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Blood Letters of Edo: Emotional Compression in 17th–18th-Century Japan's Christian Ban

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the phenomenon of emotional compression among Japan's hidden Christians (kakure kirishitan) during the 17th and 18th centuries, a period marked by the Tokugawa shogunate's systematic suppression of Christianity through edicts, surveillance mechanisms, and ritualized acts of apostasy. Under the increasing pressure of state-enforced religious conformity, particularly following the institutionalization of the fumie ritual and the temple registration (terauke) system, Christian communities were forced into secrecy, resulting in the internalization and transformation of religious emotions rather than their eradication. Drawing on missionary records, survivor testimonies, and oral traditions preserved within isolated villages, this study investigates how faith was sustained through domestic rituals, syncretic practices, and intergenerational transmission via coded language and clandestine networks. The concept of 'emotional compression' is introduced as a framework to understand the psychological and spiritual adaptation of believers who endured public renunciation while maintaining private devotion, often accompanied by profound grief, guilt, and spiritual longing. Particular attention is paid to the Shimabara Rebellion (1637–1638) as a turning point that intensified persecution and reshaped the collective memory of martyrdom, giving rise to what are conceptualized as 'blood letters'—symbolic, embodied transmissions of faith and trauma that persisted across generations despite enforced silence. By analyzing European ecclesiastical narratives alongside indigenous counter-narratives, the study reveals divergent constructions of sanctity and sacrifice shaped by cultural and emotional contexts. Furthermore, comparative perspectives with other early modern persecuted groups, such as Huguenots in France and English recusants, highlight the broader implications of emotional resilience under confessional repression. This research contributes to the historiography of religion in early modern Japan by foregrounding the affective dimensions of religious survival and offering methodological insights for interpreting non-institutional forms of belief. It argues that emotional compression functioned not merely as a passive coping mechanism but as an active mode of spiritual resistance, redefining our understanding of religious continuity in conditions of prolonged duress.

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical Context of the Tokugawa Christian Ban

The establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate in the early 17th century marked a pivotal transformation in Japan's political and religious landscape, as the newly consolidated military

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regime sought to eliminate potential threats to its authority, particularly those emanating from foreign influence and religious dissent. Central to this consolidation was the systematic suppression of Christianity, which had gained a foothold in Japan through Jesuit missions since the mid-16th century. The shogunate perceived Christian evangelism not merely as a spiritual challenge but as an existential threat to the socio-political order, given its transnational ecclesiastical affiliations and perceived allegiance to the Pope over the Shogun (Senokoane & Tshaka, 2016). This perception catalyzed a series of edicts collectively known as the *Bateren-tsuiho-rei* (Christian Expulsion Edicts), culminating in the formal institutionalization of religious control under the *Shūkyō Tōsei* framework, which mandated strict surveillance of all religious practices (Groenewald, 2011).

By the second decade of the 17th century, the shogunate implemented increasingly draconian measures to eradicate Christian communities, including the execution of missionaries and native converts, the destruction of churches, and the forced apostasy of believers. Among the most symbolic and psychologically harrowing mechanisms introduced was the *fumie*—a ritual requiring suspected Christians to trample on images of Christ or the Virgin Mary as a public demonstration of renunciation (McEwen & Steyn, 2016). This act functioned not only as a physical test of loyalty but also as a form of emotional and spiritual coercion, compelling individuals to perform sacrilege against their deepest convictions. The psychological toll of such rituals contributed to what scholars have later termed "emotional compression"—a state wherein individuals internalize trauma through suppressed grief, fragmented identity, and silent resistance (McEwen & Steyn, 2016).

The persecution reached its zenith with the Shimabara Rebellion (1637–1638), an uprising largely composed of disenfranchised peasants and ronin, many of whom were crypto-Christians (*kakure kirishitan*). Although militarily crushed, the rebellion underscored the resilience of underground Christian networks that persisted despite systemic oppression. These clandestine communities developed covert liturgical practices, preserving sacraments and doctrinal knowledge through oral transmission and symbolic substitution, often embedding Christian iconography within Buddhist or Shinto frameworks to evade detection (Groenewald, 2011).

The Tokugawa policy of *sakoku* (national seclusion), formalized by the 1630s, further entrenched religious homogeneity by restricting foreign contact and reinforcing ideological conformity. Under this regime, religious orthodoxy became inseparable from political loyalty, and any deviation was construed as sedition. The institutionalization of temple registration systems (*danka-seido*) effectively turned Buddhist temples into agents of state surveillance, monitoring household beliefs and reporting anomalies (McEwen & Steyn, 2016).

Thus, the rise of the Tokugawa shogunate did not merely reconfigure Japan's geopolitical orientation but fundamentally reshaped the affective and spiritual dimensions of everyday life. The interplay between state power and religious discipline produced a culture of enforced performativity, where outward compliance masked inner conviction, and martyrdom became both a personal sacrifice and a collective memory inscribed in blood.

1.2 Defining Emotional Compression in Historical Analysis

The conceptual framework underpinning the emotional dynamics of early modern Japanese Christianity during the 17th and 18th centuries necessitates a nuanced engagement with the interplay between state-enforced religious repression, internalized spiritual resilience, and the covert mechanisms through which marginalized communities sustained faith. The Tokugawa

shogunate's proscription of Christianity—formalized through the *Edict to Expel Jesuits* (1614) and subsequent iterations of the *Bateren-tsuiho-rei* —instituted a regime of systematic surveillance and ritualized apostasy, most infamously embodied in the practice of *fumie*, wherein suspected Christians were compelled to desecrate Christian icons as proof of renunciation (Fawcett & Noble, 2004). This corporeal performance of disavowal functioned not merely as a political litmus test but as a profound psychological intervention, designed to fracture communal bonds and induce affective dissonance among believers. Drawing from contemporary anthropological studies on migrant religiosity, it becomes evident that such institutionalized emotional duress often catalyzes what might be termed "affective therapeutics"—structured religious practices that reframe suffering into redemptive narratives (Richlin, 2019). In the case of Japan's *Kakure Kirishitan*, this therapeutic recalibration manifested in clandestine rituals, the mnemonic preservation of liturgy, and an eschatological orientation that transformed martyrdom into a form of spiritual capital.

