Inter-Changeable Religions: A Style of Japanese Religious Pluralism in Hirado Island Villages, Northwestern Kyushu

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The Japanese till this day have never had the concept of God; and they never will.
Shūsaku Endō, *Silence*[1]

Introduction

The novel titled *Silence* (*Chinmoku* 沈黙), written in 1966 by Shūsaku Endō,[2] a Japanese Christian author,[3] portrayed religious agonies for a Jesuit priest and the Japanese "Hidden Christians" (*kakure kirishitan* 隠れキリシタン) in the early modern period. A dialogue in this novel between this priest, upon his arrest, and a samurai magistrate referred to the port and castle town of Hirado 平戸, where Francis Xavier established his Christian mission in 1550.[4]

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1 Endō, *Silence*, p. 202.
2 Ibid.
3 Williams, "Crossing," p. 132.
4 Endō, *Silence*, pp. 162–66.

The forms of Hidden Christianity practiced on Hirado Island and neighboring Ikitsuki 生月 Island together constitute one of two main branches of the tradition in present-day Nagasaki Prefecture.[5] Furuno Kiyoto has pointed out that Hidden Christianity presents an interesting case of "syncretism" (*konseikyō* 混成教) in the history of world religions.[6] Namely, it has merged ritual content and style containing Shinto practices, Buddhism, and indigenous folk elements without affiliation to any Christian church, or without relying on professional priests, since as early as the first decades of the seventeenth century.[7] Miyazaki Kentarō has demonstrated that this syncretized religion should be regarded as typical "Japanese folk religion" (*minzoku shūkyō* 民俗宗教).[8] Moreover, the religious sites and rituals of various saints originating from Catholic martyrs and those for multiple gods of Shinto and Buddhism, along with folk elements, have coexisted within village spaces in which people have believed simultaneously

5 Nakazono, *Kakure kirishitan*, pp. 53–55. Another branch has been expanded mainly in the Sotome 外海 region and the Gotō 五島 islands.
6 Furuno, *Kakure kirishitan*, p. 241.
7 Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*; Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan"; Miyazaki, *Jitsuzō*, pp. 54–201; Harrington, *Japan's Hidden Christians*, pp. 35–95.
8 Miyazaki, *Jitsuzō*, p. 9.

in both this transformed Hidden Christianity and the predominant traditional combination of Shinto and Buddhism.[9] This article focuses on religious pluralism in Japanese folk religion, which is also underpinned by syncretism, based on examples of villages on Hirado Island, where a tradition of Hidden Christianity survived up to the late twentieth century.

As many scholars of religion have observed, Japanese religiosity is an interwoven mixture of Shinto and Buddhism as the basic framework, with other elements drawn from Confucianism, Daoism, and folk religion.[10] Each of these "five major strands"[11] has been historically layered, transformed, and syncretized in complicated political, social, and economic contexts.[12] In particular, various phenomena later called the "syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism" (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合 or, in present scholarship, *shinbutsu yūgō* 神仏融合) arose in the eighth century, but more fully in the late tenth century, and Buddhism was placed in a highly predominant position over Shinto.[13] However, the "separation of kami and Buddhas" (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離) and State Shinto (Kokka Shintō 国家神道) were politically established by the Meiji government in the nineteenth century.[14] Shinto was closely associated with the national regime, while other religions such as Buddhism and folk religions (including Shugendō 修験道, mountain asceticism or spiritual training in the mountains) were fiercely reorganized.[15] This State Shinto itself was finally abolished after the country's defeat in World War II.

In such a political and social context, Japanese folk religion as a strand has been followed by ordinary people,[16] most of whom lived in rural communities up to the 1950s and some of whom still sustain various folk religions in rural areas. This folk religion is situated between institutionalized religions (e.g., Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity) and indigenous beliefs, including naturism and spirit worship.[17] Moreover, Japanese folk religion itself has been historically affected by and syncretized with various religious strands.[18] Miyazaki, as a researcher of Hidden Christians, proposes that the structure of Japanese folk religion maintains ancestor worship as the basic faith, grounded in naturism and belief in the soul, but also adopts Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity (cases of Hidden Christians), and New Religions as institutionalized religions.[19] As a result, we have routinely witnessed a sort of "religious pluralism," in which various different religions (each of which has been historically syncretized) coexist in one Japanese family (household) and even within a single individual.[20] Such coexistence, of course, is also observed in the village community.

This Japanese religious sense of pluralism, including polytheism, tolerance of the coexistence and merging of multiple religions, and belief in "this-worldly benefits" (*genze riyaku* 現世利益) from various gods and ancestors' souls, has been enthusiastically studied by Japanese themselves in such disciplines as religious studies,[21] folklore studies,[22] social psychology,[23] and theology.[24] However, religious studies scholars have recently contended that religious pluralism in Japan clearly differs from the original European concept described by John Hick, who argued that there is not

9 Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, pp. 189–91, 199; Nagasaki-ken Kyōiku Iinkai, *Nagasaki-ken*, pp. 81–206; Hirado-shi Ikitsuki-chō Hakubutsukan, *Ikitsuki-shima*, pp. 8–17; Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 61–64.

10 Earhart, *Japanese Religion*, pp. 2–3; Yusa, *Japanese Religions*, p. 16. Contemporary Japanese religions further include Christianity and New Religions 新宗教 (new religious movements, such as Tenrikyō 天理教 and Konkōkyō 金光教) as major strands in addition to the five strands. See Hori, *Japanese Religion*, p. 11; Earhart, *Japanese Religion*, pp. 2, 187.

11 Ibid., pp. 2–3.

12 Hori, "Sho shūkyō," pp. 309–12; Thal, *Rearranging*, pp. 1–10, 314–19.

13 Yoshie, *Shinbutsu*, pp. 11–27; Yoshida, "Kodai," p. 455; Uejima, "Chūsei," pp. 630–31.

14 Toki, "Jingi," pp. 245–47; Hardacre, *Shinto*, pp. 368–71. These concepts of "syncretism" and "separation" have been criticized, especially in English scholarly literature, in that they assume preexisting and original "pure" religious traditions. See for example Faure, *Gods of Medieval Japan*, pp. 2–4; Hardacre, *Shinto*, pp. 143–44. This article, however, deals with each religion (e.g., Shinto and Buddhism) expediently as "relatively independent," such that each can merge and separate, and from a retrospective perspective that presupposes that each living priest is affiliated with contemporary "individual" religions.

15 Yasumaru, *Kamigami*, pp. 119–79.

16 Hori, *Japanese Religion*, p. 137; Sakurai, "Minkan shinkō," p. 700. As does Sakurai, some Japanese scholars have referred to such folk religions as *minkan shinkō* 民間信仰.

17 Araki, "Sōron," p. 596; Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, pp. 186–87.

18 Hori, *Japanese Religion*, p. 121; Sakurai, "Minkan shinkō"; Miyake, *Mandala*, p. 25. Shugendō is typical of such syncretized folk religions. See Earhart, "Unified Interpretation," p. 215.

19 Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, pp. 184–94.

20 Hori, *Folk Religion*, pp. 10–13.

21 Hori, *Minkan shinkō shi*, pp. 13–18; Nieda, "Shūkyō ishiki"; Miyake, *Nihon shūkyō*, pp. 129–48; Yamaori, "Gendai," pp. 336–40.

22 Wakamori, *Kami to hotoke*; Sakurai, *Minkan shinkō no kenkyū*, pp. 3–141; Nakazono, *Kakure kirishitan*, pp. 437–44.

23 Kaneko, *Shūkyōsei*, pp. 189–274.

24 Ueda, *Nihonjin*, pp. 57–83.

merely one way but a variety of ways of salvation or liberation within the contexts of all the great religious traditions.[25] Horo Atsuhiko notes that, historically, Japanese pluralistic religions have merely coexisted and merged with one another, while each religion has not clearly recognized the differences between itself and other religions to proactively determine how it relates to the others.[26] Moreover, Nishitani Kōsuke argues that such different religions have, in fact, been integrated by Shintoism as henotheism, which reached its climax as State Shintoism during the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century.[27] He further underscores that the concept of religious pluralism should not be arbitrarily used to support inveterate Japanese irreligiosity—the crusted and inert syncretism of sundry religions.[28] However, these perspectives on religious studies are based principally on the viewpoint of religious bodies and national rulers as "makers of religion," not that of ordinary people as "users of religion" who receive and believe in individual religions.[29] This article, therefore, focuses on such ordinary people, who can also be regarded as "makers of folk religion," in addition to non-managerial priests as "mediators of religion."[30]

