

# The Fourth and Fifth Generation Japanese Buddhist Americans:

The Importance of Ethnicity and Religion in Their Identity

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## *Introduction*

This chapter evaluates the utility of existing identity theories as they pertain to Japanese Buddhist Americans in Hawaii. This section concentrates on the processes, which led to their current identifications. In this chapter, I engage with the constructivist and synthetic analytical framework I have developed to analyze ethnographic fieldwork data gathered over a five-year period. The study sheds light on the formation of Japanese Americans identity using a micro-level analysis of attitudes and beliefs of their experiences as they live it. This research does not focus on ethnic identity development, but the importance of ethnicity as a component of one's identity. Thus, identity manifestation is situational depending on whom we encounter. Utilization of sociological approaches, which examine individual-level identifications of self, psychological models (Tajfel's Social Identity Theory, Stryker's Identity Theory, and Turner's Self Categorization Theory) focus on collective-level identities where identities are formed through social comparisons with the categorizations of an individual via their group membership.

Furthermore, this section focuses on the Japanese American fourth and fifth generation with respect to additional recent ethnographic fieldwork data obtained from the Japanese American third generation individuals. This part of the research also draws attention of the significance to the Japanese Buddhist temples and their cultural heritage within the realm of the Japanese community. The following section describes and analyzes the characteristics that influence the Japanese Buddhist community within the contexts of ethnic, cultural, and religious identities, and generational transformation. In addition, to understand the nature of the phenomena, the study examines the characteristics that affect transformative changes through

temporal and spatial aspects of the interaction within the Japanese Buddhist community.

I start my analytical description of their experiences by presenting their definitions of a Japanese Buddhist and summarizing their connections to the Japanese American Buddhist community. Before we begin, we must first develop framework.

### *Defining Identities*

The terminology used for ethnic identity varies, what scholars and I call ethnic identity has been used interchangeably with cultural identity and racial identity. Of the three terms on this topic, within the psychological field, favors the use of ethnic identity (De Vos, 1980; Gay, 1999; Govers & Vermeulen, 1997; Ignacio, 1998; Lee, 1998; Pozzetta, 1991; Sanchez, 1993; Sheets, 1999; Sue, Mak, & Sue, 1998). Ethnic identity has been described as "an enduring, fundamental aspect of the self that includes a sense of membership in an ethnic group and the attitudes of feelings associated with that membership" (Phinney, 1996). Ethnic identity, seems to be popular among scholars but so too is cultural identity (Fox, 1999; Gomez, 1981; Hall & du Gay, 1996; Ilano-Tenorio, 1996; Jones, 1990; Kolm, 1980; Ogbu, 1993). Gomez defined cultural identity as synonymous with cultural values, For example, if a person maintains his/her cultural values, then that person's cultural identity were Japanese. This definition is not complete because people might believe in some values that would be described as Japanese, but not call themselves Japanese. Hall, on the other hand, offers a theoretical solution, referring to cultural identity as the position a person must accept at the time that this position is in fact merely a representation.

Cultural identity places emphasis on the person's adoption of culture, it involves beliefs values, and behaviors characteristic of the symbol-forming activities unique to a particular group. Therefore, culture is a broader term than "ethnic" (Sheet, 1999). However, the affirmation of a group's richness in heritage, legacy, and traditions is better suggested with the word culture. For the purpose of clarification, cultural identity focuses on the ways of life, beliefs, traditions, and meanings passed from previous generation to the next. Cultural identity includes cultural orientation, cultural persistence, and to some degree of self-perceived assimilation or acculturation (Sanchez, 1993). In this dissertation, I chose to, at times to interchange the term cultural and ethnic identity to align my research with the literature on Japanese Buddhist Americans.

