**Overview of *Majo*, Western Witches, in Contemporary Japan**

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**Abstract**

This article examines the situation of Paganism, mainly Witchcraft, from the West in Japan. Japanese Witches do not resist traditional religion. They also avoid the influence of Christianity; thus there is no image of evil for Witch. However, people who practice Witchcraft are forced to be aware of “Witch” in anime and children’s literature because the Witch is a popular character for anime and children’s literature. If we regard Japan as a contact zone where Western Witchcraft and Japanese tradition meet, various images of Witches are produced there outside the Christian context, and a localized Witchcraft as a faith has emerged.

**Keywords** Localization, Contact Zone, Paganism, Witchcraft, Magic

**Introduction**

When a religion is brought into a certain area, the religion is usually localized. In the field of Paganism, Pagans often adapt to an area and its indigenous culture (e.g., in New Zealand Witches use a different wheel of the year from the one used in the Northern hemisphere and take in Maori culture carefully, Rountree 2004), are influenced by mainstream religion (e.g., Catholicism influences Paganism in France and Spain, Fedele 2013) or worship local deities (e.g., Canaanite reconstructionism in Israel, Feraro 2016).

The Paganisms which were developed in the West are sometimes “exported,” however, Paganism has been studied mostly in countries where the mainstream religions are Judeo-Christian (cf. Aitamurto and Simpson eds. 2013, Rountree ed. 2015, Strmiska ed. 2005). What, then, is the situation of Western Paganism[[1]](#footnote-1) in countries whose traditional faith is polytheism, not Judaism or Christianity – for example, Japan?

In Japan, the word “Paganism” is hardly known; hence it does not function as an umbrella term. However, Western Witchcraft[[2]](#footnote-2) is known as well as Western Magic, and a small number of people are involved[[3]](#footnote-3). The aim of this paper is to examine the reason why Witches in Japan do Witchcraft and how they use the Japanese culture and materials. Then I would like to discuss the position of Western Witchcraft in Japan with respect to the international Pagan scene.

I would like to use the concept of “contact zone” to conceptualize the meeting of Witchcraft from the West and the traditional culture of Japan. The meeting of two or more cultures in one site can be analyzed using Mary Pratt’s concept of the “contact zone”. Pratt examined travel writings from 1750 to 1980 and use this term to examine “social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 1992: 4).

Paganism is a re-invented or created religion, based on native faith before the arrival of Christianity and refers to Western folklore, archaeology and, sometimes, non-Western cultures. In this sense, Paganism can be said to be a new faith which was born in a contact zone where traditions from different times and spaces meet.

The data I use in this paper was collected during my fieldwork in the areas of Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Tohoku from March 2017 to June 2020. I conducted participate-observation of four meetings (one online), five ceremonies, twelve events and five workshops and lectures, and held semi-structured interviews or conversations with 58 people, including two Americans and one Briton, who call themselves Witches, are trainees of Witchcraft, call themselves Magicians, run shops related to Witchcraft, are authors of books about Witches and practice what they perceive as practices from ancient European cultures. Their genders were; 38 women, 18 men and 2 X gender. Their ages were; 4 in their 60s, 8 in their 50s, 13 in their 40s, 17 in their 30s, 14 in their 20s and 2 teenagers. I talked with members of a “Witch Circle” and a “Magic Research Group” at two different universities.

I first made a contact with people who ran a Magic shop. I met several Witches there. After that, I used Twitter to find people who called themselves Witches as well as to find open events. I joined several events and met more Witches. We sometimes already knew each other on Twitter. Most of the time, I asked for an interview after I met them in person. I also directly contacted people who were publicly known as Witches or people who prior interviewees suggested I meet. I interviewed at cafés, restaurants, shops, karaoke rooms, university campuses, online and in their home. I changed their profiles and sometimes merged several people’s profile together as one person to protect their privacy.

Please note: Not all of the people I asked for interviews answered or accepted my request, and some people who I met asked me not to write about them. The resource is only from the people who I was allowed to meet or could make a contact and the people who agreed to be interviewed and to use the interview for public. I have not made a contact with all the people who call themselves Witch in Japan. Therefore, the data I use in this article is limited.

I first explain the religions in Japan and the word of Witch in Japanese. Then I summaries the history and the current situation of Witchcraft and Magic in Japan. After that, I examine the reason why they are involved in Witchcraft and how they take Japanese culture for their practice.

