

DANA & SANGHA:  
VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY IN THE BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF  
AMERICA

A Thesis

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Anthropology  
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Anthropology

by

Rebecca Anne Sparks

SUMMER

2016

© 2016

Rebecca Anne Sparks

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

DANA AND SANGHA:  
VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY IN THE BUDDHIST CHURCHES OF  
AMERICA

A Thesis

by

Rebecca Sparks

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Liam D. Murphy, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, First Reader  
Terri Castaneda, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Student: Rebecca Sparks

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

\_\_\_\_\_, Graduate Coordinator  
Jacob L Fisher, PhD

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Department of Anthropology

Abstract

DANA AND SANGHA: VOLUNTEERING AND COMMUNITY IN THE BUDDHIST  
CHURCHES OF AMERICA

By

Rebecca Sparks

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) is the mainland United States branch of Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji, a branch of Buddhism that is very popular in Japan. The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin is one of the largest churches, with a large and thriving membership. There are many groups and individuals who support the sangha and the surrounding non-Buddhist community by volunteering their time at the Church. The work of the lay membership is particularly critical because the BCA clergy tend to relocate at different junctures in their careers, while the membership at temples can be multi-generational. Through participant-observation, ethnographic interviews, and network mapping this thesis will highlight the importance of the work of the lay community and the overlapping micro-social networks that make up the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
Liam D. Murphy, Ph.D. Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I want to thank the members of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin for their kindness, openness, and help. I can only hope that my thesis does justice to their kindness.

I also want to thank my advisor, Dr. Liam Murphy, for all his help. He not only provided guidance on thesis and fieldwork, he was willing to help me get papers signed, once I moved out of the area. Many people at SWAA also offered me encouragement and support, most noticeably Dr. Terri Castaneda. It is because of her encouragement that I decided to continue my thesis, despite the difficulties I was facing. Thank you. Thank you to Raguhumaran Trichtur, who gave me invaluable advice. Thank you to the whole of California State University: Sacramento Anthropology, who made many allowances for me to continue in my education. Thank you for letting me see this to the end.

Also to thank is my family for their help and encouragement. I especially want to thank my mom, who was often my first proofreader. Thank you Orion for being understanding of the demands on my time. I also want to thank my friends, who encouraged me and offered to help. Thank you Chrissy Delk, who let me ramble on about my thesis and still seemed genuinely interested in what I was saying. Thank you Crystal Gallagher for offering to be a proofreader. Thank you Dr. Janene Whitesell for your offer to proofread, as well as the lei of writing. I diligently used it, and it helped a great deal. Thank you to Towards Eden, for your help proof reading. Thank you also

Malee Xiong and Joanne Small at the Office of Graduate Studies. Without your help I would surely not be graduating.

Writing my gratitude reminds me how I have benefited by my connections with other people. I could have never done this without all the kindness and support of everyone. Thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgements.....  | vi |
| Chapter  |    |
| 1. Introduction.....   | 1  |
| Statement of Investigation .....                                     | 1  |
| Elaboration of Investigation.....                                    | 1  |
| Literature Review.....   | 5  |
| Methodology .....  | 9  |
| Overview of Chapters .....   | 12 |
| 2. Community in Jodo Shinshu.....                                    | 14 |
| 3. History of the Betsuin - Meeting the Needs of the Community ..... | 22 |
| Building a Community: Japanese Americans Come to the Valley.....     | 22 |
| Internment Aftermath.....  | 28 |
| Activism and Academics .....   | 31 |
| Current Day - Broadening the Path.....                               | 33 |
| 4. Creating Movements - Ecosangha .....                              | 38 |
| 5. Networking and Volunteering.....                                  | 49 |
| 6. Bringing it All Together – Staffing Obon.....                     | 65 |
| 7. Conclusion .....  | 73 |
| Appendix I .....   | 75 |
| References.....  | 78 |



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Statement of Investigation**

I am interested in how a Japanese American Buddhist religious institution help create volunteer organizations and opportunities for the benefit of the community, and how volunteer work was understood and enacted in the institution. Instead of a homogeneous, clearly defined community and culture, I was struck more with the stark or subtle differences that shaped both the definition of community and what volunteering meant in context. These visions of community impacted both who was desired and invested to volunteer at the institution, and the path of the institution and the health of these overlapping communities as a whole.

#### **Elaboration of Investigation**

I conducted my study in the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin.<sup>1</sup> The church practices a branch of Pureland Buddhism called Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji. The Jodo

---

<sup>1</sup> In Japan the Buddhist religious buildings and groups use the word *tera* or *ji*, like the Hongwan-ji. This word is usually translated as temple. The Jodo Shinshu religious groups in America are called *bukkyo kai* (literally Buddhist Association) has been both translated as “temple” or “church”. The BCA website has its religious communities listed as “temples/churches.” In addition, the five largest temples are known as *betsuins* (literally special temple), a title bestowed on BCA *bukkyo kai* with a large congregation or dependent *bukkyo kais*. For clarity, I will use temples to refer to *tera* in Japan, church for *bukkyo kai* in America, and *betsuin* will remain untranslated.

Shinshu Hongwanji headquarters are in Japan, but it has a presence in many countries all over the world. The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), the mainland United States Jodo Shinshu branch, has over thirty churches across the nation. The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin is one of the largest in the BCA. The church is over a hundred years old, and has long been a leading figure in San Jose Japan Town. San Jose Japan Town, only a few city blocks wide in any direction, is one of the three remaining Japan Towns left in the United States<sup>2</sup>. It has borne witness to the transformation of the Santa Clara Valley from a fertile farming community to the high tech and crowded Silicon Valley.

The church owns several buildings on the tiny city street. The Hondo, the main church building, is modeled on a temple back in Japan and is immediately striking. From the street facing the temple, flanking the Hondo on the left is the church office, which includes several rooms used for meetings and classes. To the right is the garden and Nokotsudo<sup>3</sup>, and beyond that the gymnasium, and further still a small parking lot. Behind the gym, they own a lot and a building on the opposite street. That building is used for classes, while the lot is used mainly for barbequing chicken for sale at Obon.

