

Dichotomous but Complementary Aspects of *Kami* and *Hotoke* Concepts in Japanese Language

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1. Introduction: *Kami* and *Hotoke* in Contemporary Japanese

Every year Buzzword Awards⁽¹⁾ are given to the expressions that best describe the social trend of the year. The top winner for 2016 was *kamitteru* (godlike or superhuman 神ってる), which originally refers to the miraculous ability possessed by a baseball player (Jiyūkokuminsha n.d.). The word *kamitteru*, an abbreviated form of *kamigakatteiru* (having god-like quality 神がっている), is a kind of metaphor based on the similarity between the extraordinary power of *kami* (gods or God 神), and the person referred. Some other Japanese neologisms, especially among internet slang words, provide more examples. Below are typical ones.

- (1) *Kore kangaeta yatsu wa kami*

これ考えた奴は神。

The guy who invented this must be a genius.

- (2) *Kinjo no konbini de kamitaiō o uketa*

近所のコンビニで神対応を受けた。

I have received awesome service at a nearby convenience store.

- (3) *Kono arubamu wa kamikyoku zoroi da*

このアルバムは神曲ぞろいだ。

This album is full of masterpiece tunes.

Each underlined part corresponds to the Japanese word *kami* and its translations. As mentioned, the word *kami* focuses on the extraordinary

aspects of someone or something; it denotes a genius in (1), awesomeness in (2), and a masterpiece in (3). However, when Buddhist *hotoke* (the Buddha or buddas 仏) is used metaphorically, which is a religious term similar to *kami*, it communicates highly context-dependent meanings as in example (4).

- (4) *Akushukai deno huan eno kamitaiō ga wadai to natteiru Nakajima Kento ni narai, Ōno Satoshi ga miseta hotoketaiō ni hankyō ga yoserareta.*

握手会でのファンへの神対応が話題となっている中島健人にならい、大野智が見せた“仏対応”に反響が寄せられた。(Modelpress 2016)

Following Kento Nakajima who had delivered a highly praised service during the handshake event, Satoshi Ohno showed more sophisticated attitude towards his fans.

While *kamitaiō* 神対応 in (4), literally a godlike response, has become a conventional metaphor now, the underlined word *hotoketaiō* 仏対応, a sincere response, can be interpreted as an unconventional one and so communicates the intended meaning only in the immediate context. In fact, few *hotoke* metaphors are found among newly invented slang expressions as Tamon (2014) points out. The rich connotations of the word *hotoke* in the Heian period have disappeared from present-day Japanese. The only recent conventional metaphor with *hotoke* is “*hotoke no N*” 仏の N, which means “compassionate N,” “generous N, or “kind N” where N refers to a noun phrase (Tamon 2014, 123). In addition, *hotoke* usually means the dead, so (1) sometimes implies that the person who invented the thing referred must be a genius and possibly no longer alive. This might be one of the reasons for the scarcity of *hotoke* use among newly coined expressions.

These examples suggest that the notion of *kami* can be used more easily, and thus more familiarly, than that of *hotoke* in contemporary Japanese. However, seen in a wider context, many Buddhist expressions in fact have already existed in daily Japanese expressions. How could

this contradiction be accounted for? This article aims to answer the question by investigating Japanese dead metaphors in terms of religious representation. After a brief look at examples of metaphorical expressions with Buddhist origins in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 tries to explain how they get wider meanings as metaphors. Finally, Chapter 4 offers further discussion about the inclusiveness of the Japanese *kami* concept, in which Shintō *kami*, Buddhist *hotoke*, and even the Christian *kami* are combined.

2. Buddhist Representations in Present-day Japanese

2.1. Dead Metaphors with Buddhist Origins

There are many more expressions with Buddhist origins than those with *kami* in the Japanese language. Some of them are examples of generalization of meaning and thus called dead metaphors defined as below.

So-called dead metaphors are words whose literal meaning is no longer current, and whose sense has therefore been transferred to the figurative. (Wales 2014, 267)

Some dead metaphors with Buddhist terms can be illustrated in (5-8).

- (5) 法師 (*hōshi*, a Buddhist monk, literally a teacher of Buddhism):
 - a. 起き上がり小法師 (*okiagarikoboshi*, a rolly-poly doll)
 - b. 影法師 (*kagebōshi*, sihourette)
 - c. 山法師 (*yamabōshi*, Japanese dogwood)
- (6) 坊主 (*bōzu*, a Buddhist monk, lit. a temple master):
 - a. ねぎ坊主 (*negibōzu*, an onion head)
 - b. 三日坊主 (*mikkabōzu*, giving up easily)
 - c. 台湾坊主 (*taiwanbōzu*, an atmospheric depression originating near Taiwan)
- (7) 坊 (*bō*, a Buddhist monk, lit. a Buddhist residence or temple):
 - a. 寝坊 (*nebō*, getting up late)

- b. かくれん坊 (*kakurenbō*, hide and seek)
- c. さくらん坊 (*sakuranbō*, cherry)
- (8) 小僧 (*kozō*, a young Buddhist monk, lit. a little priest):
 - a. 高師小僧 (*Takashikozō*, limonite cube)
 - b. 膝小僧 (*hizakozō*, knee)
 - c. 小便小僧 (*syobenkozō*, Manneken Pis)

