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ACCEPTANCE OF RELIGIOUS TESTIMONIES

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Abstract

Because Japan has a different religious culture than Western countries, it has been very difficult for Japanese scholars to apply European or American theories about religion to Japanese religions. Conversely, Japanese studies have no impact on the research field in Western countries. Thus, it is necessary to overcome the closed nature of religious studies in Japan and to conduct international comparative research based on a common framework that will be valid in both Japan and Western countries. This paper reports results from a questionnaire survey on religious testimonies based on a general model that is independent of the context of any particular religion.

In this paper, we have defined the testimony model as a state-transition model comprising five steps: “initial state,” “practice based on religious teaching,” “resultant state,” “interpretation of results,” and “change in faith”; each of these steps contains some experience factors. According to this model’s structure, a testimony can be interpreted as an episode experienced by an individual.

Based on the model, we prepared six types of testimonies containing different experience factors, showed one to each of our survey respondents, and asked each respondent if the testimony seemed acceptable to him or her. We performed this online survey in 2012 through a research company panel. The survey respondents included male and female Japanese residents ages twenty-five to twenty-nine years and forty-five to forty-nine years old. After excluding those who disliked religion, the survey’s total sample size was 998 respondents.

In all, ninety-nine of the 998 respondents—about ten percent—answer that the indicated testimony is “acceptable” or “fairly acceptable,” and 31.2 percent of the respondents, not showing direct antipathy toward the testimonies, find them “neither acceptable nor unacceptable.” Young male participants tend to accept the testimonies, as do the self-employed. Testimonies that include “carrying a sacred object” but do not mention a “religious organization” tend to be more acceptable than the others. Testimonies of exorcism are considered less acceptable. In general, the respondents who believe in the existence of God and the devil are more likely to accept the

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testimonies, as are those who make an effort to control their emotions. The survey also reveals that it is not always true that believers are more likely to accept religious testimonies.

This survey was performed as a pilot study. Although it is necessary to examine all of the possible combinations of factors, we have examined six patterns thus far; the remaining combinations are yet to be studied. Moreover, the online survey method may have resulted in some sampling bias, and the sample size was fairly small. However, our data yielded some interesting findings; for example, acceptability depends not on whether a person professes a religion but on what kind of religious consciousness the person has.

Key words: religious testimony, state-transition model, conversion, online survey

1. Introduction

Religious studies have been developing in the West, both theoretical and empirical. Theoretically, the situations surrounding religion in the West are discussed from the viewpoint of secularization theory or rational choice theory; empirically, quantitative analyses of international comparative surveys on religiosity, with a focus on Christianity, have been performed, such as the European Values Survey, World Values Survey, and International Social Survey Programme (ISSP). Dozens of countries have participated in such surveys and a number of interesting findings have been published (Inglehart & Baker 2000, Halman & Draulans 2006, Finke & Adamczyk 2008). However, it has been very difficult for Japanese scholars to apply theories about religion in the West to Japanese religions because even basic terms such as “god,” “religion,” and “spirituality” mean something very different in Japanese and Christian traditions. While the concept of “god” is arguably the most important in religious studies, “God” or “a personal God” in the Christian sense is hardly translatable into Japanese (Manabe 2010), which suggests that unless considerable innovation is made, it is impossible to discuss religion in Japan in the same context as the global study of religion. Regrettably, religious studies in Japan have not achieved significant results at a global level so far.

In order to overcome the closed nature of the study of religions in Japan and undertake international comparative studies, it is necessary to conduct research based on an objective method and universal measurements, according to a common framework that will be valid in both Japan and the West. This paper reports results from a questionnaire survey on religious testimonies based on a general model independent of the context of any particular religion. This model is, in this paper, called a state-transition model. In this survey, the respondents are shown testimonies with some key elements replaced.