On the opposite side of the street from the Hondo, there is a house that is occasionally occupied by visiting ministers. Next to that is a two-story building where the Dharma school classes meet, and another parking lot. Behind these buildings and adjoining the street on the far side is an unpaved lot, usually used for parking and another house. There are trailers on both lots for storage as well.

---

<sup>2</sup> The other two Japan Towns are located in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

<sup>3</sup> Also known as Columbarium. There are shelves and niches where the ashes of deceased members can be put to rest.

The Japanese American members of the church range from Ninsei to Gosei, or second to fifth generation descendants of the original settlers.<sup>4</sup> The congregation members lean to the elderly; the average age of the adult members is sixty years old, with over half of the congregation over sixty-five years old.

Since Japanese Americans have shown a high rate of marrying other ethnic partners since 1960, many younger Japanese Americans have multiple ethnicities to navigate. (Hwang, et al. 1994; Kikumura and Kitano 1973; Lee and Fernandez 1998). Most of these out marriages were to non-Buddhists, meaning that young people also had to navigate multiple religious identities as well.

Although it started out as a Japanese ethnic church, many non-Japanese Americans have been a small part of the BCA community for a long time as well, either as converts or married into Japanese American families. Since Buddhism has gained the reputation for being an attractive alternative spirituality, more non-Japanese have been seeking out the church. The attendance of non-Japanese Americans is still relatively small in San Jose, but in at least two churches in the BCA the new converts have outnumbered the Japanese Americans.

In light of this change, several scholars and ministers in the BCA are arguing to take a “Dharma centered” approach that is meant to appeal to American tastes. Some quietly would prefer to keep the churches mostly Japanese American, even if it meant for the churches to dwindle away and eventually disappear.

---

<sup>4</sup> Nekkei is the term for the Japanese Diaspora. The generations are counted as Issei (first), Nisei (second), Sansei (third), Yonsei (fourth) and Gosei (fifth).

The church is not only significant to local Buddhists. There are many other Japanese culture clubs or Japanese American social organizations that use the church grounds, for example the Japanese Language school or the Kendo club. The church has been an important social gathering place as well as a religious institution since it was established. These organizations are independent of the Church and pay rent for using the space.

These groups and the church and these organizations work together in local festivals, for example, by the organizations helping out at the Obon festival or Nikkei Masturi, both held in the summer. Many people belong to one or of these clubs and are a member of the church as well. These groups can also choose to submit articles or put ads in the monthly the church newsletter, the Dharma. They also submit an end of year reports to be included in the annual report for the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin.

For the majority of my interview subjects, Japanese American men and woman baby boomers, being Buddhist was part of their Japanese American identity. There was a very fluid connection between the Japanese American community and the Buddhist Sangha as a subset of that community in San Jose Japan town. However, as a white person, I perhaps paid special mind to the non-Japanese Buddhists and their place in the community. While most of the thesis is focused on the Japanese American Buddhist community, my fifth chapter will focus on places where people are either not Japanese American or Buddhist, but are that are still part of the community as a whole.

Through it all, I see a common thread of people stepping up to invest time and money in building a community projects that bring people together. It is through

volunteering that I see most tangibly the connections of the people in this Buddhist community, and perhaps most vibrantly where people enact what Jodo Shinshu means to them.

## **Literature Review**

### *Japanese Buddhism*

While there is a robust study of Buddhism, most of those studies are in South East Asia, where a very different branch of Buddhism is practiced<sup>5</sup> (Bunnag 1973; Carrithers 1983; Geary 2008; Gellner 2001; Gombrich, et al. 1988; Kapferer 1994; Southwold 1978; Southwold 1983). In contrast, there are fewer and shorter ethnographies of native Japanese Buddhists available to English readers (Gellner 2001; Martinez 1990: 336-347). David N. Gellner (1990) states these are both because South East Asian Buddhism is easier to understand. In South East Asian Buddhism, Buddhism is the dominant religion in the country, instead of co-existing pluralistically like East Asian Buddhist nations. The sutras South Asian Buddhism uses have been translated to English, and finally the individualistic focus appeals to Western scholars.

This disparity continues in the ethnographies of North American Buddhists amongst minorities, in that Southeastern Asians seem to be more often studied: Laotian Buddhists in Toronto (Van Esterik 1992), Cambodian refugees in the San Francisco Bay area (Ong 2003), Thai Buddhists in Silicon Valley (Perreira 2004). The only anthropological description of Japanese American Buddhism was Radin (1946), who noted changes in

---

<sup>5</sup> South East Asia practice Theravada Buddhism, while East Asia mainly practices Mahayana Buddhism.

various celebrations and customs like New Year's Eve and funerals between Japanese, Japanese-American Christians and Japanese-American Buddhists.

There is also the possibility that this bias is also a reflection of disparity of power between Asian nations. J. Spencer (1990) notes that the places studied have been under colonial rule longer, and have allowed anthropologists greater access. It is interesting to note that studies on Japanese and Japanese Americans peaked right after the end of World War II, both in Japan (Embree 2013; Ruth 1946) and in America (Broom and Riemer 1949; Leighton 1946). While anthropology is still done in Japan, international interest has tapered off in that Japan is not quite "other" (Robertson 2005).

Kuwayama, et al. (2004) reports that in Japan itself, anthropology is a thriving discipline. However, only a few Japanese anthropologists have been recognized outside of Japan. The "world-system" of anthropology prioritizes work from the United States, Britain and Germany. Since Japanese anthropologists can publish in Japanese and still get tenure and otherwise be involved in the Japanese academic world, they see little need to translate their works to English or German. While the Japanese religious diaspora has been studied, it has not been translated to English.

The sum of anthropological study of Japanese Americans seems to be about academic and financial achievement (Caudill and VOS 1956; Schneider and Lee 1990), comparative medical anthropology (Kagawa-Singer, et al. 2002; Kaw 1993), kinship changes (Yanagisako 1975), and internment (Broom and Riemer 1949; Leighton 1946). It will then be, at least in terms of fieldwork sites, like breaking new ground.

