# The Representation and Definition of Shinto Within Travel Guidebooks

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Japan is a country that is home to polytheistic religions, namely Buddhism and Shintoism. However, in comparison to Buddhism, which is spread widely, Shinto is mainly found in Japan. Thus, foreign visitors are most likely to encounter Shinto and Shinto shrines for the first time when they visit Japan. It can be argued that developing an understanding of the major religion(s) of a country can enhance cultural understanding. However, a clear definition of Shinto is an ongoing debate in Japan and among scholars across the world. Hence, this research tries to understand through Content Analysis of English and German language travel / guidebooks how Shinto is presented to foreign tourists. Previous research showed that these texts can be a major source to learn about other religions. The 'Shinto Paradigms' as identified by Aike Rots build a framework to analyse the content. He identified six paradigms, each attributed to certain themes which can be used to define Shinto. The results show that most western travel information sources present Shinto in the context of the 'Ethnic Paradigm' that portrays Shinto as an indigenous religion which is deeply intertwined in the Japanese life. However, some of the same sources also show traits of a more recent definition approach, the 'Environmental Paradigm' which strongly connects nature and the environment with Shinto. These findings have implications for marketing Shinto shrines for tourism, as a common presentation of Shinto does not exist that can shape the tourist's experience and understanding of the host culture. Further, the paper shows that the paradigms of Rots provide a base framework for further tourism related Shinto studies, while reflecting the difficulties of portraying a congruent definition of Shinto.

**Key Words**: Content Analysis, Shinto, travel guidebooks, religious tourism, Japan

## Introduction

Sacred places are often highlighted as major tourist attractions among travel information sources like travel guidebooks or tourism association websites. In Japan's case, many of these are Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. As sacred places are often visited by guided tours, it might not be a surprise that in an article published in 2017, Masayo Hagimura (the president of the Japan Guide Association) talked about the kind of questions foreign tourists ask and among the most common ones was what religion the guide adheres to (Hagimura, 2017). While it can be argued that Buddhism has reached a global exposure, Shintoism is mainly found within Japan with some overseas shrines located in areas with larger Japanese communities like Hawai'i or Brazil. Therefore, Western societies have little contact with Shinto outside of Japan and in general, most have little or no exposure to polytheistic religion that 'may be difficult to understand or accept for followers of monotheistic religions' as Jimura

(2019:150) points out. Searching for a definition of Shinto can be a difficult task. While within non-academic literature and Shinto circles, Shinto is frequently defined as an indigenous and ancient worship tradition firmly linked to Japanese culture, (Rots, 2017), many academics who study the history of Shinto highlight that it has a historical and ongoing development (Hardcare, 2017; Rots, 2017), which makes it a challenge to get a clear and concise answer. But also, talking with Japanese people about how they define Shinto will produce variety in their descriptions, as well as how they practice it. Yet, Shinto elements can be found in various situations of daily life, including shrine festivals that take place in public spaces and also as markers of a place, as shown in Figure 1.

Therefore, even though tourists might not visit a shrine, they will have some exposure to elements of Shinto. It can be argued that for a better understanding of a different culture, it might be of advantage to understand some of its religion(s). But where do tourists find this information?

**Figure 1. Elements of Shinto Found in Public Spaces**
Kamidana (house altar) in a restaurant, Shimekazari (new year good luck decoration), Yasaka Festival Shrine in the streets of Kyoto; Train station sign showing a shrine gate (from top left clockwise)



Author's Own Photographs

Despite a variety of online travel information sources, Mieli and Zillinger (2020) found that guidebooks are often preferred due to the curation of their content and their credibility. Furthermore guidebooks are

> *one of the genres of literature in which most people obtain information about religions other than their own* (Stausberg, 2011:201).

In this context, as the literature will show, the representation of religion within travel information sources has been researched with different aims. However, even though Shinto shrines are a major attraction for tourists and Shinto is rarely practised outside Japan, little research was found that looks into the representation of Shinto within travel information sources.