On the other hand, Western religious scholars, for example William Woodard and Jan Swyngedouw, have recognized such Japanese religiosity (or non-religiosity and secularity) as a pluralism that is not easily understood from Western viewpoints based on Christianity.[31] Moreover, this situation of multiple religions, most of which originated in foreign countries, has been recognized in English-language scholarship or by Western persons themselves not as a mere coexistence but as one unified faith or one entity[32]—"unity and diversity" or "unity in diversity and diversity in unity."[33] In addition, it has been pointed out that these multiple religions adapt to the role differentiation and functional specialization within Japanese religion, or a kind of division of labor,[34] in which different religions or gods satisfy a single person's various specific demands. Such demands for this-worldly benefits are not simply material concerns but also mental ones that underpin people's search for peace of mind and salvation.[35] Miyazaki points out that the Japanese people's broad-minded acceptance of the new appearance of strange gods, without renouncing their existing religions or causing any conflict between new and old beliefs, lies at the base of such pluralism.[36]

Certainly, these previous studies by Western scholars have underscored the unity and differentiation of roles of the multiple religions in Japan. Few scholars, however, including the abovementioned Japanese researchers, have systematically and empirically demonstrated how on a practical level such different religions function in their allotted roles and are unified in people's daily lives. Nor have they sufficiently shown why Japanese people have maintained such a broad-minded attitude to different religious elements and accepted the coexistence and merging of multiple religions within themselves in their daily lives. Among such scholars, Byron Earhart has presented the most systematic and detailed structure of Japanese religious pluralism in four dimensions (society, space, time, and life), as well as integrated explanatory schemes to express a unified worldview, or an arrangement of meanings assigned to each entity in a lived space by residents.[37] However, his concise description is mostly restricted to Shinto and Buddhism, especially concerning the dimension of space where ordinary people experience daily life.

In this way, the fundamental questions of this study are interrelated: How are such different religious elements situated to assume their own roles in the division of labor under the religious unity of Japanese rural societies? How are various religions practically unified to a structured worldview in a folk religion within society? Why are Japanese people tolerant of the coexistence and merging of different religions in their lives? To answer these three questions, this article focuses on Hirado Island as a "treasury of religions" or a "living

25 Hick, *Religious Pluralism*, p. 34.
26 Horo, "Gendai no yōsei," pp. 14–16.
27 Nishitani, "Shūkyō tagenshugi," pp. 67–68.
28 Ibid., pp. 57–58.
29 Umesao, *Nihonjin*, pp. 105–7.
30 This approach is in accord with Sakurai's opinion that emphasizes actual religions for ordinary Japanese people rather than religious bodies, as well as Miyake's perspective that focuses on ordinary people and the priests of folk religions for comprehensively understanding Japanese religion. See Sakurai, *Shinbutsu*, p. 40; Miyake, *Shintō*, p. i.
31 Woodard, "Religious World"; Swyngedouw, "Secularization," pp. 293–95.
32 Woodard, "Religious World," p. 82; Hori, *Folk Religion*, p. 10.
33 Earhart, *Japanese Religion*, p. 4; Swyngedouw, "Secularization," p. 294.
34 Ibid., pp. 297, 300; Swanson, "Japanese Religiosity," p. 4; Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, p. 184.
35 Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*, pp. 14–17.
36 Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, p. 184.
37 Earhart, *Nihon shūkyō*, pp. 126–72, 238–39.

Figure 1. Map showing case-study villages examined in detail in the article (black dots), other villages mentioned (white dots), and two local mountains as triangles. Created by author.

museum of religions"[38] that is suitable for examining the coexistence of multiple religions (figure 1). In addition, priests of several strands of "Buddhism" strongly based on folk religions still survive on the island, garnering the attention of Japanese folklore scholars.[39] Although this island's numerous rituals have been reduced or reorganized generally following Japan's rapid economic growth period (1955–1973), this study was able to observe an abundance of rituals that have managed to survive.

Methodologically, this analysis adopts a geographical or spatial perspective based on three significant points. First, it considers multiple spatial "scales" to accurately comprehend the religions. These scales are the entire Hirado Island, the villages as the basic community, and households (including individuals as household members) as the principal daily (re)production unit. The notion of "scale" as used here aids our understanding of the beliefs and practices in religious pluralism. Sec-

38 Hori, "Sho shūkyō," p. 309; Swanson, "Japanese Religiosity," p. 4.
39 Inokuchi, "jō"; "ge"; Sakurai, *Nihon no shama'nizumu*, pp. 193–206; Miyamoto, *Sato shugen*, pp. 156–79; Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, pp. 27–162.

ond, it extensively surveys different villages comparatively to find common features among different villages in a single region. Third, it intensively focuses on interiors of village and household spaces such as religious sites by adopting a spatial-structural approach that has been regarded in Japanese folklore studies as a useful method for grasping the totality of village people's daily lives.[40] It is not until we consider the concrete spaces for daily life that we can appropriately understand how the structure of Japanese religion is constituted. From such a geographical perspective, this article reveals the detailed conditions of the coexistence of different religions in several villages, including former Hidden Christian villages, and their residents' households on Hirado Island. It also focuses on individual priests (as ritual performers) and residents (as members of a household) as important actors in religious phenomena, while considering religious pluralism as the result of contact, such as negotiations, among these different actors.

First, this study describes typical examples of both priests and residents as actors to show how multiple religions, which have often merged with each other and today independently coexist, are embodied even within individuals. Next, it attempts to identify common basic demands met by each religion's role in villages and households based on comparisons. Finally, it reveals the religious competencies and negotiations found among priests on the island. The principal sources are interviews with priests of different religions and village residents, as well as observations of the landscapes and rituals. These sources are complemented by the results of previous research studies. The fieldwork was conducted mainly from August 2010 to March 2012.[41] The key questions in this procedure are the division of labor by multiple religions and their negotiations in each village and household, the unified structure commonly abstracted from case studies, and a logical explanation for the religious broad-mindedness of villagers on the island.

Priests Embodying Multiple Religions

In the Hirado Island villages, most residents can be classified into the following three categories: Shinto-Buddhists, former Hidden Christians, and Catholics.[42] Shinto-Buddhism in this sense is a typical style of Japanese folk religion, weaving together Shinto, Buddhism, and other religions including indigenous elements. The Hidden Christians, descendants of converts to Catholicism through missionary work by the Society of Jesus in the mid-sixteenth century, have simultaneously retained their Shinto-Buddhist devotions in addition to Hidden Christianity, whose Christian rituals were secretly conducted only within adherents' homes.[43] However, in most of the Hirado Hidden Christian villages, Hidden Christian rituals ceased during the twentieth century and only the Shinto-Buddhist beliefs survive at present.[44] The Catholics believe in only Christianity (except for a very rare case discussed later) and are descendants of converts. After the beginning of missionary activity by the Paris Foreign Mission Society in the mid-nineteenth century, ancestors of these Catholics converted from the native Hirado Shinto-Buddhism or Hidden Christians (namely, "returned" Catholic believers over several hundred years), most of whom migrated from outside of Hirado Island.[45] Most of the

40 Matsuzaki, "Sonraku," p. 1. Although the spatial structures of religious sites in Japanese villages have been studied by many scholars in such fields as cultural anthropology, religious studies, and geography, their principal interests are in the villagers' spatial recognition, including cosmology and spatial folk classifications for religious and subsistence activities, rather than the coexistence of multiple religions and priests. See Muratake, *Saishi kūkan*, pp. 80–114; Miyake, *Shūkyō minzokugaku*, pp. 324–33; Suzuki, *Saishi to kūkan*; Imazato, *Nōsan gyoson*.

41 In most cases, fieldwork was conducted with either Hagiwara Hirofumi, Matsuda Takaya, or Ueno Kenji of the Hirado City Board of Education at that time. Information on religious and social affairs in each village was obtained from interviews with one or a few male elders, each with experience as the head official of the self-governing organization in the villages. The dates of fieldwork, including interviews and observations, in each village and with priests, were as follows: Aburamizu on August 5 and 20, November 26 (2014); Kasuga on May 26 and 27, July 8 and 9, August 5 and 6, September 4, December 14 (2011); Takagoe on December 15 (2011), March 14 (2012); Koba on October 12 (2010), March 15 (2012); Ōshijiki on September 22, November 5, December 14 (2011), March 14 (2012); Neshiko on September 1 and 24, October 14 and 15 (2010), September 21 (2011), April 12 (2015); Hōki on August 31, September 22, October 11 (2010), January 11, November 3 (2011); Īra on March 15 (2012); Miwa Shinto priest on August 5 (2011); Myōkanji Buddhist priest on November 4 (2011); and Fukagawa *yanboshi* priest on November 4 (2011).

42 Imazato, "Territoriality," p. 53.

43 This situation is different from Ikitsuki Hidden Christians, who have conducted rituals not only within homes, but also outdoors. Nagasaki-ken Kyōiku Iinkai, *Nagasaki-ken*, pp. 109–206.