*Civil Society, Community and Volunteering*

On a more abstract level, there are much richer resources available. Communities have been extensively studied in anthropology. Community is a cluster of individuals who share something in common, imagined, real or both (Anderson 1983; Anderson 2006). It could be an ethnicity, a social class, a hobby, a place, a shared experience or some other feature (D'Alisera 2004; DeMello 2000; Gigengack and van Gelder 2000; Maxwell 1998). Communities are not limited to who you know, but with whom you feel kinship (Anderson 2006). The boundaries can be overlapping – you can belong to multiple communities – and while the boundaries can be blurry, there is none-the-less an inside and outside to each community (Hannerz 1992). You can also be part of a community not through any sort of camaraderie, but through the similar experience of exclusion from other social worlds (Fast, et al. 2013).

The community I am studying is the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, a mostly Japanese American community. This community is situated and enacted in the larger community of the Japanese American community in San Jose Japan Town.

Volunteering requires definition within this exposition. A common, everyday definition of volunteering is time or labor given without pay, in service to an individual, group or organization. This is a good start, but it does not distinguish volunteering from other unpaid labor, from internships to spontaneous acts of kindness. Most volunteering requires at least some planning and preparation.

Regarding volunteering, John Wilson and Marc Musick (1997) further define three additional rules. “(1) Volunteer work is a productive activity.” The goal of volunteering

is not leisure-consumption, but leisure-production. Just like the labor market, there is a volunteer market looking for people with particular skills. “(2) To a varying degree, volunteer work involves collective action.” Wilson and Musick’s example is that if you are the only one picking up trash in your neighborhood with no visible impact, you would likely not continue for as long as if it was a community activity and everyone was involved. “(3) The volunteer-recipient relationship is an ethical one.” Motive is important to volunteers. The more selfless the motive for volunteering, the more likely it is recognized as “real” volunteering (Musick and Wilson 2007: 30).

The act of volunteering falls somewhere between personal caring behaviors and social activism. The former tends to be more informal, and the latter is seen to be motivated more by justice than compassion (Wilson 2000: 217). For my study, I include both care and activism under the umbrella of volunteering to gain a holistic view of helpful behavior.

Lastly, it is necessary to distinguish between institutions and what I am calling social organizations in this context, since institutions are social organizations according to most definitions. Institutions fill a significant role in public life and focus on providing services. For example, schools provide education for children, firefighters provide emergency support, courts provide a place to settle disputes, parks provide a place for recreation, churches provide religious education, and so on. Institutions own rather distinctive buildings that are built specifically for the role they will play in the community. They tend to be seen as fitting a nearly universal niche in community building.



Social organizations are much more focused on local populations and interests. They include clubs, study groups, associations, etc. They focus on the activities of the members instead of the services they provide for the public, and they may or may not have their own physical assets. Even when the group is centered on giving or volunteering, the club is focused around the role of the giving member instead of the recipient of services.

Institutions support clubs. By being associated with an institution, they might be provided space for meeting, a close social network for recruiting, funds for activities necessary to start and maintain a group. In return, the groups often return service in the forms of dues, volunteer work, a greater community recognition of the institution presence or the institution's generosity.

## **Methodology**

Ethnography is a research strategy that involves direct contact with informants and subjects, in the context of the lived environment (Fetterman 2010; Murchison 2010: 4). It is in this way that it can best orient itself to making culture explicit (Wolcott 1999: 72). I spent 2012 to 2016, using several different qualitative methods to gather my data. Most notably, I used participant observation, unstructured and semi structured interviews, network analysis and archival research.

### *Fieldwork and Participant Observation*

The start of every ethnography is participant observation. It is this participation that allows researchers to build rapport, understand cultural context and speak with authority

about their fieldwork (LeCompte 1999). I attended Sunday services, adult Buddhist classes joined groups, went on retreats, helped with service projects and participated in special events like New Year's Eve service and Obon.

### *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Although I had informally obtained consent from the clergy and many members to study and observe, before I began my semi-structured interviews I spoke to the Board and gained formal recognition and permission. I used snowball sampling to mimic the connections in the social network I was studying. Some of my interviewees volunteered themselves, but most were solicited. Most of the people I interviewed were longstanding members of the Sangha for many decades, although one had just joined in the last five years. I interviewed twenty people, all above the age of eighteen, for an average of one and three quarter hours. Sixteen of my interviewees were Japanese American, and four were white. All but two interview subjects were retirees.

Questions focused their history of volunteering both inside and outside the church, current volunteer work, their feelings on volunteering and the intersection between Buddhism and volunteering. Four people had started different organizations in the church in the last twenty years, and recounted the founding of those groups. Everyone was involved in multiple classes, clubs, volunteer committees, and other voluntary organizations both inside and outside of the church.

### *Archival Data*

The Betsuin has an archives committee that maintains records of the church. The organization kindly allowed me access to some of their archival data.

### *Network Analysis*

Network analysis is a complementary tool for showing connections within the temple. This model visually reveals connections between “nodes,” which reveal connections and gaps in relationship models. Using a computer program called Pajek, I analyzed the 2014 Annual Report through a Boundary Penetration Relations model. This shows when two entities share a subcomponent in common; in this instance when someone was listed in the leadership of two or more clubs in the 2014 Annual Report (Knoke and Kuklinski 1982: 16). This model visually showed how information flowed between clubs, and which clubs were excluded from the flow of information and influence on the board. This process also highlighted people who were involved in most multiple committee leadership positions. These busy people were the ones most often recommended to me as people I should interview for this project.

### *IRB and Privacy*

Interviewees were given the option to be taped or have notes taken for the interview. All information was stored in an encrypted file on a security locked laptop, and the recordings and the notes were destroyed once they have been transcribed. Interviewees will also be guaranteed privacy through the use of pseudonyms. Consent was gained before taking pictures at certain important events.

Most interviewees allowed taping of the interviews, while I also took notes. The tapes were digital, and moved to a secure laptop. The notes were transcribed to the same laptop and the original paper shredded by a security service.