Therefore, this study aims to show how Shinto is being represented and what kind of definitions are given within Western travel guidebooks by applying the Shinto paradigms from Aike P. Rots. This paper specifically tries to understand how the ongoing discussion about defining Shinto is reflected and how Shinto is being described to readers. This is of importance, as Munro (2019) emphasises that especially for visitors with a different faith, information should be relevant and understandable. It has to be noted that it is not the aim of this study to either produce a definition of Shinto nor evaluate which definition might be the most accurate, but rather to critically highlighting the treatment of Shinto within travel guidebooks. This will especially be a challange, as

Shinto has been characterised in a variety of ways and it is difficult to establish a neutral and historically correct description / definition (Rots, 2017).

To achieve the research objective, this research applies Content Analysis as a methodology, which has shown to be beneficial in previous studies on place representation and travel information sources (Bender *et al.*, 2013; Lew, 1991; Stepchenkova & Morrison, 2006). By building on previous applications of content analysis, this study tries to structure information from a variety of sources and representation styles. To evaluate the data, the author has adapted the six Shinto Paradigms that were clustered by Rots (2017) into a coding scheme that allows classification of the provided representations.

## Literature Review

### *Shinto*

To evaluate the findings of the guidebook analysis, it is required to identify not just how Shinto is discussed and defined inside academia, but also how it is described from an 'official' standpoint. One of these 'official' bodies can be seen as the Jinja Honcho - Association of Shinto Shrines. According to the Jinja Honcho, Shinto is:

> [The] *indigenous faith of the Japanese people that encompasses the ideas, attitudes, and ways of doing things* (Jinja Honcho, no date).

It highlights that Shinto as faith has 'no dogma, doctrine or founder' and comes from the ancient Japanese's bond with the power they discovered in nature, a relationship that continues and is distinguished by a deep respect for nature's might and thankfulness for nature's gift (Jinja Honcho, no date).

This type of definition can also be found in academia, such as in Lokowandt's (2001) book *Introduction to Shinto*, which mentions the same absence of holy scripture, founder, and dogma, and while highlighting the aspect of nature and ancestor worship, he emphasises that both are enriched with a strong political component. Furthermore, he regards ceremonies as an important component of Shinto, and the shrine as one of the most important sites for them. A similar stance on the relationship between Shinto and shrines is given by Breen and Teeuwen (2010) who refer to Shinto being a religion of shrines

and despite having limited appeal to the average shrine visitor, it significantly impacted the design and operation of shrines. However, they take a critical stance on the indigenous aspect of Shinto for the Japanese people and rather see it as a historical construct (Breen & Teeuwen, 2010). This position is shared by several other researchers, like Rambelli (2014), who found that what is currently known as Shinto has always been a wide range of possibilities, so diverse that it is difficult to restrict it to a single kind. Hardcare (2017) also emphasises the diversity of Shinto throughout Japanese history and how it cannot be reduced to a single concept.

This ongoing evolution is also supported by Rots (2017) who listed and compared existing definitions of Shinto. How these have been conceptualised through its development in modern times led him to identify five different paradigms:

> *the imperial paradigm,*
>
> *the ethnic paradigm,*
>
> *the local paradigm,*
>
> *the universal paradigm and*
>
> *the spiritual paradigm.*

One additional paradigm is added, as Rots (2017) found in recent years that Shinto is being promoted as an old practice of nature worship that contains rich cultural and intellectual elements for developing long-term human-environment interactions. This *environmental paradigm* incorporates and reinterprets the imperial, ethnic and spiritual paradigms while including global debates on religion and the environment.

As this review shows, there are numerous scholarly viewpoints on defining Shinto. Rots' discourse on analysing recent definitions is seen as an objective technique for providing an overview of various definitions and so forms the basis of the coding process used in this paper. Hence, these six paradigms will be introduced in more detail within the methodology section.

### Travel Guidebooks

The representation of religions within travel guidebooks has been examined by a variety of researchers. However, as can be seen from the previous section, a clear and straightforward definition of Shinto is difficult to achieve,

yet no research could be found that evaluates Shinto in this context. Therefore, the search was extended to include any and all religions or religious beliefs and their representation within travel guidebooks. This investigation showed that many academics focussed their research on the Lonely Planet guidebook series.