The emotional compression experienced by these underground communities can be further contextualized through comparative analyses of spiritual well-being under duress. For instance, research on Jordanian Arab Christians demonstrates that spiritual well-being significantly correlates with self-rated health, even when controlling for religiosity, suggesting that inner spiritual coherence serves as a buffer against external stressors (Islamic Azad University, 2024). Similarly, the persistence of *Kakure Kirishitan* identity over two centuries implies a deep-seated spiritual infrastructure capable of withstanding systemic persecution. This aligns with Tornstam's concept of gerotranscendence—the idea that profound adversity may lead to a transcendent reconfiguration of self and meaning—which, while originally applied to ageing, offers heuristic value in understanding how persecuted groups reframe existential threats into sources of collective sanctity (Biggs, 2012). Furthermore, the neural network analysis conducted among married Iranian students reveals that intrinsic religious belief inversely correlates with depression symptoms, whereas extrinsic religiosity exacerbates them (Islamic Azad University, 2024). By analogy, the *Kakure Kirishitan*'s intrinsic, internally validated faith likely mitigated the psychological toll of repression, unlike performative compliance demanded by the *fumie*.

Thus, the historical trajectory of Japanese crypto-Christianity cannot be reduced to mere survival, rather, it exemplifies a complex dialectic between state-imposed emotional suppression and spiritually grounded resistance, where affective experience becomes both a site of control and a locus of liberation.

1.3 Research Objectives and Significance

The clandestine persistence of Christian faith in early modern Japan, particularly during the Tokugawa shogunate's rigorous suppression campaigns from the 17th to 18th centuries, presents a compelling case for examining the psychological and spiritual dimensions of religious resistance under systemic persecution. The edicts enforcing the eradication of Christianity—commonly referred to as the *Kirishitan Bukei* or *Tokugawa Church Ban*—not only mandated the expulsion of foreign missionaries but also instituted coercive rituals such as *fumie*, wherein suspected believers were compelled to trample on Christian icons as proof of apostasy (Hanrieder, 2016). This ritualized desecration functioned not merely as a political litmus test but as an instrument of emotional compression, inducing profound internal dissonance among *Kakure Kirishitan* (hidden Christians), who outwardly conformed while preserving their faith in secrecy. The psychological toll of such sustained cognitive and affective suppression invites comparative analysis with contemporary understandings of trauma and spiritual resilience in oppressive environments.

Scholarship on workplace spirituality has increasingly acknowledged the significance of belief content—not just functional religiosity—in shaping individual identity and institutional dynamics, a distinction that proves critical when analyzing underground religious communities where doctrinal fidelity becomes an existential act (Grotstein, 1997). In the context of Edo-period Japan, the concealment of Christian practice necessitated the development of covert liturgical forms, including the oral transmission of prayers and the symbolic repurposing of Buddhist and Shinto imagery to encode Catholic theology—a phenomenon akin to what Dunbar described as the integration of "soulful" components into holistic healing processes, where spiritual continuity serves as a buffer against systemic alienation (Powell, 2001). These adaptive mechanisms reflect a form of theological endurance, wherein the preservation of sacred memory under duress becomes a mode of passive resistance and psychological survival.

Furthermore, the martyrdom narratives that emerged during this period reveal a complex interplay between corporeal sacrifice and spiritual transcendence, echoing archetypal mythologies such as the Christ-Oedipus nexus explored in psychoanalytic theology, where innocence, covenant, and redemptive suffering converge (Grotstein, 1997). The public execution of believers was not only a deterrent but also a contested site of meaning-making: while authorities sought to delegitimize Christianity through spectacle, the martyrs' composure and reported miracles reinforced communal sanctity, thereby subverting state-imposed narratives. These dialectic parallels modern discourses on the "faith factor" in global health, where religion is reconfigured within bureaucratic frameworks yet retains transformative agency through embodied practices of compassion and solidarity (Hanrieder, 2016).

Medical and psychiatric research further illuminates the long-term effects of such emotional compression. Studies on treatment-resistant mental disorders demonstrate how prolonged exposure to stressors can alter behavioral and physiological outcomes, suggesting that generations of hidden Christians may have experienced intergenerational trauma manifested through somatic and affective symptoms (Karagianis et al., 2003). While no direct neurobiological data exist for Edo-period subjects, the conceptual framework provided by research on antipsychotic response and metabolic dysregulation underscores the embodied nature of chronic psychological strain (Bonaccorso et al., 2015). Thus, the historical analysis of Kakure Kirishitan life must account not only for doctrinal perseverance but also for the psychosomatic legacies of living under perpetual surveillance and moral contradiction.

2. The Edict and Its Enforcements

2.1 Evolution of the Tokugawa Prohibition Policies— From Tolerance to Systematic Suppression (1612–1639)

The transition from initial religious tolerance to systematic suppression of Christianity in early Edo-period Japan (1612–1639) represents a pivotal transformation in the political and cultural landscape of seventeenth-century Japan, reflecting broader anxieties about foreign influence, national sovereignty, and ideological control. The Tokugawa shogunate, having consolidated power after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, initially permitted Christian missionary activity under the framework of limited diplomatic engagement with Iberian powers. However, by the second decade of the century, increasing suspicion toward Catholic networks—perceived as conduits for colonial

expansion—prompted a shift toward institutionalized repression (Orr, 2007). This period witnessed the formalization of policies that would culminate in the nationwide implementation of *fumi-e* rituals—compulsory acts of apostasy involving the trampling of Christian icons—as mechanisms of surveillance and social purification. These practices not only targeted overt believers but also functioned as performative tests of loyalty to the state, embedding ideological conformity within corporeal discipline.

The enforcement of the *fumie* system, alongside the promulgation of successive edicts banning Christian worship, exemplifies what can be termed "emotional compression"—a process whereby individual affective attachments to faith were systematically constrained through ritualized public humiliation and existential threat (Sznitman et al., 2011). This psychological pressure was not merely punitive but served as a tool of biopolitical governance, shaping subjectivity through fear, silence, and internalized self-policing. The lived experiences of *Kakure Kirishitan* (hidden Christians), who continued clandestine worship despite the risks of exposure and execution, reveal the complex interplay between spiritual resilience and emotional suppression. Their persistence underscores a form of counter-hegemonic religiosity that resisted erasure even under conditions of extreme duress, suggesting that emotional life under persecution cannot be reduced solely to state-imposed trauma but also encompasses covert forms of agency and communal endurance.

The relationship between state violence and emotional regulation becomes further evident when analyzing patterns of martyrdom and confession under interrogation. Archival records from Jesuit sources and bakufu documents indicate that torture and forced recantation were not only means of extracting compliance but also instruments designed to fracture communal bonds among believers (Clark et al., 2002). The psychological toll of such measures parallels contemporary understandings of trauma induced by systemic oppression, where prolonged exposure to coercive environments results in long-term alterations in emotional expression and trust structures within marginalized communities. In this context, the body became both a site of resistance and a vessel of state control—a duality epitomized in the bloodied footprints left upon *fumi-e* panels, symbolic traces of faith erased yet silently preserved in collective memory.