**Religions in Japan**

First of all, I discuss religious practice in Japan. Many Japanese “practice” both Buddhism and Shinto. They worship ancestors and conduct funerals through Buddhism tradition. For blessing new-born babies and children, they go to Shinto shrines. However, most of them do not regard these practices as “religion” but as “tradition” or “custom.”

Although Christian missionaries came in 16th and 19th centuries and founded many reputable universities and hospitals, the Christian population in Japan is very small, compared to other East Asian countries.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs regularly asks about the number of followers in all the religious organization, but not individual. In 2019, the population of teachers and believers was; Shinto (87,291,505), Buddhism (84,692,033), Christianity (1,953,103) and Others, for example Tenrikyo and SGI, (8,052,393). The total number (181,989,034) is larger than the population in Japan, which is 126,150,000 (The Agency for Cultural Affairs website, Portal Site of Official Statistics in Japan website).

Because both worship nature and many divinities, Shinto is sometimes considered Paganism by Western Pagans. Michael York (2003) was trying to see ‘Paganism’ as a global phenomenon and wanted to include Shinto.

A Shinto priest who studied in London told me “emperor worship is the core of Shinto, but British Pagans do not think of this phase.” Shinto had been mixed with Buddhism for a long time. The Shinto which is widely spread and accepted in contemporary Japan, was independent, or constructed, during Meiji Restoration in late 19th century. It was used for authorizing the Imperial Family as the descendants of Japanese divinities. This Shinto is called State Shinto. A very small number of Japanese try to revive the Shinto before arrival of Buddhism in Japan, and a small number of people have been interested in this “Ancient Shinto,” however most current scholars are skeptical about its existence.

*Itako*, *yuta* and *miko* are sometimes considered to be equivalent to Witches in the West because of their shamanic skills. *Itako* are blind women who are trained to become spiritual mediums in Tohoku area. *Yuta* are spiritual medium in Okinawa, mostly female. *Miko* were originally seen as medium and include *itako* and *yuta*, but now *miko* usually means young women who support Shinto priest. However, this article does not consider they are equivalent to the Western Witches.

***Majo*: The Word for Witch in Japanese**

This article is about the Western Witchcraft in Japan, therefore I will explain the translation for the Witch in Japanese. In the study of anthropology, “Witch” and “Witchcraft” outside the West, especially Africa has often been translated *yo-jutsu-shi* (妖術師) and *yo-jutsu* (妖術). On the contrary, “Witch” from the West usually translated as *majo* (魔女) and “Witchcraft” as *majo-jutsu* (魔女術). The word 魔女 is used as a Buddhist term, but it is pronounced as *manyo*[[4]](#footnote-4). The first use of *majo* 魔女 as a translation for Witch was in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* in 1887 (Nishimura 2015: 11). People who were persecuted as Witch at the time of Witch hunt were also called *majo*.

Ma (魔) has two parts, 麻 and 鬼. According to a dictionary (Kamata and Yoneyama 2011), the former character (麻) means māra (an obstacle for Buddhist practice) in Sanskrit, and the latter character (鬼) means a monster who harms human and animals. Ma (魔) is also used for Magic (*maho* 魔法 or *majutsu* 魔術) in Japanese and devil and demon (*akuma* 悪魔). Jo (女) means female (Male Witches in Japan say they are often asked why men call themselves Witches). The Witches in those fictions were female. Jutsu (術) means way.

One informant said that the word *majo* widely spread in Japan because of “the Oriental Witches,” the nickname for women volleyball team who got a gold medal at 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo[[5]](#footnote-5). Although Western cinemas and dramas in the West, for example Harry Potter and Disney, are popular, Japan intermittently makes many manga and anime for children whose main characters are young female Witches or girls who can use Magic since 1960s[[6]](#footnote-6). Therefore, Witches in European history, Witches in pop cultures and contemporary Witches are often called differently from Witches in Africa etc. And the image of Witch is not only negative, like scary hag, but also positive, like strong women who have mystical power[[7]](#footnote-7).

**The History of Witchcraft and Magic in Japan after 1970s**

This chapter is based on my interviews, website (Akiba), magazine (Utada ed. 1992) and the research of books whose title include Witch, *majo*, Magic, *maho* and *ma-jutsu*.