Kraft (2007) has examined how religion and information about it are presented by considering the voice used by the authors and the 'religious dimensions of travelling and the traveller, including so-called spiritual resources offered to travellers' in her study on spirituality and religion within *Lonely Planet India* (Kraft, 2007: 230). Further, she discovered a lot greater emphasis on religious motives inside *Lonely Planet India* when compared to *Lonely Planet California* even though Californians are statistically a religious people. Building on Kraft's work, Maćkowiak (2017) examined the representation of religion and spirituality in two Lonely Planet Guidebooks for Indonesia and Thailand. Through content analysis, this author discovered discrepancies in the representation of global religions and local, folk, and animistic beliefs between the *Lonely Planet Thailand* and the *Lonely Planet Indonesia* guides; despite the prominence of these themes in both countries' public discourse, they were absent from the Indonesian edition.

In another study, Tödter (2014) analysed how religion is portrayed as a general topic in a multicultural city, Singapore, and addressed this issue using *Lonely Planet Singapore* to establish the function of guidebooks in the religious context. Her findings indicate that the travel guidebook and its depiction of religion serve as an interpreter or guide, and only via its interpretation can religion become an unforgettable experience.

While the above studies focus on Asian countries, these were drawn on the available data which was extracted from one guidebook publisher. This finding is supported by Peel and Sørensen (2016), who researched the use of travel guidebooks within the academic field and found that 'studies which draw on a range of guidebook types taking account of a diversity of readers are few' (Peel & Sørensen, 2016:59). Hence, this study analyses a variety of travel guidebooks to get a richer picture of the representation of Shinto.

## Methodology

This study aims to show how Shinto is being represented and what kind of definitions are given within Western travel guidebooks by applying the Shinto paradigms from Aike P. Rots. It specifically tries to understand how the ongoing discussion about defining Shinto is reflected and how Shinto is being described to guidebook readers. Guidebooks were chosen, because as shown in the literature review, and despite the digital age, they are still being used as a rich source of information that informs readers about religions, especially of other cultures.

To extract and analyse the extracted information, Content Analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method. This is defined as

> *a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use* (Krippendorf, 2004:18).

Content Analysis is a prominent type of analysis in religious studies as seen from the literature review and can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative approaches in textual analysis for characterising and explaining aspects of embedded messages (Nelson & Woods, 2011). Because the structure and presentation of various travel information sources differ, Content Analysis is helpful in this regard, as it facilitates the handling of 'unstructured information more easily than other research approaches' (Nelson & Woods 2011:111).

## Overview of Sample

The sampling was influenced by the languages of the travel guidebooks, i.e., English and German, as these are the main Western languages used by the author. Therefore, non-probability purposive sampling was used, which is often found in studies with a particular area of interest (Riffe *et al.*, 2019). In terms of the travel guidebooks, the requirement was that they either had a chapter about religion or an section about Shinto. Based on the author's own experiences and previous research on travel guidebooks about Japan, only those that focus on Japan as a country were included. Given a large amount of travel information sources, limiting the number of publications made the study more manageable (Riffe *et al.*. 2019).

