

## Perceptions and Experiences of the Healing Effects of Fundamental Faith Practices in Kakure Kirishitan Society

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Kakure Kirishitan survivors, Perceptions, Healing experiences, Health outcomes, Fundamental faith practices, Orasho, Ohatsuhoage, Nagasaki Christians

### **1 . Introduction**

As I investigated the present-day remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities in Nagasaki settings, my understanding of what are actually the least distinctive aspects of their lived- religious experiences and articulated beliefs has greatly improved, allowing me to better understand how and why the persisting communal participation in Kakure Kirishitan religion and private spiritual devotion have had beneficial effects on their physical, spiritual, and emotional health. So far, however, there has been relatively little discussion about these facets of the subject. It is therefore of signal importance that research be conducted to examine the nature, extent, and contours of this seldom explored religious phenomenon against the backdrop of the Kakure Kirishitan survivors' psycho-religious life and imagination. Here I would like instead to provide a close-up review of some salient perceptions and experiences surrounding the significant positive healing effects of fundamental faith practices within individual Kakure Kirishitan households, and discover their specific meanings (including personal, collective, religious, moral, and cognitive significance of affliction and recovery) and implications for these seemingly integrated religious minorities.

The synthesis includes mainly ethnographic information gleaned from three religiously active Kakure Kirishitan communities found in Shimo-Kurosaki, Shitsu, and Wakamatsu districts, on various dates between 2004 and 2018. Specifically, I triangulated three methods—open-ended, in-depth semi-structured interviews; long-term direct observations documented in field notes; and review of published and other documents—to improve the validity of the findings and explore diverse perspectives. Adopting an ethnographic lens (Tedlock 1992: xiii; Kielmann 2012: 236), I tried to understand various aspects of their religion and historical [hidden] memories from the member's point of view, not merely analyzing them from a third-person perspective. In

particular, I pose three important questions: (1) how do the performance of religious ritual, the engagement in religious practice, and the shape of religious belief, contribute to, or hinder, health and well-being in Kakure Kirishitan society? (2) How does Kakure Kirishitan religion—faith-based community address questions of disease and healing? (3) How does religious engagement with health (broadly defined) negotiate indigenous and Western epistemologies in this specific setting? It was also important to understand whether the healing stories were based on isolated instances or from a number of spiritual encounters/experiences, and how recent the perceptions and observations had been formed. Following Hovi's (2013: 187) analytical tool, I further took into consideration what is included in the idea of health in this specific context, what is counted as healing and how it is strived for; and finally what are seen as healing effects and where are the (possible) limits of healing in question.

By eliciting patterns of ritual healing and symbolic actions reflecting Kakure Kirishitan survivors' spirituality (personal relationship to the transcendent) and religious belief systems (as hopefully unveiled by ethnography), I hoped to have construed some experiences and potential healing effects of their fundamental faith practices set in motion. With the help of narrative analysis, I focused more specifically on meanings given to illness and healing in the interview material (Riessmann 2008 reviewed by Hovi 2013: 188). At the most basic level, I have identified and interpreted Kakure Kirishitan prayers (*Orasho*) and the age-old ritual event of *O hatsuhoage* as constituting two fundamental faith practices that are deeply embedded and inscribed with a set of healing meanings. The overall discussion therefore provides an understanding of synthesis and interpretation which articulates prayers and healing within the continuous spiritual path of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. More specifically, it is dealt with by framing these vital themes of the study within the practitioners' pursuit of well-being as a sacred journey in the least restricted environment.

## **2. Background: Kakure Kirishitan Survivors in Nagasaki Settings**

The History of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan, particularly in the Nagasaki area, spans nearly 500 years, originating in the mission of the Jesuit Priest, Francis Xavier, and his companions (1549-51). 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 Christian missionary activity in Japan and then to eradicate 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* (“stepping on pictures”), which were first used in Nagasaki in 1628. Suspects 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.

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, transformed the implications of the hitherto external and internal policies to their own advantage (Ohashi 1996: 59-60) and over time 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. Left without priests, they therefore developed their own rituals, liturgies, symbols, and a few texts, adapting them from remnants of 16th century Portuguese Catholicism and often camouflaging them in forms borrowed from the surrounding Buddhism and Shinto. (For a concise overview of this history, see Endo 1982; Morioka 1975; Higashibaba 2001; Lee 2010; Dunoyer 2011).

The most notable production during this period was 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 stories of Japanese martyrs (see Figure 1-1). The historical background is that this book was probably committed to paper in about 1823 (Tagita



Figure 1-1 Tenchi Hajimari no Koto Bible-like Narrative (Murakami Community in Shimo-Kurosaki) Photo by the Author, 19-07-2004

1978:36), and as such it is particularly associated with the Kakure Kirishitan communities in Sotome (present-day Kurosaki) and Gotō archipelago (For further details, see Turnbull 1996; 1998; Miyazaki 1996; Whelan 1996; Mase-Hasegawa 2015). Moreover, the early Japanese Crypto-Christians produced an annual calendar of worship called “*Basuchan reki 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). Other major productions by the early Japanese Crypto-Christians included a set of payers called *Orasho*—after the Latin *Oratio* (see Figure 1-3) and the Age-old Ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* briefly discussed below.



Figure 1-2 Calendar of Bastian-sama (Murakami Community) Photo by the Author, 19-07-2004

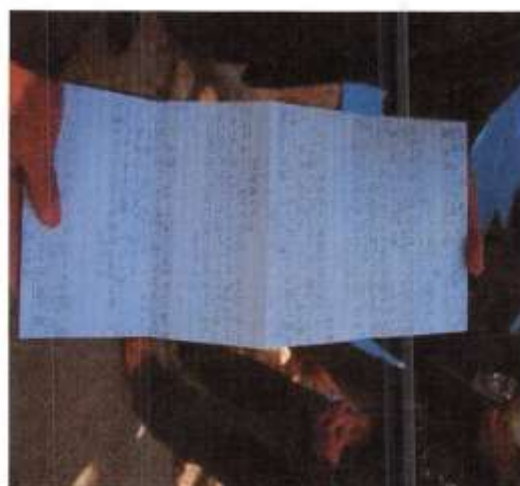


Figure 1-3 Orasho (Kakure Kirishitan Prayers)  
(Murakami Community)  
Photo by the Author, 31-10-2014

After the ban of Christianity of 1614 was lifted in 1873, a sizeable number of believers (*Senpuku Kirishitan*)—especially from Gotō archipelago and Urakami (Nagasaki)—eventually returned to the Catholic Church. 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.’ Although the hidden Christian communities have been tolerated by the Japanese State for almost 150 years now, remnants of the communities have continued their separate and partly private lives as independent, Christian communities. Indeed, they have long 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—while allowing permutations of form and content. It can be suggested that the ‘hiddenness’ has become part of their continued Christian life and worship. The present study therefore focuses on these Kakure Kirishitan survivors—generally labeled as descendants of the early Japanese Christian converts and the underground Christians/Catholics (*Senpuku Kirishitan*), who survived the severe persecution by the Japanese authorities, especially between 1614 and 1873.

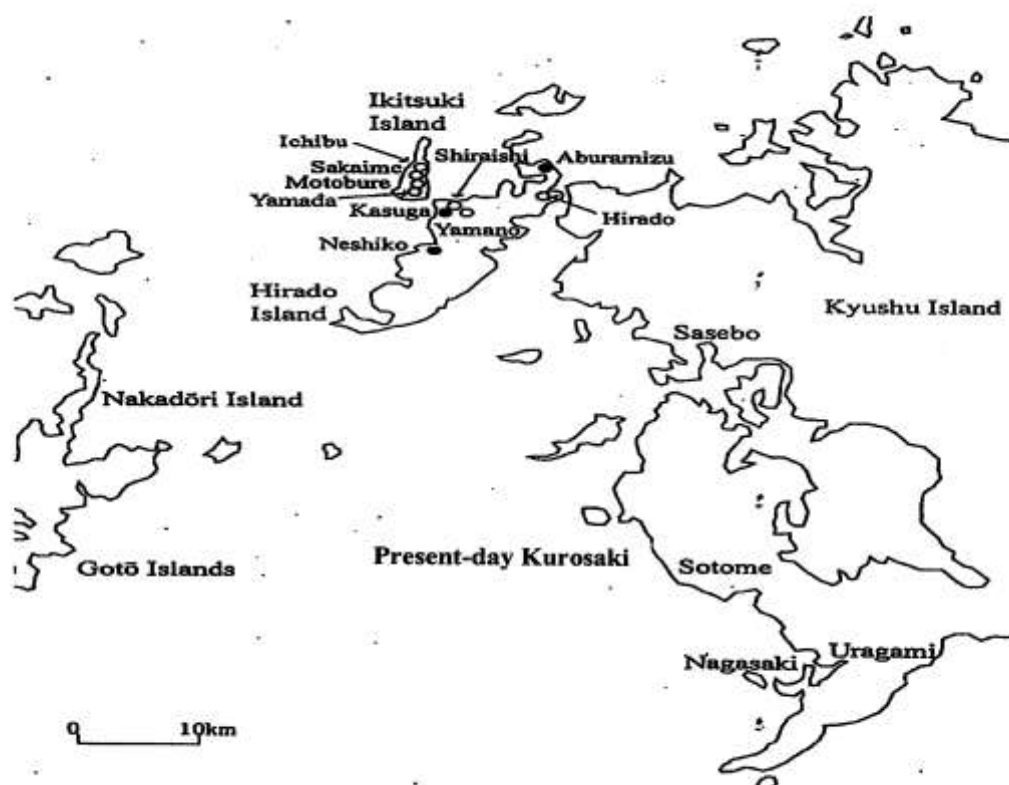


Figure 2 Study Area

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, and 1,500 to 2,000 practitioners as of November 2014, living exclusively in six remote localities: Sotome (present-day Kurosaki), Shitsu, Kashiya, Wakamatsu (Shin-Kamigotō), Ikitsuki, and Hirado (see Figure 2). Today these faith-based communities constitute a tiny, marginalized minority of the local populace, and their survival is in question. The unprecedented demographic shrinkage is the result of various historical events, together with sociological, structural, and economic threats which are, except tangentially, not reflected here. A major factor contributing to the membership crisis, however, is the rarity of new adherents to a community that is already in decline due to the aging of the members (Munsi 2014b: 41).

Three factors seem to be particularly significant in reviewing the present-day Kakure Kirishitan survivors. First, it should be kept in mind that each community of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners has a distinct history and character (Filus 2003). Yet, it lives according to its own established regulations under the leadership of recognized religious authorities or community formal leaders (*Chōkata* 帳方), who also represents the community to the rest of society, and who also are seen as relating the community to the Trinity (God, Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit), the Blessed Virgin Mary (whom they referred to as Maria Kannon), the “divine” ancestors and in some instances, to the protective “deities”. This form of religious organization, which, in some respects, reflects the traditional Japanese value pattern (Bellah 1970: 116-117), helped preserve and nourish cultural idioms that, theological considerations apart, distinguished these seemingly integrated minority religious communities. It is difficult for researchers to even make fairly accurate generalizations, given their limited personal experiences with any particular community, and any such generalizations must be scientifically treated with suspicion. Second, the cultural heritage of Kakure Kirishitan communities is traceable in their traditional customs, faith and organization. They continue to display a close association with the earlier Japanese Christians and martyrs (their righteous ancestors in faith), even though allowing permutations of form and content. This is so because the members of Kakure Kirishitan communities have long created their religious identity in remote areas, remaining steadfast to the beliefs and traditional ideals set forth by the older generations.

Finally, a third important consideration is that the present-day Kakure Kirishitan communities in Nagasaki settings reveal a kind of community participation which is both a process toward an end and an outcome in itself. In the present-day Kurosaki, Shitsu and Wakamatsu districts, for instance, the remnants of Kakure Kirishitan Communities underwent radical transformations concomitant with changes in the structure of their society as whole. Thus, the visible presence of the tiny, minority of marginalized Kakure Kirishitan communities in this context should be seen as a result of their dynamic creativity and their adaptability to challenges of survival, rather than to conclude that they are conservative and are simply holding on to old ways. On current

evidence, moreover, the specific characteristics of the San Jiwan Karematsu Shrine Festival (Shimo-Kurosaki) were regarded as the most visible nexus between religious expression and social context (Munsi 2008: 226-227, 241; see also Munsi 2013: 101-108). 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 Munsi 2015: 269-270).

But an additional emphasis is necessary. A difference should be made between the decline of Kakure Kirishitan communities and the continuity of their faith. It is not to be expected that the faith of Kakure Kirishitan communities we know today will disappear in the immediate or near future. On the contrary it will be interesting to observe for a couple of decades the continuation of the faith of Kakure Kirishitan communities 'focused on individuals' rather than 'focused on community.' In general, therefore, it seems that the survival of contemporary Kakure Kirishitan communities remains a question, not because it is intrinsically and inevitably doomed, but because much of their religious vitality and affirmation will depend on the individual and the collective past experiences, their perceptions and interest in finding alternative ways of survival, and how these all combine to create their anticipation of future events (Munsi 2012; 2014. 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)). With this background, it remains now to review more closely the main themes of this article, before delving into our subject matter.