The practice of Ritual Magic came to Japan, prior to Witchcraft. In the 1970s, the occult movement arrived in Japan from the US, probably by US armies. Two books (*Magic: its ritual, power and purpose* (London: Aquarian Press, 1952) and *The magician, his training and work* (London: Aquarian Press, 1959) ) written by Walter Ernest Butler, a British Occultist, were translated and published as *Introduction to Magic: the Mystery of* Qabalah by a Qabalist who had a connection with the Fellowship of Isis.

In the 1980s, several books about Magic, for example, the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley, were translated and published. There were Japanese Magicians who wrote books by themselves. Some of them founded societies and started corresponding courses of Magic. There were several “Witch schools” which were founded by people who graduated from “Witch schools” in the US (Matsuo 1995: 18). Tokyo lodge of O.T.O., the Ordo Templi Orientis, was founded in 1988. Tatsuhiko Shibusawa (1928-87) and Suehiro Tanemura (1933-2004), famous essayists about fantastic novel, art etc., also introduced Western Magic in their writing.

In the 1990s, Witchcraft and Wicca were finally introduced in Japan. In 1991, at least, two Witchcraft circles were founded. One is Oriental Wicca[[8]](#footnote-8). The founder was initiated into traditional Witchcraft by an elderly British Witch in Yokohama. According to the interview with him (December 16th, 2019), following his teacher’s advice, he added some elements to the original teaching from his teacher, adjusting to Japan. Oriental Wicca is still active. He teaches Witchcraft with his apprentice. The other was a Japanese branch of the Green Circle, which was originally founded by Marian Green. The founder was initiated by European Witches who lived in a country in Asia. She is a manager of translation and writing company and known as a famous female astrologer. According to the interview with her (April 7th, 2018), because Green Circle is a networking group, it is not active any more in this Internet age. However, she is active to write and to lecture about fortune telling, Witchcraft and Magic.

Pagan magazine has never been published, but Occult magazines sometimes feature Witchcraft and Magic in the West. For example, *Twilight Zone* (1983-85, World Photo Press), succeeding *UFOs and Space* (1975-83, Universal), succeeding *UFOs and Space*, *Cosmo* (1973-74, Cosmo). *Mu* (Gakken) is the only Occult magazine which is still published monthly was started in 1979.

# From 1994, practical books of Witchcraft were published as the series of “Wiccan Millennium,” including *Spiral Dance* by Starhawk (1994), *The Gentle Arts of Aquarian Magic: Magical Techniques to Help You Master the Crafts of the Wise* by Marian Green (1994), *The Tree: The Complete Book of Saxon Witchcraft* by Raymond Buckland (1995), *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* by Doreen Valiante (1995), *Eight Sabbats for Witches* by Janet and Stewart Farrar (1997) and *Drawing Down the Moon* by Margot Adler (2003).

However, the members of a cult, Aum Shinrikyo, released poisonous gas, sarin, on the Tokyo subway lines in 1995. Many matters relating to Magic were considered to be dangerous. Therefore, many Magicians and Witches stopped holding open gatherings and practiced in secret at home.

Some Witches in their 50s and 60s said Magic and Witchcraft were confused in 1990s, probably because Magic came to Japan first, therefore people who only practiced something like Magic were considered as Witches, and herbalists were not recognized as Witches. Since around 2000, several books about herbs as well as healthy life and self-development have been published, including *majo* for titles. Nowadays some herbalists, healers, therapists and natural life advisors call themselves Witches. Some conduct ceremonies, but others do not[[9]](#footnote-9).

Until 2000s, most of the books were about Witchcraft and Magic from the UK or the US. General books about herbal Witch and the history of Witch hunt in Germany started to be published, but not all the Japanese authors consider Witchcraft as faith. After the middle of 2010s, books about how to do Witchcraft by Raymond Buckland or Scott Cunningham were translated and published.

Although more books about Magic were published in 1980s, there were books about spells and readings whose titles included *majo*. And there are several reading places whose names include *majo* (eg. House of *Majo* in Kobe and Osaka, and *Majo* Maison in Urayasu). Some astrologers and tarot readers call themselves Witch, but not all of them conduct ceremonies or any religious practice. One of those Witches I met decided to call herself Witch when she started reading as her job because she liked the characters of Witch in fantasy since she was a child. At that time, she did not know that some people practiced Witchcraft as their faith. She learned Witchcraft after she started call herself Witch, but she did not practice Witchcraft as faith. She said “I clearly say I’m not a real Witch, just a Witch of fortune telling.” Because of her honest attitude, she seems not to have a trouble with Witches who do both fortune-telling and Witchcraft as faith.

