Domain Shinto in Early Modern Mito: Impacts on Village Populations and Rural Networks

Brigitte PICKL-KOLACZIA*

Tokugawa Mitsukuni's religious policies in Mito domain during the 1660s are famous for their radical retrenchment of Buddhist institutions but were also designed to promote a system of one shrine per village. As Mitsukuni aimed at a complete separation of Shinto shrines from Buddhism, his reforms can be regarded as a typical case of Domain Shinto. Nevertheless, he could not achieve a comprehensive implementation of his policies. In the village of Noguchi, the subject of this case study, a tutelary shrine had existed since the early ninth century. It was, however, managed by a Buddhist temple. Its festivals were rooted in Buddhist practices mixed with a few Shinto elements. Probably owing to its comparatively high status, Noguchi's tutelary shrine remained under Buddhist influence for at least one hundred and twenty years after Mitsukuni's Domain Shinto measures. Only in the first half of the nineteenth century had all Buddhist elements been removed. Based on firsthand sources, this article reconstructs the relatively slow transformation of Noguchi's religious practice while analyzing the surprisingly large networks of Noguchi's leading families, in which their village shrine played a vital role.

Keywords: early modern Japanese religion, religious practice, rural society, shrine administration, tutelary shrine, Noguchi, Mito

This article deals with Domain Shinto at a local level, analyzing how religious policies introduced by Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628–1701) in his domain of Mito 水戸 (today's Ibaraki Prefecture) in the second half of the seventeenth century affected a particular village and its inhabitants. As noted in the introduction to this special section, we use Domain Shinto as an umbrella term to subsume a cluster of religious policies and ideas related to Shinto. The most prominent examples of Domain Shinto reforms occurred in the 1660s, the same time as those of Mitsukuni, and each involved the radical transformation of a certain local religious landscape. These reforms did not focus solely on Shinto as they also

* Brigitte Pickl-Kolaczia is a PhD candidate at the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Her research focuses on the dynamics between Shinto and Buddhism and religious practice in early modern Japan. Research for this article was funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) under project number P 33097.

derived from the fascination of the daimyo in question with Confucianism. Nonetheless, they did result in conditions favorable for the promotion of Shinto institutions and professionals.

The measures implemented were not identical in each of the domains involved, nor did they lead to the same outcomes. In Okayama 岡山, the main focus was on inspection of religious affiliation through Shinto shrines (*shintō-uke* 神道請).[1] Distinctive to Domain Shinto in Aizu 会津 was Hoshina Masayuki's 保科正之 (1611–1673) Shinto funeral and his subsequent deification.[2] And in Mito, the introduction of a system of one tutelary shrine per village and the proposed separation of Shinto and Buddhism were the most noteworthy aspects and had the greatest impact on the domain's religious landscape. In this article, I examine the effects of Mitsukuni's policies on local religious practice. I demonstrate that they are a key example of Domain Shinto, as the transition from syncretic to Shinto-focused practices, a deviation from the general developments in Japanese religion in the early modern period, was not prompted by either shogunal policy nor Shinto ideology alone, but are the result of Mitsukuni's desire to regulate and streamline religious administration based on his own ideas. Shinto shrines that conformed to his vision by either having a long history or by being promoted to tutelary shrines, which he then placed at the center of local communities, played a central role in his plans.

Zooming in on the Village

There have been a number of publications examining the religious policies Mitsukuni introduced in Mito. In 1968, Tamamuro Fumio 圭室文雄 published a study describing the measures implemented by Mitsukuni and the effect these measures had on Mito's religious landscape.[3] Based on that early study, he also analyzed the impact of these measures on Hachiman and village tutelary shrines.[4] Tamamuro's seminal work *Shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離, one of the major publications on the separation of Shinto and Buddhism, also includes a section on Mito.[5] In *Le sabre et l'encens*, published in 2005, Natalie Kouamé examines the destruction of temples in Mito based on a collection of orders from 1666 entitled *Hakyakuchō* 破却帳 (Register of Destructions).[6] And in a recent chapter of my own, I have given a detailed description of the measures of Mitsukuni, as well as their impact on the religious environment of Mito.[7] However, all of these studies analyze developments in Mito at the level of the domain. They include very little on the consequences of Mitsukuni's measures for religious life and practice in Mito's villages.

Much research has been done on the social history of early modern Japan. However, works such as Herman Ooms's *Tokugawa Village Practice*, which provides detailed descriptions of the social structure of Tokugawa-era villages, give very little information on religious practices at this time.[8] This gap has to some extent been filled by Nam-lin Hur's *Death and Social Order in Tokugawa Japan*, yet its focus is on funerary customs and

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1 See Stefan Köck's contribution to this Special Section.
2 See Bernhard Scheid's contribution to this Special Section.
3 Tamamuro 1968.
4 Tamamuro 2000; Tamamuro 2003.
5 Tamamuro 1977.
6 Kouamé 2005.
7 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021.
8 Ooms 1996.

the resulting relationship between temples and their parishes.[9] While Hur does mention Mitsukuni's religious policies, it is only in passing. Moreover, his observations on Shinto funerals, also regarding Mito, are limited to the period after the mid-eighteenth century.

The present article builds on this earlier research to describe the effects of Mito's religious policies on religious practice in a single village over a span of roughly two hundred years: from the 1660s, when religious practices were quite syncretic, to the mid-nineteenth century, when Shinto rituals were performed without any Buddhist participation at all. As we will see, Mito's transition away from Buddhist-Shinto syncretism (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合) had become common practice, at least in the village of Noguchi, long before the Meiji government's Order on the Separation of Kami and Buddhas (*Shinbutsu hanzenrei* 神仏判然令) of 1868. This deviation from general developments in Japanese religion seems to have been a result of Mito's Domain Shinto. My sources also suggest, however, that the reforms of Mitsukuni took much longer to manifest than he likely intended.

For this case study into the local implications of Domain Shinto, I examine the village of Noguchi 野口 because, unlike for other villages in Mito, there are still a relatively large number of documents available from the early modern period. These documents were written and collected by members of Noguchi's most prominent family, the Sekizawa 関沢, and are now held in the Ibaraki Prefectural Archives. The *Sekizawa kenke monjo* 関沢賢家文書 collection consists of over 6,700 documents dating from 1514 to the late Meiji 明治 era (1868–1912). The documents contain information on village administration, land, taxes, religious matters, and, of course, matters related to the family itself.[10] The case study draws on documents selected from this collection, which I use to examine the institutional and individual networks that centered around Noguchi's tutelary shrine of Saeki Jinja 佐伯神社, and how changes in religious practice affected these networks.