### **3. Reviewing Religion, Prayer, Spiritual Healing, and Kakure Kirishitan Patterns in Context**

Here I would like to provide an outline review of the vital concepts and themes characterizing this case study. This is particularly articulated against the backdrop of the intersection between lived religion, spirituality, and well-being.

#### **3-1. Religion**

It is evident from the scope of this study that "the pathway toward healing leads most often through the realm of spirituality and religion" (Sorajakool 2006: xii). In this

respect, the term ‘religion’ is used here 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). Consistent with this startling definition, I concur with the framework developed by Dollahite and Mars (2009: 375) suggesting that “religion consists of at least three dimensions of experience: (a) spiritual beliefs (beliefs, framings, meanings, and perspectives that are faith-based); (b) religious practices (expressions of faith such as prayer, scripture study, rituals, traditions, or abstinences that are religiously grounded); and (c) faith communities (support, involvement, and relationships rooted in one’s congregation or less formal religious community).” These same themes can be inferred from the current study.

### 3-2. Kakure Kirishitan Religion

Even if Kakure Kirishitan religion has some traits in common with the above-mentioned definition and dimensions of religion, it should nevertheless be fully understood within its specific cultural and socio-historical context. On account of its essence, worldview (metaphysical conceptions) and framework, as well as in relation to the evolution of Japanese society, Kakure Kirishitan religion as we know it today should be appropriately labeled not simplistically and cartoonishly as *Kakure Kirishitentism* (Furuno 1969) or “folk religion” (Miyazaki 1996, 2001, 2014, 2018), but rather as “Japanized Catholicism” (Filus 2009) translating a kind of Indigenous Catholicism in a relative sense.

One might, however, suppose that the overall religious phenomenon of this minority religion is profoundly marked by the creative adaptation of the Kakure Kirishitan individuals and communities. What indeed surfaces in this specific setting is an interaction between physical characteristics of the faith-based community and the patterned action of its individual members. As will be discussed further on, this community dynamic is significant, partly because frequent rituals and religious imagination in the individual Kakure Kirishitan families and communities have not only shaped a sense of belonging but also strengthened the identity formats and adaptation processes for generations. This seemingly clear fact should be acknowledged and given due attention by researchers. One more important point should be kept in mind. It was not until Tagita’s (1978) seminal work that Kakure Kirishitan religion really became prominent in the public consciousness and highly regarded as being lived as communion and commitment.

However, on the basis of my long-term experience with Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, I would like to acknowledge and highlight the fact that the inter-related important aspects of this striking “Japanese Catholicism’ (in all its variegated, multifaceted, intertwined dimensions of the many forms of local Japanese cultural and Christian spiritualities) are not things to be taken lightly. Rather they can be, to use



Bloch's formulation (1989: 167), "identified and further explored (with appropriate interpretations), of course after a certain amount of in-depth analysis and by bringing in a certain amount of contextual ethnography". Such inquiry could, in turn provide some very fundamental insights into this restricted field of Kakure Kirishitan studies. Whatever needs saying about this, it seems more likely that within Kakure Kirishitan religion is a vision of the human-being that is quite grounded in a strong consideration of the virtue of community belonging, religious beliefs, unpublished spiritual writings, relics of veneration, specific prayers and ritual practices bequeathed to them by their deceased predecessors.

An interesting detail here is that the present-day "individual Kakure Kirishitan families have an ever-present fear that they would betray their righteous ancestors in faith by giving up the Kakure Kirishitan faith, especially when they are still active physically. It transpires from narratives and interviews that those who promptly obeyed this principle of preserving the Kakure Kirishitan faith would make things easier for themselves both in this and the next world. One thing is therefore clear from this:

Kakure Kirishitan communities have re-emerged in urban settings as corporate religious minorities who struggle to achieve transition while retaining the persistence of the past, sustaining a kind of dialogue between the past and the present. Because of their religion particularly defines who they are, to change religions, for most remnants of Kakure Kirishitan survivors, means to give up their identity and the support and security that are embodied in it. Unlike their deceased predecessors, they are confronted with a diverse set of contextual, socio-cultural, and ethical issues and settings (Munsi 2014b: 40).

We may be able to say that, when actually confronting a health crisis, these seemingly integrated religious minorities often rely upon their religion—which dictates their fundamental faith practices—to eventually seek for the divine intervention. Next I will briefly discuss the particularly intriguing question of precisely how it is that prayer and health are intersected and symbolically represented within the scope of the ritual constituencies' religiosity (subset of spirituality).

### **3-3. Prayer and Healing Prayer**

In the narrative perspective, prayer can be broadly defined as a dialogue with the sacred or divine or transcendent. As the foremost practice of cultural and religious beliefs and practices, it "manifests among religious believers regardless of faith tradition" (Castelli 1994). But, at the macro-level, it is also viewed as a kind of dialogue between history and modernity, and between the individual and the community. In his book *The Fulfillment of All Desire*, which draws upon the teaching of seven spiritual doctors of the

Roman Catholic Church, Dr. Ralph Martin describes it in a way that is succinct and yet comprehensive and inclusive of diverse expression: “prayer is at root, simply paying attention to God” (2006: 121). In the context of emerging interest in the healing power of prayer, the Baylor Religion survey has greatly improved our understanding of the peculiar fact:

Among the most pressing reasons for prayer—for prayerfulness in general and the act of focused praying, in particular—are challenges to health or well-being, such as due to acute or chronic illness or to an injury [...] For active believers and people of faith, prayer, including for healing, is more than a situationally motivated response to one’s own suffering; it is an ongoing expression of piety and of taking up the yoke to be of service to others by acting as a liaison or advocate between suffering individuals and God (Levin 2016: 1136-1137).

On the basis of this preamble, the common understanding of healing prayer would then refer to a conversation with God, requesting a cure for a physical ailment, arising from “faith healing” practices in various Christian denominations. The point for now is only that healing in those contexts is rooted in a deeply personal relationship with a loving God (Luhrmann 2013). Evidently, the psychiatrist and anthropologist Laurence Kirmayer (2004: 34) has the merit to emphasize that healing rituals and other symbolic actions can thus have effects on physiology, experience, interpersonal, interaction and social positioning. Of all ways that healing is conceptualized and understood, that faith healing is perceived and expressed, “at the heart of any healing practice, however, are metaphorical transformations of the quality of experience (from illness to wellness) and the identity of the person (from afflicted to healed)”. The broad discussion on the relationship between prayer in its different forms and health outcomes has been carefully reviewed recently (Baesler &Ladd 2009).

#### **3-4. Kakure Kirishitan Prayers (Orasho)**

Considering especially the actual psycho-religious and socio-cultural contexts of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners studied, it is evident to me that they have long collectively shared witness stories that fit squarely into the above interpretations of prayer and healing. In particular, however, their set of prayers is most well-known as *Orasho*, a term that derives from the Latin word *Oratio* (prayer). As such, it should be more accurately regarded as a set of distorted Catholic prayers. Since its earliest formulations in the period of Christian persecution in Japan (1614-1873), the *Orasho* has increasingly come to occupy a central place in the ritual life and imagination of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. Even more importantly, its recital constitutes 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 (Lord’s Prayer), Hail Mary, Creed, Salve Regina, and other standards” which the members of Kakure Kirishitan communities hold and remember collectively (Munsi 2008: 230, 238).

In regard to ethnographic claims involving beliefs and practices within Kakure Kirishitan communities, *Orasho* is perhaps—alongside their *Bible-like* “The beginning of Heaven and earth [*Tenchi hajimari no koto*]”—the most discussed specific prayer pattern of this kind (Tagita 1978; Kataoka 1997; Minagawa 1981, 2004; Miyazaki 1996, 2001, 2015, 2018; Turnbull 1998; Nakazono 2018). It was clear then, and is even clear now that, for the most part, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners do not understand the contours and implications of what they recite during their prayer meeting; neither do they seem very interested in the specific psycho-religious and theological meaning of their specific prayers (*Orasho*), behavior, or various symbols they intelligibly use in a concrete spatio-temporary location. In the light of Durkheim’s (2001) principle, it must also be mentioned that some texts of the *Orasho* also inform us that, at times, Kakure Kirishitan survivors are more interested in being involved with forms of the sacred which are “consistent with their ongoing beliefs and values”, and hence strive to preserve a great common heritage bequeathed to them by their distinguished forebears in faith. In this specific setting, it is interesting to note that the many various implications of such connection to the past in these religious practitioners’ sociological experience and existing strivings for physical and spiritual well-being have been highlighted in my previous reports.

Characterized by the use of a fixed and elaborated liturgy (the foremost religious event being the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* (briefly discussed below), recited at prescribed times and accompanied by certain forms of ritual, *Orasho* has, moreover, become part of the psycho-religious and ethical formation of Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities. Beginning perhaps with earlier Kakure Kirishitan communities, it is posited that both the singing and reciting *Orasho* in this quasi-religious setting inherently involves the ritual constituents into feelings of connection to each other, to their respective communities and tradition, and more importantly, to the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and their deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith, whom they will eventually become. The whole picture thus renders a framing in which *Orasho* effectively creates comfort, support, strength, agency and thanksgiving, and hence catalyzes emotional shifts and spiritual transcendence. On the very basic level, what is pointed up cogently is that Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample have traditionally subscribed to the belief that *Orasho*, like any structured prayer, often gives

them what cannot be imagined. Put differently, it gives them all that is beyond the border of the mind's eye. The same can be said of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event as explained in the following.

### **3-5. The Age-Old Ritual Practice of *Ohatsuhoage***

#### **3-5-1. Institution and Aims**

In their religious development during the period of Christian persecution in Japan, Kakure Kirishitan survivors consistently generated the so-called *Ohatsuhoage*, a ritual practice or an institutional cult established as the unique and unprecedented consequence of their religious actions. These patterns specifically involved a synopsis and syncretism of Christian, Buddhist, Shinto, and local patterns through which the ritual constituencies ostensibly experienced vertical relationships with the Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and their deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith, including San Jiwan—their local Patron Saint enshrined at the Karematsu Shrine in Shimo-Kurosaki (Nagasaki).

The age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* (precious offerings) represents, for many reasons, by far the most important time-persisting event observed within Kakure Kirishitan society. From the outset it is clear in this specific context that the chief purpose or meaning of its performance is twofold: first, it is basically celebrated (with a restricted but elaborated repertory and unpublished spiritual writings) as a symbolic equivalent or ritual substitute of the Eucharist during which they reach the highest form of approach to God, experiencing his presence and power. The second, and seldom explored, aim of this ritually-prepared communal meal is to stimulate the imagination of individual participants, while at the same time conjuring up their cherished memories and beliefs. In such a way, they become integrally involved in a communion and/or communication with their righteous ancestors in faith, much like the way Christians believe in the presence of Christ in the sacred meal of communion. Such an event's symbolic significance also 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).

#### **3-5-2. Sequence of sub-categories**

What also emerged from the analysis of the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage*—which I was fortunate to have been able to observe closely—is especially its functioning as a sequence of sub-category. Just as Catholics have the opportunity to intimately experience the Eucharistic celebration, so too during the course of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony Kakure Kirishitan believers are in a sense “renewed”, and leave their set “*tatami* spiritual/prayer room” once again pure. This is evident for instance in the

recital of the distorted version of the Nicene Creed that very effectively reaffirms the values of the Roman Catholic Church in which Kakure Kirishitan survivors claim their roots. In one way at least, the ritual celebrant and co-participants, we can posit, also display some signs of deference as they repeatedly bow during the most significant part of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice: the preparation of the communal meal. In other respects, the ritual celebrant shows deference to the Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and righteous ancestors in faith through his gestures, enhancing clues about their important associated spiritual beliefs and sacred space-time. Yet it is necessary to emphasize that the repetition of the same prayers (*Orasho*) and pious actions among Kakure Kirishitan practitioners both defines and determines their respective communities and, more importantly, preserve the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice in quasi-urban contexts. That is perhaps the very reason why a great number of Kakure Kirishitan informants indicated that non-participation in the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice prescribed by their communities would mean not only taking the risk of losing membership in them, something that would not do justice to the righteous ancestors in faith, but also being unable to learn the persistent religious behavior and patterns particular to its performance.

