Faith and Power

How religious practices shaped life and government in Japan

SS24.8.16b "Explain the effects of religion on Japanese society and politics."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB As you read, underline religious practices, circle effects on daily life, and draw a box around effects on political power. Draw a line from each marked effect to a practice or belief that helps explain it.

Religion in Tokugawa Japan

1. At a village shrine in Tokugawa Japan (1603 to 1868), neighbors might gather for a festival honoring kami, sacred beings associated with places and forces of nature. Shinto rituals connected families to their community and to the seasons. Japan's emperor also took part in rituals linked to Shinto traditions, which helped support the idea that his position was sacred. Yet the shogun, a military ruler, held most governing power. Religious customs could strengthen social ties and give authority a sacred meaning without making the emperor Japan's day-to-day ruler.

2. Buddhist temples shaped another part of life. Many families turned to Buddhist priests for funerals and memorial services, creating lasting ties to a local temple. Under the Tokugawa shogunate, officials required households to register with Buddhist temples. Temples could then certify that registered families were not Christian, helping officials enforce the government's ban on Christianity. A place of worship thus became part of a system of political control. This policy also increased the role of temples in everyday life, even for people whose beliefs and practices varied.

3. Christianity reached Japan through European missionaries in the sixteenth century and won converts, including some powerful lords. Tokugawa rulers later saw Christianity as a possible threat to their authority, partly because some believers followed foreign religious leaders. The shogunate banned the faith, punished many Christians, and used temple registration to identify households. Some Christians practiced in secret, passing prayers and traditions through families. Government policy changed religious life, but religion also shaped policy: rulers limited a faith they feared might challenge their control.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a Shinto festival affect life in a village?

2. How did Shinto rituals affect the emperor's standing, and what limit on his power does the passage describe?

3. How did Buddhist temples serve both families and Tokugawa officials?

4. Why did Tokugawa rulers ban Christianity, and how did the ban affect some Christians?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence scene set in Tokugawa Japan that shows a family at a shrine or temple. Then write two sentences explaining one effect on family or community life and one effect on political power shown in your scene. Use details supported by the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Faith and Power

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.16b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline religious practices, circle effects on daily life, and draw a box around effects on political power. Draw a line from each marked effect to a practice or belief that helps explain it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a Shinto festival affect life in a village?	**Gathering for a festival honoring kami could strengthen ties among neighbors and connect families to seasonal traditions.**
2	How did Shinto rituals affect the emperor's standing, and what limit on his power does the passage describe?	**The rituals supported the idea that the emperor's position was sacred, but the shogun held most governing power.**
3	How did Buddhist temples serve both families and Tokugawa officials?	**Temples held funerals and memorial services for families. They also registered households and certified that registered families were not Christian, helping officials enforce the ban.**
4	Why did Tokugawa rulers ban Christianity, and how did the ban affect some Christians?	**Rulers feared Christianity might challenge their authority, partly because some believers followed foreign religious leaders. Some Christians responded by practicing in secret.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A family visits a Buddhist temple to remember a relative who died. A priest leads a memorial service. Later, the household registers with the temple. The temple certifies that the family is not Christian. The service helps the family honor their relative and strengthens their ties to the temple. Registration lets officials enforce the ban on Christianity, making the temple part of government control.

Accept scenes about Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples if both explained effects follow from details in the passage. Distinguish the emperor's sacred standing from the shogun's governing power.