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The Politics of Affect in the Era of the Ban: The Tokugawa Shogunate's "Fear–Pity–Humiliation" Strategy and the Emotional Resistance of Catholic Communities, 1614–1873

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Abstract: This paper examines the emotional politics employed by the Tokugawa shogunate during the period of Christian suppression in early modern Japan (1614–1873), analyzing how state-sponsored strategies of fear, pity, and shame were systematically deployed to dismantle Catholic networks and enforce religious conformity. Rather than viewing persecution solely as a legal or military campaign, this study situates it within the framework of affective governance, wherein emotional experiences were deliberately orchestrated through ritualized practices such as the fumie (image trampling) and institutional mechanisms like the terauke (temple registration) system. The fumie ceremony, widely implemented at ports and village checkpoints, functioned not only as a tool of identification but also as a performative act of public humiliation, designed to induce shame and sever individuals' psychological attachment to Christianity. Concurrently, the terauke system embedded religious surveillance within bureaucratic and familial structures, compelling individuals to publicly renounce their faith under threat of social exclusion, thereby producing internalized guilt and spiritual alienation. State-organized executions, particularly high-profile martyrdoms such as the Great Nagasaki Martyrdom of 1628, were staged as spectacles intended to instill terror while simultaneously evoking pity—emotions that, paradoxically, were reinterpreted by onlookers and clandestine believers as signs of spiritual heroism and divine grace. Far from passively accepting these imposed affective regimes, underground Christian communities engaged in complex processes of emotional resistance, transforming state-inflicted suffering into sacred endurance and communal solidarity. Through oral transmission of prayers, domestic rituals, and gendered practices of maternal devotion, hidden Christians preserved an affective continuity of faith across generations. Women, in particular, emerged as crucial agents of emotional resilience, maintaining devotional life within private spheres. By analyzing the dialectics between institutionalized emotional

control and subaltern affective agency, this study demonstrates that the Tokugawa regime's triad of fear, pity, and shame achieved partial compliance but inadvertently fostered counter-emotions that sustained Catholic identity in covert forms. This research contributes to global histories of emotion and religious persecution by illustrating how premodern states instrumentalized affect as a technology of power, while subordinate groups reclaimed emotional experience as a site of resistance.

Keywords: Tokugawa shogunate; Japanese history; fumie; history of emotions; terauke system; religious persecution; emotional resistance; affective governance

1. Introduction

1.1. Historical Context of Christian Suppression in Tokugawa Japan

1.1.1. The Arrival and Expansion of Catholicism in Early Modern Japan

The arrival and expansion of Catholicism in early modern Japan marked a transformative period in the religious and cultural history of the archipelago, beginning with the landing of Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier in 1549. This initial contact initiated what scholars have termed the "Christian century" (1549–1639), a period characterized by both fervent evangelization and complex socio-political negotiation between foreign missionaries and local power structures[1]. The propagation of Catholic doctrine was not merely a spiritual endeavor but also an architectural and institutional project aimed at establishing a visible ecclesiastical presence within a culturally distinct society. Missionaries faced significant challenges in constructing churches that conformed to European liturgical norms while simultaneously adapting to vernacular Japanese building practices, materials, and spatial aesthetics[1]. These architectural negotiations were not peripheral but central to the missionaries' efforts to visualize and institutionalize a distinct Catholic identity amidst a predominantly Buddhist and Shinto milieu.

Despite the absence of surviving physical structures due to the systematic destruction of Christian edifices following the Tokugawa shogunate's proscription of Christianity in 1614, historical documentation—particularly letters, reports from the Society of Jesus, and travelogues—provides critical insight into the material and symbolic dimensions of missionary architecture[1]. Churches, even when constructed using traditional Japanese carpentry techniques and layouts, were often reoriented to align with Christian cosmology, incorporating altars, cruciform arrangements, and sacred imagery to demarcate sacred space according to Catholic theology. Such spatial strategies served both devotional and didactic functions, reinforcing doctrinal instruction and communal identity among converts.

The growth of Catholic communities across Kyushu and parts of western Honshu was facilitated not only by preaching but also through the integration of religious practice into daily life, echoing broader patterns observed in other cross-cultural religious movements. While the North African Manichaean communities provided Augustine with a spiritual and intellectual framework through which he later reinterpreted Christian truth, so too did the Japanese Christian *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) develop resilient forms of clandestine worship after the ban[2]. However, unlike Augustine's eventual rejection of Manichaeism in favor of Catholic orthodoxy[2], Japanese converts were compelled to preserve their faith in secrecy, often blending Catholic rituals with indigenous religious expressions to evade detection.

The institutional mechanisms employed by the Tokugawa regime—most notably the *fumie* (image-trampling) ritual and the temple registration (*terauke*) system—were designed

not only to suppress religious heterodoxy but also to regulate affective loyalties through public performances of apostasy. These practices targeted the emotional core of religious adherence, aiming to induce fear, shame, and ultimately internalized compliance. Nevertheless, the persistence of underground Christian networks suggests a profound emotional resistance, wherein collective memory, ritual continuity, and embodied faith sustained religious identity across generations despite systemic repression.