### 3-5-3. Climax and Communal context

The climax of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity integrally involves the consecration of the gifts—three bowls of rice and three cups of *sake* (including food items such *nishime* and *sashimi*)—and a prayer that asks God to transform the offered *rice* into the body of Christ and the *sake* into the blood of Christ, in much the same way that

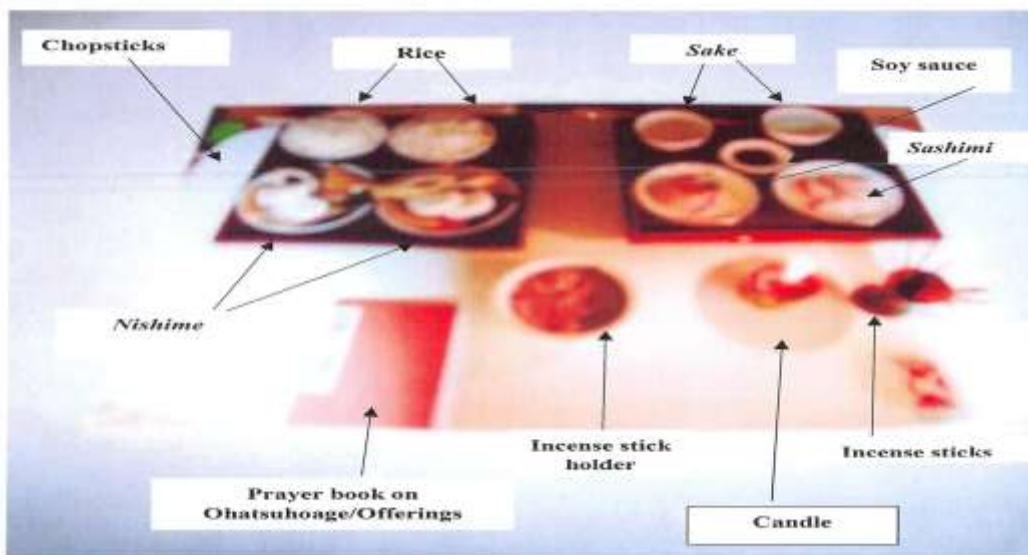


Figure 3 Table set as Altar for the Age-Old Ritual Practice of Ohatsuhoage

(Murakami Community)

Photo by the Author, 31-10-2014

transubstantiation is effected in the Eucharist (see Figures 3).

As important, if not more so, is the Kakure Kirishitan believers' substantial spiritual conviction that these two elements (rice and *sake*)—products of the land of the practitioners' own righteous ancestors—correspond closely to the notion of bread and wine—without which this religious ceremony would lose its original, meaningful context and sense. This acute awareness of substituting patterns, which characterized the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event from its inception, is in line with Bloch's (2005: 21-22) startling assumption that:

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: ch.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.

The consecration of these food items is followed by an effective symbolic communal meal, whereby the ritual celebrant (who is the community formal leader commonly known as *Chōkata* 帳方) drinks first the consecrated *sake* (representing the blood of Christ) in distinct movements and passes it on to the co-participants. What happens is that he does the same for the consecrated rice (representing the body of Christ)—using chopsticks, which curiously comes in the end to vividly delineate both a 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). This emphasis on ritually-prepared communal meal or sacrament (similar to the Christian Eucharist) thus culminates in a focus on collective spiritual gestures. Looked at more simply, the consecrated *sake* is first consumed, and then the consecrated rice 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 using the fingers.

It is important to consider that the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity is virtually always at the center of the distinctively religious activities of the Kakure Kirishitan communities studied. Moreover, it seems to be a characteristic of this ritual event that it symbolizes the mystical and social unit of its participants. Evolving from more psycho-religious

meanings and determinants, it has therefore become a specific religious setting whereby all community members are united by a great common heritage, religious and historical bonds, and cherished memories, narratives, and emotions, while at the same time sharing both repeated co-presence in the sacred space and a worldview, which in turn bring them imaginatively into interaction with their righteous ancestors in faith. One can only speculate at this point, yet it is worth noting that when the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is intelligibly performed at Christmas and Easter vigils, it almost becomes an ecstatic celebration of the highest sort, binding Kakure Kirishitan survivors together in a surprisingly real ‘holy communion,’ much in the same way as happens at the Catholic Mass. Seen from a historical perspective, consumption thus becomes, for Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, a single creative directional process which is sustained by the psycho-religious/spiritual aspirations and desires of their individual faith-based communities.

#### **3-5-4. Symbolism and Implications**

Often overlooked, the symbolism of religious forms (including the representation of the sacred) and member bonds have proved to be very important dimensions in the lived religious experiences and continuing struggles of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. This is unsurprising perhaps, as it tells us that the distinctively religious activities afford Kakure Kirishitan believers the opportunity to practice their persuasive religious patterns and all that entails (Munsi 2015: 273; 2016: 10). I argue that it is precisely in terms of all these persisting activity patterns of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice and its attendant beliefs that Kakure Kirishitan survivors typically bring to the foreground their minority religion (labeled as “Japanized Catholicism”). The point can thus be made that the situated specific and interactive dimensions of this religious setting ultimately involve them in a collective sense of identity and heritage, sense of belonging (which together with the sharing of values, symbols, practices, obligations, emotions and memories created in this setting work to produce sense of “spiritual kinship”), religious/spiritual aspirations, and minimal survival in urban settings. By ‘heritage’, I refer more specifically to the embodied meaning of a congregation or community’s “sacred deposit from the past” (Son 2014: 108), while the term ‘identity’ merely denotes its “sentient” boundaries. Most essentially, the latter includes not only “history, myths, values, mores, beliefs, emotions, and traditions, manners of informal conversation”, but also “explicit sentiences as seen in its creed, constitution, by-laws, and mission statement and its particular history; implicit sentiences that “give more influential messages such as worship style, dress codes, friendliness or judgmental attitude” (Son 2014: 104-105).

From the perspective of the event-centered ethnography, I would strongly suggest that the construction and interplay of the salient elements (material symbols of religious life and their emotional significance) of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity largely translates

into actual practice what it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of as the significance positive intersection of identities and various forms of ritual resources. It also bears observing that the way these fundamental faith practices are perceived in this specific context is not only reflected in the Kakure Kirishitan survivors' identity but also in their subsequent feelings toward specific locations within their specific prayers, ritual practices, and festivals. My sense from the field is that these time-persisting religious activities are significant in that community solidarity forged in the powerful and emotional moments sequentially allowed Kakure Kirishitan believers to learn the patterns of *Orasho* and of the *Ohatsuhōage* ritual practice, which often create the state from which potentially healing can emerge. With some exceptions, there has been very little theorizing about the specific links between these two fundamental faith practices of the Kakure Kirishitan survivors and the various measures of their well-being such as physical, mental, and emotional health. A detailed description and interpretation of the subject can be found in Mushi's forthcoming (2019).

Turning to the results of structure and healing effects in this specific socio-religious setting, we should note, finally, that these further dimensions to Kakure Kirishitan practitioners' faith practices highlight their shared conception according to which the *Orasho* and the *Ohatsuhōage* ritual event embody and entrench power relations, being potentially functional for their well-being. This stems from the intriguing field-based realization that these fundamental faith practices, when used for health-directed prayer and modes of spiritual intervention can often heal them from the root, from the soul to the subtle body, to the physical body. In a similar sense, these two distinctively religious activities are therefore, following Koen's formulation (2011), "used as potent practices of healing where beliefs in the supernatural or spiritual dimension frame the contexts where healing occurs". During my ethnographic fieldwork I indeed came across many examples illustrating this statement. Tellingly, what I recorded includes diverse stories, many of which a modern scholar would probably be more comfortable in classifying as 'folk literature' rather than as biography or hagiography. This synthetic review, in turn, leads us to the appreciation of the interactions between faith and healing among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors.

#### **4. The Relationship between the Kakure Kirishitan Society and Healing**

It is increasingly recognized that religious healing comes in many forms, from miraculous supernatural intervention, to the manipulation of metaphysical energies, to the proper ordering of healthy human relationships and societies. This can also be shown in many examples within Kakure Kirishitan society. From in-depth interviews, it transpired that the Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities allow individual members to explore the meaning of their spirituality, minority religion, and personal



beliefs and to define and determine as clearly as possible, potential facets of their religiosity. Within that context, the connection of the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners to their respective faith-based communities has been identified and proven to be a protective factor in the individual healing experience. At the heart is the focus on spirituality. And it is arguable that prayers and rituals of Kakure Kirishitan believers constitute a highly significant part of the mechanisms through which their community interconnectedness operates in the different healing cases outlined and discussed below.

Remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities are still scattered over Nagasaki settings, representing a significant religious phenomenon. Today, perhaps more than before, their minority religion has been on the whole highly regarded as a benign force of motivation to action and virtue, while their fundamental faith practices have been instrumental in enabling community connectedness to buffer effects of illness and the implication for divine intervention. Eventually, healing outcomes occur here both within the performative organization of the fundamental faith practices—liminal period, and in the contexts of meaning and action which extend around them—post liminal period. One might argue, in turn, that Kakure Kirishitan practitioners really discover, in this liminal context, their minority religion and tradition which, embedded in the socio-historical and religious/spiritual processes and contexts, significantly define and determine them.

We have known for some time that many Kakure Kirishitan informants significantly express a deep-felt sense of community belonging and a strong belief in the potential effect of their fundamental faith practices for health benefits. There is substantial evidence that a strong sense of community (sense of belonging, influence, integration and emotional connection) among individual members of Kakure Kirishitan faith-based community readily influences options for collaboration of their respective communities with other communities representing different religions. How then does it account for individual religious practitioners?

The truth (as many social scientists following Durkheim have indeed pointed out) is that religion is fundamentally a matter of community identity and belonging. Most believers do not convert to a faith; they are born into it. And neither is it that common outside Europe (and more recently America) for them to overtly reject their faith, even if their practice of it becomes more casual (Walters 2018: 3).

It is perhaps not surprising that *Orasho* (specific Catholic prayers) and the age-old ritual practice of Ohatsuhoage (a ritual substitute for the Eucharist) are considered among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors as powerful, determinative and credible, since they provide them with an important source of social coherence and psycho-religious/spiritual support. This, in turn, will reiterate the point that the power of these fundamental faith practices is evident in this dynamic interplay between the religiously

committed Kakure Kirishitan community and members. If individual members feel that they have contributed to the achievement of the overall spiritual goal, then the whole community benefits and healing is fostered accordingly. If the community is either thriving or in decline, or even disbanded, then it will be able to influence its individual members both physically and spiritually. This is a cycle that, at least in my opinion, will continue as long as these seemingly integrated religious minorities stay intact and are successful in fulfilling their needs.

There is accruing evidence that a Kakure Kirishitan faith-based community that influences its individual members and has influential members and prominent figures may have a strong position in Kakure Kirishitan society, and may be able to combine religious forces with another community (preferably, another faith-based community because, like I said earlier, of their common goals). In this way, the re-incorporation of the Ōura community into Fukaura Community (Wakamatsu) in December 2011 is a case to the point. The Fukaura community can be, in this particular case, identified as “surviving”, simply because members have maintained their original corporate ownership and structure. While the Ōura community first experienced survival “in name,” because members have retained their “brand” after the death of their leader, prior to the death of its leader, Ōura Moriye (101 years old) on 4 February 2013, and secondly, it finds itself now in the state of “disappearing”, because its members’ religious activities have been absorbed into those of the Fukaura community (Munsi 2014:48). In addition to this is the tranquil and high centered Kirishitan shrine festivals held annually in Shimo-Kurosaki and Wakamatsu (Munsi 2011, 2014: 51-53, 2015: 270-273, 2018). As such, these religious events provide particularly fruitful examples of how such interfaith gatherings can give resources to and enhance the religiosity of the faith-based communities.

More significantly, the above-mentioned patterns purport to say how the present-day remnants of Kakure Kirishitan communities have especially empowered themselves personally, collectively, and spiritually by incorporating their specific religious experience. The psycho dynamics of these events reveal striking patterns determining religious traditions in urban settings, allowing us to study them as “religious emotional regimes characterized by balanced dialectical connections between self, society and symbols (Riis/Woodhead 2012: 121). In any case, suffice it to emphasize here that collaboration between these two faith-based communities, or among more than two religious communities, may be difficult at the beginning (e.g. the crisis of the Karematsu Shrine festival accurately described by Munsi 2018) because members may be wary of the others’ differences (or what appear to be differences). Opportunity for trust building must continuously take place so that the two or more communities begin to see each other as one.

One general point inevitably emerges from all this, and that is that the perceptions

and experiences of the healing effects of the fundamental faith practices make Kakure Kirishitan believers implicitly encourage Kakure Kirishitan believers in their own spiritual identity. It is precisely in this way that they tend to reconcile their sense of the sacred and express the Kakure Kirishitan faith, both in private and public sphere. We may also note that such experience often makes them come away with a heightened awareness of the spiritual dimension in lived-religious experiences and an awareness of the mysterious divine in their least restricted environment. Allowing Kakure Kirishitan practitioners not only to tell their story but also to explore it in a way that encompasses fundamental faith practices can be healing psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Asking questions about their relationship with the Divine and how this relationship helps to heal or hurt therefore enables us to further inquire about their core religious beliefs and faith systems. Each of the healing experiences and stories of Kakure Kirishitan patients both emphasizes the potential power of their contemplative practices and prayers and fits squarely into physical and spiritual healing results, something that surpasses our understanding of the material and physical nature of our world. It is moreover not the case that healing is the sole feature or function of their minority religion but restoration of wellness and wholeness is a central component of their lived-religious experiences and minimal survival in Nagasaki settings.

