

WORLD NEWS AND POLITICS**EMPIRE OF THE SUN UNDER ATTACK: JAPAN'S EARTHQUAKE, TSUNAMI & NUCLEAR THREATS**

—Amaterasu, a sun goddess, is one of the most revered deities in Japanese mythology. She was represented on battle armor and her symbol appeared on the former flag of Japan. Mythology tells the tale of Amaterasu's grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto, who descended to Earth and initiated a divine lineage, where the Japanese emperor was soon considered a god. Today, the Grand Shrine at Ise evinces the importance of this deity in Japanese culture. Composed of more than 65 complex structures, the Grand Shrine is the main shrine of the Shinto.

Followers of Shinto revere forces of nature and *kami* or gods. Every quarter of a century, the structures in the Grand Shrine are destroyed so that newer and older generations can participate in the rebuilding process.

The power of this long embedded tradition will be much needed in the coming days, weeks, and months as Japan struggles to recover following the largest earthquake to hit its soil in more than 140 years.

Sitting at the edge of a horseshoe shaped, 25,000-mile line along the Pacific Rim known as the "Ring of Fire," or the mouth of the sun goddess as I like to call it, Japan has certainly learned to live in harmony with the *kami* in good and bad times.

On March 11, 2011, Japan clamped her armor and marched into battle as earthquakes ripped through her seafloor and raised 30-foot waves that swallowed lives and swept away cars and buildings like toys. The quake was so powerful that it shook towns and cities hundreds of miles away, including the country's capitol, Tokyo, several hours south of the epicenter.

A nation that has lived by the way of the gods, Japan has learned to use some of her god-given powers, the ability to split atoms and harness nuclear energy in her 54 nuclear programs. But the gods are not ready to fully relinquish their roles yet, as evidenced by the imminent nuclear meltdown following the aftermath of the recent earthquake. Truly, the gods continue to test the Japanese samurai spirit as explosions from the Fukushima nuclear plant sent radiation spewing into the air and forced men in white suits to risk their lives by going on a suicide mission in a desperate attempt to pacify a brewing storm, while the nation's emperor made a rare appearance to stress his concerns.

Japanese citizens must now not only deal with the emotional turmoil from the loss of their loved ones who were either swept away by the sea or buried in the rumble of collapsed buildings and roads, but they must also cope with hunger, thirst, cold, and the fear of radiation exposure from a nuclear meltdown.

The *kami* life force has descended upon the Japanese people. Now they must make use of their ability to perform another special feat, recovering from an 8.9 earthquake that jolted global markets, tore homes down and lives apart, and moved the island nation more than half a dozen feet.

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