Before turning to religious policies and practices, let me give a short description of Noguchi's topography and its economic circumstances. Noguchi was situated on the Naka River 那珂川, which connected the village with the castle town of Mito, approximately twenty-five kilometers to the southeast.[11] With the river serving as a trading route, Noguchi and its people maintained relations with many villages and towns. A market was held in Noguchi's Yadonami 宿並 district six times a month (*rokusaiichi* 六斎市), making the village an economic hub. Goods that were traded included hardware, paper, sundries, dyed cloth, vegetables, tobacco, sweets, fish, spun cotton, *tatami*, woven straw mats, rope, and cotton. In addition to selling their own produce, local farmers could purchase almost all their farming tools and daily necessities at the market. In 1693, a harbor and an official marketplace were erected on the riverbank, where goods and tithes were stored and handled. This thriving harbor market ultimately led to the ruin of Yadonami, since trade moved away from that district.[12]

According to the earliest available reliable data, a census of 1774, Noguchi counted in that year 623 inhabitants in 166 households with 80 horses. The village's annual income was 935 *koku*. At that time, however, Noguchi, like the rest of Mito, was in a state of economic

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9   Hur 2007.
10 The documents are well preserved, often originals with later colophons or postscripts.
11 Today Noguchi is part of the city of Hitachi-Ōmiya 常陸大宮.
12 Kidota 1988, pp. 3–5.

decline. In 1782, the number of households had decreased to 135, the number of inhabitants to 531, and the village's income to 759 *koku*. This trend held at least until the end of the eighteenth century.[13]

Changes in Religious Policies in Japan

When Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 (1543–1616) came to power in the early seventeenth century, he implemented numerous policies to consolidate his authority and streamline and regulate the administration. Between 1601 and 1615, his government issued forty-six decrees to regulate temples. These policies were, at first, targeted at individual temples rather than Buddhism in general or particular Buddhist sects.[14] From 1612, though, the government issued laws on specific sects, and by the second half of the seventeenth century, rules affecting all sects came into effect.[15] These included the introduction of a system of main and branch temples (*honmatsu seido* 本末制度), the obligation to maintain two main temples for certain sects, and a focus on doctrinal study. The *honmatsu seido* was implemented to strengthen the authority of head temples over branch institutions. In contrast, the obligation to maintain two head temples sought to weaken sects against the secular authorities by splitting their formerly centralized power. Putting emphasis on doctrinal study was meant to divert the clergy's attention from political matters. It also led to a reduction in the number of priests by disqualifying the non-scholarly with no knowledge of Buddhist doctrine. Details varied by sect and by region, but by and large these policies were implemented across the whole of Japan.[16]

After the Shimabara Rebellion (*Shimabara no ran* 島原の乱) of 1637–1638, an insurrection blamed on Christian influence, the government ordered that the population undergo certification of their religious affiliation (*shūmon aratame* 宗門改).[17] Although these orders did not specify a particular authority to execute these inspections, the task was effectively performed by Buddhist temples.[18]

Thirty years after introducing the inspection of religious affiliation, the government under Tokugawa Ietsuna 徳川家綱 (1641–1680) passed the Law on Temples of All Buddhist Sects (Shoshū Jiin Hatto 諸宗寺院法度) in Kanbun 寛文 5 (1665).7.11. It contained provisions on the issuing of certificates of religious affiliation by temples and regulated relations between Buddhist temples and parishioners. On the same day, the Law for Shrine Priests (Shosha Negi Kannushi Hatto 諸社禰宜神主法度) was issued to regulate Shinto affairs. This legislation granted unprecedented authority over shrine priests to the Yoshida 吉田, a powerful family of Shinto priests in Kyoto. By treating the Yoshida as equivalent to a Buddhist sect, it "placed Shinto in the same category as the sects of Buddhism."[19]

Shortly before these laws, in early 1665 the shogunal government mandated the countrywide inspection of religious affiliation by ordering all daimyo to install *jisha bugyō*

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13 Kidota 1988, pp. 5–7.
14 Harada 2004, pp. 154–156.
15 Hur 2007, p. 50.
16 Kasahara 2001, pp. 336–337.
17 Tamamuro 2001, p. 262.
18 Only in 1687 did the shogunate explicitly forbid religious certification by any agent other than Buddhist temples. See also Stefan Köck's contribution to this Special Section.
19 Teeuwen 2021, p. 152.

寺社奉行 (magistrates of temples and shrines) or *shūmon bugyō* 宗門奉行 (magistrates for religious affairs).[20] Officially, these orders did not instruct Buddhist temples to inspect religious affiliation, but in practice it was mostly temples that took on this task. This semi-official obligation to affiliate with a Buddhist temple to obtain the necessary certification, the so-called *terauke* 寺請 system, put Buddhism in a preeminent position in relation to other religious creeds.

This intervention in religious life in Japan was not met with unconditional obedience. Some daimyo seemed to reject this privileged status of Buddhist temples and instead turned to Confucianism and Shinto.[21] In 1666, several daimyo started a series of religious reforms in their domains, reforms that we subsume under the term Domain Shinto. As mentioned above, Tokugawa Mitsukuni of Mito was one of the most prominent of these reformers.

Religious Policies in Mito

Mitsukuni was the second daimyo of Mito domain and a grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu. Mito was one of the Three Houses (*gosanke* 御三家), branch families of the ruling Tokugawa installed in the domains of Kii 紀伊, Owari 尾張, and Mito. While the Mito Tokugawa were of slightly lower status than the other two houses, they were exempt from the obligation of alternating residence between Edo and their home domain (*sankin kōtai* 参勤交代). Nonetheless, Mitsukuni spent most of his time in Edo and thus close to the shogun and the center of political power. This may have given Mitsukuni the freedom to interpret *bakufu* orders in accordance with his own needs.[22]

In 1663, Mitsukuni commissioned a survey of all religious institutions in Mito. Every village collected information on its temples and shrines and forwarded the collected data to the domain administration. Domain officials then compiled an overall register called the *Kaikichō* 開基帳 (Register of Foundations). This register contains fifteen volumes: two for tutelary shrines (*chinju* 鎮守) of Mito's towns and villages (*Chinju kaikichō* 鎮守開基帳), five for Shingon temples, one for Rinzai 臨済 and Sōtō 曹洞, and one each for the other sects represented in Mito: Tendai 天台, Jōdo 浄土, Ikkō 一向, Ji 時, and Nichiren 日蓮, as well as the groups of ascetics, *yamabushi* 山伏 (mountain ascetics, practitioners of Shugendō 修験道) and *gyōnin* 行人 (ascetics similar to *yamabushi*, but with looser institutional ties). The register includes information about each institution's name, location, affiliation, income, head temple, additional titles and designations, priestly rank of the chief monk, certificates of tax exemption, founding, founder, and, for the years before 1663, the number of adherents and number and social status of parishioners.

According to this register, there were 2,377 temples in Mito at the time, with most affiliated with the Shingon school. With a population of around 290,000, the average parish size was approximately 122 persons, smaller than the average Japanese parish of that period.[23] The number of temples in Japan had been increasing since the beginning of the Edo period despite repeated attempts by the shogunate to stifle their uncontrolled growth.[24] Since

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20 Tamamuro 2008, p. 58.
21 See also the contributions by Inoue, Scheid, and Köck on Okayama and Aizu in this Special Section.
22 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 178; the following short summary of Mitsukuni's religious policies is based on Pickl-Kolaczia 2021.
23 Tamamuro 1968, pp. 841–843.
24 Hur 2007, p. 4.

temples apparently did not serve individual villages, but family lineages, the increase was thus due—at least in part—to an increase in new family branches resulting in new lineages.[25]

Although the number of temples in Mito in relation to population was above the countrywide average, the *Chinju kaikichō* shows that there were only 186 shrines, all listed as "tutelary" (*chinju*), with 18 *kannushi* 神主 (head priests), 169 *negi* 禰宜 (priests), 18 *shanin* 社人 (shrine personnel), and 6 *ichiko* 市子 (shrine maidens). While the *kannushi* seem to have been licensed by the Yoshida, this was probably not the case for the other shrine personnel, including *negi* and *ichiko*.[26] It is important to note that the register listed only tutelary shrines. Shrines not considered tutelary, such as smaller folk shrines, were not included in the *Chinju kaikichō*, although they were listed in the registers provided by individual villages, as the records of Noguchi village will demonstrate below.