Here more than one point of view has been apparent: the *Orasho* and the *Ohatsuhōage* ritual event are defined and understood not just by their functionality, or even their healing properties—but they are fundamental faith practices with social and spiritual meaning, as they express the community's highest aspirations. They reinforce in each of the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners the awareness that they are part of the faith-based community, which in turn makes them continue to learn about the connections between spirituality and healing, faith and spirit manifested in their present localities. It is part of my basic argument that Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in my sample group, believe in a God of supernatural miracles. This seems to be evident across their minority faith-based communities, though any attempt to understand such lived-religious beliefs and experiences as they relate to supernatural physical healing is often subject of much debate theologically and scientifically. For these seemingly integrated religious minorities, however, such a debate appears to be a minor, almost peripheral concern. I would agree nonetheless that if we look more closely at Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in my sample, we will find that they seem, much more like the Merina of Madagascar studied by Bloch (1989: 122-123): “little interested in what their beliefs consist of, they are horrified at the suggestion that those beliefs, whatever they might be, would not be totally shared by everybody”.

Between 2008 and 2018, I conducted a survey to examine closely the healing experiences of 30 Kakure Kirishitan practitioners from three religiously active communities in Shimo-Kurosaki, Shitsu and Wakamatsu. I focused mainly on these

particular faith-based communities because I initially during my pilot study looked at what they were about (their joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by their members), and how they did function (the relationships of mutual engagement that bind members together into a socio-religious entity), and what capability they have produced (the shared repertoire of communal resources—routines, sensibilities, artifacts, scripts, vocabulary, symbols, styles—that members have developed over time. The first part of the data was collected with attention paid to the degree of healing results through the divine intervention experienced by Kakure Kirishitan patients themselves and witnessed by their community members. It transpired that the majority (70%) of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners indicated their belief in supernatural healing through their fundamental faith practices. This majority was made up equally of those who either strongly (40%) or somewhat (30%) agree that it is possible to be physically healed supernaturally by God through the intercession of the righteous ancestors in faith. The remaining one-third (30%)—most of them young practitioners who either received Infant baptism or adhered to Kakure Kirishitan communities through marriage—were skeptical, amounting to those who either strongly (20%) or somewhat (10%) disagree (see Figure 4).

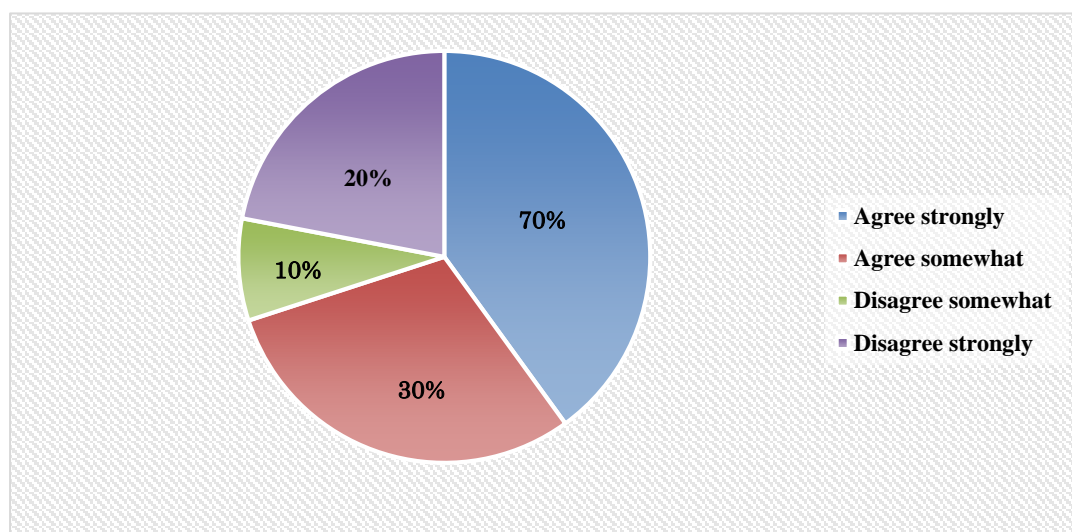


Figure 4 Proportion of Belief in Supernatural Healing among the Kakure Kirishitan Survivors

On the surface, it transpired that Kakure Kirishitan practitioners from Shitsu district experienced less supernatural healings than those from Shimo-Kurosaki and Wakamatsu who recorded many supernatural healing experiences within their communities and surroundings. In this we see clearly the particularity of the Kakure Kirishitan worldview in which the visible world of human experience and the invisible world of the spirits and God exist along a continuum and form an organic reality. Equally these quantitative findings delineate how Kakure Kirishitan practitioners live

significant religious experiences and share naturally the deep convictions that induce them: Heaven often answers them in a most unexpected way. Thus, ironically, it may be argued that these convictions are so taken for granted that they are seldom articulated. Yet, they infuse every aspect of the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners' fundamental religious forms or ritual processes by which ideology is created both individually and historically. Quite simply, it seems that their individual and collective piety, religious aspirations and expectations somehow rely traditionally on the judgments rendered about the divine grace and miracles in the Roman Catholic Church's teaching, preaching and theology.

Another part of the data collection was designed to determine the prevalence of the use of healing prayer in response to a medical issue. In findings from this interview survey of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in Shimo-Kurosaki and Shitsu which asked respondents to select from a lengthy list of "therapies and treatments" that they had used in the past year, 40 % reported using "spiritual healing" by others" and 60 % reported using "prayer". Both categories, however, confessed to having often combined their belief in supernatural healing with ordinary medical treatment. There was no mention of any kind of physical exercise as a suitable therapy. Our follow-up 2014 survey, however, found that the past-year prevalence of "spiritual healing by others" was now 35 % and "self-prayer" was now 65 %, perhaps due to the aforementioned decline in membership. In the 2018 interview survey it transpired that 70 % of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners of my sample clearly indicated a lifetime prevalence of healing prayer for either their own sake or for individual members' health benefits, while 30% emphasized the importance of having a healing ritual or "sacrament" performed for one's health. One important predictor to consider in these data is that most respondents were over 40 years old and aging persons predominated. The practitioners' belief in the healing power of their fundamental faith practices brings substance to their prayers and ritual practices, which in turn reaffirm the community's social, psycho-religious and spiritual cohesion. And whenever healing occurs within individual Kakure Kirishitan households it takes the form of enhancing consciousness, as the two fundamental faith practices —*Orasho* and *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice—bring their participants into contact with the supranational beings (Trinity, Blessed Virgin, and righteous ancestors in faith).

A final part of the data collection focused on the degree of health security that Kakure Kirishitan practitioners felt themselves to have. Individual members who remained active within their respective faith-based communities were differentiated between those who described their presence and participation in prayers and rituals as "very secure" or "secure" , and those who regarded it as "insecure or very insecure". Those who were not religiously active within communities were divided between those who said they were seeking an alternative religious denominatio

n, such as conversion to either to Buddhism or Catholicism, and those who were not. Thus, there were four categories: (1) secure-participation; (2) insecure-participation; (3) non-participation; and (4) permanently removed from the community's commitment. I tried to determine whether change in illness between the intended sampling and follow-up differed between respondents in the four categories of religious participation after 17 March 2015, when the local Catholic Church celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of many underground Christians (*Senpuku Kirishitan*) on the 17 March 1865, following the confession of Bernadette Sugimoto and his companions in the presence of the Paris Mission Priest, Fr. Bernard-Thaddée Petitjean (1829– 1884) in Ōura Catholic Church (Nagasaki). In so doing, I purposely used secure-participation as a referential group. The proportions in each of the four religious participation categories were as shown in the following figure 5:

Religious participation	Number	%
Secure-participation	60	75
Insecure-participation	10	12.5
Non-participation	8	10
Permanent exit from Kakure Kirishitan community	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	80	100

Figure 5 Proportion of the relationship between Religious Participation and Health Security

These quantitative findings provide us with important insights into the relationship between health status and religious practices, but they tell us little about the actual experiences of those involved. More specifically, they do not explicitly help us to fully understand how Kakure Kirishitan practitioners manage and negotiate their fundamental faith practices and health benefits within their specific environments. With this said, while much can be gleaned from our survey results, we are dealing only with more subjective feelings and emotions of the Kakure Kirishitan believers involved. In addition, it should be admitted that our data collection methods here initially provided respondents with a limited number of response options. Still, much study is needed in this area to determine how they perceive, interpret and explain what is really happening around them. For this, qualitative methods (in-depth semi-structured interviews, narrative interviews, direct observations) somehow provided us with a deeper and richer source of data. Clearly I cannot examine all such empirical data gleaned from different Kakure Kirishitan communities. In what follows, however, I propose in the limits of space, to offer a general understanding of them by outlining only four single case studies, which are of central importance in this article. They signify four different striking

narratives gleaned from four different settings (hospital, home, and the temple) that offer us useful insight into the claims made above.

## 5. Divine Intervention as a Potent Mechanism for Healing

My focus here is particularly on the use of health-directed prayer and other modes of spiritual intervention for purposes of healing, for oneself and for others. I will then examine its social, psycho-religious and spiritual implications for Kakure Kirishitan practitioners.

### Case Study 1 Healing of Fukaura Fukuemon (Wakamatsu)

In what follows, I shall recount the story of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shinkamigoto, more precisely in Wakamatsushima (present-day Wakamatsu-chō), using a somewhat unconventional scheme, in which faith and health are intertwined. The area had its share of Christian martyrs, such as Callisto (Kuemon), who was arrested and beheaded in 1624; an account is given in *The History of Christianity in Goto* by Urakawa Kazusaburō. Christians suffered martyrdom in Tabuto, a place-name that has not survived. According to my informant, an old man, Tabuto was located behind the present-day City Hall of Wakamatsu. A monument to these martyrs was erected in 2001 at the Doinoura Catholic Church. The traces of the persecuted remain all over the islands.

Kakure Kirishitan survivors migrated to the region seeking to preserve their faith even at the cost of abandoning their homelands. But the new locations were not really safe either, and the inhabitants despised them. Consequently they had a difficult struggle to find land between the mountains. When freedom of religion was given throughout the country in 1873, a great number of the descendants of the migrated Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in this area chose, surprisingly, to become Buddhists, while a small number converted to Shintoism. Converts to Catholicism were few, perhaps for financial reasons. In the Catholic Church it was required that they contribute money, whereas in the Shinto shrines one only needed to pay for amulets, and in Buddhism there was no charge at all, except on the occasion of burial.

The following is excerpted from interviews I conducted on 6 November 2008 with Fukaura Fukuemon, the eighth Taishō (大將, formal leader) of the Kakure Kirishitan community in Wakamatsu:

Around 1628 my ancestors, a couple names Kajirō and Ume, left Omura village for Tsukiji to escape the persecution of Christians ordered by the local authorities. After much hardship on the sea they finally arrived in Tsukiji (present-day Wakamatsu-chō). The present-day Kakure Kirishitan families or practitioners in Wakamatsu are all descendants of those early migrants.

I was born on 20 September 1920. This year I am turning 88. I always feel that

God defends and protects me, and I am really grateful to him. I think that my life has been safe because I always pray to Deus (God) and Maria (Blessed Virgin Mary). This conviction was strengthened during World War II and again by recent events. On 4 October 1946, when I was 27 years old, I was demobilized from the south. Before I left the Malayan Peninsula, we were heavily bombarded by the USA army. During the bombardment I was hiding in a small hole in the form of a cone. When I realized that the attack was over, I came out, but the American offensive suddenly restarted. In that confusion, a bullet penetrated my iron-mask struck me just left of my eyes. I was really scared. Then when we were pulling out, my uncle, Fukaura Fukumitsu, was shot in his left arm and thigh. He had to be carried by four soldiers. As the attack became violent, some wanted to leave him and flee but one soldier said, 'We must not abandon him; keep on holding him.' This soldier's reaction saved my uncle.

Regarding the recent events, I was hospitalized on 21 December 2007, with swellings about the size of a coin in my chest. They released me from the hospital after reducing the dose of medication, and now there is nothing at all. That also, I believe, was a grace from Deus and Maria. I requested to sleep out in order to conduct the Prayer of Christmas, but the hospital only left me out during the day, not at night. During my hospitalization, I thought of death, and said to myself: 'As I approach death, I will become a Catholic. I want to go in the other world and enjoy eternal life with Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is the child of Maria, is he not?'

Then, on 22 December 2007, I presided over the ceremony of the delivery of an heirloom of mine, a secret statue, said to be of Jesus, which I had kept for decades at home. It is now in the keeping of Sakai Yoshihiro, Taishō (formal leader) of the Fukaura community. Fr Teruaki Asada, originally from Kurosaki Catholic Church (Archdiocese of Nagasaki), paid me a visit at the hospital, and suggested that I receive baptism next year. So now I am memorizing the Our Father [The Lord's Prayer]. Both Fr Teruaki and my eldest daughter have been teaching me the basic principles of Catholicism.

Items such as the *Takarazōsho*, two books of Orasho left by his righteous ancestors, and the *Shishikioboegaki* constitute the treasure of Fukaura Fukuemon. The turning point of their spiritual life nonetheless came on 18 June 2009 when Fukaura Fukuemon and his wife Fukaura Tsuyako were baptized by Fr Teruaki Asada, taking the Christian names Johannes and Maria. The whole conversion process took them many months. The striking account that Fukaura gave me was theologically oriented towards what it means to be a good Christian, and the grace that God reserves for those who accept Him in their life (Munsi 2011: 176-177). This brings us to the second, and perhaps most interesting account, from the same setting.