1.1.2. The Edict of Expulsion and the Onset of Persecution (1614)

The Edict of Expulsion issued by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1614 marked a pivotal moment in the history of Christianity in Japan, initiating an era of systematic suppression that would persist for over two and a half centuries. This decree, formally known as the *Bateren Tsuiho Rei*, not only mandated the expulsion of foreign missionaries but also laid the institutional groundwork for the criminalization of Christian belief and practice among Japanese converts [1]. The edict was not merely a political or religious measure; rather, it functioned as a calculated emotional technology designed to instill fear, enforce conformity, and dismantle collective identity within nascent Catholic communities. By examining the architectural erasure of Christian spaces and the symbolic violence embedded in early enforcement mechanisms, one can discern how the shogunate weaponized spatial and corporeal control to suppress heterodox belief systems.

Prior to the 1614 edict, Catholic missionaries had attempted to construct ecclesiastical buildings that balanced indigenous architectural norms with Counter-Reformation ideals of liturgical visibility and doctrinal authority [1]. However, the near-total destruction of these structures—ranging from modest chapels to larger mission complexes—symbolized more than physical eradication; it represented an ontological negation of Christian communal existence. The absence of consecrated space disrupted ritual continuity, severed inter-village networks of 信徒 (fudan, believers), and intensified the psychological burden of clandestine worship. As documented in missionary correspondence, the inability to gather publicly for sacraments such as baptism or Eucharist led to profound spiritual desolation, exacerbating the emotional toll of persecution[1].

Simultaneously, the shogunate's deployment of coercive rituals like *fumie*—the act of trampling on Christian images—introduced a performative dimension to state surveillance, transforming the body into a site of ideological contestation. These acts were not isolated incidents but part of a broader affective regime aimed at producing shame, doubt, and internal division within Christian enclaves. Drawing parallels with later colonial contexts where religious presence was interpreted through a geopolitical lens, the Tokugawa authorities framed Catholicism not as a neutral spiritual pursuit but as an invasive force threatening the cosmological order of *bakuhan taisei* (shogun-domain system)[3]. Much like the perception of missionaries in Qing China during the 19th century, who were increasingly viewed as agents of Western imperialism despite their pastoral intentions[3], Japanese Christians were constructed as potential traitors whose loyalty lay beyond the realm of the *Tenno* and *daimyo*.

This conflation of faith with sedition enabled the state to justify escalating measures, including public executions and familial denunciations, under the guise of maintaining social harmony (*wa*). The emotional landscape thus became a contested terrain: while the regime sought to cultivate fear and compliance, underground Christian communities developed counter-emotive practices—such as secret prayer gatherings (*kakure kirishitan*) and mnemonic devotions—to sustain hope and solidarity. In this light, the 1614 edict did not merely initiate legal persecution; it inaugurated a protracted struggle over the governance of feeling itself.

1.2. Theoretical Framework: Emotion as Political Instrument

The interplay between emotion and governance in early modern Japan, particularly under the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868), reveals a sophisticated deployment of affective strategies aimed at consolidating political authority and suppressing religious dissent. Central to this mechanism was the state's instrumentalization of fear, pity, and shame—emotions not merely as byproducts of policy but as calculated instruments of social control within the broader framework of *fūzoku seido* (customary governance). The expulsion of Christianity in 1614 marked the beginning of a prolonged campaign against Catholic communities, culminating in the institutionalization of practices such as *fumie* (the trampling of Christian icons) and the *terauke seido* (temple certification system), both of which functioned as technologies of emotional regulation designed to elicit compliance through psychological subjugation [4]. These mechanisms were not solely punitive; rather, they operated within a complex emotional economy that sought to reconfigure subjectivity through the deliberate modulation of affective states.

Fear, as a governing principle, was systematically cultivated through public executions, surveillance networks, and the threat of familial punishment, instilling a pervasive sense of insecurity among hidden Christian (*kakure kirishitan*) communities. This aligns with anthropological observations on how religious migrants experience affective distress under conditions of displacement and marginalization, where emotional vulnerability becomes a site for both control and transformation[4]. Similarly, the Tokugawa regime exploited such vulnerabilities, transforming fear into a disciplinary force that permeated kinship networks and communal life. Yet, alongside fear, the state also mobilized pity—not as compassion, but as a performative gesture embedded in the ritual logic of repentance and redemption. Authorities occasionally offered leniency to those who recanted, framing apostasy as an act of mercy, thereby positioning the state as both judge and savior. This duality mirrors the affective therapeutics observed in Evangelical communities, where negative emotional states are reinterpreted through redemptive narratives to produce spiritual resilience[4].

Shame, meanwhile, functioned as a deeply internalized sanction, reinforced through communal exposure and religious humiliation. The *fumie* ceremony, requiring individuals to desecrate sacred images, induced moral injury by forcing believers to violate core commitments, thus producing a crisis of selfhood. This process resonates with findings on emotional regulation in religious contexts, where cognitive change—such as reappraisal through scriptural interpretation—and response modulation become essential for psychological survival[5]. In enduring persecution, many crypto-Christians engaged in analogous strategies, reframing suffering as sanctification and maintaining devotional practices in secrecy. Their resistance was not merely doctrinal but affective, constituting what might be termed an "emotional counter-public" that sustained collective identity against state-imposed erasures[4].