### ***Religious Identity***

In practice, the contemporary place of Kona, Japanese Buddhist ritual involvement consists of an ongoing dialogue between tradition and the forces of modernism. Religious identity is said to decline in significance over time through a process called secularization. Actually, secular is quite easy to define. According to Bailey (as quoted in Christiano et al. 2002) it always means, simply, the opposite of religious. " In regards to religious identity, these temples as represented in my sample exhibit variance between a 'secular' traditionalism and a 'spiritual' traditionalism. *Secular-traditionalism* is used here to describe an approach to ritual involvement that prioritizes the personal, familial, and social significance of Japanese traditional ritual observances. *Secular-traditionalism* in contrast refers to an approach that focuses on the, ancestral-historical and universal mystical deep intrinsic connection to the world Satori in Mahayana Buddhism significance of traditional Japanese rituals. The continuum of Secular-traditionalism-Spiritual-traditionalism ranges from a theoretical zero level of Japanese Buddhist mysticism (spiritualism) in regards to Japanese traditional ritual to 'maximal' non-Orthodox, universe/Buddhist concentrating on Japanese traditional ritual spiritualism. This describes those who not only do not affiliate with a given religion, but also do not consider religion very much.

### ***Generational Transformation***

Recapitulating on theoretical framework previously mentioned, the construct of intergenerational cultural differences refers to the extent to which children and in this case, their parents differ in their endorsement of the same set of norms of either the host or the ethnic culture. To some extent, differential patterns of acculturation between adolescents and their parents are the underlying causes of such cultural difference and in many cases, conflict.

The majority of studies on intergenerational and intercultural communication research have been done on the subjects of the first generation (immigrants) and their adolescent relationships in relation to acculturation and assimilation theories to mainstream America (McCann, Ota, Giles, & Caraker, 2004; McCann, 2003; Mori, 2003; Sugimoto, 1997; Tanaka & Bell, 1996; Collier, 1996). In contrast, the focus of this study pertains to the Sansei (third generation), Yonsei (fourth generation), and the Gosei (fifth generation) and as a result, this researcher has labeled for the present study 'generational transformation' to examine the characteristics that influence cultural maintenance or losses across generations. In general, it looks at how previous generations have shaped and reshape the Japanese Buddhist community within paradigm of ethnic and religious identities.

The next section discusses the processes that lead to the individuals' ethnic and religious identifications. It also analyzes generational transformation in terms of the characteristics that influences ones' identity.

### ***Definitions of a Japanese Buddhist: The Building of Identity***

The third, fourth, and fifth generation Japanese American, the definition of a Japanese Buddhist varies in a number of different ways. In response to this task, this section examines the definition of Japanese Buddhist utilizing various ethnic and religious identity, and generational transformation frameworks. In addition, to further understand the interactional relationship among these actors, the study focuses on transformative changes across generations. Furthermore, data analysis of the participants' definitions and their experiences with the Japanese Buddhist community revealed three aspects in defining a Japanese Buddhist. In this case, the researcher constructed: (1) Japanese cultural heritage, (2) Japanese Buddhist shares similar beliefs, and rules, (3) Japanese Buddhist rituals. When asked the question, 'How do you define a Japanese Buddhist American?'

#### ***Japanese Cultural heritage***

A person with ancestral background from Japan and identifies themselves, as "*Japanese*" was an answer given in all focus group sessions and individual interviews. However, participants were quick to concede that a person did not necessarily have to be of Japanese decent to be considered a Japanese Buddhist. This issue arose when they thought of people they knew who were not of Japanese heritage but attended a Japanese Buddhist temple. Harold<sup>1)</sup>, focus group session two, a Gosei participant, He professes to belonging to the same temple.

Harold, is a Gosei focus group session two participant

*Since I was a little kid, I attended the (Jodo Shin-shu) Hongwanji church on a regular basis, take part in all the events and my parents and my grandparents are members of this temple...and ever since I*

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1) Harold is a Gosei, he identifies himself as pure Japanese and a Japanese Buddhist. His family is active members at the Kona Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu. He grew up in the center of the Kona coffee farm belt Japanese American community. According to Harold, his ethnic identity was influenced from both his parents and his grandparents. His father worked for the State of Hawaii in the water department. Harold's mother was educated at Washington State University and worked as an elementary school teacher. Harold is the only one in the group that did not apply himself to higher education. During the focus group sessions, he did not provide much information but on the level of personal interview, we touched on topics of recent issues at his temple. In addition, several follow up telephone interview sessions were conducted.

