



The influence of Buddhism and Shintoism on the concept of Ikigai is profound and pervasive. These two spiritual pillars of Japan have shaped the way the Japanese apprehend the meaning of life, the relationship to self, to others and to the environment.

Buddhism, particularly Zen Buddhism, emphasizes the practice of meditation, the quest for enlightenment and detachment from the illusions of the material world. These principles strongly resonate with the pursuit of meaning and personal fulfillment at the heart of Ikigai. Zen meditation, with its focus on the present moment and acceptance of reality as it is, encourages an attitude of presence and mindfulness that is essential for discovering and living one's Ikigai.

The Buddhist concept of karma, which underscores the importance of actions and their consequences, also finds an echo in Ikigai. The notion of Ikigai invites us to engage in activities that have a positive impact on ourselves and the world, to cultivate benevolent relationships and to contribute to collective well-being. This vision of karma as an ethical responsibility and an opportunity for personal growth is at the core of Ikigai philosophy.

Shintoism, an animist religion native to Japan, believes that everything, living or inanimate, has a spirit, a kami. This belief invites us to cultivate a deep respect and intimate connection with the world around us. From the Shintoist perspective, every activity, even the humblest, can be an expression of our Ikigai if it is carried out with sincerity, commitment, and in harmony with our environment.

Shinto rituals, such as water purification (misogi) or the celebration of nature's cycles, encourage an attitude of gratitude, wonder, and connection with the forces beyond us. This spiritual posture nourishes the pursuit of meaning and fulfillment at the heart of Ikigai.

The combined influence of Buddhism and Shintoism on Ikigai is manifested in the valorization of harmony, balance and the search for meaning. These two spiritual traditions invite us to cultivate a deep and authentic relationship with ourselves, others and the world around us. They encourage us to find a balance between action and contemplation, between engagement in the world and inner detachment.

A striking example of the influence of Buddhism and Shintoism on Ikigai is the life and work of Matsuo Bashō, the most famous Japanese haiku poet. Bashō was a Zen monk who spent much of his life traveling through Japan, contemplating nature and seeking enlightenment through the practice of poetry. His haikus, imbued with simplicity, ephemeral beauty and spiritual depth, are a perfect expression of his Ikigai. They bear witness to a life dedicated to the quest for meaning, harmony with nature and celebration of the present moment.

Another example is Japanese craftsmen, like master potters or swordsmiths, who consider their craft as a spiritual path, an expression of their Ikigai. Their total commitment to their art, their quest for perfection and their respect for natural materials and processes reflect the influence of Buddhism and Shintoism. Their work becomes a form of meditation in action, a way to connect to something greater than themselves and to find profound meaning in the creative act.

Thus, Buddhism and Shintoism have permeated the Japanese concept of Ikigai, inviting us to cultivate a life in harmony with oneself, others and the world, to find meaning in daily activities and to awaken to the beauty and depth of every moment. This spiritual influence gives Ikigai a transcendent and universal dimension, which goes beyond mere personal development to embrace an existential quest and a connection with the sacred.

Key takeaways:

1. Buddhism and Shintoism have deeply influenced the concept of Ikigai in Japan, shaping the way the Japanese apprehend the meaning of life, the relationship to self, others and the environment.
2. Zen Buddhism emphasizes meditation, the quest for enlightenment and detachment, encouraging an attitude of presence and mindfulness, essential for discovering and living one's Ikigai.
3. The Buddhist concept of karma finds its echo in Ikigai, inviting us to engage in activities that have a positive impact on ourselves and the world, thereby cultivating benevolent relationships and contributing to collective well-being.
4. Shintoism believes that everything has a spirit (kami), inviting us to cultivate a deep respect and intimate connection with the surrounding world. Every activity can be an

expression of Ikigai if carried out with sincerity, commitment, and harmony.

5. The combined influence of Buddhism and Shintoism on Ikigai is manifested in the valorization of harmony, balance and the search for meaning, encouraging a deep and authentic relationship with oneself, others and the world.

6. Striking examples of this influence are the life and work of poet Matsuo Bashō, and the commitment of Japanese craftsmen to their craft as a spiritual path and an expression of their Ikigai.

7. Buddhism and Shintoism give Ikigai a transcendent and universal dimension, inviting us to cultivate a life in harmony, to find meaning in everyday activities and to awaken to the beauty and depth of every moment.