Ultimately, the longevity of religious traditions under duress underscores the centrality of subjective emotional experiences in sustaining belief systems, even when structurally suppressed[4]. The Tokugawa emotional regime, while coercive, inadvertently catalyzed resilient forms of spiritual agency, revealing the limits of top-down affective governance.

1.3. Literature Review

Existing scholarship on the suppression of Christianity in Tokugawa Japan and the interplay of emotion, power, and religion provides a foundational framework for this study, while also revealing gaps that the present research seeks to address.

Regarding the historical context of Catholicism in early modern Japan, Arimura (2014) [1] examines the architectural adaptation and identity construction of Catholic

churches,highlighting how missionary buildings balanced European liturgical norms with Japanese cultural practices—an aspect crucial to understanding the material and symbolic dimensions of early Christian presence before the 1614 ban. BeDuhn (2013)[2] draws parallels between Augustine's theological transition and the experiences of Japanese hidden Christians, noting the latter's unique challenge of preserving faith in secrecy rather than rejecting heterodoxy. MungeLLO and LAAMANN (2017)[3] contextualize Tokugawa's perception of Catholicism within broader East Asian geopolitics, comparing it to Qing China's framing of missionaries as agents of imperialism, which illuminates the shogunate's justification for religious suppression as a defense of political order.

In the theoretical realm of emotion and governance, Smith (2007)[4] develops a phenomenological account of Christianity's endurance rooted in emotional experiences, emphasizing how affect sustains religious commitment even under duress—providing a key lens for analyzing the emotional resilience of hidden Christian communities. Tuapattinaja et al. (2018) [5] explore emotion regulation strategies among Christian women facing trauma, particularly cognitive reappraisal and response modulation, which offers insights into how Japanese Christian adherents navigated shame and suffering imposed by state rituals like fumie. Takikawa and Sakamoto (2020)[6] compare moral-emotional discourses in U.S. and Japanese legislatures, revealing Tokugawa's emphasis on communal harmony (wa) and hierarchical duty (giri) as distinctive emotional anchors of its governance, differing from Western liberal-conservative frameworks.

Studies on religious emotion and resistance further inform this research. Voss Robertsa (2012)[7]analyzes the aesthetic and spiritual dimensions of religious emotion in Indian Christianity, introducing the concept of "rasa" that serves as a heuristic for understanding how Japanese hidden Christians reinterpreted state-imposed shame as sacred suffering. Szabo (2022)[8] examines security challenges to Christian sacred sites, highlighting the role of spatial control in religious suppression—complementing analyses of the Tokugawa's destruction of churches and institutionalization of temple registration. Vishkin et al. (2019)[9] link religiosity, emotion regulation, and well-being, shedding light on how underground Christian communities in Japan maintained spiritual continuity through ritual and communal support.

Olajimbiti (2015)[10] explores the language of emotion in Christian liturgical prayers, illustrating how symbolic discourse shapes affective responses—relevant to understanding the mnemonic devotions and oral traditions of hidden Christians. Bard (2019)[11] studies affective therapeutics among migrant Evangelical communities, showing how religious groups reconfigure emotional states to cope with marginalization—a parallel to the counter-affective practices of Japanese kakure kirishitan. Simister and Kowalewska (2016)[12] discuss gendered dimensions of religious oppression, noting how Catholic doctrines can limit women's exit from abusive situations, which resonates with the role of women as key agents of emotional resilience in Tokugawa's underground Christian networks. Wang (2023)[13] develops the concept of the "anxiety machine" in rural affective politics, offering a framework to analyze how the Tokugawa shogunate institutionalized fear through surveillance and ritualized punishment. Finally, Dosena (2012)[14] reflects on maintaining ecclesial identity in Christian higher education, underscoring the significance of collective memory and ritual in preserving religious identity—critical for understanding how hidden Christians sustained their faith across generations without formal institutional support.

While existing literature covers historical context, emotion regulation, and religious resistance, few studies systematically examine the Tokugawa shogunate's deliberate deployment of a tripartite emotional strategy (fear–pity–shame) as a cohesive technology of governance, nor do they fully explore the dialectical relationship between this state-imposed affective regime and the subaltern emotional agency of Catholic communities. This research

addresses these gaps by integrating insights from emotion history, religious studies, and political anthropology to analyze how Tokugawa's affective governance both constrained and catalyzed resistant forms of Christian identity.

1.4. Definition of Core Concepts: Affective Governance, Emotional Resistance, and Affective Technologies in the Context of This Study

1.4.1. Affective Governance

In this study, "affective governance" specifically denotes a governance paradigm adopted by the Tokugawa shogunate during the era of Christian suppression (1614–1873), wherein emotion was instrumentalized as a technology of power. Through institutional mechanisms and ritualized practices, the shogunate systematically regulated the emotional experiences of social members to enforce religious conformity and sustain political order. Distinct from conventional administrative control, its defining feature lies in treating emotion as both the target and medium of governance: rather than relying solely on legal sanctions or military coercion, it reshaped individuals' psychological perceptions and value judgments by deliberately evoking emotions such as fear, directing pity, and imposing shame, thereby internalizing obedience to shogunal rule as an emotional instinct.

