

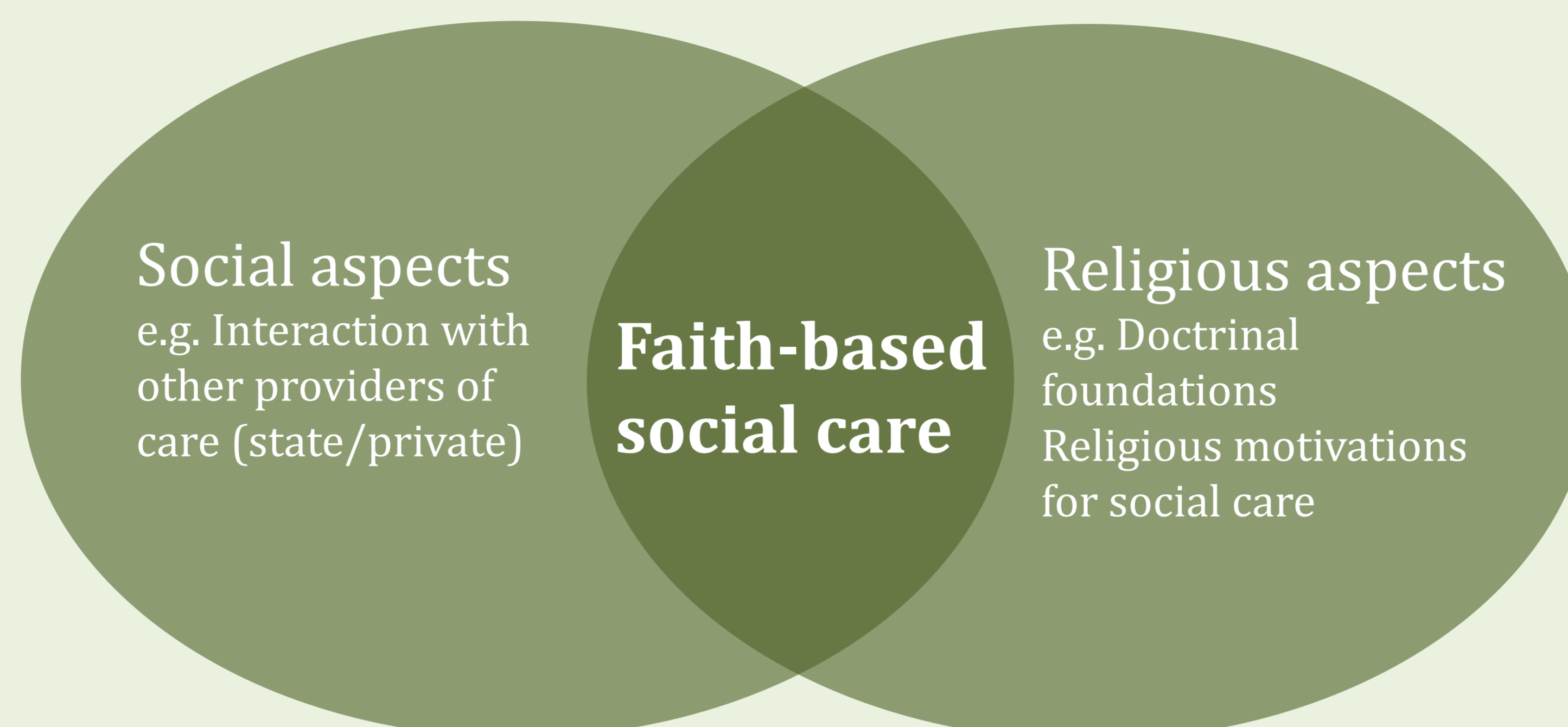
# New Religions and Social Care in Contemporary Japan

## Risshō Kōseikai as a case-study

### Research Questions and Methodological Approach

#### New Religions

The category of new religious movements (*shinshūkyō*) refer to religious organisations developed in Japan since mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. These movement have been object of many controversies since their rise, and their relationship with Japanese society became especially problematic since Aum Shinrikyō (movement founded in the 1980) released sarin gas in Tokyo underground, killing 13 people and injuring hundreds.

