Territoriality by Folk Boundaries and Social-Geographical Conditions in Shinto-Buddhist, Catholic, and Hidden Christian Rural Communities on Hirado Island, Western Japan

Imazato Satoshi
Faculty of Humanities, Kyushu University; Fukuoka 819–0395, Japan.
E-mail: ima@lit.kyushu-u.ac.jp
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Abstract This article explores how the sense of territoriality and various background conditions of Japanese rural communities affect the emergence of folk boundaries, which are viewed here as the contours of residents’ cognitive territory represented by religion-based symbolic markers. Specifically, I look at how the particular social-geographical conditions of different communities create diverse conceptions of such boundaries, including the presence or absence of the boundaries, within the same region. Here, I focus on three Japanese villages encompassing seven local religious communities of Shinto-Buddhists, Catholics, and former Hidden Christians on Hirado Island in Kyushu. These villages are viewed respectively as examples of contrastive coexistence, degeneration, and expansion in territoriality. Among the seven religious communities, only those believing in Shinto-Buddhism, as well as Hidden Christianity, have maintained their folk boundaries. These communities satisfy the conditions of an agglomerated settlement form, a size generally larger than ten households, a location isolated from other communities within the village, and strong social integration. In contrast, Catholics have not constructed such boundaries based on their historical process of settlement. However, they have influenced the forms of Shinto-Buddhists’ territoriality, although not those of Hidden Christians. Additionally, their settlement form and relative location among the other religious communities have affected the shape of the Shinto-Buddhists’ cognitive territories. Changes in these intertwined background conditions can transform the states of territoriality, which should be viewed as correlated rather than independent and as dynamic rather than static.

Key words folk boundary, territoriality, Japanese village, rural religious community, Hirado Island

Introduction

This paper explores the essence of human territory contoured by cognitive boundaries, considering the background social-geographical conditions of rural communities. It exclusively focuses on folk boundaries (mura-zakai) in Japanese villages, which are recognized by the residents themselves and identified through religion-based symbolic markers such as a straw rope stretched across the road or a stone statue by the roadside (Yagi 1988: 138–139). These informal boundaries are recognized and represented not as lines but as points beside main roads, and they do not always correspond to the formal administrative or cadastral boundary (Iijima 2008: 143). Such folk boundaries with their symbolic markers, which are generally located at interior points rather than the formal village boundary, reflect the existence of rural people’s cognitive territories that originate from their conception of territoriality. This study shows that an analysis of Japanese folk boundaries can help explain the general characteristics of human territoriality.

In geography, human territoriality is defined as “the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (Sack 1986: 19). Theoretically, it has three basic characteristics: 1) a form of classification of space and its popular acceptance; 2) a form of communication by territorial markers or signs around boundary lines; and 3) control over access to the area (Sack 1986: 21–22; Agnew 2009: 745). Folk boundaries of Japanese villages can be regarded as a typical representation of human territoriality (Hamatani 1988: 62–63), where these boundaries completely satisfy the three above-mentioned characteristics: 1) they establish spatial and social classifications between the inside and the outside of the village; 2) they are represented by symbolic markers around cognitive boundaries; and 3) they spiritually control access and thus guard against threats from outside of the village.

On the other hand, most theoretical studies on the ter-
ritorality of rural villages in English-speaking countries have focused principally on political-economic aspects (Malmberg 1980: 83–115; Sack 1986: 52–91), not religious-social aspects. In contrast, numerous case studies in the Japanese social sciences have intensively addressed the religious-social aspects of folk boundaries in rural villages, proposing certain theoretical considerations from cultural anthropological and semiotic perspectives (Yagi 1988; Tarumi 1990: 1–52; Imazato 2006: 255–269, 2007: 10–12).

The religious aspect of Japanese folk boundaries, which carry various symbolic meanings and functions to guard against misfortune and evil spirits, was exhaustively theorized by Yagi (1988). Thus, this study primarily explores the social aspect, which is grounded on the cognition of spatial and social distinctions between the inside and the outside of a community (Iijima 2008: 143). Such a distinction between the self (inside) and others (outside) formed by the folk boundary is underpinned by a strong mental fusion within the village community (Harada 1983: 389). This mental fusion, or shared sense of living together and unity, is fundamentally based on the community’s social integration, namely, strongly bound relationships in daily life among the member households (Iijima 2008: 143–145).

Generally, the social integration of Japanese villages and the cognitive distinction between inside and outside are more remarkable than those features in the villages in East and Southeast Asia (Kitahara 2007: 166–167; Sato 2007: 142–151). In addition, Japanese villagers have maintained a strong sense of ‘our own territory’ covering agricultural fields and woodlands, by preparing religion-based symbols that delineate their cognitive territory (Hamatani 1988: 56–63; Torigoe 2007: 18–20). Folk boundaries represented by symbolic markers socially announce the village residents’ territory to outsiders (Imazato 2006: 262–263) and spiritually guard the residents themselves and their land. Such boundaries can be regarded as indicators of the strength of village territoriality. Accordingly, focusing on the folk boundaries in Japanese villages is a suitable approach to examining various issues of territoriality.

Nevertheless, regarding the social aspects of Japanese folk boundaries, few studies have focused directly on the relationship between folk boundaries, as an indicator of territoriality, and background conditions; folk boundaries must be practically arranged within a society rooted in various social and geographical conditions. However, do all Japanese villages maintain such folk boundaries? Which combined conditions induce, or absent ones evade, village territoriality? How do different conditions in individual communities diversify the characteristics of folk boundaries, including their presence or absence, within the same region?

In response to these questions, this paper proposes three categories of social-geographical conditions within villages that are basic factors of Japanese rural social geography (Kurematsu 1951; Hamatani 1988): shared religion(s), spatial structures, and social integration of the village, including multiple smaller communities within the village (Figure 1).

First, the folk boundaries in Japanese villages are always represented by religion-based symbolic markers. Thus, different religions should maintain their own style of boundary symbols. However, previous studies on folk boundaries in rural Japan have limited their scope to ordinary Shinto-Buddhist villages¹. Consequently, this study focuses on cases of different religions followed in single or multiple religious communities and their member households within the village as a way to overcome that shortcoming of the previous works.

Second, in this study, the concept of spatial structures includes settlement form (agglomerated or dispersed), population size (number of households), and the relative geographical location among other communities. Folk boundaries are spatial representations of human cogni-

![Figure 1](image-url)  Hypothetical framework for this study considering background social-geographical conditions.
tion that divide an area under such specific spatial and geographical conditions.

Third, this paper evaluates the degree of social integration by whether self-government and religious organizations are tightly linked within the village and by the frequency of annual religious rituals. Generally, traditional Japanese villages conduct most religious rituals as events for the entire community (Furukawa 2007: 25–27). The goal of this paper is to clarify which of these background conditions result in specific forms of territoriality and how this process occurs.

**Religious Background of Case Study Villages**

This article, accordingly, examines the relationships between folk boundaries and their background conditions in three Japanese villages on Hirado Island, Nagasaki Prefecture: Houki, Koba, and Neshiko (Figure 2). Small terraced paddies and dry fields are dispersed among hilly woods within these villages. Historically, the various religions of Shinto, Buddhism, folk religions, Catholicism, and Hidden Christianity (Kakure Kirishitan) have complicatedly coexisted or merged on the island. In addition, these villages have preserved a relatively large amount of traditional religious rituals, including those for the folk boundaries.

Hirado Island villages can be classified into three basic types from the viewpoint of religious geography: Shinto-Buddhist, Catholic, and former Hidden Christians, although the actual situation within each village is more complicated (Imazato 2015: 155–158). Shinto-Buddhist and Catholic communities coexist in Houki and Koba, while former Hidden Christians live in Neshiko. These case-study villages, located in close proximity to each other, play host to all three religions but display various patterns of territoriality, which enables this study to precisely compare multiple villages under different conditions within the same region. Accordingly, this island and these three villages are well suited to the purposes of this paper.