*was little I have never seen any [non-Japanese at the temple] there... and I identifies myself as a Japanese Buddhist. The Temple today has not change a lot, of course on occasion you see one or two non-Japanese. For me being with my Japanese friends is important, I have many friends at the other Japanese temple (Kona Daifukuji Soto-Shu temple) too*

Jon<sup>2)</sup>, is a Gosei focus group session 2<sup>3)</sup> participant,

*I used to think like you have to be Japanese to be a Japanese Buddhist because at my church there are all of these old pictures hanging on the wall and when you look at them of course it's all group shot and anyway, the members are all Japanese. You go to the graveyard, it's all Japanese names, it funny because I was told that there is one grave up there, an unmark grave and they say it is a Filipino man. The only non-Japanese grave with no name on the grave...Not at my church, recently at The Daifukuji [Soto-Shu temple] has about thirty or forty percent [non-Japanese] that I see all the time. I don't know if they consider themselves Japanese Buddhist but I am sure they think of themselves as Buddhist. At first, it was strange to see some Haoles<sup>4)</sup> at church but I guess it is pretty much no one says anything and I guess anyone can become a Japanese Buddhist.*

Sam<sup>5)</sup>, is a Gosei focus group session 2 participant,

*Sure they are members of our temple so ya, they (non-Japanese) are Japanese Buddhist. I mean this is a Japanese Buddhist temple right? In addition, the temple is from Japan right? I hope the of Japanese*

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2) Jon identifies himself as pure Japanese is studying at the University of Washington in Seattle. He grew up just outside the Kona Coffee belt community but I considered him a part of this community due to the fact that he attended the same Konawaena high school and had overnight stays at his grandparent's house which is in the center of the Japanese community. Jon also spent much of his after school activity with his local Japanese friends. Jon is also a member of the Daifukuji Soto-Shu and identifies himself a Japanese Buddhist.

3) This focus group session 2 was taken around a BBQ grill cooking steaks and drinking beer. The six members three male and two female of the focus group were all university students that have return to Kona, Hawaii for summer vacation for approximately two months. All of them, three Gosei and two Yonsei identify themselves as pure Japanese, and Japanese Buddhist. The session went until 2 o'clock in the morning a good 7 hours. Basically the more we drank, the more interesting data was acquired.

4) Haoles, Hawaiian expression used for describing a white person.

5) Sam identifies himself as pure Japanese is a University of Hawaii student lived in the center of the Kona coffee belt community where there is the highest concentration of Japanese families. He grew up on a five acre family operated coffee farm which required him to work long hours during coffee season. His family is an active member of the Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu.

*Buddhist feeling doesn't change, I mean it wouldn't be the same if all of the Japanese kanji was gone, it wouldn't be Japanese. Who knows maybe thirty-years from now there will be more haoles than Japanese, and that would be really sad.*

The Jodo Shin-Shu Kona Hongwanji membership remains almost entirely comprised of Japanese Americans, while the Daifukuji Soto-Shu temple only a few miles away has recently been welcoming people of all ethnicity to practice Mahayana Buddhism. Within the context of Japanese Buddhist temples, in the case of Harold, during the focus group discussions Jon accused Harold of racist comments towards non-Japanese. In addition to that he unconsciously accused Sam as the other members of "the Kona Hongwanji temple as conservative old style Japanese Buddha heads<sup>6)</sup> that has no desire to let anyone but Japanese in their church." From my observations concerning the Hongwanji temple, Harold was perhaps explaining the truth of the internal circumstances at his temple with the knowledge that Harold had not experienced outsiders in his temple lead him to assume that a Japanese Buddhist is a person with ancestral background from Japan<sup>7)</sup>. In turn, this could also explain to some degree why Japanese ethnic identity in this community is prevalently high. For example, concerning ethnic identity, in the case of Harold, which is relevant to Tajfel's, (1978) theory of social identity is defined as being "that part of an individual's self concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." In regards to the way in which Harold evaluates his temple, he bases his sense of ethnic self-identity on a comparison of his Temple members (which happen to be composed of an entire group of Japanese Americans individuals, Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu) to that of the Daifukuji Soto Zen. He also associates his temple to the other temple the Daifukuji Soto Zen as being non-multicultural that suggested that his temple as a social collective group was pure Japanese and "*not contaminated*." Harold on several occasion referred to his ancestral history including many generations as members of the temple, implying his pride towards his temple and the history of a unique uniform homogeneous Japanese Buddhist temple. This suggests Harold and other individuals' submission to identifying themselves as a Japanese Buddhist.

