

Transnationalism, Buddhism and Japanese Americans in the United States of America

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Abstract

This paper examines the social exclusion of Japanese-Americans and the influence that this social exclusion had on Japanese-American beliefs in Buddhism. The study demonstrates that social exclusion likely contributed to strengthening the belief in Buddhist religious institution among Japanese-Americans in the early twentieth century. The analysis of secondary resources highlights important new topics to be discussed, such as the role of religion and faith in times of social exclusion and racism, as well as diplomatic relations and Japanese religion in general. The finding shows that American society was divided at the time of the World War II with regard to the accommodation of the immigrants in general. Some Americans considered immigration to be an integral part of the country's development, while others believed that immigrants threatened American security. The discourse about immigrants and the situation of America being divided about immigrants is similar to what we see today in America, and we can learn much about the present by more closely scrutinizing this similar event in America's past.

Key Words: Japanese-American, Buddhism, Transnationalism, Immigrants, the U.S.

Introduction

The September 11 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in the United States of America (the U.S.), by terrorist groups claiming to be Islamic, have created uncomfortable feelings and connotations towards the religion Islam and the immigration of Arabic speaking people in the United States, raising questions about the relationship between immigrants, religion and homeland security. The public attention and tensions have created the need for Muslims to clarify their identity – both who they are and the extent to which they accept or reject an identity associated with terrorism. More recently, we witness the surge of nationalism arising in the U.S. that resulted in banning the entry of predominantly Muslim country origin immigrants and refugees. The way that the Muslim population has been grouped together and stereotyped by many in the West does urge us to reflect on the historical relationships between religion and immigrants in the United States, and how immigrants were perceived and accepted or rejected. Looking back, the accommodation of the immigrants in the U.S. has always been an issue. In particular, the religion of the immigrants coming to settle in the U.S. was often associated with malaise or even the source of conflicts between immigrants and people already living in the U.S. Religion has been an integral part of ethnocentric nationalism. The historical case of the relationship between Japanese immigrants and national security agencies

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in the U.S. provides a good comparative study for analyzing this issue. The reason for this is that the Japanese religion Buddhism was once considered to be the source of conflicts.

On the 7th of December 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The day after this attack on the U.S., the U.S. and Britain declared war on Japan. Japan-US relations have since been marked and tainted by this war, which has also influenced the religious beliefs of Japanese-Americans. The central question of this paper is to what extent religion influenced the way Japanese Americans formed their identities between the late 19th century and the end of the Second World War. The main concern is how the religious identity of Japanese-Americans was affected by the socio-political context of the United States, as well as the broader international political and economic contexts. Yoshida suggests that despite the existence of ethnic Christian churches among the immigrant population (Christianity being the major religion in the U.S.) acceptance of Japanese people in American society faced an extremely high bar for acceptance¹. Moriya mentions that since the bar of acceptance was so high, Japanese immigrants faced a lack of recognition of cultural changes, which, as Moriya mentions, resulted in a turn to cultural essentialism. In this case, that was to turn back to a more familiar religion: Buddhism². This study will attempt to demonstrate the following hypothesis: The lack of acceptance of Japanese immigrants in American society resulted in the Japanese immigrants' heavy reliance on and strong connections to ethnic religions, specifically Buddhism.

This paper consists of three parts. First, it will outline the background of Japanese immigration to the U.S. and Japan's religious beliefs, with a particular focus on Buddhism. Second, it will examine the failed accommodation of Japanese immigrants within American society. Third, it will analyze the consequences on the religious beliefs of Japanese-Americans. The study will focus on the time period between the late 19th century and the end of the Pacific War.

Chapter 1: Buddhist Japanese Immigrants in the United States of America

One might argue that not all immigration has been considered as a positive source of socio-cultural change throughout American history. One example of this can be seen in Japanese immigration. Looking from a broad perspective, the U.S. experienced a new trend of international immigration in the early 20th century. During the first wave of immigration, during the period of the independence (1776–1890), most foreign people came to the United States from Northern or Western Europe (Britain, France, Germany, Ireland or Scandinavia)³. From the late 1880s, however, there was a marked shift in major source countries providing immigrants to the U.S., including a larger influx of immigrants from non-Western European countries. These 'new' immigrants were primarily made up of slaves and Jews from eastern and southern European countries, including Sicily and Greece, who previously constituted only a small proportion of immigrants to the U.S.⁴ As a result, the American society, that had previously only known immigrants from the West, developed a sort of 'moral panic' towards these new immigrants⁵. Between 1800 to 1950, some 40 million newcomers arrived in the U.S., with 85% of them coming from Europe, 11% coming from other countries in the American hemisphere, 3% from Asian countries and 2% from the rest of the world⁶. Among these immigrants, the Japanese made up only a small portion of American society. However, it is clear that the political climate of the time saw American society feeling unsafe because of the new non-Western immigrants, which affected their attitudes towards the arriving Japanese immigrants.

One cannot deny that the Japanese rural poverty was one of the major causes of Japanese immigration to the U.S. The roots of this poverty were twofold. First, it was the result of a painful transition to a modern economy. The government imposed extra taxes at the time, to

contribute towards the government's income. Those who relied on agriculture for their livelihood were deeply affected. Those who could not pay the tax were obliged to sell off their land. Secondly, Japan was hit by natural disasters. The 1885 drought resulted in great famine, which extended across the entire nation⁷. Japan was challenged by overpopulation. Like many other international immigrants, the triggering factor that pushed many Japanese towards the U.S. was, essentially, socio-economical.