Three years later, the year after the Law on Temples of All Buddhist Sects and the Law for Shrine Priests were issued, Mitsukuni implemented religious policies that aimed to change the religious landscape according to his own ideals and to allow him more control in religious matters.[27] These policies constitute Mito's specific form of Domain Shinto. They reduced the number of temples to 944, with roughly 60 percent destroyed. This reduction, however, did not oppose shogunal religious policy, as Mitsukuni mainly targeted temples headed by uneducated monks (*muchi muge no gusō* 無智無下之愚僧, literally "ignorant and vile simple-minded monks").[28] This was in accordance with the Law on Temples of All Buddhist Sects, which ordered priests to be well-versed in their doctrines.[29]

While his most severe measures affected Buddhist institutions, the ideological focus of Mitsukuni's policies was on Shinto. This manifested itself in several ways. An emphasis was placed on shrines having a certain pedigree. Shrines without a long history and that were mainly rooted in folk belief and thus not included in the register of tutelary shrines were to be eradicated. In their place, Mitsukuni aimed at having one tutelary shrine per village (*isson-issha* 一村一社). The point was to position shrines at the center of communities to facilitate administration and to strengthen the population's sense of community.[30] The eventual goal was probably to take the inspection of religious affiliation out of Buddhist hands.[31]

The installation of this system of one tutelary shrine per village can be considered successful. According to a 1696 register called *Chinjuchō* 鎮守帳 (Register of Tutelary Shrines), which lists the tutelary shrines of Mito's villages, their number had nearly tripled from 186 in 1663 to 511.[32] This means that after Mitsukuni's reforms, almost every one of the nearly six hundred villages in Mito had its own tutelary shrine.[33] According to his plans,

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25 Ooms 1985, p. 166.
26 Tamamuro 2003, pp. 2–3. Unlike today, in the period in question, the term *negi* seems to denote a status below *kannushi*. It may have also been used for village members who held religious authority but were not fully-fledged priests.
27 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 189.
28 According to *Hakyakuchō*, p. 3. The original manuscript is kept at the National Diet Library, Tokyo, Sugiyama sōsho 杉山叢書 4, call number わ 081−11. It is reproduced in Kouamé 2005, pp. 14−58.
29 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 180.
30 Tamamuro 1968, p. 869.
31 See also the introduction to this Special Section.
32 *Chinjuchō* in ST 53, *Jinja hen* 18, pp. 169−235.
33 A register of villages in Mito from 1781 lists 578 villages (Tamamuro 1968, p. 869). I am assuming that this number did not change dramatically during the Edo period.

these shrines were to be separated from Buddhist institutions and managed by a Shinto priest. Mitsukuni also sent shrine priests to Kyoto to be instructed in Yoshida Shinto.[34] The separation of Buddhism and Shinto, however, was not implemented comprehensively.[35] Noguchi is an example of the failure of this aspect of Mitsukuni's policies; the village's tutelary shrine remained under Buddhist supervision until the nineteenth century.

Another aspect that Mitsukuni tried to tackle was the obligatory inspection of religious affiliation at Buddhist temples.[36] For a short period, from 1674 to 1687, shrine priests in Mito obtained certificates of religious affiliation from two of the domain's shrines, namely Shizu Jinja 静神社 and Yoshida Jinja 吉田神社, ranked as the second (*ninomiya* 二之宮) and the third (*sannomiya* 三之宮) shrines of Hitachi 常陸 (the province in which Mito was located). However, this measure was short lived, ending when the government decreed that religious affiliation certification was the exclusive purview of Buddhist temples.[37]

Unique to Mito's religious reforms are the so-called "Hachiman reforms" (*Hachiman aratame* 八幡改). In 1695, Mitsukuni's successor Tsunaeda 徳川綱條 (1656−1718) targeted Hachiman shrines and had most of them either re-dedicated or destroyed. This might have been due either to the deity's strong Buddhist connotations impeding Mitsukuni's attempts to disentangle shrines from Buddhist influence, or the fact that the Satake, the lords of Mito prior to the Tokugawa, had worshiped Hachiman. Other hypotheses include Mitsukuni's possible doubts about the identity of Hachiman and Ōjin Tennō 応神天皇 (r. 270−310), or having reservations about the veneration of an imperial ancestor by common people.[38] In any case, the aim of such reforms was probably not to oppress Buddhism nor to promote a particular Shinto sect, but to shape Mito's religious landscape based on Mitsukuni's Shinto-Confucian ideals.[39] At their core, though, stood the separation of Shinto from Buddhism. Mitsukuni's policies did not exactly align with the shogunate's reforms, nor were they a manifestation of major Shinto movements such as Yoshida Shinto. They also differed in many particulars from the reforms taking place in Okayama and Aizu at around the same time. Nonetheless, they were based on a similar ideology and were probably motivated by the same legal preconditions. These shared characteristics make up Domain Shinto, of which Mito constitutes a representative and prominent example.

Impact on the Village

Documents from Noguchi help us understand the impact of Mitsukuni's Domain Shinto on Mito's villages and their inhabitants. In 1663, Noguchi conducted a survey of its religious institutions and compiled the Register of Temples and Shrines in Noguchi.[40] The order to

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footnotes:

34 Tamamuro 1968, p. 858.
35 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 185.
36 For a discussion of anti-Christian temple certification, see Hur 2021.
37 Itō 1968, pp. 824−825; Kasahara 2001, p. 338; on developments in Okayama, see Köck's contribution to this Special Section.
38 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, pp. 186−187.
39 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 189.
40 *Noguchi-mura jisha o-aratame chō* 野口村寺社御改帳 SKM, call no. 60-1-0. This is a copy of the 1663 register, dated 1723 and signed by Sekizawa Genjiemon 関沢源次衛門, hereditary name of the head of the Sekizawa family from the early eighteenth century (Kidota 1988, p. 10).

prepare this register was issued by Mitsukuni and thus came from outside the village, either from Mito or Edo.[41]

Noguchi's Temples and Shrines

This Register of Temples and Shrines in Noguchi gives us a glimpse into the situation of religious institutions in 1663. There were thirteen Buddhist temples in Noguchi at that time. Ten belonged to the Shingon school: Renkakuji 蓮覚寺, Myōjōin 妙浄院, Hōjōin 法浄院, Renjōin 蓮浄院, Kashōin 華浄院, Keijōin 経浄院, Ryūzōin 龍蔵院, Keirenji 慶蓮寺, Hōsen'in 宝泉院, and Jōshōin 浄性院. One was a Sōtō temple named Gyokusenji 玉泉寺, one a Jōdo temple named Jōdoji 浄土寺, and one an institution called Daifuku 大福 that was classified as *yamabushi*.[42] Renkakuji was the most prominent temple. Noguchi does not seem to be an outlier when it comes to Buddhist institutions in Mito, even if the distribution of temples between schools was not completely identical to that of the whole domain, and some schools were not represented in Noguchi at all. As in Mito as a whole, though, in Noguchi the majority of temples belonged to the Shingon school.[43] Six of the thirteen temples in Noguchi were destroyed during the period of Mitsukuni's reforms: the Shingon temples Ryūzoin, Keirenji, Hōsen'in, and Jōshōin, and the Jōdo and Sōtō temples.[44]

Noguchi's register also lists thirteen shrines. There were five independent shrines: Saeki Jinja 佐伯神社, Tachiki Myōjin 立木明神, Fuji Gongen 富士権現, Seiryū Gongen 清龍権現, and Inari Myōjin 稲荷明神. Another eight shrines were located on the grounds of Saeki Shrine. Three were Hachiman shrines: Usa Hachiman 宇佐八幡 (also called Yumiya Hachiman 弓矢八幡), Wakamiya Hachiman 若宮八幡, and Shōhachiman 正八幡. The other five shrines were dedicated to Kumano Gongen 熊野権現, Mishima Gongen 三島権現, Inari 稲荷, Sanjūbanjin 三十番神, and Kitano Tenjin 北野天神.