It is true that many Japanese people use these expressions without paying attention to their Buddhist origins. For instance, *hōshi* 法師 has a general meaning of Buddhist monks and can be applied to things that look like the figure of monks like toy dolls in (5a), silhouette on the ground in (5b), and a kind of plant in (5c). *Bōzu* 坊主, *bō* 坊, and *kozō* 小僧 in (6–8) communicate similar meanings as *hōshi* in (5), so sometimes these expressions are interchangeable; both *hizabōshi* 膝法師 (knee) and *hizabōzu* 膝坊主 can be used synonymously as *hizakozo* 膝小僧. However, *kozō*, a young Buddhist apprentice, sometimes entails slightly different contents to describe something young, small, or round. As above, for most Japanese speakers, these dead metaphors can be used as common expressions without any religious connotations. Similar examples might be found in English language: “hierarchy,” “lobby,” “cell,” and so on (Terasawa 2016, 74).

Examples in (5–8) are metaphors in which expressions for monks, or humans, are applied to non-human things or objects. Kobayashi (2015) gives an observation about this aspect as below.⁽³⁾

Many expressions which refer to concrete objects derived from their resemblance with the original Buddhist objects. In contrast, abstract ideas are usually made from shifting, misinterpreting, or even misunderstanding of the original Buddhist concepts. That is the way the meanings of words extend. This application of difficult Buddhist terms into everyday language demonstrates the ways how ordinary people look at things in the world around them.

(Kobayashi 2015, 208–209)

When the referent of the Buddhist trope is an object, the expression is called metaphor. On the other hand, when the referent is an abstract idea, it is called metonymy where “the name of a referent is replaced by the name of an attribute, or of an entity related in some semantic way” (Wales 2011, 267). This will be of interest when we look at the relationship between *kami* and *hotoke* later in Chapter 4.

There are also similar examples of dead metaphors originating from Buddhist concepts. Among them are *chie* (wisdom 知恵), *jyama* (an obstacle 邪魔), *innenn* ([sometimes bad] fate 因縁), *kakugo* (a resolution 覚悟), *guchi* (a complaint 愚痴), and so on (Terasawa 2016, 73). In addition, there are further noteworthy metaphors in Japanese to represent sounds in nature. In the next section, let us have a brief look at some examples.

2.2. Sound Representations with Buddhist Terms

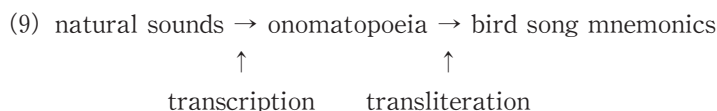
Buddhist expressions can also be seen in the representations of natural sounds. There are mainly two ways to express natural sounds in human language. The first and the most obvious example is to use onomatopoeia: bow-wow for dogs, meow-meow for cats, croak croak for frogs, and so forth. In addition, bird songs can be translated into human language as mnemonic word plays called *kikinashi* 聞きなし. They are the expressions made by the combination of the original sounds and meanings of the target language. Buddhist terms can also be seen among *kikinashi* expressions in an interesting way. Below are the examples with Buddhist terms taken from the most comprehensive *kikinashi* database on the Internet by Shibata (n.d.).

Table 1 Japanese Birds Song Mnemonics with Buddhist Terms

Bird Name	<i>Kikinashi</i> (Bird song mnemonics)
イカル (<i>Ikaru</i>) Japanese Grosbeak	ヒジリコキ (<i>Hijirikoki</i>) At a high-rank monk, a child laughs.
ウグイス (<i>Uguisu</i>) Japanese Bush Warbler	法 法華経 (<i>Hō hokekyō</i>) Dharma, the Lotus Sutra. 法をきけ (<i>hō o kike</i>) Listen to the Dharma.

オオヨシキリ (<i>Ōyoshikiri</i>) Oriental Reed Warbler	常光寺、常光寺..... (Jyōkōji, Jyōkōji,) Jyōkōji Temple, Jyōkōji Temple... 長興寺、長興寺..... (chōkōji, chōkōji,) Chōkōji Temple, Chōkōji Temple...
コノハヅク (<i>Konohazuku</i>) Oriental Scops Owl	仏法僧 (<i>bup্পōsō</i>) Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha (three jewels). 仏法 (<i>bup্পan</i>) the teachings of Buddhism
ジュウイチ (<i>Jyūichi</i>) Rufous Hawk-Cuckoo	慈悲心 (<i>jihishin</i>) benevolence
フクロウ (<i>Fukurō</i>) Ural Owl	小僧鼻くそ食うか (<i>Kozō hanakuso kūka</i>) Hey boy, do you wanna eat your boogers?
ホトトギス (<i>Hototogisu</i>) Lesser Cuckoo	本尊掛けたか (<i>honzon kaketaka</i>) Have you returned a hanging image of Buddha? 本堂建てたか (<i>Hondō tatetaka</i>) Have you built the main temple?

Kikinashi is a mnemonic device enjoyed by birders to identify birds by their songs. So most of them are made of familiar words or phrases for the birders to remember the sounds easily. The process by which they are constructed can be shown as below.