To address the poverty in rural Japan, the Japanese government took part in diplomatic negotiations with the U.S. authority on immigration. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kaoru Inoue, and Japan's leading business, Mitsui Bussan, collaborated to make a deal with the director of the Hawaii Immigration Bureau, who was happened to be an advisor for Mitsui Bussan⁸. The arrangement was signed between the Japanese government and Hawaiian sugar plantations. The outflow of Japanese officially commenced in the year 1868, and for the first time, Japanese laborers were allowed to leave their country legally, and enter the U.S. In that same year, the first shipment of 141 men, six women and one child left for Hawaii, on a three year contract. The first group of Japanese immigrants then settled in California, and founded the agricultural colony at Gold Hill, near Sacramento⁹. Many Japanese immigrants who arrived in Hawaii immediately left for the U.S. mainland. From the period between 1885 and 1924, around 200,000 Japanese moved to Hawaii, and around 180,000 moved to the U.S.¹⁰. In the pre-war era, Japan's overseas colonies, Korea and Taiwan, as well as Manchuria, were the top three destinations for Japanese emigrants. The U.S. was not yet one of the top destinations, with Hawaii ranking fourth and the U.S. mainland, following Brazil, came in sixth place in terms of popularity of destination for Japanese emigrants¹¹. Although it was supposed to only be a temporary place of residence, the majority of Japanese workers decided not to return home¹². Consequently, the U.S. society was alarmed at the growing presence of Japanese immigrants.

The majority of Japanese who settled in the U.S. in the 20th century were Buddhist, with some Shinto and Christian. Unlike the current discussion on Islam and Muslim immigrants in the U.S., little has been studied to explain the religious links between the identity of Japanese immigrants in the U.S. and the identity of their home country. One reason for this is that the notion of race is a widely accepted umbrella for the analysis of Asian Americans.

To provide an additional perspective on the relationship between Japanese ethnicity and religion, this paper attempts to understand the consequences of the socio-cultural exclusion of the Japanese in the U.S. based on their religious beliefs. Thus, the following section will include a brief overview of Japanese religion, which will be useful for the later analysis.

Unlike societies which were previously made up of one predominant religious group, such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the Japanese civilization was based on multitheism¹³. In present day Japan, the Japanese have incorporated both the religions of Buddhism and Shinto into their daily lives. One could observe this social and religious reality as far back as the 6th century. Prince Shotoku (574–622), the founder of the Japanese civilization, said that three religious and moral systems were found in Japan, to form the root, the stem, the branches, the flowers and the fruit of the tree in Japanese society.

Shinto is the root embedded in the soil of the people's characters and national traditions. Confucianism is seen in the branches of legal institution, ethical codes and educational system, Buddhism made the flowers of religious sentiments bloom and gave circumstances of the times and by the genius of the people into a composite whole of the nation's spiritual and moral life. These three systems were molded and combined by the circumstances of the times and by the genius of the people into a

composite whole of the nation's spiritual and moral life¹⁴.

In the recent developments of Buddhist scholarship, many specialists affirm this point of view that Buddhism and Shinto have been closely interlinked throughout much of Japanese history¹⁵.

Acknowledging this close link between Buddhism and Shinto, we should also recognize, however, that Buddhism went through its hardest time during the process of Japan's modernization. One can observe a growing anti-Buddhist sentiment that prevailed across all of Japan. The modernization process was carried out from the mid-19th century, under the new Meiji government¹⁶. To establish a nationalistic character, through the purification of Shinto, the government attempted to suppress Buddhism because it contained foreign elements. All teachings of Buddhism that Japan knew in the mid 19th century were introduced from China from the mid-sixth century¹⁷. It is believed that the origin of Buddhism goes back to India¹⁸ and that it was introduced to China at around the same time of the beginnings of the Christian era. The intensified Chinese exchange with the region situated in Chinese Western frontiers, however, was established in the fifth or sixth century¹⁹. Unlike Christianity, which was introduced to Japan in the mid-1500 by Spanish missionaries, one can observe a smooth acculturation of Buddhism into Japanese society²⁰. The process of the acculturation of Buddhism saw it evolve to meet the reality of life in Japan. Thus, Buddhism was embedded in the Japanese civilization by the time the government of the Meiji Era attempted to eliminate it from Shintoism. To form a national consciousness, Japan's Meiji government deliberately used Shinto, Japan's popular and indigenous belief system, and attempted to eliminate Buddhism. While it is difficult to measure the extent to which Buddhism was successfully separated from Shintoism, it is clear that there was no link between Japan's secular national and ethnic identity and the teachings of Buddhism practiced in the early 20th century in Japan.

Throughout its history in Japan, the doctrine of Buddhism functioned to transcend enlightenment and contribute towards social unity. In principal, the doctrine of Buddha shows the path on which he had walked²¹. This is to provide worried living persons with assurance that the highlight of one's life is to attain peace and enter the benevolent world of the ancestors²². From this perspective, Buddhism has been an important agency for viewing one's life, particularly for dealing with the issue of death²³. For instance, the function of the Buddhist temple is to commemorate the ancestors of the community²⁴. The social element is another important aspect that should be highlighted about Buddhism in Japan. The community based on household units was systematically formed in order to provide social unity. In addition to this social function, it has also been suggested that it is not merely a matter of abstract thought, but rather it is inextricably embedded in the political, ideological, and cultural specifics of Japanese society²⁵. As to one final point on Buddhism, it should be highlighted that Buddhism, unlike Shintoism, was based on universal unity rather than national or social solidarity²⁶. All in all, the Buddhist institution in Japan was depoliticized and functioned only for personal liberty and social organization. The following section is an examination of why American exclusion of Japanese occurred and consequently why Japanese needed the Buddhist institutions to secure their strength.