### **Case Study 2 Healing of Sakai Yoshihiro (Wakamatsu)**

The striking story of Sakai Yoshihiro, whom I met on 14 May 2008 and later subsequently interviewed, has not yet received a great deal of attention in the ethnographic research literature. It is noteworthy that after a decade I felt the need to revisit it in this section. Much more can be said of its fundamental contours, but for the purpose of the holistic understanding of the concept of “healing” entailed in the present analysis two features in particular stand out. First, based on existing reviews and assessments, it not unlikely that his healing could eventually be seen as the experienced improvement in relation to the past. A second consideration for Sakai’s case is that his complete healing is very much associated with acceptance of a more Kakure Kirishitan religious (Christian) orientation in his life experience, with significant facets, religious patterns, circumstances and conditions needing further research.

A fisherman by profession, Sakai Yoshihiro is a convert from Pure Buddhism to Kakure Kirishitan faith, something unusual in Kakure Kirishitan society. It is recorded that he was baptized as Domegos [Domingos] by Taishō (大將, community formal leader) Fukaura Fukumitsu in December 1976. He is married to Sakai Suzuko, daughter of Fukaura Fukumitsu, the seventh Taishō (formal leader) of the Kakure Kirishitan community in Wakamatsu. On June 8, 1998, Fukaura Fukumitsu died at the age of 86. He was immediately succeeded by Fukaura Fukuemon (see case study 1) who worked hard for the survival of the community, which had a high level of cohesion. On September 20, 2007, when Fukaura Fukuemon turned 87 and decided to retire from the office of Taishō (formal leader), the members realized that there was nobody available to take over the leadership of the faith-based community. The Kakure Kirishitan rules require that only a baptized man can become Taisho, so Sakai Suzuko was not qualified to take over the leadership of the community. 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 an idea surfaced. They asked Sakai Yoshihiro to take over the office of Taishō (大將, community formal leader). He was reluctant at first, as he had been diagnosed with liver and stomach cancer and the latest medical checkup showed that his case was worsening. His doctor had told him he might survive for about six months, and since then he had been preparing for death. Coupled with this concern was his acute awareness of the fact that, coming from a Buddhist family background, his knowledge of Kakure Kirishitan faith was limited.

However, Kakure Kirishitan survivors repeatedly insisted that they really felt he was the one most suited to be Taishō, even if only for six months. Sakai Yoshihiro started to be aware that something might lie behind such an appeal. Meanwhile he could see—through the spiritual life of his wife Suzuko and other community members—that

Kakure Kirishitan practitioners really did believe that they knew Jesus and that knowing him had changed their lives. On 22 December, 2007, he finally decided to take over the leadership of the Kakure Kirishitan community in Wakamatsu, and became the ninth Taishō, guiding the Fukaura community of twenty-seven *danka* (households), with about seventy or eighty believers. Community members called him Taishō (leader) but he introduced himself as a Shimpu (Japanese for Father or a Roman Catholic Priest).

Six months later, in May 2008, he went for another medical checkup at Nagasaki North Hospital. Amazingly, the doctor found that his liver and stomach cancer had completely disappeared. This was later confirmed by a team of medical doctors, after months of tests. When I met Sakai Yoshihiro on 14 May 2008, he was quite happy to tell me this striking story. He showed me the two different documents which contained the results of his medical checkup. In the first the doctor wrote that Sakai Yoshihiro had advanced liver and stomach cancer, while in the second the doctor clearly confirmed that he could not find *even a trace of cancer* and that Sakai Yoshihiro had been completely healed. Interestingly enough, however, Sakai did not use the term ‘miracle,’ but simply spoke of ‘God’s grace.’ “That was God’s grace. I am completely healed because of this Kakure Kirishitan faith,” he said.

I was diagnosed with liver and stomach cancer. 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) and praying (or reciting *Orasho*) 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. I remember that I would sit in that chair during these times of prayer and seeking God—His divine intervention. One time I felt there was no hope and I told my wife Suzuko some things about our business affairs. But she refused to listen. She said she was not going to let me die and that God (who blessed and protected Kakure Kirishitan practitioners during their hardships) would keep His word to us and that I would receive a grace of healing. Meanwhile I was offering *Ohatsuhōage* ritual practice for my Kakure Kirishitan community members. I took on the community leadership on 22 December 2007 and 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 May 2008, barely three months after my investiture 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.

The healing of Sakai Yoshihiro from liver and stomach cancer was an extraordinary event for both his family and his Kakure Kirishitan community. They could not but thank God and praise him for His great faithfulness and his blessings toward them. As I proceeded with the interview session, Sakai Yoshihiro looked at me and said:

Life becomes quite different for whoever goes through a near-death experience. When I was sick from liver and stomach cancer I did things my way and went to the hospital many times, and now [after being healed] I have peace. I fall upon my knees, pray, and recite my *Orasho* daily. I am beginning to know not only Jesus Christ but also the Blessed Virgin Mary and to love them forever.

I need to clarify here that Kakure Kirishitan survivors have traditionally subscribed to the belief that their God is Merciful and a Healer. So anyone who belongs to their community can be naturally healed from any serious sickness. Sakai Yoshihiro's case is one among many others which have already been registered by Kakure Kirishitan in the region. The issue has grown in importance in light of recent research. Sakai's testimony and that of many other members prompted me to further interact with their faith-based community. When we look at his life in its entirety, we appreciate especially his fatherly kindness, his simplicity, modesty and hiddenness, as well as his love for the community. These features are seen also in his commitment to train his eldest son Fukaura Shinji, as a future Taishō (community formal leader). Note in passing that Sakai Yoshihiro is proof that the Kakure Kirishitan communities lived on, in some form or another, and his late father-in-law, Fukaura Fukumitsu and other religiously committed senior members claimed ancestry from among those first arrivals. He can show sacred objects, some Catholic, but others drawn from other religious traditions or simply unremarkable that the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in Wakamatsu considered sacred; the syncretic traditions of the hidden Christians were one way that they were able to practice their faith, even after losing touch with the local Roman Catholic Church.

To date little evidence has been found associating faith and health among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Japan. There are many interesting features to Sakai Yoshihiro's conversion and healing. So far, three features have been identified as being potentially important. First, it is readily apparent that Sakai Yoshihiro, in telling his account, refrains from identifying the healing as a miracle. Instead he defines it as the grace from the Almighty and Eternal God, protector of Kakure Kirishitan survivors. When I met him for the first time in 2008 he set the scene immediately for conversation, and started relating his healing experience. He emphasized that it was nothing else than the healing power of faith in the Trinity through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This becomes telling because, in addition to his faith and 'unified peak' experience of healing,

Sakai Yoshihiro's actual encounter with God (Deus), Jesus Christ and Blessed Virgin Mary, and his deep-felt attachment and interaction with the community's deceased predecessors probably had something to do with sustaining his commitment to a life of serving others within his Kakure Kirishitan community and social world.

Secondly, the testimony by Sakai Yoshihiro is a clear and poignant example of how fundamental faith practices of Kakure Kirishitan survivors could be used for self-interested healing purposes. One might think that such spiritual and healing experience would come to a very few devout individuals. But from what I discovered in my preliminary research, Christ encounters apparently happen as much to ordinary individuals who are simply striving in their own way to do their best. From the vantage point of Scriptures, this is what one might expect, for Jesus Christ—in the Gospel according to John—made it clear to his followers that he would manifest himself to anyone who loves him and follows his commandments: “Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him (Jn 14: 21; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1812)”. This implies the consideration of going to Christ in prayer with the conviction that he sometimes cures even victims of serious illness when it is his will and individuals approach him in faith. Perhaps Sakai Yoshihiro who believed without seeing, derived sufficient strength from his own faith, and had less need of his wife's direct intervention. Rambo (2003: 215) is right: “Assumptions about life, religion, and God necessarily color one's perceptions.”

Finally, one crucial but not surprising finding is that all Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample live significant religious experiences, and share naturally the deep psycho-religious and spiritual convictions that induce them. These convictions, mingled with specific time-persisting Kakure Kirishitan constructs (Munsi 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015), are so much taken for granted that they are seldom articulated in the least restricted environment, yet they infuse every aspect of the above-outlined original religious forms of Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities.

## **6 . Belief in the efficacy of Intercessory Prayer**

The following two recent accounts from Kurosaki district are presented in order to graphically illustrate the way in which Kakure Kirishitan survivors hold the belief in the efficacy of their intercessory prayer in healing, and to highlight their significant psycho-religious and spiritual implications in this specific socio-cultural and religious setting.

### **Case Study 3    Healing of an Old Woman (Shimo-Kurosaki)**

From a historical perspective, it might seem appropriate to place Murakami

community within the larger surviving Kakure Kirishitan segment, following in the footsteps of their deceased predecessors in Shimo-Kurosaki district (Nagasaki). Thus, the following story, excerpted from field interviews with key informants, delineates again how belief in the instrumentality of prayer and praying for human health and healing has characterized lived-religious experience of Kakure Kirishitan survivors.

Magdalena Kimiyo Urakawa was a 95-year-old devout Kakure Kirishitan woman and cousin of Murakami Shigenori—the *Chōkata* 帳方 or community formal Leader of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shimo-Kurosaki. 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 her leader, Murakami Shigenori, to perform the above-outlined age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* 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 the house of the community formal leader, according to the Kakure Kirishitan protocols.

Eventually, Kimiyo firmly believed that in the ritually-prepared communal meal she would, in a span of moments, encounter and embody Jesus Christ, illuminating ways that eating the consecrated food (rice, *nishime*, and *sake*) could be a holy practice that would lead her to physical, spiritual, and emotional health. No matter what the medical doctor had often told her or even the worries expressed by her relatives regarding her critical health condition, she had and expressed an indomitable spirit and a strong faith in God’s blessing and grace. Left to her own strength, she knew that she would give up. For these and other reasons she needed the specific ritually-prepared communal meal and the strength that comes from its consecrated food to energize her spirit. In a similar way, she showed an indomitable spirit in the face of all the suffering she experienced and yet needed God’s special presence and power.

After making a sustained prayer, Murakami Shigenori then went on to give the consecrated food to Kimiyo, who in turn received it with a firm faith in Christ’s presence in it—at that pivotal moment during ‘the rite of communion’. Soon after 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 revealed to her in a meaningful way. Now mystified but filled with gratitude to the Lord, she reported this God’s grace to her community formal leader. That episode happened in June

2013. But in September 2013, barely three months later, her health condition got worse again. The bad news then reached her community formal leader, who immediately decided 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 home-centered religious food practice, he decided this time to increase the amount of consecrated food. On this occasion too Kimiyo felt a firm conviction that something would happen to her. 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’ reportedly happened two times and Magdalena Kimiyo Urakawa firmly kept on displaying her Kakure Kirishitan faith. In other words, my reading suggests that she firmly believed that Christ is always present in the ritually-prepared communal meal, regardless of how absent he may seem to be at times. Seen in the light of Christian teaching, this also suggests a faith which believes that Christ’s power is always available to us regardless of how helpless we may feel at times. Evidently, by tasting and seeing for herself the goodness of the Lord in consecrated food from the ritually-prepared communal meal, Kimiyoshi perhaps experienced all the blessings promised in Psalm 34: “we would be delivered from all our fears, especially our fear of death; we would be saved from all our distresses, whether mental worries or physical ailments; we would be made radiant with joy, especially when we love and serve one another”. Indeed, Christian teaching reminds us that these blessings are not something we have to wait for until we reach heaven.

One day, however, Kimiyo sent her son, Shinji Urakawa, to meet the community formal leader for two reasons. First, to thank him for what he had so far done for her in terms of intercessory healing prayers. Second, and more importantly, to let him know that she had been really concerned about the efficacy of those intercessory prayers. She intended to insist that she evidently experienced a great deal of profound comfort from Christ after eating the consecrated food. But, given the fact that the ups and downs of recovery constituted a terrible burden for her and the community formal leader, she nevertheless requested if the latter could stop praying again for her health condition. It transpired that her family members had no option but to respect her decision, though they were quite frustrated. Yet, it soon became clear that they experienced not only the emotion of genuine sorrow as they recalled the ups and downs of her recovery, but also the emotion of helplessness, as they wondered where to begin again trying to help her in such a critical condition.

The community formal leader respected the old lady’s request, though he thought that it would not do any harm if he kept on praying for her. It was evident in this pervasive assumption: Although the old lady was depressed, she did not found herself bereft of belief. Indeed, her belief and trust was not only in the power but in the character and

wisdom of God—the focus of prayer. Later, as might be expected, the community formal leader indicated that in his thought he quickly reviewed all that the old lady had gone through. This in turn led him to receive a complete understanding of why many Kakure Kirishitan believers have long agreed that their fundamental faith practices embody a potential healing power, and experiences have witnessed to God's apparent intervention in their lives and struggles. Even though Kimiyo had physically and emotionally suffered, these hardships were actually a spiritual gain. It was also understandable that she interpreted in a specific way the workings of the consecrated food taken during the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice. But it was strange, however, that the old lady refrained from receiving it again, simply because of its efficacy which she no longer wanted to continue. She had to take such a decision, regardless of her acute awareness of her critical condition. It transpired that her son kept on sitting beside her while at the same time apologizing for what happened. Shortly thereafter he joined other family and community members in the task of helping her mother to find peace within herself, so that her ideal of God's blessing, peace, and grace could be more fully realized.