Once natural sounds reach the auditory system, they are changed into perceivable stimuli to be represented in the human mind. This process includes transcription in which once represented sounds are meta-represented again in human language, that is, onomatopoeia. To make them more memorable, these onomatopoetic expressions must be transliterated into familiar words or phrases. Then, the second process starts

when a recipient engages in a search for the similarity between onomatopoeia and familiar phrases that have already existed. Through the process that contains phonetic, pragmatic, semantic operations, new mnemonic expressions called *kikinashi*, or bird song mnemonics are constructed.

In the course of transliteration, certain phonetic aspects are ignored so that natural sounds can be applied to human language. This is because the more they resemble the common expressions, the easier they are memorized or kept in mind for a long time. Thus, words and phrases used for *kikinashi* should so familiar with speakers that they can be remembered.

Looking at *kikinashi* examples in Shibata (n.d.), only one Shintō term *gokitō* (a prayer ⁽⁴⁾ 祈禱) is found. Nakanishi (1956) refers to this term as below.

At Buddhist temples in the mountains, people hear the song of Oriental Scops Owl, which sounds like “Gokiton,” as *buppōsō*, while in shrines, they hear as *gokitō* as they like it. (Nakanishi 1956, 36)

Though the original sounds are the same, the word chosen depends on the context. From these examples, it seems likely that the concepts that are often used to make *kikinashi* have high accessibility for the people of the time when *kikinashi* created. In other words, as examples (5) and Table 1 show, Buddhist concepts were more familiar than Shintō’s at that time.

In case of Japanese Bush Warbler in Table 1, there are some researchers who mention the origin of *hō hokekyō* (*The Lotus Sutra* 法華經). In the summary of his open lecture by Kandazatsugaku daigaku (n.d.), Sotoaki Tokui mentions that in the temples, Buddhist monks may hear the sounds in the mountains and use the most accessible terms, that is, their Buddhist terms to describe it. And Nakami Yamaguchi, a leading researcher of *kikinashi* in Japan, points out the difficulty for present-day Japanese speakers to remember these expressions in terms of Buddhist terms because they have lost the strong link with Buddhism

(Yamaguchi 1989, 48). From these statements, the words chosen for *kikinashi* must have been easy to access and remember, and thus close to the mind of people of the time. In other words, Buddhist concepts were within easy reach of Japanese mind especially during the Edo period when many *kikinashi* expressions began to appear.⁽⁵⁾

This makes an interesting coincidence with the recent popularity of *kami* terms among internet slang words as illustrated in (1-3). There are three possible reasons for the abundance of Buddhist terms in *kikinashi* compared to Shintō terms. The first reason is that Buddhism and birds might be strongly connected. Some eminent examples are six birds appearing in the Sukhavati sutra including *karyōbinga* 迦陵頻伽, that is a personified bird with a human face and beautiful voice in paradise. However, it is difficult to imagine that ordinary people properly understand or at least read these teachings. The second reason is that Buddhism might exist everywhere around them. While we cannot directly see Shintō gods, we can easily see Buddhist figures and monks at nearby temples. And Buddhism was deeply concerned with people's lives as mentioned above. The third is the fact that *kami* and *hotoke* can be interpreted as having almost the same connotation of superhuman beings. In the next chapter, this contradictory aspect of borderlessness between *kami* and *hotoke* will be examined.

3. *Hotoke* Representation as Gods

3.1. Ad Hoc Concept Construction and Folk Etymology

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are many metaphorically extended Buddhist expressions in the Japanese language. They are so prevalent that speakers with another, or no religious mind use them as ordinary Japanese expressions without any hesitation.

Relevance theory can account for this generalization process. Since this theory was first publicized by Sperber & Wilson (1995), it has been one of the leading theories of pragmatics to give systematic accounts for communication, especially for the interpretation of what is not clearly stated but successfully communicated. According to relevance theory,

metaphor contains the process called ad hoc concept construction which is the change of meaning in accordance with the principle of relevance. Relevance can be defined as the balance between the effort required to interpret the expression and the cognitive effect given by that effort. According to this theory, human cognitive system is geared to search for relevance, that is, the optimal balance between effort and effect. Thus, metaphoric meanings appear as a result of widening or loosening of the original concept to get optimal relevance. Carston (2002) explains this process by using the figure below.

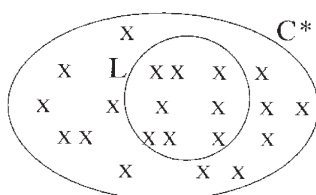


Figure 1 Ad Hoc Concept Construction (Carston 2002, 343)

Figure 1, where L refers to the scope of the core lexical concept and C* is that of the broadened ad hoc concept, illustrates how metaphorical meanings could be understood. Take *hōshi* 法師 in (5) as an example.