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6) Buddha head is an expression use by the local people to describe a Japanese Buddhist. This expression is also used for Japanese in general, due to the fact that several decades ago in Hawaii a large population of Japanese were predominantly Buddhist.

7) It is not uncommon for Harold to response in this manner. For the reason that, Japanese Buddhist temples in Honolulu and in the Greater Los Angles are all experiencing similar situation where most of the members are Japanese Americans. (Nishimura, 2003 Doctoral dissertation)

For the other respondents, Jon<sup>8)</sup> mentioned that after moving to the mainland, (Seattle) he came into contact with several other Japanese Buddhists and developed friendships with these individuals. In time, he discovered that he could not "relate" to Japanese Buddhist Americans that grew up in the mainland.

*I began to realize that the place where I grew up the Japanese understand Japanese culture more than the mainland Japanese (referring to religion). They don't do the things we do like the family grave, it seems they don't respect the dead which I think is not good not very Japanese like, and the smell of their house, it doesn't smell like a Japanese house you know the smell of senko. When some says they are Buddhist, I assume that when I go to some one's house I can see or at least smell the butsudan.*

Comparing his experiences with other Japanese American community experiences, he discovered that he shared a different sense of background with other Japanese Americans and perceived a Japanese Buddhist or a Japanese Hawaiian identity rather than a Japanese American identity. To some extent, a lack of diverse context inhibited group comparisons and thus one's ability to derive an identity. Awareness of group stereotypes and characteristics incurred social comparisons and group rejection. Changing context (e.g., going to college, travel abroad) caused some individuals to change their comparison groups and thus their self-conceptions.

It is interesting to note, the way in which Jon and Sam identify new members of non-Japanese as Japanese Buddhists, which refers to as "religion ethnicity"<sup>9)</sup>. To put this into perspective, within the context of religious and ethnic identity, Jon and his friends as well as five other interview participants all responded that they identify these non-Japanese members of the Daifukuji Soto Zen as Japanese Buddhists<sup>10)</sup>. While discussing racial issues at their temple (Daifukuji Soto Zen), these two individuals and other explained that they have accepted the fact that this Japanese Buddhist temple is Universal in the sense

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8) Jon and I had several telephone interviews approximately three months after the focus group session two.

9) Religious ethnicity is the process of various ethnic groups participates in the same religion. In this sense Evangelical Protestants for instance can be Italian, Dutch, Japanese, Mexican, or Kenyan (Hammond and Warner 1993).

10) During this focus group session, it is important to note that both Jon and Sam were extremely sincere during the interview and at the same time describing the subject of racial issues at their temple (Daifukuji Soto Zen). These two individuals and other have accepted the fact that Japanese Buddhist is Universal, and that this temple stretches beyond racial matters. Yet at the time expressed how sad that their temple to some degree is losing its "Japanese culture because us young folks are not interested in the church which, will someday eventually affect our ethnic identity."

that it is open to anyone who wishes to seek Buddhism. In the case of Sam, he seems to be of two minds. He accepts the fact that other non-Japanese should be able to practice Buddhism at his temple. On the other hand, he is afraid of it losing its Japaneseness. For Sam, the fact that most of the items are imported from Japan, the writing on the walls is Japanese, and the pictures of all Japanese group members of the past reinforces the fact that Japanese Buddhist stems from the members as identifying themselves as being Japanese. In regards to religious identities, by directing interest to people's subjective worlds, Barth, (1969) strengthened an observation that Gordon<sup>11)</sup> (1964) had made earlier, namely that people could adopt some of the tastes, styles and practices of the majority group culture and still be categorized as different and /or retain feelings of belonging to one's ancestral group such as Japanese Buddhist. In addition, this temple extends beyond racial matters and has embraced the concept of multiculturalism within a predominantly Japanese demographic environment.