Historically, Christianity diffused over the island at the earliest stage of the European missionary outreach in Japan. After the arrival of Francis Xavier in Hirado in 1550, the Society of Jesus spread Catholicism to the northwestern coastline villages of Hirado Island, including Neshiko, and neighboring Ikitsuki Island (Kataoka 1967: 44–48). Most of these villages patiently held Hidden Christian beliefs despite its prohibition by the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1614. Hidden Christians on the islands preserved their religion, without any Catholic priests, by

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**Figure 2.** Distribution of household religions in Houki and Koba.

*Note: Most households in Mizutari live in the northern area, which is not shown in this figure.*

*Source: Interviews with residents, topographic maps, and housing maps.*
sustaining secret lay organizations within each village community and conducting various rituals on their own, in such a way that the form of their rites merged with the Japanese Shinto style (Miyazaki 2014: 54–128). They believed simultaneously in both this transformed Hidden Christianity and traditional Shinto-Buddhism (Miyazaki 2014: 160–201; Nakazono 2015: 22–23). However, most of the Hirado Hidden Christian villages, including Neshiko, dissolved their Hidden Christian organizations and ceased conducting rituals by the late 20th century, currently maintaining Shinto-Buddhism only (Miyazaki 2014: 218; Imazato 2015: 139–142). Therefore, there are currently only “former Hidden Christian villages” on Hirado Island.

In contrast, many Catholics have spread to the northeast side of Hirado Island, including Houki and Koba. Most of their ancestors migrated from Kyushu mainland regions such as Sotome, in addition to neighboring islands such as Kuroshima and Goto in the present Nagasaki Prefecture, from the end of the 18th to the beginning of the 20th century (Hirado City Board of Education 2009: 11; Iwasaki 2013: 38–42; Imazato 2015: 156–158). These Catholics, most of whom were Hidden Christians under the Tokugawa Shogunate regime, returned to Catholicism via the Paris Foreign Mission Society after the Meiji Restoration government lifted the Christianity prohibition in 1873 (Spae 1963: 8–10). Of course, the descendants of these Catholics still only believe in Christianity. In addition, many converts from Shinto-Buddhism to Christianity appeared in the late 19th century, especially on the east side of the island, including Houki and Koba (Imazato 2015: 156–158).

This paper focuses on these Shinto-Buddhist, Catholic, and former Hidden Christian communities in the case-study villages. I first examine shared religions, spatial structures, and social integration as background conditions in each village, including internal religious communities, while describing religious rituals and sites related to folk boundaries and territoriality. Next, I comparatively analyze territoriality in the three villages to reveal the basic conditions that influence the creation of folk boundaries, and finally I discuss the general implications for the idea of human territoriality.

Fieldwork for this paper was conducted from 2010 to 2011, and all figures and tables show data from these years. The principal data sources are interviews with residents, including experienced senior officials in self-government associations or religious organizations, as well as observations of landscapes and religious rituals. Topographic maps and housing maps at different scales, published in 1991, 2001, 2006, and 2010, are used as references to illustrate the maps of Houki, Koba, and Neshiko.

**Houki Village**

First of all, I overview the geographical and historical profiles of Houki village to grasp the general relationship between Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics within the village. Houki lies on the east side of Hirado Island and consists of 186 households (Table 1). Shinto-Buddhist households as earlier occupants and Catholic households as later migrants are mixed within the formal administrative and cadastral village area (Figure 2). The number of households believing in Shinto-Buddhism is currently about twice that of Catholics, although the two groups’ numbers were previously closer.

Shinto-Buddhist households in Houki were established even before the Medieval Period (Seno 2001: 670). In contrast, most Catholics later migrated from Sotome, Kuroshima, and Goto in the latter part of the 19th century, although some are descendants of the indigenous Houki people (Imazato 2015: 148). Most Catholics, as migrants, cleared the land to develop dry fields (and the rare tiny paddy fields) in the peripheral hilly zones that were not yet occupied by the earlier residents—the Shinto-Buddhists (Imazato 2018: 112–113). They were also tenant farmers of paddies in Houki and the neighboring village of Mizutari, owned by the Hirado urban districts, Himosashi, and the Mizutari people (Figure 2). Generally, the social-economic status of Catholics had not been higher than that of the Shinto-Buddhists on Hirado Island. In addition, the Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics of Hirado Island’s villages have not participated in each other’s rituals, except in rare cases. However, they have grown up together, attending the same municipal schools, and there have been more than a dozen marriages between Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics in Houki after the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s.

**Self-government and religious organizations**

Next, I explain the relationship between self-government associations and religious organizations within the present village, before considering their rituals involving territoriality. The local administrative and self-government structure in this region basically consists of two levels: a larger village (cho) and a smaller district (ku).

Although the Houki people maintain the united self-government organization on the village level, the basic unit for local administration and self-government is four
districts. Each district, numbered First through Fourth as proper nouns (Table 1), individually provides the self-government association managed by elected officials, financial resources, and a community center (kokaido). Senior officials of these four districts gather as members of the unified self-government organization of the village to discuss specific issues, such as primary school education and petitions for infrastructure construction to the Hirado City government.

The residents of the First District, who are descendants of fishermen and commonly refer to the area as Ura (creek or fishery settlement), live in a core agglomeration around a small fishing port, whereas most households of the Second District, called Zai (countryside or agricultural settlement), are widely dispersed on foothills at the rear of the First District (Figure 2). All residents of the First and Second Districts are Shinto-Buddhists (Table 1). In contrast, the Third (commonly called Uso) and Fourth (Kyozaki) Districts’ residents are exclusively Catholic. The Third District’s households are dispersed on the slopes of a valley in the western part of the village, whereas the Fourth District’s households are strewn across the eastern slope terrace facing the sea. It is clear that the administrative division of Houki is based on the religions followed by the households rather than on geographical location. Consequently, many member households of each district spill over district boundaries, excluding that of the agglomerated First District (Figure 2).

The First and Second Districts’ households are Shinto parishioners of Sarutahiko Shrine (Figure 3 and Table 1), who jointly hold religious rituals. The priest of Miwa Shrine, located in nearby Himosashi, is in charge of various Shinto shrines in Hirado Island’s central region and also performs Shinto rituals in Houki, but the three most important rituals, the New Year Prayers (Hatsugito), Gion Purification (Gion-sai), and Grand Ceremony (Reitaisai), are rotationally managed by the two district heads (kucho).

As an example of the relationship between the self-government associations and religious organizations, in the First District, not only one or two representatives of Shinto parishioners (miyasodai) but also the self-government executives, including eight councilors (hyogiin) and the secretary (shoki), formally participate in Shinto rituals. In addition, besides the eight councilors, the representatives of the Shinto parishioners as well as the most recent head of the district (sen-kucho), who also participates in the rituals, concurrently serve as councilors of the self-government association. The official system of the Second District is similar to that of the First District, except that the six heads of neighborhood units (hancho) participate in the rituals rather than their own eight councilors.

In contrast, duties of Buddhist supporter representa-
Rites (terasodai) are officially separated from those of the two self-government associations. Shinto households in the two districts are concurrently supporters of one of four Buddhist temples, including Hojuji Temple of the Jodo (Pure Land) sect and Myoenji Temple of the Nichiren (Lotus) sect, both of which are located within Houki (Figure 3), and two temples located outside of the village.

Consequently, the two self-government associations and the Sarutahiko Shinto parishioner organization are inseparable in these Shinto-Buddhist districts. Moreover, the main annual rituals for the Shinto-Buddhists occur ten times a year, although two of the ten rituals are held only in the First District (Table 2). Therefore, the First District can also be regarded as a religious subunit of the Shinto-Buddhist community. While each district manages its own self-government association and unique participant system for the Shinto rituals, the two districts jointly maintain moderately strong integration as a religious community.