44 Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan," p. 204; Imazato, "Hirado-shima ni okeru kirishitan to katorikku," pp. 139–42.

45 Ibid., p. 157.

Hirado Hidden Christians, who accepted the sixteenth century's Christian missionary works of Francis Xavier, occupied a single village facing the mid-western coastline. In contrast, most Catholics, who have adhered to the nineteenth century's Christian missionary message of Bernard Petitjean, were dispersed to the mid-eastern and northern parts of the island, as well as often coexisting among Shinto-Buddhists within a single village.[46]

In the Shinto-Buddhist and former Hidden Christian villages, this study found five main folk categories of priests: *shinkan* 神官 in Shinto, *bonsan* 坊さん (in local dialect) in orthodox Buddhism, *yanboshi* ヤンボシ, *biwahiki* 琵琶弾き, and *hōnin* 法人.[47] Among them, *yanboshi*, written in standard Japanese as *yamabushi* 山伏 or *yamahōshi* 山法師, are male priests of Shugendō, most of whom officially belong to the Daigo branch (Daigo-ha 醍醐派) of the Buddhist Shingon school (Shingon-shū 真言宗) and live in the villages, not in the mountains.[48] Shugendō is a Japanese syncretic religion based on traditional belief in the mountains and influenced by Buddhism, Daoism, shamanism, and Shinto.[49] In addition, *biwahiki*, written as *biwahōshi* 琵琶法師 in standard Japanese, are male folk "prayers" who also play traditional Japanese lutes (*biwa*) and formally belong to the Gensei branch (Gensei-hōryū 玄清法流) of the Buddhist Tendai school (Tendai-shū 天台宗). Although the Hirado people refer to them in a friendly manner as *mekura-san* (literally, "blind person"), most current *biwahiki* priests are not visually impaired. These *yanboshi* and *biwahiki* can be categorized as minor Buddhists strongly rooted in folk religion. This study addresses only well-established major schools, sects, and branches of Buddhism as "Buddhism," excluding these minor Buddhist priests. The distinctions, however, between such categories as *yanboshi*, *biwahiki*, and *hōnin* are often blurred by scholars and sometimes even by residents.

Among these five categories, this section focuses on a *yanboshi* priest, Mr. W., as a practitioner of Shugendō, living in Fukagawa 深川 village[50] in the central part of the island, who clearly embodies a feature of Hirado Island's religious pluralism and syncretism.[51] Mr. W.'s grandfather was also a *yanboshi* and the founder of his small informal temple, which is apparently just a private house. Mr. W. began training for the priesthood at the age of twenty-two at Saikyōji 最教寺 Temple in Hirado.[52] He later trained at the well-known monastery of Daigoji 醍醐寺 Temple in Kyoto, which was the center of the Tōzan branch (Tōzan-ha 当山派) within Shugendō,[53] and studied for more than thirty-five years at Myōkanji 妙観寺 Temple on the island.[54] He also repeatedly stayed in a shrine at the top of Hirado Island's Yasuman-dake 安満岳,[55] a center of Shugendō mixed with Shinto and Buddhism since the medieval period. He trained in the mountain woods at night to acquire miraculous powers, smoking cigarettes in order to ward off evil spirits who interfered with his training. As part of his training, he underwent the long pilgrimage to eighty-eight Buddhist and Shinto shrines throughout Hirado Island (*Hirado hachijū-hakkasho meguri* 平戸八十八ヶ所巡り), which mirrors the famous Shikoku Buddhist pilgrimage related to Kūkai 空海 (known posthumously as Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師) but uniquely also includes Shinto shrines.

As a Fukagawa village resident, Mr. W. is a supporter of Fukumanji 福満寺 Temple of the Buddhist Chisan branch in Mukae-Himosashi 迎紐差 village[56] and worships at Susanoo Jinja 素盞嗚神社 (shrine), which enshrines the village Shinto tutelary deity of Fukagawa. On

46 Ibid., pp. 155–58.

47 *Hōnin* are female faith healers or shamans who attempt to cure illness through communication with supernatural entities. See Inokuchi, "ge," pp. 50–51; Sakurai, *Nihon no shama'nizumu*, pp. 202–3; Miyamoto, *Sato shugen*, p. 169; Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, pp. 35–42. *Hōnin* meet the demands of villagers at their homes, even making decisions on important ritual affairs of Hidden Christian beliefs in the Ikitsuki Island villages. See Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, pp. 56–58.

48 *Hōin* 法印, male Shugendō priests of Shijiki-san 志々伎山 in the southern part of the island, are broadly included in this category of *yanboshi*. See Miyata, "Bukkyō minzoku," p. 25.

49 Miyake, "Sōron," p. 448; Earhart, "Introduction," p. 3.

50 Although the official designation for all of these Hirado villages is *chō* 町 ("town"—in this case, Fukagawa-chō), this article prefers "village" (lower case) in recognition of their rural landscapes and traditional modes of community self-government.

51 This article uses pseudonyms for interviewees. Mr. W.'s profile and life history were concisely described by Takami Hirotaka, although Takami reported that he lived in Himosashi 紐差 village on the island at that time. See Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, pp. 30–33.

52 Saikyōji is a Shingon Buddhist temple of the Chisan branch (Chisan-ha 智山派), located in Hirado's urban district. This branch has been closely related to Shugendō.

53 Miyake, *Mandala*, pp. 56–58.

54 This temple is also in the Chisan branch; it is located in Hirado's Yamanaka 山中 village.

55 The mountain Yasuman-dake has been widely worshipped by the people on and around Hirado Island, including even the Hidden Christians in the western part of the island. See Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan," pp. 251–52; Hirado-shi Kyōiku Iinkai, *Hirado-shima*, pp. 282–84.

56 Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, p. 30.

Figure 2. Okimatsu Inari Dai Myōjin Shrine, Yamanaka village. Photograph by author.

the first day of the Horse in February (*hatsuuma* 初午), generally the most important day of rituals for Inari 稲荷 (folk gods of subsistence such as agriculture, fishing, and commerce, whose envoys are foxes), he worships with a *biwahiki* priest from Kawachi 川内 village before Okimatsu Inari Dai Myōjin 起松稲荷大明神 Shrine (henceforth "Okimatsu Shrine") in Yamanaka village (figure 2).[57] Okimatsu Shrine was established in 1963 by a Buddhist priest from Myōkanji Temple, presenting a typical case of a surviving syncretic fusion of Shinto and Buddhism. This example of Mr. W.'s religiosity, including his life history, illustrates that individual priests, as "actors and laborers" of the religious roles on this island, are grounded in various religions. Based on this example, priests on Hirado Island can be seen as the embodiment of Japanese religious pluralism and syncretism as well as the embodiment of tolerance for the coexistence and merging of different religions.

Residents Embodying Multiple Religions

These different religions are embodied not only within individual priests but also within individual residents. This section first focuses on Kasuga 春日 village, formerly a small Hidden Christian community.[58] There were only seventeen households in the village in 2014. The Kasuga people, especially the elders, devoutly worship various entities in Shinto, Buddhism, and folk religions, as well as pray to them early every morning.

The first case is Ms. X., an older female farmer, who embodies an example of religious beliefs held by a woman of the village. Every morning, she prays at home in the following order: (1) Yasuman-dake, commonly called *takagami-sama* 高神様 (a mountain god enshrined on a higher site and honored as a high-ranking deity), which can be clearly seen from her home; (2) Kasuga Jinja 春日神社 (henceforth "Kasuga Shrine"), which enshrines the village Shinto tutelary deity (*omiya-sama* 御宮様, as she refers to it); (3) a small Inari shrine (*okami-sama* 御神様), which was established as a village deity by a female *hōnin* shaman of Shinrikyō 神理教 (namely, belief in divine doctrine) at the mid-slope point of a hill behind the shaman's home in Kasuga;[59] (4) her parents' home in distant Kawatana 川棚 Town on the Kyushu mainland; and (5) a Buddhist altar within the head family's home of her lineage group (*honke no hotoke-sama* 本家の仏様) of Kasuga. Female *hōnin* for Inari gods are often called *okami-san* 御神さん (goddess), *ogami-san* 拝みさん (prayer), or *dainin* 代人 (deputy) on the island. They are usually members of Shinrikyō, a New Religion, which was established at the end of the nineteenth century in order to revitalize and systematize the old legitimate Shinto, but is also influenced by Daoism and Confucianism.[60] This series of prayers is given in order of importance to her. It shows that worshipping great nature, symbolized by the mountain Yasuman-dake, and worshipping her ancestors are indispensable to her faith, as well as her tolerance of or indifference to the coexistence and merging of different religions.