In general, it may be said that Kimiyo's sudden refusal to eat any more the consecrated food was really hard for her family and community members to accept. But while she was feeling uneasy, the appearance of a calm sick person was also a consolation for them. On 31 December 2013 Kimiyo made a great deal of effort to eat dinner together with the whole family, despite her worsening health. As time went on, her son, Shinji Urakawa, in particular thought that she would be able to live with them and welcome the New Year 2014. Just on 1 January 2014, however, his wish was not realized as his mother, Magdalena Kimiyo Urakawa, stopped breathing and passed away in a peaceful state. The sad news thus reached Kakure Kirishitan members around 6 a.m. As a community formal leader, Murakami Shigenori then performed the pre-funeral rites on 3 January and the funeral rites on 4 January in the house of the departed member, according to the Kakure Kirishitan ritual protocols.

The above-outlined account involves a two-stage process in which the recipient was first apparently healed of a physical condition and testified to the positive role of the Kakure Kirishitan prayers, then showed the terrible burden of the ups and downs of her recovery, knowing perhaps that Jesus Christ would come principally to heal the spirit, not the body. This is telling, because research has shown that healing is more than cure, and sometimes healing of the mind and spirit can happen without physical healing. For Kakure Kirishitan informants, however, the details of this single account are yet more evidence of the potential manifestation of God's grace or miraculous healing which deserves to be duly acknowledged.

#### **Case Study 4 Workings of Kakure Kirishitan Prayers in a Buddhist Temple (Kurosaki)**

Here is a more recent striking example of the efficacy of Kakure Kirishitan prayers. Even though the episode itself occurred in a completely different setting, it nevertheless highlighted, in terms of faith, some contours quite similar to those of the other accounts outlined previously. It is important to mention at the outset that Kakure Kirishitan survivors traditionally perform their funeral rite in two ways. First, they take the deceased person to the Buddhist temple. It is evident that this religious commitment, which hitherto meant their camouflage strategy during persecution of Christianity in Japan, has become today part of their tradition. After the Buddhist priest finishes his 40 minute-ceremony, they then move to the deceased member's home and restart the funeral rite, using their own Kakure Kirishitan patterns. And this was precisely what happened during the story reported on here.

On 13 October 2015, Mr. Shigenori Murakami (community formal leader of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shimo-Kurosaki) reported that while Mr. Kimura (community formal leader of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in Shitsu) and other three friends were talking to each other, they got the surprising news that their friend's mother was seriously injured. Shortly after, they rushed to the house of their friend's mother. Unfortunately they found that she was already dead from her injury. Eventually, they decided to organize a funeral rite at the Buddhist temple. The whole account here is about the contours of that funeral rite that took place on 15 January 2015.

The Buddhist priest started the funeral rite in a good spiritual atmosphere and with every assurance that it would last about 40 minutes. As he engaged himself in the recital of the sutra the smooth conduct of all the required spiritual practices was evident both in smaller details as well as in more general ways. Nonetheless, it transpired that while the Buddhist priest was chanting the sutra, Mr. Murakami (a member of Kimura community in Shitsu) simultaneously initiated in his own silent sequences of Kakure Kirishitan prayers (*Orasho*) for the sake of his community member's soul. The most important segment of the efficacy of Kakure Kirishitan prayers then occurred just in the middle of the funeral rite. Twenty minutes after beginning the recital of the sutra, the Buddhist priest suddenly collapsed in the temple. The congregation, of course, experienced a kind of anxiety and panic. Some participants even decided to call the ambulance from the Nagasaki North Hospital. While contacts for getting an ambulance were under way, the Buddhist priest then woke up, making a loud noise in the temple. Everyone was surprised and frightened.

The Buddhist priest stood up, looked at the congregation and shouted, "Who among you tried to pray at the same time with me, using patterns from another religion? Please tell me, who is that person?" As nobody in the temple admitted to it he then repeated the same questions at least three times. While the whole congregation remained silent, Murakami, a devout Kakure Kirishitan practitioner from Kimura community in Shitsu, who had felt that the Buddhist priest's noisy gesture was strong enough, then



courageously stood up and raised his hand, saying: “Sorry. I was the one who was praying at the same time with you”. After hearing that, however, the Buddhist priest went on to further raise his voice, saying to his interlocutor: “What kind of prayers did you use?” Murakami replied: “I used a set of Kakure Kirishitan prayers”. I did respect your prayers and I believed in their spiritual power, but as a member of Kakure Kirishitan community, I deeply felt that I also have the responsibility to pray for our deceased member. I strongly believed that our Kakure Kirishitan prayers could be used to help purify her soul,” This admission astonished everyone.” Finally, the Buddhist priest retorted: “Do you not see that such strong prayers are somehow disturbing me in this funeral process? Please, I beg you: Just stop using those specific Kakure Kirishitan prayers right now! Because I felt myself being quite defeated by their potential spiritual power.”

From this account it became evident that not all Kakure Kirishitan participants were completely comfortable with that sudden incident, although it should be mentioned that others felt attracted to the details of their specific prayers. Such a dramatic incident, moreover, underscored the importance of their fundamental faith practices. The Buddhist priest tried to compose himself and proceeded with the rest of the funeral rite. Yet, as the ceremony proceeded, the congregation did not fail to consider the incident in that very light. Finally the Buddhist priest purified and blessed the deceased person.

Afterwards the Kakure Kirishitan participants took home their deceased member and they understandably restarted the funeral prayers on their own, according to their tradition and protocols. Not surprisingly, then, this was a stage in their funeral rites which contained specific practices. First, instead of buying a given posthumous name for an ancestor, they attached the title “San’ (Portuguese for *saint*) to their deceased member’s Christian name. Interestingly, this singles out that their shared-religious assumption that “all Kakure Kirishitan dead do not only go to heaven but all become saints” (Filus 2003: 98). Second, they separated the so-called “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 to heaven. Whether understood as a medium for remembering their prominent figure Basuchan [Sebastian] and recapturing his spirit, or as a protection against evil spirits, or simply as an act of traditional ancestor veneration, it is readily apparent that the act of wrapping the *Basuchan no seiboku* (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 Munsu 2011: 169-170).

The remains of the deceased member were reportedly buried in a white robe, according to the Kakure Kirishitan protocols. Thereafter, Murakami recalled the whole event:

It was regrettable to lose someone so precious, and we were all in the state of sorrow, anxiety, and separation. But we could not understand why such strange things happened in the Buddhist temple, whereas I did pray in silence. Indeed, everybody was astonished about what happened between the Buddhist priest and me. It was a quite unexpected incident. However, I gave myself spiritually as though I was spiritually drunk by the momentum of the Buddhist priest's recital of the Sutra whose content and contours I did not know at all. After a while I started reciting silently the funeral *Orasho* used by Kakure Kirishitan believers. As I asked God to receive the soul of our departed member I deeply felt like my whole body was trembling. I immediately remembered to have never experienced such things before. This was to be a big surprise. Looking back now, it is really sad and frustrating to see what happened with the Buddhist priest. But at the same time I still wonder how and why the Buddhist priest knew that I had been praying in my heart for the soul of the deceased, a close friend who just died while I was talking with my friends. I have found, most importantly, that we all have the power to bring happiness into our lives, despite any trouble that comes our way.

Looking at this particularly spectacular example of the workings of Kakure Kirishitan prayers in the first instance, it is possible that it represents a single episode translating a two-fold tension. On one hand, its trajectory in a Buddhist temple thus depicts a remarkable extent to which the Buddhist and Kakure Kirishitan prayers have been bifurcated or conflicted, not intersecting. In corresponding fashion, some Kakure Kirishitan informants have thus far indicated that they have lived and witnessed it. Not surprisingly, then, this was a specific time in the history of the present-day Kurosaki, which placed in the foreground the force of Kakure Kirishitan prayers in a specific religious setting. On the other hand, observers may see on the side of Murakami (including his companions from Kimura community) a kind of tension between the apparent desire of Kakure Kirishitan believers to scrupulously observe their tradition of taking the dead body to the Buddhist temple for funerals (which in the past was part of their camouflage strategy) and the dire consequences of not using Kakure Kirishitan prayers as specified by the righteous ancestors in faith. I have found myself astounded by the degree of fear and insecurity that Kakure Kirishitan believers of my sample often express in this regard. From the vantage-point of religion, anthropology, and cognitive science (Whitehouse & Laidlaw 2007), it is possible to see aspects of their religiosity here in the light of Astuti's exposition (2007). On this scale, moreover, one may naturally wonder how the Buddhist did know that someone else was praying at the same with him in the temple. This facet of this incident may find interesting explanations in the field of neurosciences (Raichle 2006, 2010; Fox & Raichle 2007). But a discussion of this dimension is beyond the scope of this article.

Finally, when interviewed on the contours of the above-outlined healing experiences, the community formal leaders and their followers from Shimo-Kurosaki, Shitsu and Wakamatsu clearly indicated that they are all signs of God's grace which will always remain in their mind and this will continue to be one of the pillars of their Kakure Kirishitan faith. More than anything, it is important that we do not lose sight of how their history in Nagasaki settings propels some testimonies of miraculous healing by faith. Similarly, there is accruing evidence that Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample maintain their collective story and their shared practice by a huge common effort. With this said it is significant to add that, although their religion does not constitute an ancestral cult, it involves sufficient veneration of the dead and belief in their powers and intercession to plead for God's grace or healing power. As Andrade and Radhakrishnan (2009) correctly put it: "In this context, we must keep in mind that religion is based on faith and not on proof. This implies that, if God exists, he is indifferent to humanity or has chosen to obscure his presence. Either way, he would be unlikely to cooperate in scientific studies that seek to test his existence." Next it remains to appreciate the nature and extent of the significant features of these healing accounts against the tenets of Kakure Kirishitan faith. More precisely, I have attempted to unpack significant possible loaded meanings in religious practices or belief systems and their significant role in healing, especially in today's context of Kakure Kirishitan survivors.

## **7. Discussion: Prevalence and Characteristics of Kakure Kirishitan Healing Rituals**

This narrative ethnography provides insights into the under-researched area of perceptions and experiences surrounding potential healing effects of spiritual practices within Kakure Kirishitan society. One of the more consistent findings is that the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* and specific prayers (*Orasho*) play a pivotal role in improving Kakure Kirishitan survivors' personal well-being—such as physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional health. This field observation points to important truths: where the patterns of these fundamental faith practices are fully internalized by these minority religious practitioners, they will motivate them to create circumstances and conditions which contribute to such holistic healing outcomes, which may be apparent at the outset. One of the most important aspects of the healing prayer in this specific setting is the active practitioners' acceptance of Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities and their belief in the divine intervention through the intercession of Jesus-Christ, Blessed Virgin Mary, and their righteous ancestors in faith (including San Jiwan—their local patron saint). Filus' field-observation (2009:16-18) is quite telling on this respect:

These (Kakure Kirishitan) prayers act as magical incantations. When asked why they say prayers, Kakure Kirishitan (survivors) reply: "For our ancestors." Most of

them add: “Also for health and safety.” When asked why they continue their religious practices, the most common reply is: “It would be inexcusable towards our ancestors if we renounced the faith for which they suffered so much.” Their response to my question as to why they do not renounce their relations with Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines was: “The temples and shrines protected our ancestors during persecution so it would be unfaithful and ungrateful towards our ancestors as well as towards the temples and shrines [...] Kakure Kirishitanism makes no pretense of being monotheistic. The 16th-century Catholicism with its concept of the Holy Trinity and its multitude of saints was most likely not conceived of as monotheistic by the Japanese. Presently Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the saints, the Japanese martyrs, and one’s distant ancestors (those who died long ago) are all venerated as kami.

It is recognized that anthropologists usually rely on the ethnography within the emic perspective to study each society and the symptoms of illness based on the local belief and meaning systems. In this regard, they consequently doubt that illness can be treated by drugs developed within a different belief system and acknowledge that illness may be managed with local healing practices (Benson, Thistichwaite and Moore 2009:166). From these above field-observations, nevertheless, inferences can be especially made to the central ritual event of *Ohatsuhoage* and its attendant beliefs that might suggest that it has likely taken on a more ‘mystical communion’ for some Kakure Kirishitan believers who, after the shared meal, convincingly bore witness to its healing force or workings. The above-outlined vivid true-life accounts, deeply inspiring and profoundly moving mythical and oral narratives gleaned from Murakami community (Shimo-Kurosaki) and Fukaura community (Wakamatsu) are quite enlightening in this regard.