Within the specific context of Tokugawa Japan, this governance model exhibited distinct indigenous characteristics: first, it was deeply embedded in the political framework of the "bakuhan taisei" (shogun-domain system), with safeguarding "wa" (communal harmony) and "giri" (hierarchical duty) as the core objectives of affective governance. Catholicism was framed as "kegare" (spiritual pollution) that undermined communal cohesion and hierarchical order; second, leveraging Japan's unique social organizational structure, the "terauke seido" (temple registration system) integrated religious surveillance into familial and local administrative networks, permeating emotional discipline into the fabric of daily life. This formed a dual emotional control mechanism characterized by "top-down institutional constraints coupled with bottom-up communal oversight." Unlike modern Western affective governance models rooted in nation-state building, it prioritized dissolving individual religious sentiments through "communal emotional identification," embodying the "ethical-political integration" of affective governance under pre-modern East Asian authoritarian regimes.

1.4.2. Emotional Resistance

"Emotional resistance" refers to the implicit resistance and agentive responses undertaken by underground Catholic communities (kakure kirishitan) during the Tokugawa period against the state-imposed emotional order. Confronted with the oppression of the shogunate's affective governance, these communities engaged in reconstructing emotional cognition, upholding emotional bonds, and innovating emotional practices. Its core did not lie in open political rebellion, but in competing for the right to interpret meaning at the emotional level: reconfiguring negative emotions deliberately induced by the shogunate (e.g., shame, fear) with sacred and just connotations to sustain the group's religious identity and spiritual solidarity.

In the specific context of Tokugawa Japan, emotional resistance was marked by prominent traits of "secrecy" and "adaptability": constrained by the "sakoku" (closed-country policy) and harsh persecution, resistance could not be pursued through public religious rituals or collective actions. Instead, it relied on covert forms such as private domestic rituals, orally transmitted prayers and martyrdom narratives, and women-led emotional inheritance; simultaneously, to evade detection, resistance practices often integrated indigenous religious

elements with core Catholic doctrines, forming a distinctive "hybrid emotional expression." This not only preserved the emotional continuity of faith but also enabled adaptive survival under high-pressure conditions. Distinguished from more explicit emotional struggles in other historical contexts, this resistance model underscores the survival wisdom of vulnerable religious groups in "upholding faith through emotion and uniting emotion through faith" amid extreme suppression.

1.4.3. Affective Technologies

"Affective technologies" in this study encompasses a suite of institutionalized tools, ritualized processes, and symbolic instruments developed by the Tokugawa shogunate to implement affective governance. It specifically refers to technical mechanisms capable of precisely inducing, guiding, or manipulating specific emotional experiences to advance governance objectives. Its core function is to translate abstract affective governance goals into operable, repeatable, and monitorable practices, rendering emotional regulation a normalized and large-scale governance activity.

In the specific context of Tokugawa's Christian suppression, affective technologies manifested primarily in three forms: first, ritualized affective technologies, exemplified by "fumie" (image trampling). Through the public performance of compelling believers to trample on Christian icons, it generated intense shame and psychological dissonance, directly disrupting religious sentiments; second, institutionalized affective technologies, represented by the temple registration system. Via administrative procedures such as household registration binding and regular inspections, it converted religious loyalty into quantifiable "compliance certificates," triggering individual fear and anxiety through the threat of social exclusion; third, symbolic affective technologies, symbolized by public executions (notably iconic events like the Great Nagasaki Martyrdom of 1628). Punishments were constructed as "warning spectacles," achieving emotional deterrence and value indoctrination of the general public by amplifying a climate of terror and constructing the emotional narrative that "apostates receive mercy while steadfast believers face severe retribution." These technologies did not operate in isolation but collaborated to form a comprehensive emotional regulation system, reflecting the early exploration by pre-modern states of integrating emotional manipulation into their governance toolkits.

2. Mechanisms of Emotional Governance

2.1. The Ritual of Fumie: Enacting Shame and Public Compliance

The institutionalization of the *fumie* ceremony during the Tokugawa shogunate's suppression of Christianity represents a pivotal mechanism in the broader affective governance employed to dismantle Catholic networks and enforce ideological conformity between 1614 and 1873. Rooted in the political anxieties surrounding foreign influence and religious heterodoxy, the practice required individuals to step on images of Christ or the Virgin Mary as a public demonstration of apostasy, thereby transforming corporeal action into a litmus test of loyalty to the state [1]. This ritual was not merely a tool of surveillance but functioned as a performative act designed to induce psychological dissonance, exploiting emotions such as fear, shame, and moral conflict to erode communal solidarity within clandestine Christian communities.