The second case focuses on Mr. Y., a middle-aged fisherman, the head of a household in Kasuga.[61] After rising in the early morning, he first prays within a sacred room of his home, turning his body toward sites and objects of worship in the following order (figure 3): (1) a Buddhist altar (*butsudan* 仏壇); (2) Shinto household shrines on a shelf (*kamidana* 神棚); (3) the home

57 Myōjin are Shinto gods from the Buddhist perspective in Shinto-Buddhist syncretism.

58 Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan," pp. 234–37; Imazato, "Spatial Structures," pp. 261–65.

59 This shaman's brother was the last baptizer in Hidden Christian history in Kasuga.

60 Inoue, "Shinrikyō."

61 Only his household in Kasuga, which newly migrated from outside the village in the modern period, did not believe in the Hidden Christianity worshipped from the early modern period.

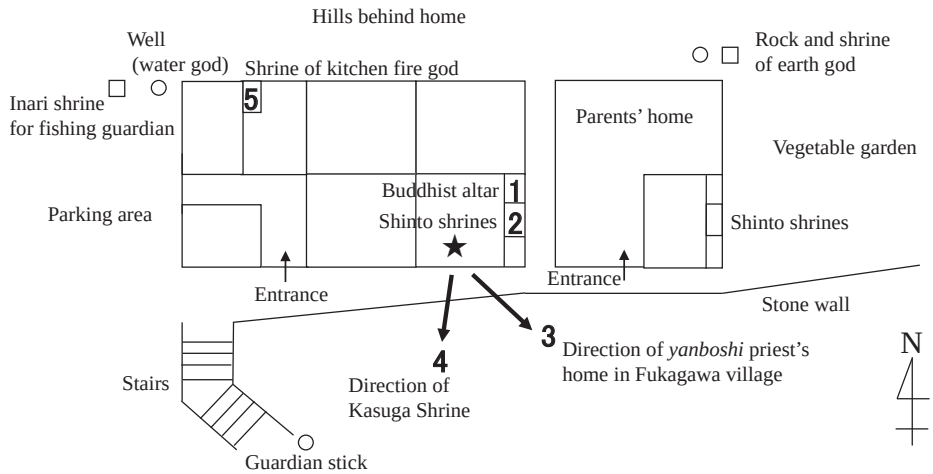

Figure 3. Worship sites and objects within a Kasuga home. In both figures 3 and 4, numbers indicate sites for morning prayer offered by the household master (location denoted by a star). Source: Interview with the household master and observations.

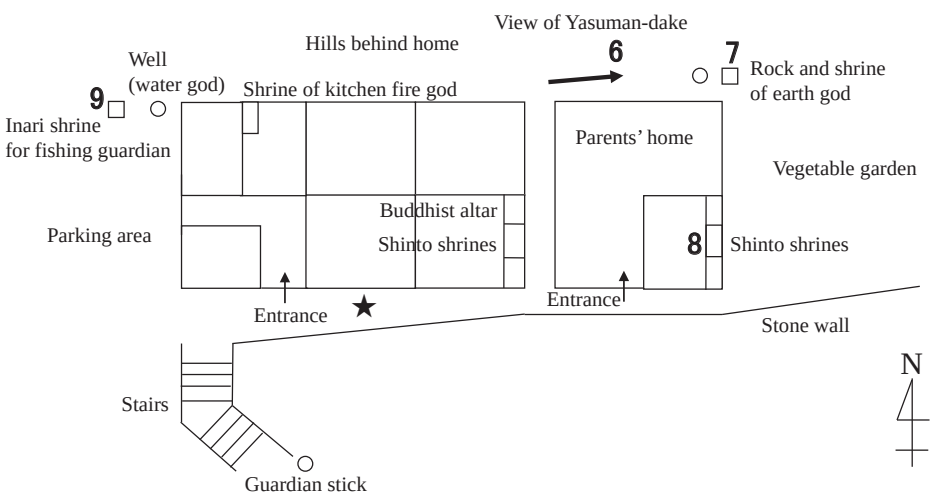

Figure 4. Worship sites and objects outside a Kasuga home.

of the *yanboshi* priest (the abovementioned Mr. W.), who is his most reliable priest, and this priest's god in distant Fukagawa village; (4) Kasuga Shrine; and (5) the household shrine of the god Kōjin 荒神 for safe cooking when using fire in the kitchen. He then goes outside of the home (figure 4) to pray in the following order while facing (6) Yasuman-dake; (7) the set of a rock and a shrine of an earth god (*ji no kami* 地の神, which is also an agricultural god);[62] (8) Shinto household shrines on a shelf within his parents' adjacent home; and (9) a small shrine to the god Inari for successful fishing and safety as his principal means of subsistence. According to his explanation, he prays in this series in order of geographical direction from the east, which is the direction of the sunrise, and through the south to the west. This practice shows his gratitude to nature

62 Most shrines for village and household gods on Hirado Island, excluding the main Shinto shrines of the villages, are exceedingly small ones made of stone and placed on a stone dais.

ruled by the sun. It is presumed that such an attitude is based on his arrangement of the meanings given to entities in his living world, similar to the case of Ms. X. in this village.

Early every morning, Mr. Y. offers a cup filled with water, salt, and uncooked rice to the kitchen fire god, while his wife places cooked rice and a cup of tea at the Buddhist altar for their ancestors. He prays before the Buddhist altar four times a day: after rising, before going fishing, after coming back from fishing, and before sleeping. He also offers rice wine (*sake* 酒) and Japanese cleyera (*sakaki* 榊) leaves on the Shinto household shrines on the first and fifteenth days of every month. Before going fishing, he offers cups of tea, water, and rice wine to the fishing god of Inari outside his home and prays to this god for his safety. On the way to and from the Kasuga fishing port, he bows before his ancestors' gravestone in a cemetery to pray for safety when fishing. On his fishing boat, he prays again for his safety to sacred paper sheets representing a boating god (*funagami* 船神) and to another Inari god as the fishing deity. During his son's departure on long fishing trips, he and his wife pray for their son's security before Kasuga Shrine, the Inari shrine of Shinrikyō in Kasuga, and the Okimatsu Shrine as a fishing deity in Yamanaka village. The worship practices of both Ms. X. and Mr. Y. show that their desire for family safety and happiness are always supported by multiple gods and ancestors, all of whom contribute to the religious division of labor in village life.

The most extreme case of the coexistence of multiple religions is that of Mr. Z., the male head of a household and a Catholic believer in Neshiko 根獅子. This village, where the number of households was 178 in 2014, is also a former Hidden Christian village on Hirado Island.[63] After the missionary work of the Paris Foreign Mission Society in the mid-nineteenth century Japanese Hidden Christians either converted (returned) to the Roman Catholic fold or continued as Hidden Christians, maintaining the same pious devotion to the Jesus Society (also known as the Jesuits, formally founded in 1540) as that espoused by their ancestors during the sixteenth century. Although the latter type of Christianity has since declined in contemporary Hirado Island villages, Hidden Christians continued their devout belief in other religions such as Shinto and Buddhism.[64] In contrast, Catholic churches, at least those established by the French missionaries from the mid-nineteenth century, never permitted their believers to worship any religion other than Christianity, demonstrating an insistence on monotheism rather than an acceptance of pluralism.

Mr. Z., however, is a Shinto-Buddhist *and* a Catholic. In Neshiko, several people have been baptized by the Himosashi Church on Hirado Island since the arrival of the French missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century.[65] They were persuaded by missionary nuns of the church to join the Catholic fold. However, Mr. Z. does not go to church at all, while both he and his household have retained their belief in Shinto-Buddhism. No Catholic altar and no Catholic-style cemetery gravestone have been constructed, whereas the Shinto household shrines and the Buddhist altar are still enshrined within his home. The Neshiko village community has maintained strong social integration, with an overwhelming number of regular Shinto rituals within the regional parish of Himosashi's Miwa Jinja 三輪神社 (henceforth "Miwa Shrine"). It is natural for the Neshiko people to sustain their membership in Shinto and Buddhist associations, especially the Hachiman Jinja 八幡神社 (shrine), since they have been established for the community's members and represent historically deep-rooted religions of the village.[66] If Mr. Z. is or will be a devout believer in Christianity, he probably has conflicting feelings about whether he and his household, as Neshiko residents, actually *converted* (returned) to Catholicism.

This example of Mr. Z. suggests how the Hirado people carefully treat human relationships both within and outside the village (in this particular case, his community colleagues and a Catholic nun). This case shows how extremely broad-minded they are about the coexistence of different religions, including Christianity, as an element of their religiosity. In similar cases, some scholars reported that Catholicism, Buddhism, Shinto, and indigenous elements coexist in some single households and individuals in other regions in Japan.[67]

63 Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan," pp. 205–33; Imazato, "Spatial Structures," pp. 259–61; Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 61–64.