Close analysis of these accounts, left behind in written and spoken statements, explicitly shows how well they work in immersion settings. Specifically, they give Kakure Kirishitan practitioners, however elderly the ones in my sample may be, more substantive attention to the significant role of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual activity in shaping the core beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and psychological, as well physical, spiritual, and emotional health outcomes. This is especially observed from descriptions of dramatic and uplifting near-death encounters to miraculous healings of mind and body. This point demonstrates that it is not mere coincidence that Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample described their various healings as a divine grace rather than simply “miracles” as would be asserted by many Catholics. True, the Catholic teaching informs us that miracles are unexplainable and extraordinary occurrences which God divinely performs in our affairs. These are supernatural events which happen beyond our natural ability or power. Colle’s (2011: 251) general conclusion is that, because of the evidence presented, “To some degree miracles in the life of the Christian Church will continue to echo the

Gospel accounts in the New testament that many follow Jesus Christ because they saw the signs he did (Jn 6: 21; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1795) while the risen Lord also commends “those who have not seen and have believed’ (Jn 20: 29; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1822).” Here there is indeed something really remarkable both in the imaginative grasp and in the literary skill of this fourth Gospel, in which nobody has once read it with attention is ever likely to forget: Throughout the Johannine Gospel, this belief (often to believe *in, eis*) is understood as an active commitment, one which “involves a willingness to respond to God’s demands as they are presented in and by Jesus” (Brown 1970: 513). This willingness to respond to Jesus is depicted in the Prologue (Jn 1:12; 13; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999:1784); repeated throughout the fourth gospel, and reiterated in one of the two summary statements at the end of the book (Jn 20: 30-31; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1822).

Before proceeding, however, one point must be made. In one sense at least, what Kakure Kirishitan believers are saying is not just true or valid, but it also has far-reaching theological implications: that is, if the claim about God’s saving grace is upheld, it is so fundamental that it inevitably justifies the conclusion that the narrowed notion of miracles fit squarely into the broad notion of grace. Equally important is the stress by theologians that every miracle is by grace. This statement, in turn, leads us to St Paul’s question to Galatians regarding their experience of miracles by the Spirit: “Does, then, the one [God] who supplies the Spirit to you and works mighty deeds [miracles] among you do so from works of the law or from faith in what you heard?” (Gal 3: 5; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1958). This single question can only be answered by ‘hearing from faith’ because the Galatians received the Spirit as Gentiles. It will be suggested here that every miracle that happens, happens because of grace. In this view, “grace” denotes merely the work of God in our hearts—how He forgives us, makes us spiritually alive, and changes us to become more like Him. Again, we can understand this by analogizing it to something in the natural realm. Electricity enlightens a room and also keeps our appliances running. The same power accomplishes different things. Likewise, the Holy Spirit enlightens our hearts, but it is also God’s supernatural power in the world. Recently I had experienced a paradigm shift in my understanding of the subject.

The most specific description of the faith in Christ is offered at Galatians 3:14, where St Paul stated that: “the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1958). Now this is where we can see the usefulness of the Kakure Kirishitan believers’ claims. What they really want is undoubtedly the favor of God that was spoken over Abraham, which produced his physical and spiritual abundance. In a similar vein, we can immediately notice that they have an acute awareness of the fact that the only thing that can stop the blessing of God in our lives is

our unbelief. Here Blaise Pascal's quote is intriguing: "The two foundations; one inward, the other outward; grace and miracles, both supernatural."

In the language of what came to prevail in Latin Christianity, both are supernatural, although in common usage it is the healing that is considered extraordinary [...] This distinction between the ordinary workings of grace and extraordinary miracles in the Christian theological account of divine agency is important. Both faith itself and its extraordinary manifestations require an apologetic. In the case of miracles, the apologetic will be more demanding. In the ordinary life of a believer faith may be present without miracles but not without grace (Colle 2011: 235-236).

Now with this in mind let us return to the main theme of this foregoing discussion. The kind of empirical phenomenon of supernatural healing I am referring to is again not the whole of the long conversation with Kakure Kirishitan practitioners but only certain, relatively occasional parts of it, parts which are almost entirely in their fundamental faith practices. In general, one can assume that the above-outlined specific features, in a more authentic form, translate the prevalence of healing prayer use in response to a medical issue. Here the most constant, to reiterate, is the ritual constituencies' absolute acceptance of Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities and, most importantly, their belief in the persistent net effect of loving God on every indicator of healing prayer use. Similarly, I would argue that the prevalence of this view translates the recognition of the individual patients' trajectory from faith to the subsequent cure which in turn reorders the imbalance produced by the disease, while at the same time reintroducing the healthy body (Silva & Vasconcellos 2013: 18). From a medical anthropology viewpoint, the potential healing effects observed in Kakure Kirishitan society allows us to explore the links between health and identity. But from the Christian anthropology viewpoint, what we do not understand and seems to us quite curious in this ritual milieu is the realization that Kakure Kirishitan patterns do not include the early Christian ritual of laying on of hands (*manus imposito*) for the efficacious communication of healing virtue, prestige and power.

Nonetheless, if we take the position that either the recital of *Orasho* or the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event is, for the effectiveness of faith healing, to be of more symbolic or to have ceremonial value in virtually every Kakure Kirishitan community studied, then further serious consideration will need to be given to its substantive content and psycho-religious and spiritual purposes. Along with many others, I have long observed, on the basis of in-depth narrative interviews, that all of its contours and workings involve an insistence that not only the Kakure Kirishitan narrators themselves but also the

shared and diffused information about their tangible healings obviously served to legitimize this collective ritual practice in different ways. One significant way is that it occupies a unique and important place in the socio-cultural, psycho-religious, and spiritual lives of Kakure Kirishitan survivors as they strive together to fulfill the shared purposes suggested by their faith (Munsi, forthcoming, 2019).

Especially, following Sparrow's (1995) formulation, we can reasonably say that it almost always seems to offer them a possible "glimpse at miracle—the incredible force of divine love—and the reassurance that a world beyond this one does indeed exist". Today it is clear that, even with their status as seemingly integrated religious minorities, Kakure Kirishitan survivors of my sample were observed as happy, comfortable, and convinced with the experience and potential healing power of their fundamental faith practices. This is evident, though it may also depend much upon the actual individual spiritual associations and beliefs. My sense from the field is that this perception of ritual constituencies inflects the ways in which their religious culture continues to be translated into a greater degree than is sometimes admitted. It is clear in the reviewed sources that the religious beliefs and spiritual practices of patients are, from a contemporary point of view, powerful factors for many in coping with serious illnesses and in making ethical choices about their treatment options and in decisions about end-of-life care (Puchalski 2001; McCormick et al., 2012). From the vantage point of Christian anthropology, the perceptions and experiences of Kakure Kirishitan believers of the supernatural healing here point to important truths: When Jesus says that it shall be done to us according to our faith, He is in fact stating the spiritual law of John 15 (see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1813) in a different way. Faith simply means being open to the power of God, so that the more of God's power we can bring to our situation, either by our own prayers or the prayers of other believers (as illustrated in our quantitative and qualitative data outlined above), the more likely we will see a miraculous outcome.

Relating the above insights to the particular case of Kakure Kirishitan believers, readers can nevertheless infer that I have, in this article, reviewed and discussed only one facet of the subject. Indeed, we need to stress that there exist in Kakure Kirishitan society many other striking healing accounts related to surviving relics of veneration and sacred sites whose compelling features, I propose, should be appropriately discussed in a separate paper. It suffices to emphasize at this juncture that Kakure Kirishitan practitioners conceived these sacred objects and sites as a potentially-wonder-working bridge between the worldly and the divine, the physical and metaphysical realms. In this respect, they ultimately channel redemptive and intercessory forces and constitute potent vehicles of grace, blessing, and healing. Thus, as we show from Filus' (2003: 98, 2009: 18-19) field-description below, the evidence is overwhelming in this specific setting.

Objects of worship, particularly the relics of the martyrs—pieces of martyrs'

clothes stained with their blood, old crucifixes, medallions, rosaries, holy pictures, images of saints, etc. – are venerated as *kami* and are believed to possess supernatural properties, such as healing powers. Like Shinto *kami* which are hidden in the main hall of a Shinto shrine, these objects are usually hidden in the roofs or walls of Kakure Kirishitan houses. During some important holy days they are taken out, put on a tray and held up to the believers' foreheads so that the spiritual properties of these objects can be absorbed into the believers' bodies. Kakure Kirishitan apply these objects to affected body parts for curing illness. These objects were not shown to me by practicing Kakure Kirishitan, but only by those who had given up the religion. The faithful believe that these objects lose their powers and healing properties when revealed to non-believers, and that heavenly punishment will be incurred (*bachi kaburu* 罰かぶる).

Some natural objects such as rocks, stones and trees, are believed to have divine properties. The Kakure Kirishitan from Kurosaki when sick or in trouble visit Karematsu Jinja, a shrine built over the tomb of San Jiwan, an unidentified foreign priest who was active in the area after the prohibition of Christianity. There they rub their bodies with small stones which are in the shrine, or take a stone home as a charm. Informants told me that during the Second World War almost all the stones disappeared from the Karematsu Shrine, as they were taken either by the Kakure Kirishitan soldiers or by their wives and mothers to serve as protection amulets for the men.

Introducing this field observation encourages us to consider how Kakure Kirishitan practitioners often need tangible signs from God to help them survive the difficulties that life presents in their least restricted environment. It seems abundantly clear that the sacred objects and sites strengthen the devotion of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners and make them more receptive to God's grace, both in private and in the public sphere, much more than they do for the Catholics. Be that as it may, the Directory of the Roman Catholic Church emphasizes well the anthropological spirit that should inspire religious or popular piety, which Mong (2018) has examined closely in relation to faith and superstition. The healing of a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years reported in the New testament (Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:25-34; Lk 8:43-48; see Zinkuratire & Colacrai 1999: 1649; 1699; 1745-1746) is perhaps one of the most dramatic example of popular piety—"the belief that God's grace and power will still work and be channeled to ordinary people through a simple pious act regardless of their lack of knowledge or understanding of theology, doctrine or liturgy. Nonetheless, when the miracle has taken place, the Lord does require that the supplicant acknowledge openly the act of divine grace. God does not want anyone to get a secret free pass, so to speak." (Mong 2018: 366). And Kakure Kirishitan practitioners of my sample have almost followed this divine



principle when they subsequently revealed to me in the field some perceptions and experiences of healing effects of their fundamental faith practices.

The above-outlined accounts of perceptions, experiences, and conversations taken together clearly indicate that Kakure Kirishitan survivors are profoundly comforted by their spiritual beliefs. The reason is to be found in the fact that because sharing their own beliefs or praying with an individual Kakure Kirishitan patient in special circumstances has a unique value to that single community member, and this prior belief in the divine grace is irreversible in their mindset. Only by investigating the motives behind the fundamental faith practices of Kakure Kirishitan believers can contemporary observers plumb the recorded stories' depths of meaning. Following Rahner's formulation, we can reasonably say that this divine grace is, for most of them, made possible because they are open to receiving it. From inside the narratives and practices of individual Kakure Kirishitan families and communities studied, this can help to explain the nature of the relationship between faith and health. More significantly, their central thread is that participation and belonging to Kakure Kirishitan faith-based communities is an essential part of the healing process, a kind of 'laboratory' where ritual constituencies put into practice the learning received in rituals. Similarly, I would argue that, for many whom I interviewed, the experience of being involved in their fundamental faith practices indeed offers exclusive and diverse opportunities for perceiving and experiencing well-being—such as physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as social and psycho-religious/spiritual-security. As I noted at the outset, mediating mechanisms set in motion become more pronounced in this sphere, especially when they search divine intervention in life crisis situations. This is not surprising. Turner (1970: 50) aptly suggests that, "By exposing their ill-feeling in a ritual context to beneficial ritual forces, individuals are purged of rebellious wishes and emotions and willingly conform once more to the public mores." As a matter of course, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners expressed the view that their conviction in the presence of the Trinity, Blessed Virgin Mary, and their righteous ancestors in faith (whose memory never leaves them) arguably opens the door to Christ consciousness in their lives and shows them how they can instantly and automatically tap into this divine grace and facilitate healing experiences within their individual families and communities. How then does it account for the concept of ritual efficacy in this specific context? Blanton (2016: 99) reminds us that:

The concept of ritual efficacy is here limited to a description of the opening or organization of specific experiential frameworks in-and-through the performance of prayer. In this way, the efficacy of prayer emerges from its specific attunements of the senses. This organization of somatic experience, in turn, "heals" or enframes bodily experience, the classification of suffering, and the structures of everyday life

in a profoundly different frequency.

Expanding on previous research, our results suggest that, unlike other esoteric practices, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners strongly believe that potential healing effects of their specific prayers occur in the context of the free choice to do only God's will, and so is the conduct of the prayer healing practice. One might say that, in general, they do not diagnose, treat, cure or prevent disease. Instead what they do is strictly a faith-based practice within which they bring the individuals' innate connection with the Trinity—of course through the intercession of Blessed Virgin Mary and their righteous ancestors in faith including San Jiwan, their local patron saint—into their conscious awareness and show them how to share it with others. This single finding is in line with the existing research which shows that individual believers, when actually confronting crisis situations in life, often involve themselves in a kind of transition, whereby they naturally integrate “non-being” (pain, suffering and mortality) into their “system of meaning and beliefs” (Sorajjakool 2006: 35).