**Witchcraft in Contemporary Japan**

I give you the basic information about people who practice Witchcraft as their faith. How many Witches practice Witchcraft in Japan? It is difficult to say because Japanese census does not ask us of our religion. There is no big organization like the Pagan Federation or the Covenant of Goddess. The number of covens is very small, therefore most of the Witches in Japan are solo. From the tweets and the profile on Twitter, the number of Witches in 20s is more than teen Witches, and several people who I interviewed agreed.

There are more female Witch than male Witch. I met two X gender Witches. The jobs as main income resource are a school teacher, office workers, medical staff, shop employees, an IT engineer, an advertising business, managers at café, restaurants or Magic shops, lecturers of courses, writers of fortune telling magazine or website, a potter and an animation creator. Many do fortune telling, art and craft as side job. Some were looking for new jobs, taking off work and raising up children. Comparing to Japanese in general, they prefer creative work and work with a high level of self-direction to major company.

All the interviewees I talked in Japanese are born and brought up in Japan. There are several non-Japanese Witch from abroad. Those Witches I met were from North America or Western Europe.

Some interviewees told me the Internet has made the number increase with the spread of broadband in 1999-2000. Because the number who do Witchcraft as faith is very small and they hid after the Aum incident, they mainly communicate with others online. When I conducted my research, Twitter was the most popular media. Generally speaking, the older generation is less but is good at English and has an experience of communicating with Witches who live abroad. On the contrary, the younger generation is more but more of them said they were not good at English. However, social media, especially Instagram, helps young people to communicate with people who do not speak Japanese.

It seems that the Internet have removed the language barrier as well as enhanced the chances of communication. I think this situation promotes more people to access Witchcraft. The interviewees first heard of Witchcraft as faith from books, if they are over 40s or under 30s, who knew it in their childhood. The interviewees under 30s, who knew it in last several years, tended to know it from the Internet as well as meeting with Witches.

How do they study Witchcraft? Even they know Witchcraft from the Internet, they tend to read books about how to do Witchcraft (Eg. books written by Starhawk or Scott Cunningham). Some people communicate with like-minded people on the Internet or in person and join the courses or meetings by Witches.

Now there are several Witchcraft groups as well as Oriental Wicca. I met the founder and several members of Uphyca, a group of solo female Witches, in person (I will mention them again later). Several people teach herbs and divinations personally. One lady took a course of Glastonbury Goddess Temple and holds courses and ceremonies, arranging its teaching to Japanese situation. Another lady who studied Witchcraft from a British Witch who lived in Japan runs a Magic shop and conducts retreats and ceremonies. A Witch who runs herbal café holds ceremonies at her café, and several Witches rent a room and hold ceremonies. Around those leading figures, like-minded people are networking loosely.

Some people buy goods and tools for ceremony and altar at Magic shops as well as shops of Asian, African and Latin American goods[[10]](#footnote-10). As far as I know, physical shops relating to Witchcraft are Kuroneko Majutsu Ten (Black Cat Magic Shop) in Yamagata, Majyutsu Do (Magic Temple, inside computer cable store) in Tokyo, Enchanté (herbal café selling Magic tools) in Tokyo, Green Thumb (selling kitchen Witch dolls and herbs) in Yokohama, Crescent Mirror in Shiga and Guinqujack (Silver Peacock, inside a restaurant, named Witch’s Kitchen Cauldron) in Osaka. Online shopping is also an option. The owners sell mainly imported goods and hand-made goods.

I encountered two university circle/group. Both do not practice Witchcraft as faith.

One is Witch Circle of a university in Tokyo, founded in 2018. The members do not regard their practice as faith. Their main activities are making jam, studying tarot and rune and watching cinema. I joined their meeting of introducing their circle to first-year student (March 28th, 2019). About 20 people came and enjoyed cooking and talking. This circle seemed to give an opportunity for university students to communicate under the theme of Witch.

The other is Magic Research Group of a university in Kyoto, also founded in 2018. I talked with five members (May 31st, 2019). They went to a Magic shop, an ethnology museum, the Easter ceremony at Orthodox church to have an experience of ritual. The founder is a Christian and wants people to be interested in religion. He thought he could recompose the religious capital through Magic in order to make people more interested in religion, not just Christianity. Members tend to be interested in religion and occult.