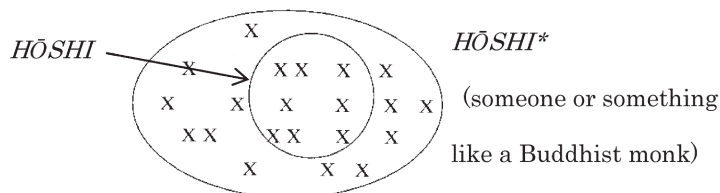


Figure 2 Ad Hoc Concept Construction of *Hōshi* (法師, a Buddhist monk)

The core concept of *hōshi* as a Buddhist monk is extended to match the meaning in the given context. For example, *okiagarikobōshi* 起き上がり小法師 can be interpreted as a balancing toy that looks like a typical Buddhist monk, or the person with a bald head by broadening the lexical concept until it yields enough cognitive effect in the context. As such,

kagebōshi 影法師 and *yamabōshi* 山法師 connote the extended concepts of a Buddhist monk. According to Carston (2002), “a logical or defining feature of the lexically encoded concept is dropped in the process of arriving at the intended interpretation” (Carston 2002, 329). When these temporarily extended concepts become fixed and included as an individual entity in a certain language system and sometimes combined with other parts of the compounds as in (5), they get status as a portion of their definitions and become dead metaphors. So this process can be applied to the process of how dead metaphors are made.⁽⁶⁾⁽⁷⁾

Carston (2002) also gives two more different stages of ad hoc concept construction.

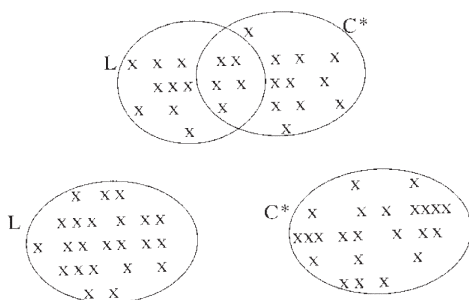


Figure 3 Types of Ad hoc Concept Construction (Carston 2002, 353).

Figure 3 can be applied to the examples below.

- (10) a. Bob is a magician. (Carston 2002, 353)
 b. Bob is a bulldozer. (Carston 2002, 328)

According to Carston (2002), the ad hoc constructed concept of MAGICIAN* in (10a) shares some denotations with a lexicalized concept MAGICIAN, but some concepts of magician excluded through the process of interpretation. As a result, (10a) can communicate that Bob has the same miraculous ability as some, but not all magicians have. (10b) is an example of category crossing cases in which the lexicalized concept

BULLDOZER and its broadened concept BULLDOZER* are not overlapped at all as illustrated by the lower pattern in Figure 3. In case of (10b), a bulldozer [−animate] falls into the category of human [+animate]. Carston (2002) implies that each disjoint set can be included in a stable element of the concept, that is, an independent sense of entry in dictionaries. Therefore, this process can be applied to the process of how an ad hoc concept or temporary constructed meaning transforms into a fixed meaning among the definition of polysemies as Wilson & Carston (2007) refers to as “lexical pragmatic processes” (Wilson & Carston 2007, 238⁽⁸⁾).

Here folk etymology occurs. Once the expression is perceived as a word and is used with a distinctive meaning, the original etymological aspects are prone to be ignored. This is because the words or expressions have become so familiar that they can be used without any original connotations, so no one pays attention to the correct origin of the words. Even if they suggest false origins, the expression can be interpreted properly in the context.⁽⁹⁾ As mentioned, they have already been individual words without any original connotations, that is, a dead metaphor.

In the next section, a brief history of the concept *kami* and *hotoke* is outlined to further explain the *kami* and *hotoke* terms in the Japanese language.

3.2. Diachronic Aspect of *Kami* and *Hotoke* Expressions

Japanese people are often said to be non-religious.⁽¹⁰⁾ For example, they do not hesitate to celebrate Christmas, pray to their local gods during New Year days at Shintō shrines, and have funerals at Buddhist temples. These attitudes stem from the era of *Shinbutsu Shūgō* (syncretization of Shintō with Buddhism, 神仏習合) during which both Shintō *kami* and Buddhist *hotoke* were unified and became an object of respect and prayer. Below are some examples that reflect this characteristic mindset of Japanese people.

- (11) *Kami sama hotoke sama, dōka negai o kiite kudasai*

神様仏様、どうか願いを聞いてください。

For goodness sake, *kami* and *hotoke*, please make my wish come true.

- (12) *Kono yononaka, kami mo hotoke mo nai*

この世の中、神も仏もない。

This world is merciless because there are neither *kami* nor *hotoke*.

- (13) *Kare no buji o, shinbutsu ni inotta*

彼の無事を神仏に祈った。

I prayed to gods for his safety.

When *kami* is used in non-religious context, it is usually accompanied with *hotoke* as in (11-13). This coexistence *kami* and *hotoke* in a phrase might be derived from the Japanese mindset called *Shinbutsu Shūgō*, which had been prevailing until *Shinbutsu Hanzen rei* (the order of separation of Buddhism from Shintōism 神仏判然令) advocated around the beginning of the Meiji period. When Buddhism was first introduced in Japan in the middle of the 6th century, Buddha or *hotoke* was recognized as a foreign *kami*. For this, it was not difficult for the polytheistic Japanese people to accept *hotoke* as one of their gods; Buddha was once called *banshin* (a foreign *kami* 蕃神), *magami* (a true *kami* 真神), *takokushin* (a *kami* from a foreign country 他国神), *bussin* (a Buddhist *kami* 仏神), *marōdogami* (a guest *kami* 客神) (Yura 2016, 68-69).