Table 1 lists all of these shrines with their respective *honji* 本地 (original) buddhas, in this case called *hontai* 本体 (primary devotional object). Noguchi's shrine for its protective deity, the village's tutelary shrine, was Saeki Jinja (see figure 1). It not only served Noguchi, but also the neighboring villages of Noguchitaira 野口平 and Ōhata 大畠. It was the only shrine in Noguchi listed in the domain-wide register, and thus the only shrine recognized by the domain.

41 Depending on when exactly Mitsukuni gave the order to have these registers compiled, he was either in Edo or Mito. While he spent most of his time in Edo, between seventh and eleventh months of 1663 he resided in Mito (Suzuki 2006, p. 103).
42 SKM, call no. 60-1-0, pp. 3–5, 9–11; Komatsu 2004, p. 2. Renkakuji is missing from this 1723 copy of the register. This is presumably a mistake by the copyist, as a newer 1817 copy lists the temple's name; see the *Suifu shiryō* 水府志料, vol. 16, comp. Komiyama Fūken 小宮山楓軒, National Diet Library, call no. 826-13, p. 105.
43 For the overall distribution of temples between sects in Mito, see Tamamuro 1968, p. 842.
44 Komatsu 2004, p. 2. As yet, I have not found any evidence describing the exact circumstances of the destruction of the temples.

Table 1: Shrines in Noguchi, 1663[45]

Shrine	*hontai*
Saeki Myōjin 佐伯明神	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音 Yakushi Nyorai 薬師如来 Jizō Bosatsu 地蔵菩薩
Tachiki Myōjin 立木明神	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音
Fuji Gongen 富士権現	Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来
Seiryū Gongen 清龍権現	Nyoirin Kannon 如意輪観音
Inari Myōjin 稲荷明神	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音
Shrines on Saeki Myōjin's grounds	
Usa Hachiman 宇佐八幡 / Yumiya Hachiman 弓矢八幡	Amida Nyorai 阿弥陀如来
Wakamiya Hachiman 若宮八幡	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音
Shōhachiman 正八幡	Shōkannon 正観音
Kumano Gongen 熊野権現	Amida Nyorai 阿弥陀如来
Mishima Gongen 三島権現	Shaka Nyorai 釈迦如来
Inari 稲荷	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音
Sanjūbanjin 三十番神	Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来
Kitano Tenjin 北野天神	Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音

According to its official history, Saeki Jinja—also referred to as Saeki Myōjin 佐伯明神 or Saeki Sanjinja 佐伯三神社—was founded in 806 by a monk named Genkai 玄海.[46] Genkai belonged to the Hossō-shū 法相宗 and was from the province of Sanuki 讃岐 in Shikoku. Saeki Jinja enshrined Inase Irihiko no mikoto 稲背入彦命, a deity linked to that province.[47] The shrine possessed land in Noguchi and neighboring villages, which it had received in the later part of the sixteenth century from Satake Yoshishige 佐竹義重 (1547−1612), a former lord of Mito domain. The Satake revered Saeki Shrine as *kita no chinju* 北の鎮守 (northern tutelary shrine).[48] Like many Shinto shrines at that time, it was not managed by a Shinto priest, but by a *bettō-ji* 別当寺 (supervisory temple). Saeki Shrine's *bettō-ji* was Renkakuji. The *Saeki Myōjin saiji shikiji* 佐伯明神祭事式事 of 1666 details that the same temple also managed Tachiki Myōjin, Fuji Gongen, and Seiryū Gongen.[49]

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45 Created by the author based on 1666's *Saeki Myōjin saiji shikiji* 佐伯明神祭事式事, SKM, call no. 32-3-0, pp. 1−2, 4−5.

46 The origins of the shrine's name are detailed in 1707's *Saeki Daimyōjin Inase Irihiko no mikoto* 佐伯大明神 稲背入彦命, SKM, call no. 1907-0-0. This cites *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, and *Kinmochi shiki* 公望私記, a Heian 平安 period (794−1185) commentary on the *Nihon shoki* by Yatabe no Kinmochi 矢田部公望. The Saeki 佐伯 (alternatively 佐倍木) are described as descendants of Emishi forced to settle away from the capital due to their unruly behavior. The Saeki-be 佐伯部 then lived in the five provinces of Harima, Sanuki, Iyo, Aki, and Awa (Sakamoto et al. 1967, p. 313). Local etymology derives Saeki from *sakebu* 叫ぶ, while the *Kinmochi shiki* describes them as a "hairy people . . . who shout (*kyōdō* 叫咷) day and night."

47 According to the *Nihon shoki*, Inase Irihiko no mikoto was the younger brother of the imperial prince Kami-kushi 神櫛皇子, ancestor of the Kuninomiyatsuko of Sanuki 讃岐国造. Inase Irihiko was ancestor of the Harima no Wake 播磨別 (Sakamoto et al. 1967, pp. 285−287). The Saeki family also appear in the *Harima fudoki* 播磨風土記 (Palmer 2016, p. 14).

48 Gozenyama-mura Kyōdoshi 1990, p. 352.

49 SKM, call no. 32-3-0, pp. 4−5.

Figure 1. Saeki Jinja, the long lasting tutelary shrine of Noguchi, remains a part of the community today. Photographed by the author in 2020.

The shrine consists of three buildings, thus its moniker Saeki Sanjinja. Each shrine building had its own *hontai*: a Jūichimen Kannon 十一面観音, a Yakushi Nyorai 薬師如来, and a Jizō Bosatsu 地蔵菩薩. Despite Mitsukuni's provisions, these typical elements of Buddhist-Shinto syncretism could still be found in the early eighteenth century and may have existed still longer.

Next to the main building of Saeki Shrine today there is a hall housing seven small shrines: Inari Jinja 稲荷神社, Yama Jinja 山神社, Fuji Jinja 富士神社, Tachiki Jinja 立木神社, Yamakura Jinja 山倉神社, Soga Jinja 素鵞神社, and Tenman Jinja 天満神社. It is unclear exactly when the other shrines listed above in table 1 disappeared. It is not unlikely, however, that this happened at the time of Mitsukuni's reforms. In compliance with the later reforms of Tsunaeda, the three Hachiman shrines were abolished at the end of the seventeenth century.

Noguchi's Secular Administration

Noguchi village's secular administration consisted of a *shōya* 庄屋 (village headman) and several *kumigashira* 組頭 (group leaders).[50] The abovementioned Sekizawa family played a central role in the village's administration. Their history begins in 1601, when Yahachirō Shigesada 弥八郎重定 moved to Noguchi on the recommendation of the local shrine priest, Saeki Bingo 佐伯備後. Shigesada's third son founded his own line, the Sekizawa family. Until the early seventeenth century, the family were of warrior rank. However, two generations after Shigesada's arrival in Noguchi, the head of the family joined the class of peasants for economic reasons. After this change in status, the family's income increased, as did its influence in the village. In 1642, the family head became a group leader, an office he passed on to his son and successor. Nevertheless, from the 1660s onward the family was in dire financial straits, ultimately selling their estate and relinquishing the post of group leader.