In the particular case of Kakure Kirishitan practitioners studied, however, it quickly emerged that when their fundamental faith healing practices fail and the expected “God's grace” or “miracle” does not take place at all, and hence sickness (especially serious illness such as cancer) remains, they understandably reconfigure “one's schema, one's sense of reality and belief systems to accommodate this new devastating variable” (Sorajjakool 2006: 32). In some respects, this suggests an individual and collective effort to either overcome a ‘flawed ritual’ or continue to pursue healing in the midst of non-healing. That notwithstanding, an in-depth analysis of qualitative data also reveals the ways in which participants interact with ritual contexts that ultimately support their healing effort. These patterns appear to illustrate the extent to which Kakure Kirishitan believers ensure that their fundamental faith-based practices will achieve their full healing effects. Just as many Christians, so too Kakure Kirishitan survivors subscribe to the belief that even if Jesus does not heal them physically, he can always heal them spiritually. This being the case, it might be assumed that their religious assumption thus fits squarely into Psalm 32 that proclaims how we can turn to the Lord in time of trouble and be filled with the joy of salvation. It highlights how we can confess our sins and have our guilt taken away.

A second, perhaps equally important assumption, is the Kakure Kirishitan survivors' belief that Christ can heal them psychologically. In a nutshell, this suggests that he can transform their despair into hope, fear into courage and anger into acceptance. An interesting detail here is that their physical sufferings may not diminish, but they will still have Jesus to support them as they endure those sufferings. In the last analysis, they are convinced that their pain may in some instances find no relief, but Jesus will be present to reassure them as they put up with it. That is precisely why during the recital

of *Orasho* and the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event Kakure Kirishitan practitioners heartily come together in communion, with an expectant faith in Lord's power to heal all their ills whether they be physical, spiritual or psychological. One might argue, in turn, that this field-observation reflects a recent acknowledgement that, "For active believers and people of faith, prayer, including for healing, is more than a situationally motivated response to one's own suffering; it is an ongoing expression of piety and of taking up the yoke to be of service to others by acting as a liaison; or again it does not just heal the spirit, it aids in healing the mind and body as well."

It should be apparent by now that among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors the recital of *Orasho* and the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* ultimately represent two inseparably linked fundamental faith practices embedded with the entwined efficacy in addressing healing needs. Looking at the scope of ritual theory, indeed, they fit squarely into 'ritualized activity' partly because there are formalized arrangements of objects, participants, and bodies and spaces which "trigger the perception that these practices are distinct and the associations that they engender are special" (Bell 2009: 220). Evidently, this is particularly true in the case of the Kakure Kirishitan ritual practices studied. In more than a decade of observing and analyzing them, I have found that the immensely private recital of *Orasho* and celebration of the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual event remarkably display sacred spaces, whereby Kakure Kirishitan believers interact and construct beliefs and symbolic meanings. By articulating such a meaning-making process in the set *tatami prayer room*, they always refer to the underlying convictions, orientations, symbols, cherished memories. Indeed, this characterization suggests that through the recital of *Orasho* and the *Ohatsuhoage* ritual practice, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners become integrally involved in a rich repertoire of symbolism. I argue that it is precisely out of these religious and cultural symbols and patterns of interpretation that suitable expressions for the specific quality of lived religious experiences and personal well-being are sought accordingly.

Thus, the whole picture of the dynamic interplay of these above-outlined components and constructs is interesting in the context of the recent acknowledgement that "individual and collective experiences and beliefs are indissolubly, interdependently, and dynamically related to each other" (Arnold 2018: 49). But I think we can go further and specify that collectively shared, socio-historically and culturally determined patterns of meanings, symbols, and articulatory expressions determine the making of perceptions and experiences of Kakure Kirishitan survivors with regard to the interplay between prayers and healing effects translated into the field of Kakure Kirishitan leadership, reflecting a kind of priesthood. In view of this, I suggest that the intrinsic religious orientation of the leaders' office represents the vision of internal piety of obedience to the great common heritage bequeathed to them by their deceased predecessors or righteous ancestors in faith. As seen above, this is a very appealing notion of Kakure Kirishitan

religious tradition. Consistent with this idea, it is proposed that, in the practice and mind-set that pervade the religious activities of Kakure Kirishitan believers studied and have come to characterize their religion as a kind of “Japanized Catholicism”, the deceased predecessors form a kind of ‘remembered family,’ which having been now connected with the ‘lived’ family, readily constitutes a resource for personal well-being representing a bridge to the mythical original reality. One thing at least is certain: By reflecting on important family and community events Kakure Kirishitan survivors not only store them in their memories, but also draw from them meaning and significance.

The religious assumptions of Kakure Kirishitan believers, to some degree, display a kind of triad or tripod of healing, salvation, and health which can be conceived and designed in the form of circles which interpenetrate themselves. As such, the concept of healing in this specific context is located at the interconnection between the concept of health and that of salvation. In the light of the above-outlined case studies, it is fairly to assert that, for most Kakure Kirishitan practitioners studied, the healing process goes beyond the physical and chemical process; it touches the soul and the spirit of the individual or patient involving also the social dimension, for instance the community in which the patient lives, articulates beliefs, and performs the two fundamental faith practices, including the *Orasho* (prayers) and the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony. I have elsewhere argued that the subliminal influence of these two fundamental faith practices and related structures of beliefs in shaping the religious culture and health transformations of Kakure Kirishitan survivors is itself a force to be reckoned with in this least restricted environment (Munsi 2014a, 2014b).

Much more can be learned in this area of inquiry when focusing on other healing accounts of Kakure Kirishitan individuals from the remote Ikitsuki and Hirodo districts. It is recognized that they “do not hide their religion and allow non-believers to participate

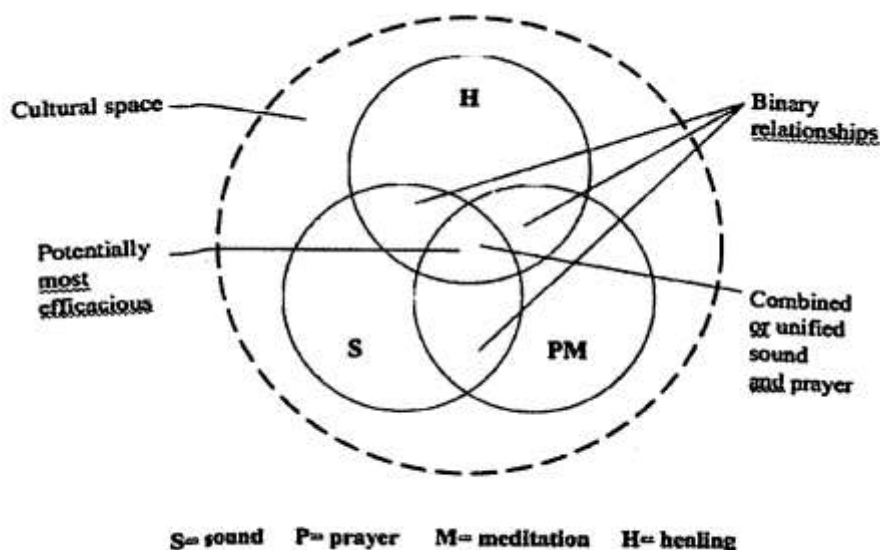


Figure 6 Sound-prayer-meditation dynamic models (Koen 2011:267)

in their religious rites and ceremonies” (Filus 2003: 94). Indeed, they made news across the country. In similar ways, it has been argued that they have displayed an expression of a unique religious phenomenon where emphasis seemed to be put more on the singing of *Orasho* rather than on its recital during their distinctively religious activities (Minagawa 1981, 2004). Considering this specific area, it is possible too that the application of Koen’s (2011) “sound-prayer-meditation dynamic model” (see Figure 6) to our present micro-ethnographic analysis can generate more systematic empirical data, which needs to be accompanied by developments in the way the dynamic interplay between, sound, prayer/meditation and healing is conceptualized and understood in this specific setting. This is partly because Koen’s suggested model clearly frames “the confluence of sound and prayer in the context of healing, daily life experience, and ethnographic and experimental research. Each circle represents an individual parameter. Binary relationships can be seen at the intersection between each pairing of two parameters. The combination and unification of sound and prayer, as seen in the center, is potentially the most efficacious parameter to effect healing.”

Perhaps the major difficulty that researchers may face is how to cope with the fact that the contours of the perceived and experienced healing effects of the spiritual practices are often hidden by ritual constituencies themselves in their specific naturalistic settings. So far, it is enough to remember that, for the most part, many individual Kakure Kirishitan believers share an extraordinary secret that most have, for various reasons, been reluctant to reveal except to their closest friends and relatives. On this scale, moreover, they have experienced divine intervention or God’s grace through the physical, mental, and emotional health outcomes of intercessory prayers and ritual practices at a pivotal moment in their lives. Experiences and field observations have indeed shown that this effect is particularly pronounced for Kakure Kirishitan survivors found in Kurosaki, Shitsu, and Wakamatsu districts.

A corollary of the last point is that various reported significant positive healing effects of the recitation of *Orasho* and the performance of the *Ohatsuhoage* religious ceremony vividly instill the ritual constituencies’ psycho-religious and spiritual convictions that once it is intelligibly performed, ultimately a possible healing will occur, and hence bestow (at first sight) a new (deeper) understanding of the very essential nature of Kakure Kirishitan faith. Gopichandran (2015:238) seems to accentuate this point: “With the emerging evidence of a relationship between faith, spirituality and health, evidence of the effectiveness of faith healing practices, consideration of the holistic concept of healing (psycho-socio-spiritual), and moves to place the patients’ preferences and requests at the centre of the care process, active engagement with requests for faith healing becomes essential.”

One major purpose of this article was to show to what extent Kakure Kirishitan practitioners tend to put into practice their ever-renewed comprehension of communal

and supernatural forces rather than providing systematic explanations. Equally significant in this respect is what emerges from our recent field-study. One has a clear impression in this context that the quintessential requests of Kakure Kirishitan patients for faith healing may not, for some reasons, produce expected miraculous cures, but they surely increase their faith in the process of that healing. This facet of the subject still needs further ethnographic examination. From this point of view, however, it is worth noting that, although the relationship between religious involvement and spirituality and health outcomes (Olver 2013) seems likely valid among the Kakure Kirishitan survivors studied. It is nevertheless difficult, at this stage of research, to establish causality. This is a significant issue. In hindsight, these mechanisms, as Koenig, McCullough and Larson (2001) aptly remind us, undoubtedly involve complex interactions of psychosocial-behavioral and biological processes.

Looking at the spiritual and cultural of the subject, recent research has moreover shown that “in the context of healing, faith-based practices are not value-neutral and their relative merits and demerits are contextual. The outright rejection or unquestioning acceptance of faith healing requests can communicate a lack of interest and involvement in the patient’s well-being” (Gopichandran 2015: 240). From what I have been able to discover to date, however, I would therefore forcefully concede with Abercrombie (1998: 411) that “The kinds of non-written social memory that I foreground in my ethnography, imbedded in ritual acts and formulaic speech and grounded in meanings lived in the social landscape, do not often have written traces.” If nothing else, this single aspect and many others of the subject also call for further investigation with interdisciplinary approach.

## 7. Conclusion

This synthesis has typically delineated how consistent belief of Kakure Kirishitan survivors in the potential healing effects of the recitation of *Orasho* and the age-old ritual practice of *Ohatsuhoage* reveals much about the rationale behind their individual and collective ritual ceremonies, especially in living crisis situations. Thus, by articulating their perceptions and experiences about the power they wield in prayer, Kakure Kirishitan practitioners have evidently proved that drawing explicit attention to the Trinity, Blessed Virgin Mary, and their righteous ancestors in faith (including San Jiwan—their local patron saint) leads to divine grace. Seen in this light, it does not matter for the Kakure Kirishitan believers of my sample, whether the expected healing processes go fast or slowly. What ought to matter, for a larger part, is the search for divine intervention and how do individual Kakure Kirishitan believers justify their perceptions and lived religious experiences of the potential healing effects of their fundamental faith practices, when discerning health outcomes and security within their

individual tight-knit communities. The micro-analysis reinforces the startling conclusion that “at the center of studies of religion is an individual who relates their subjective experiences, and the content of these lived experiences, by simultaneously using their cultural repertoire of symbols, interpretations, and expressions, while either subsuming the cultural repertoire under their own lived experience or creating a new expression through reflection” (Arnold 2018: 47). Still more empirical and statistic information is needed in this area to determine whether outside of belief in God there may be no more ubiquitous religious expression among Kakure Kirishitan practitioners than the use of healing prayers and ritual practices. In general, therefore, this field-case study is intended to provide the foundation for further conceptualizing and understanding this specific religious phenomenon of faith healing among the Kakure Kirishitan practitioners in a practically and theoretically integrated way.

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