Shinbutsu Shūgō, the combinatory religious worship, is said to have started during the 8th century when Japanese gods were declared to be among the believers of Buddha by an oracle. Then, there was the era of *Honjisuijyunsetsu* 本地垂迹説⁽¹¹⁾, during which *kami* was believed to be a form of manifestations of the Buddha. The unification of *kami* and *hotoke* was strengthened even more during the Edo period, because of *Terauke seido* 寺請制度, by which every citizen had to belong to their local temples. After continuing for over 1,100 years, this *Shinbutsu Shūgō* era ended in 1868 when the Meiji government issued *Shinbutsu Bunri rei* (the Edict for Separation of Shintō and Buddhism 神仏分離令). Since then, the

two religions have been apparently divided until now. From these historical facts, the concept of *kami* and *hotoke* can be said to have undergone a process outlined below.

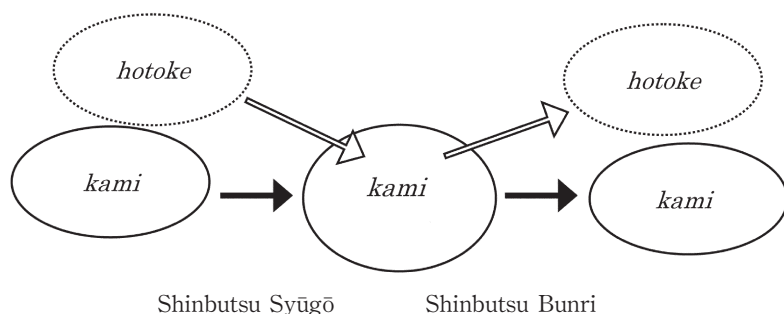


Figure 4 Transition of *Kami* as Superhuman Beings in General

According to this rather simplified figure, when the concept of *hotoke* was first introduced in Japan, *kami* and *hotoke* are both perceived as something superhuman, divine and sacred. However, after *Shinbutsu Bunri*, general polytheistic *kami* had to exclude Buddhist concepts. This separation of *hotoke* from *kami* also caused difficulty in using *hotoke* to express something superhuman in general. This account for the scarcity of newly invented *hotoke* expressions seems feasible because in the expressions in (1-3) *kami* does not simply denote Shintō *kami*, but generally speaking, an abstract superhuman entity.

There is also one more interesting point. After separating from the general *kami* notion, Buddhist *hotoke* got a distinctive image as belonging to a separate individual religion. It seems to be a natural conclusion that Buddhist *hotoke* have lost the rich connotations shared with the general notion of *kami*, and that a narrowing of the meaning has occurred as Tamon (2014) suggests. Let us look at further examples below.

- (14) *Kamisama, dōka negai o kite kudasai.*

神様、どうか願いを聞いてください。

- (15) *Hotokesama, dōka negai o kite kudasai.*

仏様、どうか願いを聞いてください。

While (14) communicates almost the same meaning as (11), (15) does not. In addition, the speaker of (14) does not have to be a religious person. However, (15) denotes a specific Buddhist meaning; for example, the speaker of (15) can be regarded as an enthusiastic Buddhist believer.

Going back to Carston (2002) can give us the further point that this transition of the concept *kami* draws a parallel with the ad hoc concept construction illustrated in Figure 3. Below is the application of historical change of *kami* and *hotoke* concepts to Figure 2 and 3 originally proposed by Carston (2002).

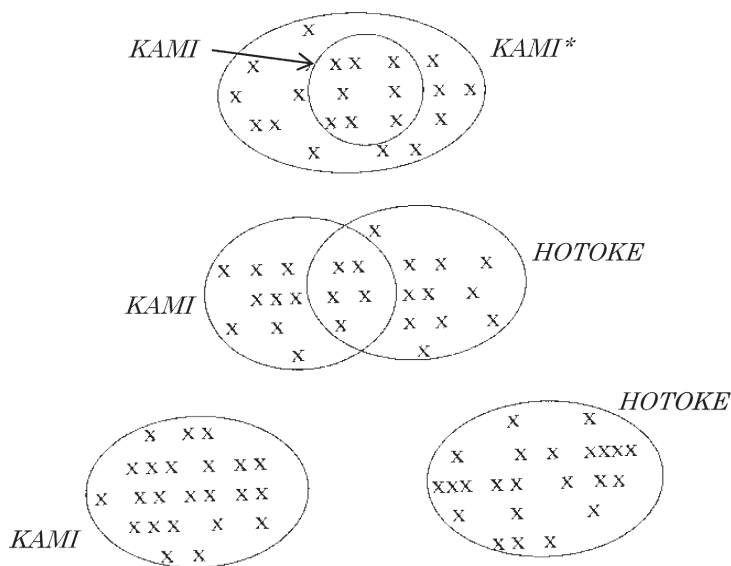


Figure 5 Transition of *Kami* and *Hotoke* Concepts

As mentioned in 3.1, three types of ad hoc concept construction represent not only the cases of immediate ad hoc constructed lexical concept, but also those of chronological or etymological change of the word meaning. During the era of *Shinbutsushūgō*, *kami* contained *hotoke* as *bushin*, one

of many gods, but the two concepts have moved apart since *Shinbutsu hanbetu*. However, the concept of *kami* as *hotoke* still partly remains as the middle figure in Figure 5, leading to accept the use of *kami sama hotoke sama*, *kami to hotoke*, and *shinbutsu* to represent gods in general.