2. Research on testimonies

2.1. Testimonies for external and internal consumption within religious organizations

In religion, particularly in new religious movements in Japan, a significant number of testimonies are given. Many religious organizations post testimonies on the Internet, and printed publications by such organizations often include a number of testimonies as well. Even those who are not religious might come across such testimonies in the course of their daily lives. Most people feel that these testimonies are unreliable and deceptive, leading them to reject religious organizations. But some might be persuaded by a testimony and become interested in the corresponding religious organization. As such, testimonies, which are transmitted to the outside world by religious organizations, may provoke antipathy or hostility among the non-members of the organization; on the other hand, they may solicit understanding and empathy, which may lead to interfaith dialogue. Whether religious testimonies provoke antipathy or empathy has the potential to influence various situations surrounding religion in society. If testimonies are instrumental in promoting mutual understanding among religions and leading to interfaith dialogue, the practical value of studying religious testimonies should increase.

Although religious testimonies are often transmitted by religious organizations to the outside world, they are probably more frequently shared within the religious organizations. In order to help the followers deepen their faith, testimonies are constantly exchanged and shared at gatherings. Such testimonies have been studied widely in Japan. For instance, Hino (1982) studied testimonies from Oomoto, Shimazono (1985) looked into testimonies from Myōchikai, Risshō Kōsei Kai, Tenrikyo, and Yumiya (2004) researched testimonies from Aum Shinrikyo. These studies elucidate the activities in each religious organization and consider how faith is strengthened in the whole religious system.

These studies are based on written testimonies, that is, publications by the religious organizations. In this case, the testimonies are selected by the religious organizations; only those testimonies which are deemed suitable for strengthening the followers' faith are chosen and they are inevitably edited and modified by the religious organization. Therefore, testimonies collected directly from followers by a researcher are important because they are raw data.

The followers' testimonies are, at the same time, the religious life histories of the individuals. There is some accumulation of research on religious testimonies in relation to the study of life history. Kawamata (2002) and Kawamata et al. (2006) have conducted analyses on the qualitative method used in the study of life history and analyzed religious testimonies in regard to individuals' life histories and faith, their inter-generational transmission of faith, and/or their interest in the community. In addition, Akiba and Kawabata (2004) and Haga and Kikuchi (2006) have focused on individual life history within specific religious organizations. These studies are detailed but have not gone beyond extracting the religious factors that characterize a particular religious organization.

2.2. *Limitations in the study of testimonies*

Previous studies of religious testimonies, regardless of whether they focus on written testimonies or testimonies as life history, have not gone beyond the study of individual religions. Most studies have investigated which characteristics of the religious organizations are included in the written testimonies and the ways in which these characteristic writings influence the followers within those organizations. In short, these studies have focused on the content of religious testimonies, that is, the religious teaching and expression or rhetoric used in the testimonies. Put differently, they have dealt with the surface—flesh and skin—but not the skeleton. The religious teaching and rhetoric found in testimonies differ significantly from one religious organization to another. Even within Japan, there is no general framework that enables a comparison of different religions. In order to make such a comparison and, furthermore, to conduct an international comparative study, the skeleton of the testimonies—their structure—should be investigated. Accordingly, this paper aims to understand the structure of the narrative of testimonies in a general framework that extends beyond the limits of the Japanese religious experience by drawing on Anderson's study (1988) of narrative.

Analyzing testimonies as a kind of structure or in several stages is not a novel undertaking. Such studies have been carried out, to a limited degree, in the study of conversion in the field of sociology of religion. Suzuki (1970), who studied the followers of Soka Gakkai, proposed a model of conversion process consisting of twelve steps, including the weakening of the primary group, psychological isolation, instability, tension, and frustration as the effects of 1) their definition of the situation, 2) changes in objective conditions systematically directed their definition of the situation, urbanization and the general downward social mobility and 3) geographical mobility. Morioka and Nishiyama (1979) pointed out eleven conditions regarding Myōchikai's integration of the community and individuals' acceptance of faith, and suggested that when some of these conditions were combined, changes in the faith system were induced. Turning abroad, Lofland and Stark's well-known model identifies seven stages in the process of joining a religious organization (Lofland and Stark 1965). The study focuses on a type of cult in the United States. The above-mentioned studies invariably focus on a particular religious organization and the processes in their proposed models are too detailed to be used as general models.