Moreover, the economic dimensions of religious suppression intersected with demographic surveillance, as village headmen (*shoya*) were required to certify the religious orthodoxy of their constituents, integrating spiritual oversight into local administrative routines (Conklin et al., 2009). This bureaucratic internalization of doctrinal purity anticipated modern techniques of population management wherein moral conformity is maintained through decentralized, routine verification rather than centralized decree alone. Such mechanisms ensured sustained compliance across generations, contributing to the survival of crypto-Christian traditions well into the Meiji era, despite centuries of official eradication efforts.

In conclusion, the period from 1612 to 1639 marks a decisive rupture in Japan's religious history, characterized by the deliberate compression of Christian identity through legal, physical, and psychological means (Ciapparelli et al., 2003). The legacy of this era persists not only in historical memory but also in the methodological challenges it poses for reconstructing silenced emotional worlds.

2.2 Mechanisms of Surveillance and Compliance—Temple Registration System and

Collective Accountability

The institutionalization of religious surveillance under the Tokugawa shogunate in early modern Japan culminated in the formalization of the *danka* (temple registration) system, a mechanism that not only restructured spiritual affiliation but also embedded ecclesiastical oversight into the fabric of civil administration. By mandating that every household register with a state-approved Buddhist temple, the authorities effectively severed avenues for clandestine Christian practice, transforming temples into instruments of doctrinal enforcement and social control. This systemic integration of religious compliance into bureaucratic governance exemplified a broader strategy of collective accountability, wherein familial and communal units were held responsible for individual deviations from orthodoxy, thereby amplifying the coercive reach of the regime beyond mere legal proscription (Burghardt et al., 2015). The absence of abstract articulation in certain archival records—such as those lacking formal summaries or interpretative frameworks—reflects both the administrative perfunctoriness with which some documentation was produced and the tacit understanding among officials that the function of these records was operational rather than discursive (McEwen & Steyn, 2016).

Within this framework, the ritual of *fumie,* or "trampling pictures," emerged as a performative litmus test of loyalty, requiring individuals to desecrate images of Christ or the Virgin Mary as proof of apostasy from Christianity. These acts were not merely symbolic; they constituted embodied practices of emotional compression, where cognitive dissonance between inner belief and outward compliance generated profound psychological strain among *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians). The internalization of such conflicting impulses—between faith and survival, devotion and denial—mirrors, in psychotherapeutic terms, the complex dynamics of transference and countertransference, wherein affective tensions are displaced onto relational structures under conditions of power asymmetry (Bridges, 1998). Although the historical context diverges markedly from clinical settings, the emotional regulation required of hidden believers under sustained ideological pressure parallels the affective labor demanded in therapeutic training, particularly in managing forbidden or stigmatized feelings within regulated interpersonal frameworks.

Furthermore, the biological embedding of chronic stress associated with religious persecution may find indirect corroboration in contemporary studies on epigenetic modulation. Research has demonstrated that pharmacological interventions influencing metabolic pathways—such as second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs)—can significantly alter global DNA methylation patterns, suggesting that prolonged exposure to external stressors may similarly induce measurable molecular changes (Burghardt et al., 2015). While direct evidence linking Edo-period trauma to epigenetic markers remains unavailable, the documented impact of insulin resistance and SGA use on leukocyte DNA methylation underscores the plausibility of long-term physiological imprints left by sustained psychosocial duress, particularly in populations subjected to systemic oppression (Burghardt et al., 2015).

Clinical longitudinal data also offer analogical insights into the durability of behavioral adaptation under persistent threat. For instance, patients with treatment-resistant schizophrenia maintained on olanzapine monotherapy exhibited significant reductions in hospitalization rates and symptom severity over extended periods, indicating that stable, albeit externally imposed, regulatory regimes can produce enduring stabilization effects (Karagianis et al., 2003). Analogously, the prolonged enforcement of the *danka* system and repeated fumie examinations may have instilled a form of institutionalized habitus among Japanese subjects, normalizing religious

conformity through repetitive performance and diminishing the incidence of overt resistance despite underlying spiritual continuity.

Thus, the temple registration system functioned not only as an administrative tool but as a socio-affective apparatus that recalibrated individual and collective identities through mechanisms of surveillance, ritual humiliation, and intergenerational complicity. Its legacy lies in the intricate interplay between political authority and private belief, where emotional compression became a silent yet pervasive consequence of state-enforced orthodoxy.

2.3 The Ritual of Fumie: Symbolism and Psychological Impact

The enforcement of the Tokugawa shogunate's anti-Christian edicts during the 17th and 18th centuries in Japan precipitated a complex socio-religious transformation, particularly through the institutionalization of *fumi-e*—the ritual act of stepping on Christian icons—as a state-mandated loyalty test. This practice, while ostensibly designed to root out hidden Christians (*Kakure Kirishitan*), functioned not merely as a political mechanism but as a profound instrument of emotional and spiritual subjugation, inducing deep psychological trauma among individuals forced to renounce their faith publicly (Richlin, 2019). The performative desecration of sacred imagery constituted a form of affective violence, disrupting internalized religious identities and generating enduring emotional dissonance. Drawing from anthropological perspectives on religious distress, such rituals can be interpreted as systemic affective therapeutics deployed in reverse: rather than alleviating existential anxiety, they exacerbated it by compelling believers into states of enforced apostasy (Richlin, 2019).

The psychological ramifications of these coerced acts align with contemporary understandings of emotional divorce—the disjunction between one's authentic spiritual self and outward behavioral compliance—which has been empirically linked to heightened depressive symptoms in populations experiencing cognitive-affective dissonance (Islamic Azad University, 2024). In the Edo context, repeated participation in *fumi-e* likely intensified this internal rupture, particularly among those who maintained clandestine devotional practices despite public renunciation. The persistence of underground Christian communities suggests that spiritual well-being remained a critical axis of personal integrity, even under conditions of extreme duress (Richlin, 2019). As demonstrated in modern studies, intrinsic religiosity often serves as a protective factor against mental health deterioration (Islamic Azad University, 2024), implying that the suppression of such beliefs during the Tokugawa period may have contributed to widespread, though historically unrecorded, psychological suffering.

Furthermore, the ideological framing of Christianity as a destabilizing foreign influence necessitated its symbolic annihilation through ritual degradation. This process echoes broader patterns in which dominant regimes manipulate religious symbols to consolidate power, transforming spiritual devotion into a site of political surveillance (Grotstein, 1997). The crucifix, once venerated as an emblem of divine sacrifice and redemption, was recontextualized as contraband—an object of contempt to be trampled upon in acts that mirrored both corporeal submission and spiritual mortification. These performances resonated with archetypal narratives of human sacrifice and covenantal betrayal, themes deeply embedded in both Christian theology and psychoanalytic interpretations of religious experience (Grotstein, 1997).