4. *Kami* as General Worship Objects

4.1. Is English “God” Japanese *Kami* or *Hotoke*?

When giving sincere prayers to gods, Japanese people often use the expression *kami sama hotoke sama* (Oh my goodness, lit. Oh my god and Buddha 神様仏様) as in (11). This expression can also be represented as “Oh my God” in English. The reason is that the translation for the Christian God is *kami* 神, which is exactly the same expression as Shintō *kami*. In addition, Christian churches or buildings of other religions are often translated as *jiin* 寺院, which also means Buddhist temples in Japanese. Christian priests are sometimes called *bōzu* 坊主, the same expression used in (6). This intertwined relationship among the three religions sheds further light on the suggestion that *kami* and *hotoke* were once interchangeable concepts.

As for the relationship between Shintō *kami* and the Christian *kami*, the Japanese version of the Christian God, Jin (2015) points out that there are large gaps between God and its translated expression *kami*. While the God in Christianity is an absolute being, Japanese *kami* contains anything from good to bad beyond human knowledge. Although there seems to be a distinct difference between the two, *kami* as a translation for the Christian God became largely accepted. Jin (2015) explains this terminology as below.

Kami as the translated expression for the Christian God became accepted not only because it could be used to represent any gods in any religions, but also because Japanese Christians, or the recipients, had made tremendous efforts to clearly understand the Christian God Himself. (Jin 2015, 51–52)

Therefore, the expression *kami* got an additional meaning when the Christian God was included as a part of its connotation.

As mentioned above, Japanese *kami* can be used to describe something superhuman in general. It contains Shintō *kami*, Buddhist *hotoke*, and also the Christian God. So *kamitaiō* 神対応 as illustrated in (2) and (4) has broader meaning than *hotoketaiō* 仏対応 in (4). There are also other interesting aspects of *kami* and *hotoke*.

- (16) ? *Hotoke sama kami sama dōka negai o kanaete kudasai.*
? 仏様神様、どうか願いをかなえてください。
(17) ? *Kono yononaka, hotoke mo kami mo nai.*
? この世の中、仏も神もない。
(18) ? *Kareno buji o busshin ni inotta.*
? 彼の無事を仏神に祈った。

If *kami* and *hotoke* communicate completely separated notions for present-day Japanese, why do expressions in (16-8) sound unnatural?⁽¹²⁾ Should there be no problem whether speakers say “神様仏様 (*kami sama hotoke sama*)” or “仏様神様 (*hotoke sama kami sama*)” when offering a sincere prayer?

The fact that *kami* and *hotoke* cannot be exchanged in conventional use implies that *kami* and *hotoke* concepts have not been completely divided yet. As in (14), *kami* can be used without *hotoke*, while *hotoke* cannot be used without *kami* to express general gods. This is because *hotoke* is added after *kami* to stress the sincerity or meaning of gods themselves. In this sense, *hotoke* has been used to repeat the same content of being superhuman, that is, *kami*.

Another possible reason is the synecdocheal structure of compounds. According to Namiki (2009), in some English compounds, preceding elements are narrowed by the following elements, that is, the first elements show the whole and the second are parts of them. For example, “door-knob,” “fingertip,” and “tableleg” (Namiki 2009: 35). This can be applied to Japanese compounds such as *gyūniku* 牛肉, literally cow meat,

meshitsubu 飯粒, a boiled rice grain, *seiriseiton* 整理整頓, cleaning and organizing, and so on. Further, this word formation can give an account for the synecdochal relationship between *kami* and *hotoke* as Kobayashi (2015) mentioned. It is possible that *kami sama hotoke sama* implies that the latter *hotoke* concept is included in the former general concept *kami*.

4.2. Contradictory Dichotomous Views of *Kami* and *Hotoke*

Instead of saying “Oh my God!” Japanese speakers do not say “Oh my Buddha!” As many examples in this article show, the Buddha or *hotoke* does not always refer to gods in general. This is the reason why examples (15–18) sound distinctive or metaphoric. However, they also prove inconvertibility of these expressions. This also shows that *kami* and *hotoke* have not been completely divided in Japanese mindsets. Even after the Meiji Restoration, it is often said that people kept worshipping both *kami* and *hotoke*. It is not unnatural that many new words are made from the *kami* concept because it still contains gods in general including the Christian *kami* and Buddhist *hotoke*. Below is the figure that represents the ad hoc constructed concepts of Shintō *kami*, Buddhist *hotoke*, and the Christian *kami* and their co-relationship in Japanese language.