## **Overview of Chapters**

### *Community Building in Jodo Shinshu*

I compare a service and a retreat to highlight two different ways community is built through shared ritual interactions.

### *History of the Betsuin - Meeting the Needs of the Community*

The Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) are, as a whole, facing the issues of a dwindling membership and a more diverse Japanese American population. Many prominent members in the BCA purport that the solution is to move away from an ethnic by removing or softening Japanese elements and focusing on a more “dharma centered” approach to appeal across racial and ethnic lines. The San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin an institutional anchor in one of the three remaining Japan Towns in the United States.

### *Creating Movements - EcoSangha*

This last year, the Buddhist Churches of America at the national council unanimously voted to have a new group that focuses on the intersection of Buddhism and environmentalism, called EcoSangha, adopted by all churches in its network. The EcoSangha itself is a rather new movement, with one of the two major originators starting at the San Jose Buddhist Church. Using in depth interviews, I analyze how this EcoSangha was formed, legitimized and propagated.

### *Bringing it All Together – Staffing Obon*

In this final chapter, I focus on how diverse social networks are utilized to staff Obon, a two-day summer festival and a major source of funding for the church. I discuss how the event appeals to many different types of people connected to the temple. I

discuss the different types of recruitment that are used; family and friends of church members, affiliate groups that use the church for their activities, and even online listings on websites like volunteermatch.com to fill the giant need of labor. I discuss some of the different attitudes toward volunteers exhibited by different people in the temple specific to the event.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Community in Jodo Shinshu

For this chapter I wanted to focus on the specific religious practices of Jodo Shinshu that help build community. For the first half, I will focus on the New Year's Eve service, as one of the more traditional services for the church. For the second, I will describe a retreat I went on and how it was taught and practiced.

#### *New Year's Eve Service*

The most crowded service for the church is on New Year's Eve. It is not only one of the more important religious observances that attracts people who rarely attend church, but it also combines English and Japanese services together when they are separated on the usual Sunday services. It takes place in the evening, in the Hondo. When entering the Hondo for service, you bow your head in respect to the altar.

The Onaijin, the altar space, visually dominates the room. It is on a stage elevated from the floor, and painted screens partially close off the area. The altar space is filled with overwhelming amount of gold; gold bells dangling from the ceiling, gold plating on the altars and statues. This is because the words of Amida Buddha will never tarnish. It also represents the Pure Land in a very visual way. Those who entrust themselves to the Amida Buddha will be reborn in his Pure Land, where it will be much easier than this degenerated world to achieve Awakening. While this seems to be taken quite literally in the past, the people I spoke with saw it more as an allegory.

In the center of the central altar is statue of the Amida Buddha,<sup>6</sup> the primary spiritual figure in Jodo Shinshu. Flanking the statue to the left are cut flowers to remind one of the impermanence of life, and a candle on the right to symbolize the infinite light of the Amida Buddha. To the right and recessed against the far wall is a small altar for Shinran Shonin, the founder of Jodo Shinshu. To Shinran's right is an even smaller altar to Prince Shotoku, who brought Buddhism to Japan.

To the left and recessed is an altar to Rennyō Shonin, the eighth head priest and responsible for unifying and greatly spreading Jodo Shinshu. To his left is a smaller altar to the seven patriarchs. These men wrote works that were influential to the development of Jodo Shinshu.

To the right and in front of the stage is a lectern, where ministers will usually stand to deliver sermons.

The Gejin, or the seated area in Japan would just be an open space and people would sit on the floor, but the church has accommodated American conventions and put in pews. The room is already half full, and people are milling about, finding seats and catching up with friends and acquaintances. The hall is largely Japanese American, but others who have joined the church are here as well. By start time the room will be filled. During the Sunday morning adult service there is a greeter to help greet and acclimate new members, but they are not here for this event. This evening service is not expected to draw visitors who are unfamiliar with Jodo Shinshu.

---

<sup>6</sup> Pictures and even the written words Amida Buddha are also acceptable alternatives to put in this space

Not long after I have said my hellos and found a seat, the bell is rung in its familiar pattern to signal the start service. The ministers come from the wings of the stage and take their places on either side of the main altar, although one minister comes to podium. People are slow to quiet down; they seem to want to get the last word in before the hush of the service. There is a rustle as people pull out their onenju<sup>7</sup>, and clasp their hands together with the onenju held between their thumbs and fingers, tassel side down. Those who do not have an onenju, or failed to bring them today clasp their hands together as well.

The minister at the lectern starts the nembutsu, the primary religious mantra of the Jodo sects. The chant means to entrust oneself to the Amida Buddha, based on the vow he made to bring everyone who did so to his Pure Land. In Jodo Shinshu, since Shinran realized that the Amida Buddha has already fulfilled his vow, this chant is more of an expression of gratitude than supplication. “Namu Amida Butsu,” the minister chanted. “Namu Amida Butsu,” the crowd repeated. This chant will be repeated two additional times. In Japan, the nembustu is recited simultaneously. This speaker-response is unique to the United States, but I was unable to find the origin of the tradition. Occasionally I saw speakers try to reinstate the Japanese recitation, but it gained little traction.

After the nembutsu is recited, the onenju is left around the left wrist. The chairperson for the service comes forward to say some opening remarks, and to say which pages the Sangha will need to turn to for the sutra chanting. There are two books

---

<sup>7</sup> Contemplation beads. It is a shortened version of the 108 bead nenju that Buddhist monks use to meditate, but since the beads are not used for counting in this sect, the number of beads will vary, but it will be little larger than bracelet size. It is more used as a reminder of the Buddha and the teachings. It is still a sacred object, and is to be treated with respect.



used; the “little book” has the phonetic pronunciation of the sutras. The “big book” also has the phonetic pronunciation, but includes the Chinese characters, the Sino-Japanese pronunciation as well as an English Translation.

After the sutra, the guest speaker is introduced. Ministers are often requested to speak at other temples, our ministers included. Some guest speakers can be longwinded or dense, but most are concise and easy to understand. Today’s speaker was the latter. He spoke about observing gratitude for the year that has passed. Then, he also spoke briefly in Japanese. During the normal Sunday services, the English and Japanese Language services are held separately, but they are combined for this special service. I can understand just enough to know that he is talking about what to think about when ringing the bell. After his message, we sang a Gatha, which is like a Buddhist hymn. The minister gives closing remarks, and the nembutsu is recited once more.

