

論 文

The Age-Old Ritual Practice of *Ohatsuhoage*  
among the Kakure Kirishitan Survivors  
Intersection of Identities and Resources

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**Abstract**

This article highlights the singularity of the most salient features of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event that constitutes one of the most persistent and deeply ingrained aspects of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Nagasaki Prefecture. By bringing together these significant characteristics from the lived religious experiences of three religiously active Kakure Kirishitan communities, I attempt to forge a significant positive correlation between the corporate identities and ritual resources that characterize the celebration of this ritual substitute of the Eucharist. The synthesis demonstrates that the ritually-prepared communal meal—*Ohatsuhoage*—constitutes a stable part of Kakure Kirishitan dominant ideology in which its followers critically take up membership in and identity with the divine and human community. Intriguingly, its core elements conspire together to signal, shape, and heighten collective self-definition, psycho-religious imagination, cherished memories and emotions, while also grounding their identity formats and adaptation processes. The analysis reinforces the startling assumption that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event continues to be, for the most part of the actor-participants, an historical and valuable religious activity deemed important enough to maintain their minimal survival in urban settings. In general, therefore, this study provides a refined interpretative tool for further understanding how the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity has increasingly proved to be a definitive component of the various processes that ultimately enables Kakure Kirishitan survivors to be nurtured by the strands of their longstanding spirituality and religion in the flux of social change.

**Keywords**

Kakure Kirishitan survivors, *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, sharing, remembering deceased predecessors, time-persisting relational patterns, identities, resources, camouflage strategies, Nagasaki Christians.

## 1. Introduction

I am prompted to study afresh the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* in light of indications, from both my long-term cross-sectional research and my conversations with some fieldworking anthropologists, that it has long proved to be the most important time-persisting event of the present-day remnants of the Kakure Kirishitan (Hidden Christian) communities in Nagasaki Prefecture. Tagita's (1978) seminal work makes some seemingly incidental references to it, but a more illustrative analysis of its central virtues for the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners appears to be reflected in the strictly ethno-historical studies of Miura (1980) and Kataoka (1997). In a subsequent phenomenologically-informed volume, Miyazaki (1996; 2001; 2014) explains certain aspects of this ritual practice gleaned from the Kakure Kirishitan believers' major events and festivals associated with the New Year's Eve on the Ikitsuki Island. From a historic-phenomenological perspective, Turnbull (1998) has brought focus to the structure and function of this ritually-prepared communal meal and the significant role played by its underlying sequence of principal dishes that are prepared, offered, consecrated, and consumed. Still, much more remains to be explored in this area, with studies that would likely need to consider the anthropological, sociological, and psycho-religious dimensions of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. Here I would like instead to highlight the singularity of some salient socio-cultural, psycho-religious, and spiritual aspects of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony and assess the likely impacts it continues to have in the practitioners' lived-religious experiences. The study thus draws on an event-centered ethnographic approach to specifically forge a refined heuristic model for understanding the underlying intricate intersection between ritual participants' identities and their resources (significant objects, persons, symbols, events). The nature of the two aims generated different research approaches, thus making the use of mixed methods appropriate (Russell 2006).

The synthesis includes mainly ethnographic data gleaned from three religiously active Kakure Kirishitan communities in Nagasaki settings, namely Shimo-Kurosaki, Shitsu and Wakamatsu, on various dates between 2004 and 2018. Within the sampling strategies adopted, however, I particularly tried to understand the various aspects of their religion, religious ceremonies, belief-related practices, perceived identity, and symbolic significance of certain actions and objects from the individual members' point of view, not merely analyzing them from a third-person perspective. The term 'religion' is used herein to simply denote "a covenant of faith community with teachings and narratives that enhance the search for the sacred and encourage morality" (Dollahite 1998: 5). Yet within the subtle "framework of practical activity that raises potentially more fruitful questions about the origins, purposes, and efficacy of ritual actions" (Bell

2009: xv), the very concept of ritual is more acutely understood as what “always stands in systematic relation to objects and behavior and, in part defines the community in which it takes place” (Lana 1994: 320). In particular, I develop two important questions: (1) what does this collective ritual really look like within Kakure Kirishitan communities when it is performed effectively, and what are the meanings practitioners discursively attach to their own engagement and involvement in it? (2) How can we briefly determine and illustrate its embodied vital elements in relation to the Kakure Kirishitan ideology and faith? Four integrated and interrelated themes surveying recent and past research thus drive the case study and subsequent ethnographic micro-analysis forward. I argue that the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* embodies defining essential components that provide the present-day Kakure Kirishitan practitioners with a vital source for the minimal survival of their seemingly integrated minority communities and religion in urban settings.

## **2. Background: The Institution of the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Practice in Kakure Kirishitan Society**

From the outset it is clear that the term “*Ohatsuhoage*” (お初穂あげ) is not a fashionable label in Kakure Kirishitan society. Instead it represents a long-standing spirituality of offering derived from Shinto practices—particularly the thanksgiving religious ceremony of *hatsuhō* held after a good harvest. It seems most likely that ‘offering’ in general and ‘formalized ritual offering’ in particular powerfully reaffirm all the dimensions of the Shinto and Buddhist worldview that somehow define and determine most Japanese believers (for a lucid account of the theme, see, Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Zhong 2016). Tellingly, however, the addition of the Japanese honorific prefix ‘O’ here makes it the only expression used by the Kakure Kirishitan survivors to intelligibly suggest a direct link with the Catholic Mass (discussed below), while the suffix “*age*” derives from the Japanese verb “*ageru*” that means “*to offer*”. This fully accounts for the accurate definition of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony as a ritually-prepared communal meal that essentially displays a meeting of Christian and Japanese cultures and spiritualities. Typically, it constitutes one of the most persistent and deeply ingrained aspects of Kakure Kirishitan community identity. At stake, I argue, no account of Kakure Kirishitan survivors, whether historical, sociological, cultural, psychological, religious or spiritual would be complete without mention of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and its particular features. To set the scene, I will first provide a brief historical background of how, why, and in what circumstances the Shinto-specific micro-practice of *hatsuhō* came to be adapted by

Kakure Kirishitan survivors for their own purposes, namely, for revealing the ritual substitution of the Eucharist under the close appellation of the *Ohatsuhoage*.

## 2-1. Context: From Missionary Activity to Persecution

Historically, the establishment of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice into the Kakure Kirishitan society can be traced back to the Edo period (1603-1867) or (at best) when early Japanese Catholics (largely peasant, and numbering in the hundreds of thousands) experienced the cruelest, and perhaps the most systematic and the most relentless religious persecution spanning over two and half centuries (1614-1873), mainly in the Kyushu region. The following is a simplified account of the important socio-political and religious determinants that generated it.

Francis Xavier (1506-52) and his fellow Jesuits arrived in 1549 and spread Christianity throughout Japan. Xavier's missionary endeavor in Japan thus took place just at the moment when the political and social conditions of the island empire were being prepared for a great change, an end of feudal strife and religious wars (Doak 2011). After his conversion to Catholicism in 1563, the first Christian daimyō (feudal Lord), Omura Sumitada (1533-1587), with territory in northwestern Kyushu, dramatically changed the course of the mission with his enthusiastic support. Despite his amazing success, Xavier's missionary work did not last as expected. In 1587 a religious culture and tradition surrounding the persecution of the Japanese Catholic Church and Christian holocaust thus developed under Tokugawa Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and temporarily ceased in 1598. The reasons for this are varied. The most likely explanation is that their persecution, including that of 26 martyrs of Nagasaki that occurred in 1597 had more to do with the conversion of warlords and vassals who ended up on the losing side than with anything doctrinal.

The new ruler, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), was reportedly quite tolerant of Christianity for a while but scattered local persecutions did take place. There were 132 recorded Christian martyrdoms between 1600 and 1612 and thousands more of the Japanese Christians were stripped of their property and banished. From 1614 persecution increased. Ieyasu became determined to stop all Catholic Christians' missionary activity in Japan and then to expunge the faith from among his subjects. After his death, a much more brutal persecution was carried out. All kinds of horrible torture methods were created, such as sawing bodies with bamboo, stabbing with a spear, placing people in boiling hot springs, burying people alive and worst of all "*ana-tsurushi*", which was hanging the victim bound upside down in a pit with the head in excrement until they suffocated. And further, related to this whole system of surveillance was the famous *Fumi-e* 踏絵 ("stepping on pictures"), which were first used in Nagasaki in 1628. Suspect were asked to step on a holy picture or small bronze metal picture of Jesus as proof that they were not Christians. This "Christian Century"

then came to a halt in 1639 when the shogun closed Japan's borders from foreign contact in order to solidify control over the nation.

## 2-2. Survival Strategies of the Underground Christian Community

Many early Japanese Christians (Catholics) courageously chose not to step on the *fumie* and died as a result of their strong faith. There were reportedly over 2000 executions by 1650, and several systematic persecutions of individual Kirishitan communities as late as 1873. Others, however, in an effort to escape—as far possible—the persecution and preserve their Christian/Catholic faith, remarkably demonstrated their propensity to organize themselves into distinctive underground Christian communities. By so doing, these *Kirishitan faith* practitioners, for the most part, poorly catechized and ill prepared believers, ironically transformed the implications of the hitherto external and internal policies to their own advantage (Ohashi 1996: 59-60) and over gradually established their own Japanese version of Catholicism. Hence, they remembered the story of Christ through religious ritual practices, prayers, and beliefs in secret without Catholic priests and without any sacrament other than baptism, marriage and funerals, while at the same time pretending to follow the hitherto state-imposed Buddhism. (For a concise overview of this history, see Endo 2009; Morioka 1975; Higashibaba 2001; Lee 2010; Dunoyer 2011).

### 2-2-1. Religious Leadership Patterns

Left without priests or religious instruction, the early Japanese Crypto-Christians/Catholics were quite isolated. Under these conditions, they resolutely relied on lay leaders, inspired very much by the lay hierarchy (*dōjuku* and *kanbō*) of the time (Turnbull 1998: 70-71), to lead the religious services. The leadership organization set in motion was as follows: *Chōkata* 帳方 (headman, in charge of ceremonies (baptism, recital of *Orasho* [a set of Catholic prayers], *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, marriage, anointing the sick, funerals, etc.), *Mizukata* 水方 (baptizer), and *Kikiyaku* 聞き役 (in charge of communication). The names for leadership positions and the style of organization vary according to the community and the district. It also bears observing that they followed both the hereditary and consensual based systems of leadership selection. In Kurosaki region and Gotō archipelago, for example, the office of the leader is given to the son or brother of the former leader rather than to the most eligible person through consensus, a pattern clearly observed in some communities on the isolated islands of Hirado and Ikitsuki.

### 2-2-2. Ritual and Devotional Practices

Equally in the quest of staying hidden in the face of persecution, the early Japanese Crypto-Christians (*Senpuku Kirishitan*) vividly developed their own rituals, liturgies, symbols, and produced a few spiritual texts, objects and images, intelligibly adapting them from remnants of 16th century Portuguese (medieval) Catholicism and often camouflaging them in forms borrowed from the surrounding (medieval) Buddhism, Shinto, and local customs. These survival strategies include a sacred book (Bible-like narrative) called “*Tenchi hajimari no koto*” (The beginning of Heaven and Earth), which comprises familiar Bible stories, apocryphal Christian material, Japanese religion, and folklore, as well as story of Japanese martyrs (see Figure 1-1). The historical background is that this book was probably committed to paper in about 1823 (Tagita 1978: 36), and as such it is particularly associated with the Kakure Kirishitan communities in Sotome (present-day Kurosaki) and Gotō archipelago (Turnbull 1996; Miyazaki 1996; Whelan 1996). Moreover, they reproduced *Konchirisan no ryaku* (An Abridgment of Contrition), which was transcribed into Japanese by Bishop Luis Cerquiera in 1603 and printed in Nagasaki in the same year (Laures 1957: 91; quoted by Turnbull 1998: 74). This contrition must have reportedly assuaged the guilt felt for stepping on *fumi-e*, holding Buddhist funerals and all the other compromises Hidden Christians were forced to make in order to keep on practicing their faith secretly. In this specific context, it also bears observing that the sacrament of baptism (as means of adhesion and salvation), which lay people were allowed to perform in the absence of a priest, appears to be here a typical Christian ritual that the underground Church did not in any way attempt to acculturate, or to disguise as a Shinto or Buddhist rite (Turnbull 1998: 80).

Moreover, the early Japanese Crypto-Christians produced an annual calendar of worship called “*Basuchan reki* バスチャン暦 or *Basuchan no koyomi*” (the calendar of Bastian), “which tradition says was revealed in a vision to Bastian (a Japanese Catechist), who was martyred in 1659 (See Figure 1-2). In his vision Bastian’s master San Juan-sama (distorted Portuguese for St John) appeared before him and passed on to him the knowledge of the calendar, then disappeared, walking across the surface of the sea (Kataoka 1979: 558; reviewed by Turnbull 1998: 56). San Jiwan was reportedly a Portuguese missionary who took particular care of the Kakure Kirishitan survivors in the present-day Kurosaki district (formerly Sotome) during the period of persecution. Despite some fine legendary tales that serve to define the saint’s identity and his marvelous deeds in the region, including his supernatural qualities according to some believers, little is known about him. But, this fact, according to Kakure Kirishitan informants, does not seem to really matter, for their longstanding religious sentiment towards San Jiwan depends on oral report of his deeds, transmitted over generations (for further details on the cult of San Jiwan, see Munsu 2015: 269-270). There is considerable evidence that the preservation of this Church calendar (*Basuchan reki*)

was and still remains quite central to the faith of Kakure Kirishitan communities in Sotome, Gotō and Nagasaki.