### Rituals held for Shinto-Buddhists’ territoriality

The annual ritual directly concerning joint territoriality of the two districts is the New Year Prayers held on the first day of ‘Monkey’ (saru, one of the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac) in January

As part of this ritual, people plant chinquapin (shii) wooden sticks of about 0.4 meters tall, called tsujifuda (literally, junction tablet), into the ground at ten junctions or crossroads within the village as protection against evil spirits or demons from the outside world (Figures 3 and 4). Of the ten sticks, one is strictly for the First District (No. 7 in Figure 3) and another is only for the Second District (No. 6). This fact, in addition to the two rituals held only in the First District, indicates that the two districts retain partial independence within their religious community.
These ten guardian sticks are equivalent to the folk boundary markers widely observed in Japanese villages. Generally, junctions (tsuji) as contact points with the other world (takai) in traditional Japanese villages are located at not only periphery points, but also the central point of the settlement (Sasamoto 1991: 303–306). A stick beside the main junction of the First District (No. 1) can be regarded as the central point. In addition, the other nine sticks are arranged threefold: three sticks around the First District (Nos. 2–4) jointly as the final protection line from the outside; three sticks covering most of the Second District houses dispersed on hilly slopes (Nos. 5–7) as the second defense line; and three sticks at the residents’ cognitive entrances of the village (Nos. 8–10) as the first barrier line. Houki Catholics clearly recognize the existence and general meaning of these sticks, although they do not know the exact locations of all ten sticks15.

Moreover, there are three more rituals indirectly, but intimately, related to territoriality that serve to maintain safety in the cognitive territory: the Gion Purification, the Grand Ceremony, and the Water Gods Rite (Kawamatsuri). The Gion Purification is conducted in July (mid-June in the old lunar calendar). The common concept of this ritual in Japan is to prevent contagious and infectious diseases in summer, as is the case with Kyoto’s famous Gion festival. Houki’s rite is performed both by the Miwa Shinto priest as well as two Buddhist priests of Hojuji and Myoemji Temples to prevent diseases and guard against accidents in rivers, ponds, and the sea.

The Houki people believe that diseases are caused by evil spirits invading from junctions and the spirits of dead persons, and that drownings and accidents in the water are caused by an imaginary being called gawappa living under water, generally referred to as kappa (water imps) in Japan16. In the Gion Purification, temporary bamboo-grass altars, called sana (Figure 5), are erected at ten places that are believed to be the appearance points of gawappa or spirits of the dead in addition to the principal Shinto and Buddhist sites (Figure 3): the three main riversides; the bank of Kyozaki Pond; Sarutahiko Shrine; a dragon god (ryujin-sama)—a water deity represented as a rock from which water oozes; a Kannon shrine (the Buddhist deity of mercy); two wooden stupa-shaped Buddhist poles (hoto-sama) (Figure 6); and a Buddhist stone (banden-sama) standing in the center of the First District18.

In addition, in mid-December’s Grand Ceremony, the Shinto priest prays before the five principal gods: Sarutahiko Shrine; an Inari shrine (a god of agriculture and fishing); a tortoise-like stone (Kameishi-sama)19; an ox god shrine (ushigami-sama) for guarding agricultural cattle; and the dragon god. The priest also prays before four bamboo-grass altars, as during the Gion Purification (Figure 3)20. Both the Gion Purification and the Grand Ceremony can be regarded as rituals for preventing evil and for ensuring residents’ safety within the village; in
other words, for the preservation of the commonly recognized territory.

On the other hand, the Water Gods Rite currently held on the autumnal equinox is conducted only in the First District, which has maintained common wells. The First District’s settlement is surrounded by eight water gods’ sites that protect wells or springs at the foot of hilly woods and prevent droughts (Figure 3)²¹. These eight gods can be considered guardians of not only the traditional water supply used for daily life but also the agglomerated settlement itself.

**Houki Catholics without folk boundaries**

In contrast, the people of the Third and Fourth Districts are parishioners of the Houki Church (Figure 7 and Table 1), whose activity began in 1878 with its church later constructed in 1898. The Houki Parish includes Nakano and Yamano mission stations, which are located in the northern part of the island and have their own lay assemblies. In addition, all of the lay officials of the Houki Parish, led by the pastor, are chosen from officials of the three lay assemblies.

The officials of the Houki lay assembly consist of four representatives (traditionally called *shukuro*), four ceremony committee members (*tenrei-iin*), and four missionary committee members (*senkyo-iin*) (Imazato 2014: 27–28). Regular Sunday masses and the various principal festivals, which are designated by the Roman Catholic calendar, are held separately at each center (Houki Church, Nakano and Yamano Stations) of the lay assembly (Table 3)²². Thus, it can be concluded that the social integration of the Houki lay assembly is stronger than that of the larger Parish. Although the officials of the lay assembly have often concurrently served as executive officials of the self-government associations of the Third and Fourth Districts, including heads and councilors (Imazato 2014: 31–32), the election systems of officials for the religious organization of Christianity and the two discrete self-government associations are completely separate. Accordingly, the Catholic community in Houki maintains moderate integration to almost the same degree as that of the Shinto-Buddhists.

The Houki Church, which stands on a hillside behind the First District settlement, is the only religious site for the Catholics except for each district’s cemetery. They have no religious symbols that define their own folk boundaries. Moreover, most Catholic homes are located...
outside the folk boundaries marked by the guardian sticks of the First and Second Districts, being separated geographically into either the Third or Fourth District (Figures 2 and 3).

Koba Village

I next focus on Koba village, explaining the geographical and historical background of the village and describing the people’s religions. Koba is adjacent to the western edge of Houki and encompasses 99 households, approximately half the size of the Houki and Neshiko (Table 1). A large quarry owned by a private company, established in 1983, has gradually extended its area in the center of the village (Figure 8). Shinto-Buddhist and Catholic households are mixed within the village area, just as in Houki (Figure 2 and Table 1). The basic administrative units of Koba are three small districts—Koba, Kandori, and Tasaki—each of which is geographically separated and maintains its own community center. However, no unified self-government organization has been established in this village, differing from the Houki case.

Because Koba village was the first base of the missionary work on Hirado Island by the Paris Foreign Mission Society in the late 19th century, many households, including non-Hidden Christians, converted from Shinto-Buddhism to Catholicism (Imazato 2015: 148–149). The remaining Shinto-Buddhist households in Koba are supporters of Buddhist temples, including Daishoji Temple, which is located within the village (Figure 8) and belongs to a mountain asceticism (shugendo) of the Shingon (True Words) school, and other temples located outside of the village.

Figure 8. Religious sites in Koba.

Source: Interviews with residents, observations, and topographic maps.
Koba’s Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics

Next, I describe the self-government associations and religious organizations as well as religious rituals in the three small districts. First, Koba District is located in the northern part of Koba village and is the largest in population (42 households) among the districts within the village (Table 1)\textsuperscript{23}. Just under 20 Shinto-Buddhist and two dozen Catholic homes are dispersed throughout this district (Figure 2). Most Catholic households are converts from indigenous Shinto-Buddhists\textsuperscript{24}, with the exception of migrants from Sotome (Imazato 2015: 148). The district was once divided into two subunits: one consisting only of Shinto-Buddhists and the other only of Catholics. These subunits based on religion were virtually the basic units of self-government, although they were finally combined in approximately 2003 because of the decreasing number of households within the district.

