

This can be a year when we deeply appreciate one another and the many diverse life forms on this beautiful green-blue planet, the sacred Earth.

Amaterasu Emerges—Here Comes the Sun

January 2, 2017

by [Liz Fisher](#)

320 Shares

New Year is the time when we make resolutions and visualize what we want to accomplish during the upcoming twelve months. The days are now getting longer, bringing more sunlight. Nature has a way of turning its wheel and refreshing our sense of future possibilities. This year, 2017, however, carries an underlying feeling of foreboding. The changes in the power structure of the government in the United States have made many of us feel apprehensive.

Amaterasu-ōmikami – Sun Goddess

Reviewing a cross-cultural drama, the story of Amaterasu, the Goddess of the Sun in Shinto, can provide insights about how to proceed. It speaks to this current occasion in our collective and personal lives when we are transitioning to unknown and potentially disruptive circumstances. It is also about when to withdraw and when to emerge.



Japanese Sun Goddess Amaterasu and Shinto deities. This work is in the public domain.



Torii Arch photo by Dan Smith (Rdsmith4) via Wikimedia Commons (2011).

Shinto, centered in Japan, is one of the most prominent Earth-centered spiritual perspectives in the world. Kami are the Spirits or phenomena that are venerated in the religion of Shinto. They can be elements of the landscape, forces of Nature, as well as beings and the qualities that these beings express. Amaterasu is a major kami. This red Torii arch is a gateway that signals the transition from the profane to the sacred and is a prolific symbol within Shinto.

Amaterasu's Story

The story is complex and there are several versions with various levels of detail. Here are the highlights. Amaterasu is the Sun who brings all life to the Earth. In Her studio, many women weave the fabric of the natural world. Her brother, who is prone to jealousy and cruelty, is abusive to these women. Amaterasu becomes angry and withdraws into the Cave of Heaven, pulling the great door behind Her, sealing off the cave. When She withdraws she takes with her the warmth and light that has brought the goodness of life to the Earth. No longer was there day and night. No longer does the golden light help the rice to grow. Life is impossible. So, many Shinto goddesses and gods put their heads together and decide they will do a wild dance in front of the cave to try to draw Amaterasu out.



Japanese Sun Goddess Amaterasu and Shinto deities. This work is in the public domain

The Goddess, still very curious, peeps out from behind the cave stone and sees Her reflection in the mirror that is hanging on the Sakaki tree in front of the cave. So intense is the brilliant image, so beautiful is Her reflection upon the polished bronze surface, that She steps further out to take a closer look. Those watching quickly close the door to the cave that had been Her home of anger.

Unbeknown to Amaterasu, then, her own brilliance pulled her back into the world. Many of us have receded from society because of the wounding we have received. But, rather than remaining in our isolated places, let's bring each other out of our separated "caves" to share our gifts, our enthusiasm, and our love of diversity.

The Amaterasu story suggests that once the Sun is in the world again, shifting dynamics are possible. This also reminds me of a Beatles song *Here Comes the Sun* recorded on the album *Abby Road* in 1969. Those were also politically challenging times. Click on this link to enjoy a short video that illustrates this Beatles favorite.

[Here Comes the Sun Video](#)



Charlie Norris's Gazebo – photo courtesy of Charlie and Jeanne Norris, 2016.

The song brings to mind a special holiday card I received this year which features the Sun shining through a gazebo built by Charlie Norris, a friend from my youth. His partner Jeanne is a wonderful artist and a great friend as well. Since the early 1970s we have kept in touch even though we live on opposite ends of the country. We chose different lifestyles but stayed committed to common values.

Gazebos

I was thrilled because gazebos have always had special significance for me. A gazebo is defined as a shelter or covered area which can be a private resting place as well as a bandstand. Both uses can be powerful tools for keeping hope alive.

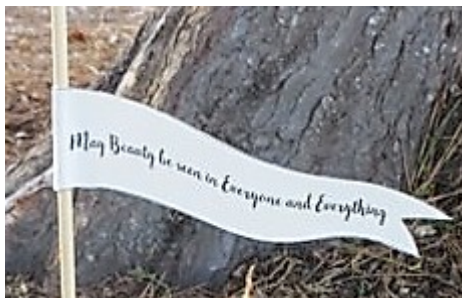
By coincidence, in the City of Pacific Grove in California where I live there is a place called Jewell Park in the center of town which is the home of a stand of trees and its own gazebo. I decided to make a pilgrimage to this park in honor of the return of the Sun, and my transcontinental connection with my friends.



Pacific Grove California, Centennial Bandstand Gazebo and Faery House photos by Bob Fisher.

On my way to the gazebo, I came across another form of shelter: small sculptures like this one at the base of each of the trees which stand in a circle behind the gazebo. No human artist was identified. Carefully crafted from natural materials, each had an opening into an inner chamber, if you were small enough to fit through. Each was accompanied by a flag: “May Beauty be seen in Everyone and Everything.”

May Beauty be seen in Everyone and Everything



Because I believe in the existence of Faery beings, this saying was especially meaningful.

I took this flag as a sign, literally. Let’s make 2017 a year we set our own agendas and practice our values. This can be a year when we deeply appreciate one another and the many diverse life forms on this

beautiful green-blue planet, the sacred Earth. Let’s keep the gazebo and the fairy houses both in mind. Like Amaterasu let us bring our light into the world, proclaiming our truths even more loudly.



Art credits:

Japanese Sun Goddess Amaterasu and Shinto deities. This work is in the public domain.

Tori Arch photo by Dan Smith (Rdsmith4) via Wikimedia Commons (2011).

Charlie Norris’s Gazebo – photo courtesy of Charlie and Jeanne Norris, 2016.

Pacific Grove California, Centennial Bandstand Gazebo and Faery House photos by Bob Fisher.

Additional related material:

Rise Up & Call Her Name: A Woman-honoring Journey into Global Earth-based Spiritualities by Elizabeth Fisher (author of this column) contains a session that explores in depth the myth of Amaterasu, including exercises to build self-appreciation.