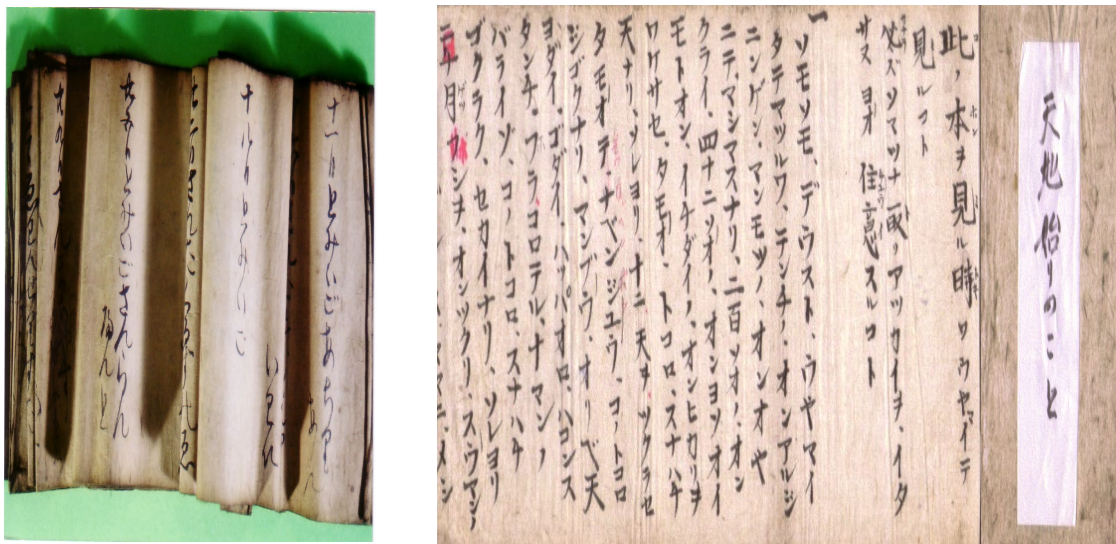


Figure 1-1

Tenchi Hajimari no Koto

Bible-like Narrative

(Murakami Community in Shimo-Kurosaki)

Photo by the Author, 19-07-2004



Figure 1-2

Calendar of Bastian-sama

(Murakami Community)

Photo by the Author, 19-07-2004

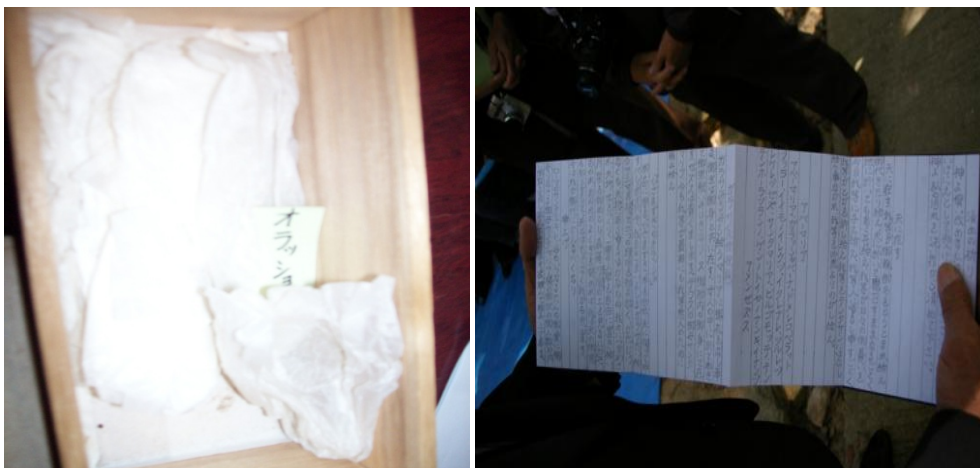


Figure 1-3 Orasho (Kakure Kirishitan Prayers)  
(Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author, 31-10-2014

Another major production by the early Japanese Crypto-Christians was a set of payers called *Orasho* (after the Latin *Oratio*), which they dimly remembered and passed down orally to avoid detection (see Figure 1-3). As such *Orasho* should be more accurately regarded as a set of distorted Catholic prayers whose recitation constituted perhaps the most important part of their daily practice, or even an expression of their spirituality (part of the structure of being). Nevertheless, *Orasho* still remains “unintelligible” in content. This is so because it consists of “an amalgam of printed 16th century Portuguese, Latin and Japanese texts and a number of undecipherable words, of which formal leaders of Kakure Kirishitan communities hitherto had no knowledge. In fairness, however, I learned that they include the Our Father (The Lord’s Prayer), Hail Mary, Creed, Salve Regina, and other standards,” which the members of Kakure Kirishitan communities hold and remember collectively. Those that had been translated into Japanese changed little over the centuries, but not so for those in Latin or Portuguese. For example, “*Ave Maria gratia plena*” became “*Abe Mariya hashiyabena*” (Munsi 2008: 230, 238). In addition, the early Japanese secret Christians specifically borrowed from Buddhism the melodic progression and rhythm of *Sutra* and intelligibly adapted it to the reciting-reading and singing of their prayers (*Orasho*), while keeping the same format of Catholic texts (for concrete examples of these prayers and hymns, see Minagawa (1981, 2004). It was clear then, and is even clear now that, for the most part, practitioners did not understand the contours and implications of what they recite during their praying gathering; neither did they seem very interested in the specific psycho-religious and theological meaning of their specific Catholic



prayers (*Orasho*), behavior or of various symbols they intelligibly use in a concrete spatio-temporary location.

A further camouflage strategy was the usage of a two-fold funeral service: the official one conducted by the Buddhist priest of the *dannadera* at which the family were registered, and a brief Christian one hastily carried out at home by themselves according to their own protocols, and interestingly, with the overt aim of nullifying the effects of the *Sutra* recited by the Buddhist Officiant, and were commonly known as *Kyōkeshi no Orasho* (*Sutra* extinguishing prayers) in Gotō archipelago (Kataoka 1997: 275). This was actually a time in funeral rites, which generated with specific practices. First, instead of buying a given posthumous name for an ancestor, they attached to the title “San’ (Portuguese for *Saint*) to their deceased member’s Christian name. Eventually, this was done on the basis of their shared-religious assumption that “all Kakure Kirishitan dead do not only go heaven but all become saints” (Filus 2003: 98). Second, they separated the so-called *Basuchan no seiboku* or sacred wood of Bastian” [Sebastian] bit by bit into pieces, wrapped it in white cloth, and fixed it on the forehead of their deceased member, as a passport for heaven. Whether understood as a medium for remembering their prominent figure Bastian [Sebastian] and recapturing his spirit, or as a protection against evil spirits, or simply as an art of traditional ancestor veneration, it is readily apparent that the act of wrapping the “sacred wood of Bastian” had a profound meaning in the religious beliefs and practices of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. Still preserved in many individual Kakure Kirishitan families, this “sacred wood of Bastian” attests to the deep yearning of their generations. The tradition that has crystallized around it over decades is intriguing (for further details, see Mushi 2011: 169-170).

It is recognized that the Catholicism of the ‘Christian Century’ in Japan (1549-1639) was colored by “a rich vein of popular devotion to saints, martyrs and holy images [and objects], which was encouraged by the Jesuits along with the enthusiastic espousal of the sacraments” (Turnbull 1998: 81; see also 90-91). This context thus helps us understand that the kind of religious syncretism set in motion by secret Christians was partly foreseen in the camouflage strategy for religious gatherings and partly to perpetuate the indigenous ancestor veneration, for example, producing a Japanese statue of Christ as the Buddha (or statues of Jesus disguised as Izo), identifying the *kami toyo-tame hime* with the Virgin Mary (or statues of the Virgin Mary that look nearly indistinguishable from the Buddhist bodhisattva, Kannon), and enshrining martyrs and ancestors as *kamisama* (closely analogous to the Shinto idea of *kami*), without renouncing their fundamental Christian beliefs. By involving themselves into such a conceptual type identity (re-created worldview) and tangible or physical type of identity (rituals and spiritual texts), some early Japanese Crypto-Christians finally

came to intelligibly establish the ritually-prepared communal meal or *Ohatsuhoage* as explained in the following.

### 2-3. The Establishment of the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Institution

Here the inspiration of the early Japanese crypto-Christians (*Senpuku Kirishitan*) gleaned from Shinto patterns (practical ways) of the *hatsuho* is helpful in understanding the basics of our subject matter. As observed earlier, the concept of *hatsuhō* itself, literally, signifies “first fruits”. It is a common concept in Shinto world and is deeply ingrained in Japanese local cultural idioms. The key thing, however, is the centrality of the autumn rice harvest experience in a specific setting. On the occasion of thanksgiving to the deities for the autumn rice harvest, the best of the first rice shoots are usually removed and presented as an offering. From the spectrum of Shinto rituals (which have both a religious and a social component), however, the very concept of *hatsuhō* has by extension come to mean foodstuffs being consecrated and offered to *kami*, and joyfully consumed. There is a curious parallelism between the symbolism of this typical Shinto ritual practice and the agricultural first fruits offering required by God of Israelites (Deuteronomy 26; see also Exodus 23: 19; Leviticus 23: 10; Proverbs 3: 9-10. Biblical texts found in Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999:297; 130; 189; 1011).

In point of fact, the early Japanese crypto-Christians took up, among other things, the specific Shinto tendencies of *hatsuhō* and intelligibly incorporated them, with very slight changes, into their basically Christian structures, rites and institutions, albeit in secret. More specifically, they axiomatically substituted the Eucharistic species of bread and wine (goodness of creation) by Japanese rice (the stuff and staple of everyday life) and *sake* as precious offerings to God. In so doing, they involved themselves into a ritually-prepared communal meal underlying a typically thanksgiving gathering. From that point on, they constructed seemingly integrated minority communities and their secret corporate religious actions with patchy piecemeal adaptation consistently generated the so-called *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony as the alternative of the Eucharist. The rationale behind such a religious approach was indeed their Christian/Catholic belief in the importance and dignity of the Eucharist (Catholic Mass) as being at once a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, of propitiation and satisfaction.

Of significance to us, however, is the specific study by Miura's (1980: 96-97) of this ritually-prepared communal meal. One key site of his comment gives us some deep insights into these Kirishitan communities and their religious determinants:

On account of seclusion, when the hidden Christians eventually run out of the two Eucharistic species, they intelligibly replaced bread and wine by rice and

*sake*, while the role of the Catholic priest was replaced by that of the village chief. They used to alternatively gather on Sundays in front of *Butsudan* behind which they placed a cross with the portrayal of Jesus Christ, precisely at the house of a nominated community member. There they prayed intensively, though they did not understand completely the inner meaning of both the text they were reading or reciting, and that of the religious practices they were performing. Although their text was readily an amalgam of Latin, Portuguese and Japanese, its content was closely similar to that used by Catholics. When the prayers and consecration of precious offerings were over, they came together for a ritually-prepared communal meal during which individual community members would receive, from their respective formal leaders, some *sashimi* [or rice] and *sake* which he has just blessed and offered to both God and the righteous ancestors. Such a religious pattern is called *Holy Communion* in Christian terms. Indeed, it is during *the Holy Communion* that Christians received the bread and wine that has been, by transubstantiation, spiritually transformed fully into the literal body and blood of Christ (Japanese translation by the author of this article).

Admittedly, the modest contribution of the early Japanese Crypto-Christians (Catholics) to the transformation of hybrid notions and patterns into a ritual practice labeled as *Ohatsuhoage*—with its attendant beliefs and combined properties and actions—could be, in concept and practice, deemed a milestone achievement and enduring religious legacy that gave pride of place to Kakure Kirishitan culture and tradition in the region. Nonetheless, it is to be regretted, for example, that Kakure Kirishitan leaders of my sample have never written records of their lived-religious experiences and struggles. As a result, very little is known about the profiles of the prominent pioneering figures of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual institution. However, our primary information gleaned from Murakami community (Shimokurosaki) has appropriately attributed (at least in part) its original conception and institutionalization to Shichiroemon and Maguemon, two Urakami (Nagasaki)-born men highly regarded as prominent forebears and liminal figures in Kakure Kirishitan society.

In 1630 Shichiroemon and Maguemon, two Urakami-Nagasaki-born Crypto-Christians realized that ten or twelve years have passed since missionaries were expelled from Japan and their return still remained uncertain. Thus, they intelligibly initiated and produced, on the basis of their little knowledge as lay Catechists (*dōjuku* and *kanbō*), the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice. Not only was it highly regarded as being a ritual substitute of the Eucharist, but also it significantly made practitioners integrally become in communion and or in communication with saints and their deceased predecessors. Thereafter this

religious enterprise gradually produced a distinctly Japanese sect of the Catholic religion. Since then, Kakure Kirishitan survivors have to date for about 250 and 300 years intelligibly preserved and transmitted this ritual activity over generations (Personal communication, 19 July 2004).

In a similar vein, Kataoka's (2012: 74-77) synthetic review of striking ethno-historical accounts about both above-mentioned prominent figures from Urakami have been referred to in Kakure Kirishitan literature to great effect to establish and connect, in a more conspicuous way, their defined religious commitments and outstanding achievements—a fact that to my mind calls for further scrutiny.

#### 2-4. Secret Spread and Preservation

Practically (if past evidence is any guide), it would not be far wrong to suggest that the secret spread at an incredible pace and the long-term preservation of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice in the region—from a particular point of origin: Nagasaki and from its indigenous local culture—would have been facilitated in great part by its inter-parent household nature. Just so, within the boundaries of the then emerging Kakure Kirishitan units of networks (inter-communal relations), community formal leaders (*Chōkata*) distinguished themselves from other members' actions in learning by heart the basic patterns of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event and transmitting them from one to another, albeit in different ways. Luckily, despite the threat of persecution, they all started practicing it in their own small communities (homes of their shared practices and interests) where they were also inspired by religious and spiritual traditions, and then repeatedly encouraged its diffusion in the region. If one takes a look at the historical conditions that framed this development, the substantial difference between these Japan's tiny, marginalized Kakure Kirishitan segments in a constant struggle for minimal survival and those hidden faith-based communities found elsewhere, such as in China, India, and Indonesia, mostly lies, at least in my opinion, on the institution and performance of the *Ohatsuhoage* or ritual substitute of the Eucharist by their community formal leaders (*Chōkata*).

By such indications, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual institution as we understand it today, is arguably a symbolic material representation from a particular historical period of Christian persecution in Japan. Practically, however, there has been a readily apparent pregnant shift or transfer of the very notion of *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity from a particular *survival strategy* into an interesting, distinct, and empirically traceable *religious phenomenon* in its own right. At one level, its retention is very much observed in remote Nagasaki areas such as Ikitsuki, Hirado, Wakamatsu, Kashiyama, Shitsu, and Sotome (present-day Kurosaki), the setting of Shusaku Endo's acclaimed Novel *Silence* (2009)—which deftly draws from the oral history of the local Kirishitan communities pertaining to time of suppression of the local Catholic Church.

Next I will turn to a fine-grained review of the vital concepts and themes related to our foregoing discussion.

### **3. Kakure Kirishitan Survivors**

After the ban on Christianity from 1614 was lifted in 1873, a sizeable number of the underground Christians (*Senpuku Kirishitan*)—especially from Gotō archipelago and Urakami (Nagasaki)—eventually returned to the Roman Catholic Church. Although the hidden Christian communities have been tolerated by the Japanese for almost 150 years now, remnants of them have continued their separate and partly private life as independent, Christian communities. Known in both the local populace and literature under the appellation “Kakure Kirishitan” (Hidden Christians), they have indeed kept to the religious activities and culture left behind by their deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith with whom they share ethnicity, historical and Christian/Catholic roots—even though allowing permutations of form and content. It appears that the ‘hiddenness’ has really become part of their continued Christian life and worship (Munsi 2014b: 353, 2015: 268). In Part 17 of a series entitled “Great Moments in Catholic History”, published in 1983 in the journal *The Catholic Register*, Fr. Jacques Monet aptly calls it “one of the most extraordinary acts of preserving faith in the long history of the Church”, while Pope Pius went to far as to describe it as a ‘miracle’. (For an encompassing, detailed, and intricately woven ethnography of these seemingly integrated religious minorities in Nagasaki settings, see Tagita 1978; Masaki 1973; Kataoka 1997; Furuno 1969; Miyazaki 1996, 2001, 2014, Harrington 1993, 1998; Turnbull 1998; Filus 2003, 2009; Lee 2010; Munsi 2012a, 2012b, 2015, 2018 among others) these seemingly integrated religious minorities, see Tagita 1978; Masaki 1973; Kataoka 1997; Furuno 1959; Miyazaki 1996, 2001; 2014; 2018; Whelan 1992; Harrington 1993, 1998; Turnbull 1998; Filus 1992; 2003, 2009; Lee 2010 among others).