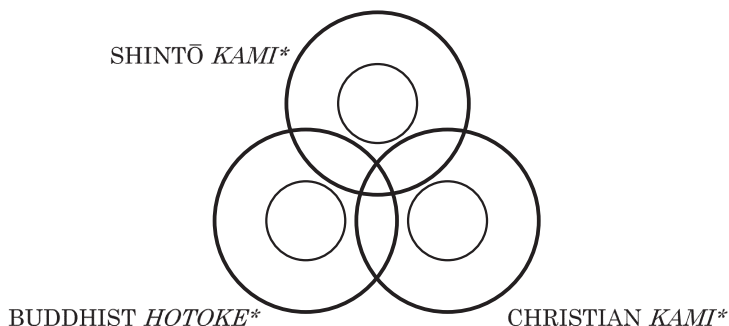


Figure 6 Representations of Superhuman Beings in Japanese Language

These three circles of concepts of superhuman representation are connected by their extended, so to say, ad hoc broadened concepts. As

shown in examples (13), Shintō *kami* and Buddhist *hotoke* are largely expressed as *kami* or *shinbutsu* 神仏 in Japanese. Shintō *kami* and the Christian *kami* are overlapped in terms of the coincidence between Shintō *kami* and the translated word *kami* of the Christian God. As mentioned, Buddhist *hotoke* and the Christian *kami* are also closely related by the expressions *jūin* and *bōzu*, the originally Buddhist terms, which are applied to Christian churches and priests. The center of these three circles, the overlapped area, has the richest meaning of *kami* in Japanese that includes all three and makes it possible to create new metaphorical expressions with *kami* terms in (1-4). As above, while these three concepts of superhuman beings exist as an individual entity respectively, they share the same sphere as their extended lexical concepts.

This inclusive and interchangeable relationship among *kami*, Buddha, and God also shows high receptibility of Japanese mindset toward the objects of worship. As Yamaori (1983) indicates, “relationships between *kami* and *hotoke* in Japanese mindset clearly represented in a distinctive way how Japanese people respond to foreign cultures and religions” (Yamaori 1983, 205).

The excerpt below shows how Japanese people have accepted them.

In Europe, Christianity absorbed other religions into its closed system, while in Japan, based on the coexistence of both Buddhism and Shintōism, conflicting but cooperating relationships with each other were established, combining these two into an open system.

(Yoshie 1996, 213)

In spite of this tolerance toward the unknown or newly introduced concepts, some other researchers point out that it makes it difficult for Japanese people to establish a religious identity.

Deeply embedded worship toward a unified object of gods and *hotoke* was denied by the Meiji Restoration. Thus Japanese people seemed to give up their traditional worship of gods, but they didn't. It is

because everyone needs an object on which they depend.

(Yura 2016, 196)

Japanese people recognize themselves as non-religious because they have already engaged in many religions at once. This leads to symptoms so called religious complex, a kind of after effect of compulsory *Shinbutsu Bunri*. (Shimada 2011, 203)

In addition to the polytheistic nature of Japanese religion, decreasing the awareness of sacred prayer objects, it became easier for Japanese speakers to confuse or combine the concept of gods. However, as Shintō was made to identify itself in terms of difference from the newly coming Buddhism, all things can be recognized as an individual entity by virtue of relationships with others. Then, when they fail to find the objects against which they are contrasted, an identity crisis may occur. The recent use of *kami* as a newly invented word shows that the self-image of non-religious Japanese seeks a hideout in the expression *kami*, or gods.

So far, the coexistence of *kami* and *hotoke* was briefly observed. So now, the time has come to answer the question given in the first part of this article. “How could the contradictory distribution of *kami* and *hotoke* in present-day Japanese be accounted for?” Below are three possible answers to this question.

- (19) a. Due to *Shinbutsu bunri rei*, *kami* and *hotoke* were clearly divided, or rather, Buddhist *hotoke* concept was excluded from the concept of *kami*, or superhuman beings in general. For this reason, the word *hotoke* cannot be used as a superhuman praying object in general. On the other hand, the *kami* notion has continued to signify superhuman beings in general.
- b. Paradoxically, the *kami* concept still includes the *hotoke* concept in part. This comprehensiveness of the *kami* concept creates confusion, that generates religious complex among Japanese speakers.

- c. To hide this contradictory aspect of Japanese worship, the use of *kami* as a general concept for the object of worship can be useful. If people only pray to *kami*, they can make others believe that they are religious, faithful and even trustworthy.

Japanese people enjoy religious figures by applying them to their daily lives. Sometimes they are the object of prayer, and sometimes they give wisdom about living. On the other hand, people love them, respect them, and even fear them. This multi-religious mindset of Japanese people creates a distinctive attitude toward the creation of buzzwords introduced at the beginning of this article.

5. Conclusion: Dynamics of *Kami* and *Hotoke* Concepts

According to Chiba (2013), there are two possible etymologies for the English word “religion.” One is from the combination of Latin *re* (again) and *leg* (observation), and the other is from the *re* (again) and *lig* (union). The latter connotes the reunion of God and humanity in Christianity. Thus, the term “religion” is deeply connected to Christianity (Chiba 2013, 36). And interestingly, *Shūkyō* (religion, 宗教), Japanese translation of religion, means Buddhist teachings at first although it means religion in general now.⁽¹³⁾ If this is the case, there had been no notion of religion before Buddhism was introduced in Japan.