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50 In the late eighteenth century, Noguchi had six *kumigashira*.

But in the 1740s, Sekizawa Masakiyo 関沢政清 managed to stabilize the family's income and reputation. He regained social recognition for his family and was even selected to serve from 1750 to 1752 in the domain's office for agriculture (*kinnōyaku* 勤農役). He was also the first to carry the family's hereditary name of Genjiemon 源次衛門.[51]

It was Masakiyo's great-grandson Masahide 政英 who would finally bring unprecedented prosperity to the Sekizawa family. Masahide took over the family's business in 1773. At that point in time, the family's assets included saké (worth 150 *ryō*), soy sauce (worth 50 *ryō*), paper (worth 360 *ryō*), fresh *urushi* 漆 (lacquer) and *urushi* trees (worth 105 *ryō*), soy and azuki beans (worth about 12 *ryō*), loans (45 *ryō*), stored wares for trade (worth 137 *ryō*), and cash (70 *ryō*). The family also owned building lots and arable land. Their annual income was 50 *koku*. In 1774, the household consisted of nine people and five horses. The family's total wealth amounted to something between 1,500 and 2,000 *ryō*. Although they were the largest farming family in Noguchi, their economic focus was brewing soy sauce and saké.[52]

Masahide's prosperity was not limited to economic success. He continuously ascended in social rank. In 1775, he became one of Noguchi's group leaders. Ten years later, he was appointed village headman. In 1791, his area of influence widened still further when he was appointed *yamayokome* 山横目 (mountain and forest supervisor), giving him authority over eighteen villages.[53] He was also involved in relief measures for poorer families suffering under the economic decline of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, this support was not only altruistic; it was also for his family's benefit by halting the labor drain caused by economic decline.[54]

Changes in the Administration of Religious Institutions

In some respects, Noguchi was typical of the religious changes in Mito, such as half of its temples being abolished. But it was unusual in other respects, in particular regarding Saeki Shrine and its administration. Saeki Shrine had been Noguchi's tutelary shrine since before the reforms of Mitsukuni. While it was not a *shikinaisha* 式内社 (a shrine listed in the *Engishiki* 延喜式), its long history made it the type of shrine Mitsukuni wanted to strengthen in Mito's religious landscape. And yet after Mitsukuni's reforms Saeki Shrine remained under Buddhist supervision; its separation from Buddhism was not enforced until the first half of the nineteenth century. While this constitutes a deviation from Mitsukuni's overall plan, it nonetheless seems to represent a common problem faced by shrines in Mito. If no temple took care of their maintenance, shrines were not financially viable. They had virtually no sources of income, such as funerals or memorial services for the dead, which were the purview of Buddhist temples.[55]

Information about the development of the administration of Saeki Shrine can be gathered from two different versions of the *Chinjuchō*, the register of Mito's tutelary shrines. The first version, dating probably to 1696, mentions only Renkakuji and a monk named Myōjō 妙浄 as administering Saeki Shrine.[56] But another version of the register, edited later,

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51 Kidota 1988, pp. 8–10.
52 Kidota 1988, pp. 14–16.
53 Kidota 1988, p. 26.
54 Kidota 1988, p. 30.
55 Pickl-Kolaczia 2021, p. 185.
56 *Chinjuchō*, p. 22. In the possession of Tamamuro Fumio 圭室文雄.

mentions the office of shrine priest, not the Buddhist monk.[57] This seems to reflect the emphasis on Shinto as part of Mitsukuni's measures. The later version also mentions six *yamabushi* from the Tōzan 当山 faction of Shugendō as administrators.[58] These six came from other villages and from 1698 were employed in a rotating system of shrine administrators, known as *rinban* 輪番.[59]

Having *yamabushi* as administrators at Noguchi's Saeki Shrine is inconsistent with developments across Mito as a whole, where almost 80 percent of the *yamabushi* disappeared in this period. But those affiliated with Noguchi seem to have continued their function unimpeded. In fact, their official mention in the later shrine register seems to indicate that they had risen in importance in Noguchi. The reasons for this are as yet unclear. Possibly they were saved from the fate of the many other *yamabushi* in Mito due to having been associated with Noguchi's religious institutions, such as Renkakuji or even Saeki Shrine itself.[60]

Another difference between the two versions of *Chinjuchō* concerns the mention of shrine administrators and personnel. The earlier version only lists Renkakuji and its monk Myōjō, but the later edited version also mentions a *negi* named Nagayama 長山 and an *ichiko*.[61] Nonetheless, the shrine remained under Buddhist control without a licensed Shinto priest until the Tenpō 天保 era (1830–1844), when such a priest was finally installed by Tokugawa Nariaki 徳川斉昭 (1800–1860).[62] A document dated 1846 names Nagayama Kyūma 長山求馬 as the shrine's Shinto priest (*shinkan* 神官).[63] This Nagayama Kyūma was likely a descendant of the *negi* with the same family name mentioned in the *Chinjuchō*.[64] This means that despite the then daimyo of Mito, Tokugawa Nariaki, installing a Shinto priest as administrator of Saeki Shrine, the post was likely filled by a longstanding member of Noguchi's community and not by an outsider.

Transformation of Religious Practices

Changes in the administration of Saeki Shrine appear to have gone hand in hand with changes in religious practice. Following the lead of Mitsukuni's Domain Shinto, syncretic rituals were gradually dropped in favor of Shinto ceremonies without Buddhist features. It is unclear when Buddhist influence started to wane in Noguchi. Unfortunately, there are no continuous records. Nonetheless, extant documents do enable glimpses of religious practice as they shifted in Noguchi in the years between the 1660s and the 1850s.

A key document here is the aforementioned *Saeki myōjin saiji shikiji* of 1666, which consists of five numbered sheets glued and folded together.[65] The author's name is given as

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57 This version cannot be dated earlier than 1707, since it includes events from that year; ST 53, *Jinja hen* 18, pp. 169–235.

58 ST 53, *Jinja hen* 18, p. 179.

59 According to a 1764 document, *Noguchi-mura shojisha aiaratame kakiagechō* 野口村諸寺社相改書上帳, SKM, call no. 1326-0-0, pp. 3–4. The villages were Akutsu 圷, Hosoya 細谷, Tamatsukuri 玉造, Batō 馬頭, Shimonomiya 下野宮, and Kōnosu 鴻巣. All were located quite far away from Noguchi.

60 Both versions of the *Chinjuchō* list many *yamabushi* as shrine administrators. It seems plausible that affiliation with a shrine offered some protection for the *yamabushi* of Mito.

61 ST 53, *Jinja hen* 18, p. 179.

62 Shimonaka 1982.

63 *Kakitsuke o motte negai age tatematsuri sōrō koto* (*Saeki myōjin daiha kaishō hairyō negai*) 書付ヲ以奉願上候事 (佐伯明神大破桧松拝領願), SKM, call no. 1860-0-0, p. 1.