Anderson (1988) lies in his unique analysis of religious testimonies from three new religious movements in Japan (Zenrin Kai, Risshō Kōsei Kai, and Sukyo Mahikari). The study does not deal with one specific religious organization but three, and it has concluded that there are seven themes in religious testimonies: summary, orientation, crisis, process of improvement, discord, solution and reconciliation, and conclusion. Of them, crisis, process of improvement, discord, and solution and reconciliation occupy the central position.

2.3. *The state-transition model of testimonies*

This paper, drawing from Anderson's study in particular, argues that religious testimonies are composed of five stages: initial state, practice based on religious teaching, resultant state, interpretation of results, and change in faith. Some of these stages are added to Anderson's model to account for changes that take place after conversion, and others are renamed to maintain neutrality.

The initial state is the condition before a person joins a faith. In the deprivation theory, it refers to conditions of poverty, illness, and conflict, the degree of desire for self-realization and psychological stability, and the degree of spirituality and orientation for transcendence at that point. It is assumed that after this stage, the process of joining a faith starts.

The second stage, practice based on religious teaching, is where some religious action is performed. There are two aspects to this stage: performing religious rituals, and one's attitude or need for guidance in daily life.

The third stage is the resultant state, which represents what changes have been brought about by practicing the religion. Obviously, no change is also a possibility.

In order for change to lead to faith, interpretation of results—including recognition of results and the level of satisfaction arising from it—is important. This is the fourth stage.

Lastly, faith and belief can be strengthened, suspended, or abandoned. The latter two are probably more frequent.

The above is defined as the basic structure of testimonies and is called the state-transition model¹. In this basic structure, testimonies are compositions in which the individuals' episodes are framed.

Can the five stages in testimonies be clearly distinguished in an empirical approach? In other words, can these stages be a basic structure with respect to factual evidence? Kōno investigates this question (Kawabata 2012, p. 139). He analyzes 966 religious testimonies collected from the Internet between April 2007 and January 2008.

The relevant parts are extracted from each stage: initial state, practice based on religious teaching, resultant state, interpretation of results, and change in faith. Next, for each of the five stages, the relevant parts from the 966 testimonies are assembled and analyzed. The results show that in the initial stage, words related to illness such as “hospital,” “cancer,” “operation,” and “medicine” occur frequently along with words related to the family, such as “mother,” “father,” and “husband.”

In the “practice based on religious teaching” stage, terms that are specific to the respective religious organizations, such as “prayer,” “hope,” “Nam Myōhō Renge Kyō,” “chanting,” and

¹ This model has been developed by the “religion and communication” project of the Japanese Association for the Study of Religion and Society, and it is one of the outcomes of the collaborative research of Mitsuharu Watanabe and Masahiro Kōno of Kanto Gakuin University, Tatsuya Yumiyama of Taisho University and Hiroyuki Kurosaki of Kokugakuin University.