64 Miyazaki, *Shinkō sekai*, pp. 184–242; *Jitsuzō*, pp. 179–201.

65 Naganuma, *Nihon shūkyō shi*, p. 946; Imazato, "Hirado-shima ni okeru kirishitan to katorikku," p. 148.

66 Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 61–64.

67 Itō, *Shūkyō to shakai kōzō*, pp. 199–203; Suyama, *Amami Ōshima*, pp. 220–26.

This Neshiko case, therefore, is not an isolated regional practice.

Basic Demands of Religious Rituals

This section moves from the "scale" of the individual to the two different scales of household and village, considering the relationships between priests and residents as well as the roles that each priest assumes in annual rituals. Takagoe 高越 village is a former Hidden Christian community facing the western shoreline of the island (figure 5)[68] that had twenty-six households, including one Catholic household, in 2014. Table 1 (p. 12) and figure 6 show the present-day principal rituals and their sites, including Yasaka Jinja 八坂神社 (henceforth "Yasaka Shrine") as the main religious site, for both the village and household scales. Several rituals were abolished and others were unified from formerly discrete rituals in order to simplify the ritual system and maintain only the more basic ceremonies. One Shinto, one *biwahiki*, and two *yanboshi* priests participate in one or more of these rituals, while a Buddhist priest performs funerals and the summer Bon prayers (*tanagyō* 棚経) at residents' homes. This Takagoe case shows how various priests of different religions engage in the division of labor in village rituals in response to basic religious demands.

In addition, table 2 (p. 12) lists the religions of the priests who perform rituals before principal worship sites and objects which are generally observed in common among the case study villages in different parts of Hirado Island: Aburamizu 油水 in the north, Kasuga and Takagoe in the west, Koba 木場 in the east,[69] and Ōshijiki 大志々伎 and Noko 野子 in the south. Interviews with priests and residents are partially complemented by the works of Miyamoto, Miyazaki, and Takami.[70]

In particular, Aburamizu residents are descendants of Hidden Christians who migrated from the Gotō Islands from around the late nineteenth century.[71] Approximately one quarter of the Aburamizu Hidden Christian households converted (returned) to the Catholic fold, whereas the rest are Shinto households that ceased to be Hidden Christians in the 1950s and are not supporters of any Buddhist temple. Such Aburamizu Shinto households are similar to typical Catholic villagers on Hirado Island, who maintain few restricted religious sites, such as a church (generally located only in larger or neighboring villages), a cemetery within the village, or an altar within the home.[72] However, this simple Aburamizu-migrant style is an exception on the island. Most villages, including former Hidden Christian villages and excluding Catholic communities, have sustained similar basic shrines and ritual objects before which different Shinto, Buddhist, *yanboshi*, and *biwahiki* priests perform rituals, both within the village and in each home. Such tendencies imply that the religiosity of Hidden Christians more closely resembles that of Shinto-Buddhists than Catholics, at least on Hirado Island though not on the Gotō Islands.

Furthermore, the spatial composition of Takagoe's ritual sites also shows the spatial division of labor by multiple gods and ritual objects within the village space, which derives from the resident's worldview based on their engagement with nature and ancestors (figure 6 and table 2): (1) Yasaka Shrine; (2) a Buddhist hall (*odō-sama* 御堂様, a structure but with no priest in residence) with Jizō 地蔵 (a bodhisattva) guardians; (3) a Buddhist guardian stone (*sangai-banreitō* 三界万霊塔); (4) four cemeteries (one of which is for a Catholic household); (5) a *saruboya* サルボヤ tree (*isunoki* in standard Japanese, *Distylium racemosum*) and another small shrine beside the main brook representing water gods (*kawa no kami* 川の神); (6) the Gotō-sama 五島様 (the proper name for a local shrine) for an ancient castaway from the Gotō Islands; (7) the Yorazu-sama 寄らず様 (the proper name for a local shrine) watching over rice paddy fields as an agricultural god (*ta no kami* 田の神); (8) a pond god (*ike no kami* 池の神) as a water god beside an agricultural pond; (9) small shrines such as guardian gods for cow and oxen as agricultural cattle (*ushigami* 牛神) within the Yasaka Shrine site and beside the Gotō-sama shrine; (10)

68 Tagita, *Shōwa jidai*, p. 259.

69 Miyamoto studied the folk religion of Koba village. See Miyamoto, *Sato shugen*, pp. 171–76.

70 Miyamoto, "Hirado-shima," pp. 21–22; Miyamoto, *Sato shugen*, pp. 171–76; Miyazaki, "Kawa-matsuri," p. 329; Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, pp. 113–15. For Noko, the data were obtained in 1976 by Honda and Nomoto. Honda, "Seisan," p. 32; Honda, "Shinkō"; Nomoto, "Nenchū gyōji."

71 Miyazaki, "Hirado kakure kirishitan," p. 202; Imazato, "Spatial Structures," pp. 265–68.

72 Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 58–61.

Figure 5. Landscape of Takagoe village showing several clusters of houses, terraced rice paddies, and scattered woods. Photograph by author.

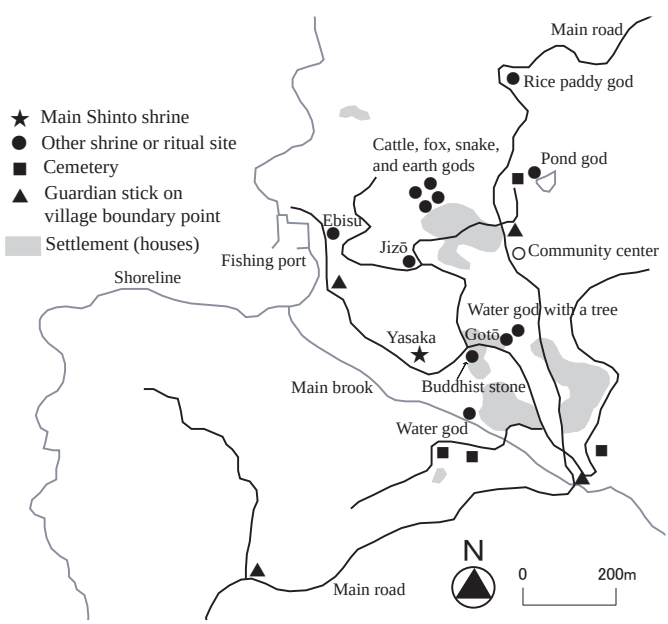

Figure 6. Main religious sites in Takagoe village, with key. Source: Interviews, observations, and topographic maps.

Table 1. Annual rituals of Takagoe village. Most rituals are held on the Sunday closest to the original ritual date. Source: Interviews with priests.

Village scale

Month	Ritual content	Priest	Site or object
Jan.	New Year prayers for village peace	○	Yasaka and village boundaries
Mar.	Water gods and fishing god rites	○	Water gods and Ebisu shrine
Apr.	Spring prayers for a good harvest	○	Yasaka Shrine
Jun.	Gion purification	○	Yasaka Shrine
Aug.	Prayers for the dead	■	Jizō hall and Buddhist stone
Sep.	Water gods and fishing god rites	○	Water gods and Ebisu shrine
Oct.	Grand ceremony for autumn harvest	○	Yasaka Shrine and small shrines
Nov.	November ceremony for harvest	○	Yasaka Shrine
Nov.	Thanks to gods of agricultural cattle	■	Cattle god shrines
Nov.	Thanks to the rice paddy god	■	Rice paddy god shrine
Dec.	Memorial for a dead person from the Gotō Islands	■	Shrine for a Gotō castaway

Household scale

Month	Ritual content	Priests
Jan.	New Year prayers	○
Jul.	Midsummer purification of homes	○■
Aug.	Summer prayers for ancestors' souls	●
Oct.	Prayers before household gods	◆

Key: Religious affiliation of ritual priests: ○Shinto ●Buddhist ■*yanboshi* ◆*biwahiki*

Table 2. Priests performing principal rituals of villages and households. Cases of Catholic households in the villages are excluded in this table. Source: Interviews with priests and residents, and in part using publications by Honda ("Seisan," "Shinkō"), Miyamoto ("Hirado-shima," *Sato shugen*), Miyazaki ("Kawa-matsuri"), Nomoto ("Nenchū gyōji"), and Takami (*Kōjin shinkō*).