**Table 1: Travel Guidebooks Used in Data Analysis**

| Rank | USA *Sorted by Amazon* | Australia *Sorted by Amazon* | Deutschland *Sorted by Amazon* | United Kingdom *Sorted by Amazon* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lonely Planet Japan (2019 ed) | Lonely Planet Japan (2019 ed) | Stefan Loose Reiseführer (2018 ed) | Lonely Planet Japan (2019 ed) |
| 2 | Fodor's Essential Japan (2019 ed) | Japan Travel Guide: Things I wish I knew before going to Japan (2019) | Baedecker Reiseführer (2018 ed) | DK Eyewitness Japan (2019 ed) |
| 3 | Japan Travel Guide: Things I wish I knew before going to Japan (2019) | Lonely Planet Best of Japan (2019 ed) | Lonely Planet Japan (2019 ed) | Japan Travel Guide: Things I wish I knew before going to Japan (2019) |
| 4 | DK Eyewitness Japan (2019 ed) | Insight Guides Pocket Japan (May 2020 ed) | National Geographic (2019 ed) | Lonely Planet Best of Japan (2019 ed) |
| 5 | Super Cheap Guides: Japan (ed 2017) | DK Eyewitness Japan (2019 ed) | Marco Polo Japan (2016 ed) | Super Cheap Guides: Japan (2017 ed) |
| 6 | Moon Japan: Plan your trip, avoid the crowds, and experience the real Japan (2020) | Japan Travel Guide 2020: Fully-Digitalized (2019) | Japan der illustrierte Guide (2019 ed) | Fodor's Essential Japan (2019 ed) |
| 7 | Japan Travel Guide 2020: Fully-Digitalized (2019) | Japan in 60 Easy steps: The compact and comprehensive travel guide (2019 ed) | Low Budget Reiseführer Japan (2019 ed) | The Rough Guide to Japan (2017) |
| 8 | Cool Japan Guide (2015) | 14 Days in Japan: A first-timer's ultimate travel guide (2018) | Japan spielend in 60 Schritten (2019 ed) | Berlitz Pocket Guide Japan (2017) (2020 version available) |
| 9 | Must-See Japan (2016 ed) | Japan: The Ultimate Japan Travel Guide by A traveler for a traveler (2016) | I love Japan Reiseführer (2019 ed) | Marco Polo Japan (2016) |
| 10 | 14 Days in Japan: A first-timer's ultimate travel guide (2018) | The Rough Guide to Japan (2017) | Vis-a-vis Reiseführer (DK) (2020 ed) | Insight Guides Japan (2020) |

The travel guidebooks were sampled by browsing through guidebooks from nations chosen for tourism promotion by the 'New Tourism Strategy to Invigorate the Japanese Economy' (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2016), which include the EU, the USA, and Australia. As a result, travel guidebooks were selected from the Amazon pages in the United States, Australia, England, and Germany. Amazon was picked since it has a large book selection and is available in all four markets. The keywords for the search were 'Japan, travel, guidebook' but, for cross-checking, different combinations were also included, i.e., 'Japan travel guide' and 'Japan travel guide book'.

The German site was searched with the term 'Japan Reiseführer', the equivalent term for a travel guide, as its German meaning, 'book' was included in the bookstore context. The standard Amazon sorting 'Sorted by Amazon' was used to display the results and the first ten guidebooks that covered all of Japan based on the title

were selected (Table 1). Depending on whether Amazon Store offered the electronic edition, texts were purchased through the Amazon page or the publisher's site.

Of the twenty-four book titles found, 10 were excluded; one was not available as an e-book, 8 did not have a chapter or section about Shinto and one was in the style of a photo album with very limited textual information about the country.

The reason that ebooks were favoured is twofold. The digital presence of travel information sources has risen in recent years, with tourism associations offering smartphone apps for on-the-go information as well as a wide range of user-generated content. As Mieli and Zillinger (2020) discovered during their literature review, the abundance of available information sources has led to visitors becoming hybrid consumers. But they also found:

[The] *efficiency value lies in the curation of guidebooks, which helps overcome online confusion and mitigate the cognitive effort of using the Internet for information search* (Mieli & Zillinger, 2020:39).

An ebook can be carried much more easily and allows note-taking capabilities, it also keeps the charm of a conventional book. Second, it efficiently allows one to search for paragraphs about Shinto that are not shown in the content page or index - this also facilitates electronic coding.