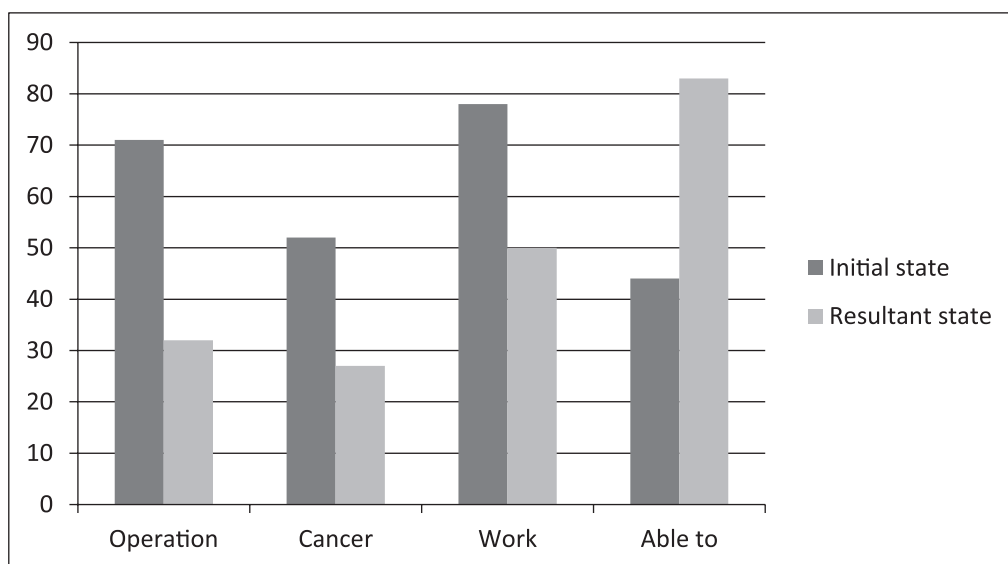


FIGURE 1.
Comparison of characteristic words of the initial and resultant states
(From the chart by Kōno, Kawabata 2012, p. 139)

“purification of the spirit” appear frequently.

The resultant stage is similar to the initial stage in that words related to illness and family are frequently found. However, the resultant stage differs from the initial stage in that words such as “joy” and “gratitude” as well as words related to outcomes such as “marriage” and “finding a job” appear. While words like “bad” and “hard” appear in the initial stage, in the resultant stage, words like “good,” “enjoyable,” and “optimistic” are found instead. In addition, a statistically significant difference is found between the initial state and resultant state in the rate of appearance of the words such as “operation,” “cancer,” “work,” and “able to” (see Figure 1).

Such a clear result shows the validity of analyzing religious testimonies according to the state-transition model. Needless to say, testimonies differ from one another in content. Diverse testimonies have failed to produce valid results for interpretation if data were thrown in to the analysis without being categorized into five stages using the state-transition model, even if the text mining technique was used. However, when data are categorized into the five stages of the basic structure and when data for each stage are extracted and analyzed, words that are characteristic to each stage are identified and it becomes clear that investigating patterns of combination of these characteristic words show the features and structures of each stage. In short, what is notable about the Kōno report is that it validates the practice of categorizing data into five groups and the fact that these five categories constitute a basic structure for at least the 966 testimonies used in the analysis.

Each of the five stages is thought to contain certain factors. For instance, the initial state is

thought to contain economic difficulties, illness, problems with relationships, and spiritual training. Similarly, the practice based on religious teaching stage contains not religious but moralistic everyday practices and extraordinary practices such as asceticism or becoming a priest. The resultant state includes getting out of the initial state or not getting out of the initial state. The change in faith stage includes acquisition of faith, strengthening of faith, and abandonment of faith. There are a variety of interpretations of results, but one simple factor is satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regard to the result.

3. Data and Methods

3.1. Method for the pilot study

Based on the model of religious testimonies thus built, this study presented constructed testimonies to respondents and asked them if they could accept the testimonies or not. If two testimonies, for example, one containing economic difficulties at the initial stage and the other illness, were identical in other respects, such as practice and the resultant state, the degree of acceptance of the testimonies would be compared when the two testimonies were shown to two sets of respondents. In doing so, it should become clear that the testimony with economic difficulties would be more acceptable than the one with illness. As shown earlier, there were *four* patterns in the initial stage (economic difficulties, illness, problems with relationships, and spiritual training), *two* patterns in the practice based on religious teaching stage (not religious but moralistic everyday practice and extraordinary practice such as asceticism or becoming a priest), *two* patterns in the resultant stage (getting out of the initial state and not getting out of the initial state), *three* patterns in the change in faith stage (acquisition of faith, strengthening of faith, and abandonment of faith), and *two* patterns in the interpretation of results stage (satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the result). Therefore, investigating all possible patterns with this method would require a total of ninety-six patterns (arrived at by multiplying $4 \times 2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2$). Supposing that twenty respondents would be required for each testimony, it would mean nearly 2,000 research respondents would be needed.

Because such a large-scale study was impossible to implement, a small-scale pilot study was carried out in the form of a questionnaire survey. In order to cover all combinations of factors, short testimonies were constructed corresponding to a particular combination of identified factors². A total of eighteen short testimonies were constructed, and each respondent was asked to read all eighteen testimonies and then asked whether he or she could believe them respectively. Below is an example of one of the testimonies:

² The method used here is the conjoint analysis that is frequently used in marketing research. By using an orthogonal design, a large number of combinations can be reduced to twelve or eighteen, which makes research more efficient.