Architectural suppression accompanied these bodily rituals; the eradication of missionary-built churches—structures that had previously served as spatial embodiments of Catholic identity—was central to the shogunate's strategy of cultural erasure[1]. With the destruction of ecclesiastical spaces, believers were deprived of physical loci for collective worship, intensifying their emotional isolation. Yet, even in absence, these lost architectures

remained symbolically potent, sustaining covert religious memory through oral transmission and domestic devotional practices. The interplay between spatial annihilation and embodied compliance thus reveals a dual strategy: one that sought both to eliminate visible markers of faith and to reconfigure subjectivity through repeated acts of humiliating performance.

Furthermore, the emotional labor demanded by the *fumie* can be analyzed through frameworks of affect regulation, where individuals navigated complex internal processes to reconcile outward compliance with inner conviction [5]. Drawing on cognitive reappraisal—a strategy observed in contemporary studies of forgiveness among Christian women enduring familial trauma—some believers may have reinterpreted their desecration of sacred images not as betrayal but as an act of endurance rooted in spiritual resilience [5]. In this light, the very mechanism intended to produce shame could be subverted into a site of quiet resistance, where emotional discipline enabled the preservation of faith under duress. Consequently, the *fumie* system, while effective in enforcing surface-level conformity, inadvertently illuminated the limits of state power over interior belief.

2.2. Temple Registration System (Terauke Seido): Institutionalizing Religious Conformity

2.2.1. Administrative Structure and Religious Surveillance

The administrative structure of the Tokugawa shogunate during the early modern period was meticulously designed to consolidate political authority and suppress religious heterodoxy, particularly in relation to the burgeoning presence of Christianity following the arrival of Jesuit missionaries in the mid-sixteenth century. Central to this governance framework was the implementation of systematic religious surveillance mechanisms, such as the *sōkai seido* (temple registration system) and the institutionalized practice of *fumie* (image trampling), both of which functioned not merely as tools of doctrinal enforcement but as affective technologies aimed at producing specific emotional responses among suspected Christian adherents[8]. These policies were embedded within a broader biopolitical apparatus that sought to regulate corporeal conduct and interior dispositions alike, thereby transforming religious identity into a governable domain through ritualized acts of public abjection.

The temple registration system, or *terauke seido*, required all households to affiliate with a certified Buddhist temple, which in turn issued official certificates confirming compliance—documents that were periodically inspected by local authorities. This bureaucratic sacramentalization of religious affiliation effectively erased the possibility of spiritual anonymity, rendering faith a matter of state record rather than personal conviction. Concurrently, the performance of *fumie*, typically conducted during annual inspections, compelled individuals to desecrate Christian icons as a performative test of loyalty to the regime. Such rituals were not only epistemic devices for identifying hidden believers but also theatrical enactments designed to instill fear (*kuyashisa*), induce moral shame (*hazukashisa*), and elicit pity (*aware*)—emotions strategically mobilized by the shogunate to dismantle communal solidarity within underground Christian networks[8].

These affective strategies intersected with spatial controls and information hierarchies characteristic of Edo-period governance, reflecting an early form of governmental rationality that anticipated later disciplinary regimes. By orchestrating collective rituals of humiliation and surveillance, the Tokugawa authorities reconfigured religious resistance into an emotionally charged field of power, where devotion was measured not solely by belief but by affective submission. Thus, the interplay between administrative rigor and emotional engineering underscores the centrality of affective politics in sustaining ideological hegemony under conditions of prolonged religious prohibition.

2.2.2. Emotional Dimensions of Coerced Affiliation

The emotional dimensions of coerced affiliation during the Tokugawa period (1614–1873) reveal a complex interplay between state-imposed religious conformity and the affective resistance of underground Christian communities, particularly within the framework of the *fumie* (trampling image) ritual and the temple registration (*terauke*) system. These mechanisms were not merely administrative tools but deeply affective technologies designed to elicit and manipulate emotions such as fear, pity, and shame in order to dismantle collective religious identity[9]. The shogunate's deployment of public *fumie* ceremonies functioned as performative acts of political theater, wherein individuals were compelled to demonstrate apostasy by trampling on Christian icons—a ritual saturated with symbolic violence intended to provoke internal dissonance and public humiliation. This institutionalized emotional regulation can be understood through the lens of cognitive reappraisal, a strategy whereby individuals reinterpret aversive stimuli to mitigate distress; however, in this context, the state sought to impose an externally dictated reappraisal, compelling subjects to reframe their devotion as betrayal[9].

Conversely, members of the *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) engaged in counter-emotive practices that subverted state intentions. Drawing parallels with contemporary studies on religious coping, these communities utilized scriptural study and communal prayer as forms of cognitive change and response modulation, sustaining spiritual continuity despite systemic persecution [5]. Their endurance reflects a form of emotion regulation not as suppression, but as transformative resilience—where suffering was reappraised through theological narratives of redemptive sacrifice[9]. The persistence of clandestine worship, often led by lay *mochidai* (female leaders), underscores how gendered religious roles facilitated emotional endurance within domestic spheres, where private rituals replaced public liturgy.