Chapter 2: American Exclusion of the Japanese

In the early 20th century, it appears that there was a lack of political will to include the Buddhist Japanese in American society, liberty and social organization. Consequently, the Japanese who immigrated to the U.S. in the 20th century were constantly faced with the challenge

of harsh social exclusion. One reason for this may be that the Buddhist Japanese did not suitably match the concept of what an “American” was perceived to be in those days, namely white, probably Protestant and of Anglo-Saxon descent. Although the presence of many ethnic groups is what makes today’s American society particularly unique, in those days, American society was not as willing to include second-generation Japanese Americans²⁷. As a consequence, there existed a sense of frustration and isolation that was felt by the Japanese-American. This was especially true for the second-generation Japanese-Americans who were born in the U.S. They were entitled to American citizenship and were even educated at American public schools, where they bowed to American flags to demonstrate their loyalty to the U.S.²⁸ Considering such aptitude of Japanese-Americans to assimilate, a lot of historiography by Japanese scholars takes a critical stance on the harsh discrimination of the U.S. authority. The following section will analyze carefully this criticism, and assess to what extent the deteriorating U.S.-Japan relations influenced the exclusion of Japanese Americans, from a historical and political viewpoint.

Upon analyzing the motives of the American Immigration Exclusion Acts, it appears that the U.S. government restricted the entry and integration of Japanese immigrants into American society based on the perceived threats at the time. This is evident through: 1) the 1908 Gentlemen Agreement, 2) the 1924 Immigration Act and 3) the 1942 Executive Order 9066. Each policy reflected different complexities of Japan-US relations, as well as the domestic and international political environment during that period. Finally, it demonstrates the absence of religious motives behind the exclusion of Japanese-Americans. The following section therefore follows these three different phases to examine the failed accommodation of Japanese-American in the U.S.

The 1908 Gentlemen Agreement

The first diplomatic action of the U.S., which officially related to Japanese immigrants, was the 1908 Gentlemen Agreement. In the year 1907, the federal government banned Japanese immigration from Hawaii and Mexico to the mainland. In the following year, 1908, the government officially restricted the flow of Japanese to the United States. The agreement between the two countries appears to have been reached in a harmonious manner. The Japanese agreed to issue no further labor passports for either Hawaii or the U.S., and the U.S. arranged to restrict the entry of persons with Japanese passports from Hawaii to the mainland, and promoted the free return of Japanese laborers in the U.S. to Japan.

This agreement manifested from a growing American fear of the Japanese presence, and this fear extended beyond American society, to the international community. Following Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905), the presence of Japanese immigrants came to be considered as a growing issue for the U.S. national security. Until this point, the anti-Japanese campaign had not extended nation-wide. It is a widely accepted view that California’s anti-Oriental tradition dated back to its gold-rush past²⁹. Nevertheless, Roger Daniels, a prominent expert on Asian American issues, highlights that the anti-Japanese movement, concentrating on exclusion, attracted little notice outside California and the neighboring states³⁰. It appears that Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese war altered the sentiments of American foreign policy makers, and their subjective relationship with Japan. As a consequence, one can argue that they came to consider Japanese immigration as a threat to the U.S. security. It was the first time in modern international history that a non-Western country conquered one of the major Western powers, and, as such, it caused Western countries to consider and acknowledge Japan as a country with a great modern industrial and military capacity³¹. The country that had only opened up to the Western influence in 1853 was ambitious enough

to acquire a great power status in Asia. Following Japan's previous triumph in the Sino-Japan War (1894–1895), the victory in the Russo-Japanese war allowed Japan to expand its sphere of influence over Korea and South Manchuria. This hindered American national interests in continuing on with the open door policy in Asia – a concept in foreign affairs that dictated that all nations should have equal commercial and industrial trade rights in China. The growing presence of Japan in East Asia affected the way American society came to view Japan, which was increasingly seen as a vigorous and agile actor of power politics in East Asia³². From this, one can interpret the growing negative and hostile sentiments as the Japanese representing a threat to the U.S. national security.

The shift in American thought is exemplified in President Roosevelt's interpretation of the growing anti-Japanese sentiments in the country. In the year 1905, the year marked by Japan's victory over Russia, the Asiatic Exclusion league in San Francisco mounted a campaign to exclude Japanese and Koreans from the U.S. The campaign was successful enough to influence the San Francisco Board of Education. In the following year, 1906, it prepared papers to rule that 93 Japanese students in all the twenty-three public school of San Francisco, including 25 who were native-born American citizens, were to join the Chinese at the segregated oriental school established in 1884³³. This 'local' political 'exclusion caught the president's attention and made him aware of the anti-Japanese feelings that were prevalent in the region. What is important to note is that the president realized that this hostile sentiment against Japanese immigrants was no longer limited to San Francisco, and he anticipated that it could spread over the whole nation³⁴. Indeed, the president himself attempted to be critical about such a drastic measure of segregation in San Francisco, and insisted on equal respect for the Japanese civilization and Japanese-Americans, as with other Western civilizations and immigrants in the U.S. Thus, his interpretation and urgings appeared to localize the growing anti-Japanese sentiments to California, underscoring the full extent of the problem across the U.S. Some have argued that anti-Japanese attitudes differed across the region. For instance, where the anti-Japanese agitation in California was due to the mechanization of local political organs, the case of Seattle shows that without the same level of political influence and interference, great cordiality existed between the Japanese and Americans³⁵. There was also still a balanced public opinion on the presence of Japanese-Americans. The large majority of the public in California expressed unfavorable opinions on Japanese immigrants, but the editorial of the newspaper often gave critical insights on such moral panic³⁶. This evidence is, however, contradictory to what President Roosevelt estimated about the anti-Californian movement.