I was unemployed and could not support my family. I joined the religious organization that claimed to represent the only true faith. Guided by the organization's teaching, I prayed to the god who would save me at the end of the world. I tried to be true to my feelings and intuitions. Then, one day, I felt I was at one with the universe. After that, my problems were all sorted out and others started to envy me. At the same time, I was experiencing peace of mind.

The survey was carried out on the Internet in Japan and the US in 2011. A total of 344 responses from Japan and 330 responses from the US were collected. The most significant finding in this pilot study is that, while it is often assumed that there is a big difference between Japan and the US in terms of attitudes toward religion, as far as acceptance or rejection of short testimonies with the cultural factors removed, there is no major difference between Japan and the US (Kawabata 2012, p. 140). One of the benefits of a survey using constructed testimonies is that the researcher can construct as many testimonies as required for an experimental design by combining factors; additionally, because the length of real testimonies often exceed a thousand words, a respondent might find it hard to read multiple testimonies and answer questions, but a respondent can read and respond to many testimonies if they are short, which means that the sample size needed is smaller and the cost of the research is significantly reduced.

On the other hand, respondents in the 2011 survey made comments such as, "The short testimonies were too short and not concrete enough. It was difficult to make up my mind," and "Because I had to read so many testimonies, it became very confusing." These comments show the shortcomings of this method.

3.2. Method for the main study

The main study of this paper is an online survey that was conducted using a social survey company and carried out in February and March of 2012. A contrasting method to the 2011 survey is employed through trial and error process. In the main study, one respondent is asked to read one testimony about six hundred words long. In regards to the state-transition model of testimonies, emphasis is placed on the practice based on religious teaching stage and three patterns are prepared for this stage: Pattern 1 includes the slightly religious practice of carrying something sacred, Pattern 2 uses the example of exorcism as a religious act, and Pattern 3 expresses believing in an impersonal principle, as opposed to a personal god.

The procedure is more complex in this study because it also aims to investigate whether the presentation of testimonies to respondents will bring about changes in their religious attitudes. The results of this investigation will in turn construct a model for religious testimonies. This objective is pursued by conducting a two-stage survey: First a survey on religious attitudes is carried out before the presentation of testimonies and after the presentation, the same questions are asked again to compare the results.

First, a screening test was administered to select appropriate respondents, followed by two surveys administered to those with certain religious tendencies. In the screening survey, respondents were only asked about their interest in religion and asked to choose one from four categories: “I am a believer,” “I am not a believer but I am interested in religion,” “I am not a believer and I have no interest in religion,” and “I dislike religion.” The two-stage survey was carried out with those respondents who chose “I am a believer,” “I am not a believer but I am interested in religion,” and “I am not a believer and I have no interest in religion.”

In the first survey, all respondents were asked the same question. For the second survey, conducted about three weeks later, six questionnaires were prepared and distributed evenly among each of the three categories of respondents.

The research respondents were Japanese men and women of two age groups: late twenties (twenty-five to twenty-nine years old) and late forties (forty-five to forty-nine years old). With the three categories of religious attitude, gender, and age, there were twelve possible categories. The aim was to obtain more than seventy-five responses from each category for a total of at least nine hundred respondents.

In addition, because this study is built on a new idea and there are no preceding surveys, it is difficult to predict what kind of results might be produced. Therefore, in order to ensure the precision of the survey, a pre-survey was conducted before each stage of the main study. The pre-survey, in this instance, collected about ninety samples before the collection of responses for the main study at each stage. The results of the pre-survey were used to determine whether the wording was suitable.

At the first stage of the main study, the pre-survey suggested that the wording was appropriate and therefore the main survey was carried out without modification. At the second stage of the main study, the pre-survey suggested that some revision to the wording was necessary, and the main survey was carried out with revised wording. While the responses to the second main survey by those who responded to the pre-survey for the second stage of the main study were discarded, the responses to the first stage of the main study were included in data as valid responses. The question about empathy towards testimonies was asked in the second stage of the main study. The testimony used was as follows:

I am thirty-five years old and an employee of a manufacturer. My life so far has been without major crises and I have been, relatively speaking, fortunate.