For most services, the congregation would line up to do Oshoko; a ritual of offering incense to the Buddha. However, for the New Year’s Eve service, the congregation will all get the opportunity to ring the bell. It is symbolically rung 108 times to represent driving out the 108 passions that bind us to this world, but since the congregation is more than 108 strong and no one will be denied their turn, it will be rung more often than that.

One of the chair members has brought sake to share in one of the boardrooms – served small cups that are meant for just a taste. There is more visiting and catching up, but soon people start dispersing into the night, to return home for their own celebrations. Many will return the next day, for a service to usher in the New Year.

*The Retreat*

My first experience was much less formal. I had visited San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin during events like Obon and spoke with one of the resident ministers, but my first experience with the community as an anthropologist was a retreat that I attended at the end of Summer 2012. I had found this flyer on the San Jose web site.

*HUMAN NATURE – BUDDHA NATURE*

*AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN SHIN BUDDHISM*

*Shin Buddhism, the largest branch of Buddhism in Japan, is emerging in America. Shin offers a compelling process of engaging life challenges with effective results. By incorporating simple daily habits of gratitude, Shin followers are able to appreciate life, regardless of their material circumstance. Introspection, discussion, and insightful activities will bring alive the relevancy and depth of “living” Shin. Come experience the perspective that makes ordinary life an extraordinary reality. Human nature inspired by Buddha nature produces inner peace and is accessible regardless of our cultural heritage. Wake up to American Shin Buddhism.*

*Facilitator: Dr. Kenji Akahoshi, Sensei*

*Shin Buddhist minister with a background in transpersonal psychology, wilderness vision quests, personal growth and body-mind-spirit disciplines.*

I emailed Dr. Akaoshi immediately and reserved a spot. The retreat took place in the Quaker Center, a tiny camp in the Santa Cruz mountains. The group of eighteen that attended were a mix of ethnicities, from young adults to people enjoying their retirement. I found out later that this was not representative of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin as a whole-which is overwhelmingly Japanese American, but rather of the Tuesday night adult Buddhist classes, which were also at that time taught by Dr.

Akahoshi. Not all of the campers were from San Jose; some had come from other churches, and a few had heard of the retreat from personal connections.

Dr. Akahoshi was a longtime member of the church. I was delighted to find a picture of him as a child in the chigo parade<sup>8</sup> in the fiftieth anniversary photobook (1950). His parents were both active in church activities. His father was treasurer for over 17 years and helped prepare the books every year. Later his dad was part of the Komon, or the elders who advised the ministers.

Dr. Akahoshi went on to get degrees in transpersonal psychiatry and dentistry. He married Nancy, a tour-de-force in her own right, and they raised a family. They were both active in the Buddhist community. Dr. Akahoshi continued to question the connection between Jodo Shinshu and the modern world. After his children were grown and he had retired, he started pursuing the path of becoming a Buddhist minister. At the time I met him that summer he had finished all his coursework and was doing internships, and waiting on a trip where he could be ordained.

The retreat was a labor of love of the Akahoshis. There was not a staff for the kitchen at the little retreat, so all the food was brought in and prepared by Nancy Akahoshi. The members of the retreat took turns helping with serving and clean up. The cost of the retreat was the cost of food and the camp grounds. The Akahoshis did not charge for their labor, although they did accept donations. Still, with the amount of time they put into preparing the workshop, it was not profitable in the fiscal sense.

---

<sup>8</sup> Chigo (sacred child/young acolyte) parades are when young children are dressed up like Heian (Japan 600-1000 AD) lords and ladies and led in procession to commemorate an important religious mile stone in both Buddhism and Shinto. In San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, it has been done at every twenty-five-year anniversary.

I had a lot of book knowledge about Buddhism. I had also read about Jodo Shinshu in books. It, like most of Japanese Buddhism, was in the Mahayana tradition, which meant that instead of focusing on the historical Buddha, they accepted non-historical Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Mahayana also places a focus on interdependence and awakening to Buddhahood together instead of individual enlightenment. I had also learned how it was part of the Pureland tradition. This meant it was focused on the non-historical Buddha, the Amida Buddha, would help you be reborn in their Pureland where it is much easier to reach Buddhahood if you recite the *nenbutsu*. I had learned about how it was founded by Shinran Shoenin at the beginning of the turbulent Kamakura Era in Japan. I learned he was the first monk to marry and eat meat, both of which were taboo but have become standard practice.

Kenji's classes did not ignore these premises, but focused much more on the emotive appeal of Jodo Shinshu. After breakfast we walked up to another octagonal meeting space, this one with floor-to-ceiling windows for seventy-five percent of the room where you could gaze out on to the peaceful mountain landscape. As we sat in a loose circle on pillows on the floor or chairs, we listened to Kenji's lectures. In the lid of an old paper box he kept posters that he would put up to illustrate his points. One was the Four Noble Truths drawn up in quadrants. Another was the outline of a man with a large oval around their body. Outside the circle were pictures of animals, rivers, trees and other objects. This poster was to explain the illusion of duality; that we appear separate but are all interconnected. Other subjects covered that weekend were how to move from the "me" into the "we", how to cultivate an attitude of gratitude, and giving instead of

receiving. We were often breaking into small groups to talk about our experiences and brainstorming before coming back to the larger group and discussing our results with the rest of the class.

At meals Kenji not only had us recite the Nembutsu before eating, we practiced the Japanese customs of saying “itadakimasu” and “gochisosama deshita,” with the explanation of how they express gratitude for receiving the meal.

One of the more unconventional practices we did was form a line, facing the large picture window, then had people go down the line behind the others and whisper the comforting words they wanted to hear as a child. Another was we ate a traditional Japanese breakfast in total silence, also facing one of the large picture windows, to focus on the immediacy of the moment and enjoyment of the food and our surroundings. We did not practice any service rituals like oshoko or chanting sutras, although nembutsu was said often. This is in part because this was a class for learning about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, but it also was in part because of Kenji’s background in alternative religions and psychology gave him a unique perspective on how to teach.