Thus, the emotional economy of religious suppression under the Tokugawa regime reveals a dialectic between institutional power and embodied resistance, wherein affect became both a target of control and a site of subversion.

2.3. Spectacles of Punishment: Cultivating Fear and Pity

2.3.1. Public Executions and Martyrdom Narratives

Public executions during the early modern period in Japan were not merely judicial acts but deeply ritualized performances designed to reinforce state authority and suppress religious dissent, particularly within the context of the Tokugawa shogunate's suppression of Christianity following the 1614 edict banning the faith. These spectacles functioned as a critical component of the regime's broader emotional governance strategy, deploying fear as a central mechanism to discipline both converts and potential sympathizers[10]. The public torture and execution of Christian adherents—often conducted through methods such as fumi-e (the forced trampling of Christian icons) and crucifixion—were calculated displays intended to elicit visceral emotional responses from onlookers, thereby internalizing state-sanctioned religious orthodoxy. Such rituals were instrumental in constructing an affective regime wherein the emotional triad of fear, pity, and shame became tools of political control, shaping individual and collective subjectivities in alignment with bakufu ideology.

The performative nature of these executions resonates with contemporary understandings of emotion management in religious contexts, where language and symbolic action are employed to manipulate affective states[10]. In this regard, the Tokugawa authorities, much like certain modern religious institutions analyzed in Nigerian charismatic Christianity, utilized embodied practices to provoke automatic emotional and behavioral responses from participants and spectators alike[10]. However, rather than inciting spiritual

fervor, the Japanese state aimed to extinguish it through coercive emotional conditioning. Martyrdom narratives that emerged from these persecutions, preserved in clandestine Christian writings and later compiled by European missionaries, reveal how persecuted communities reinterpreted state-inflicted suffering as redemptive sacrifice, thus subverting the intended emotional impact of public executions[4].

These counter-narratives illustrate how religious actors cognitively reframed trauma into spiritual empowerment, a phenomenon paralleling the subjective emotional experiences that sustain long-term religious commitment even under duress[4]. By transforming martyrdom into a site of resistance, Christian communities cultivated alternative emotional economies that challenged the hegemony of the shogunate's affective order. Consequently, public executions, while ostensibly serving as instruments of deterrence, inadvertently contributed to the endurance of underground Christian networks throughout the Edo period.

2.3.2. Dual Affective Responses and Subversive Interpretations

The emotional dynamics between the Tokugawa shogunate and Catholic communities during the period of religious suppression (1614–1873) reveal a complex interplay of affective governance and resistance, wherein state-imposed rituals such as *fumie* (image trampling) and the temple registration system (*terauke seido*) were not merely mechanisms of surveillance but also instruments of emotional regulation designed to instill fear, elicit pity, and enforce public shame[11]. The shogunate's deployment of what can be conceptualized as an "affective regime" relied on the systematic cultivation of negative emotional states—particularly fear of punishment and social ostracism, and the internalization of shame through compulsory acts of apostasy—aimed at dismantling collective religious identity. These emotionally charged practices functioned as technologies of power, reshaping subjectivity by compelling individuals to perform disbelief in ways that disrupted inner spiritual coherence[4]. Yet, within this coercive framework, Catholic communities developed dual affective responses: outward compliance accompanied by inward resistance, manifesting in subversive interpretations of mandated rituals. For instance, the act of trampling on Christian images was re-signified by some believers as a moment of martyrdom or ironic devotion, thereby transforming a gesture of humiliation into one of concealed piety. This counter-affective strategy illustrates how marginalized groups reappropriate dominant scripts to sustain communal belonging and spiritual continuity under duress[11]. Moreover, the persistence of *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) suggests that affective experiences—such as longing for spiritual authenticity, solidarity in secrecy, and moral resilience—played a constitutive role in sustaining faith beyond institutional structures[4]. Rather than viewing religious survival solely through institutional or doctrinal continuity, this perspective foregrounds the phenomenological dimension of belief, emphasizing how subjective emotional experiences become central to religious endurance. Thus, the historical trajectory of Christianity in early modern Japan cannot be fully understood without attending to the affective subtexts of both repression and resistance, which together shaped the longue durée of underground Christian practice.

3. Emotional Resistance and Subaltern Agency

3.1. Internalization and Reinterpretation of State-Imposed Emotions

3.1.1. Transforming Shame into Sacred Suffering

The transformation of shame into sacred suffering within the context of religious persecution represents a profound intersection of emotional regulation, communal identity, and theological reinterpretation. In early modern Japan, the Tokugawa shogunate's

prohibition of Christianity (1614–1873) institutionalized mechanisms such as *fumie* (image trampling) and the *terauke* system (temple certification) to enforce ideological conformity, thereby producing systemic emotional distress among hidden Christian communities[5]. These practices were not merely political tools but functioned as affective technologies designed to elicit fear, induce shame, and disrupt collective religious identity. Yet, rather than leading to complete spiritual capitulation, these emotionally charged rituals often catalyzed an internal reconfiguration of suffering as redemptive endurance. Drawing on contemporary theories of emotion, particularly the Indian Christian theological engagement with *rasa*—the aesthetic and spiritual "taste" of emotion—this process can be understood as a form of embodied emotional resistance[7]. The concept of *rasa*, while rooted in South Asian performative traditions, offers a transregional heuristic for analyzing how persecuted communities aesthetically and theologically refract dominant emotional scripts.