Basic site or object	Aburamizu	Kasuga	Takagoe	Koba	Ōshiziki	Noko
Village scale						
Main Shinto shrine	—	○	○	○	○	○
Buddhist hall (not a temple)	—	■	■	■●	●	△
Cemetery (for funeral rites)	○	●	●	●●■	●●	●
Water gods	—	○	○	○	○	○◆
Agricultural gods	—	○	■	—	○	○◆
Cattle gods	—	○	○■	■	○	◆
Fishing gods	—	△	○	—	○	○
Set of guardian sticks	—	●■	○	—	○	◆
Household scale						
Shinto shrines on shelf	○	○■	○■	■	○	○
Buddhist altar	—	■	●	●●■	●●	●
Earth god	—	○	◆■	◆■	○	○
Kitchen fire god	○	○◆	◆	◆■	●◆	◆
Water god of the well	—	○■	◆	■○	○●	◆
God of agriculture or fishing	—	○■	◆■	■	○●◆	○◆
Guardian stick	—	■	○	◆	—	—
Priest's dwelling						
Within village	—	—	—	■	—	○●◆
Outside village	○	○●■◆	○●■■◆	○●●◆	○●●◆	—
Number of households in 2014	30	17	26	37	48	85

Key: Religious affiliation of ritual priests: ○Shinto ●Buddhist ■*yanboshi* ◆*biwahiki* △residents performing rituals themselves with no priest

Figure 7. A guardian stick for Takagoe village. The incantation in Chinese characters is written by a Shinto priest. Photograph by author.

Figure 8. A boundary stone in the contemporary Hidden Christian style of an Ikitsuki Island village. Photograph by author.

an Ebisu (恵比寿, fishing god) shrine; and (11) a set of four guardian sticks (*tsujifuda* 辻札, literally "junction tablet").

These guardian sticks surround the settlement as village boundary protectors beside the main road and at the fishing port to protect against evil spirits or demons from the outside world (figure 7). In the unique case of a Hidden Christian village on neighboring Ikitsuki Island, village boundary rituals (*nodachi* 野立ち) that are equivalent to such guardian stick rituals in Takagoe have been performed in the Christian style. A contemporary village, for example, relies on permanent boundary stones (figure 8), although the traditional style on Ikitsuki has been a temporary arrangement of small white crossed papers (*omaburi* オマブリ).[73] This shows an explicit example of syncretism between Japanese folk religion and Christianity. In addition, Takagoe has small stone shrines of such deities as the cattle (*ushigami*), fox (Inari), snake (*hebigami* 蛇神), and earth (*ji no kami*) gods, who receive the prayers of *yanboshi*. Takagoe's variety of gods and religious sites reflects the human relationships, including those observed at the household scale, maintained for many years between the residents and different priests, especially *yanboshi* and *biwahiki*.

At the household scale, this section also takes up the case of ritual sites for the abovementioned Kasuga household of Mr. Y. (figure 3 and table 2) with several observations: (1) the set of Shinto household shrines and the Buddhist altar in the sacred room; (2) the small rock and shrine of the earth god (*ji no kami*) behind the home; (3) the household shrine for Kōjin, the kitchen fire god; (4) a water god of the well (*kawa no kami*) outside the house; (5) the Inari shrine for successful fishing

73 Nagasaki-ken Kyōiku Iinkai, *Nagasaki-ken*, pp. 121–22, 144, 165. This ritual is conducted by the residents themselves without the involvement of any professional priest, whereas the Hidden Christians have conducted all of their rituals by themselves since the seventeenth century.

and safety located near the well; and (6) a guardian stick (*kadofuda* 門札, literally, "gate tablet") in front of the home. Such spatial composition reflects his family's engagement with nature and their ancestors, similar to cases at the village scale.

In addition to Takagoe and Kasuga, similar religious sites both at the village and household scale can be observed in Koba, Ōshiziki, and Noko. These five villages also maintain their own gods as a result of their own history and negotiations with various past and present priests, especially *yanboshi* and *biwahiki*, in order to meet the basic demands for shrines and other ritual sites. Moreover, table 2 illustrates a key finding: for both the village and household scale, the same kinds of rituals among different villages are performed by various priests of different religions. For example, the guardian stick ritual in Kasuga is performed both by a Buddhist priest from Yamanaka and the *yanboshi* priest from Fukagawa,[74] while in Takagoe, this is performed by the Shinto priest of Himosashi's Miwa Shrine. In sum, a specific ritual corresponding to a specific site does not need to be exclusively performed by a specific religion's priest. This fact implies that each priest maintains his own "customer area" for each specific ritual.

As an overview of all of the rituals shown in table 2, this analysis finds that the Shinto and *yanboshi* priests conduct most of the Kasuga rituals, whereas the *yanboshi* and *biwahiki* priests sustain their importance in the Takagoe rituals. The rituals of Koba, in which half of the residents are Catholics and the other half are Shinto-Buddhists who are further divided into two parishioner groups,[75] are mainly performed by a *yanboshi* priest living within the village and a *biwahiki* priest from distant Kawachi village, whereas the Miwa Shinto priest is responsible for only a few rituals. Ōshiziki is a typical case for Hirado Island, in which a Shinto priest conducts most of the village rituals, whereas various priests, including *yanboshi* or *biwahiki*, perform household-scale rituals. This shows a similar pattern to the Hōki 宝亀 and Neshiko villages.[76] Noko in the 1970s was partially similar to the Ōshiziki case, although the presence of a *biwahiki* living within the village was remarkable both for the village and households. In sum, from these examples, rituals in the household scale are principally conducted by *yanboshi* and *biwahiki* priests, who have sought to create new demands for rituals and ensure their means of sustenance, avoiding conflicts with well-established Shinto and Buddhist priests who predominantly conduct rituals at the village scale.

Priests as Business Professionals and Residents as Customers

The above section noted common basic demands for ritual performances corresponding to each shrine and ritual object, both at the village and household scale in every village except for Aburamizu. However, the responsibilities for these ritual performances are changeable. Table 3 shows some recent changes in priests for the guardian stick rituals at the village and household scale. Priests write an incantation in Chinese characters on the front of each wooden stick and purify them in the prayer ceremony during the New Year (figure 7), while village residents put the sticks into the ground themselves at village boundaries based on their mental images of these boundaries.[77] Generally, a change in priest directly follows the death of the former priest; in most cases, when a *yanboshi* or *biwahiki* priest of Buddhism that is not well-established dies and has no successor, his ritual responsibilities are passed to a Shinto priest,[78] although the villagers themselves decide which priest should be the successor.[79]

Such flexible partnerships remind us of the contemporary relationships, as it were, between "business professionals" and "customers" in daily life. Namely, priests as business professionals pursue their means of livelihood and try to gain new customers, whereas village residents as customers fufill their own religious

74 The Kasuga people simultaneously place two sticks prepared independently by the Buddhist priest and the *yanboshi* priest at the same point, as mentioned later.

75 Imazato, "Territoriality," p. 60.

76 This is based on the author's fieldwork in Hōki and Neshiko.

77 The number of sticks is different among villages; for example, there are four in Takagoe, five in Kasuga, seven in Neshiko, and ten in Hōki. See Imazato, "Hirado-shima ni okeru shūkyō bunpu," p. 119; Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 56, 62.

78 Generally, in well-established Buddhism in Japan, one of the neighboring priests (often a long distance away in depopulated areas) of the same sect inherits ritual responsibility. Aizawa, "Kaso chiiki," p. 184; Sakahara, "Haiji," pp. 314–21.

79 Miyamoto, whose work is based on Koba village cases, and Takami, who studied folk religions in Itoya 猪渡谷 village, report that Hirado people request another priest of the same religion or other religions for household rituals upon the death of the former priest such as *yanboshi* and *biwahiki*. See Miyamoto, *Sato shugen*, pp. 175–76; Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, pp. 114–15.

Table 3. Examples of recent changes in priests for guardian stick rituals. Īra village recently ceased performing the guardian stick ritual. Source: Interviews with priests.

Village	Scale	Ritual object	Change
Takagoe	Village	Set of guardian sticks	■→○
Takagoe	Households	Guardian stick	■→○
Shishi	Households	Guardian stick	■→◆
Īra	Village	Set of guardian sticks	○→—
Kigatsu	Village	Set of guardian sticks	■→○
Akamatsu	Village	Set of guardian sticks	■→○

Key: Religious affiliation of ritual priests: ○Shinto ■*yanboshi* ◆*biwahiki*

demands. Such a situation indicates the existence of competition and complement among Shinto, Buddhist, *yanboshi*, and *biwahiki* priests in villages as their business areas.[80] Table 2 shows that different priests, most of whom live outside the village, participate in various village rituals.

