**Marie Kondo and Kuyō: Is throwing things away really a religious experience?**

The article “Marie Kondo and Kuyō: Is throwing things away really a religious experience?” highlights a popular idea and method for decluttering ones life and reducing materialism, something related to Shinto beliefs, as well as calling into question the simple designation of popular phenomena as something motivated entirely by any one religion (or religion in general, for that matter).

The article starts off by describing the “KonMari” method, initially thought up by Marie Kondo in a book published back in 2011. This method centers around the idea of considering each of one’s possessions and asking a question many have probably heard before: “Does it spark joy?” If the answer is no, then you are encouraged to let that possession go and move on. It is meant as a way to declutter your environment and reignite joy and energy in your daily life. Despite Marie Kondo not explicitly stating that there are any direct ties to Shinto, the large amount of media attention towards the KonMari method has questioned the existence of such ties (as well as spawning a multitude of podcasts and other global media surrounding the method). In particular, from our readings, we know that one of the core components of Shinto belief is the connection to the presence of spirits, or “kami”, in the world around us. The idea is that the disposal of possessions that don’t spark joy leads to better harmony between yourself and the kami. Further, before fully parting ways with any possessions that don’t spark joy, they are meant to be thanked for the service they provided as a way to avoid a feeling named *mottainai,* which is a feeling of guilt or shame for not using an item to its full use has been exhausted, as well as retain peace between the kami residing in those objects. This idea of going further than simply disposing of items can also be related to the Shinto and Buddhist funerary ritual called Kuyō, which is meant to ease the separation of the dead (whether it’s objects or people) from the living.

However, with these questions there have also been others raised about whether there really is a tie to any specific religion, and whether one should made at all. Marie Kondo herself has claimed that Shinto doesn’t influence her as much as many people may think. Additionally, many of the aforementioned viewpoints come from the eye of the Western world, which, as the article describes, often associate Asian popular cultural phenomena with being motivated by “mystical forces or irrational beliefs.” Further, one can consider a similar method being presented in the Western world regarding something like intermittent fasting. Something like this could be easily connected to Christianity, while not necessarily being derived from it. In other words, deriving religious connections from popular phenomena and making conclusions based upon those, rather than the phenomena themselves, is something one should be careful about. It also provides an interesting commentary on how the Western world views other religions, particularly Asian ones.

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