#### **3-1. Common Heritage and Fond Memories**

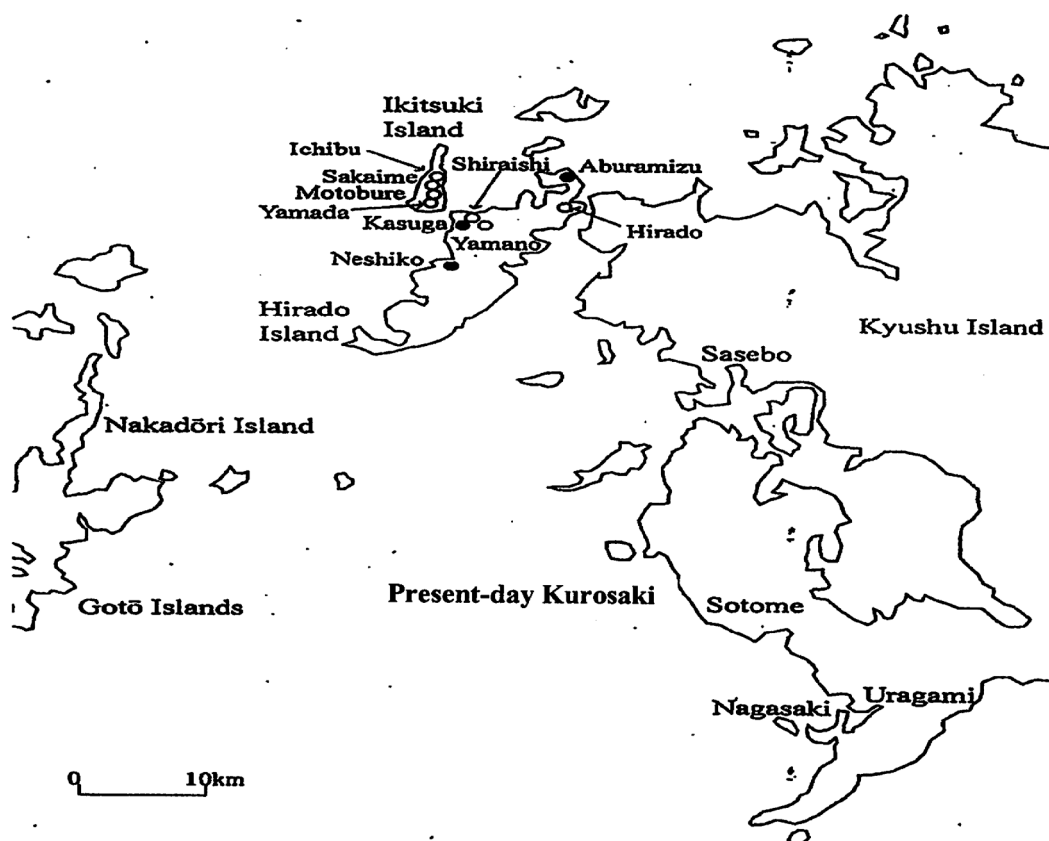
Particularly intriguing is the question of why remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities continue to exist and function privately in some remote areas of Nagasaki prefecture. The reasons for this varied. One of the more consistent findings is that the tiny Kakure Kirishitan communities of 1,500 to 2,000 have survived in virtue of shared fond memories of their righteous ancestors in faith, whom they will eventually become. These ‘mediator saints’ are accessible to the Kakure Kirishitan survivors partly because there are relics, images, and records of them in the region. Kakure Kirishitan believers are therefore inheritors of the knowledge secretly passed down to them, along

with all its gaps, erasures, and writings. Nosco (1993) provides us with the best account of this secret transmission and maintenance of faith and tradition within a long latency (incubation) period. It would be surprising if this has not been the case.

Looking back, we recall how these early Japanese Christians showed, despite relentless persecution, tremendous perseverance in their Christian faith and community life. This great witness should not be treated here in isolation but researched in conjunction with other features of Kakure Kirishitan communities. Kakure Kirishitan believers have long considered that their righteous ancestors in faith should be remembered, re-imagined, and praised over generations. Conversations with individual Kakure Kirishitan families in Shimokurosaki, Shitsu and Wakamatsu have revealed that a few still remain instrumental in transmitting orally those long-proven social and religious values and passing them on (with little or no distortion of content) to the young generation. Along with this storytelling, we can add the too often overlooked *silent transmission* of central tenets through the very presence of and activities of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in both private and public spheres (Munsi 2015: 268). I draw attention to this most overlooked consideration merely because I have long been of the opinion that “history is not only shaped by stories that are told, but also by those that are silenced or forgotten (Climbo & Cattell 2002: 163). With this background, it remains, however, to glimpse our research site and highlight the social conditions of our subjects, before delving into our discussion.

### **3-2. A Community in Decline**

The number of religiously committed Kakure Kirishitan individuals in Nagasaki settings was relatively stable in the years after the first systematic study of them reported by Tagita (1978), but subsequently there has been a dramatic decrease. According to our tally, there were only 3,000 Kakure Kirishitan survivors as of 1 July 2004, living exclusively in five localities: Kurosaki, Kashiya, Wakamatsu, Ikitsuki, and Hirado (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2 Study Area**

Recent numbers are more controversial, ranging from 1000 to 1500 Kakure Kirishitan practitioners that many scholars and observers readily acknowledge (Doak 2011: 27) to nearly 2000 (most of whom are elderly) that local Catholic Church-related groups (including myself) argue for either case a further steep fall from the 3,000 counted in 2004 when I began my fieldwork. This unprecedented demographic shrinkage is the results of various historical events, together with sociological and economic threats. During interviews, it particularly transpired that the mass conversion to either Pure Land Buddhism or Catholicism (the number of cases of believers in Amakusa, Imamura, and Kurosaki are quite revealing) in the Showa period (1926-1989) was also another important factor in this drastic decline of Kakure Kirishitan populations. Alongside the geographic dispersion and social mobility which have has fundamentally and seriously altered conditions of Kakure Kirishitan membership in social networks (Munsi 2014a: 40-42), their lived-religious experiences were further compromised by structural changes, including the new economic and social infrastructures launched in 2005 by local governments. During the course of the study, for example, our research sites (Kurosaki, Sotome, Shitsu, and Kashiyama) and the surrounding country town were incorporated into Nagasaki city (4 January 2005) under the name Kurosaki (see Figure 3-1, Figure 3-2).



Figure 3-1

Map of (Former) Sotome District



Figure 3-2

Map of the Present-day Kurotsuki District

(1) San Jiwan Karematsu Shrine

(2) Kurotsuki Catholic Church

A major factor contributing to the membership crisis, however, is the rarity of few adherents to a community that is already in decline due to the aging problem and the young believers' lack of interest in the Kakure Kirishitan faith. Negative perceptions of urban communities also make the present-day remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities an unattractive choice for new adherents, especially for young believers. Today these faith-based communities therefore constitute a tiny, marginalized minority of the local populace, and their survival is in question. Despite this drastic membership decline, it becomes evident, under scrutiny, that they still retain their minimal survival through religious practices such as *Ohatsuhoage*, highly repetitive Catholic-sounding prayers (*Orasho*) whose texts above all others have to be learned by heart.

### 3-3. The Religious Expression of Kakure Kirishitan Survivors Today

Figure 4-1 shows that the religious stereotypes of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners involved, as observed earlier, beliefs and practices combining elements borrowed from Buddhism, Shinto, and local customs, but firmly rooted in the tenets of Catholicism, especially those pertaining to the Council of Trent. In their contemporary setting, however, the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners of my sample have sought to make a collective effort to represent the past in which they it and on which they rely for their religious experience and expression. This suggests that they have understood the relevance of their religious life on the tenets of religious culture left behind by their forefathers in faith. In the process of creative adaptations or religious adjustments, as



Figure 4-2 illustrates, the present-day remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities try to keep on the top the religious symbols and practices pertaining to Kakure Kirishitan faith, without losing sight of a few forms of Buddhism, Shinto and local customs that have been long adopted for the *sake* of camouflage. Thus in building their community life Kakure Kirishitan practitioners often created unique religious forms patterned after, but not identical, to Buddhist and Shinto forms. They actively and explicitly used Japanese cultural traditions or local customs (e.g. way of dressing and gathering, way of cooking food) to define themselves as Japanese in this specific context. How indeed could it be otherwise? These and other practical forms will be addressed in the interrelated sections that follow.

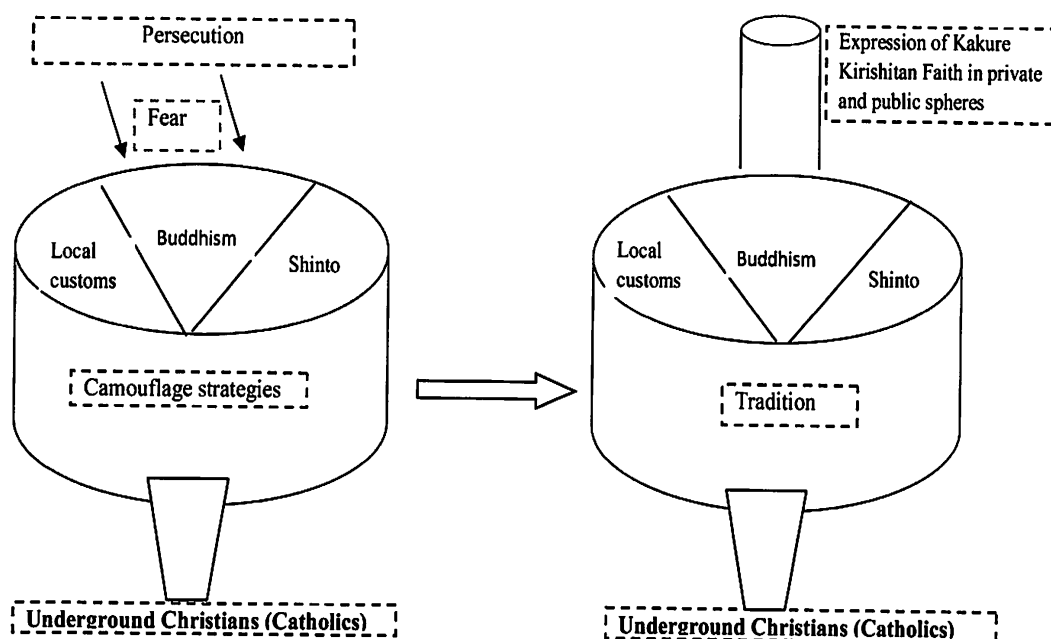


Figure 4-1

Oppressed Kakure Kirishitan Survivors

Figure 4-2

Present-day Kakure Kirishitan Survivors

In short, Kakure Kirishitan survivors express their faith both privately (when they gather in the house of the community formal leaders) and publicly during the celebration of their festivals. In the past, it may be remembered, the recital of *Orasho* was held secretly as Kakure Kirishitan minorities pursued their prominent values, religious beliefs and practices only within the confines of their private lives (Munsi 2008: 231-232, 2013; 107-108). Today, however, for the most part, it can be virtually shared, proclaimed or recited in public spheres, such as during the ‘tranquil and highly centered’ Kirishitan Shrine Festivals held annually by Kakure Kirishitan communities

in Nagasaki settings, where they share “sacred spaces” (Standaert 2009) and integrally become themselves involved into interreligious gatherings. It seems that we are dealing here with a socio-religious situation in which “a restricted number of people are asked too often to disclose aspects of their religious lives which in ordinary circumstances would remain hidden” (Davie 2012: 283).

#### **4. Framing the Ohatsuhoage Ritual Event in its Specific Setting**

In what follows, I first review the aims of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event that has long rooted Kakure Kirishitan survivors in their historical context. Focusing on one field-based case study, I then outline its structure and the significance of the communal meal. Drawing on the insights from the perspectives of contemporary anthropology and event-centered ethnography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin 2012), I finally hope to have provided the necessary scholarly tool to analyze and illustrate its four components: actor-participants, audience, scripted episodic behavior, and ritual artifacts.

##### **4-1. Basic Aims and Meanings**

The chief purpose or meaning of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is twofold. The first immediate practical purpose is to ensure the celebration of a symbolic equivalent or ritual substitute of the Eucharist. Such a ritual event’s symbolic significance contextually reflects the common belief in various rites of conspicuous consumption which usually involve food and drink highly regarded as objects with special material and symbolic value, and ‘solemnly consumed in forms of feasts [and] banquets’ (Falassi 1987). Seen from a historical perspective, conspicuous consumption ultimately becomes, for Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, a single creative directional process which is sustained by their individual faith-based communities’ psycho-religious/spiritual aspirations and desires. The second, and seldom explored, aim of this ritually-prepared communal meal is to stimulate the individual participants’ imagination, cherished memories and beliefs, and consequently engage them in a communion and/or communication with deceased forebears who have shaped and fostered their community and family conditions, much more like in the ways Christians believe in the presence of Christ in the sacred meal of communion and in the communion with saints. Thus a field of positive religious emotion seems to arise when the individual Kakure Kirishitan believers gather together to perform the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. This is evidently based on good accounts and fond memories of the past, or on what we can call, borrowing Marea Teski’s well-noted term, a series of

“memory repositories” that constitute a “binding force in the communities and a way of passing on social memories endowed with meaning” (Climbo & Cattell 2002: ix). I will detail below the phases of the elaborate *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event.

#### 4-2. Preparation

The days leading up to the celebration of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event are the time for the preparation that occurs mainly in the house of the community formal leaders (*Chōkata*), with considerably high levels of female “silent” participation. Here I have particularly identified perhaps its three most distinctive aspects which typically reflect the influence of the locally-oriented socio-cultural and psycho-religious perceptions. Firstly, individual members are involved in the material preparation, such as buying the necessary foodstuffs or offerings (rice, *sake*, *nishime*, and *sashimi*) and arranging the *tatami* room prayer, candles, and incense. Secondly, they are often beforehand involved into a gradual ‘moral and spiritual preparation’ such as housecleaning, increased praying, fasting, abstinence, and a readily visible change in self-representation toward a greater modesty and hospitality. On the simplest level, one female informant stated: “For us all these ritual preliminaries are themselves prayers and hence are highly regarded as spiritual participation—especially in some instances of one’s absence in the actual celebration”. I would point out that the emotional preparation is social and merry, and has the function of building up expectation and excitement, while at the same time instilling individual members to reconnect to the past. The third aspect of preparation is essentially aesthetical. The gestures, body language, spatial orientation, and movements of individual participants are deemed important and contribute (consciously or unconsciously) to their better preparation of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event.