The anti-Japanese movement reflected the racial prejudice that already existed in those days. In President Roosevelt's opinion, the differences that lay between Japanese and Americans were so great that exclusion of the Japanese was inevitable, in order to avoid the developments of a further anti-Japanese movement³⁷. Racism was partially responsible for making it even more difficult to accommodate Japanese-Americans into society. This view is widely shared by prominent scholarship on Japanese-Americans. For instance, American scholars, such as H.S. Millis, as well as prominent Japanese scholars, such as Kiyoshi Kawakami, T. Iyenaga and Yamamoto Ichihashi, shaped their histories in response to the racist public opinion in the U.S. at the time³⁸. On one hand, Japanese-Americans desired to integrate into American society, and they saw an assimilation consciousness as an essential element for improving the future socio-economic status of Japanese-Americans³⁹. For this reason, the second-generation Japanese-Americans attended public schools when they reached a certain age. In public school, the lessons were given in English, and the students pledged allegiance to American flags and were educated in a Christian environment. Nevertheless, President Roosevelt became convinced that assimilation would not be possible. He believed that the greater the so-

cial and cultural distance between the country of origin and country of adoption, and the more conformity was found in the latter, the more ethnic organizations would flourish, with ethnic enclaves forming that needed to be eradicated⁴⁰. Indeed, American society was developing a critical fear in reference to their accommodation of the Japanese. It viewed Japanese people as hostile to Western people and believed they would establish an ethnic community that would challenge American society. This line of thinking resulted in a never-ending cycle of failure to accommodate Japanese-Americans in the U.S.

The Immigration Act of 1924

The Immigration Act of 1924 was a United States federal law that pushed back the quota of immigrants for each country, in order to minimize the influx of non-Western immigrants, including those from the Mediterranean and East European countries, as well as East Asians and Asian Indians⁴¹. It deliberately limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to two percent of the number of people from that country who were already living in the U.S. in 1890, according to the census of 1890. This was, thus, the first permanent limitation on international immigration into the U.S.

The Immigration Act concerned a variety of countries and regions, and it included the Asian Exclusion Act, which entirely prohibited East Asians and Asian Indians from immigrating to the U.S. There was one shortfall to the 1906 Gentlemen's Agreement that sought to reduce the number of Japanese immigrants in America. The agreement still allowed those presently domiciled in the U.S. to leave and return on a voluntary basis, and, most importantly, it allowed for family re-unification⁴². It was expected that the Gentlemen's Agreement would end immigration; however, the Japanese population in the U.S. continued to increase. In the year 1910, there were 72,000 Japanese-Americans; in the year 1920, the figure reached 150,000⁴³. Looking at the number of adult Japanese within California alone, the figure rose from 32,785 in 1910 to 47,566 in 1920⁴⁴. From a gender perspective, between 1908 and 1919, 39 percent of the Japanese moving to the U.S. were women, most of who came to join their husbands. Indeed, by 1920, their presence as wives and mothers had completely changed the Japanese community⁴⁵.

We should question, however, the extent to which the growing number of Japanese-Americans directly represented increasing threats to U.S. security. Little evidence suggests that the U.S. public intensified its anti-Japanese movement because of the increased number of Japanese population in the U.S. Contrary to this view, Roger Daniel, the prominent scholar on Japanese-Americans, suggested that from 1913 to 1919, exclusionist activity within California declined; no significant anti-Japanese organization existed during those years⁴⁶. The principal reason for this decline of anti-Japanese feeling was likely that the U.S. was preoccupied with World War I (1914–1918); thus, dealing with Japan's continuous efforts to consolidate its interests was not an immediate priority for U.S. security at the time. This illustrates that the climate of Japan-US relations was a much more significant factor than the actual number of immigrants in shaping the anti-Japanese discourse.

With the end of World War I, Japan continued its ambitious endeavors in Asia, and this caught America's attention and raised concern. It came with the collapse of what remained of the old imperial order in East Asia; thus, Japan was obliged to redefine its fundamental relationship with the three major players, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the U.S.⁴⁷. In this context, Japan sought to acquire equal status from the West (i.e. Japan's position in the Pacific from the conquest of German's Island to Manchuria, as well as the termination of the racial clause at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference). Japan's leading politicians also agreed upon the idea to protect its sphere of influence in the East, which continuously undermined the Europe-

an order in the region⁴⁸. The government of Japan simultaneously attempted to keep sound relations with the U.S., thinking that international cooperation was fundamental for Japan's security⁴⁹. However, Japan's privileged status was contrary to what the U.S. was ready to accept. Thus, we can see that Japan posed a threat to U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific.

There was not only external, but also internal pressure from ethnically Japanese people on American security. There is a clear distinction between 1) the legitimacy of government sovereignty to regulate the inflow of the international immigrants and 2) the question of socio-economic exclusion for the immigrant settlers. However, one can argue that racist moral panic can simultaneously influence the socio-economic exclusion of immigrant settlers and the passage of immigration exclusion registrations. To address this racist moral panic, American politicians instituted fears of a mythic race war for responsible efforts to reach a mutual understanding between people⁵⁰. No known evidence demonstrates that the U.S. government was ever willing to take political action to correct the persisting and growing moral racism toward Japanese immigrants in those days.