Within this framework, the experience of shame imposed by the state was not passively absorbed but actively transformed through cognitive reappraisal and devotional practice. As observed in studies of Christian women navigating marital violence, forgiveness processes involve recursive phases—uncovering, decision, work, and deepening—that rely heavily on cognitive change and response modulation strategies[5]. Analogously, Japanese *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians) engaged in a sustained emotional recalibration, interpreting forced apostasy and ritual humiliation as participation in Christ's passion. This sacralization of suffering parallels the Bharata Natyam Christian choreographies that rework classical *rasas* of love (*sringara*) and peace (*shanta*) into forms consonant with Christian soteriology[7]. Such performative and interior acts of re-signification enabled marginalized believers to sustain communal coherence despite centuries of surveillance and stigma. Thus, the affective regime of the Tokugawa state, intended to suppress heterodoxy, inadvertently fostered a clandestine emotional economy wherein shame was alchemized into sanctified endurance, preserving faith across generations through the quiet praxis of sacred suffering.

3.1.2. Fear as a Catalyst for Communal Solidarity

The emotional governance employed by the Tokugawa shogunate during the period of Christian prohibition (1614–1873) exemplifies a sophisticated political technology aimed at regulating collective affective life through the strategic manipulation of fear, pity, and shame. Central to this regime's biopolitical apparatus was the systematic deployment of *fumie*—the ritual act of stepping on Christian icons—as a corporeal test of loyalty, which functioned not merely as an instrument of surveillance but as a performative mechanism designed to elicit and manage emotions within the targeted religious communities[6]. Fear, in particular, was not simply an incidental byproduct of persecution but a calculated catalyst for communal solidarity among underground Christian groups. As state-imposed terror intensified through public executions, denunciations, and the integration of temple certification systems (*terauke seido*) into civil registration, the experience of shared vulnerability fostered affective bonds that transcended kinship and regional affiliations. These emergent forms of emotional cohesion were paradoxically nurtured by the very mechanisms intended to dismantle them, illustrating how state attempts to govern subjectivity can inadvertently generate resistant collectivities.

Drawing on recent theoretical advances in the geographies of anticipation, the shogunal regime can be understood as operating an "anxiety machine" that institutionalized future-oriented dread through ritualized practices and legal codifications[6]. The periodic enforcement of *fumie*, especially during times of perceived external threat, sustained a temporality of suspicion that disciplined populations across generations. Yet, within clandestine Christian networks, alternative emotional scripts emerged—narratives of martyrdom, divine protection, and spiritual endurance—that reinterpreted suffering as

redemptive rather than shameful. This counter-affective repertoire enabled believers to transform state-induced humiliation into a source of moral resilience, thereby subverting the intended psychological effects of punitive policies. The interplay between top-down emotional regulation and bottom-up affective resistance reveals the limits of sovereign power in fully controlling interiority, even under conditions of prolonged repression. Thus, the history of Japan's Christian *kakure kirishitan* offers a compelling case for rethinking the dynamics of emotion, power, and community formation in early modern Japan.

3.2. Affective Practices in Underground Christian Communities

The gendered dimensions of emotional resilience within religiously persecuted communities reveal complex intersections between doctrinal adherence, institutional constraints, and affective agency, particularly under conditions of prolonged state-sanctioned oppression. In the context of Tokugawa Japan's suppression of Christianity from 1614 to 1873, women within clandestine Catholic communities navigated a fraught emotional landscape shaped by the interplay of religious devotion, social surveillance, and bodily discipline enforced through mechanisms such as *fumie* (image trampling) and the temple registration (*terauke*) system. These institutions not only regulated orthodoxy but also inscribed hierarchical power relations onto the body and psyche, compelling individuals—especially women—to engage in intricate forms of emotional regulation to sustain faith amid systemic humiliation[5]. Drawing on contemporary psychological frameworks, it becomes evident that strategies such as cognitive reappraisal and response modulation were implicitly employed by Christian wives who, despite enduring spiritual and physical coercion, reinterpreted suffering through scriptural narratives of forgiveness and perseverance[5]. This internalization of redemptive suffering parallels broader patterns observed in marginalized religious groups where structural prohibitions—such as the Catholic Church's ban on divorce—limit exit options and intensify entrapment in oppressive environments[12].