The overall organizational preparation thus entails both the Kakure Kirishitan ritual protocol and the spiritual obligation of reconnecting to the past. To quote one key male informant, “All these ritual preliminaries encourage us to invest ourselves further into the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event as we reconnect ourselves to the past, showing respect to our deceased predecessors and remembering their contribution to our Kakure Kirishitan communities.” These ritual preliminaries, in the most general sense, accord well with the essential pre-ritual behavioral elements described by Parkin (1992). By working together and effectively as ‘psycho-religious functioning agents’, these individual Kakure Kirishitan families, much more like the highly religious families reported by Dollahite and Marks (2009: 389), have long provided “an initial bridge between religious contexts and better family outcomes.”

Particularly galling for certain members are nevertheless the concerns and constraints over this lengthy and articulated preparation of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony. One consistent matter on which many Kakure Kirishitan practitioners of

my sample and those studied by Turnbull (1988: 165) in Ikitsuki are widely agreed upon is that all this involvement and requires quite an amount of self-sufficiency, with time-consuming preparation and preservation of food. On the surface, however, it transpired that any attempt to choose this work is quite risky (as one might not be able to live up the standard the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual institution requires), and hence any insufficient preparations and performance would make, at least in part, the ritual itself become a fiasco in both the religious/spiritual and the financial/material sense. This is almost certainly one reason why some individual members are generally much more reluctant to consider or think about the possibility of taking leadership positions in their respective Kakure Kirishitan communities and to even regard such a task as almost impossible. This has also meant, as some community formal leaders (*Chōkata*) remarked in retrospect, a related factor that tends to restrict the number of times for celebrating this particular ritually-prepared communal meal within Kakure Kirishitan communities—a factor that they did not necessarily see changing in the near future.

#### 4-3. The Ritual Setting

While most religious communities have fixed separate places of worship, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners gather on a private and secret, or even more restricted and modestly discrete Japanese *tatami* prayer room (see Figure 5-1; Figure 5-2) set within the house of the community formal leader (*Chōkata*). Just as the Vedic Agnicayana ritual strictly “takes place inside an enclosure” (Staal 1989: 71), so too the specific

*tatami* prayer room, according to the Kakure Kirishitan protocol, is strictly being bound to a designated, special, presumably restricted location. Thus some possible parallels may be noted here with house church movement in China.

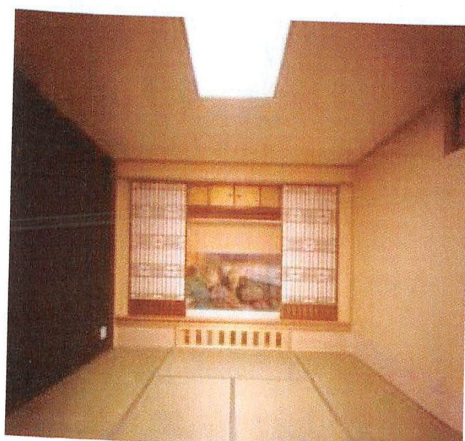


Figure 5-1  
A Japanese Tatami Room

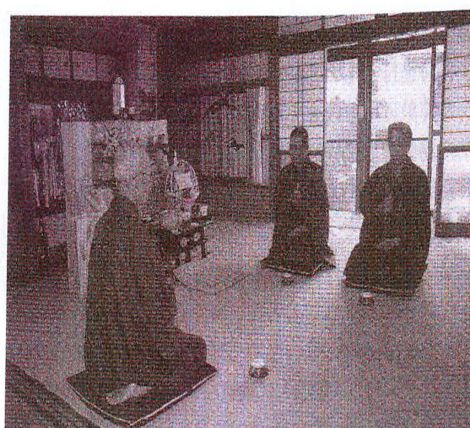


Figure 5-2  
Kakure Kirishitan Practitioners  
seating on a single tatami prayer  
room

The symbolic aspects of this specific *tatami* prayer room will be further considered in the next section, but two important points should be mentioned here. Firstly, its continuing usage— as a place of unified intercession and corporate offering or worship in the body of Christ through the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice—by the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners should be appropriately related to a tradition of camouflage strategy left behind by their deceased predecessors whom they put in the forefront of their consciousness. It is this, more than anything else, that continues to make leaders and traditional forms of organization appear to be so important in the lived-religious experiences of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. When interviewed, Kimura Tomokoyoshi (a community formal leader of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in Shitsu) recognized and affirmed that: “During the single celebration of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event, we highly regard the *tatami* prayer room as being a key symbol and a powerful metaphor in our Kakure Kirishitan religion and worldview.”

Secondly, the entire set up of the *tatami* prayer room is readily very simple and modern, but it has all the symbolic properties essential to a single *Ohatsuhoage* ritual setting: an altar, a cross, a home-Buddhist altar (*Butsudan* 仏壇), statues of the Virgin Mary, photographs of saints, and piece of cloth of martyrs on the table-like altar. It transpires that the small table set as altar near a Buddhist altar is apparently the central place of attention or the point of significance in the immediately surrounding ritual territory. Here the elaborate Buddhist altar, so far observed in houses of the community formal leaders, was purposely oriented toward the east, much more in the way observed by virtuous Pure Land Buddhist practitioners. Of particular interest, it strengthened claims of their deceased predecessors’ historicity and deeds, and (so to speak) the charisma of their chosen private-*tatami*-prayer room. It could be therefore argued that the *tatami* prayer room inherently relates to, conditions, and constitutes aspects of the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners’ religious life including: belief, ritual, meaning, aesthetics, and experience.

#### **4-4. Ritual Celebrant and Circumstances**

According to strict protocol rules of Kakure Kirishitan communities, the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* can only be secretly performed by the community formal leaders (*Chōkata*). These are baptized and non-ordained men who have, either by inheritance or selection, taken over the leadership role within the communities for a certain period. Note that the strict principle of being a ‘baptized man’ seemingly originated both from the most discussed Roman Catholic Church’s organizing and canonical law for acceding to priesthood: “A baptized male one receives sacred ordination validly” (see Can.1024), and perhaps from the manhood-oriented aspect of Japanese leadership.

More generally, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice is performed three times per month, according to the specified Kakure Kirishitan community's ethos (codes of behavior) and elaborated lunar annual liturgical calendar (*Bastian no higuri or koyomi* [The calendar of Bastian]) mentioned briefly before. Its fundamental aspects thus reflect what Assmann (1995: 129) called "figures of memory" whose 'memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)." Traditionally the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is mostly held with a religious fervor during the most solemn celebrations of Christmas Eve (*Otaiya* literally 'big evening'), Lent (otherwise known as *kanashimi*), the Easter vigil and many other events (for further details, see Kataoka 1997: 194-197; Turnbull 1998: 170-173).

In the individual members' process of forming a unified sense of community identity, however, the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony can today, as in the past, be equally conducted in other specific circumstances, such as baptisms and weddings, birthday celebrations in child welfare homes, as well as times of crisis, praise, veneration, thanksgiving, and petition for protection and earthly blessings. Peripheral mention in other historical records suggests that all these formal and informal or even tacit occasions for performing this home-centered priestly liturgy have, in some sense, a special mythical and ritual nature that aims to guarantee the welfare and prosperity of Kakure Kirishitan individuals and communities with their own open socio-cultural and historical contexts.

#### 4-5. Protocol and Participants

Ritual participants (long-term individual members whose involvement with the community varied in terms of leadership and commitment) are usually required to adhere to the long-standing Kakure Kirishitan official line and protocol when attending the modestly discrete *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice: no photography, no writing of notes on ceremonies, and no audio-visual recording. This is simply because "it is more generally expected that actor-participants ought to enter into both the specific spiritual atmosphere and repetitions of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event, and not be mere observers", commented our key informants. Understandably, then, ritual participants here adopt certain explicit and implicit attitudes. This suggests that they must live, breath, feel, hear, and totally experience its most important cycle: the flow and ebb of the dynamic interplay between the visible community of the living and the invisible community of God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and their deceased predecessors. It also bears observing in this context that the specific kind of code which each Kakure Kirishitan community establishes on a customary basis varies according to the instrumental goals of the community and the particular religious tradition and experience it has inherited.

Interestingly enough in this context, however, though these obligations may be taken seriously, we have noticed within Kakure Kirishitan communities studied some signs of exception and flexibility over the long-standing strict protocol or moral and religious prescriptions of their faith-based communities. A noticeable example would be the American visual anthropologist, Christal Whalen. During her second phase of fieldwork in 1995, she was reportedly allowed by the Kakure Kirishitan community on Narushima Island to make an audio-video recording of their solemn religious ceremony (*Otaiya*) that denotes ‘big evening’, the Kakure Kirishitan celebration of the Christmas Eve. Immediately thereafter she was then able to stage its aspects in her 35-minute film entitled “*Otaiya: Japan’s Hidden Christians*” released in 1996. In a very sense, this striking film represents a kind of sequel to her widely cited book (1996) translation *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth (Tenchi Hajimari no Koto)*—a bible-like narrative used by Kakure Kirishitan survivors. Along similar lines to Kakure Kirishitan communities on tiny Ikitsuki Island off Nagasaki (Miyazaki 1996, 2001, 2014; Turnbull 1998), those found in Wakamatsu (Shinkamigoto) have also, on specific occasions and reasons, kindly allowed visitors or researchers to enter their restricted ceremony ground from outside.

Most recently, on 11 October 2016, I had the privilege to make ethnographic video-recordings and timed observations of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony intelligibly conducted with a singularity of purpose by Murakami Shigenori (formal leader of Murakami Community in Shimokurosaki) in the *tatami* prayer room of the Paulus Heim (Nagoya). This took place just a day before the unprecedented *Workshop on Orasho* (Kakure Kirishitan prayers) organized by the Nanzan Center for Christian Archives on 12 October 2016. On this specific occasion, the overall ritual event was reduced to 50 minutes (17:30-18:20) for the convenience of the restricted audience of eight academics from Nanzan University. Observing it first-hand (in a typically non-situated and deterritorialized ritual place that virtually evokes the ritual celebrant’s “translocative position”) and approaching its audio-video recordings, photographs, and related written documents as contextualized practices than mere contents nevertheless allowed me to further gain an intimate insight into the internal realization of its meaning and enactment. Similarly, I concretely experienced the way in which the Kakure Kirishitan survivors’ most important beliefs, core values, and moral order (including norms and assumptions) are revealed through its intelligibility performance.

#### **4-6. The Structure of the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Practice and the Significance of the Communal Meal**

Because of the socio-geographical patterning in the ethnographic distribution of Kakure Kirishitan minorities all over Nagasaki Prefecture, the set schemes (scripts) and contents of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual institution have long been informed and configured by various sources of authority and distortion across a number of physical and mediated spaces. It is evident in the field—even from causal observations—that its nature and degree of performance will vary widely from one community to another, though neatly all Kakure Kirishitan practitioners shared a great common ritual language, heritage, and memory (the contemporized past). Here I draw in particular on a single field case study to highlight the constituent parts and sequences of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event within an exceptional frame of time and space.

#### 4-6-1. Duration and Intentions

The whole celebration *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event lasts for about two hours. The main celebrant (community formal leader) knows that it is important to perform it in precisely the right sequence. Traditionally the Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shimo-Kurosaki have subscribed to the belief that each individual petition deserves one specific *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony. It is often true that the more requested petitions the community formal leader gets from individual members, the more celebrations of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony he should subsequently conduct for different socio-spiritual purposes. Even though “the intentions of particular feast days may differ, the rite itself is a common one, just as the Catholic Mass may be offered up for a variety of intentions, but retains the same liturgy and structure” (Turnbull 1998: 166).

#### 4-6-2. Processes

The overall scheme of the solemn *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity, as especially observed today among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shimo-Kurosaki, contains two essential parts: Saying and singing of the *Orasho* (prayers) and the eating of a communal meal that is somehow shared with the deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith. The second constituent part reflects the Shinto *Naorai*, where food is offered to the *Kami*, and shared among participants. Essentially, however, the overall scheme of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event parallels the Catholic Eucharist, which is central to the life of the Catholic Church. The basic structure of the Catholic Mass has two main parts of equal importance and two framing rites: Introductory Rites (Entrance, Greeting, Penitential Act, Glory to God, Collect), (1) *The Liturgy of the Word* which consists of Biblical readings, the homily, Creed (Profession of faith), and the prayer of the faithful or intercessions. (2) *The Liturgy of the Eucharist* (Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar, Prayer over the Offerings



Eucharistic Prayer), the Lord's Prayer, Sign of Peace, Lamb of God, Communion Rite (The word communion comes from the Greek *koinonia* meaning fellowship or sharing.), Prayer after communion, and Concluding Rites (Optional announcements, Greeting, Blessing, and Dismissal).

Part I: Saying and Singing of the *Orasho* (Prayers)

**4-6-3. Beginnings and Symbolic Objects**

Dressed in dark blue *kimono* or in ordinary Western-style clothes, the individual members secretly gather together in the house of the community formal leader. Upon moving in together, they go through a short ritual where they fix their eyes straightway towards the elaborate Buddhist altar (*Butsudan*) before which each ritual participant bow on entering the set *tatami* prayer room. What is equally interesting is the way in which Christian, Buddhist, Shinto elements and symbols (often presented unconsciously with spiritual connotations), artifacts (reflecting events in the past), and local religious customs are simultaneously surmounted by various material cultural items shared by individual communities from an assumed common origin.

More specifically, the ritual participants sit, in a proper frame of mind to worship, around the table-like altar (a low Japanese table set aesthetically according to a Japanese canon of presentation) upon which two candles are lit at its two head corners. Figures 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, 6-5, 6-6 and 6-7 thus provide vivid illustration of the main symbolic ritual artifacts placed on this table-like altar: the crucifix, statuettes of the Virgin Mary, two trays (plates), two small bowls of rice, two Japanese *sake* cups, two *nishime* dishes, one *sashimi* dish, chopsticks, flowers, incense (for burning), phrases from St. John's discourse at the Last Supper, a sequence of prayers (*Orasho*), written petitions for members' prosperity and well-being. Beneath are placed pieces of clothes of Christian martyrs, the rosary (embedding a superlative, explicit Catholic devotionism), the 'sacred wood of Bastian' (*Basuchan no seiboku*) imbued with spiritual essence, and medals used as amulets. By the same token, the usage of images and photographs with embedded power—especially during funerals or specific intentions for members' well-being—importantly allow Kakure Kirishitan believers to (silently) make what Prosser (1998: 104) aptly coined "statements that cannot be made by words."