Both the New Year’s Eve service and Kenji’s retreat built community. The service was a special tradition that connected a large group of people to a specific time and place, while Kenji’s retreat was more intimate and introspective. They are both reflective of the practice of Jodo Shinshu in San Jose.

## CHAPTER THREE

### History of the Betsuin - Meeting the Needs of the Community

#### **Building a Community: Japanese Americans Come to the Valley**

San Jose is in the Santa Clara Valley. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Santa Clara Valley was known by the moniker “The Valley of Heart’s Delight,” for its abundant greenery and fertile farmland. At first the settlers had grown wheat and grains, but after the invention of the refrigerated railway car allowed nationwide transport of perishable foodstuffs, the farmers turned toward orchards and vineyards. As early as 1852, some farmers had started growing apricots, peaches, pears and plums for prunes (Payne 2008: 78). These successful ventures created a huge need for migrant labor.

At first, Chinese immigrants filled this need. San Jose farmers would recruit Chinese workers from Heinlenville, named after the John Heinlen who sold the Chinese immigrants the property after the original settlement burned down (Fukuda 2014: 22). However, the Chinese laborers who had been providing much of this cheap labor had been subject to a series of exclusionary laws that limited immigration (Tsurutani 1989). Their numbers could no longer meet the need.

Japanese immigrants stepped in to fill the gap. During the Meiji Restoration, the rice farmers of southern Honshu were faced with the dual crisis of a tax reform that often bankrupted small farmers (Pyle 1996: 154) and a national policy that encouraged a baby boom. Scholars, students and established academics, were encouraged to visit the western countries to take advantage of educational opportunities. As a result, many younger sons took advantage of new policies that allowed travel overseas, with the

intention of making their fortune before returning to Japan. Starting in Hawaii and then coming to the Americas, large populations of temporary laborers started to come during the 1880s and peaking in the 1910s. Tens of thousands of these Japanese came to the United States.

At first Japanese immigrants joined Heinlenville, presumably because that is where farmers picked up their temporary laborers, and Japanese felt more familiar with Chinese customs and safer from xenophobia. Soon business aimed at Japanese men cropped up along the edges of Heinlenville providing the beginnings of San Jose Japan Town (Fukuda 2014: 26).

#### *Buddhist Church Founded*

Most of the first businesses in Japan Town were aimed at the Nikkei community, although a few services like laundries or nurseries extended to the larger community. It was also in these early years that the two largest religious institutions in San Jose Japan Town started; the Buddhist church and the Methodist church (Fukuda 2014: 29).

The persistence of both Christian and Buddhist institutions in the Nikkei is a multifaceted phenomenon. Before the Meiji Restoration every family was expected to be part of a local Buddhist temple, in part to keep Christianity from spreading among the Japanese national citizens (Hur 2007). Although Christian missionaries were active in Japan, they were not widespread in the 1800 and 1900s. It could be that some of the early adopters of Christianity were also some of those who went abroad.

Another likely reason that the Japanese joined Christian churches in America was that they were seen as an adaptation to American life. The first Japanese communities

that formed in America were not intended to be permanent settlements with the same institutions and traditions as Japan. Many joined Christian Protestant missions, attracted by social programs such as English classes, childcare and help finding work as domestic servants (Spickard 1996: 54). They also believed that they would experience less xenophobia as Christian converts.

In contrast to the United States connection, Buddhist institutions were rooted in Japan and a sense of solidarity among the Japanese. Testuden Kashima notes that many of these associations began following a crisis – several deaths in the community, for one instance. He wrote that, “These two factors – crisis and a sense of community-were crucial forces enabling the *bukkyokais* [Buddhist study groups] to start, flourish, and financially maintain a resident minister and necessary religious social programs (Kashima 1977: 21).”<sup>9</sup>

It is because of this link that so many Japanese culture classes and associations started out in the Buddhist temple, the very first being the Japanese Language school. Reverend Takahashi’s wife was the very first instructor in 1908 (Fukuda 2014: 48, 123).

Although there were Shin Buddhist teachers in San Francisco as early as 1872, the first official missionaries assigned to the mainland United States were Reverend Dr. Shuye Sonoda and Reverend Kakuryo Nishijima in 1898. They led the *Bukkyou Seinen*

---

<sup>9</sup> Ironically, one of the first things the Japanese ministers in San Jose did was split the Buddhist community. In 1906 Reverend Honen Takahashi arrived and in 1907 Reverend Gyoow Sasaki joined him. For unclear reasons the two ministers had a falling out and Takahashi and his supporters ceded and set up the Independent Buddhist Mission at the Fifth Street location. The fourth minister managed to reconcile the two churches in 1917.



*Kai* Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA), founded the previous year. In 1902 the church was officially established by visiting ministers.

In America, the BCA was one of many overlapping ethnic institutions that helped Japanese-Americans endure and thrive during times of persecution and discrimination. The first generation Japanese-Americans, or Issei, founded many ethnic institutions that defined and nurtured the individual settlements, as well as the Japanese-American community as a whole. Paul Spickard credits ethnic institutions, along with a shared culture and an interest in surviving prejudice for the high social cohesion of the early Issei. Institutions were highly prolific among the Issei. They created economic institutions such as farmer's cooperatives and business institutions, civil organizations such as Japanese Association of America, religious groups like Buddhist or Christian Churches, or other specific interests like language schools (1996: 63). Issei could turn to these groups to manage their various economic, political, social and religious needs.

#### *Places for Women and Children*

Churches also provided a social center for women and children. In addition to religious services, the YMBA provided a safe social center with activities such as the screening Japanese movies, and the hosting of picnics (Kashima 1977: 7).