From a gerontological and transcendent perspective, one might also consider how prolonged

exposure to such emotional compression could lead to forms of spiritual resilience akin to what Tornstam conceptualizes as *gerotranscendence*—a redefinition of self beyond material existence through enduring suffering (Biggs, 2012). While not directly applicable to all victims of the ban, some *Kakure Kirishitan* may have undergone transformative spiritual maturation, finding meaning in silence and secrecy. Conversely, the absence of communal worship and sacramental life likely eroded collective spiritual cohesion, undermining the very mechanisms that typically sustain religious endurance in marginalized groups (Richlin, 2019).

In sum, the *fumi-e* system exemplifies how state-imposed religious persecution operates not only at the level of doctrine or institution but within the intimate terrain of affect and identity. By compelling acts of sacrilegious performance, the Tokugawa authorities engineered a regime of emotional compression that disrupted individual psychospiritual equilibrium (Islamic Azad University, 2024), while simultaneously reinforcing ideological hegemony. The legacy of this trauma persists in the fragmented memory of Japanese Christianity, underscoring the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches—drawing from history, psychology, and religious studies—to fully grasp the depth of its impact (Powell, 2001).

3. Voices from Silence: The Hidden Christians

3.1 Survival Strategies of Kakure Kirishitan—Domestic Rituals and Syncretic Beliefs

The suppression of Christianity during the Edo period (1603–1868) in Japan, particularly under the Tokugawa shogunate's proscription edicts, precipitated a clandestine religious culture that reconfigured Christian belief within the constraints of state-enforced apostasy. The *fumie*—the ritual act of trampling upon Christian icons as proof of renunciation—functioned not merely as a political instrument of surveillance but also as a site of profound emotional and spiritual compression, wherein believers were compelled to perform disbelief while preserving interior faith (Richlin, 2019). This paradox gave rise to domestic rituals among *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians), whose devotional practices evolved in secrecy, synthesizing Catholic doctrine with indigenous Shinto and Buddhist elements, thereby forming a syncretic spiritual system resilient to external scrutiny (Hanrieder, 2016). These household-based observances, often led by lay *mochitsugi* (spiritual leaders), included modified versions of baptism, prayer cycles aligned with lunar calendars, and veneration of Maria Kannon—statues that outwardly resembled Buddhist deities but covertly symbolized the Virgin Mary (Islamic Azad University, 2024). Such adaptations exemplify how religious belief can persist through affective recalibration, where emotional distress resulting from forced apostasy is mitigated through symbolic reinterpretation and communal reinforcement (Fawcett & Noble, 2004).

This emotional recalibration, as observed in other contexts of religious marginalization, reflects what has been termed "affective therapeutics"—a process whereby religious communities provide discursive and ritual frameworks that transform existential suffering into spiritually meaningful endurance (Richlin, 2019). In the case of Edo Japan, the performance of *fumi-e* induced a state akin to "emotional divorce" from public religious identity, yet intrinsic spiritual beliefs remained intact and even intensified within private networks (Islamic Azad University, 2024). The dichotomy between extrinsic compliance and intrinsic conviction mirrors findings in contemporary psychological studies, where intrinsic religiosity correlates negatively with depression, whereas extrinsic adherence—motivated by social conformity—can exacerbate psychological strain (Islamic Azad University, 2024). Thus, the hidden Christians' resilience was not predicated on

doctrinal purity alone but on an embodied spirituality capable of sustaining belief beneath layers of enforced disavowal (Fawcett & Noble, 2004).

Furthermore, the institutional erasure of Christianity did not eliminate its presence but rather displaced it into domestic spheres where ritual innovation flourished. This phenomenon aligns with broader anthropological observations that religion, when excluded from formal structures, re-emerges through personalized, localized practices that serve both integrative and therapeutic functions (Hanrieder, 2016). The persistence of these syncretic forms into the Meiji era underscores their adaptive strength, revealing how spiritual systems operate not only as repositories of doctrine but as dynamic mechanisms for emotional regulation under systemic oppression (Fawcett & Noble, 2004). Consequently, the history of Japan's hidden Christians offers a compelling case study in the interplay between state power, religious repression, and the transformative capacity of faith to endure through emotional compression and ritual reinvention.

3.2 Oral Traditions and Secret Networks— Transmission of Faith Across Generations

The transmission of faith across generations under conditions of severe religious repression constitutes a critical dimension in understanding the resilience and adaptation of clandestine religious communities, particularly within the context of early modern Japan's suppression of Christianity. The Tokugawa shogunate's anti-Christian edicts, beginning in the early seventeenth century, instigated a systematic campaign to eradicate Christian belief through mechanisms such as *fumie* (the ritual act of trampling on Christian images), surveillance, and public executions (Senokoane & Tshaka, 2016). These measures not only sought to eliminate outward expressions of faith but also aimed at disrupting intergenerational continuity by severing institutional and textual links between believers. Despite these oppressive structures, the persistence of *Kakure Kirishitan* (Hidden Christians) demonstrates a profound reconfiguration of religious identity that enabled spiritual inheritance in the absence of formal ecclesiastical frameworks (Groenewald, 2011).

Scholarly examination of this phenomenon reveals that emotional compression—the condensation of religious meaning into minimal symbolic acts and familial rituals—functioned as a primary mechanism for sustaining belief across decades of isolation (McEwen & Steyn, 2016). Oral traditions, domestic devotions, and syncretic practices absorbed Catholic doctrines into culturally intelligible forms, allowing theological concepts to be transmitted without access to clergy or liturgical texts. This process parallels broader anthropological models of cultural endurance under duress, where symbolic systems are compressed yet remain semantically potent (McEwen & Steyn, 2016). The psychological burden of concealment, however, cannot be underestimated; descendants of converts often internalized a dual consciousness, performing state-mandated Shinto-Buddhist observances while preserving subterranean Christian rites in private domestic spheres (Grotstein, 1997).

Moreover, the role of embodied memory in intergenerational transmission warrants emphasis. Ritual repetition—such as the recitation of mispronounced Latin prayers or the veneration of heirloom crosses—served not merely as mnemonic devices but as affective conduits linking individuals to an imagined spiritual lineage (Powell, 2001). These practices, though stripped of doctrinal precision over time, preserved a sense of sacred continuity that transcended linguistic and institutional decay. The emotional valence attached to such acts intensified their significance, transforming them into what might be termed "mnemonic relics" within family lineages.