The Shinto-Buddhists belong to either Yabosa or Yatsuo Shrine (Figure 8 and Table 1). Originally, all households within Koba village (Koba, Kandori, and Tasaki Districts), including later converts to Catholicism, were parishioners of Yabosa Shrine. However, at the beginning of the 20th century, some households switched their association to the newly established Yatsuo Shrine for political reasons (Miyamoto 1984: 172–173). Currently, only four households are members in Yabosa and six in Yatsuo, while several Shinto-Buddhist households are involved with neither shrine. Each shrine holds only the Grand Ceremony in December, not arranging any guardian sticks for folk boundaries (Table 4). Furthermore, considering that the Shinto-Buddhists share only a few Buddhist rituals and that the Catholics are affiliated with a church parish, it can be assumed that only weak social integration exists both in the Shinto-Buddhists of this district and the entire Koba District.

However, the two Shinto communities jointly conduct a few rituals such as the Water Gods Rite (Miyamoto 1984: 173), whose four ritual sites are the source or banks of streams and a grave (Figure 8). These four sites together encompass most of the dispersed Koba homes, including both Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics, thus representing a vestige of the previous territoriality in the Koba District before the split-up of the original Shinto association.

Kandori with Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics

Second, Kandori District is located at the southeastern tip of the village and contains a mix of Shinto-Buddhist and Catholic households dispersed within the district (Figure 2). The ancestors of the Shinto-Buddhists came from Awa Province (the present Tokushima Prefecture) on Shikoku Island before the first half of the 19th century. Most Catholics either converted from Shinto-Buddhism or migrated from the Kyushu mainland (Imazato 2015: 148–149), and all Catholics currently belong to the same church parish as do the Koba District’s Catholics.

The Shinto-Buddhists maintain the original tutelary deity of the indigenous Kandori people, Ichinomiya Shrine commonly called Awa-sama (Figure 8). Although they have been formally included in the Sarutahiko Shinto association of Houki since the split between the Yabosa and Yatsuo Shrines of Koba, they sustain an independent religious community (Table 1). However, the number of their rituals within Kandori is extremely limited (Table 5). Moreover, these nine Shinto-Buddhist households manage a single self-government association.
jointly with over ten Catholic households. Accordingly, the social integration of Kandori Shinto-Buddhists is currently not strong.

Their guardian sticks used to be placed at the center of Kandori (No. 1 in Figure 8) and two cognitive entrance points on the main road (Nos. 2–3), which together encompassed not only Shinto-Buddhist but also Catholic homes extensively scattered throughout the district (Figures 2 and 8). However, they recently ceased the placement of guardian sticks due to the decrease in households, though the three guardian sticks are still prepared for Kandori parishioners during the New Year Prayers at Sarutahiko Shrine39.

**Tasaki as a home to members of Himosashi Church**

Third, Tasaki District occupies the southwestern area of the village30. Tasaki’s 32 households are extensively dispersed and maintain a single self-government association within the district (Table 1). All Catholic households have either converted from Shinto-Buddhism or migrated from the Kyushu mainland (Imazato 2015: 149), resulting in their not residing alongside any Shinto-Buddhist homes (Figure 2).

All Catholics in Koba village, consisting of the Koba, Kandori, and Tasaki Districts’ approximately 70 households, are parishioners of the Himosashi Church established in 1885 (Ichiyama et al. 1982: 18) and located in the primary town of central Hirado Island (Figure 2). Tasaki was chosen as the first base of the missionary work in the central region of the island by the Paris Foreign Mission Society; a small chapel in Tasaki, as the predecessor of the Himosashi Church, was established in 1878 (Imazato 2015: 149)31. This first missionary center was later converted to a nunnery that has now fallen into ruin (Figure 8).

The officials of the lay assembly of Himosashi Church include the president (komoncho), three vice-presidents (komon), and the twelve heads of the parish’s districts (chikuchō) traditionally called representative (shukuro) within each district, including the Koba, Kandori, and Tasaki Districts (Ichiyama et al. 1982: 88). These Koba village Catholics do not maintain their own church within the village, although the three districts have their own cemeteries (Figure 8). They join in regular masses and principal festivals, just like the rituals for Houki Catholics shown in Table 3, in the Himosashi Church. Although their social integration is strong, they are rather more like Himosashi church members, including believers outside of villages, than the Koba village Catholics who do not concurrently maintain any unified self-government association32.

Moreover, they have no symbolic markers that indicate any folk boundaries within the village. However, the Tasaki Catholics commonly recognize an indigenous place name, *Fudaba*33, which generally means the point of a religious stick, talisman paper, or public signboard, located near a small pass between the Tasaki and Koba Districts. Accordingly, it can be assumed that the Tasaki people used to set guardian sticks at folk boundary points before their conversion to Catholicism in the late 19th century.

**Neshiko Village**

Finally, I look at Neshiko village’s situation and its background of territoriality in the same manner as done for the Houki and Koba cases. Neshiko, a former Hidden Christian village, faces the western sea of Hirado Island and is comprised of 191 households (Figure 9 and Table 1)34. Although the formal area of the village is not large, the Neshiko people have also maintained homes, agricultural fields, and various religious sites in the southwestern part of neighboring Oishiwaki village (Figures 9 and 10). The 20 households of Oishiwaki, consisting only of Shinto-Buddhists, are extensively dispersed approximately two to four kilometers away from the Neshiko settlement. It is presumed, from a few missionary reports of the Society of Jesus and a contemporary geographical survey (Imazato 2015: 160), that this southwestern part of Oishiwaki village was already a substantial area of Neshiko by at least the mid-16th century and that Neshiko formally belonged to Oishiwaki at that time.

**Social organizations and territorial ritual**

Neshiko’s moderately agglomerated settlement is composed of four districts (First through Fourth). Houses are mostly concentrated near the seaside and a fishing port, with some homes dispersed in the First District. Each district is located by a brook and has a common name: Matsuyama, Nakaban, Mino, and Saki. They each select a district head (*kuchō*) and hold regular meetings (*taniyori*, gathering by the brook). However, in contrast with the Houki and Koba, the basic unit for self-government is the entire village headed by the village representative (*chosodai* or, simply, *sodai*), who is concurrently a district head. Moreover, assistant staff (*koyaku*) are selected from each district for self-government, Buddhist rituals, and formerly Hidden Christian rituals, respectively; these four districts systematically function as subunits of the village. The Neshiko people manage a single community center as a village facility without maintaining such buildings for each district.
Figure 9. Distribution of household religions in Neshiko.

Note: Shinto-Buddhists are former Hidden Christians or their descendants. Most homes of Oishiwaki village are distributed in the northeastern part of the village area, which is not shown in this figure. In addition, several Neshiko homes are dispersed among villages such as Himosahi and Kusazumi, located to the east of Oishiwaki area (not shown in figure).

Source: Interviews with residents, topographic maps, and housing maps, in addition to the report by Hirado City Board of Education (2009: 332).

Figure 10. Religious sites in Neshiko.

Source: Interviews with residents, observations, and topographic maps.
The households of Neshiko had been both Shinto members of Hachiman Shrine and followers of Hidden Christianity, although they now believe in Shinto-Buddhism only (Figure 10 and Table 1). The Miwa Shrine priest, who is also in charge of the Shinto shrines in Neshiko, performs the principal Shinto rituals, as in the Houki and Koba areas. Most Neshiko villagers have also belonged to Myoshoji Temple of the Buddhist Soto school (a Zen Buddhist sect), located in Shishi village, which is to the north of Neshiko. However, some households are supporters of Shokanji Temple of a mountain asceticism (shugendo) of the Shingon school, which was established within the village in 1947 (Hirado City Government 1967: 377).

In Neshiko, the self-government association actually coincides with these associations of the Hachiman Shrine parishioners and Myoshoji Temple supporters; these three organizations are inseparable. All executive officials of the self-government association, including the present and last village representatives (chosodai and senyaku), the secretary (choyaku), and district heads (kuchô), attend the principal Shinto rituals35. In addition, the representative of the Hachiman Shrine parishioners (miasodai) appears at not only such Shinto rituals, but also village council meetings, and the last village representative is customarily inaugurated as the representative of the Myoshoji Temple supporters (terasodai) in Neshiko.