Not all individuals share the same feelings, during the focus group session 2, Lindsey<sup>12)</sup> responded to Jon in a jokingly manner, "*Are you crazy, how can a white person become a Japanese Buddhist?*" At this time, everyone had a puzzled look on their faces and everyone to some extent agreed that "*it would be difficult for a white person to become a Japanese Buddhist*". Soon after, Nadine<sup>13)</sup> called everyone racist. At this point, the discussion became critical in regards to Jon referring to the Jewish religion having individuals converting to Judaism. The fact that Lindsey responded in this manner, reveals to her feelings that Japanese Buddhist temples in Hawaii are regarded as defining Japanese cultural heritage. In terms of ethnicity and religion, Lindsey's comment pertains to the term "ethnic fusion"<sup>14)</sup> in which, ethnicity forms at the core of a religion. In

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11) Gordon (1964) suggests that ethnic identities are above all social-psychological phenomenon encapsulating a "sense of people hood."

12) Lindsey Gosei identifies herself as pure Japanese. She is studying at the University of Southern California. She grew up in Kealahou, Kona in the heart of the Kona coffee community. Her family is active members at the Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu. When I met her, she was very interested in Japanese culture. At the time, she was enrolled in a Japanese language class at her university. She is also interested in Japanese cooking. My wife (Japanese national) invited her to a cooking session at my mother's house for dinner the next day.

13) Nadine, Jon's girlfriend, identifies herself as pure Japanese. She is a university student. She comes from a fairly wealthy family, her father is an engineer at Pearl Harbor Naval base and her mother is a Registered Nurse. They reside in Kahala, Oahu known to everyone as the Beverly Hills of Honolulu. I have spoken to her on many occasions in Seattle on various topics. On the issue of her insufficient knowledge of Japanese ethnic culture, from the many casual conversation we had, it would seem the setting where she grew up had little interacting with other Japanese individuals. In addition, the fact that her background is imbedded in the Christian faith made it difficult for her to acquire a higher level of Japanese cultural heritage.

14) Ethnic fusion is the process in which ethnicity forms at the core of a religion, as exemplified by the Amish for instance. To be Amish is to be both ethnically Amish as well as religiously Amish, the two are one and the same. In the case of the Japanese community, the members of the Japanese Buddhist community are the central core to the Mahayana Buddhist religion (Phillip Hammond and Kee Warner 1993).



this particular situation, to establish a true Japanese Buddhist ethnic identity, one must be ethnically Japanese and religiously Japanese. The cases of the Japanese community, the members of the Japanese Buddhist community are the central core to the Mahayana Buddhism.

### ***Japanese Buddhist community shares similar beliefs and rules***

In defining a Japanese Buddhist, besides ancestral background from Japan, participants responded that, a person who together with other Japanese Buddhists shares similar beliefs, values and rules. The beliefs and values such as spiritual faith, spiritual guidance, and spiritual religious values referred to by participants were typically those that Japanese American Buddhists hold common with other Japanese Mahayana Buddhists. The case discussed here with respect to traditional spiritual belief, does not pertain to the conscious of the fourth and fifth generations directly. For example, until recently Japanese Buddhist, education was limited within these Japanese Buddhist temples. Furthermore, the means of communication linguistically was in the native<sup>15)</sup> Japanese language. Therefore, for many of these Japanese Americans individuals, their Japanese Buddhist spiritual rituals, to some extent, have not been acquired directly from these Japanese Buddhist temples. Consider 43-year-old Yonsei Robert<sup>16)</sup> who characterized his experience of early memories at the Hongwanji temple as empty.

Robert is a Yonsei personal interview:

*I would sit in the class, the priest would be talking in Japanese, and some broken English I mean these priest like just came off the boat. I could not understand a word he was saying. it wasn't just the language problem but the way they taught was boring with this monotone sound that just put you in a daze...One day I decided to ask the priest about something about the Buddha and about heaven I can't remember anyway, he gave me a nothing answer something empty the world of nothing (mu no seikai). The priest explained to me that we*

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15) I make note to native here for the reason that, the Buddhist priest were until recently from Japan, and with respect to that, the Nisei, Sansei cannot linguistically comprehend theological discourses.

16) Robert is a Yonsei, in his early 40's. He identifies himself as half Okinawan and half Japanese and a Japanese Buddhist at the Kona Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu. He analyze himself as "semi-active in participating in any sort of church matter." He grew up in the center of the Kona coffee belt Japanese community. Robert has two sons which "I hopes will be more active in church activities... I feel the church can offer Japanese cultures and other Buddhist teaching that will help them to be a person in this community."