64 ST 53, *Jinja hen* 18, p. 179.

65 SKM, call no. 32-3-0.

Sekizawa Kizaemon 関沢喜左衛門. A short postscript added in 1869 by Sekizawa Chōjirō 関沢長次郎 gives a brief history of Saeki Shrine and religious measures in Mito during the Edo period. According to this postscript, the document originally consisted of six sheets, but the last sheet was lost during political disturbances in Mito domain in 1864. There is also a comment in red ink, possibly by Chōjirō, stating that the contents written in the 1660s cannot be taken seriously. It seems likely that this reflects a late nineteenth century ideology that promoted the separation of Shinto and Buddhism and took an anti-Buddhist stance. It may also have been an attempt to protect Saeki Shrine from further scrutiny by Meiji ideologues and from potential repercussions and violent acts against any possibly Buddhist remnants at the shrine.

The original text that gave rise to this later anxiety provides an overview of Noguchi's religious festivals throughout the year as they relate to Saeki Shrine, which are listed as follows:

- First day to eighth day of the first month: The *negi*, *ichiko*, and six managing attendants (*bettō rokku* 別当六供) assemble inside Saeki Jinja and Renkakuji, where they recite the *Ninnō Sutra* and pray for peace and safety in the land.
- Tenth day of the third month: The shrine parishioners (*ujiko* 氏子) of the three villages of Noguchi, Noguchitaira, and Ōhata assemble to present offerings for the *kami* (*heisoku* 幣束) and eat *sakakowai* 酒強飯 (rice steamed for saké production).
- First day of the fourth month to last day of the sixth month: Every day, the six *bettō* recite the *Lotus Sutra* in front of Renkakuji.
- Fifteenth day of the sixth month: The *negi* presents offerings to the *kami*. The six *bettō*, the *negi*, and the *ichiko* assemble to hold a ceremony with *sakakowai*.
- Fifteenth day of the eighth month, and the ninth and nineteenth day of the ninth month: The *ichiko* holds a ceremony "in the same way as [described] above." On the evening of the eighteenth day, a *yugama* 湯釜 (kettle) is presented.
- Nineteenth day at the hour of the ox: *Michi no matsuri* 道の祭 (procession) from Saeki Shrine to Tachiki Myōjin. The distance is 210 *ken*.[66]
- Last day of the eleventh month: The *negi* holds ceremonies, which are not noted in detail.

During each of these seven religious festivals, the *bettō* recite the *Lotus Sutra* and do maintenance work on the shrine building.[67]

From this calendar, it is clear that for Shinto shrines in Noguchi, too, religious life in 1666 was deeply rooted in Buddhist practices, and so did not greatly differ from the blend of Buddhism and Shinto common throughout Japan in the early Edo period. Ceremonies involved the participation of *negi*, *ichiko*, and Buddhist practitioners in their function of *bettō*. They frequently officiated the same rituals together. The ceremonies were held at Renkakuji as well as at two of Noguchi's shrines: the tutelary Saeki Shrine and Tachiki Myōjin. The recitation of sutras features prominently in several rites, especially the *Lotus Sutra*. It is also

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66 Approximately 382 meters.
67 SKM, call no. 32-3-0, pp. 3–4.

worth noting that the *bettō* were responsible for maintaining the shrine building, and that this too was linked to the festival calendar.

The *bettō* referred to in this document were very likely the six *yamabushi* mentioned above. Connections between *yamabushi* and Buddhist temples were not uncommon; they often formed "collaborative and synergic networks" with Buddhist institutions.[68] It seems that the six *yamabushi* traveled to Noguchi several times a year to take part in ceremonies. From this we can infer that prior to officially taking up rotating responsibility for the shrine as mentioned in the later *Chinjuchō*, they already had a relationship with Saeki Shrine and thus with the community. It is noteworthy that although they seem to have been part of Noguchi's religious apparatus in 1666, the date of the above calendar, they are only mentioned in the official registers from 1698 onwards.

It may be assumed that this late seventeenth century state of affairs continued unchanged, since the records of Saeki Shrine make no further mention of such matters. The next major event in the shrine's history is documented about a hundred years later. Around 1790, Saeki Shrine underwent renovation and rebuilding. It was a costly effort. Donations were collected in Noguchi as well as in numerous other villages in Mito and even outside the domain. There are two documents from 1788 recording these donations, one for the main hall (*honsha* 本社), and the other for the three shrine buildings referred to as *sansha* 三社.[69]

Donations for the main hall came from 38 villages or wards. Of these, 23 were within Mito domain and 8 were outside, including 7 in Edo.[70] Donations for the *sansha* shrine complex came from 17 villages, all inside Mito domain. Among the donors for the shrine complex were also 3 temples: Renkakuji in Noguchi, Senpukuji 泉福寺 in Noguchitaira, and Myōshōji 命照寺 in Ōhata. Sekizawa Masahide, who is referred to by the hereditary name Genjiemon, donated large sums for the project and also handled the money given by other donors.[71]

The rebuilding included the addition of decorative wood carvings. They were designed and produced by a master wood carver from the village of Kamiose 上小瀬 named Nagayama Takashige 長山敬重.[72] Work on the shrine was finished in 1791, and a document from that year records that in the fourth month the re-enshrinement of the deities (*sengū* 遷宮) was performed.[73] For that occasion, *goma* 護摩 rituals, in total fourteen performances (*za* 座), were held. The *goma* is a fire ritual in esoteric Buddhism held to pray for good health or profit. The rituals were sponsored by various individuals and groups. There is no reference to a religious professional conducting the ceremonies. Since *goma* are also a typical Shugendō practice, it seems probable that one or several of the *yamabushi* officiated the ceremonies. While there is a *goma* rite in the Yoshida Shinto tradition, there was no licensed Shinto priest residing in Noguchi at that time. It thus seems unlikely that the document is referring to a ceremony based on Yoshida traditions.

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68 Castiglioni et al. 2020, p. 1.
69 These are the *Jōyō Naka-gun Suifu Noguchi-mura Saeki Daimyōjin honsha shindachi kangebo* 常陽那珂郡水府野口邨佐伯大明神本社新建勧化簿 (hereafter *Honsha*), SKM, call no. 31-0-0, and the *Jōyō Naga-gun Suifu Noguchi-mura Saeki sansha shindachi kangebo* 常陽那珂郡水府野口邨佐伯三社新建勧化簿 (hereafter *Sansha*), SKM, call no. 32-1-0.
70 I have not been able to identify the locations of the remaining seven villages mentioned in the records.
71 *Honsha*, SKM, call no. 31-0-0, p. 65; *Sansha,* SKM, call no. 32-1-0, p. 26.
72 Kamiose lay about five kilometers north of Noguchi upstream along the Ōsawa River 大沢川.
73 *Saeki Myōjin go-sengū nyūyōchō* 佐伯明神御遷宮入用帳, SKM, call no. 1624-1-0, p. 1.

From these documents we can infer that even after Mitsukuni's reforms of the 1660s, Buddhist practices were still prevalent in Noguchi in 1791. Over the next sixty years, however, Buddhism was slowly expunged from shrine festivals. An 1855 entry from the diary of Sekizawa Genjiemon, probably a descendant of Masahide, reveals that the annual festival (*reisai* 例祭) at that time was of a very different character than the ceremonies and practices described in earlier years. At that time, Renkakuji and the six *yamabushi* certainly no longer administered Saeki Shrine, since, as mentioned above, the shrine had its own *shinkan*, installed by Tokugawa Nariaki.