The Japanese-Americans' growing economic success also came to pose as a threat to American citizens. The first generation was initially stripped of their civil liberties and the bulk of their property was marginalized. Generally speaking, the second generation, even with their excellent academic achievement, could only find work within their ethnic community and within establishments owned and run by the first generation-middle class Japanese-American society⁵¹. Some even suggested that, in the pre-war period, 'Asians and their children have been a parish group at the very bottom of the ethnic escalator of American society, holding legal and social status even below that of oppressed African Americans'⁵². Given such general socio-economic constraints, however, by the 1920s, Japanese-Americans began to make some economic progress. In 1919, about 10% of the market value of Californian agriculture was attributable to Japanese farmers, who produced some \$67 million worth of products⁵³. By the end of the 1920s, Japanese-Americans came to seek white-collar jobs, which were long associated with equality with the whites. Also, Japanese-Americans tended to employ people who belonged to their own ethnic and national groups, as was also the practice among 'white' Americans. There was consequently a growing presence of Japanese ethnic businesses in the U.S. It has been suggested that disputes arose due to their economic success, and that Japanese-Americans in California, and elsewhere, were faced with persistent prejudices⁵⁴. The increasing number of Japanese-Americans was not the sole factor that led to a growing moral panic in American society, however. The significance of containing Japan's geopolitical interests in the Asia Pacific also formed part of the U.S. foreign policy objectives, and was largely responsible for the growing anti-Japanese sentiments. Moreover, the socio-economic promotion of Japanese-Americans was received negatively, in such a way as to promote a policy of exclusion. Looking back to when the immigration Act of 1924 was signed, the way Japanese-Americans were socialized was not the way they wished to be. The racism on the side of American society as well as an unwillingness to overcome cultural differences kept American society and Japanese-Americans apart.

The 1942 Executive Order 9066

The exclusion and detention of Japanese-Americans was the final point of racial confrontation. Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt authorized the internment of Japanese immigrants and citizens with an executive order in 1942. Translated into practice, the executive order led to the forced removal and internment of approximately 120,000 Japanese Americans (62% of whom were American citizens), Chinese-Japanese Americans, Korean-Americans considered to have Japanese nationality, Japanese-Hawaiians

in the mainland and Japanese-Latin Americans from the West Coast of the U.S. during World War II. Roughly, 110,000 men, women and children were at first put into temporary Assembly Centers. Later, the army took them to prison camps located mainly in remote parts of the mountains and deserts of the West⁵⁵.

This ethnic rhetoric played a great role in deteriorating Japan-US relations in the 1930s and 1940s. In this view, the Shinto-inspired form of nationalism was partly responsible for Japan's aggressive foreign policy at that time. During these years, the government of Japan developed its Asian policy as it evolved under the banner of the Great Asian co-prosperity sphere, which challenged American interests in China and Southeast Asia⁵⁶. The historiography of Japan's foreign relations tended to highlight the racism that was prevalent in the Western-centered international relations and Japan's frustration with this. It turned out that Japan failed to acquire equal status with the West in the international arena, though it enthusiastically provided a modest contribution to its victory in World War I. Therefore government policy shifted so that Japan would keep and develop its privileged sphere of influence in Asia as the U.S. did in Latin America. Coupled with Japan's intolerant attitude towards open trade, Japan's quasi-conquest of Manchuria, in 1937, and Southeast Asia in the early 1940s, undermined the U.S. geopolitical interests. In the major historiography, there is no evidence that the human rights violation of the Japanese colonial subjects were the purpose of intervention. Given the condition that Japan was unwilling to renounce the acquired territories in Asia, the U.S. aggressively imposed an oil embargo in order to secure its national interests. The oil embargo meant war for the oil-starved Japan, as it attempted to seize the oil fields of the Dutch East Indies.

It was also during this period that the government of Japan lowered its tolerance with regard to American racist regulation, and the exclusive policy towards Japanese-Americans. One can note a sensitive stance in Japan's foreign policy makers' discourse in reference to the U.S. Asian exclusion policy. To respond to Japan's resistance regarding the immigration policy, however, the U.S. remained reluctant to acknowledge that action and attitude of state and local authorities might constitute an important element in the creation of foreign policy⁵⁷. The U.S. was also unwilling to resolve its ethnically shaped hostility that drove Japan's foreign policy at that time. Following the American response, the government of Japan rhetorically used the U.S. Exclusion Act of 1924 as a way to infuse its own hysterical reaction.

In responding to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt repeated the anti-Japanese rhetoric to remove Japanese-Americans from American society. It grouped and profiled anyone with Japanese origins with the Japanese military machine master-minded suicide missions launched against naval vessels. The politicized propaganda escalated racism and hatred against the American-Japanese as part of the war effort among the general public⁵⁸. Overall, the 1942 Executive Order 9066 was the expression of American political choice to exclude the unfamiliar others from a country that challenged the U.S. for its racially constrained international relations. The following section will analyze the consequence of this ethnically driven American exclusive attitude towards Japanese-Americans, based on their belief in Buddhism.

Chapter 3: Buddhist beliefs among Japanese-Americans

This section analyses the growth and development of the Japanese Buddhist community in the U.S., and assesses to what extent it was linked to the formation of ethnic and national identity. It reveals that Buddhism and its institution greatly contributed to forming an identity of Japanese 'American,' which was used to relativize themselves with American mainstream society.

The passing of the racially exclusive act proved to be an escalating source of insecurity for Japanese-Americans. For this, it appears that Buddhism played a key role in providing shelter and refuge for the increasingly insecure group. The exclusion act highlighted the fact that Japanese-Americans were cast to the social margin because they did not fit the American model of citizenship. The ideal of democracy was still racially exclusive in the U.S. at that time⁵⁹. It was often the case that Japanese sought full recognition as Americans because they desired to have access to the same opportunities and a chance to enjoy an equal quality of life⁶⁰. However, it was a failed attempt. As a consequence, frustration and sense of separateness were often felt, particularly by the second generation Japanese-Americans.