Neshiko actively holds over thirty Shinto and Buddhist rituals each year (Kawakami 2008: 8–9), including a variety of principal rituals at Hachiman Shrine and other sites (Table 6). This village demonstrates a high degree of integration as a community. Among these rituals, sites for the Water Gods Rite on both equinoxes36 and small pools for rice seed germination (tan’nyake) for the Agricultural Water Rite (ihoriko) are assigned to the four districts, respectively (Figure 10). These rituals symbolically show the systematic integration of these subunits into the entire village.

The religious ritual for Neshiko’s territoriality is the New Year Prayers, as in Houki. The Neshiko residents plant purified guardian sticks, made of tobira wood (tobera)37, in the Shinto-Buddhist style at seven road junctions and hill pass points. Recently, one of these stick points (No. 4 in Figure 10) was transferred to a junction on Route 383 farther east from the settlement because the homes and paddy fields of the Neshiko residents have over time increased beyond the previously easternmost point (Figures 9 and 10)38. This set of seven sticks represents the single folk boundary of Neshiko’s cognitive territory, which overlaps with the vast expanse of the formal village area of Oishiwaki. This cognitive territory includes almost all of Neshiko’s homes and most of the sacred sites of the Hidden Christians in addition to the Shinto-Buddhist ritual sites, except for two Kompira shrines watching over sea safety from the hilltops (Figure 10).

### Hidden Christianity as a community’s religion

Moreover, it is necessary to grasp the historical background of Neshiko, which had maintained a Hidden Christian organization, even up to recent times, simultaneously with these Shinto and Buddhist associations (Naganuma 1928: 934–969; Maki 1972; Miyazaki 1998b). Although the economic status of Hidden Christians on the island was equal to that of the Shinto-Buddhists, their social status was not equal, just as the case of the Catholics on the island39. The member households in the Hidden Christian organization began to decrease before the 1960s (Furuno 1966: 167; Maki 1972: 125), falling to about half of the village households at its dissolution in 1992 (Miyazaki 1998b: 204–205).

Officials engaged in Shinto and Buddhist rituals were commonly called onote-yaku (literally, front side officials). In contrast, the Hidden Christian officials, including baptizers (mizu no yaku), were called ura-yaku (back side officials) and conducted many annual rites that basically followed traditional Japanese folk religions, except for such Christian rituals as Easter and Christmas (Kataoka 1967: 194–196; Maki 1972: 126–128, 134–135; Miyazaki 1998b: 209–216). Thus, both these ‘front’ and ‘back’ officials respectively bore key roles in the social

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### Table 6. Main annual rituals of Shinto-Buddhists in Neshiko

| Month | Ritual | Site |
|-------|--------|------|
| Jan.  | New Year Ceremony, Saitain-sai | Hachiman Shrine |
| Jan.  | New Year Prayers, Hatsugoto | Seven junctions |
| Feb.  | Praying for Harvest, Kinen-sai | Hachiman Shrine |
| Mar.  | Sea God Rite, Kompirako | Kompira shrine (west) |
| Mar.  | Water Gods Rite, Kawa-matsuri | Four brooksides |
| Apr.  | Fishing God Rite, Ebisu-matsuri | Ebisu shrine |
| Apr.  | Agricultural Water Rite, Ihoriko | Four seed pools |
| Apr.  | Spring Prayers, Haru-matsuri | Hachiman Shrine |
| Jun.  | Mid-year Purification, Oharae-sai | Hachiman Shrine |
| Sep.  | August’s First Crops Rite, Haisak | Hachiman Shrine |
| Sep.  | Water Gods Rite, Kawa-matsuri | Four brooksides |
| Oct.  | Grand Ceremony, Rei-taisai | Hachiman Shrine |
| Nov.  | Sea God Rite, Kompirako | Kompira shrine (east) |
| Nov.  | Thanks to Ox God, Ushigami-matsuri | Ox god shrine |
| Nov.  | Harvest Festival, Aliname-sai | Hachiman Shrine |
| Dec.  | Year-end Purification, Oharae-sai | Hachiman Shrine |

Source: Interviews with residents and priest of Miwa Shrine, in addition to Kawakami (2008: 8–9).
integration of Neshiko.

Most Hidden Christian rituals were secretly held in the house of a hereditary leader (tsujimoto-sama) located in the center of the settlement (Figure 10). However, in addition to the Hachiman Shinto shrine, all sacred sites for Hidden Christians were located somewhat far from the Neshiko agglomerated settlement and across the formal boundary with the adjacent Oishiwaki. These sites include, specifically, a sacred spring for ritual water (Ushaki-sama no ido), the Six Martyrs' Shrine (Ushakiso or Okusunisama) in the Oishiwaki Woods, a martyrdom rock (Shotsenkei), a martyrdom tree (Chicha no ki), a cave concealing Hidden Christian runaways (Sempuku no oishi), and a statue of Saint Mary (Rurudo no maria), most of which have their own legends or stories that are still currently maintained by the Neshiko people.

Comparison of the Three Villages

I next analyze the characteristics of territoriality as influenced by background conditions in the three case-study villages which cover, in total, seven religious communities: Houki Shinto-Buddhists, Houki Catholics, Koba district's two groups of Shinto-Buddhists (Yabosa and Yatsuo Shrines), Kandori Shinto-Buddhists, Koba village Catholics of the Himosashi Church, and Neshiko's former Hidden Christians.

Houki as a case of contrastive coexistence

First, Houki is a case of coexistence in territoriality of two contrastive communities. In Houki, the Catholic community grew beside the existing Shinto-Buddhist community. The Shinto-Buddhist community, centralized by Sarutahiko Shrine as earlier occupants, shows strong territoriality, whereas the Houki Catholic community, as later migrants, displays no territorial markers. Basic self-government organizations are instituted according to this religious division, although the Shinto-Buddhist houses are distributed mostly in the core and inner zones, while most Catholics are scattered in the periphery. The Shinto-Buddhists and Catholics are separated both socially and spatially, although they keep certain contacts within and outside of the village. They diverge into contrastive situations such that the Shinto-Buddhists maintain clear folk boundaries, while the Catholics do not create a folk boundary. Rather, the Third and Fourth District's Catholics are separated from each other, being linked only by the Houki Church as the most salient landmark and social node of their dispersed households within the village.

Houki’s Shinto-Buddhist community, composed of two districts, maintains the three-fold folk boundaries represented by ten guardian sticks. A complex settlement form comprised of agglomerated (First District) and extensively dispersed (Second District) portions has led to the partial independence of each district and an intricately shaped outline of their common cognitive territory. The fact that all of the three most principal rituals are closely related with territoriality demonstrates a strong concern for territory.

However, their cognitive territory contoured by the outer boundary does not fully encompass the entire village area. This boundary carefully excludes most Catholic homes dispersed on the periphery, including the eastern mixed part with Shinto-Buddhists. In short, the relative location of the Catholic households affects the shape of the cognitive territory for the Shinto-Buddhists and reduces their territory to the area inhabited solely by them. On the other hand, most Catholics, except for those who live near the church in the center of the village, have not immigrated to within the Shinto-Buddhists' cognitive territory. Within the constraints of both religious groups coexisting while being closely adjacent to and partly overlapping with each other, the Houki Shinto-Buddhists carefully maintain the dispersed religious sites, especially the boundaries, water, and safety within their cognitive boundary, while the Catholics do not disrupt the Shinto-Buddhists' territoriality.