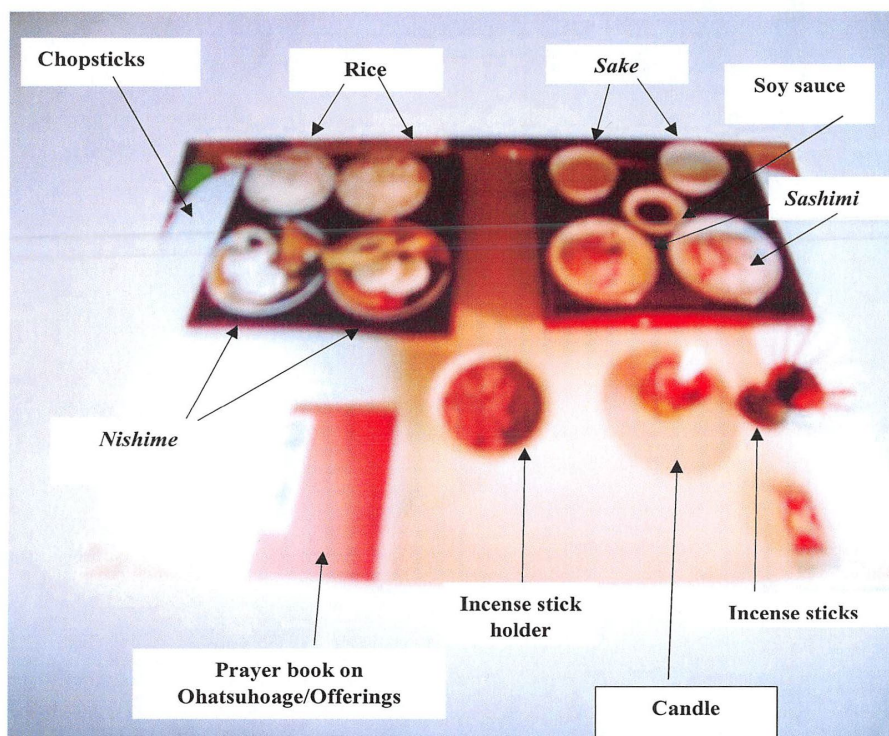


Figure 6-1

Table set as Altar for the Age-Old Ritual Practice  
of Ohatsuhoage (Murakami Community) Photo by the Author, 31-10-2014



Figure 6-2

*Nishime* dish (Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author, 06-11-2005



Figure 6-3  
Clothes of Christian Martyrs and Rosary  
(Murakami Community)

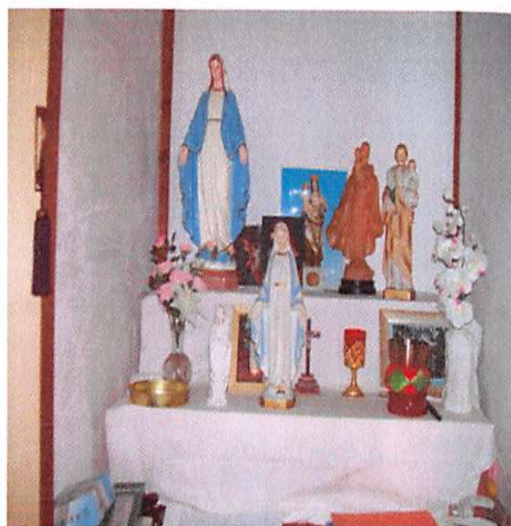


Figure 6-4  
Statuettes of the Blessed Virgin  
Mary of Fatima  
(Murakami Community)



Figure 6-5  
Copper carving of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary used  
during the *Ohatsuhoage*  
ritual practice from  
Meiji Period to April  
2014  
(Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author,  
03-11-2014

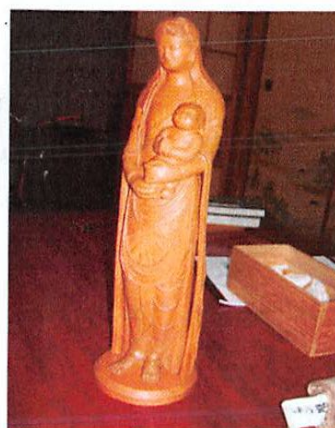


Figure 6-6  
Wood carving of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary  
used during the  
*Ohatsuhoage* ritual  
practice since April  
2014  
(Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author,  
03-11-2014



Figure 6-7  
Holy Water used during  
the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual  
practice  
(Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author,  
03-11-2014

Some of the above-selected ritual food items deserve preliminary comment here. To a certain extent, the restriction on certain food qualities marks a person's ritual status and also prevents liminal danger. For example, *sashimi*—made only of blue fish during Lent and of red fish during Feast Days such as Easter—is particularly used by Murakami community (Shimo-Kurosaki) just as a purposeful strategy of camouflage while it symbolically replaces rice in the fishing-based Fukaura community (Wakamatsu). During the interview sessions, however, informants readily pinpointed that the prolific decisive taboo is most associated with the consumption of meat. Although this avoidance of meat arises from a particular cultural context, it may well be linked to Kakure Kirishitan practitioners' compassion and reverence for the passion of Jesus Christ celebrated on Good Friday in Christian tradition. Moreover, this is elaborated in the idea to prepare and purify their faiths in the Risen Lord against the backdrop of the encouraging quote from the first letter of Saint Peter in the New Testament: "In this you rejoice, although now for a little while you may have to suffer through various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith, more precious than gold that is perishable even though tested by fire, may prove to be for praise, glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 1: 6-7; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999:2063). However, it might have been also reinforced by the hitherto Buddhist and Shinto philosophy and taboo against the consumption of meat.

The implications of these offerings and sacred objects cannot be over-estimated. When interviewed, some key informants from Shimo-Kurosaki clearly indicated that, "These precious objects bring in our minds a picture of the Christian century in Japan and the deeds of our Christian martyrs or righteous ancestors in faith", and others from Shitsu mentioned that, "They bring us together into a communal way of lived-religious experience, sacred in its own right. The material manifestation of our religiosity is evident in these objects and offerings which, in turn, provide salient memories of the spiritual character of this ritual event." It now seems certain in this specific consecrated context that the selected ritual food items are purposely used to comment on the sacred and to reenact venerated stories. This notion of ritual place and objects is closely similar that surrounding the Maya ritual space and atmosphere reported by Johnson, Crandall and Johnson (2015: 75). Yet, Kaell (2017: 144) aptly reminds us that it is precisely through the interaction of these ambient objects that "different elements may be foregrounded or backgrounded at particular times."

#### **4-6-4. The Actual Celebration**

The stance at the beginning is especially the appeal of the ritual celebrant to create a contact with the invisible world through a short spiritual recollection and

concentration in front of the set ritual table-like altar. In tone of profound respect, the ritual celebrant, dressed in a dark blue kimono and assisted by Mizukata and Kikiyaku, then welcomes the community members who secretly gather in faith on the *tatami* prayer room, facing the set ritual table-like altar. Greetings are then exchanged between ritual participants. Immediately the main celebrant proceeds with a brief speech explaining the purpose and the meaning of the prayer gathering. There is no communication between other ritual participants whose common role is fixed within discrete performances. The crucial pattern of collaboration here consists of cherishing the memory of the deceased predecessors who have protected them and promoted their faith, and what comes to the same thing, re-enacting key episodes of the prominent figures of their respective community. “We also offer this communal meal to show and profess loyalty, gratitude and love to them,” commented one key informant from Wakamatsu. This is quite explicit: the ceremony is conducted in an idiom that highlights the ritual equality and indispensability of all individual members, including the invisible populations. In this sense, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event has a function of affirming, justifying and celebrating the worldview of the liminal state.

Next comes the first solemn moment: the recitation-reading of the sequence of the *Orasho* (prayers). Given that the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners highly regard this specific ritual activity as their “dogma”, they afford to perform it under one principle: one must do it right, one must say the prayers right, otherwise it will not have power. As Murakami Shigenori (leader of Kakure Kirishitan community in Shimo-Kurosaki) rightly indicated, “The texts of *Orasho* must be learned by heart. It is much more important to recite them smoothly without mistakes. If, on the other hand, these rituals were performed incorrectly, or worse, ignored altogether, then chaos would ensue. That is why Kakure Kirishitan celebrants always try their best to avoid such a situation.” This narrative from Shimo-Kurosaki is telling because in the absence of other things that most other traditions have, this becomes the thing they have got to be true. Note also in passing that Kakure Kirishitan participants generally do not only understand the conceptual content of what they are reciting, but also the exact historical and theological meaning infused in them. But this readily causes little concerns to them. Instead the communally cited text, though unintelligible, appears an important religious marker for them as both its possessors and inheritors and helps them to integrally become a unique faith-based community with a strong sense of cohesion and distinctiveness. Characteristically for the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, all these the prayers are said in tone borrowed from the Buddhist melody of the *Sutra*. In this specific religious setting, one gradually assists of an extremely solemn and joyous atmosphere with a high level of religious emotion, which in turn creates a sense of awe and mystery. Particularly significant in this specific context (gestural space), at least for a while, social distinctions among participants

disappear, as the structured physicality of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice binds them spiritually together in a single sequence of actions and in a plurality of intimately pre-existing ties. Space and time thus play a key role in distinguishing and maintaining the mundane apart from the special, the sacred from the profane.

The recitation of *Orasho* tends to occur repeatedly and in a fixed sequential pattern throughout the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. The ritual celebrant first addresses a prayer to the Blessed Trinity, saying, “*Deus Padre, filio, Spiritu Santo persona sustancia. Deus, sancta cruz, Amen Jesus*” [God the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit, “one God in three Divine Persons. God, Holy Cross, Amen Jesus”]. This is followed by an invitation to an act of penance called the Kyrie, *eleison* (or “Lord, have mercy”). The sequence reads: “*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison,*” much more in the way it is usually said at every Catholic Mass with the exception of Holy Saturday and also of the Mass on Whitsun Eve at which the prophecies and litany are chanted. Crucial to this part of the celebration is the Kakure Kirishitan believers’ consideration attention to the concepts of purification and reconciliation, which are much pronounced in both Catholic and Shinto communities. Brief illustration must suffice. For Christians, disobedience, putting human will and ego ahead of God, leads to specific sinful acts. Both sin as a state of being and sin as the specific acts to which that state of being leads call for the forgiveness of divine grace, and perhaps penance. From a Shinto perspective, because the divine essence of the human being cannot be lost or destroyed, purification is needed. Purification in effect polishes the dulling overlay of that essence, allowing it to shine with its full brightness. The reality of sin in its individual and community or social forms therefore needs rites of purification and expiation.

The performance of the act of penance thus leads the ritual celebrant to the path of prayers. This entails first of all the congregation’s recitation of the Latin prayer of the *Paaterunausuteru* [Pater Noster, the Lord’s Prayer] in a corrupted form found in their oral tradition. This is indeed a prayer that Jesus Christ taught to His disciples in the New Testament when they asked Him how to pray (Luke 11: 1-4; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999:1751-1752). The prayer is also well-known as the *Pater Noster*, after the first two words of the prayer in Latin. Soon after, the main celebrant recites a brief preface addressed to their deceased members: “Lord, we offer these prayer offerings to the souls of our departed members who rest in eternal life with you. Grant this, O merciful Father, for the *sake* of Jesus Christ, our only Savior, Mediator, and Advocate. Amen.” It would take me too far afield to spell out the implications of this item, for every significant principle of the social structure and religious thought of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners is encapsulated in it. In the case of Japan and Catholic teaching, there is a history of ritual practice to gain benefits in this world and the afterlife rather than just active belief.

Next the ritual celebrant piously recites the *Pater Noster* (7 times). This is followed by the one-time recitation of *Keredo* [*Credo*, Creed], which is the third item in the Ordinary of the Mass in the Catholic Church and constitutes a declaration of faith on the part of the believer. The link with Christian history also serves to emphasize the obvious point that the Credo was performed constantly in Japan during the *Kirishitan* era, barely some four centuries ago. The doctrinal text *Orasho no hon-yaku* [Translation of the *Oratio*], printed in 1600, includes the following statement: Of the various prayers, the *Pater Noster*, *Abemaria* [*Ave Mara*, Hail Mary], *Keredo* [*Credo*, Creed] and the *Madamento* [Ten Commandments] should be specially memorized.” This indicates that it was considered essential for Japanese Christians, at the time, to memorize and sing the Credo. Then the participants recite again the *Pater Noster*.

Immediately afterwards, all ritual participants typically recite the *Ave Maria* (3 times), using intelligibly their fingers in form of a cross as they put their hands together. Immediately they move to make a specific prayer addressed to the Virgin Mary of Fatima. It transpired that its insertion into the sequence of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice stems from the Murakami community members’ particular devotion to her (see Figure 6-4). One thing is at least certain: Of all the messages of the Blessed Virgin Mary, none are as important as those given at Fatima, a remote farming village on a rocky slope in Portugal. The Blessed Virgin Mary of Fatima reportedly appeared six times between 13 May and 13 October 1917 to three little shepherd: Lucia dos Santos and her younger cousins Francisco and Jacinta Marto. She gave them a message of peace and hope for a world engulfed by war. From a Christian perspective, the Blessed Virgin Mary is a central figure in God’s plan of salvation. She plays a major role, second only to her son (Jesus Christ), in the work of redeeming the world. This role involves her in continuous conflict with Satan. At Fatima, however, the Blessed Virgin Mary assured us that final victory would be hers: “In the end my Immaculate Heart will triumph”. From the three shepherd children of Fatima therefore faith grew one of the greatest spiritual movement of our times. (For further details, see Apostoli 2010. In the following there is mention of Saint Bernadette/Lourdes—suggesting the spirituality of the Paris-Mission Priests—but “Fatima devotion” is later).

Immediately afterwards the ritual celebrant recites again the *Pater Noster*. This is followed by the recitation of a lengthy, vivid, reverend and pious *Ave Maria* (50 times). Finally, the ritual celebrant and actor-participants, with the exact sequence of behaviors, intelligibly repeat the whole Part I, before moving on to Part II: eating of the communal meal. It transpires that either the singing or recitation of *Orasho* in this quasi-religious setting inherently involves the ritual constituencies into feelings of connections to each other, to their respective communities and tradition, and more

importantly, to God, Jesus, Virgin Mary, and their deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith.

## Part II: Offerings and Eating of the Communal Meal

Part II of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event begins with prayers over the faithful [Intercession prayers] and makes ritual participants move through a specified series of events to the communal meal. First of all, they recite together the *Pater Noster*, with a focus on the offerings placed on the set table-like altar. Next comes the ritual celebrant's recitation-reading of a brief Preface: "Almighty God, receive these offerings of rice and *sake* and make them become the body and blood of Christ". After that, the actor-participants involve themselves into thanksgiving Prayers. Here they rhythmically recite the *Credo* and specific prayers whose conceptual contents make specific references to the disciples of Jesus Christ and their righteous ancestors in faith. Next, the ritual celebrant recites again a brief preface that underlines the communion between the actor-participants and the deceased predecessors. Through his gestures, whose often influences go unnoticed, the ritual celebrant thus enhances clues about community members' important spiritual beliefs associated with this specific sacred space-time.