The diary entry from the fourth month of 1855 describes the annual festival as follows:

- Eighth day: This year, we have asked the tutelary deity to come out of the shrine. For this year's ceremony, the sacred treasures (*shinki* 神器) had not been prepared. Hence in accordance with a decree (*otasshi* 御達) [prescribing] the ceremony's procedures, the [devotional objects] were brought from this village [of Noguchi] in a portable shrine to the ceremonial site at the riverbank, where prayers (*kitō* 祈祷) were held.
- Ninth day: [The deity] entered the temporary shelter (*okariya* 御仮屋). Since there was a delay the day before in Noguchitaira, this was done today.
- Tenth day: From approximately the eighth hour, the deity passed through Kamijuku 上宿, Kamigō 上郷, and [Noguchi] Taira.[74]
- Eleventh day: The tutelary deity [was entertained] with a [performance of] puppet theater in the village.[75]

This description is noteworthy for several reasons. First, there is no longer any reference to Buddhist institutions or ceremonies. Renkakuji is not mentioned, nor are the *yamabushi* as *bettō*. The recitation of sutras has also lost its place within the rites. Second, the parishes no longer assembled before Saeki Shrine. Instead, a *mikoshi* 神輿 was now paraded through the parishes, where their members said separate prayers for safety and a good harvest.[76] And third, the procedures of the festival were prescribed in a decree and thus were probably dictated from outside the parishes.

Religious Practice and Community in Noguchi
The documents listing the donors for the renovations of Saeki Shrine and the *goma* sponsors allow a glimpse into the community of Noguchi. The two 1788 documents detailing donors for the renovation of the shrine both begin with the founding history of Saeki Shrine, followed by the names of the village officials. Sekizawa Genjiemon (Masahide) was the village headman (*shōya*). There were six group leaders (*kumigashira*).

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74 The eighth hour (*yatsu goro* 八ツ頃) could refer either to two in the morning or two in the afternoon; the latter seems more likely here. For more details on the early modern time system, see Zöllner 2003, p. 124.
75 Shimonaka 1982.
76 Shimonaka 1982.

Table 2: Village head and group leaders in Noguchi, 1788 and *goma* sponsors, 1791[77]

Name	*Honsha*	*Sansha*	*Goma*
Sekizawa Genjiemon 関沢源次衛門	village head	village head	o
Nagayama Jirōemon 長山次郎衛門	group leader	group leader	
Horie Gohei 堀江五兵衛	group leader	group leader	
Aoki Kichiemon 青木吉右衛門	group leader	group leader	o
Gunji Ginpei 軍司銀平	group leader	group leader	o
Kobayashi Shin'emon 小林新右衛門	group leader	group leader	o
Gunji Katsushige 軍司勝重	group leader	group leader	o
Ichi Asahi 市朝日	shrine personnel	shrine personnel	
Nagayama Ōsumi no kami 長山大隅守	shrine personnel	shrine personnel	

It comes as no great surprise to learn that influential members of the community were also involved in matters related to religious practices and the upkeep of religious institutions. We have already encountered Sekizawa Genjiemon under the name of Masahide. He was one of the Sekizawa family's most successful members and one of only three people to sponsor a *goma* ceremony individually, as table 3 shows. Four of the group leaders also participated in *goma* rituals, as can be seen in table 2.

Three of the *goma* performances were collective; two were for the villages of Noguchitaira and Ōhata (1 and 14). In the latter cases, the names and numbers of sponsors are not mentioned. In the case of the collective rite in Ōhata, the person who presented the money is named. Another collective performance was paid for by a group of three merchants from three villages (10). Only three rites were sponsored by a single donor: one by Sekizawa Genjiemon from Noguchi (2), one by Minagawa Gohei 皆川五兵衛 from Ōhata (8), and one by Tachi Tsubonaka 館坪中 from Kadoi (13). All other performances were sponsored by groups of two to five donors.

Table 3: Sponsors of *goma* performances, 1791[78]

Goma Performance	Donor village	Number of sponsors	Comments
1	Noguchitaira	-	collective performance
2	Noguchi	1	Sekizawa Genjiemon 関沢源次衛門
3	Noguchitaira	2	
4	Ōhata	2	
5	Noguchi	2	
6	Noguchitaira	3	
7	Noguchitaira	4	
8	Ōhata	1	Minagawa Gohei 皆川五兵衛
9	Kadoi	4	

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77 Created by the author based on *Honsha*, SKM, call no. 31-0-0; *Sansha,* SKM, call no. 32-1-0, and 1791's *Ōgoma seshu tsukechō* 大護摩施主附帳, SKM, call no. 1624-2-0.

78 Created by the author based on SKM, call no. 1624-2-0.

Goma Performance	Donor village	Number of sponsors	Comments
10	Nagasawa, Fukuoka, Kadoi	3	collective performance for merchants
11	Kadoi	5	
12	Kadoi	3	
13	Kadoi	1	Tachi Tsubonaka 館坪中
14	Ōhata	-	collective performance

This data reveals that Saeki Shrine's religious community was not limited to households in Noguchi. For the *goma* rituals, several sponsors came from other villages. Noguchitaira and Ōhata belonged to the shrine's official parish; the others (Nagasawa 長沢, Fukuoka 福岡, and Kadoi 門井) were obviously also connected to it. On the other hand, not all of Noguchi's group leaders financially supported the *goma* rituals.

Analyzing Changes in Religious Practice in Noguchi
Saeki Shrine, which served as the tutelary shrine for several villages and thus had regional importance, connected people and institutions beyond the borders of the village of Noguchi. It was connected to the domain as a whole through the festivals and rituals that supported the shrine. People in Noguchi thus formed relations with each other as well as with people outside their village. Changes in ceremonies and rites resulted in changes in these networks.

Before analyzing these changes, I would like to point out that Noguchi was in a privileged position since it already had a tutelary shrine prior to Mitsukuni's measures, one of only 186 tutelary shrines in the domain at the time. It thus already represented a model of Mitsukuni's vision for Mito's religious landscape in this respect and fulfilled one of the characteristics of Mito's Domain Shinto. Since Noguchi could keep its accustomed religious institution at the center of its religious practices, changes in the village's religious landscape were unlikely to have been felt as sharply as they probably were in other villages in Mito. Moreover, since according to Saeki Shrine's founding legend it was established by a Buddhist monk of the Heian period, the presence of a Buddhist monk at Saeki Shrine was a long-standing tradition. This may be another reason why the shrine's Buddhist traditions remained unchallenged until at least the late eighteenth century.[79]

Renkakuji was relieved as managing institution in 1698, when six *rinban* were officially named as managers of Saeki Shrine in a system of rotating responsibility. These six figures probably already had previous connections with Saeki Shrine and Noguchi. Nevertheless, Renkakuji was still mentioned as official *bettō-ji* in documents until the 1830s. The official appointment of the *yamabushi* as *rinban* can be considered atypical for the changes in Mito, since *yamabushi* were generally targeted by Mitsukuni's measures. From the 1830s, however, we can observe more drastic changes in religious practices in Noguchi and its vicinity. These changes are rooted in Domain Shinto measures of the seventeenth century, as the groundwork for the separation of Shinto and Buddhism was laid by Mitsukuni's reforms.