Koba as a case of degeneration

Second, Koba illustrates the degeneration of territoriality. In this case, the number of existing Shinto-Buddhists in the village have drastically decreased by conversion to Catholicism because it was the initial base site of the Catholic missionary work in the late 19th century. Koba, as with Houki, experienced this second wave of Christian missions, mixing Shinto-Buddhist and Catholic homes within the area. Although Koba originally had a smaller population than those of Houki and Neshiko, it nevertheless repeatedly split into branches both in self-government and religious organizations. As a result, the spatial extensions of these organizations do not entirely coincide with each other, leading to insufficient integration throughout the village, districts, and religious communities.

Koba's original Shinto-Buddhist community, centralized by Yabosa Shrine, has traced a gradual process of separation and decrease in member households, weakening its integration: many converts to Catholicism in the
Koba, Kandori, and Tasaki Districts; the split into the Yabosa and Yatsuo Shinto associations, as well as unattached households; and the Kandori Shinto-Buddhists’ converting to the neighboring Houki’s Shinto association. These Shinto-Buddhist communities of Yabosa, Yatsuo, and Kandori do not currently hold any rituals or set symbolic markers for folk boundaries. Discontinuing the practice of planting guardian sticks in Kandori represented the end stage of a degeneration process, which also involves the status of folk boundaries.

Moreover, none of Koba’s Catholics display signs of territoriality; they are connected to the Himosashi Church, which is located outside of the village and shows strong social integration that covers a larger parish area comprised of several villages. In addition, their homes are dispersed and separated into the three districts. Thus, their sense of territoriality does not revolve around a village or smaller districts. As a result, neither the Shinto-Buddhist nor Catholic community currently displays any territoriality. It should be pointed out that this background, in which the people of Koba village lacked a genuine sense of territory, enabled a private company to construct a quarry site within the village.

**Neshiko as a case of expansion**

Third, Neshiko represents a case of expansion of territoriality by a self-governed and religious community that singly exists within a village area, which is different from the Houki and Koba cases. In this case, Catholicism historically merged and coexisted with Shinto-Buddhism within the same entity—a Hidden Christian community. The first wave of Christian missions in the mid-16th century resulted in the appearance of this peculiar community. The community continued until recently with two different religious elements, that is, Shinto-Buddhism as ‘the front side,’ centralized by Hachiman Shrine, and remarkably transformed Christianity as ‘the back side,’ integrated by hereditary leaders. Accordingly, Neshiko’s folk boundary symbols have been Shinto style (mixed with folk religions), as in Houki, and not Christian style. However, the people have passed on memorial places of Hidden Christianity as important religious elements within their cognitive territory.

Neshiko has sustained a large population, as has Houki, that is divided into four districts (also as in Houki), but the basic unit of self-government and religion has been the entire village with the four districts functioning as a subunit. By having lived mostly in the agglomerated settlement, as well as not having experienced any migration by worshippers of different religions such as Catholics (Imazato 2018: 113–114), the village community has maintained strong integration and systematic organization, which in turn has produced firm territoriality.

In particular, the large shape of the current cognitive territory in Neshiko fully expands not only to the contours of the formal area, but also greatly overlaps the neighboring area of Oishiwaki village. Historically, Neshiko’s lived space, including its residential area, paddy fields owned by the residents, and religious sites both for Shinto-Buddhism and Hidden Christianity, has gradually extended into Oishiwaki. The area of Oishiwaki homes has become too sparsely populated in the extensive village area and too far from Neshiko to be an obstacle to Neshiko’s expansion of territoriality beyond the boundary. Such extensions culminated in the recent drastic transference of one guardian stick. This cognitive territory fringed by seven guardian sticks currently consists of the western original part, in which most homes and Shinto-Buddhist religious sites are located, and the eastern extended part, which covers sacred Hidden Christian sites and a large part of the formal area of Oishiwaki.

**Discussion**

The focal point of this paper is the social-geographical conditions that lead to the diversity of territoriality within a single region comprised of several villages. Finally, I will discuss this point based on the case studies of Houki, Koba, and Neshiko, as well as a comparison of these three villages and among their seven religious communities. Table 7 shows that only two religious communities (Houki’s Shinto-Buddhists and Neshiko’s former Hidden Christians) have maintained folk boundaries and territoriality. These communities fully or partly satisfy all of the seven conditions based on the framework proposed in Figure 1: 1) sharing Shinto-Buddhism; 2) agglomerated settlement form; 3) more than approximately ten households in population size; 4) geographically isolated from other religious communities within the village; and 5) strong social integration from the viewpoints of both 6) tight linkage between self-government and religious organizations and 7) a high frequency of religious rituals.

First, I argue why folk boundaries emerge only in Shinto-Buddhist (including former Hidden Christian) communities, whereas none appeared in Catholic communities, even if largely populated and not weakly integrated. Generally, Catholics in Europe place small shrines or statues of Christ and the Virgin Mary by the roadsides of village peripheries and mountain passes (Aida and
Tani 1969: 14–17), while Japanese rural Catholics also set such territorial symbols (Imazato 2006: 263). Thus, it should not be assumed that a lack of folk boundaries stems directly from the nature of Catholic beliefs or Christianity.

Rather, in the cases discussed in this study, other individual factors should be considered. Most of the Houki Catholic believers are non-native settlers who came in the latter part of the 19th century, owned few agricultural fields, and did not gain a higher social-economic status within the village. Although most of the Koba Catholics were not immigrants but converts in this period, they have resigned themselves to a lower social status just after the period of prohibition against Christianity. In this process, Catholic homes in both Houki and Koba became extensively dispersed and thus were often mixed with the Shinto-Buddhist homes, without forming individual agglomerated settlements that could easily facilitate the appearance of folk boundaries. Moreover, Koba Catholics, including the Tasaki District as a uniform Catholic settlement, have been integrated into the Himosashi Parish encompassing a much larger area than the village and its districts. Consequently, in this situation, they did not become concerned with their own territoriality.

However, such a historical process for Catholics in this region has affected the disappearance of the Shinto-Buddhists’ territoriality in Koba village; numerous converts from Shinto-Buddhism as well as Catholic immigrants in the late 19th century led to decreases in absolute and relative population sizes of Shinto-Buddhists, indirectly weakening social integration within the village. Koba’s Shinto-Buddhist communities, including that of Kandori, all of which currently break a critical population level of approximately ten households, no longer seem to sustain concern for folk boundaries.

In contrast, conversion to Catholicism in the mid-16th century in Neshiko village, which was thereafter suppressed by Japan’s prohibition of Christianity, did not directly affect these Christians’ form of territoriality; symbolic markers as territorial representation of Neshiko Hidden Christians have been set up in the same style as those of Shinto-Buddhists (tsujifuda, guardian stick style) and not in the Christian style. In addition, the lack of Catholic immigration to Neshiko after the latter part of the 19th century worked to sustain the strong territoriality of the Neshiko community. This situation greatly differs from the case of Koba village.

Second, I should note that, among the seven social-geographical conditions, both settlement form and relative location of the community to other communities can affect the shape (outline and spatial structure) of cognitive territories contoured by the folk boundary, including its limitation and expansion. In Houki, the agglomerated and dispersed areas of Shinto-Buddhists’ homes, which are partially adjacent to or mixed with Catholic homes, have led to a three-tiered structure of the cognitive territory and limitations on its contour as well as the relative social independence between the two Shinto-Buddhist districts. The historical immigration process of Catholics into the village is also related to this phenomenon. In Neshiko, the accumulation of dispersed inhabited areas and religious sites not within but beyond the village has already reflected the extension of cognitive territory over the formal boundary with neighboring Oishiwaki village, before the transfer of a guardian stick.

In particular, it should be noted that the settlement
forms of both the Houki Shinto-Buddhists and Neshiko’s former Hidden Christians consist of not only the agglomerated but also the dispersed parts. Prior studies have presupposed that the folk boundaries and their symbolic markers in Japanese villages appear in agglomerated settlements (Fukuta 1982: 39; Hamatani 1988: 95) and not in dispersed settlements (Hamatani 1988: 60). However, such parts of the Houki and Neshiko settlements, in addition to the above case of the fully dispersed Kandori Shinto-Buddhists, do not conform to this common view. Differing from the typical Japanese dispersed settlements on continuous flats, exemplified by the Tonami and Sanuki Plains (Hamatani 1988: 20), residents in dispersed settlements in hilly regions, including Hirado Island, can easily find salient landmarks such as passes and edges of flats to use as folk boundary points.