This spiritual atmosphere thus leads the ritual participants to another lengthy, vivid, reverend and pious recitation of *Ave Maria* (33 times). This is followed by a specific prayer meant for the intercession of the Virgin Mary and other female saints. The focus is more specifically on Saint Bernadette Soubirous (1844-1879) of Lourdes (France), who is venerated in the Catholic Church as Patroness of illness, people ridiculed for their piety, poverty, shepherds, shepherdesses. She is often depicted in prayer with a rosary or appealing to the Holy Virgin. Although Kakure Kirishitan practitioners do not know much about her deeds, the conceptual content of the prayer addressed to her reflects well the one often used in the Catholic Church. Next the ritual celebrant moves on again to the saying of the specific *Prayer for the intercession* of the Virgin Mary and other female saints. This is specifically followed by the rhythmic recitation of the *Pater Noster* (2 times), with a particular reference to the *Ohatsuhoage* (precious offerings) placed on the small set table-like altar. As the ritual participants enter into this liminality, they recite a lengthy and vivid preface, which in other areas such as Ikitsuki and Hirado, consists of almost entirely of chanting. This is finally followed by the *Pater Noster*.

Then comes the most important prayer over the rice and *sake* (both staple and luxury ingredients) that occurs just in the middle of this celebration. This ultimately involves the ritual participants into the climax of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. The ritual celebrant thus undertakes the consecration of these precious offerings with an



overly punctilious observance of its details. At some point, the conceptual contents of this crucial prayer fit squarely into the Eucharistic Prayer used in the Catholic Church, which always includes the words and actions of Christ at Last Supper with his disciples on the night before his suffering and death. Evidence for this viewpoint is ample: As ritual participants hear again of these past events, the Holy Spirit spiritually brings them into the present so that they become part of the story and participate in it. In one way, at least, the ritual celebrant and co-participants also display some signs of deference as they repeatedly bow during this most significant part of the celebration: the preparation of the communal meal.

This is quite explicit: As he lifts up the three bowls of rice and three cups of *sake* (precious offerings), the ritual celebrant—in the name of the community and in communion with their righteous ancestors in faith—prays and asks God to transform the offered rice and *sake* into the body and blood of Christ, in much the same way that the transubstantiation is effected in the Eucharist. In the Catholic Mass, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ. Those who share the Body and Blood of Christ at the Lord's Table thus become the body of Christ that is sent out to bring the love of Christ to others. As important, if not more so, is the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners' substantially spiritual conviction that these two elements (bread and wine) correspond closely enough to their notion of rice and *sake*—without which this ceremony will lose its original, meaningful context and sense. In the past, it should be reiterated, the rice and *sake* were ultimately used as alternative to Eucharist bread and wine because they were unavailable, or as a way to conceal the ritual from persecutors (Whelan 1996). By performing this crucial section of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event they integrally become involved into an interaction of implicit and explicit beliefs and processes of reality generally drawn from a great common heritage, orientation, and experience (which is made verbally explicitly in a religious discourse).

In addition, the ritual celebrant recites a thanksgiving Prayer addressed to the Infinite Lord: "Almighty God, we thank you for all your grace and marvelous things you have done for us." This reflects the purpose of the Catholic Mass: to give thanks and praise to God for the greatest gift of all, the gift of our salvation through the death of God's son on the cross. After that, the ritual celebrant sequently recites the *Pater Noster*, the *Credo* (3 times), and the *Ave Maria* (53 times). Thereafter, ritual participants share an effective symbolic communal meal. This ritually-prepared communal meal is eaten swiftly, lasting as long as the meal is served and the members express their gestures aimed to elevate faith and action. The ritual celebrant drinks first the blessed *sake* (representing the blood of Christ) in distinct movements and

passes it on to the co-participants. This suggests immediately that the emphasis that the Kakure Kirishitan participants put upon the ritually-prepared communal meal (ritual substitute of the Eucharist) culminates in the restricted focus on the collective spiritual gestures according to the needs of the context. What happens, however, is that he does the same for the rice, which curiously comes in the end to vividly delineate both a quite reverse pattern of the communion service observed in the Eucharist and a cultural pattern of a traditional Japanese meal (whereby rice is commonly served at the end). These ritual individual actions are closely similar to that of the Catholic Mass where believers are nourished by the word of God and by the Body and Blood of Christ.

Even in the course of the communal meal, one finds elaborate time arrangements according to which dishes are served in a fixed sequence. The consecrated *sake* is first consumed and then comes the consecrated rice that is placed in the palm of the cupped left hand very similar to the way the *Communion host* is received in the hand in the present-day Catholic churches. The consecrated rice is then eaten directly from the palm without use of the fingers. It is recognized that Kakure Kirishitan survivors from Sotome (present-day Kurosaki) and Gotō archipelago distinguish themselves in much more of a process of sharing from a common cup and a common bowl than those from Ikitsuki and Hirado districts (Miyazaki 1995: 2). For example, the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in Gotō archipelago usually pass around a cup of *omiki*, and receive *sashimi* in their right hands. But it transpires that among the Kakure Kirishitan believers in Sotome (present-day Kurosaki) to which we mainly referred in this field case study, a cup of *sake* is passed from the high ranking officials to the other participants to drink. A dish is then passed around on which are *sashimi*, *nishime*, rice, and *kamaboko* (boiled fish paste). Some of each item is taken in the left hand and eaten and then the dish is passed on the next person. Taken together, these individual ritual actions constitute a vital stage in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual process and its immediate aftermath.

When asked about the implication of this communion rite (fellowship or sharing), formal leaders of Kakure Kirishitan communities of my sample clearly indicated that “it effectively brings us together into closer relationship with one another as well as with Christ and our deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith.” Brief illustration must suffice. The Japanese (especially Shinto believers) are also likely to seek a mystical, felt experience of the *kami*, while Christians typically seek to be in relationship, rather than in mystical communion, with God. It is noteworthy that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity is central for the Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample and determines the essence of their religion. When it is intelligibly performed at Christmas and Easter vigil, it hardly becomes an ecstatic celebration of the highest sort, binding Kakure Kirishitan survivors together in honest and surprisingly ‘holy communion,’ much in the same way at the Catholic Mass. More positively, experience

has shown that the essential elements of this Eucharistic celebration—including ritualized prayers, scripture, reading, homily, and celebration of the Holy Communion—have remained relatively constant through the centuries. Having its substitution in this context was therefore perfectly appropriate and absolutely necessary for Kakure Kirishitan survivors, since they might have imbued with the Catholic teaching that “the celebration of the Eucharist is at one and the same time the full expression of a “Jesus space” and the supreme synthesis of study-prayer-action” (Standaert 2009: xii). To a great extent, during the sacred meal of Communion, at the Eucharistic celebration, Christians (Catholics) believe, at a deep and spiritual level, that they receive the body and blood of Christ in the form of bread and wine (further discussed below. I will have, therefore, to insist—at this stage of study—that the selected ritual food items (rice, *sashimi*, and *nishime*) and drink (*sake*) seemingly become, for Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, both the ‘sacramental’ source of nourishment and an important medium for establishing and maintaining their relationships with the supernatural.

Immediately after the shared communal meal, closing words are said by the ritual celebrant. He thanks the go-between, and by gestures of genuine equality, mutual respect, and acknowledgement. As they are sent off, the ritual participants secretly leave once again pure the set *tatami* prayer room together in harmony. From the perspective of Eucharistic theology (especially in the light of its centrality to the faith of Roman Catholics), nevertheless, one more thing remains certain: [...] outside the confines of the liturgy, the Church can respond to the encounter with Christ through act of love and service. Encounters with others in daily life are, therefore, a response to the encounter with Christ in the Eucharist (Whalen 1993: 130-131). For Kakure Kirishitan practitioners studied, therefore, all these elements came together to articulate their perceptions of what made the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity authentic in this specific religious setting.

#### **4-7. Return to Mundane Life and Health Outcomes**

Looking at the wide picture, it seems likely that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice has recently taken on a more ‘mystical communion’ for some Kakure Kirishitan believers than once thought. After the shared communal meal, participants eventually return to mundane life but convincingly bear witness to its healing force or purported health benefits. During the period of study, I obviously came across to a series of vivid true-life accounts, deeply inspiring and profoundly moving mythical and oral narrative in the form of stories. One such noteworthy case is the healing story of Sakai Yoshihiro recently gleaned from Fukaura community (Wakamatsu), which because of its importance and its typicality, we record here:

I am fisherman by profession and a convert from Pure Land Buddhism to Kakure Kirishitan faith. In December 1976 I was baptized as Domegos [Domingos] by *Taishō* (Community formal leader) Fukaura Fukumitsu, the seventh *Taishō* (leader) of the Fukaura Community in Wakamatsu (Shin-Kamigotō). On 8 June 1998, Fukaura Fukumitsu died at the age of 86. He was immediately succeeded by Fukaura Fukuemon worked hard for the survival of the community, which had a high level of cohesion. On 20 September 2007, when Fukaura Fukuemon turned 87 and decided to retire from the office of *Taishō*, members realized that there was nobody available asked me to take over the leadership of the community. The Kakure Kirishitan rules require that only a baptized man can be become *Taishō* (leader), so my wife Suzuko was not qualified for that position. As weeks passed, worry grew that the selection process would take too long and that events or ceremonies would have to be postponed. One day, members asked me take over the office of *Taishō* (leader). I was reluctant at first, as I was diagnosed with liver and stomach cancer and the latest medical text checkup showed that my case was worsening. My doctor had told me that I might survive for about six months, and since then I had been preparing for death. Coupled with this concern was my acute awareness of the fact that, coming from a Buddhist family background, my knowledge of Kakure Kirishitan faith was limited.

On 22 December 2007, and with the insistence of the community members, I resolutely decided to take over the leadership of the Fukaura community in Wakamatsu, and became the ninth *Taishō* (leader). However, things were no so easy. I was getting weaker and having a hard time walking, but my wife Suzuko and I decided to draw closer to God by reading His word in *Tenchi Hajimari no Koto* (Bible-like spiritual book of Kakure Kirishitan survivors), reciting sequences of specific prayers (*Orasho*), and offering the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice together. Often, we would rise early in the morning to seek God. We prayed for a grace, a healing. We frequently recited *Orasho*, asking for Jesus' blessing and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. However, we were in turmoil in February 2008 because I was getting worse. We had continued to pray and yet I had not received healing. In early May 2008, barely three months after my investiture (22 Dec. 2007) as *Taishō* (leader) of the Kakure Kirishitan survivors, I began to feel stronger and was walking much better. When I went in to see my doctor, he gave

me the Good News. The doctor could not find any cancer. It was gone. Intriguingly, it has not returned to date. Praise God forever. The God of Kakure Kirishitan survivors gave me grace, healing. He was and is a healer (Personal communication in Wakamatsu, 14 May 2008; see also Mushi 2011:177-179).

Another striking account gleaned from Murakami Shigenori (formal leader of the Kakure Kirishitan community in Shimokurosaki) reads:

My cousin, Magdalena Kimiyo Urakawa was a 95-year-old devout Kakure Kirishitan woman of our Murakami community. Because of age she grew ever weaker. Even though she was given some medical treatment such as blood transfusions, fluids and painkillers, she eventually displayed a feeling of fatigue, slow walking speed and low levels of physical activity. One day Kimiyo was told by her medical doctor that she may die in the near future, and that she would do better to think of saying goodbye to her family members, relatives, and intimates.

Despite this sad news, it transpired that she did not either blame God for her sickness and bad health or curse Christ when her health worsened. By her own admission she had instead an exceptional need for comfort and reassurance as she faced a critical health condition. In this spirit, she later decided to ask me (as her leader) to perform the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony for her healing. As she was so weak, she could only 'spiritually' participate in the prayer gathering from her bedroom while the rest of the community members met in *the tatami praying room* traditionally set aside in my house, according to the Kakure Kirishitan protocols.

After making a sustained prayer and offering the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, I then went on to give the consecrated food to Kimiyo Urakawa, who received them with a firm faith in Christ's presence in it—at that pivotal moment during 'the rite of communion. Soon thereafter, she recovered amazingly. On the strength of that consecrated food she was able to survive for six months and returned to normal life. Indeed she realized that God would have shown to her in a meaningful way. Now mystified but filled with gratitude to the Lord, she reported it to me. That episode happened in June 2013. But in September 2013, barely three months later, her health condition got worse again. I had to perform again the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and offered a healing prayer for her. Having now

an acute awareness of the potential healing power of this ritually-prepared communal meal, I decided this time to increase the amount of consecrated food. She ate it with faith and then recovered again quickly. The news, which secretly spread within the circles of ritual constituencies, later reached her medical doctor, who in turn was quite astounded. The same scenario happened two times and Kimiyo firmly kept on displaying her Kakure Kirishitan faith (Personal communication in Shimokurosaki, 13 October 2016; see the full account in Mushi, forthcoming, 2019).

Close analysis of the fine accounts, left behind in written and spoken statements, reveals that they are giving more substantive attention to the significant role of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance in shaping the core beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and psychological as well as physical health outcomes. More particularly, it is observed from descriptions of dramatic and uplifting near-death encounters to miraculous healings of mind and body. And yet, taking a clue from Sparrow's (1995) formulation, we can reasonably say that, once the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony is performed, it almost always seems to offer them a possible "glimpse at miracle—the incredible force of divine love". Recent studies increasingly highlight the relationship between religious involvement and spirituality and health outcomes (Olver 2013; Koenig 2008) that seems likely evident among the KaKure Kirishitan survivors studied. Even though, it is difficult, at the stage of this research, to establish causality. In hindsight, I can affirm with Koenig, McCullough, and Larson (2001) that these mechanisms involve complex interactions of psychosocial-behavioral and biological processes. Taken together, these elements involve, at least in my opinion, an insistence that not only the narrators themselves but also the shared and diffused information about these tangible healings obviously served to legitimize this ritually-prepared communal meal in different ways. If nothing else, this facet of the subject also calls for further insights.

## 5. Distinctive Features and Implications of the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Practice

This section sets out to provide a micro-analysis and interpretation of the particularistic aspects of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity and its attendant beliefs. I subscribe to the expression "attendant beliefs" merely because I accept the entirely plausible assumption that "all ritual is not sacred, and ritual does not represent the totality of religious belief (Bell 1997; Brück 1999), so that ritual is not solely the performance of religion" (Rowan 2012: 2). Inspired theoretically by Jones' (1994)

synthetic model of understanding the New Testament features of the Lord's Supper, I thereby distinguished seven constitutive features which, in active practice, largely translate what I described as a significant positive intersection between practitioners' identities and ritual resources that typically characterize a single *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event.