The literature review suggests that a definition of Shinto is an ongoing process throughout history. Thus, in addition to the most recent travel guidebooks, further guidebooks were selected to include a recent historical perspective. Two well-known publishing houses were chosen to enrich the data to obtain more of a semi-historical perspective. The first editions of the two chosen publishers - Baedeker and Lonely Planet - go back about 40 years. Baedeker was chosen as it represents one of the oldest travel guidebook publishing houses and Lonely Planet, as its origin and target group of readers were different to other travel guidebooks when it was founded. Since the first edition on Japan of both publishing houses was published around 1981, a 10-year increment was chosen. Four editions (1981, 1991, 2000 and 2009) were obtained of the Lonely Planet texts, but, only three (1983, 1999 and 2011) could be sourced for Baedeker. It is noted that while the travel guidebook series stays more or less the same, a change of authors occurs over time, and this was evident in these series over the course of almost 40 years.

## Coding

The coding procedure that was used is described here in depth since Krippendorf (2004) emphasises that findings should be repeatable. Thus, it is crucial to understand how the coding technique was used by the sole coder, the author. Based on the research question and to analyse the texts under the direction of the Shinto Paradigms, a deductive coding approach was applied.

MAXQDA Analytics Pro 2020, a software for qualitative and mixed methodologies research, was used to code and analyse the text. The coding process started with extracting the chapters and sections / paragraphs about Shinto. Then each document was read four times:

The ***first*** reading was to facilitate the researcher becoming more familiar with the texts.

The ***second*** read was to apply the codes based on the six Shinto Paradigms using a code memo (Table 2) and to identify segments that describe Shinto nowadays. This is important to note, as numerous travel guidebooks in either their 'History of Japan' or 'Religion / Shinto' chapter talk about the abolishment of 'State Shinto' at the end of World War II and the ruling of the American General Headquarters to separate state and religion. While the objective was to apply the Shinto Paradigm codes, hence a deductive coding process, it became apparent that one publisher excessively referred to Shinto as a 'cult'. Therefore, this inductive code was added to the list to establish if other publishers take a similar stance.

This was followed by a ***third*** read to ensure that all sources were coded in the same way.

The ***fourth*** reading followed two to three weeks after the previous coding sessions to avoid codes being missed or miscoded due to the fatigue of reading large amounts of text.

| Table 2: Code Memo - Shinto Paradigms based on Rots (2017) | |
|---|---|
| *Shinto Paradigm* | *Code Memo* |
| **Imperial** | Relationship with the divine imperial institution and being a public, 'non-religious' ritual tradition |
| **Ethnic** | A single ritual style of all Japanese that defines the Japanese nation. |
| **Local** | Diverse rural / folk customs that have not altered since ancient times, as well as common people's rituals and beliefs |
| **Universal** | Developed in Japan; has (possible) relevance not only for Japanese but also for people from all over the world as a 'global' religion |
| **Spiritual** | Mystical, non-rational divine encounters |
| **Environmentalist** | Combines parts of imperial, local, and spiritual paradigms, reinterpreting them in light of global religious and environmental discourse |

**Figure 2: Code relations matrix showing the applied paradigms for each travel guide**

| | Environmental | Ethnic | Imperial | Local | Spiritual | Universal | Cult |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Baedeker | | | | | | | ■ |
| Berlitz Pocket Guide | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| DK eyewitness Travel Guide | | | | | | | |
| Fodors Essential | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| Insight Guides | ■ | ■ | | ■ | | | |
| Insight Guides Pocket | | | | | | | |
| Lonely Planet Best Of | | ■ | | | | | |
| Lonely Planet | | | | | | | |
| Marco Polo | | | | ■ | | | |
| Moon Japan | ■ | | | | | | |
| National Geographic | | ■ | | ■ | | | |
| Stefan Loose Reiseführer | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| The Rough Guide | ■ | ■ | | | | | |
| The ultimate Japan Travel Guide | ■ | | | ■ | | | |