Many of them set up altar at their home and do Sabbath at home alone. Although the main reason is the difficulty to find coven because of the small number, some people are worried about doing ritual with somebody else. One Witch said “I don’t want to show my privacy to others” and another Witch said “I am afraid of the relation among coven.”

Most of them do not tell their practice to their parents because they think their parents do not understand what they are doing. One woman said that their husband who lived together have never asked. Another woman said, although her husband probably knew, she did not tell him because she has been losing the chance to explain. Even if they told their practice to their partners and children, their family were often not interested in their practice and said “Do if you want to” or “I don’t mind, if you don’t bother me.” It seems Witchcraft as faith is considered to be individual choice.

Even though open ritual is not common, some Witches organize Sabbath as open event. In many cases, the organizer rents a room, therefore the number of participants is limited and it usually costs 1000 to 10000 yen (about 10 to 100 US dollars) and needs to book in advance. In Japan, it is normal that people go to shrine or temple only for prayer, cleansing and conducting rites of passage. Especially in cities, they book or plan in advance and pay 5000 to 10000 yen (about 50 to 100 US dollars) to the priest on the spot. I think this custom is one reason why the open ritual system of advance booking and payment of expensive charge is easily accepted.

Although people who call themselves Witch and people who conduct Sabbath are thought to be weird or big fans of fantasy, it hardly happens those people are regarded as evil or servants of devil because Japan is not a Christian country. However, general public are cautious about the people who are enthusiastic in new religious practice because they are afraid to be asked to join, to donate huge amount of money and to be brainwashed.

**The reason why they are involved in Witchcraft**

Then why are they attracted to Witchcraft or how do they think of Witchcraft? The following is based on my interview with 24 Japanese who call themselves Witch (19), called themselves Witch (2) or are preparing to be Witch (3) as faith.

Four people were attracted by Witchcraft because of resistance. Although several people mentioned feminism and Witchcraft, only one person clearly said that was why she was attracted. According to a female Witch whose husband is from North America, comparing to North America, female spirituality is still respected in Japan, for example celebrating one’s first menstrual period. That might be a reason why feminist Witchcraft has not become popular in Japan. Three others said practicing Witchcraft is a resistance to her parents, handicraft culture and common sense.

Paganism in Western society is often counter to male-oriented society, Christianity and Judaism, or nationalism. However, Witchcraft in Japan is hardly making any influence on social activism. I think it is because political demonstrations are not common among young people and the older generation have a bitter memory of the Aum Shinrikyou incidents.

Few people regard Witchcraft as religion. Only one person clearly said “If Witchcraft is not a religion, I don’t think I practice it.” Her family belonged to a radical Buddhist group until she became 20. She was looking for an alternative to that new religion she was brought up with. She and her student find Witchcraft is attractive because of its DIY style.

Five people consider what they do is what Witch is rather they are attracted by Witchcraft. For example, Witchcraft is a daily practice, a daily life, a moral or guideline to use fortune telling, and a way of proper life physically, deepening oneself and connecting to the world. The last one said “When I am travelling, my spirits support me and make me think I am a Witch. So I feel I exist between human and spirit.”

Three people think Witch represents their ideal lifestyle. One said the lifestyle of Witch who he knew was cool. Another said “I conduct ritual because it is fun. I want to spread something fun! I want to show others how life is fun!” The other said “The way of Witch and the world of Witch is a way of living to accept everything and take all the responsibilities. Many people cannot do this, so I want to advise them.”

Five people, four of whom are herbalists, recognize Witchcraft as healing rather they are attracted by Witchcraft. One of the five also considers nature worship and similarity with mediumship which is her family tradition.

Eight people find inner change of themselves. Four consider Witchcraft gives them self-esteem. Two people find spells work well, and two people find the positive influence on one’s own work.

Three people find the similarity with their situation and interest in Witches. Two of them sympathize for “Witches” in Witch hunt time. One of them were bullied at school. The last one, who do traditional dance, is attracted by the connection with Japanese culture.

Four people stopped to call themselves Witch. Three of them had no practical change but stopped to use the name because of avoiding to regard as New Age Witch, avoiding the issue of “real Witch” conflict and thinking calling herself Witch leads her to the side of human and losing the connection with nature. However, one was originally interested in animism, therefore she gradually did not feel right to call foreign divinities and became interested in Buddhism.