### **5-1. Explaining the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Repertoire**

Upon close examination, the content of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual repertoire is quite revealing in three ways. First of all, it provides a vivid illustration of the longstanding ritual protocol, religious/spiritual beliefs and practices of the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in the least restricted environment. The second important aspect of the repertoire entails the frequent repetitions of prayers (*Orasho*) observed throughout the entire corpus of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. At best, such constant repetitions of format prayers, known alternatively as “conscious repetition or quotation” (Bloch 2005: 125), constitute entity represented as guaranteeing the efficacy of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance. This is precisely what Searle (1969) aptly coined “conditional aspects”, i.e. those aspects that cannot be changed if the ritual event is to have any efficacy. Thirdly, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual repertory is characterized by its basic timing and sequencing aspects of the rhythmic performance practice and repetitive movements. To an extent, Kakure Kirishitan survivors find themselves part of this specific religious setting, which connects them to their history, re-creates their community identity, and reinforces their religious ideals. As the ritual event moves forward, it is clear that their articulation of its core patterns potentially represents some kind of spiritual necessity that governs and strengthens their experience of communion with God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, the Virgin Mary, and with their deceased predecessors, including San Jiwan—their Local Patron Saint (Munsi 2014b: 355-358, 2015, 2018; see also Dougill 2012; Masaki 1973). Thus, the position is maintained that the overall repertory of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event enacts a range of meaningful actions and details that embody an aesthetic and symbolic dimensions subsequently discussed below.

### **5-2. Facets of the Single *Tatami* Prayer Room**

The utilization of the single *tatami* prayer room accounts for the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in a number of significant ways, but for the purposes of the present analysis three ethnographic features in particular stand out. The first is that the single ‘prayer room’ or ritual space is, in actual practice, temporally transformed into a “sacred space-time” by the strength or the epistemological potency of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event and its attendant beliefs (Munsi 2015: 273). In this respect, participants' established spiritual environment or sacred space (Knott 2005: 24; Son 2014: 58; Lane

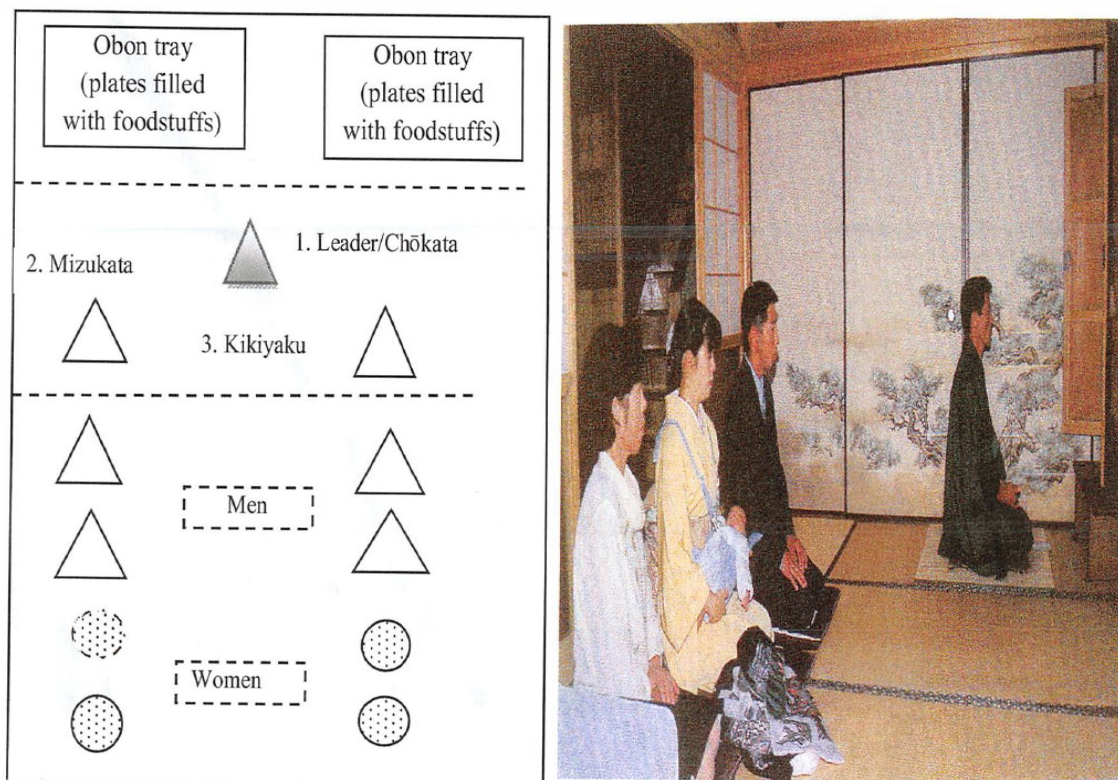


Figure 7

The seating arrangement of Kakure Kirishitan Practitioners on a single  
*Tatami* Prayer Room

Illustration from field notes by the Author, 7 April 2018.

Photo by Hirado-Shi/Ikitsuki-Machi Museum, *Shima no kan dayori*, 2002: vii

2002: 18) reflects “an effort to ensure engagement and participation with the ancestral spheres” (Luke 2012 reviewed by Rowan 2012: 5), with enthusiasm and emotional affinity (Whitehouse & Laidlaw 2007).

The second important aspect of the single *tatami* prayer room entails the ritual seating (reclining) arrangements (assignments) of Kakure Kirishitan participants, which clearly place men on the front and women on the back of the setting—so the latter must not physically approach the set table-like altar behind which the community formal leader (*Chōkata*) is seated (see Figure 7). A notable feature of this persisting seating arrangement, however, is that it meaningfully channels the flow of all ritual participants in, through and around the set table-like-altar, with a variety of body actions that readily traces ritual patterns in space and time. Here individual members (starting with two assistant leaders (*Mizukata* and *Kikiyaku*) face the table-like-altar, whereby the community formal leader, engaged with the emotional and psychological feel of the sacred space, presides over the overall *Ohatsuhoage* ritual



event to honor God and ask the intercession of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith. If we investigate this notion in another light, we can interpret it as the long-term Kakure Kirishitan ritual protocol's subtle way of silencing and sidelining women, or making them experience a kind of "intersectional invisibility" or "categorical/social invisibility", whereby individuals with intersecting subordinate identities tend to be marginalized members within marginalized groups (Perdue-Vaughn & Eibach 2008: 381).

Interestingly enough, however, many Kakure Kirishitan females of my sample seemingly considered the issue as secondary. This is evident in the fact that they have not yet, at this stage, much like the Aisyiah women in Muhammadiyah (Indonesia) studied by Dewi (2008: 178), attained more specifically what Chafetz (1990: 37) aptly described as "gender consciousness", that is, a condition where women question norms, ideology and stereotypes which disadvantage them. Whatever may be said, the active participation of individual Kakure Kirishitan believers in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance thus involves a particular relation to space and time as this specific religious setting inherently draws them closer to the altar and to proximity with each other. A close consideration of its circuit of shared ritual activity or interaction thus suggests that it constitutes another level of ritual stage/physical space. Most immediately, the latter denotes merely a "*practiced place* that is in a sense actualized by the multiple, conflicting movements deployed within it" (De Certeau 1984: 117).

Thus, the third important aspect of the *tatami* prayer room involves its temporary transformation into a 'space of cultural practice.' Here the ritual celebrant tends to guide the tenets of their religion and spiritual tradition into this created space-time (including intimate objects, invisible entities, liturgical formula), while at the same time designing specific ritual structures that symbolize and embody the sacred. It is precisely within this sacred space-time that individual participants form a single faith-based community and their relations with their socio-physical and spiritual environments are renewed and radically transformed. In this respect, the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* (precious offerings) likely exemplifies a process of sanctifying an individual Kakure Kirishitan families, which includes "creating sacred times, places, and meaning at home by setting aside times for home-based-religious activities" (Dollahite & Mark 2009: 380). The very intimate relationship of the Kakure Kirishitan believers with their respective *tatami* prayer room therefore translates the essence of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, to use Honigmann's (1959) terms, as being more generally "a symbolic expression of appropriate sentiments" (Kutsche 1998: xvi).

### **5-3. The Communal Context: Symbolism of Religious Forms and Member Bonds**

The the age-old ritual of *Ohatsuhoage* fundamentally shows some similarities or parallels to the patterns of the Catholic Mass (Munsi 2008: 232-234, which theologically hinges around the transubstantiation and eating of bread and wine as the body and blood of Christ. This suggests that the one body of Christ and the single loaf ritually symbolize unity of Christ with the believer and, consequently, the unity of the community in its participation in Christ. Christian identity is, therefore, a corporate identity. At the very least, this acute awareness of substituting patterns—which characterized the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony from its inception—bear directly on Bloch's (2005: 21-22) startling claim for the focus of a single ritual process:

The ritual process is always focused on special type of substitution, where one thing 'becomes' another, in the same way as wine 'becomes' the blood of Christ during the Mass (Levi-Strauss 1962: chap.8). These transformations are not arbitrary. When one thing is changed into another, it is clear that some sort of empirical connection between the two still exists. It is commonality that is to be the channel for the achievement of ritual...Ritual transformations depend therefore on connection that links different states and on difference sufficiently obvious to make the transformation worthwhile and arresting. Transforming wine into blood is typical of ritual; transformations of wine into whisky would not do. I view such transformative potential as the central fact of ritual symbolism.

Among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors, the communal context of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is salient in that it is a meal that is communal and not private. In fact, the Kakure Kirishitan narratives are replete with thoughts of secrecy but also with those of fellowship and community. This anthropologically translates the pattern of '*unison*', whereby all individual members eat in the same location and at the same time. ). From the point of view of Christian theology, this point to important truths: "On a communal level, Christ's presence in the Eucharist is also reciprocated in the faith-filled worship of the believing community" (Whalen 1993: 130-131). In fact, I would propose that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, combined with the saying and singing of the *Orasho* (prayers) displays the symbolism of religious forms and members bonds, albeit not in a formally integrated context—especially as observed in the Roman Catholic Mass, which is essentially "filled with prayers, symbols and actions that help to recreate the Last Supper" (Curtis 1998: 64). Yet, its real essence, as a domestic-centered religious food practice, significantly reflects the acknowledgement of "food as a particular potent collective identity" (Lindholm 2008: 87) and "offerings" as an essential part of worship.

The frequent participation in this ritually-prepared communal meal translates in definitive the Kakure Kirishitan believers' quintessential quest for 'salvation'. This fits

squarely into the Christian teaching according to which the Eucharist, as the central ritual of the Catholic Church, “makes the believers participants in this salvation scheme by an extreme form of identification with Christ: the eating of his body and the drinking of his blood” (Koster 2003: 9). The implication is plain from Christian spirituality: through the consumption of red wine (blood of Christ) and bread (body of Christ) in the Holy Communion, Christians or communicants access and obtain redemption from God (Bynum 1997). In the same vein, the celebration of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event specifically displays spiritual moments of “a two-encounter” (offer and response) between the living Kakure Kirishitan community and the invisible populations (God, Jesus, Virgin Mary, righteous ancestors in faith, including San Jiwan—their local patron saint). These aspects somehow recall the irony first indicated by St. Augustine that “the gifts we give to God were first received from him and that by now receiving our gifts, he will give to us his very self” (Moroney 2008: 86). By sharing a worldview that allows for such encounters, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners therefore firmly believe to be secure enough in their own spirituality to essentially consider the presence of these aforementioned supernatural beings who ultimately become for them “specific sacred/spiritual spaces” in the Standaert’s sense (2009 ix, 93). Evidently, this singles out a category that should be forcefully understood here in the sense similar to what Teilhard de Chardin referred to as a “divine milieu.”

When asked to summarize his professional opinion about the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, Murakami Shigeru (former leader of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shimokurosaki who deliberately converted to Catholicism in 2005) was emphatic:

Since I took over this office in 1982 I have long found myself in the position of a Catholic priest whenever I have offered it to both God and our deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors. This has also given me full satisfaction as a fervent descendant of hidden Christians whose historical roots and religious involvement should be made relevant to the present (Personal communication, 19 July 2004).

#### **5-4. The Connection of Ritual and Material Elements**

Material items (including gestures and movements) that make up the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice are deeply imbued with potent symbolic meaning. Through the form of a meal, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice expresses not only the communal nature and extent of Kakure Kirishitan faith in new urbanized contexts but also its dependence upon the Japanese Christian martyrs (or their righteous ancestors in faith) for the necessary food for life. Throughout the tradition of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners the reality of the ancestors’ presence at the community gathering would be associated with the signs of food blessing and sharing that features in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event.

In the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony, there is a holistic worldview evident wherein establishing and maintaining a circle of right relationships between and among community members, as well as between community members and the natural world is absolutely critical. The ceremony clothes (especially the dark blue kimono that all the men used to wear) and the presence of many religious objects and venerate relics in the *tatami* prayer room, in many respects reflect a structured union between two mutually exclusive worlds. This suggests immediately that these religious and cultural tools are symbolically charged with notions of personal and collective history mediated by personal experiences. A further element becomes clear: throughout the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event participants used their body as an “expressive entity” to recreate the society of the Kakure Kirishitan survivors in a specific setting. How could it be otherwise?

Thus the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice has a central function in the minimal survival of Kakure Kirishitan believers in Nagasaki settings. The central importance given to the righteous ancestors in faith appeared to be instrumental in strengthening members’ active participation in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity. The precise nature of that profound and systematic relationship with the invisible world may find explanation in the deep-rooted religious ethos (dispositions) of Japanese society (Mullins 2011). As a great number of Kakure Kirishitan informants clearly indicated: “Our active participation in a single *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice is not only a potent means of learning some persistent religious behavior and patterns particular to its performance, but mostly an expression of doing justice to our righteous ancestors in faith.” What early missionaries and others often dismissed as idolatry, animism or polytheism, etc. (Filus 2003) was actually a way of seeing in the entire world a wondrous creation in which humanity has a special responsibility to uphold the circle. Christian missionaries and many observers often overlooked the sense of the single creation spirit that permeates most sacred systems of Japan’s Kakure Kirishitan survivors.

#### **5-5. The Awareness of Community Solidarity**

During the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony specific prayers of intercession and supplication are not merely made for the *sake* of an individual alone, but for the entire community. This is particularly true of ritual celebrations that usually “demonstrate appropriate communication with the supernatural, as well as affirming the participants’ sense of belonging to the group” (Gariné 2002: 251; for further details, see also Lyon 2016: 219; Bader, Mencken & Parker 2006: 77). The overall scheme of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event itself reflects the communal nature of these sacred ways. The effect of this ritually-prepared communal meal is to establish, through its representations (however implicit), a stereotype of religious and social relations in

which contemporary practitioners of Kakure Kirishitan faith retain their community identity and continued existence, at the expense of becoming symbolically “spiritual orphans”. We deal here with the critical issue pertaining to personal experience and the reconstruction of identity in situational contexts. My argument is that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice gives the present-day Kakure Kirishitan survivors a concrete representation of the religiously preserved culture of their particular faith-based community, its leadership structures, *Chōkata*, *Mizukata*, *Kikiyaku* and the scheme of values which sustains it in a changing context.