However, since some point in my life, I had suffered from serious trouble, which I could not confide to others. One day, I was invited to a religious organization by an acquaintance. Because the organization’s teaching matched the basic principles in my life, I attended their meetings frequently. As I attended more meetings, I started to develop the expectation that my problems might be solved and became a member of the organization. The organiza-

tion’s teaching, which was different from that of others, is as follows:

(new page)

Happiness and misfortune in life is determined by a strong force that far transcends human beings. It is a principle that goes beyond human emotions and ethics. There are people who remain poor because whatever efforts they make result in failure and there are others who contract serious illnesses even though they have not done anything wrong. Still others cannot deal with their bosses even though they get along with people in general. Even if a human being behaves in an ethical manner and makes an effort to be good, this alone does not determine the person’s life. A strong force that transcends human beings determines whether I can live a happy life or not.

(new page)

In order to benefit from this strong force, it is important to carry the sacred object issued by the organization everyday and everywhere and worship it whenever you can. Since ancient times, human beings have been worshipping various sacred objects. The organization teaches that the sacred object directly transmits the power of the great being. The shortest way to gain happiness is to carry the sacred object all the time and worship it all the time so that we can receive the blessing of the god’s sacred power.



True religion is not simple human morality. Religion enables you to fight off the influence of bad forces and to accept a stronger force at a higher level and makes you happy in both mind and body.

(new page)

I concentrated on practicing the teaching. And to my surprise, my problems were solved. After this, I became a more enthusiastic practitioner of the teaching and am now truly happy. I am very grateful for the organization that has blessed me with this wonderful happiness.

For the section starting with “In order to benefit from this strong force, it is important to carry the sacred object issued by the organization everyday and everywhere...”, two alternatives are prepared, and a total of three patterns are presented to the respondents. The sacred object represents pattern 1, and Patterns 2 and 3 are as follows:

Pattern 2

In order to benefit from this strong force, it is important to practice the secret ritual of exorcism as instructed by the organization every day. Since ancient times, human beings have been practicing purification and driving away obstacles that prevented them from receiving blessing. The organization teaches that if you can drive out the devils and evil spirits, you can receive the

great being's force throughout your body. The shortest way to gain happiness is to ward off invisible evil forces.

Pattern 3

In order to benefit from this strong force, it is important to believe that god is an ultimate being and an impersonal principle. Since the ancient times, those who were called sages were in touch with this impersonal principle and used to explain it in the form of stories, allegories, and personification. The organization teaches that one should not judge a god by its appearance and form. The shortest way to gain happiness is to know the true appearance of the great being and its force.

In addition, it is often said in Japan that even the word "religion" would provoke rejection. Therefore, the phrase "a religious organization" in the above testimonies is substituted with "a certain person" in each pattern containing the sacred object, exorcism, and an impersonal god, respectively. These are Patterns 4, 5, and 6, so there are a total of six patterns of testimonies. Because these are not based on real experience, they are constructed testimonies.

4. Results

First, of the data in this survey, "believer" constitutes 317 respondents (31.8 percent), "not a believer but interested in religion" is 345 (34.6 percent), and "not a believer and no interest in religion" is 336 (33.7 percent).

After presenting the testimony, the question is asked, "To what degree can you accept such a testimony?" About ten percent of the total—ninety-nine respondents out of 998—chose "Acceptable" or "Fairly acceptable." Those who do not show antipathy by choosing "Neither acceptable nor unacceptable" constitute 31.2 percent (see Table 1). As there are no directly comparative survey data, it is impossible to evaluate if these figures are high or low; however, it is reasonable to assume that a certain proportion of people do not outright reject these religious

TABLE 1.
Degree of acceptance of the presented testimony

	Frequencies	Percent
Unacceptable	370	37.1
Rather unacceptable	218	21.8
Neither acceptable nor unacceptable	311	31.2
Fairly acceptable	84	8.4
Acceptable	15	1.5
Total	998	100.0