Figure 9 (p.16) shows the "customer areas" of each priest for the guardian stick rituals at the village scale. Areas A and D–H are Shinto priests' territories, in which all villages generally request a Shinto priest who, as a priest on the island, typically has the highest authority. For example, area D is the customer area of the Miwa Shinto priest, who lives in Himosashi. Although he solidly serves his own parishioners in fifteen villages, he performs the guardian stick rituals in only ten villages. The remaining five villages are Koba and Īra 飯良, which ceased to hold this ritual, Fukagawa and Ōishiwaki 大石脇 (area C), where the Fukagawa *yanboshi* priest (the abovementioned Mr. W.) performs the ritual, and Kasuga (area B), in which both the Myōkanji Buddhist priest in Yamanaka and the Fukagawa *yanboshi* perform the ritual (tables 2 and 3). Area B has a somewhat complicated arrangement: the Myōkanji Buddhist priest, the Fukagawa *yanboshi*, and two Shinto priests serve their own customer villages. However, the customer areas of this ritual have actually changed priests and can always change them again in the future, as indicated in table 3, which shows some examples of several villages on the island.[81]

Moreover, even for the same rituals in a village, competitive or rival activities take place. It is common to find within a single village, such as Koba and Ōshijiki (table 2), two or more supporter groups of different Buddhist temples (always different schools or sects) located within and outside the village.[82] In Neshiko, even the *yanboshi* priest living within the village has acquired some of the households as supporters for funeral rituals and memorial services,[83] which are generally performed in Japan not by Shugendō priests but by Buddhist priests of well-established denominations.[84] Moreover, typically in Koba and Ōshijiki, priests of different religions retain their own customers in rituals for household gods. At the Kasuga household scale, most water gods of wells and Inari shrines are purified by the Miwa Shinto priest, whereas only one household (that of Mr. Y.) requested the Fukagawa *yanboshi* (Mr. W.). The *yanboshi* priest is followed passionately and respectfully in a close relationship by the household head, in which the priest as a business professional seems to deepen such personal relationships to gain more authority for performing religious rituals.

In such competitive cases, Shinto priests hold an advantage over the others, especially at the village scale, as shown in table 2. An exception is Mukae-Himosashi village, although Shinto has generally sustained its superior authority among religions in Japanese villages since the Meiji Restoration. The Buddhist priest of Fukumanji Temple of the Chisan branch of the Shingon school, which is closely related to Shugendō, performs most of the Shinto rituals for Kumano Gongen-sha 熊野権現社 (shrine),[85] which enshrines a mountain god and is attached to this Buddhist temple. This unusual situation shows how the "syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism" still strongly persists in this village, while the "separation of kami and Buddhas" was not strongly influential here.[86] As a result, although Mukae-

80 Takami notes that Hirado Island has witnessed such competition among various priests. See Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, p. 80.

81 Takagoe, Shishi 獅子, and Īra are former Hidden Christian villages that believe in Shinto-Buddhism, while Kigatsu 木ヶ津 and Akamatsu 赤松 are Shinto-Buddhist villages. Kigatsu includes a Catholic community.

82 A similar situation can also be witnessed in Hōki village. See Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 55–56.

83 This information is based on the author's fieldwork in Neshiko.

84 Funeral rituals and memorial services can be performed even by Shinto priests (who do not normally perform them), as shown in the case of the former Hidden Christians in present-day Aburamizu (see table 2).

85 *Gongen* are manifestations of Buddhist divinities as Shinto gods (*kami*).

86 The reasons for this exception are not known.

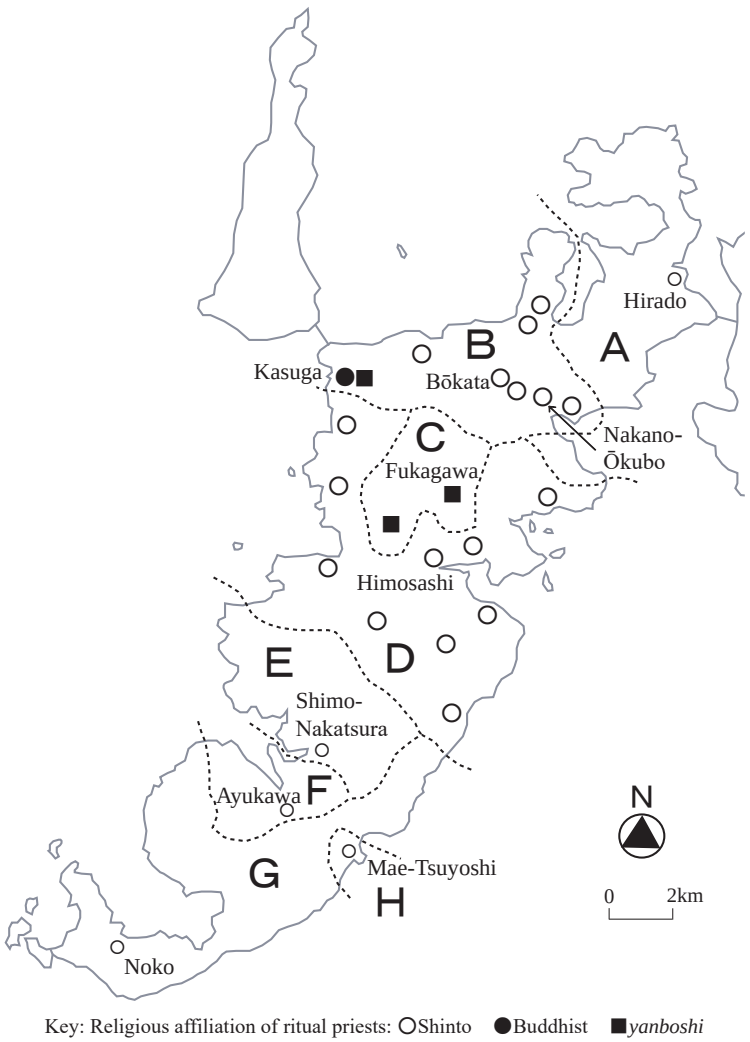

Figure 9. Priests' "customer areas" for the village guardian stick (*tsujifuda*) rituals. Except for the center island examples (areas B–D), which denote information on individual villages, only the priests' dwellings are shown (areas A and E–H). Source: Interviews with priests.

Himosashi residents are parishioners of the Miwa Shrine in Himosashi, the Shinto priest engages in only a few rituals such as those for the village guardian sticks, religious duties at an Inari shrine, and home purifications (*yabarai* 家祓い) during the New Year. In this village, the power of the Buddhist temple has historically been too great for the Shinto priest to conduct most rituals.

In addition, priests endeavor to create and acquire new religious responsibilities without invading the "customer areas" of other priests, avoiding any conflict if possible. In Kasuga, ceremonies for Kōjin in each household are performed by both the Miwa Shinto priest and a *biwahiki* priest living in Shishi village. These rituals are performed by the Shinto priest in July (*doyō-matsuri* 土用祭, midsummer ritual) and November (*shimotsuki-matsuri* 霜月祭, literally "the ritual in the frost month"), as well as by the *biwahiki* priest in September.[87] Moreover, ceremonies for the set of three Shinto gods on the single shelf of Mr. Y. are performed by two priests: invocation of the Kasuga Shrine god, as

87 This is based on work by Takami and the author's interviews with residents. See Takami, *Kōjin shinkō*, p. 114.

the village's tutelary deity, is done by the Miwa Shinto priest, whereas prayers to the popular gods of Yūtoku Inari 祐徳稲荷 and Itsukushima 厳島 shrines from the distant regions of Saga and Hiroshima prefectures are given by the Fukagawa *yanboshi* (Mr. W.).

On the other hand, priests negotiate with each other in order to coexist and survive on the island. In Ōshijiki village, two Buddhist priests of different temples negotiated for ritual authority over the animal cemetery (*ushibaka* 牛墓, literally, "cemetery for cattle") in the village.[88] The supporter households of Jōonji 長遠寺 Temple of the Nichiren sect (Nichiren-shū 日蓮宗) in Nakayama 中山 village had drastically decreased (seventeen households in Ōshijiki village in 2011), compared with those following Chōsenji 長泉寺 Temple of the Sotō sect (Sotō-shū 曹洞宗) in Mae-Tsuyoshi 前津吉 village (thirty-one households). Thus, the Jōonji priest, carefully mediated by the Ōshijiki representative resident of Chōsenji supporters to avoid a direct conflict with the Chōsenji priest, requested the Chōsenji priest to transfer the ritual authority over the animal cemetery in order to keep his income from the Ōshijiki households. The Chōsenji priest finally accepted the Jōonji priest's request without destroying any relationship among the priests and residents within the village.

As a further example, in Hōki village, ten ritual sites of Gion-sai 祇園祭 (a purification rite) in July are divided into six administered by the Miwa Shinto priest and four by two Buddhist priests.[89] The two Buddhist priests, one from Hōjuji 法樹寺 Temple of the Jōdo sect (Jōdo-shū 浄土宗) and the other from Myōenji 妙圓寺 Temple of the Nichiren sect, live within the village but simultaneously pray before the same ritual sites.[90] This case shows coexistence through compromise among different priests regarding the same rituals as well as the careful consideration given by the residents to the three different priests.