#### **5-6. The Past-Future Dialectic**

A further implication of our view, at least at this stage of study, for understanding the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event’s various degrees of connectedness is that it serves to depict a form of communication or representation of the community and its history. Thus, the whole communal meal points the gathered community backwards to the martyrdom of Japanese Christians and their beatification or canonization by the Roman Catholic Church and forwards to their Kakure Kirishitan tradition’s prosperity and their new life in heaven, and hence highlighting the two ritual directions developed by Rothenbuhler (1998: 63). This implies that, in time and space, the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is, in time and space, considered as a symbolic communal meal and prayer-gathering that articulates the historical and popular memory or remembrance of different Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities. The reason for such a historical and spiritual excursion must, by now, be obvious: Most informants often, to varying extents, highly regarded the single celebration of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice as “one of the ways to do justice to their righteous ancestors in faith”.

Analysis reveals that the specific references to the past events and deeds of the Japanese Christian martyrs, and particularly their deaths or martyrdoms are present within the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and are primarily connected with the overall scheme of prayers (*Orasho*) of Kakure Kirishitan believers. Usually the rituals which the community formal leaders of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners perform invoke the past, bringing it into the present moment. In this respect, the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony is integral to the religious expression and community identity of Kakure Kirishitan survivors considered above. This specific experience not only translates their virtue of remembering the “voice of the past” (Thompson 2009), and their “prospective memory” (Sutton 2001: 291), but also fits squarely into Stryker and Burke’s (2000) insights of “identity theory.” If so, this lived-religious experience of Kakure Kirishitan believers would be closely similar to that surrounding the strong intersection between food, memory and the construction of identities reported by described by Kravva (2001: 141) on the Tessalinikan Jewish community. Yet, just as the people of K’ulta in the Bolivian highlands (Abercrombie 1998: xxiii), the history

made by the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners themselves is indeed understood through mostly unwritten forms of social memory. In short, while the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, in this ostensibly liminal context, helps practitioners to enter into dialogue with the historical consciousness (against the backdrop of their heroes or righteous ancestors in faith), it further stimulates at the same time a feeling of community and shared destiny. Thus, the Kakure Kirishitan spirituality is defined today not only by specific individuals, but also by the entire spectrum of nature and reality as it appears to their respective faith-based communities.

## 6. Discussion

Everything points to the fact that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity, at its most fundamental level, represents a notable and precious part of the liturgical treasure and patrimony of the present-day remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities. What is primarily fascinating about it is that the ritual celebrant takes on the more complex, intermediate role of conduit and hence remains the central and active figure in the process of making sense of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event within what Hefner (1990: 269-270) coined “range of intelligibility”. Not only that, but it is also evident even at first glance that selected prayers (*Orasho*) by the ritual celebrant, his gestures (joining hands, posture and bearing) and bond to the sacred objects, the intonation of his voice rimed like the that of the *Sutra* melody, as well as many other symbols, meanings, and ideas involved create the so-called “moments of compulsory deference” (Bloch 2005: 127). To various degrees, however, these patterns—all empirically present in any single *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance—positively contribute to the overall intensity of the individual participants’ effect (i.e. emotional fervor, altered states of consciousness, inner experiences, and outer demonstrations of faith), or altered states of consciousness that is being set in motion. Importantly, it has generally been found that such a psycho-religious impact on individual participants theoretically delineates cognitive processes involving trajectories of information—transmission and transformation (Hutchins 1995). In the light of the viewpoints developed by anthropologists Humphrey and Laidlaw (1994: 90), it is also fairly clear to observe the extent to which the relation between the intention of the actor-participants and the ritual actions performed is radically transformed.

Taking a clue from Feeley-Harnik’s anthropological insights (1981: 71-106, 1994, 1995), moreover, it could be argued that the utilization of selected ritual food items (especially rice and *sake*) during this ritual event is accounted for, with special

reference to their significance in socio-cultural, psycho-religious, and ritual contexts. First of all, these food items reflect the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners' quintessential search for the symbolic equivalent or ritual substitute of the Eucharist. They, moreover, function as a metaphor for the word of God and healing. Hence concern for doctrinal purity, physical and spiritual welfare is replicated in the dietary and commensality practices of the Kakure Kirishitan believers. Secondly, the usage of these specific food items makes ritual participants integrally become involved in the construction and solidification of the collective memory and worldview of their righteous ancestors in faith. Of course, it could be argued that Kakure Kirishitan believers appear to have been praying to their dead and memorize their deeds as if still closely attached to the living within family and household networks. This sort of experience is closely similar to that surrounding the Maya ritual space reported by Lisa, Crandall and Johnson (2015: 80).

My sense from the field is that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and its attendant beliefs (deeply held and often unconscious assumptions espoused by community long-term members) partly characterize today the Kakure Kirishitan religion which, dubbed "Kirishitantism" by Furuno (1959), should be seen as "Japanized Catholicism" (Filus 2009) translating a kind of Indigenous Catholicism in a relative sense. We can infer, inspired by Jones' (2007: 22) empirical evidence, that we deal here more specifically with a situation, whereby both "objects and people are engaged in the process of remembering, in that objects provide humans with the ground to experience memory." Yet, despite the general, it seems likely that individual participants in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event articulate and express—with differing temporal orientations in the stream of communal consciousness—their spiritual experience that intriguingly displays a sequence of Dilthey's suggested five distinctive moments of structured experience: (1) the perceptual core, (2) the evocation of past images, (3) the revival of associated feelings, (4) the emergence of meaning and value, and (5) the expression of experience (Throop 2002), whereby it is only really in the fifth moment that the "structured unit of experience" can be said to reveal itself (Turner 1982: 15). Because the seemingly integrated Kakure Kirishitan communities find themselves today in the face of transitions, it seems not completely farfetched to affirm, in line with Son's (2014: 3) formulation, that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance "generates a kind of

moratorium where both the continuity of tradition and the reformation of such a tradition are equally held accountable.”

The results from my field-observation (see Figure 8), at the very least, highlight that the actor-participants in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event remarkably create and display four specific performance-related spaces: (1) the *abstract space* of the imagination that these ritual actors initially construct when they gather together and prepare necessary items for the celebration of the ritual event; (2) the *stage/physical space* on which actor-participants intelligibly perform the specific ritual actions which in turn ultimately concretize and consecrate their religious beliefs and assumptions; (3) the *gestural space* which is naturally created by both the ritual practitioners and their movements; and finally, (4) the *spiritual/liminal space* or *communion-space* which, most essentially, entails the area that is occupied by both the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners and supernatural beings, especially at the climax of this particular ritual activity. Tellingly, this fourth and liminal/spiritual space—positively characterized by the intense, profound, and invisible spiritual relations specifically—is a product of the dynamic interplay between the prior (1) abstract stage, (2) stage space, and (3) gestural space, as well as what happens in a Kakure Kirishitan practitioners’ mind in this specific ritualistic event. It is, so to speak, constructed on the basis of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners’ spiritualistic world/worldview and other forms of human interaction in the prayer gathering setting, whereby a connected whole is created.

This is a most useful insight for our study; for we have observed earlier how the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event influenced the shape and ideals of the Kakure Kirishitan

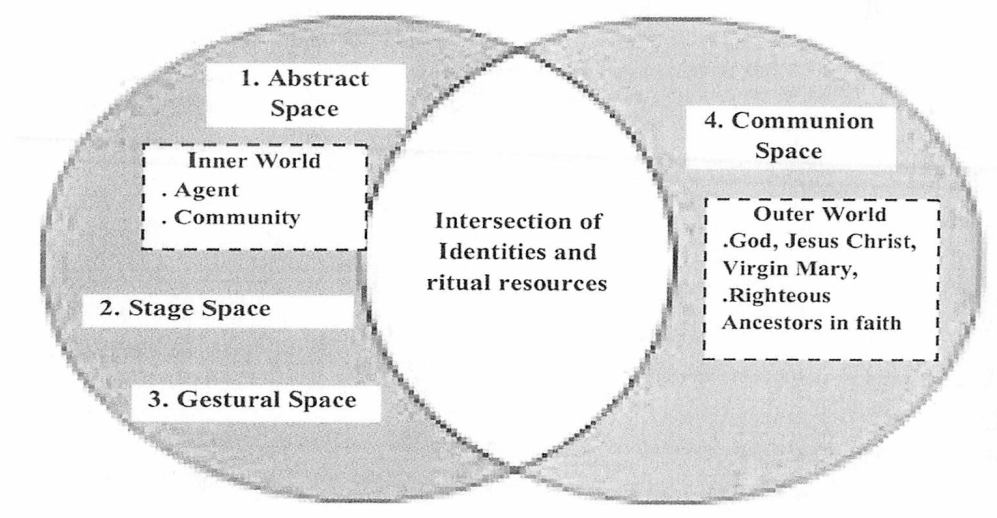


Figure 8

Diagrammatic Representation of the intricate patterns emerging from the *Ohatsuhoage* Ritual Practice among the



faith-based communities. If we investigate this seldom explored facet of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event in another light, our focus on the interaction of spaces perhaps recognizes in the first place that these spiritual spaces become, essentially, “a medium through which members affirm and reconstruct old identities, but also invent new ones” (Adogame 2016: 242). In this ostensibly liminal context indeed, the particularly intriguing “question of ritual movement reminds us that we are not dealing with single, isolated structures, but mostly with a dynamic environment, whereby different spaces and types of space (natural, social, mythic) interweave” (Ragavan 2013: 10).

Linking this discussion to the previous analytical-illustrative sections of this article, I would definitively suggest, from an intersectionality perspective (Collins 2015), that the construction and interplay of the salient elements (material symbols of religious life and their emotional significance) of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event largely translates into actual practice what is perhaps more appropriate to speak of as the significant positive intersection of identities and various forms of ritual resources. This is why the subtitle of this essay has heuristically a particular relevance. Most essentially, this entails a dynamic and simultaneous interplay between food, memory emotion, performance, belief, community, leadership role, space, psycho-religious and socio-cultural constructs, relics (representing key religious and ritual symbols), intertwined narratives, historical and spiritual resources self-identification, sense of community belongingness, socio-religious and spiritual participation, cultural practices in a specific religious setting. The upshot is simple: throughout the simplest *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event Kakure Kirishitan survivors are likely tied to past experiences (both material and emotional). This should not be surprising. Just to move off on a slight tangent, in his recent synthetic review of considerations pertaining to the archaeology of rituals, Rowan (2012: 6) concludes that a single “ritual practice represents a nexus for examining the intersection of performance, emotion, and belief made manifest through material culture and its context within build and natural environments.”

Taking a phenomenological perspective has also shown that these minority practitioners, to a significant degree, aesthetically use their bodies as ‘closed expressive entities’ to re-create their Kakure Kirishitan religion and society, while at the same time legitimating and ensuring their minimal survival next to established religious systems in Nagasaki settings. Often overlooked, these specific aspects of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and related symbolisms, on a practical level, bear striking similarities with those of the Yaqui’s celebration in Mexico clearly reported by Rodríguez and Fortier (2007). Lending support to Oshima’s (2014: 53), we can further argue that during this ritual activity Kakure Kirishitan practitioners spiritually interact with these deceased predecessors “who, not coincidentally, serve as the ground

of the community's identity and internal order." That is perhaps the reason why they are highly regarded as intendent spirit recipients of precious offerings which, in turn, serve as "constant reminders" of their presence and importance. What transpired up to that point of view is that we deal here with potentially (albeit often elusively) beliefs which ritual participants, "do not fully understand but which they hold valid because of their trust in the understanding of others" (Putman 1975, quoted by Bloch 2005: 135).

Therefore, while individual participants in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual performance by no means experience the power of collaboration briefly mentioned before, they somehow display a kind of "distributed cognition"—interplay between human memory, external representations and the manipulation of objects (Hutchins 1995). In this specific religious setting, however, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners often tend to add, if possible, new elements to ensure their minimal (at most) survival today. It is sufficient at this point to recognize that a kind of "struggle exists here among fidelity to the past, a deep desire to maintain a sense of conformity, relevance for the present and response to changing situations, and hope and anticipation for a bright future which will sustain the congregation's integrity" (Son 2014: 13). I draw substantive attention to this consideration merely because I have long been of the opinion that in a religious ritual, "what renders the performance compelling is not primarily the meanings embodied in symbolic material themselves ... but the way the symbolic material emerges in the interaction" (Schieffelin 1985: 721).

Taken together, all these elements conspire to shape the psycho-religious orientation and "emotional regime" (Riis and Woodhead 2012: 71-72) of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event, whereby individual participants likely display what Van-Cappellen and Rimé (2014) coined "positive emotions and self-transcendence" within keenly liminal experience. In this respect, we can emphasize that they further provide not only a stage on which the 'drama' of interactions unfolds but also a single time-space frame in which individual members firmly believe in the physical presence of the divine, and the result of the dialogue is what I prefer to call "a lived Kakure Kirishitan religion" which, in its many levels and varieties, reinforces sharing orientations (including focal symbols for emotional regimes) of its followers. By situating members of the Kakure Kirishitan community in this interplay of communality, identities and resources, the contours of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event ultimately enable them to embody a concrete expression of *communitas* cogently described by Turner (1968: 83). It is equally possible to argue, however, that this ritually-prepared communal meal functions, to use Moxnes' terms (1987: 158-167), an indicator of hierarchy and internal social stratification (i.e. seating), and as occasions for reciprocity. From the standpoint of a theological anthropology, their religiosity and faith can here be understood much more in the way they firmly believe in the real (substantive) presence of the Lord in the

consecrated rice and *sake* (both substitute of bread and wine) during the climax of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event. In so doing, Kakure Kirishitan believers find themselves within the liminal world they are temporarily occupying, creating and sustaining. To be sure, perhaps in addition to the consideration of (possible) contested spaces which are eventually one of the noteworthy interests in anthropology, many more details from an interdisciplinary perspective need to be worked out at this micro-level of analysis.

## 7. Conclusion

This ethnographic synthesis lends credence to the conclusion that the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* represents a stable part of the Kakure Kirishitan religious ideology in which followers critically take up membership in and identity with visible and invisible communities. As such, it ultimately engages practitioners to create not only a space of representation “directly lived through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre 1991: 39) and indirectly lived through its attendant beliefs, but mostly a space of community-constructed identity. Most essentially, such ritual implications are often “felt to be growing out of the actor-participants’ shared “experience and great common heritage” (Lindholm 2008), and what they have together created as shared religious worldview. In general, therefore, it seems that what we are experiencing, five hundred years later, from the facets of this symbolic equivalent or ritual substitute of the Eucharist, is “the carrying forth of that sort of sacramental moment; a re-creation of a time in which people are transformed into what they want to be, and, through ritual actions, a community of many individuals reaffirms their common unity and the presence of a spirituality that infuses their values with meaning” (Rodriguez & Fortier 2007: 48).

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