TABLE 2.
Multiple regression model with socio-economic variables as independent variables

	b	S. E.	β
Intercept	2.111**	.298	
Gender (male=1)	.201**	.077	.094
Age (25-29)	.305**	.069	.144
Occupational status			
Full-time employment	.033	.094	.016
Part-time employment	.116	.106	.042
Self-employed	.272*	.131	.077
Unemployed (ref.)			
Education			
Junior High school (ref.)			
High school	-.131	.254	-.052
Vocational school	-.185	.261	-.058
Junior College	-.020	.266	-.006
University	-.212	.251	-.099
Graduate school	-.175	.276	-.042
Size of the city			
Tokyo's 23 wards and ordinance-designated cities	-.108	.174	-.047
more than 100,000 cities	-.105	.170	-.049
less than 100,000 cities	-.167	.179	-.062
towns and villages (ref.)			
Adjusted R ²	.021**		
Number of cases	998		

** : p<.01, * : p<.05

testimonies, and some might even be sympathetic to them.

Regression analysis is carried out to find out which variables affect acceptance of the testimonies as the dependent variable and socio-economic variables, survey pattern, pluralism, and religious attitudes as the independent variables.

When socio-economic variables are examined (see Table 2), the gender and age groups are significant, and men and the younger age group are found to be significantly more acceptable. In terms of occupational status, the self-employed (including those employed in family businesses) are found to be significantly acceptable compared to those without jobs. Education and the size of the city are not significant factors. It is generally said that those who tend to become members of a religious organization or who tend to be more religious in Japan are women and older people. It is also evident that the self-employed tend to be religious. In light of these factors, the self-employed can be described as religious and empathetic towards the testimonies while men and the young age groups were not very religious but did show empathy towards the testimonies. In contrast, women and the older age groups are religious but show stronger antipathy towards the testimonies. However, because the adjusted coefficient of

TABLE 3.
Multiple regression models with religious attitudes and testimony patterns added

	b	S. E.	β	b	S. E.	β
Intercept	2.074**	.095		2.136**	.098	
Gender (male=1)	.163*	.066	.077	.160*	.066	.075
Age (25-29)	.308**	.067	.145	.309**	.066	.145
Self-employed	.239*	.110	.068	.249*	.110	.071
Religious attitudes						
Not religious and no interest (ref.)						
Not religious but an interest	-.194*	.081	-.087	-.196*	.080	-.088
Religious	-.357**	.081	-.159	-.361**	.081	-.160
A certain person	.143*	.066	.067	.027	.080	.013
Pattern						
The sacred object	-.002	.080	-.001	-.182	.107	-.080
Exorcism	-.191*	.080	-.084	-.195*	.080	-.086
An impersonal god (ref.)						
Interaction						
The sacred object * a certain person				.354*	.140	.124
Adjusted R ²	.050**			.055**		
Number of cases	998			998		

** : $p < .01$, * : $p < .05$

determination is very small (0.021), if one uses socio-economic variables only, the degree of acceptance of the testimonies is hardly explained.

The left-hand side of Table 3 shows the multiple regression model with religious attitudes and testimony patterns added as independent variables.

Among the socio-economic variables used in Table 2, the male dummy's significance level exceeds one percent and changes at five percent, but other dummy variables such as the younger age group and the self-employed remain significant, as shown in Table 3. In regards to religious attitudes, when holding those who are not religious and have no interest in religion as the reference category, it is found that those who are not religious but have an interest in religion and those who are religious are significantly unaccepting of the testimonies.

With regard to the testimony patterns, those testimonies that have the phrase "religious organization" replaced with "a certain person" gain more acceptance. This confirms that Japanese people might develop antipathy to the word "religion." Moreover, in terms of the content of testimonies, those testimonies that contain a reference to exorcism, a concept that is not very familiar in Japanese culture, and those which refer to ritualistic actions to avoid a negative state in which a devil would cause harm are not found to be acceptable.