The number of Japanese living in America increased steadily until 1906 (Tsurutani 1989: 174). The immigration rate dropped in 1907 due to what was called "the Gentleman's Agreement." Japan agreed to restrict visas to returning workers and the wives and children of workers living in America in return for overturning a ruling that racially segregated schools in California (Kashima 1977: 22). In the wake of this,

changes rippled into the Japanese American community. People who intended to leave returned to Japan when their work was completed. Those who intended to stay started to bring over their wives, either previously married or by arranged “picture bride” marriages (Tsurutani 1989: 179-184). This movement of peoples fundamentally changed the composition of the Japanese-American population at the time. Ishihashi writes that in 1900 married women made up 1.69 percent of the Japanese American population. That increased to 7.73 percent in 1910 and by 1920 married women made up 19.99 percent of Japanese American (Kashima 1977: 23). With the addition of women, the second generation of Japanese Americans (Nisei) was born.

The YMBA blossomed into a larger network of churches with infrastructure laid down by Reverend Dr. Shuye Sonoda and Reverend Kakuryo Nishijima. In 1914, the YMBA was renamed the *Hokubei Bukkyo Dan* or Buddhist Mission of North America (BMNA)(Bloom 1998: 34-35). The shift in demographics was reflected in church membership. Churches changed from primarily being an outreach to young men to becoming family centers. Unlike economic or civil spaces that were still dominated by men, at churches both men and women could gather together. In each church a Fujinkai (Buddhist Women’s Association, or BWA) was created, and these provided strong support to the churches (Kashima 1977). Children could socialize at churches as well. From 1920-1930, the BMNA various created programs for their new Nisei members, including Sunday schools (renamed Dharma school) styled after Christian Sunday Schools, but with the goal of teaching young children Japanese morals and Buddhist religion. The YMBAs were revived and Young Women’s Buddhist Associations

(YWBA) were created. Alfred Bloom (1998: 35) reflected that these activities encouraged “intracommunity networking” for young people, a vital skill in the Japanese American community.

On the twenty-fifth year anniversary of the Japanese Buddhist Church, members celebrated by buying land next to the temple and building a gym, completed in 1930. With this new structure they were able to provide space for wholesome activities for the growing Nisei. A basketball league was started in the Buddhist churches, and San Jose had both a men and a women’s basketball team, the Zebras and the Purplettes, who were both very successful. A marching band was also founded during this time. Dances related to the success of the basketball season were also held in the gym (Fukuda 2014: 339-345; HistoricalProjectCommittee 1974: 174). The first Obon, a summer festival that involves honoring the dead with lanterns and folk dancing, started in 1932. A few years later the land to the north was bought and a beautiful new Hondo and parsonage was built, completed in 1937. Some of the earliest pictures of the interior were wedding photos.

During this time, discrimination against Japanese-Americans continued. The Immigration Act of 1924 (the Johnston-Reed Act) negated the United States’ previous agreement and disallowed immigration from Japan. Moreover, when Takao Ozawa, with the support of the Japanese American Citizen’s League, sued for citizenship in *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, Justice Sutherland ruled against Ozawa. This prevented Issei from becoming citizens, and precluded legal recourse for racist land laws being passed in many states that prevented Issei from owning or leasing land. In Mark Stuart Wiener’s

analysis of the case, he states, “*Ozawa* thus ultimately undermined Japanese ability to participate in an institution Justice Sutherland held so dear, the ownership of real property” (2006: 105).

During World War II, this hostility only escalated, cumulating in the forced evacuation of Japanese-American citizens to concentration camps. In San Jose, the new Hondo was filled to the ceiling with luggage of members as they were forced to leave their homes and businesses. The Church was left in the care of Ben Peckham, a lawyer who handled most of the cases for Japanese American citizens (HistoricalProjectCommittee 1974: 75).

### **Internment Aftermath**

During World War II, there was some structural changes for the whole of the Jodo Shinshu community at the organizational level. In Topaz Camp in Arizona, the internment camp where many San Francisco residents had been relocated, the leaders of the BNMA officially incorporated in California. They renamed the organization as the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) (Bloom 1998: 36). Tweed and Prothero (1999: 160) comment, “Their point was as plain as it was poignant; Japanese-American Buddhism was American Buddhism, and it deserved a place alongside Christianity at the table of American faiths.” I would argue that this was also a reflection of the Nisei focus of the new BCA.

During the internment, prisoners were required to complete a loyalty questionnaire. Those who were judged disloyal based on their answers, especially to two key questions<sup>10</sup> were sequestered to a camp located in the Tule Lake, California. As Kashima (1977: 58-59) explains, this removed many of the vocal anti-American and anti-Nisei leaders, allowing the Nisei to rise to leadership positions in Buddhist groups. The Japanese-speaking Issei referred to their places of worship with the Japanese bukkyo kai, but the English speaking Nisei began calling their places of worship by the translation “church”. Nisei were also able to conduct services in English, which helped many Nisei and Sansei who did not speak Japanese fluently.

#### *Hostels – Growth of Community*

When the Japanese American community was released from the internment camps, they came home to uncertain fortunes. Many had lost everything and needed to start over. Between their losses, government programs that offered early release to those who moved to the east coast, and hostile and anti-Japanese sentiment, many Japanese Americans left California during this time. In California as a whole, the Japanese population was halved – from 113,000 to 60,000. However, in San Jose the population nearly doubled – from 3,775 before war, to 6,250 afterwards. Word had gotten out that San Jose was more tolerant, and many families from “hot spots” like Salinas, Imperial Valley and Los Angeles chose to resettle in San Jose (Taylor 1947).

---

<sup>10</sup> The two most controversial questions, 27 and 28, were about willingness to serve in the army and disavowing allegiance to the Japanese Emperor and renouncing Japanese citizenship. The first question caused distress in the potential that this was agreement to be enlisted; the latter because forswearing the only citizenship they could obtain (since they could not become American citizens) was also problematic.

Housing was a huge issue post internment: more people moved to the area, many homes of previous residents being taken over by those holding them in trust, and housing that had been condemned by building inspectors at the end of 1944 (Fukuda 2014). The Army and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and the Japanese Citizens League of Santa Clara County (JACL) turned the Buddhist Church's older building and gym into a hostel, dubbing it the Civic Unity Hostel (Fukuda 2014: 182, 186). After a year, the WRA and the JACL turned over control of the hostel to the Buddhist Church (HistoricalProjectCommittee 1974: 76). The gym was reopened for community use in 1947, but the hostel continued to operate for many years afterwards. In 1955, the building across the street was purchased for the remaining hostel residents, but in 1958 the last residents left and that building was converted into classrooms for the expanded Dharma school.