Shinto Paradigms

## Findings and Discussion

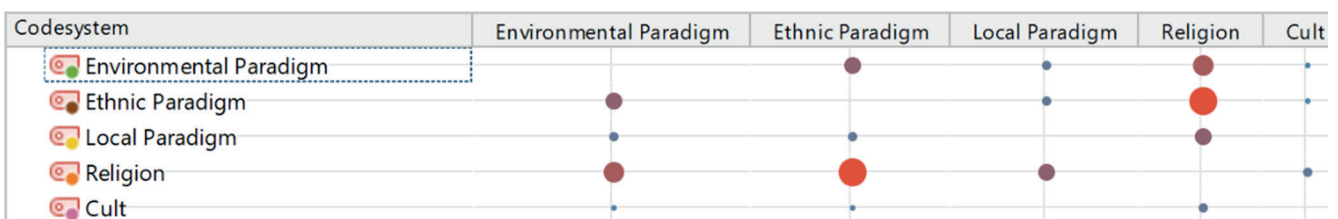### Shinto in recent travel guidebook editions

The data analysed in this study were created for the practical purpose of providing travellers with a variety of high quality information about the tourism destination of Japan and its various tourism sites. Therefore, it was not possible to guide the creation of the data creation according to a scientific research background (Müller, 2021). Müller suggests starting this type of analysis with the use of visual tools, as 'they allow [the researcher] to unveil thematic structures' (Müller, 2021:56). The six deductive codes and one inductive code were visualised as a matrix (Figure 2) to get an overview of how the paradigms were applied across the different travel guidebooks.

The matrix shows that the guided coding process based on the six paradigms resulted in overlapping codes, partially because Shinto was mentioned in dedicated chapters but also in other sections throughout the books. Since the focus was on a modern presentation of Shinto, it also shows that the imperial paradigm, which centres on the relationship with the imperial institution and timeline-wise the oldest one, is not present. However, it has to be noted, if the descriptions of Japan's history were accounted for in the process, this code would have appeared, as some travel guidebooks have a short explanation about 'State Shinto' and the divinity of the emperor, but that it was abolished with the end of the Second World War.

Another interesting aspect, which became apparent during the reading of the descriptions and is reflected in the matrix is that several travel guidebooks belong to the same publishing house, but do not necessarily share the same content on Shinto. For example, Baedeker, Marco Polo and Stefan Loose Reiseführer are published by Mairdumont, but, the coded paradigms, show that these travel guidebooks provide very different descriptions of Shinto. On the other side, the ones published by APA Publications – Berlitz Pocket Guide, Insight Guide and Insight Guides Pocket – share some of the same content on Shinto. This may have little implications for the reader, as it can be assumed that one person will not read a diversity of travel guidebooks on the same destination, however, it is noteworthy in the analysis of these books.

**Figure 3: Paradigm co-occurrences visualising in which intensity the different paradigms overlap**

| Codesystem | Environmental Paradigm | Ethnic Paradigm | Local Paradigm | Religion | Cult |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Environmental Paradigm | | ● | • | ● | |
| Ethnic Paradigm | ● | ● | • | ⬤ | |
| Local Paradigm | • | • | | ● | |
| Religion | ● | ⬤ | ● | | • |
| Cult | | • | | • | |

To elaborate on these findings, MAXQDA offers a tool for visualising code relationships, as shown in Figure 3. This code relations matrix considers co-occurrences of codes within the same document, in this case, the same travel guidebooks.

The matrix highlights how representations of Shinto are related to the topic of religion within these travel guidebooks, showing that the Ethnic Paradigm gains the largest attention when describing Shinto. It also confirms the visualisation of the coded paradigms concerning each travel guidebook from Figure 2, where it is apparent that different paradigms were coded for the presentation of Shinto within the same book, i.e., the Environmental and Ethnic Paradigm. Even though Rots (2017) noted that the Environmental Paradigms incorporate elements from the imperial, ethnic, and spiritual ones, it was discovered in the coding of the texts that a clear connection between the representations was not always possible, or different descriptions of Shinto were found in different parts of the same book, resulting in these overlapping codes that became clearer through the visualisation of these co-occurrences.

In the next step of the analysis, typical attributes of defining Shinto as found in the literature were isolated. These were: 'indigenous / native', 'no rule' and 'connection to nature'. Across the 14 travel guidebooks, 10 of them develop the theme of Shinto being something 'indigenous / native' and this approach was the most frequently used. Typical statements describe Shinto as

> an ancient belief system, dating back perhaps as far as 500 BC, and [being] indigenous to Japan (Clancy et al., 2019)

or highlight Shinto as something that

> can claim to be the indigenous faith (DeHart, 2020:742).