Most of the immigrants, drawn from rural areas in Japan, subscribed to the simple Salvationist faith demanded by the Shin (Hongwanji) sect, one of the six main branches of contemporary Japanese Buddhism. It is a widely accepted view that many who emigrated from the agricultural regions of South-Western Japan to Hawaii and the mainland U.S. brought with them their dreams of belonging and world views⁶¹. The majority of first-generation Japanese-Americans believed in the True Pure Land⁶². Before the occurrence of World War II, about 85% of Japanese immigrants were Buddhists, and the True Pure Land in the U.S. remained overwhelmingly Japanese-American⁶³. An anthropological study, conducted in 1940, showed that Japanese-Americans accounted for 55,000 of 56,000 Buddhists in the U.S.⁶⁴ Thus, the practice of Buddhism in the U.S. generally represented Japanese ancestry.

One could argue that the Buddhist Japanese remained wary of the public perceptions and misconceptions about them. Many historians have noted the connections between religion, ethnicity and American identity; however, Japanese-Americans believed in a religion that is well outside the realm of the American identity at the time⁶⁵. It is true that Japanese-American Buddhists initially shared the spirit of Buddhism among themselves and throughout their lives, through the teachings of monks who were sent from the headquarters of the various sects in Japan, particularly from the Shin. However, forms of public worship differed from those in Japan⁶⁶. Thus, when the 1924 Exclusion Act was passed, Buddhists were marked as a subject and criteria for exclusion. However, their religious belief in Buddhism was not related to Japanese nationalism, which was inspired largely by Shintoism. In other words, Buddhists forged a sense of self that embraced the very markets of racial and religious difference used against them⁶⁷. Thus, it was a misconception to use Buddhist Japanese as a subject of hostile unity against American society. However, with the advancement of the World War II, Japan's militarism triggered by Japanese patriotism came to be seen more visibly.

Given the racially exclusive social context, religion played a great role in creating this ethnic community within American society, which did not comprehensively include those originally from Japan, and those who believed in Buddhism. As discussed earlier, religion has always had an intensely social nature in Japan, being used to provide a sense of social cohesion, continuity and community on many levels, including local and familial, regional and national, and a sense of unity and identity⁶⁸. In the U.S., it appears that the scenario was similar. For instance, the local Buddhist temple served to effect group unification in various Japanese-American communities⁶⁹. They organized events and festivals related to Japanese-Americans and their home country; thus, it also had a great social function to play. They also addressed the needs of Japanese Americans – 'providing invaluable social services, promoting ethnic solidarity and serving as places of meaning for faith'⁷⁰.

Japanese Christian activities could not develop without the support of the American society as well. For instance, Ernest A. Sturge, an American of the Presbyterian faith, had a great influence on the developing of the Japanese Christian community. It kept Japaneseness in the practice of Christianity. Japanese Christian churches developed very rapidly as Japanese im-

migrants became more established in American society⁷¹. The reasons why the first-generation Japanese-American joined Christian faiths was not necessarily because they understood the teachings of Christianity. Rather, they converted to Christianity because they thought it could improve their life in America or establish a friendly personal relationship with American Christians⁷². This has been attributed to the fact that membership in the Christian church came to offer the immigrant a number of distinct social advantages, including greater cultural capital in American society. Japanese Christians lived and moved within paternalistic missionary contexts. Consequently, there were ties to white American Protestantism⁷³.

There was a diversification of religious beliefs among Japanese-Americans. During the interment camp era, the Buddhist institution helped Japanese-Americans through the painful experience of life in the concentration camps. Following an influx of former Japanese-American internees during World War II, two local Japanese temples were established in Chicago in 1944⁷⁴. They were sacred deals with the most basic sentiments and values that allowed the religious institution to develop as an integrator of values and norms⁷⁵. The War Relocation Authority (WRA), in 1942, was considered to be predominantly Buddhist, with 21.1% being Christian. Of the second-generation Japanese-Americans, 48.7% were Buddhist and 35% were Christians. There was a clear distinction between the first and second generation in terms of religious beliefs. While the first generation usually refused to convert to another religion, the second generation had more aptitude for harmonizing the two different religions. Thus, Buddhism was not a total unified force for Japanese-American.

Buddhist institutions encouraged the Japanese Diaspora to be ‘Japanese’ American. The formation of the leagues for young women and men initiated a series of conferences that became significant gathering places for second-generation Japanese-Americans, and for their socialization⁷⁶. Moreover, the Young Women’s Buddhist Administration (YWBA) and the Young Men’s Buddhist Administration (YMBA) became the primary vehicles for drawing in second generation Japanese-Americans, during the 1920s and 1930s. These organizations had their origins back in 1899 in San Francisco, and primarily consisted of young immigrant men who had recently arrived from Japan⁷⁷. In terms of language, the church, more than any other ethnic institution, persisted in its reinforcing of old world language and culture⁷⁸. Thus, the Buddhist institution provided a valuable space for immigrants to identify with and become ethnic Japanese-Americans. Through their ethnic church, which encouraged nostalgia for the old country, they often became isolated from both the old and new world setting, maintaining instead a unique “Japanese-American” identity.

Japanese-American people relativized their religious belief. Hybridization of the two religions – Buddhism and Christianity – was often evident. For instance, there was what was called Protestantism of American Buddhism, where Sunday school programs for children were initiated and which included practices of Christianity; however, the essence of the religion still contained predominantly Buddhist practices. Also, there was a greater number of second generation Japanese-Americans who chose to be Christian, even before the outbreak of World War II. In the concentration camps, however, some argue that the segregation policy intensified their beliefs in Buddhism and concretized a sense of self as a distinguished outsider. However, at the same time, some Buddhist Japanese in concentration camps demonstrated appreciation for American society supporting Japanese-Americans’ survival. There was a religious relativism among Japanese-Americans in the U.S.