The religious policies of Ieyasu in the early seventeenth century triggered a series of measures that were later implemented by his descendant Ietsuna. In turn, several domain

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79 See Inoue's contribution to this Special Section for similar examples from other domains.

lords, including Tokugawa Mitsukuni in Mito, reacted to the *bakufu*'s policies regarding Buddhism. Of course, one must be hesitant in considering Ieyasu's edicts as the starting point in a process leading to the development of Domain Shinto.[80] But they are an important waypoint and certainly influenced Mitsukuni's decision to initiate reforms in Mito. A specific feature of Mitsukuni's policies was to position a Shinto shrine at the center of each community in order to facilitate administration and to strengthen the population's sense of belonging to their villages. By removing temples and smaller shrines rooted in folk beliefs from the villages of his domain, Mitsukuni's policies caused shifts in the relationships between individuals and institutions. The tutelary shrines replaced the institutions that had been closed, thus influencing the religious identity of the domain's villagers. Mitsukuni endeavored to make the shrines the focus of villagers' religious practice.

In Noguchi, Saeki Shrine was already a central institution at this time. It was not the only shrine, however. In 1666, Tachiki Myōjin still played an active role in the religious life of Noguchi, Noguchitaira, and Ōhata. This shrine later disappeared, leaving Saeki Shrine the focus of religious practice in the area. Even prior to Mitsukuni's measures, the influence of Saeki Shrine reached far beyond the village's borders, also serving as the tutelary shrine of the villages of Noguchitaira and Ōhata. Indeed, Mito's lords before the Tokugawa considered it the tutelary shrine of the whole region, calling it *kita no chinju*. The shrine had numerous connections outside Noguchi and even outside Mito, with sponsors and donors also in Edo. Thus, the connections of Saeki Shrine were not limited to the local community. The shrine was affected by actions that happened outside Noguchi. This becomes especially evident in the renovation of Saeki Shrine in the 1790s, and by decisions made by members of the Mito Tokugawa that impacted Noguchi and Saeki Shrine. These actions include, but are not limited to, Mitsukuni's decision to promote Shinto shrines as centers of communities, and the appointment of Nagayama Kyūma as the *shinkan* of Saeki Shrine by Nariaki more than one hundred and sixty years later.

Saeki Shrine also influenced relations between individuals within Noguchi and its immediate vicinity through religious practice, as is evident in the shared sponsoring of *goma* rituals in 1791. Groups of people joined together to pay for and participate in such rituals, and while in most cases, the members of these groups of sponsors were from the same village, in one case merchants from different villages participated in a joint ritual. Through the shared ritual their relationship was maintained and very likely strengthened. The rebuilding of Saeki Shrine and related events such as the 1791 *goma* rituals offered opportunities not only for sustaining existing ties between individuals, but also for reinforcing the village's social structure. Through donations and the sponsoring of *goma* performances, the village headman and group leaders, among others, were able to strengthen their ties with the shrine as well as underline their social status. Here we see certain parallels to various domain lords restoring old and famous but dilapidated shrines in the seventeenth century. These lords not only saw it as their obligation to restore the ancient shrines, but also legitimized their rule by enabling the proper worship of their domains' deities.[81]

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80 I borrow here some of the ideas in Bruno Latour's actor-network-theory, notably his second "source of uncertainty," which states that action is controversial because it is never entirely clear were it comes from (Latour 2005, pp. 44–48).

81 Again, see Inoue's contribution to this Special Section.

Of course, religious policies and practices were not the only factors influencing people's lives and their relations with each other. Economic change also played a major role, as can be seen in the sometimes turbulent history of the Sekizawa family. This leads to the question of how religious practice and economic change interacted. The fact that Saeki Shrine was renovated during a time of economic decline hints at the importance of the shrine within the region. It is not clear who initiated the renovation, but Sekizawa Genjiemon (Masahide) was the main donor for the rebuilding of both the *honsha* and the *sansha*. He was also one of the individual sponsors for the *goma* rituals. Indeed, the shrine's fate seems to have been closely connected to that of the Sekizawa family. The family may well have benefited from the influence held by Saeki Shrine over religious life in Noguchi. Conversely, the thriving Sekizawa fortunes may have boosted the shrine. Most likely, they benefited from each other.

In the forty to fifty years after the renovation of Saeki Shrine, relations with and around Saeki Shrine seem to have undergone a number of transformations. While the position of the Sekizawa family appears to have remained stable from the late eighteenth century, other families seem to have experienced major changes in status. It is clear that the gains of the shrine trickled down to people who had relations with it, even if this is not explicitly mentioned in the documents examined in my research. Saeki Shrine was managed by a *negi*, six *yamabushi*, and monks from Renkakuji, but it remains unclear exactly how these individuals benefited from the shrine's development and how the changes in religious practices affected them personally. We do know that members of the Nagayama family continued to hold positions as Saeki Shrine's priests. Nagayama Kyūma became the shrine's *shinkan* in the 1830s on the order of Tokugawa Nariaki; this probably represented an improvement in Saeki Shrine's status within the Shinto hierarchy. Renkakuji, by contrast, was eventually destroyed,[82] and Renkakuji's monks and the *yamabushi* later no longer acted as administrators for Saeki Shrine. Beyond that, their fate is unknown.

Over time, the connections between the various parishes of Saeki Shrine became looser or were even severed, at least in terms of religious practice. The parishes no longer assembled for an annual festival and no longer celebrated together. This certainly affected relations between the members of these communities. Religious ceremonies serve more than the purpose of worship and prayer. Since preparing festivals is a protracted community effort, they are an occasion for cultivating relationships, not only during festival time but throughout the year. Holding ceremonies for each community separately meant that the groups preparing them were isolated from one another. This does not necessarily mean, of course, that connections between the parishes and their individual members were cut entirely, but the vehicle of religious practice was disrupted.

Conclusion

I consider the changes that occurred in Mito at the local level to be a key example of Domain Shinto. The transition from syncretic to Shinto-focused practices was not prompted by shogunal policy nor by Shinto ideology alone, but was a consequence of unique measures undertaken in Mito. It was also completed in Noguchi before the Meiji government enacted its Order on the Separation of Kami and Buddhas, and thus it was a development separate

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82 The available sources do not elaborate on the destruction of Renkakuji. It is likely that the temple was destroyed under Nariaki's pro-Shinto policies.

from the *shinbutsu bunri* policies of the Meiji era. The last step in the process in Mito was very likely ordered by Tokugawa Nariaki, who was certainly influenced by Mitsukuni's policies of the 1660s.

As discussed above, Mitsukuni's aim was to regulate religious administration. Placing Shinto shrines at the center of communities was a means for achieving this goal. It seems that Mitsukuni did not reach everything he had anticipated. Some did not manifest at all. Others did finally appear, but only after a long time, longer even than Mitsukuni's lifetime or that of his successor Tsunaeda. Eventually, though, they did manifest, including a complete shift from Buddhism to Shinto in the ceremonies held in Noguchi.

Establishing more manageable units of religious administration was a major aspect of Domain Shinto in Mito. Installing one tutelary shrine per village also meant establishing smaller units of religious affiliation within the Shinto realm. The separation of Saeki Shrine's parishes seems to be an evolution of this Domain Shinto characteristic. In the later nineteenth century, the modalities of Noguchi's shrine festival in the fourth month were prescribed by outside authorities by decree. It is thus not unlikely that this separation was intended by the domain's administration. Moreover, this seems to accord with Mitsukuni's initial aim of making religious life more controllable. By hindering the maintenance of networks between communities and villages, it was also easier to control the people. Domain Shinto in Mito thus had a slow but profound effect on the domain's commoner population and their relations.

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ST *Shintō taikei* 神道大系. 120 volumes. Edited by Shintō Taikei Hensankai 神道大系編纂會. Shintō Taikei Hensankai, 1977–1994.

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