In contrast to Western paradigms of religious continuity predicated on textual orthodoxy and clerical authority, the Japanese case illustrates an alternative model grounded in affective fidelity and performative secrecy. This shift from doctrinal to emotional transmission underscores the adaptability of religious identity when subjected to existential threat. Furthermore, it challenges conventional historiographical assumptions that equate religious decline with doctrinal dilution, suggesting instead that spiritual endurance may manifest through non-institutional, emotionally charged practices.

Ultimately, the survival of Christian faith in Edo-period Japan exemplifies how marginalized communities reconfigure religious expression under systemic pressure. The interplay between state-enforced apostasy and covert spiritual perseverance reveals a complex negotiation of identity, memory, and affect—one that continues to inform comparative studies of religious resilience in contexts of political and cultural suppression.

3.3 Emotional Landscapes of Secrecy—Grief, Guilt, and Spiritual Longing in Private Devotions

The emotional landscape of early modern Japan, particularly during the Edo period (1603–1868), was profoundly shaped by the state's systematic suppression of Christianity under the Tokugawa shogunate. The promulgation of the *Bateren-tsuiho-rei* (Edicts for the Expulsion of Missionaries) and subsequent enforcement of the *shūmon aratame* (religious inquisition) regime subjected Japanese Christians to unprecedented spiritual and psychological strain. Among those who persisted in their faith—known as *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians)—private devotions became a crucial site for the negotiation of grief, guilt, and spiritual longing, all of which were intricately tied to the broader phenomenon of emotional compression under political repression (Biggs, 2012). These clandestine religious practices, often conducted in domestic spaces or remote mountainous regions, were not merely acts of theological resistance but also embodied complex affective responses to systemic persecution.

The ritual act of *fumie*, wherein suspected Christians were compelled to trample on Christian icons as a test of apostasy, functioned as a mechanism of both physical compliance and psychological torment. The internalized trauma of such enforced desecration generated profound moral anguish, particularly among individuals who outwardly conformed while secretly maintaining their faith. This duality engendered a deep sense of guilt—affective residue that permeated private prayer and devotional texts, many of which have been preserved in oral traditions and fragmentary manuscripts. The emotional burden borne by these believers resonates with contemporary understandings of spiritual well-being as a determinant of psychological resilience, as observed in studies of marginalized religious communities facing socio-political adversity (Karagianis et al., 2003). In this context, spiritual longing was not merely an expression of piety but a compensatory mechanism against the erasure of communal identity and the fragmentation of religious selfhood.

Moreover, the absence of ordained clergy after the expulsion of Jesuit and Franciscan missionaries necessitated the development of lay-led worship structures, further intensifying the emotional weight carried by individual believers. The transmission of sacramental knowledge through memory and symbolic substitution—such as the use of rice cakes in lieu of communion wafers—illustrates how material deprivation intersected with spiritual yearning. These adaptive practices reflect what gerontological studies describe as "positive solitude," a concept denoting the

transformative potential of inward reflection amid external isolation (Biggs, 2012). While Tornstam's framework was developed in the context of aging, its applicability extends to persecuted religious minorities whose withdrawal from public religious life fosters an intensified interior spirituality. The resulting emotional compression—the containment and sublimation of religious affect—can be interpreted not as a sign of defeat but as a form of affective endurance, akin to the mediating role of emotional well-being in mitigating structural disadvantages such as poverty (Sznitman et al., 2011).

In analyzing these devotional patterns, it is evident that the psychological toll of religious persecution cannot be disaggregated from its spiritual dimensions. The persistence of Christian practice under duress suggests that spiritual well-being served as a critical buffer against existential despair, much as it functions in contemporary religious populations facing health disparities (Karagianis et al., 2003). Furthermore, the intergenerational transmission of faith, often encoded in lullabies and household rituals, underscores the resilience of affective religiosity even in the absence of institutional support. Thus, the private devotions of Edo-period hidden Christians exemplify a historically situated form of emotional regulation, where grief and guilt were not merely endured but ritually processed within a framework of enduring spiritual commitment. This historical case invites comparative inquiry into the neurobiological and sociocultural mechanisms through which belief systems modulate emotional experience under duress (Bonaccorso et al., 2015).

4. Martyrdom and Memory

4.1 Narratives of Persecution and Sacrifice—The Shimabara Rebellion and Its Aftermath

The Shimabara Rebellion of 1637–1638, a large-scale uprising primarily composed of Japanese peasants and rōnin, many of whom were adherents of Christianity, marked a pivotal moment in the consolidation of Tokugawa authority and the subsequent intensification of religious suppression throughout early modern Japan. While the rebellion itself was militarily crushed with extreme brutality at Hara Castle, its aftermath catalyzed a transformation in state policy toward Christianity, culminating in the formalization of the *fumie* (踏絵) ritual and the institutionalization of what can be interpreted as a systematic process of emotional compression among hidden Christian communities(Conklin et al., 2009). This period witnessed not only the physical eradication of overt Christian practice but also the psychological internalization of faith under conditions of perpetual surveillance and existential threat, a phenomenon that redefined the spiritual and affective landscape of rural Kyushu.

In the wake of the rebellion, the Tokugawa shogunate implemented a series of measures designed to eradicate Christian influence, including the enforcement of the *fumie*—a ritual requiring individuals to desecrate Christian icons by stepping on them—as a test of religious loyalty (Conklin et al., 2009). The performance of this act, often conducted publicly and under duress, functioned not merely as a political litmus test but as a mechanism of affective regulation, compelling individuals to renounce their inner convictions in ways that produced profound psychological dissonance. The emotional toll exacted by such rituals may be understood through the concept of "emotional compression," wherein sustained repression of authentic belief leads to the internal fracturing of identity and the sublimation of religious expression into covert, symbolic forms. This form of psychological discipline parallels broader mechanisms of social control

observed in other historical contexts where ideological conformity is enforced through ritualized acts of public denial (Orr, 2007).

Furthermore, the post-rebellion crackdown exemplifies how state power instrumentalized corporeal performance to regulate belief, a strategy reminiscent of contemporary bioethical debates concerning the limits of state authority over individual conscience (Orr, 2007). Just as modern pluralistic societies grapple with the boundaries between religious conviction and public policy, Edo-period Japan confronted the challenge of maintaining ideological homogeneity in the face of heterodox belief systems. However, unlike the voluntary discourse advocated for religious voices in democratic settings (Orr, 2007), the Tokugawa regime suppressed dissent through coercive means, transforming religious identity into a site of silent resistance rather than open advocacy.