This becomes more apparent when considering the textual presentations of the Ethnic Paradigm – the most coded theme – where Shinto is presented as something that not only existed since ancient times but is at the core of Japanese life and equates Shinto with what it means to be Japanese (Gray et al., 2017; Insight Guides, 2020; Bornoff & Lindelauf, 2018).

The next most popular attribute for describing Shinto – the connection to nature – found across seven travel guidebooks – mostly relates to the aspect of all natural objects possessing a spiritual side (Insight Guides, 2020; LostTravellersGuides, 2016), as well as the belief that Kami (which can be translated as a deity) live in all natural objects (DeHart, 2020). These aspects might be the most relevant to travellers when visiting a shrine and seeing either rocks or trees marked as being sacred.

The third most common feature – a religion without rules – is reflected in five of the analysed travel guidebooks, with one statement standing out that Shinto has

> no doctrine and no beginning or endgame; it simply is (Milner et al., 2019).

While the majority of analysed travel guidebooks define Shinto as either the native or oldest religion of Japan, as well as one of the world's major religions, those who do not explicitly present it as something native to Japan take into consideration some critical reflections. This reflection refers to the historical development of Shinto that the name was only introduced when Buddhism came to Japan and to distinguish between them (Ducke et al., 2018; Insight Guides, 2020, Zollickhofer et al., 2018).

These above findings have critical implications, as Shinto is being discussed in most travel guidebooks as a continuum, while the literature review showed that among academics Shinto has developed within its history and cannot be traced back to one thing that stayed unchanged (e.g., Hardcare, 2017; Rambelli, 2014).

Furthermore, the statement that aligns Japanese people with Shinto as a default is to be viewed critically, not only from an academic researcher's perspective but also as an aware observer when travelling to Japan, as it will become clear that not all people belong to Shinto by default. Even so, in a minority, there are those of Christian belief or who strictly adhere to Buddhism, in addition to those who see no affiliation with either shrines or Shinto. Hence, this view of universal Shintoism portrays a picture of Japanese people that could lead to cultural misunderstandings.

## Shinto in the Historical Versions of two Modern Travel Guidebooks

The literature review showed that descriptions and definitions of Shinto are evolving, with one approach being a strong focus on the environment in recent years, as shown by Rots (2017). This *Environmentalist Paradigm* could be found in parts of some recent texts and it was deemed of advantage to enrich the data by looking into previous editions and to explore how the representation of Shinto has changed over time. This secondary analysis was based on two travel guidebooks used for the previous analysis - the Baedeker and Lonely Planet editions.

Among the two series, the Baedeker travel guidebooks show a consistent representation of Shinto, which becomes very clear not only in the wording but also the number of words, which has not changed since its first publication in 1983. The only exception that was found is that in Baedeker's latest edition, Shinto is referred to as a religion, while in the three previously available editions it is solely described as a cult, which also remains the main nuance in its' 2018 edition. One exception in their description of Shinto is that in earlier editions, the names and functions of the different *Kami* are explained, e.g., *Tenjin* as the God of Education. Another aspect that emerged during the analysis was the consistency of quantitative differences between the description of Shinto (520 words) in comparison with Buddhism (1300 words). It can only be assumed that this may relate to the authors' representation of Buddhism as a religion and explaining in depth its historical development while referring to Shinto as a cult. This would need further attention in future editions of this series, following on from some text changes in the 2018 edition.

The Lonely Planet series is also consistent with their representation of Shinto, i.e., the *Ethnic Paradigm* being the dominant one that highlights Shinto as an indigenous religion with no dogma or text in comparison to the Bible or Koran. One key difference across the Lonely Planet editions in comparison to the Baedeker ones is that the volume of text on Shinto varies across the different analysed editions.