*shouldn't question but just believe...I identify myself as a Japanese Buddhist because my friends and I share the same ideas of knowing nothing about Buddhism.*

Researcher

You attended this church for all these years; you must have learned something in church?

Robert,

*Ya we did, we learned that if you believe in the Buddha or just believe, or something like if you believe then the Buddha will guide you to a good place, or guide you to do good thing...I think I know more about Jesus than the Buddha by letting in some Mormons or Jehovah witness.*

In considering the discussion on, how were these Japanese beliefs and values acquired? The point being made here is that these individuals identify themselves with their religious identity being of Japanese Buddhists because, to a large degree, these so-called Japanese traditional spiritual ritual beliefs and values have been largely imbedded in their Japanese culture and customs for many years. As for Harold's definition of a Japanese Buddhist stretches beyond the realm of religious identity deep into his historical Japanese cultural heritage that was passed down to him from previous generations. For instance, some of these individuals rarely attend temple services, but their religious rituals and customs are with them every day in their household. For example, "*my grandmother read the Okyo almost every night, offer food and senko to the butsudan, maybe we lack psychological spiritual part of Japanese Buddhism but we very much still do the traditions, and we believe in the Buddha.*" With regards to the lack of written religious educational material, take for instance the Christian faith, which relies heavily on one hand held size book the bible as the core to understanding a spiritual relationship with God. In the case of Harold and numerous other Japanese Buddhists, access to the knowledge of their religion is not so readily available in a hand held size book but in several books written in a difficult logical format that make it difficult for the average lay person to comprehend.

Many participants responded, that a person who together with other Japanese Buddhists share similar beliefs, values and rules but as these secular

traditionalist individuals revealed that the teaching of Buddhism was not acquired directly from the temples. Also considering how Robert responded as "*I identify myself as a Japanese Buddhist because my friends and I share the same ideas of knowing nothing about Buddhism*" indicated, in a negative and frustrating manner that at times, they do wish to be labeled as secular traditionalists. Furthermore, they believe that their limited knowledge of the teachings of Buddhism does not deter them at all from identifying themselves as Japanese Buddhists. My experiences interviewing these individuals, concerning Buddhist education, revealed that none of the subjects could respond with a reasonable answer to simple questions pertaining to Buddhism.

However, in terms of epistemological paradigms, knowledge entails belief; on the other hand, knowledge about a belief does not necessarily entail an endorsement of its truth. For example, "*I know about Buddhism, but I don't believe in it*" is consistent. It is also possible that someone believes in Buddhism but knows very little about it (it would be paradoxical to believe in something of which one knows absolutely nothing). Belief is a subjective personal basis for individual behavior, while truth is an objective state independent of the individual.

*Japanese Buddhist Rituals: Ohakamairi and the Butsudan, Paying respect to the family grave with reverence to religious identity*

A person who respects their ancestors by regularly visiting and offering flowers and incense at their family grave is a Japanese Buddhist. Among these fourth and fifth generation Japanese, Ohakamairi (visiting the family cemetery) on a regular basis for example, once a month was agreed to be an important element in Japanese Buddhist rituals by everyone in both focus session one and two and during other individual interviews. In a personal interview with Jerry<sup>17)</sup> a Yonsei in his mid-40 replied,

Jerry, is a Yonsei, Personal interview accidental,

*I usually visit our family grave once a month because of several reasons. One, because of spiritual reason this is the place I go to talk*

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17) Jerry is a Yonsei, and identifies himself as pure Japanese. He is an insurance broker. He lives in the northern section of the Kona coffee belt Japanese community. He claims that he is a semi-active member at the Kona Daifukuji Zen Soto-Shu Temple. He is married to a Yonsei pure Japanese American from Hilo (the eastern side of the island of Hawaii). During the interview, I met their eight-year-old son and their Five-year-old daughter. In the interview, they mentioned that they were concerned that their "...children lack the knowledge and experiences of Japanese cultural heritage, and were making great effort to find ways on help them acquire it..."