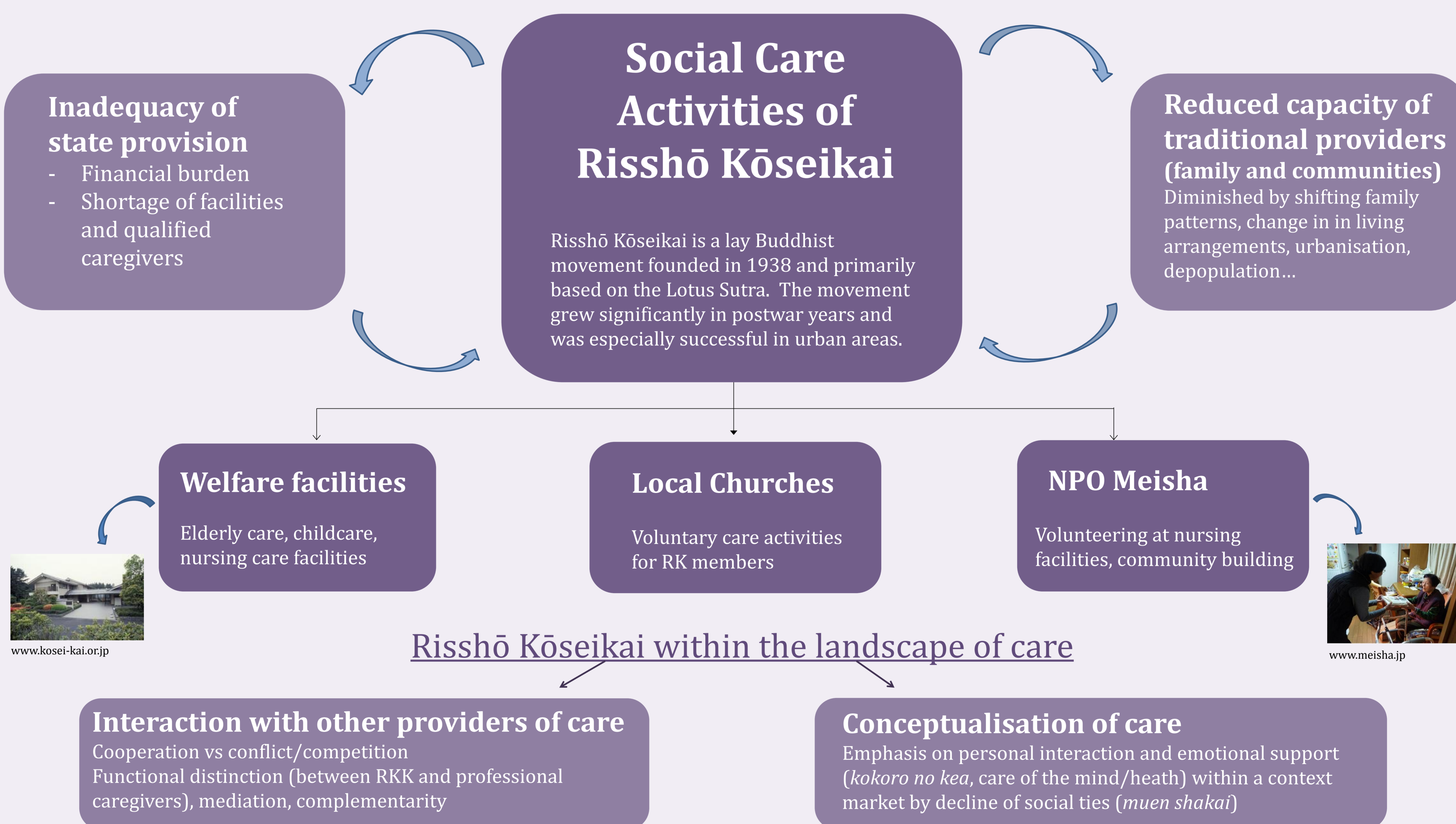


#### Research questions

- What are the social care activities promoted by RKK?
- How are these activities positioned within the broader framework of social care in Japan?
- What is the meaning attributed to care activities by members?

Methods: participant observation, in-depth interviews, archival research

### Content and Current State of Research



### Hypothesis and Future Directions

#### Care as a space of interaction?

Care as means to reinforce personal ties among members and reach out to the surrounding society beyond a strictly religious framework.  
→ New Religions as alternative communities or mediating structures

#### Religion as spiritual care?

Discourses and practices of care may serve to rehabilitate the public image of religion and renegotiate its social significance as “spiritual care”, as a form of support that cannot be effectively provided by other agencies.

#### Social Care between Religion and the Secular

Discourses and practices of care in RKK seems to reproduce patterns of conventional/lay provision of care. What are (if any) the distinctive religious features of RKK-sponsored care?

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I completed my BA and MA degrees respectively at “La Sapienza” University of Rome and “L’Orientale” University of Naples. I am currently funded by the AHRC North West Consortium Doctoral Training Partnership and the School of Arts Languages and Cultures at the University of Manchester. I am primarily interested in the social dimension of new religious movements in contemporary Japan.

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