

<b>Author:</b>	Bocking, Brian
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<b>Title:</b>	A Popular Dictionary of Shinto
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**Review:** This book is more than a popular dictionary of Shinto. The title arises, one may suppose, because the publisher would like it to reach a wide range of general and educational readers. There are indeed others in an untitled series by the same publisher dealing with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. As a specialist in Japanese religions, on the other hand, Brian Bocking (Bath College of Higher Education, Bath UK) is aware of the need for an academic dictionary of Shinto. Thus the book is a compromise, but a successful compromise. For example, there is no extensive bibliography appended, but the introduction skilfully refers to a number of useful works for further reference. The author himself says in the Acknowledgements that he found it difficult to write a book with no footnotes. This seems extreme. How many dictionaries have footnotes? What this means is that academic writers cannot endlessly cover themselves against misunderstanding when compiling dictionaries. They have to take decisions. But Brian Bocking's decisions are good decisions. The picture of Shinto which emerges from these pages is clear, correct and valuable. Knotty problems such as that of the politically controversial status of Yasukuni Shrine are dealt with in uncompromising clarity and fairness. There is a good balance between concepts, festivals and rites, artefacts and architecture, deities and spirits, people and places, named shrines, institutions and aspects of popular Shinto. A series of thematic indexes at the end provides cross-references to many items not listed in the more than one thousand main entries. The accuracy and general quality of this dictionary are first-rate, while the format is extremely accessible. Users will be pleased.

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