*to my grandfather. Second, is because this is what Japanese do we offer flowers and fruit and senko to the pass ancestors; I think it's a ritual tradition. I also think that in our house there is a altar (butsudan) which when I was little my job was to bring back and clean the little rice bowl every morning. My grandmother used to offer the same food we ate to our ancestors every day. Having an altar in your house is a house that is real Japanese especially if the altar is in the living room. But it's not just the altar, my grandma used chant every morning and night with the jizu beads and the smell of the senko and everything this is a Japanese house... That we or her believe in Buddha.*

For Jerry and his family, connecting with their ancestors through visiting the family grave and offering food and flowers to their family butsudān at home was important to identifying themselves as Japanese culturally. Jerry relates his Japanese cultural identity to the butsudān in his house. The fact that there is a butsudān in the house itself symbolizes both spiritual religious convictions and Japanese cultural heritage. Jerry also mentioned the area on which the butsudān is located in the house interprets to some extent the degree on how strongly his family respects Japaneseness values. For instance, during the focus group session two, for the participants that had a butsudān in their house, some individuals responded that their butsudān was located in another room. Jon, described his feeling toward the butsudān in their house,

Jon, is a Gosei personal interview participant over the telephone

*When we were little the altar was in the front (living room) next to the door. That was when my grandma was a live, she would always say the altar is here because when relatives come the first thing they have to do is go to the altar and make an offer and gassho. Then after she passed away and a few years went by, the altar was moved to another room. The reason for that was, my mom, I think was not comfortable about a Buddhist altar in the living room. I also think that my mom is a shame of her religion when her non-Japanese friends visit our house so she moved the altar in the other room. You see my mom is not really Japanese Japanese (culturally)... After a year or so, we all stop offering food, well not completely stop maybe once a month then twice a year. And of course, no one reads the Okyo anymore.*

In understanding Japanese ethnic identity, there are many cases similar to Jon's Sansei mother who lived in a generation where national identity conflicted with their ethnic identity and until this day, still struggles with their Japanese ethnic identity (Nagata, 1990). With regards to the family butsudān, the fact that the butsudān was not completely destroyed or taken away leaves a positive presents that the butsudān is in fact a symbol to their religious identity to Japanese Buddhism. Analysis of this discussion with the concept of, "emphasizing ethnicity over religion," it is clear that Jon's mother moved the butsudān to another room suggest that Jon's mother prefer not to be too religious (Japanese Buddhism) among her Christian friends. As Jon and his mother, show the comparative experiences of both Buddhism and Christianity in their family lives complicated the picture of what religion is, such that they could not reconcile the tension in any other way than to move the ritual instrument to another room. These actions lead to the decrease in spiritual tradition and to some extent an entry toward religious pluralism.

*Moving the Butsudān: Japanese Buddhism and Christianity under one roof*

Jon's mother a Yonsei, grew up in a community where the population were predominantly Japanese. Among her friends at the time, were entirely Japanese Buddhist that shared similar common beliefs, and rules. According to her, "I had a comfort zone among my Japanese friends and issues like religion were never a problem because everyone was Buddhist. Of course I had Japanese Christian friends too but they were I guess use to at looking at a Butsudān when they came to our house." After Jon's mother married, the couple moved approximately ten miles outside of the Japanese Kona Coffee belt community where the demographic population among Japanese ethnic family was few. For Jon's mother, interacting among a wide multicultural environment was difficult for her in the beginning but gradually accepted her new environment. In doing so, to some extent, Jon's mother decided to assimilate with mainstream Hawaiian American society. As a result, as indicated by her, "I was always nerves when non-Japanese would come to my house and see our Butsudān what would they think? With the smell and the statutes, (Buddhist) and this big alter appealing to some strange religion. I was not ashamed but rather uncomfortable because everyone around us was Protestants and Catholics and I was the only non-Christian. Soon after my mother passed away I decided to move the Butsudān to the other room." Jon's mother stated that, religion was the only element in her culture that concerned her while living outside the Japanese community. She is a big supporter of other Japanese cultural events and is an active member of the Daifukuji Soto Zen and on occasions attends the Hongwanji Jodo Shin-Shu temples.