Another case is the village guardian stick ritual of Kasuga, in which two different sticks are respectively prepared by both the Myōkanji Buddhist priest and the Fukagawa *yanboshi* (Mr. W.) at each settled point during the New Year. These two priests have maintained a close personal relationship. Myōkanji Temple, at the foot of Yasuman-dake, was originally the advance base of Saizenji 西禅寺 Temple, which was located very near the top of the mountain. The Kasuga people, as former Hidden Christians, have long worshipped this mountain. Saizenji prospered as a center of Shingon esoteric Buddhism and Shugendō on Hirado Island before being abolished in the latter half of the nineteenth century.[91] The Fukagawa *yanboshi* has studied the discipline of Shugendō at Myōkanji Temple for many years, as already mentioned. Moreover, the current priest of Myōkanji usually subcontracts his ceremonies in Kasuga, such as chanting the summer Bon sutra (*tanagyō*) before Buddhist household altars, to the Fukagawa *yanboshi*. In sum, the coexistence of the two different series of guardian sticks is underpinned by the personal relationship and negotiations between these Buddhist and *yanboshi* priests themselves.[92]

The above cases on the island show various forms of negotiation, which are often mediated by residents, between priests (Shinto and *yanboshi* or *biwahiki* in Kasuga; two different sects of Buddhism in Ōshijiki; Shinto and Buddhism in Hōki; Buddhism and *yanboshi* also in Kasuga) for a single ritual, the identical god, or the same sort of religious objects. According to socioeconomic needs, each priest as a business professional seeks to gain certain positions in human relationships with residents and the division of religious labor regarding prayers for villages and households. Their activities rely on the residents' tolerance of or indifference to coexisting multiple religions.

Conclusion

This article has endeavored to consider Japanese religious pluralism from a geographical perspective as a phenomenon underpinned partially by syncretism. Such a perspective considers what the author refers

88 Although originally this cemetery was for agricultural cattle such as cows and oxen, pet dogs and cats are now buried there. See Imazato, "Keikan shi," p. 311.

89 These ten ritual sites include the main Sarutahiko Jinja 猿田彦神社 (shrine), a Buddhist bodhisattva hall (Kannon-dō 観音堂), various other sacred places, and the sides of rivers and an agricultural pond. See Imazato, "Territoriality," pp. 56–57.

90 However, the Myōenji priest does not pray before one of the four sites, a cemetery containing only the gravestones of Hōjuji supporters; thus, he has three ceremony sites. Myōenji was established in 1909, a founding date later than that of Hōjuji, which already existed in the early modern period. See Hirado-shi Shichōshitsu, *Hirado-shi shi*, p. 377.

91 Ibid., pp. 370–71; Hirado-shi Kyōiku Iinkai, *Hirado-shima*, pp. 282–84.

92 Their relationship is not based on a formal head-branch relationship within a particular Buddhist school or branch.

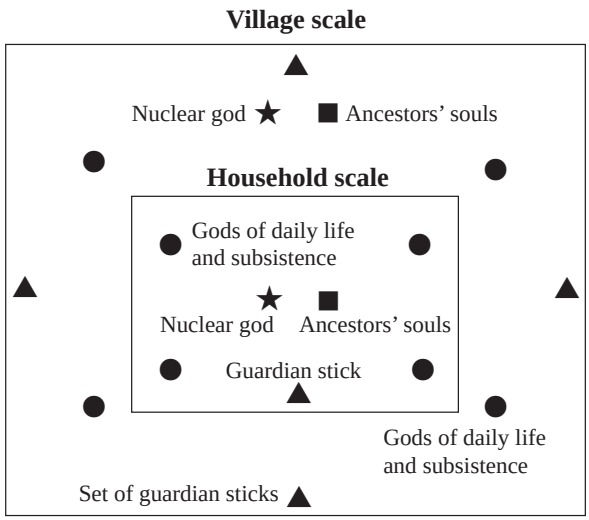

Figure 10. The basic structure of religious space in Hirado Island villages. Created by author.

to as multiple "scales"; it compares different villages on Hirado Island and focuses on specific village and household spaces to better understand Japan's folk religion. The three key areas of focus are role differentiation or the division of labor by multiple religions at the village and household scale; the unified structure of the different religions within the village and household scale; and the broad-mindedness of village residents toward different religions.

First, this study clearly established that various religions coexist not only in single villages but also at the smaller scale of households including each individual, for both the priests and residents of Hirado Island. Each of these religions is, in that sense, fluid, and has historically experienced merging and, at times, separation. Through various personal relationships, including familiar "professional/customer" relationships between priests and residents, Hirado Island's priests of different religions mutually compete, complement, and negotiate with careful consideration in order to skillfully survive. Such consideration for human relationships driven by socioeconomic needs can be cited as the basis of the coexistence of multiple religions on each of the three spatial scales. In particular, with the relative advantages held by priests of the well-established Shinto and Buddhist traditions, priests such as the *yanboshi* and *biwahiki*, who themselves are embodiments of pluralism and syncretism, have often strived to participate in the island's religious market and create new demand, especially at the household scale. As a result, the same priest may engage in different rituals among villages, while the same kinds of rituals in different villages are often performed by priests of various religions, both at the village and household scale. This division of religious labor is not firmly fixed but rather flexible in accordance with residents' demands. In sum, the island's priests assume their own roles in fluid situations for each village and household, being "inter-changeable" in complementary processes through competition and negotiation often mediated by residents.

Second, beneath this surface appearance, most of the Hirado Island villages maintain the common basic structure of a religious space as a unified entity from which this study abstracts two similar compositions in the village scale and the household scale within a single village (figure 10). As the religious loci in spaces, people address the nuclear god (usually enshrined in both the village and the household Shinto shrines) and ancestors' souls, including deceased children (usually worshipped at the Buddhist temple, hall, cemetery, and altar). Furthermore, this god and those souls are surrounded by the various gods of daily life who protect persons utilizing fire and water, as well as gods for subsistence, such as agriculture and fishing. All of these gods and souls are believed to bring the village people this-worldly benefits. These spatial elements, along with guardian sticks that watch over the main entrance points of the spaces, maintain the health and safety of the villagers (in their belief) and sustain the villagers' peace of mind. People give thanks to nature for their daily subsistence and to their ancestors who in the past diligently prepared the living space. This unified worldview, which reflects the resident's arrangement of meaning, is founded on animistic worship of the natural elements and ancestors in Japanese folk religion.[93] Furthermore, the Hirado Hidden Christian villages have shared the basic spatial structure shown in figure 10. Catholic villages at least since the mid-nineteenth century have not, however, considered this spatial structure at all since their devotees believe in Christianity only, unlike the Hidden Christian villages on this island.[94]

Third, except for these Catholics, the individual religions themselves are not necessarily irreplaceable

93 Hori, *Japanese Religion*, pp. 122–25.

94 Catholic churches in rural Japan, at least in northwestern Kyushu, have instead emphasized ethical education for believers. See for example Nomura, *Shūkyō*, pp. 139–84.

for the Hirado Island villagers—only the basic spatial structure is essential. These multiple religions are inter-changeable insofar as their roles comfortably fit the functions of each religious site and the basic structure of the villagers' worldview. In addition, for the contemporary Hidden Christians on Ikitsuki Island, even Christianity can be transformed into an element of such a spatial structure, as shown by the village boundary stones. In other words, Hirado and Ikitsuki residents are tolerant of or indifferent to the coexistence and merging of multiple religions in their lives insofar as those religions sufficiently satisfy their demands based on their worldview and do not disturb this order. This may also explain why Japan's religious pluralism and syncretism have developed, at least for ordinary persons. In addition, priests are tolerant of such pluralism insofar as their livelihood is secured.

Japanese folk religions, at least in rural villages, are integrated by a structured worldview based on ordinary people's own geographical knowledge, as accumulated through oral traditions and daily experiences in specific living spaces. The religious life of the Japanese people places great importance on careful respect for the living space favored by nature and ancestors, as well as for their neighboring humans, including priests: this is their "religion." Most Japanese people, especially those living in rural areas, should not be considered irreligious, although this may not yet be fully understood from the more common Western views of "religion." Many Japanese, in the author's view, do not presuppose the exclusive worship of a one-and-only God, strict ethical doctrine given in scripture, or an absolute founder devoutly revered by a strongly unified organization.[95] The conclusions of this article can be further compared with folk religions in other regions in Japan, as well as some East and Southeast Asian countries, whose detailed conditions of religious syncretism have recently been studied in greater detail.[96]

95 An exception is the Jōdo Shin sect (Jōdo Shin-shū 浄土真宗) of Buddhism.

96 Yoshida, *Shinbutsu yūgō*.

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