Indeed, comparative studies indicate that Catholic women exhibit higher exposure to gender-based violence (GBV), partly attributable to ecclesiastical doctrines discouraging marital dissolution[12]. While this finding emerges from modern household surveys, its implications resonate historically with the experiences of Japanese Christian women during the *sakoku* (closed-country) era, wherein apostasy was demanded yet internal loyalty preserved through silent endurance. The absence of institutional escape routes amplified reliance on intra-psychic and communal coping mechanisms, transforming private acts of prayer, maternal duty, and ritual secrecy into forms of affective resistance. Emotional resilience, therefore, was not merely an individual psychological outcome but a collectively sustained practice embedded in gendered roles and religious identity. Through repeated cycles of concealment, repentance, and reaffirmation, these women enacted what might be understood as a subaltern emotional praxis—one that simultaneously accommodated and subverted the regime's fear-based governance. Thus, the emotional history of Tokugawa-era Christian communities underscores how gender inflects both the imposition of political control and the quiet tenacity of spiritual survival.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Reassessing the Tokugawa Religious Order through an Emotional Lens

The interplay between affective governance and collective resistance in early modern Japan reveals a complex dialectic wherein state-imposed emotional regimes sought to discipline religious subjects, while marginalized communities developed counter-affective practices to sustain their identity. Under the Tokugawa shogunate's proscription of Christianity from 1614 onward, institutional mechanisms such as *fumie* (image trampling)

and the *terauke* system (temple certification) were not merely administrative tools but central components of an embodied politics of emotion designed to produce fear, induce shame, and extract public performances of apostasy [1]. These rituals functioned as technologies of subjectification, compelling individuals to perform corporeal renunciations that visually affirmed state sovereignty over spiritual allegiance. The enforced trampling of Christian icons, for instance, was calibrated to provoke visceral disgust and psychological humiliation, thereby disrupting devotional attachments through sensory desecration[1].

Simultaneously, the destruction of Catholic architectural spaces—once material anchors of communal worship and identity during the so-called "Christian Century" (1549–1639)—necessitated new forms of invisible congregation[1]. With churches eradicated and missionaries expelled, clandestine believers cultivated interiorized spiritual geographies, transforming domestic and liminal spaces into sites of covert ritual practice. This spatial reconfiguration reflects what might be understood as an affective counter-topography, where suppressed communities preserved doctrinal continuity through mnemonic embodiment and emotional endurance[4]. The persistence of underground Christian networks (*kakure kirishitan*) suggests that affective experiences—such as hope, sorrow, and sacrificial love—functioned not only as personal devotional resources but also as structuring elements of collective resilience[4].

Moreover, the circulation of anticipatory anxieties surrounding religious contamination shaped policy imaginaries beyond Japan's borders, resonating with broader East Asian patterns of moral panic and cultural containment[13]. The shogunate's affective regime thus operated within a transregional epistemic field in which fears of foreign subversion justified coercive integration. Yet, by instrumentalizing emotions like fear and shame as instruments of control, the state inadvertently catalyzed resistant emotional economies grounded in solidarity, secrecy, and sacred memory. These dynamics illustrate how political power and religious survival are co-constituted through competing regimes of feeling, where emotion is neither epiphenomenal nor private, but a contested terrain of historical agency[13].

4.2. Implications for the History of Emotions and Religious Persecution

The interplay between emotion and political authority in early modern Japan offers a critical lens through which to examine the mechanisms of religious suppression and communal resistance, particularly within the context of the Tokugawa shogunate's campaign against Christianity from 1614 to 1873. This period, marked by the institutionalization of practices such as *fumie* (image trampling) and the *terauke* system (temple certification), exemplifies a sophisticated deployment of affective governance, wherein fear, pity, and shame were strategically mobilized to discipline Christian communities[6]. The regime's emotional repertoire was not merely repressive but performative, constructing a public sphere in which loyalty to the state was validated through embodied acts of humiliation and disavowal, thus transforming private belief into a spectacle of political compliance[6]. Such techniques resonate with broader theoretical discussions on the role of affect in sustaining ideological hegemony, where emotional regulation becomes a tool of biopolitical control[4].

Moreover, the emotional labor demanded of converts—forced to negotiate between apostasy and authenticity—parallels contemporary understandings of cognitive reappraisal as a mechanism of emotional endurance[6]. In this light, the persistence of underground Christian communities (*kakure kirishitan*) may be interpreted not only as an act of theological fidelity but also as an affective resistance, wherein religious identity was preserved through ritual reinterpretation and collective memory. The shogunate's reliance on anticipatory governance—projecting future threats of divine retribution or social ostracism—echoes what recent scholarship has termed the "anxiety machine," a dispositif in which future-oriented fears justify present-day surveillance and coercion[6]. This aligns with comparative studies of

moral-emotional discourse in political institutions, which reveal how emotional lexicons are embedded in legislative and bureaucratic practices to naturalize authority[6].

Furthermore, the transnational trajectory of Christian resilience invites reflection on the phenomenological dimensions of faith, where recurrent emotional experiences—such as guilt, hope, and devotion—serve as anchors of communal continuity across centuries[4]. While the Tokugawa case predates modern democratic deliberation, its emotional politics find echoes in contemporary debates over religious identity in secularized institutions, including universities navigating ecclesial and academic mandates[14]. Thus, the emotional strategies deployed during Japan's era of religious prohibition contribute significantly to global histories of power, offering nuanced insights into how states harness affect to regulate belief, and how marginalized communities, in turn, cultivate emotional counter-practices to sustain their existence.

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