Moreover, another issue of settlement form must be examined. Previous studies showed that if multiple (two or three) folk boundaries are observed in a village, they have different meanings represented by each ritual: one for guarding against misfortune, marked by such symbols as guardian sticks, and one for expelling evil by such incantations as mushi-okuri, which literally means sending pests out of the paddy fields (Fukuta 1982: 33–62; Oguchi 2002: 114–117). However, Torigoe (1976: 67–68) reported a case of two-fold boundaries of the same sort in a settlement in which an outer boundary is newly established in addition to the inner original boundary in response to an increase in new homes located outside of the original settlement. In this case, households within the inner boundary are full-members of the community, whereas those between the inner and outer boundaries are regarded as semi-members. The Houki case, in which all three boundaries are represented by uniform guardian sticks, is different from both of these cases. The complicated structure of settlement form in Houki has probably generated this structure of multiple folk boundaries.

Third, I must discuss how changes in background conditions can transform the presence of folk boundaries and the shape of cognitive territory. Unexpected splits in the community, including by conversion to other religions, decrease in population or member households, and decline in social integration, can result in the disappearance and absence of folk boundaries, namely those of territoriality. Such a situation can cause incursions into a weakened territory by outsiders such as large business facilities (land use conversion of agricultural fields and woods), as shown in the Koba case. Tarumi (1990: 128–132) argued that the breakdown of Japanese village territoriality originated from an increase in both economic dependence on cities and accessibility to information from places outside the village communities. However, despite such circumstances, many villages on Hirado Island still currently maintain folk boundaries. Hereafter, we should consider other conditions that tend to erode territoriality than those underscored by Tarumi.

In contrast, development of settlement form can lead to the transference of symbolic markers and expansion of the cognitive territory. Prior studies reported that folk boundaries can be moved following the disappearance of cultivated paddy fields around a symbolic marker (Shiraishi 1991: 148) and transference or new construction of a main road (Torigoe 1976: 67; Shiraishi 1991: 148; Asano 1997: 45). However, the transference of a guardian stick in the Neshiko case was primarily caused by the gradual spatial expansion of the member households that branched or moved from the original agglomerated area. This phenomenon is also different from the case reported by Torigoe (1976: 68), in which the newly added markers are for incorporating semi-members of the community. Presumably, the Neshiko people believe that their folk boundary must equally protect all member households, which were once tightly integrated as a Hidden Christian village.

**Conclusions**

This article contributes to the general discussion on human territoriality by showing that different intertwined conditions, bolstered by the historical process of each religion, produce various forms of folk boundaries, including their presence or absence, with accompanying diverse changes within the same region.

Folk boundaries are maintained by units of religious communities within the village, and what religions they believe in leads to the forms of folk boundaries. Only communities believing in Shinto-Buddhism, including the former Hidden Christians, create folk boundaries and territoriality. However, these cannot be sustained in communities that satisfy only the condition of belief in Shinto-Buddhism but that fail to satisfy the other social-geographical conditions.

In contrast, Catholic communities have not generated folk boundaries at all, being affected by only a few conditions combined with historical factors in early-modern and modern rural Japan rather than by the nature of Catholicism itself. Instead, Christians directly or indirectly influenced the shape and disappearance of Shinto-Buddhists’ folk boundaries. However, Christianity has not changed the presence or form of folk boundaries, includ-
ing the ritual style, of Hidden Christian communities within the historical background of early-modern Japan, namely the prohibition of Christianity. Those Hidden Christian communities have maintained a high degree of social integration and folk boundaries in the Shinto-Buddhist style up to the present.

This study further implies that the settlement form and relative geographical locations among different religious communities can affect the shape of the cognitive territory formed by the folk boundary or boundaries. In addition, dispersed settlements in hilly regions, although often containing an agglomerated area, can create folk boundaries and territoriality, in the same way as the agglomerated settlements that have been frequently discussed in the previous studies. Moreover, changes in these various social-geographical conditions can transform the states of territoriality, including degeneration and expansion: territoriality is dynamic rather than static, even in such small rural villages.

As for the significance of religion, these Hirado Island villages should be compared with other Japanese and foreign rural communities where there are believers of different religions. However, future research should fully address the intertwined social-geographical conditions and focus on not only a single community but also the relationships with other communities that can influence the state of folk boundaries: territoriality exists not independently but in relation to such circumstances and environments. Through folk boundaries, which are often represented by tiny sticks or statues in ordinary rural villages, we can observe not only the nature of human spatial cognition under specific conditions but also that of society itself.

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Notes

1. In this paper, the term ‘Shinto-Buddhism’ refers to a dualistic belief in both Shinto and Buddhism mixed with various folk religious beliefs that has been widely followed in Japan.

2. Although the formal address of these villages is currently cho (town), this paper uses the term ‘village’ to acknowledge their rural landscapes and traditional styles of community self-government.

3. All fieldwork was conducted with Mr. Hirofumi Hagiwara, the former Academic Chief of the Hirado City Board of Education.

4. The main informants were as follows: Mr. Sz. I. (born 1940) and Mr. Sd. I. (1947)—Houki Shinto-Buddhists; Mr. R. M. (1925) and Mr. T. F. (1927)—Houki Catholics; Mr. M. K. (1926) and Mr. T. F. (1934)—Koba Shinto-Buddhists; Mr. H. M. (1938), Mr. S. T. (1946), and Mr. Y. M. (1947)—Koba Catholics; and Mr. N. M. (1935) and Mr. S. K. (1950)—former Hidden Christians in Neshiko.

5. For example, it is estimated that there were 100 Shinto-Buddhist households and 71 Catholic households in 1970, based on the statistics tables for agricultural settlements (nogyo-shuraku cado) of the four Houki districts published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

6. According to Mr. R. M. and Mr. T. F., Catholics of Houki.

7. Mr. Sz. I. and Mr. Sd. I., former officials of a Shinto-Buddhist district in Houki, explained that the financial burden of Houki village’s united self-government organization has been allotted to two Shinto-Buddhist districts, which jointly cover fifty-five percent of the amount, and the remaining two Catholic districts, which cover the remaining forty-five percent. This economic charge, called shibuhan-gobuhan (forty-five and fifty-five percent), was introduced after considering the Catholics’ economic conditions.

8. Young Houki Catholic men have recently begun to join a Shinto-Buddhist ritual called Jangara because of the significant decrease in performers within Houki. The rite of Jangara is a whole-day series of dances in mid-August that disseminated from the Korean peninsula and is performed in front of various principal sacred sites for the peace of ancestors and a good harvest. This paper does not address these rituals because they have been managed primarily in the larger rural units of the Hirado Domain since the Edo period (1603–1868) rather than the present villages (Kawabuchi 1998: 523).

9. In Houki, the primary school was closed down and absorbed into the Himosashi Primary School in 2011, which is located outside of the village.

10. According to Mr. R. M. and Mr. T. F., Houki Catholics.

11. A Catholic household—the only Catholic household in the Mizutari area, but located close to the village boundary with Houki—belongs to the Fourth District of Houki and the parish of Houki Church, whereas two Mizutari Shinto-Buddhist homes near this Catholic home are involved in the self-government association of Mizutari, which is composed of Shinto-Buddhists only (Figure 2). This case illustrates the strong social integration of Catholics in this region.

12. Information on the self-government organizations, religious groups, and rituals in the First and Second Districts is principally based on interviews with Mr. Sz. I. and Mr. Sd. I. in addition to official documents of the First District, such as a member list of the officials and accounting reports of rituals.