*Secular—Traditionalist Japanese Buddhist: Ascension*

As a secular-traditionalist Japanese Buddhist, these individuals are examples of Japanese you would not otherwise expect to be strongly committed to ethnic and religious activities. For instance, an individual might look at the headstone or an Ihai and think, 'this is just a stone or a piece of stick' but this is not the case. For many of these individuals, visiting their family grave has various important spiritual rituals and traditional values. Therefore, within this discussion on family graves and altars, these individuals fall into the category of spiritual-traditionalist in their religious identification. They to some extent believe that the incense they burn helps them to communicate with their passed loved ones during meditation in the form of gassho. It is also evident from the beautiful flower that is placed near these graves that these individuals truly respect their ancestors<sup>18)</sup>, Alice, a 34-year-old Yonsei, responded to her grandma as,

Alice is a Yonsei personal interview, telephone conversation

*My grandma is amazing she spends so much money on my grandpa(deceased), every week she is buying fresh flowers for the grave and fresh flower for the butsudan. Actually, she is so cute, she loved him so much that the flowers, fruits is always looking the best. My grandma read the Okyo every night, and like I said offer the same food we eat to the butsudan... I am wondering about myself and if I can continue this ritual, I am always reminded from her how important it is to do this. Even when I get older, I don't think I can read the Okyo every day.*

*I learned many things from my grandparents, for example fear. If you don't put flowers on the grave or the butsudan than we will get bad karama or bachi (bad luck). Or something like don't do bad things because it's going to make your ancestors angry.*

On a regular basis visiting and offering flowers and incense at their family

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18) Alice also identifies herself as pure Japanese but mentioned that she is one-eighth Chinese from her mother's side of the family. Her family is semi-active at the Hongwanji A self proclaimed atheist, she graduated from a community college in the San Francisco area and returned back to Kona and is now working at a large Home Center Retail Store. She grew up in Keahou-Kona, which is in the Kona coffee belt community. During her interview, with respect to the comment below, she made it clear that she "loves her great-grandfather and that he is so kind." She noted that her family is somewhat moderate liberal on most issues, but spiritually religious.

grave is a Japanese Buddhist according to the majority of the participants. Among these, third, fourth and fifth generation individuals, Ohakamairi regularly for instances, once a month was suggested to be an important element in Japanese Buddhist rituals. The other element among these participants in terms of religious rituals was to observe butsudān practices. In this section, straight down generational transformation from grandparents to their grandchildren had a high a relationship to the maintenance of spiritual traditional religious rituals, which are also, practiced by seculars as well spirituals. This perhaps could also determine the existence of the butsudān, "whether it was taken away, moved to another room, or was never acquired." In any case, these Japanese ritual forms into Japanese values which are extremely important to the numerous member of the Japanese Buddhist community.

Recapitulating on these definitions, it is quite perspicuous that ethnic identity has a significant influence on Japanese traditional heritage, similarity of beliefs, and values. Individuals with ancestral background from Japan identify themselves, as "Japanese" was an answer that was common among fourth and fifth generation young Japanese Buddhist Americans. only a few participants suggested that one needed to be attending Temple services in order to be considered a Japanese Buddhist. This is crucial, given the drop off in attendance and the recent revitalization among the younger generation. As mentioned previously, although these young adults were attending their temples less frequently, they continued to describe themselves as going to "the Daifukuji Church or the Hongwanji Church a few times a year rather than no Church."

The temple with its low attendance is still able to effectively transmit its spiritual traditional ways. For example, these young individuals with their deep community bonds who together with other Japanese Buddhist share similar traditional beliefs, values and rules to the point that they religiously identify themselves strongly as Japanese Buddhists. For this researcher, it was quite unique when compared with numerous interviews in other West Coast Japanese communities where participants were reluctant to openly admit to their Japanese Buddhist identity.

Regularly visiting and offering flowers and incense at their family grave is a Japanese Buddhist according to the majority of the participants. Among these fourth and fifth generation Japanese, Ohakamairi on a regular basis for instances, once a month was suggested to be an important element in Japanese Buddhist rituals. The other element among these participants in terms of religious rituals was to observe butsudān practices. In this study, straight down generational transformation from grandparents to the participants had a high relationship to the maintenance of

spiritual traditional religious rituals. This perhaps could also determine the existence of the butsudān, "whether it was taken away, moved to another room, or was never acquired."

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