The model on the right-hand side of Table 3 adds interaction variable to the model on the left-hand side. An examination of various interaction variables revealed that, when "carrying the

TABLE 4.
Multiple regression model with authenticity and religious consciousness added

	b	S. E.	β
Intercept	1.093**	.169	
Gender (male=1)	.200**	.064	.094
Age (25-29)	.320**	.065	.150
Self-employed	.211*	.107	.060
Religious Attitudes			
Not religious and no interest (ref.)			
Not religious but an interest	-.047	.083	-.021
Religious	-.113	.087	-.050
A certain person	.017	.077	.008
Pattern			
The sacred object	-.199	.103	-.088
Exorcism	-.188*	.077	-.083
An impersonal god (ref.)			
Interaction			
The sacred object * a certain person	.352**	.135	.123
Authenticity of religion			
Completely true religion	.095	.126	.025
Somewhat true religion	.036	.082	.014
No true religion	-.207*	.098	-.067
I don't know (ref.)			
Religious consciousness			
God is always on the humans' side	.099**	.023	.155
Devils or evil spirits	.071**	.021	.114
Control of one's emotions	.067**	.025	.082
Adjusted R ²	.125**		
Number of cases	998		

** : $p < .01$, * : $p < .05$

sacred object on one's person" and "a certain person" are added, there is a significant effect on the acceptance of the testimonies; on the other hand, the effect of "a certain person" independently disappears. In other words, empathy towards the testimonies increases when not only the phrase "religious organization" is removed but also linkage is made with certain religious actions. This suggests that it is not a simple rejection of words such as "religion" and "religious organization," but that these words provoke even more antipathy when they are used in connection with certain actions or words. This needs to be further investigated under different conditions.

Lastly, variables on authenticity and religious consciousness are added in (see Table 4).

When the dependent variables of authenticity and religious consciousness are added, the adjusted coefficient of determination is 0.125, exceeding the ten percent, and this proves to be considerable explanatory model. What significantly differs from previous analyses is that the variable of religious attitudes lost its influence. As for authenticity of religion, those who are so

strongly negative towards religion as to agree that “no religion is even somewhat true” do not accept the testimonies either. In terms of religious consciousness, those who support the idea of transcendental sacredness—whether good (god) or evil (the devil)—by agreeing that “god is always on the humans’ side and protecting them” and “devil or evil spirits exist” accept the testimonies; on the other hand, those who support certain ethical perspectives and ethics which are not superficially regarded as constituting religious consciousness—such as “to try to control one’s emotions and keep an optimistic outlook in life”—also show empathy towards the testimonies. Furthermore, the negative influence of the dummy variables “I am a believer” and “I am not a believer but I am interested in religion” is no longer significant. In other words, the reason those who say, “I am not a believer and I have no interest in religion” show more empathy toward the testimonies than the believers is that they had religious consciousness, as explained above.

This shows that, in Japan, believers and those who are interested in religion are not necessarily those who simply believe in transcendental beings such as god or the devil; they do not simply believe in certain ethical perspectives, either. It also shows that these characteristics do not necessarily lead to empathy towards religious testimonies. The complexity of the relationship between being a believer in Japan and accepting the transcendent Christian concepts of god and the devil is also evident here.

5. Conclusion

The above findings can be summarized as follows: those who show empathy towards the religious testimonies are generally the young, the self-employed, and men. The testimony with the phrase “religious organization” deleted and the one on carrying a sacred object attract empathy. Those who think that there is no truth in religion are not empathetic to the testimonies. The testimonies on exorcism do not attract much empathy. Those who believe in god and the devil and those who try to maintain a positive mindset tend to empathize with the testimonies. Above all, the believers do not necessarily accept the religious testimonies.

This study is experimental, using a method that has not been previously tested in studying testimonies. While there are many patterns identified in testimonies based on the state-transition model, this study has investigated only three patterns and looked into the rhetoric of “religion,” which leaves the majority of the patterns untested. Therefore, it is highly likely that some important factors remain uncovered.

In addition, because the study was conducted through the Internet, the representativeness of the sample is not secured. The size of the sample is not sufficient, either. Therefore, it is reasonable to state that the reliability of the results is not high. However, by employing a novel research method in investigating testimonies, the study has found some effects of socio-economic variables and concluded that religious consciousness was more influential than whether a person

was a believer or not. Therefore it can be said that, as an experimental research method, this study has made some contribution.

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