The encounter with Buddhism brought an awareness of difference. And this difference created conflict, but in the end, there came a time of compromise and unity in the form of *Shinbutsu Shūgō*, the mixed form of worship of Shintō *kami* and Buddhist *hotoke*. After *Shinbutsu Bunri* during the Meiji Restoration period, the two main religions of Japan were forced to be divided and kept separated. As mentioned in this article, *kami* and *hotoke* expressions in present-day Japanese tell us the history of acceptance, and then exclusion of Buddhism from the general notion of Japanese *kami*. Even if *hotoke* are separated from *kami* concept, *hotoke* expressions live on in the Japanese language as dead metaphors.

This is because multi-religious and polytheistic Japanese speakers believe in and accept supernatural things all around them. New and popular words like *kamitteru* 神ってる may disappear within a year or so. That is the way of buzzwords. However, these short-lived words can be a key to open the door to the world of deep, wide, and responsive mindsets of Japanese people.

Notes

- (1) *Yū-kyan Shingo Ryūkōgo Taishō* ユーキャン新語・流行語大賞, U-Can Japan New Words and Buzzwords Awards.
- (2) Ogawa (2017) introduces views by three experts on *kami* expressions. According to religious sociologist Tomio Tani, the ambiguous border between sacred and profane creates these new words. Bible scholar Hiroya Katsumura points out that these expressions do not have religious connotations at all. From Shintōistic point of view, Ikuro Hioka says originally Japanese people felt close to gods so these new *kami* expressions can be interpreted as an evidence of familiarity with gods coming back to people's mind. In the same article, Ogawa (2017) defines the examples which contain *kami* expressions as *kami furēzu* (phrases with the word *kami* 神フレーズ). However, *kami furēzu* is usually used to describe good or clever expressions. For this, this paper does not follow this terminology.
- (3) All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
- (4) *Gokitō* (a prayer ご祈禱) sometimes means the prayer at either Shintō shrines or Buddhist temples. Although it is also a kind of dead metaphor, this author seems to use this term as a prayer not in general, but in Shintō.
- (5) Yamaguchi (1989) points out that *hōhokekyō* as a kind of *kikinashi* for Japanese Bush Warbler appeared in the Edo period (Yamaguchi 1989, 46).
- (6) Higashimori (2005), the first systematic study on Buddhist terms from a cognitive pragmatic point of view, points out the fact that fewer dead metaphors with Buddhist origin are constructed by concept narrowings compared to broadenings (Higashimori 2005, 10-11).
- (7) Kageyama (1999) gives an example of *Nichiyōdaiku* (Do-it-yourselfer, literally Sunday carpenter 日曜大工) constructed by *Nichiyō* (Sunday 日曜), and *daiku* (carpenter 大工). When the two parts are combined into a compound, it means doing carpentry to kill time or DIY in general. The original meanings of each word have disappeared (Kageyama 1999, 57).
- (8) Wilson & Carston (2007) proposes the possibility of a systematic account for polysemy by lexical pragmatics: “the pragmatic process of concept construction becomes progressively more routinized, and may ultimately

spread through a speech community and stabilize as an extra lexical sense” (Wilson & Carston 2007, 238).

- (9) Concerning Buddhist terms, Yamada(1978) proposes three reasons for the complexity of Buddhist term origins. Firstly, there are some expressions which originated from transcribed sounds from Sanskrit into Chinese letters, like *danna* (husband, 旦那). Second is the transliteration in Chinese letters, which causes two patterns to express a single notion; for example, both *syari* 舍利 and *ikotu* 遺骨 refer to bones. Finally, terms which originally do not have Buddhist connotations can be interpreted in terms of Buddhism and included as Buddhist terms such as *Ennichi* (a fair, 縁日).
- (10) According to Yoshie (1996), it is said that Japanese people are non-religious in that no religion deeply relates to our emotional problems beyond a conventionalized ceremony level (Yoshie 1996, 7), which Ama (1996) calls *Shizenshūkyō* 自然宗教, that is, spontaneous, unconscious, and indefinable religious attitudes (Ama 1996, 11).
- (11) Shintō gods were thought to be embodied in Buddhist *hotoke*: “By this theory, the Buddhist world finally and decidedly succeeded in showing logical reasons to both royal and temporal world for the superiority of Buddha over the world of Shintō gods” (Yoshie 1996, 169).
- (12) Once “仏神” (busshin, literally Buddha and *kami*) was used to express “神仏”(Shinbutu, literally *kami* and Buddha): “The expression ‘仏神’ (busshin) gradually shifts to ‘神仏’ (*Shinbutsu*) in dynastic styled literature just as ‘寺社’ to ‘社寺’ (*shaji*). Then their status was turned around; gods became superordinate while *hotoke* subordinate” (Yura 2016, 165).
- (13) Chiba (2013) points out *Syūkyō* 宗教 is the translated word of *siddhānta* in Sanskrit and originally means Buddhist teachings (Chiba 2013, 33). On the other hand, Ama (1996) indicates the fact that it was coined after the Meiji Restoration under the necessity of a comprehensive term for all religions (Ama 1996, 74-75). In any case, the Japanese word *shūkyō* was born out of the antagonism among three religions.

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