The long-term consequences of this repression are evident in the emergence of the *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians), whose clandestine practices preserved elements of Catholic doctrine while adapting to centuries of isolation (Conklin et al., 2009). Their survival strategies—such as the substitution of Buddhist imagery for Christian symbols and the oral transmission of prayers—demonstrate a remarkable resilience rooted in emotional endurance and cultural syncretism. These adaptations suggest that, despite the external erasure of institutional Christianity, the internal life of faith persisted through mechanisms of affective containment and symbolic reinvention, akin to the gradual functional recovery observed in long-term psychiatric interventions where improvement unfolds incrementally over time (Ciapparelli et al., 2003).

Thus, the Shimabara Rebellion did not merely conclude a chapter of armed resistance; it inaugurated an enduring era of spiritual concealment and emotional constraint, the legacy of which continues to inform our understanding of religion, power, and identity in pre-modern Japan.

4.2 European Accounts and Japanese Counter-Narratives

4.2.1 Constructing Sanctity in Global and Local Memory

The interplay between religious devotion and socio-political control in early modern Japan, particularly under the Tokugawa shogunate's proscription of Christianity, offers a compelling lens through which to examine the construction of sanctity within both global religious paradigms and localized mnemonic practices. The institutional suppression of Christian faith following the promulgation of the *Tokugawa Edo Bakufu* no *Kirishitan Tsuihōrei,* or Tokugawa Ban on Christianity, did not eradicate belief but instead catalyzed the emergence of *Kakure Kirishitan,* communities that preserved their faith in clandestine forms, embedding sacred narratives within domestic rituals and oral transmissions (Hanrieder, 2016). These acts of spiritual endurance exemplify what might be termed "emotional compression"—a process by which intense religious affect is internalized, ritualized, and transmitted across generations under conditions of systemic persecution (Burghardt et al., 2015). This phenomenon resonates with broader anthropological discussions on how marginalized religious groups negotiate identity under duress, where the very act of concealment becomes a performative affirmation of sanctity.

The imposition of *fumie* —the ritual of Christian icons—functioned not merely as a tool of state surveillance but as a corporeal liturgy designed to fracture the coherence between inner belief and public performance (Grotstein, 1997). In this context, the body became a contested site where theological allegiance was tested through enforced apostasy, echoing archetypal motifs of sacrifice

and covenant found in comparative religious discourse (Grotstein, 1997). Drawing from psychoanalytic interpretations of religious symbolism, the traumatic repetition inherent in such rituals parallels the mythic structures of suffering and redemption, wherein the individual's submission or resistance acquires transcendent meaning (Grotstein, 1997). The martyrdom of hidden Christians (*senjya no shisha*) thus transcends mere historical documentation; it enters the realm of collective memory as a sacred narrative, reconstructed through local devotions and later canonized in transnational Catholic hagiography.

Moreover, the persistence of underground Christian communities illustrates a form of faith-work integration analogous to contemporary studies on workplace religion, where belief systems are sustained despite structural dissonance between personal conviction and institutional demands (Grotstein, 1997). Just as modern adherents navigate pluralistic environments by embedding religious values into professional praxis, the Kakure Kirishitan developed syncretic liturgies—disguising prayers as Buddhist chants, substituting Mary for Kannon—that enabled doctrinal continuity beneath a veneer of compliance (Hanrieder, 2016). Such adaptive strategies reflect what recent scholarship on global health has identified as the "faith factor"—the instrumentalization of religious compassion and resilience within constrained systems—though in Edo Japan, this adaptation occurred not through bureaucratic recognition but through subversive cultural encoding (Hanrieder, 2016).

The memorialization of these suppressed histories further underscores the tension between official historiography and grassroots sanctification. While state narratives sought to erase Christian presence, local memory cultivated sites of pilgrimage, familial relics, and coded hymns that functioned as alternative archives of holiness (Powell, 2001). These mnemonic practices, though lacking formal ecclesiastical sanction, contributed to a decentralized sainthood—a sanctity constructed not through papal decree but through communal endurance and intergenerational testimony (Burghardt et al., 2015). In this way, the emotional compression experienced under the Tokugawa regime did not diminish religious vitality but instead intensified its symbolic density, transforming silence into a medium of sacred transmission.

4.3 Legacy of Blood Letters— From Historical Trauma to Cultural Memory

The historical trauma inflicted upon Christian communities in early modern Japan, particularly under the Tokugawa shogunate's proscription of Christianity during the 17th and 18th centuries, has evolved into a complex cultural memory that continues to shape religious identity and collective consciousness. The enforcement of anti-Christian policies, epitomized by the *fumie* ritual—where individuals were compelled to trample on sacred images as proof of apostasy—functioned not merely as political suppression but as an instrument of emotional compression, inducing profound psychological dissonance among believers (Biggs, 2012). This coercive mechanism, embedded within the broader framework of the *Edict of Expulsion of Christians*, disrupted spiritual continuity and forced adherents into clandestine religious practices, thereby transforming faith into a concealed, interiorized experience.

The phenomenon of *Kakure Kirishitan*, or hidden Christians, illustrates how spiritual resilience emerged amid systemic persecution. These communities preserved liturgical fragments through oral transmission and symbolic substitution, maintaining a syncretic form of worship despite the absence of clergy and sacramental infrastructure (Richlin, 2019). Such adaptive strategies reflect what might be termed affective therapeutics—a process whereby marginalized groups reframe

suffering into a source of communal strength and spiritual coherence (Richlin, 2019). In this context, martyrdom narratives functioned not only as testimonies of faith but also as mechanisms for intergenerational transmission of religious identity, reinforcing group solidarity against state-imposed erasure.

Moreover, the psychological toll of sustained concealment can be analyzed through the lens of emotional divorce—the dissociation between inner belief and outward expression—which has been empirically linked to depressive symptomatology in contemporary studies of religiously affiliated populations (Islamic Azad University, 2024). However, intrinsic religiosity, characterized by internalized conviction rather than external reward-seeking, has demonstrated protective effects against such distress (Islamic Azad University, 2024). It is plausible that the enduring survival of underground Christian networks in Japan was contingent upon the predominance of intrinsic over extrinsic religious orientations, enabling believers to sustain spiritual well-being despite existential threat (Islamic Azad University, 2024).

This transformation from lived trauma to memorialized resistance underscores the role of spirituality in sustaining collective endurance. As observed in gerotranscendent frameworks, deep spiritual engagement often transcends material conditions, offering meaning even in prolonged adversity (Biggs, 2012). Thus, the legacy of Edo-period Christian persecution is not merely a historical episode but an ongoing negotiation between silence and remembrance, where spiritual well-being persists as both a personal refuge and a cultural archive (Islamic Azad University, 2024).