**Do they use Japanese culture or materials for their practice or not?**

In this section, I use the data from people who call themselves Witch or are interested in Magic and other Paganism. Many Japanese Witches whom I interviewed with have a positive feeling about Shinto, as well as Buddhism and do not feel a barrier to visit shrines and temples.

On the contrary, not everybody takes in Japanese tradition. Some people are attracted to European culture because it is different from Japanese one. Others think Witchcraft is something from the West. One Witch said “If we understand Witchcraft in the context of Japan, I suppose we are forced to interpret some of its part in that context.”

However, most of them use Japanese traditions, some of them do not even feel conflicted to practice a faith from the West because they think Witchcraft (*majo-jutsu*) is not only limited in the West, but more universal phenomenon. They think people like Witch are called differently but exist all over the world, including Japan.

When I asked whether they took in Japanese culture, “I conduct ceremony in Japanese, not in English” was a common answer. This means holding ceremony in Japanese is a kind of localization for them.

I often asked them, “What kind of calendar are you using for ceremony?” Most of my informants follow the Celtic calendar for seasonal ceremony or Sabbath. Many said it was easy to find the similar celebrations in Japanese traditional calendar which was divided into 24 seasons. Equinoxes, Solstices and the first day of spring (4th February) are well recognized in Japan, therefore more important days for them. Both Equinox days are national holidays and the period of thinking ancestors. Additionally, ancestors are coming back to our home on 13th to 15th August. Therefore, some Japanese Witches feel strange to welcome ancestors in Samhain season (31st October).

It is common to use local plants and food, instead of using European or American ones. For example, one Witch offers rice, a main carbohydrate in Japan and common offering in Shinto and Buddhism, and *sake*, alcohol which is commonly used as offering for Shinto altar and ceremony. Some use Japanese products because they live in Japan, but others use them because it is not easy to get plants from abroad. For example, one Witch made a broom, but she used cytisus which was easy to get in Japan, instead of gorse which is often used for broom in Europe. Both belong to Fabaceae family, but gorse is prohibited to import because it endangers local plants.

One man said when he did ceremony with others, based on a translated book, they deleted kiss because Japanese people usually do not kiss among friends.

I introduce two groups which take in Japanese “traditional” culture to their worldview. One Western man founded a Witchcraft group, Mikage, taking in Eastern tradition and Japanese philosophy. The Jomonian modern Witchcraft group, Uphyca, is a small group of solo female Witches, founded by Japanese woman in 2013. They try to revive Japanese pre-historic culture as invented tradition, referring the cultures of Japan’s indigenous peoples.

Jomon is a name of prehistoric era between 14,000-300 BCE in Japan. The origin of Jomon people are still unknown, probably from Pacific or Southeast Asia. Around 10th century BCE, Yayoi people came from China and Korea and mixed with Jomon people. Some Jomon people are said to have moved to the edge of Japan, so the indigenous people in Hokkaido (Ainu), and Okinawa are the descendants of Jomon people. In fact, their genomes are similar.

Uphyca Witches study Jomon culture, Ainu culture and Okinawa culture through books and fieldwork and create their own worldview. As their Witchcraft is becoming more different and different from the Western Witchcraft year by year, they are sometimes not considered as Witchcraft from other Witches[[11]](#footnote-11).

Because nature worship and polytheism are common in Shinto, some people feel ease to practice Witchcraft. I found a Shinto altar and Shinto paper amulets as well as Pagan altar at homes of two Witches. However, I only met one Witch who worshipped Japanese god and goddess because s/he lives in Japan. The person is not from Japan. Only four Witches worship Japanese divinities.

In fact, when I asked what they think of god, goddess and spirit and if they work with specific one, only nine of 43 mentioned specific name. Four of 43 said they could not think or believe the presence of divinity. Some people felt hard to imagine divinity in human shape, and others could not imagine divinity with names. Several divinities, Buddhas and nature are worshipped at shrines and temples in Japan, but people usually do not care who or what are worshipped there. I think Japanese Witch hardly mention the name of specific divinity because people are usually unconscious about the concept of divinity, and their image of divinity is different from the one in Christian countries. I would like to discuss about this matter in another time.

**Conclusion**

I explain the reason why Witches in Japan are involved in Witchcraft and how they use Japanese tradition in previous chapters. Here I discuss the position of Witchcraft in Japan in the international Pagan scene.