13. The day of saru (Monkey) originates from the name of the tutelary deity, Sarutahiko. In fact, most Shinto-Buddhist rituals are now held on Sundays closer to the original date in the solar calendar in not only Houki, but also Koba and Neshiko.

14. Based on an interview with Mr. Sz. I. and Mr. Sd. I., landscape observation, and the document titled Hatsuugito hiyo hikaecho (Memorandum for the account of the New Year Prayers in 2008). These guardian sticks are extensively distributed on Hirado Island; I observed them also in other Shinto-Buddhist villages, such as Kobiki, Bokata, and Oshijiki.
15. Based on an interview with Mr. R. M., a Catholic residing in the Fourth District.

16. All descriptions of this ritual's purpose, including about gawappa, are primarily based on explanations by Mr. Sz. I. and Mr. Sd. I. Local people on Goto, Hirado, Iki, and Toshima Islands in Kyushu have believed that people experiencing misfortune are possessed by kappa (Ishizuka 1979: 137). The Japanese kappa is an ambivalent entity regarded both as an evil being that causes people to drown and as a god that protects people from drowning (Ono 1979: 217–220).

17. These ten locations are described in the document titled Gion-sai (Memorandum for the Gion Purification in 2008).

18. These nine locations are recorded in the document titled Taisai matsurikata (Memorandum for the Grand Ceremony in 2008). Mr. Sz. I. explained that the four bamboo-grass altars set up on the banks of the brook and the pond in the Gion Purification and the Grand Ceremony, respectively, in Houki are for protecting people from gawappa.

19. According to an interview with Mr. Sd. I., landscape observation, and the document titled Kawa-matsuri nimmyo narabi zoyo hikaecho (Memorandum of the duty members and offerings for the Water Gods Rite in 2008). Water Gods Rites in Hirado's urban districts are conducted in June to prevent epidemics from well water (Miyazaki 1998a: 305–310). Japanese rites for water gods (suijin) have been conducted generally in the old lunar June, which are historically related with the Gion rituals and kappa (Tomaru 1979: 253–255). Therefore, two kinds of water gods rites coexist in Houki.

20. Descriptions of Kandori District are based on interviews with two Catholic residents of Kandori. Mr. H. M. ordinarily calls the Shinto-Buddhism in Kandori seshu (the right religion), the opposite concept of Catholicism as jashu (the wicked religion). His conceptualization clearly suggests the traditional social status of Catholics on Hirado Island.

21. Descriptions of Neshiko are based on multiple interviews with Mr. S. K., the advisor (komon) to the self-government association as a Hirado City councilor elected from Neshiko, and Mr. N. M., a former village representative, in addition to two detailed reports (Hirado City Board of Education 2009: 331–334; Kawakami 2008).

22. Descriptions of the rituals in the Third and Fourth Districts are based on interviews with Mr. R. M. and Mr. T. F. of the Fourth District.

23. Information on Koba District was primarily obtained from Mr. M. K. and Mr. T. F.

24. Cemeteries shared by both Buddhists and Catholics clearly demonstrate this conversion and current coexistence.

25. Miyamoto (1984: 172–173) reported that this separation was caused by political opposition between the ‘doshi’ (comrade) and ‘hanTai’ (opposition) in the Meiji period (1868–1912). However, Rikken Doshi-kai (Comrades for Constitution) was established in December of 1913. The date carved on a pair of stone lanterns in the newly established Yatsuo Shrine is 1915 (the 4th year of the Taisho period), thus supporting a rough date for this separation of 1914 or 1915. Some Shinto-Buddhist households in Koba District do not belong to either of the two Shinto associations, although they still believe in Shinto-Buddhism as household religions (see also Miyamoto 1984: 173–175).

26. Mr. M. K. told me that the main purpose of the Water Gods Rite in Koba is the prevention of floods and droughts. He did not refer to gawappa, which was often emphasized in interviews with the residents of Houki. The reason why some Koba residents also conduct this ritual in front of an old gravestone for an infamous historical character (called matatachi-baka, see Figure 8), in addition to the banks of streams as in ordinary villages on Hirado Island, is unknown to the current Koba residents.

27. Descriptions of Kandori District are based on interviews with two Catholics, Mr. H. M., a resident of Kandori, and Mr. S. T., who lives in Tasaki but owns paddy fields within Kandori. Mr. H. M. ordinarily calls the Shinto-Buddhism in Kandori seshu (the right religion), the opposite concept of Catholicism as jashu (the wicked religion). His conceptualization clearly suggests the traditional social status of Catholics on Hirado Island.

28. They do not currently attend any rituals in Sarutahiko Shrine because their number of households has drastically decreased to a mere few, according to Mr. S. I. and Mr. Sd. I., residents in Houki and parishioners of Sarutahiko Shrine.

29. Based on interviews with Mr. H. M. of Kandori and Mr. Sd. I. of Houki, landscape observation in Kandori, and the Houki document titled Hatsugoto hiyo hikaecho (Memorandum for account of New Year Prayers in 2008).

30. Information on Tasaki District and the Himosashi Church Parish is based on interviews with three Catholics, Mr. S. T. and Mr. Y. M. of Tasaki, in addition to Mr. H. M. of Kandori.

31. The grave of Jean-François Matrat, a famous French missionary of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, stands in Tasaki Cemetery.

32. Mr. Y. M., a Tasaki resident, stated that he regards the church community as more important than Tasaki District and that the people's desire for rural revitalization activities (maruokoshi) is currently originating in the church community rather than within the district.

33. According to Mr. S. T. of Tasaki.

34. Descriptions of Neshiko are based on multiple interviews with Mr. S. K., the advisor (komon) to the self-government association as a Hirado City councilor elected from Neshiko, and Mr. N. M., a former village representative, in addition to two detailed reports (Hirado City Board of Education 2009: 331–334; Kawakami 2008).

35. Based on observation of the Grand Ceremony in 2010 and interviews with Mr. S. K.

36. According to Mr. S. K., a purpose of the Water Gods Rites in Neshiko is to pray to the dragon god (ryujin) as a god of water.

37. According to Mr. S. K., the people of Neshiko believe that the powerful smells of the tobira wooden sticks prevent invasion by evil spirits. I observed guardian sticks in other former Hidden Christian villages, including Kasuga, Takagoe, and Shishi, on the island.

38. Such accumulation of paddy field ownership was enabled by profits from the great catches of net fisheries before the mid-20th century, according to Mr. S. K.

39. Mr. S. K. stated that his marriage to his wife was once bitterly opposed by her parents, who are Shinto-Buddhists in a neighboring village, because he is a Hidden Christian.

40. The Makiyama family, whose successive ancestors were samurai surveillance officers (ashiyaiku) involved in the crackdown on Hidden Christians under the Hirado Domain regime during the Edo period, has maintained residence in the center of the Neshiko settlement (Kawakami 2008: 32–33). This family's cemetery is respectfully separated from the other households' common cemetery (Figure 10).

41. These sacred sites of the Neshiko Hidden Christians have already been studied in detail (Naganuma 1928: 934–942; Miyazaki 1998b: 228–230; Turnbull 1998: 128–130; Dougill 2012: 217–222). The statue of Saint Mary, erected in 2002, is located near the site of an old church, which was built in the late 16th century and later demolished in the early 17th century (Hagiwara 2012: 16–17). In front of the statue, yearly consoling ceremonies are jointly held by the Neshiko residents and Himosashi Catholic Church (Kawakami 2008: 35–36).

42. It is presumed that the distribution of farmland owned or cultivated by the Shinto-Buddhists does not affect the shape of this territory. For example, most sections of the paddy fields owned by a First District resident and those owned by a Second District resident are located outside of the outer folk boundary (Imazato 2012: 107).
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