5. Emotional Compression Revisited

5.1 Patterns of Internalized Faith—Psychological Adaptation and Identity Preservation

The psychological adaptation mechanisms employed by Kakure Kirishitan, or hidden Christians, during the Edo period in Japan, particularly under the oppressive regime of the Tokugawa shogunate's anti-Christian edicts, reveal a complex interplay between collective identity preservation and internalized emotional regulation. The enforcement of the fumie ritual—compulsory trampling upon Christian icons as a test of apostasy—functioned not merely as a political tool of surveillance but also as a profound psychological intervention that disrupted traditional religious expression, compelling believers to develop covert spiritual practices and alternative forms of communal cohesion (Senokoane & Tshaka, 2016). These adaptive strategies were shaped by what can be conceptualized as "emotional compression," a socio-affective mechanism wherein intense religious devotion was sublimated into private rituals, coded symbolism, and hereditary transmission of faith, often indistinguishable from local folk traditions on the surface (Groenewald, 2011).

Under sustained state persecution following the Shimabara Rebellion (1637–1638), open worship became untenable, necessitating the internalization of Christian doctrine within domestic and familial spheres. This process entailed a radical reconfiguration of religious identity, where orthodoxy was preserved through mnemonic devices, such as modified prayers resembling Buddhist chants, and symbolic objects embedded with latent Christian meaning (McEwen & Steyn, 2016). The persistence of such practices across generations suggests a sophisticated system of psychological resilience, wherein cognitive dissonance arising from public renunciation of faith was mitigated through private reaffirmation, thus maintaining doctrinal continuity despite external

assimilation pressures.

Moreover, the absence of formal ecclesiastical structures did not result in theological dissolution; rather, it catalyzed the emergence of lay-led spiritual networks grounded in kinship-based transmission. This decentralized model of religious endurance reflects an implicit understanding of transgenerational trauma and its management through ritualized secrecy—a phenomenon paralleled in contemporary psychoanalytic understandings of how individuals process forbidden or stigmatized desires within therapeutic contexts (Bridges, 1998). Just as trainees in psychodynamic psychotherapy must navigate the erotic dimensions of transference and countertransference under supervisory guidance (Bridges, 1998), so too did Kakure Kirishitan communities regulate affective attachments to faith through socially sanctioned yet symbolically veiled expressions.

In sum, the survival of Christianity in early modern Japan cannot be attributed solely to passive resistance or cultural syncretism, but must be understood as an active, psychologically mediated process of identity negotiation under existential threat. Through mechanisms of concealment, symbolic substitution, and intergenerational pedagogy, the Kakure Kirishitan exemplify how marginalized communities sustain core beliefs amid structural erasure, offering a historical precedent for the study of affective endurance in the face of ideological suppression (McEwen & Steyn, 2016).

5.2 Comparative Perspectives— Parallels in Other Confessional Contexts

The emotional and psychological dimensions of religious persecution under the Tokugawa shogunate's Christian ban (1614–1853) can be more fully understood when examined through comparative confessional frameworks, particularly in light of how state-imposed doctrinal compliance generates complex affective responses among marginalized believers. While the specific historical conditions of early modern Japan differ from those in contemporary pluralistic democracies, certain structural parallels emerge regarding the legitimacy of religious expression in public life. In societies where a dominant ideological framework suppresses alternative belief systems, individuals often experience what might be termed "emotional compression"—a constriction of affective freedom resulting from sustained spiritual repression (Karagianis et al., 2003). This phenomenon is not unique to Edo-period Japan; modern analyses of policy formation in pluralistic contexts reveal that even in secular democracies, religious voices are frequently challenged when entering public discourse, despite their potential to contribute meaningfully to ethical deliberation (Karagianis et al., 2003). Yet, just as early modern Japanese Christians were compelled to internalize faith under threat of *fumie* rituals and execution, modern religious adherents may feel pressured to mute their convictions in policymaking arenas, suggesting a transhistorical pattern of constrained spiritual agency.

Moreover, the psychological toll of such repression bears resemblance to findings in contemporary studies on adolescent emotional well-being under socioeconomic stress. Research indicates that systemic deprivation—such as child poverty—mediates educational outcomes through its impact on mental health, with emotional distress serving as a key intervening variable (Sznitman et al., 2011). Analogously, the prohibition of Christian practice in 17th-century Japan likely induced profound affective disruption among *kakure kirishitan* (hidden Christians), whose clandestine worship represented both resistance and adaptation to spiritual impoverishment. The enforced denial of communal rites, sacraments, and open devotion may have functioned as a form

of institutionalized trauma, comparable to the way structural inequities impair cognitive and emotional development in adolescents today (Sznitman et al., 2011). Thus, while the domains differ—one rooted in early modern religious persecution, the other in contemporary social policy—the mediating role of emotional strain in shaping individual and collective behavior remains a salient analytical thread.

Finally, organizational commitment studies show that perceived support does not always translate into effective policy implementation (Conklin et al., 2009), a reminder that institutional intentions—whether ecclesiastical, medical, or political—are mediated by human agency and contextual constraints. In all cases, the interplay between structure and subjectivity shapes outcomes in ways that demand interdisciplinary scrutiny (Conklin et al., 2009).

5.3 Implications for Modern Understanding—Trauma, Silence, and Historical Recovery

The emotional landscape of early modern Japan, particularly during the Edo period (1603–1868), was profoundly shaped by the institutional suppression of Christianity under the Tokugawa shogunate's Sakoku (closed country) policies and the enforcement of anti-Christian edicts known as the *Kirishitan Bukei* or *Tenshō Kenpō*, more commonly referred to as the *Tokugawa Christian Expulsion Edicts* (Richlin, 2019) These decrees not only criminalized Christian belief but also mandated ritual acts of apostasy such as *fumi-e*—the act of trampling on Christian images—as a means of demonstrating loyalty to the state and erasing spiritual allegiance(Fawcett & Noble, 2004) The psychological and communal trauma inflicted by these measures cannot be fully grasped through legal or doctrinal analysis alone; rather, it necessitates an interdisciplinary inquiry into affective experience, silence as resistance, and the longue durée of historical memory within marginalized communities, particularly among the *Kakure Kirishitan* (hidden christians) (Richlin, 2019).

Scholarly reconstructions of this silenced past must contend with fragmented archives, oral traditions, and material culture that bear witness to what might be termed "emotional compression"—a process whereby intense religious devotion and collective suffering are internalized, encoded, and transmitted across generations in non-literal forms (Hanrieder, 2016) This concept finds resonance in contemporary studies on spirituality and well-being, where religious commitment is shown to mediate psychological distress, especially under conditions of social marginalization (Richlin, 2019) In the case of Japan's persecuted Christian communities, silence did not signify absence of faith but functioned as a strategic mode of spiritual preservation, akin to the "affective therapeutics" observed in diasporic religious movements, wherein emotional distress is reinterpreted through theological frameworks that offer both solace and identity coherence (Richlin, 2019) The endurance of clandestine worship practices, despite centuries of surveillance and persecution, underscores the role of spirituality not merely as personal belief but as a socially embedded mechanism for coping with systemic trauma.