Overall, it appears clear that Buddhism was not entirely a secular massive and collective institution that aimed to threaten the U.S. The transnationalism associated with Japanese-American’s faith in religion did not exist in a way to oppose American mainstream faith in religion. In some ways, it was connected to American society. It is important to highlight

this point because, in much research, belief in different religions is considered to be a source of conflict. It is significant that culture and religion can influence each other for fruitful development⁷⁹. It has been suggested that the temples for Japanese Buddhists did not engage in political advocacy. However, some found strength through Buddhist organization because of the support network developed from their Buddhist religious roots, which helped them stave off the pressures incurred by social exclusion. Along the way, the Japanese ethnic social network developed in a way to form a distinguished Japanese-American identity.

The contribution of this research does not rely much on primary resource survey. However, the analysis of secondary resources still highlights important new topics to be discussed. The topics include the role of religion in the faith of social exclusion and racism as well as the diplomatic relations and Japanese religion. This contributed therefore to the academic discussion on Japanese-American. Also, American society at that time had a sharply divided view toward the accommodation of immigrants in general⁸⁰. The findings show that American society was divided at the time of the World War II regarding the accommodation of immigrants in general. Some Americans considered immigration an integral part of the country's development, while others believed the immigrants threatened American security. The discourse about immigrants and the situation in which America is divided about how to feel about immigrants is similar to what we see Islamic Americans facing today.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the social exclusion of Japanese-Americans and the influence that this social exclusion had on Japanese-American beliefs in Buddhism. The study demonstrated that social exclusion likely contributed to strengthening beliefs in Buddhist religious institutions among Japanese-Americans. The arrival of Japanese immigrants, which was triggered by poverty in their country of origin, caused moral panic in American society. There was not enough political will in America to overcome any cultural differences, nor to accommodate the Japanese-Americans at that time. There was a growing sense of "unwanted Japanese" in the international arena as well, and there were also conflicts of interests in resources in the Asia-Pacific that worked to further deteriorate Japan-US relations. These factors combined were largely responsible for creating a hostile image of Japanese-Americans. The majority of Japanese Americans were Buddhist. The Shintoism-inspired Japanese nationalism eliminated the practice of Buddhism in Japan due to it being introduced from foreign countries, though it had always linked Shintoism in the development of a Japanese civilization. As a result, Buddhism never accumulated the political momentum parallel to Shinto-supported Japanese militarism.

It appears that central to the historiography of Japanese-Americans is the ethnic boundaries that were evident between Japan and the United States of America. The social exclusion of Japanese immigrants in American society not only provoked a hysterical reaction from the government of Japan, but also reinforced the cultural, racial and social niches and structures that religion created. The Buddhist institution played an important role in creating a Japanese-American identity, transmitting Japanese culture and language to the new generations, and developing social networks amongst those with Japanese ancestry. In particular, during the time when Japanese-Americans were sent into the segregation camps, Buddhism helped them acquire strength. Nevertheless, there was also a hybridization of Buddhism and Christianity, in addition to the acculturation of Japanese to American culture, language and religious practice; thus, the Japanese-Americans' belief in Buddhism did not necessarily manifest itself in an aggressive way towards American society. Japanese-Americans had some cultural and

religious linkage to American society, and they were not to be totally excluded. Finally, what is important is that American-Japanese Buddhist institution even appreciated American openness to accommodate Japanese in American society, even though it was minimal. The situation of Japanese-American in the U.S. and their relationship with American society, therefore, left a chance for integration and connection after the end of World War II.

Looking towards future research possibilities, this paper can serve as a base point for comparing and examining how the constructed threats of Islam and Muslim immigrants in the U.S. will affect that group's belief in their religion, and how it is relevant to the discourse of non-state actors and national security in America. A divided American public opinion toward immigrants is what we see in today's American politics; we must now work to better understand and discuss what we are seeing.

Notes

- 1 Yoshida Ryo, pp. 229
- 2 Moriya Tomoe, pp. 228
- 3 Lerner, Max. *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the U.S. Today*. New York: Simon and Schuster (1957), pp. 35
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 36
- 5 Moral Panic is a sociological term, coined by Stanley Cohen, meaning a reaction by a group of people based on the false or exaggerated perception that some cultural behavior or group, frequently a minority group or a subculture, is a dangerously deviant and poses a menace to the society. In Stanley Cohen's book, 'Folk Devils and Moral Panic'. Mac Gibbon and Kee (1972), pp. 9
- 6 Lerner, Max, pp. 80
- 7 Brown Board. <http://www.brownboard.org> (Accessed 1st April 2008).
- 8 Tanaka, Kei. *History of International Immigration: Japanese who immigrated to the United States of America*. <http://www.nicol.ac.jp/library/data/s3-2.pdf> (Accessed 1st April 2008).
- 9 Discover Nikkei. http://www.discovernikkei.or/wiki/index.php/Migration_Historical_Overview_United_States_JA (Accessed 1st April 2008)
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan. Tokyo: Kodansha (1993), pp. 335
- 12 Daniels, Roger. *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press (1962), pp. 31
- 13 Multitheism may be the reason why religion does not explain the deteriorated Japan-US relation in the past. To see the relation between the monotheism and multitheism, please see. [http://theology.doshisha.ac.jp:8008/kkohara/works.nsf/0/04eed22fb0a285b249256f3d00513090/\\$FILE/program.pdf](http://theology.doshisha.ac.jp:8008/kkohara/works.nsf/0/04eed22fb0a285b249256f3d00513090/$FILE/program.pdf) (Accessed 1st April 2008)
- 14 Stone, Jacqueline I, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999), pp. 57
- 15 Swandon, Paul I. *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religions*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2006), pp. 4
- 16 Kishimoto, Hideko. *The Task of Buddhism*. *The Journal of Religion*. Vol 14. No. 1 (Jan 1934), pp. 77
- 17 Watanabe, Akihiro. *Buddhism* 2nd edition. Tokyo: Iwanami (1978), pp. 6
- 18 *Ibid.*, pp. 7
- 19 *Ibid.*
- 20 Christianity flourished only for fifty years until one considered that its popularity posed such as threat to Japan's rulers and it was outlawed.
- 21 Watanabe, pp. 160-162
- 22 Kishimoto, Hideo. *The Task of Buddhism*. *The Journal of Religion*. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Dec., 1978) pp. 77
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 Ian, Reader. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. London: Macmillan Press LTD (1991). The religious institutions has been build because some sign or incident has occurred to convince people that the place in question concerns her. For instance, the world known Horyuzuji and Todaiji that were build during the time of Prince Seimu.