People do Witchcraft not only because of external factors, such as resistance and alternative religion, but also because of internal factors, such as overlapping them with Witches in history and finding Witch as an ideal figure for people without self-confidence. About taking in Japanese culture and materials, more people accept. Among the people who accepted, some use Japanese material because it is difficult to get the same materials which Western Witches use, and the other use Japanese culture to create new tradition. Although I met people who were not interested in Japanese traditional religion, I have not met people who rejected it yet. It is one of the features of Japanese Witches that they do not resist the traditional religion completely.

The other feature, comparing to the West, is the lack of Christian influence. Witches themselves and people surrounding Witches hardly connect the Witchcraft with Christianity, therefore there is no image of evil for Witch. On the contrary, even though they have no interest in anime and manga.

If we regard Japan as a contact zone where Western Witchcraft and Japanese tradition meet, various images of Witch are produced there without the Christian context and a localized Witchcraft as faith has been produced because ordinary people are familiar with “good Witch” and “scary Witch” through anime and children’s literature, people who practice Witchcraft are forced to be aware of “Witch” in anime and children’s literature.

Before I finish this article, I would like to write about the word *majo*. The English word “Witch” arrived in Japan through literature and was translated as *majo*. The image of *majo* has been spread through pop culture. Witchcraft as faith which came to Japan after the image of *majo* became popular was also translated *majo*. It was practiced to use or avoid Japanese tradition. *Majo* without religious practice, often connecting with divination and herbal therapy, is also considered as a style of *majo*.

When we examine the situation of Western Witches in non-English speaking countries, it is important to know how the word of Western Witch is translated and analyzed. This article is an overview of Japanese Witches. I would like to continue my study of them.

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1. Although Paganism is sometimes considered as a generic term encompassing all the religions and faiths except Judaism, Christianity and Islam, in this article, Paganism is used means Western Neopaganism. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In this article, Witchcraft usually means Western Neopagan Witchcraft. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Celtic culture, especially music, is popular in Japan, but Druidry is hardly known in general. I have met only one person who claims to be Druid. A man who designs Baroque style costumes holds events in which participants enjoy wearing Baroque style dress. Although LARP (live action role-playing game) is not widely known, there are groups of people who enjoy LARP. They usually wear Medieval European clothing. A man who was influenced by re-enactors in Sweden started the Japan Viking Association and holds “Viking Camps” so that people can experience of Viking culture. A woman who has an MA in history, holds talks, workshops and events revolve around ancient Greek gods and goddesses. However, these are not considered as being in the same category as Witchcraft. In my interview with the man from the Viking Association and the woman who holds ancient Greek events, both were surprised with my question whether they thought of their activities as faiths. They denied this attribution and said their activities were cultural, not religious. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Chinese characters in Japan are usually pronounced differently from the ones in China and often have several pronunciations. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The team won 22 consecutive games in Europe in 1961. When they defeated Soviet Union, media in Soviet Union gave them the nickname of the Oriental Witches (Arata 2013: 156). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Sally the Witch* (The manga was published from 1966 to 1967. The original anime ran from 1966 to 1968) and *the Secrets of Akko-chan* (The manga was published from 1962 to 1965. The original anime ran from 1969 to 1970) were the first two of these manga and anime. Both were influenced by the great hit of American drama, *Bewitched* which ran in 1966. *Kiki’s Delivery* (1989) is probably the most famous anime movie of Witch. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Beautiful women who look much younger than their real age are called “Beauty Witch.” This name derives from a blog title of a fashion magazine which started in 2008. The blog was about how to maintain the beauty for women in their 40s. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. The founder chose the word, Wicca, for his circle, as new Witchcraft, therefore Oriental Wicca is not related to the teaching from Gerald Gardner (1884–1964), the founder of Wicca. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I even met a Witch who ran a bakery named Witch’s Coppe Bread. Coppe bread is a popular bread in Japan. It shapes like hot dog bun but tastes like white bread. I find some cosplayers who call themselves Witch on the Internet. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The crystal shops are far more than Magic shops. We often find them at big shopping malls. It is probably because crystals have been used as rosary at Buddhism ceremony and as *magatama* (comma-shaped bead) for protection. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Recently Uphyca prefers to use the word *miko*, instead of *majo*. They are currently researching culture of circum-Pacific volcanic belt. Fire and volcano are the important aspects for them because Japan is volcano islands. Their sacred place, Nishi-no-shima island, was enlarged by eruption soon after its foundation. Around 30 people are members, 10 are practicing and only 5 are active in 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)