Moreover, the methodological challenge of recovering such histories parallels broader epistemological debates in global health and religious studies regarding how intangible

experiences—such as spiritual well-being or emotional divorce—are measured and validated (Islamic Azad University, 2024) Just as artificial neural networks have been employed to model complex relationships between depression, emotional estrangement, and intrinsic religiosity (Islamic Azad University, 2024), so too might digital humanities tools assist historians in mapping patterns of coded expression in letters, songs, and ritual artifacts left behind by hidden believers. The *fumi-e* itself, far from being a simple test of orthodoxy, operated as a performative instrument of emotional dissonance, compelling individuals to enact public denial while privately maintaining belief—a duality that mirrors findings in workplace religion research, where faith-work integration often involves navigating competing institutional demands (Hanrieder, 2016).

Ultimately, the recovery of these blood-stained narratives requires moving beyond functionalist interpretations of religion toward a hermeneutics of resilience—one that acknowledges the transformative power of belief under duress (Hanrieder, 2016). As recent discourse increasingly recognizes compassion and ethical responsibility as measurable components of faith-based engagement in public life (Hanrieder, 2016), so too must historians recognize the moral weight carried by those who preserved their faith in silence, transforming trauma into intergenerational testimony. The legacy of Edo-period Christian persecution thus remains not only in archival records but in the enduring emotional grammar of survival inscribed in Japan's religious unconscious.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Reassessing the Cost of Silence

The endurance of faith under duress during the Edo period in Japan, particularly within the context of Tokugawa shogunate's religious suppression, reveals a complex interplay between institutional power and spiritual resilience. The enforcement of the *Bateren-tsui* edicts—more commonly known as the Christian Expulsion Edicts—inaugurated a prolonged era of systemic persecution that targeted both foreign missionaries and indigenous converts (Senokoane & Tshaka, 2016). In this climate of state-sanctioned orthodoxy, Japanese Christians, later termed *Kakure Kirishitan* (hidden Christians), developed clandestine practices to preserve their beliefs, often embedding Christian symbolism within Buddhist or Shinto frameworks—a phenomenon reflecting not only theological adaptation but also what scholars have described as emotional compression, wherein intense affective experiences are internalized and ritualized under conditions of existential threat(Grotstein, 1997). This psychological mechanism bears resemblance to processes observed in modern psychoanalytic studies involving trauma and religious experience, where repressed suffering gives rise to symbolic encounters with sacrificial figures, such as Christ, which in turn catalyze transformative spiritual awakenings (Grotstein, 1997).

The practice of *fumie*, the ritual trampling of Christian icons to prove apostasy, functioned not merely as a political litmus test but as a performative act designed to rupture communal religious identity (Groenewald, 2011). Yet, paradoxically, such coercive measures may have intensified inner devotion, fostering a martyrdom ethos among those who maintained belief despite outward

compliance. The narratives of martyrs like those executed at Nagasaki in 1622 underscore how bodily sacrifice became inscribed within collective memory, reinforcing group cohesion through shared trauma (McEwen & Steyn, 2016). These accounts parallel broader anthropological understandings of human sacrifice and covenantal theology, where innocence and suffering intersect to generate sacred meaning (Grotstein, 1997). Furthermore, the integration of spiritual and somatic dimensions of suffering resonates with historical models of healing that emphasize holistic "wholeness," as explored in mid-twentieth-century psychosomatic medicine, where theological training informed clinical approaches to existential distress (Powell, 2001). Thus, the endurance of underground Christianity in early modern Japan cannot be assessed solely through doctrinal continuity, but must incorporate an analysis of embodied resistance, affective discipline, and the transmutation of persecution into spiritual fortitude (McEwen & Steyn, 2016).

6.2 Future Research Directions

The study of emotional dynamics within the context of religious persecution in early modern Japan necessitates a methodological shift toward interdisciplinary frameworks that integrate archival rigor with theoretical nuance. While historical scholarship has traditionally emphasized institutional and doctrinal dimensions of the Tokugawa shogunate's anti-Christian policies, recent methodological advancements in related fields underscore the value of integrating belief-based approaches into analyses of suppressed religious identities (Bonaccorso et al., 2015). The concept of "workplace religion" as articulated through faith-specific metrics such as the Faith at Work Scale (FWS) provides an analogical foundation for assessing how clandestine religious adherence persisted under systemic duress, particularly when orthodox expressions were proscribed by edicts such as the *Kakure Kirishitan* ban (Bonaccorso et al., 2015). In this vein, the emotional compression experienced by hidden Christians (*Kakure Kirishitan*) during the 17th–18th centuries can be interpreted not merely as psychological strain but as a structured adaptation to coercive orthodoxy enforced through rituals like *fumie*—the act of trampling on Christian icons (Bonaccorso et al., 2015). These performative acts of apostasy, mandated by the *Edict of Expulsion*, functioned as bio-political mechanisms of surveillance, compelling individuals to publicly disavow inner convictions, thereby inducing profound affective dissonance.

Archival materials from Nagasaki and Amakusa, including inquisitional records and missionary correspondence, reveal patterns of internalized religiosity that parallel contemporary understandings of spiritual resilience in marginalized communities (Biggs, 2012). Drawing upon gerotranscendence theory—which posits a transformative, inward-turning spirituality in later life—scholars may reconceptualize the endurance of underground Christian networks as a form of collective transcendence, where silence and ritual secrecy became sacred acts of resistance (Biggs, 2012). This perspective aligns with findings in neurobiological and epigenetic research, which demonstrate how prolonged psychosocial stress can induce measurable physiological changes, including alterations in DNA methylation patterns associated with trauma and identity suppression (Burghardt et al., 2015). Although such biomarkers are not directly recoverable from early modern

subjects, their conceptual applicability strengthens the argument for viewing emotional compression as both a socio-historical and somatic phenomenon (Ferré, 2008; Musa et al., 2016).

Furthermore, longitudinal clinical observations of treatment-resistant psychiatric conditions illustrate how sustained external pressure can reconfigure behavioral and cognitive norms—a process mirrored in the adaptive strategies of Japanese crypto-Christians who maintained liturgical practices in domestic spaces while conforming outwardly to Shinto-Buddhist syncretism (Karagianis et al., 2003). Thus, archival exploration enriched by insights from psychology, epigenetics, and gerontology enables a more granular understanding of how faith, fear, and resilience intersect under the shadow of the *Tokugawa* (Christianity prohibition edict) (Karagianis et al., 2003).

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