Based on the analysis of these two travel guidebook series that reach back to the early 1980s, a consistent portrayal of Shinto is revealed. While only two of the travel guidebook series were analysed from a longitudinal perspective, it would be interesting to undertake further investigation of how Shinto was represented within travel guidebooks, especially in pre-war editions and in the years from the end of the war to the late 1970s. Further, it could be of interest to understand the source of the representations about Shinto, especially as among the recent editions of the 14 travel guidebooks that have been analysed, a consistency is shown in how Shinto is defined. This raises questions about the origin of the information ... but this might be difficult to obtain.

## Conclusion

The objective of this research was to apply the Shinto Paradigms of Aike P. Rots to explore definitions of Shinto within travel guidebooks as a source of travel information. As was found from the literature, a clear and consistent definition of Shinto within the academic field is difficult to find, especially as some researchers have shown, Shinto is in its interpretation always evolving and depending on the times, is interpreted in various different ways.

The work of Rots (2017) provides those who want to research Shinto a good overview by catalysing Shinto into different paradigms and highlighting the latest trend in defining Shinto within an environmental context. Furthermore, the literature review also showed that travel guidebooks are rich information sources for learning about many religions. However, while travellers to Japan will get exposed to Shinto either directly by visiting a shrine or one of the shrine festivals, as well as indirectly by eating at a restaurant and seeing a *Kamidana* or *Ebisu*, there is a gap in research on how Shinto, in general, is presented to travellers within travel information sources. Hence, this study applied the Shinto Paradigms as a framework to show how Shinto is being represented and defined within western travel guidebooks, as people living in Western countries will have - with an exception of Buddhism - less exposure to polytheistic beliefs and religions.

This research shows that the Shinto Paradigms can be used as a guiding framework to extract how Shinto is being represented among different sources, as it simplifies and

most importantly makes the coding process of Content Analysis more replicable. It also highlights that a clear definition of Shinto within academic studies is a difficult task, as other researchers found that among practitioners of Shinto, variances of its definition exist, which is also reflected in the work of academics.

These findings also have implications for the information that is presented to tourists at shrines. Shrines are generally open spaces that open up their sacred services to the general public, this can lead to misconceptions of the overall sacred sites and practices and subsequent 'behaviour' of tourists due to different interpretations being provided in different information sources. It also shows that the provision of information plays an important role in presenting a religion or culture to tourists and in this instance, travel guidebooks are shown to be a rich source of information about the religions of Japan. However, substantial variances in information about Shinto exist within the travel guidebooks. For example, and the common statement of equating Shinto with being Japanese across a range of travel guidebooks provides a prejudice - since Shinto is not followed by all Japanese people.

Even so, while being a tourist in Japan – as highlighted in the introduction – elements of Shinto can be found in various public places. The literature review revealed that Shinto undergoes development throughout history and is difficult to define as a single entity. This also becomes clear when talking to a variety of people in Japan: from Shinto priests; to those who once or twice a year take part by carrying a portable shrine in one of the shrine festivals; to those who have no affiliation with Shinto or

shrines in general (personal communication). However, it is not surprising that tourists can become confused about what kind of beliefs Japanese people have when reading about religion in Japan in travel guidebooks. As previously mentioned, one of the most frequently asked questions by foreign tourists to their tour guide is 'What's your religion'. This can be corroborated by the author while living in Kyoto and overhearing tourists asking their tour guide 'whether she or he is Shintoist or Buddhist' (Hagimura, 2017; personal communication).

## Limitations

However, this study is not without its limitations. While applying the Shinto Paradigms as a coding map simplified the coding process and makes it more replicable, it has to be noted that these texts have been coded with human involvement. This subjectivism can limit the replicability of the methodology. However, through the documentation of the process, the way the coding and analysis were structured was detailed.

Another limitation is that the analysis focussed on English and German-language travel guidebooks, which means that the authors have their origins in regions with monotheistic religions. Furthermore, these guidebooks were selected using the criteria of representing the whole of Japan as a tourism destination, hence, specialised books on shrines or pilgrimage were excluded. Hence, future application of Shinto Paradigms could be applied to the analysis of travel information sources in languages where polytheistic religions can be found, as well as specialised books.

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