- 25 Swanson, Paul and Chilson, Clark. *Nanzan Guide to Japanese Religion*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press (2006), pp. 6
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Walking on New York city today, one can observe every people in Europe, Israel, the Arabs of the Middle East, China and Southeast Asia and Hawaii, Australia, India, Liberia and Nigeria, the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast, South Central America, from Caribbean islam, from British French Canada, from Green Land and Iceland.
- 28 Learner, Max. *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the U.S. Today*. New York: Simon and Schuster (1957), pp. 39 See also Murai, pp. 240
- 29 Daniels, Roger. *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press (1962), pp. 37
- 30 Daniels, pp. 31
- 31 Best, Antony et al. *International History of the Twenties Century*. London and New York: Routledge (2004), pp. 3
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Daniels, pp. 34. See also *The Brownboard*.
- 34 Ibid, pp. 38
- 35 Toll, William, pp. 13
- 36 Ibid, pp. 14
- 37 Mol, JJ, pp. 65
- 38 Azuma, Eiichiro. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnaionalism in Japanese America*. New York: Oxford University Press (2005), pp. 23
- 39 Yoo pp. 38
- 40 Mol, J.J., pp. 65
- 41 *Historical Documents in United States History*. <http://www.historicaldocuments.com/ImmigrationActof1924.htm> (Accessed 29th january 2018)
- 42 Yoo, pp. 32
- 43 McClatchy, V.S. *Japanese Immigration and Colonization: briefly prepared for consideration of the State Department, October 1, 1921*. San Francisco: Bolerum Books (1921), pp. 28
- 44 Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press (1962), pp. 33
- 45 Daniels, pp. 78
- 46 Ibid, pp. 79
- 47 Barnhart, pp. 73
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Bernhard, Michael, pp. 73. This is the principal reason why Shidehara, a prominent pre-World War II Japanese diplomat, who was a leading proponent of pacifism in Japan before and after World War II, and was the Ambassador to the U.S. when the 1924 immigration law was signed. While some delegates to the national convention of Shinto priests, heads of the ancient religion of Japan, protested against the passage of the exclusion Act, the government of Japan took a relatively harmonious stance with regard to the Act.
- 50 Toll, pp. 20
- 51 Spickard, Paul R. *The Nisei Assume Power: The Japanese Citizen League, 1941–1942*. *The Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 52, No.2 (May, 1983), pp. 144
- 52 Takamine, pp. 6
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Toll, William. *Permanent Settlement: Japanese Families in Portland in 1920*. *The Western Historical Quarterly*, Utah State University on behalf of the Western History Association, pp. 18
- 55 Taylor, Sandra C. *The Federal Reserve Bank and the Relocation of the Japanese in 1942*. *The Public Historian*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 23
- 56 Inoguchi, Takeshi. *Japan's Asian Policy: Revival and Response*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2002), pp. 1
- 57 McClatch, V.S. *Japanese-American Relations and the Second Generation*. *Pacific Affaires*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Apr., 1929), pp. 202–203
- 58 Nakayama, Timothy M. *A Japanese Perspective on September 11*. <http://thewitness.org/agw/nakayama.092701.html> (Accessed 9th April 2008).
- 59 Yoo, pp. 283
- 60 Ibid., pp. 279
- 61 Ibid.

- 62 Jodo Shin-shu. A school of the Pure Land teaching in Japan founded by Shinran (1173–1262), who outlines its doctrines in his work *The Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Proof*
- 63 Ibid., pp. 289. Another study conducted by Stanford Professor Edward Strong's survey conducted in the early 1930s indicates that 78% of the first generation were Buddhists and 18% of them were Christian faith. These two studies demonstrate slightly different figures. It is probably they were conducted in a different year.
- 64 Spencer, pp. 281
- 65 Ibid., pp. 279
- 66 Ibid., pp. 281
- 67 Yoo, pp. 281
- 68 Ian, Religion in Contemporary Japan. London: Macmillan Press LTD (1991). It was, thus, a great social opportunity.
- 69 Yoo, pp. 289
- 70 Spencer, Rober, pp. 281 See also Yoo David, pp. 286
- 71 Doshisya Daigaku Jinnbunn Kagaku Kennkyujyo.
- 72 Ibid, pp. 226. Some Japanese turned to be Christian because American Christian invited them to Churches and welcomed them while they were lonely in a foreign country.
- 73 Cain, Jr, Leonard D. Japanese-American Protestants: Acculturation and Assimilation. *Review of Religious Research*, Vol. 3, No. 3. (Winter, 1962), pp. 117
- 74 Numrich, David, pp. 189–203
- 75 Spencer, pp. 281
- 76 Yoo, pp. 294
- 77 Ibid., pp. 292
- 78 Mol, J.J., pp. 69
- 79 Moriya, pp. 228
- 80 See for instance, The Seattle Post Intelligencer, 1939 May 21. The article shows a divided view toward the accommodation of immigrants in the U.S.

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