With the influx of families into the Santa Clara Valley, there were more rural parents who wanted their children to have a Buddhist education. Instead of many smaller meetings in private residences, children were bused to the main Japanese church. At its peak in 1950s, there were three buses serving Campbell, Cupertino, Berryessa, Alum Rock, and Union Avenue. In the late 1960's service was discontinued (HistoricalProjectCommittee 1974: 76).

It was not just children's education that saw rapid expansion. Another critical outlet was safe social spaces for young adult Japanese-Americans. The Young Buddhist Association was restarted in 1946, and two years later opened more chapters in the North, West and South. The YBA noted many social events like going to the beach, dances and

other social activities. Nancy, one of the members of the temple, explained it to me like this:

*But a lot I think of the reason of why people go to church is social, because that's was one of the places where they felt safe after the war, because there's safety in numbers, and that was the one place they could go that not only that build that spiritual sanctuary and but that cultural sanctuary, they were the only people they could really trust, because who could you really trust. You couldn't trust the people who threw you in the camp.*

With the increase in membership, San Jose Buddhist Church was recognized with Betsuin status in 1966 (Committee 1998: 310).

### **Activism and Academics**

The hostility directed at the Japanese during and immediately after the World War II remained intense and most Japanese-Americans denied or were intensely private about their ethnicity to avoid persecution. Nevertheless, there were Japanese-Americans who still pursued their legal and social rights, and after World War II they had many notable successes. In 1952 the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Naturalization Act went into effect, at last granting Issei living in the US the right of naturalization (Melendy and Melendy 1984: 131; Tsurutani 1989: 173-177). There was also a successful campaign to overturn Title II of the 1950 Internal Security Act, which allowed for internment of American citizens. Nisei and Sansei activists worked together to rescind this order (Takahashi 1997: 203).

Sansei activism is a variation of Hansen's Law with a distinct modern twist (Hansen 1938)<sup>11</sup>. As Jere Takahashi wrote, "Unlike the Nisei who submerged their ethnic and racial identity, the Sansei ... defined themselves as a racially oppressed group and linked themselves to broader movements for racial change" (1997: 155). This included setting up community resources, like low-income housing for seniors, and clinics, protesting high-profile injustices, like Tokyo Rose<sup>12</sup>, or participating in civil protests like sit-ins. BCA members both participated in these events, and created similar civic minded groups within the BCA, or, or participating in civil protests like sit-ins. BCA members both participated in these events, and created similar civic minded groups within the BCA, or had existing BCA groups participate in civic-minded programs like feeding the poor.

One of the projects started this time was Fuji Towers, a six story, low-income housing development for seniors. Hina, one of the people involved, described its origin:

*Fuji towers, you know, is low income seniors and it was actually started by Buddhist from this temple... And there was a big concern for seniors. What do they do when they can't afford to live here? And so this whole Idea, let's do a building for low-income seniors. ...when*

---

<sup>11</sup>. Marcus Hansen was a Pulitzer-prize winning scholar of American-Swedish immigrants. In 1938 he proposed Hansen's Law, which states, "What the son wishes to forget, the grandson wishes to remember," meaning the children of immigrants will minimize their foreign heritage (including religion), but the grandchildren of immigrants will reclaim their grandparent's ethnicity. This has been contested and enriched by several American-Immigrant scholars. Will Herberg observed that for third generation immigrants of Jewish identity, the national identity was discarded but their religious-ethnic identity was reclaimed. Herbert Gans observed that not all third generation came back to their grandparent's culture. Further, those that did return to their inherited ethnicity return did so by interacting with select cultural objects and not core beliefs and behaviors, making the "return" a more symbolic gesture.

<sup>12</sup> Tokyo Rose was the name given to multiple English speaking Japanese women who broadcasted disheartening propaganda to the American Troops in WWII. Iva Toguri was a Japanese American woman who was visiting family during the start of WWII, and although she did not sympathize with Japan, she was one of the Tokyo Rose broadcasters. After the war she was arrested for treason and kept in prison till 1956. In 1977 journalists found witnesses were pressured to give false testimony, and Toguri was officially pardoned by President Ford.



*the piece of property up there on the corner there, we didn't have money, cause we didn't have any funds... And ah, this man, a member of our church, said "Buy it. I will pay for it and you guys can pay me back. And little by little we paid him back. He was a Buddhist member.*

Although Fuji Towers was started by members of the San Jose Buddhist Church, it went independent for legal reasons, and is still running to this day.

Another aspect of this time was a renewed interest in Japanese culture. The Kendo club, a club dedicated to the art of Japanese sword play, started during this time. Also during this time, the Buddhist minister Hiroshi Abiko started a taiko group in the Young Buddhist Association (YBA) after observing drumming to keep mochi pounding rhythm at an Asians for Community Action (ACA) event. Eventually this group became the San Jose Taiko group, and became independent of the church as well (Fukuda 2014: 306).

Sansei participated in the 1968 Student-led Black Student Union/Third World Liberation Strike that created the first Ethnic Studies School in the United States. Previous to this, the BCA had set up its own college. Starting with by classes in the Berkeley Church by Bishop Enryou Shigefuji and Reverend Kanmo Imamura, in 1966 the Institute for Buddhist Studies was founded. It is still the only non-Western religious school of higher learning in the United States (Bloom 1998: 37).

### **Current Day - Broadening the Path**

Non-Japanese members have long been a small part of the Buddhist Churches of America, with the first non-Japanese minister ordained before World War II. However, after the popularization of Buddhism from Beatniks such as Jack Kerouac and Gary Snyder, more non-Japanese people, (particularly white) became interested. It must have

been bitter seeing young white men celebrated for being groundbreaking Buddhists while not even a decade earlier Japanese Buddhists were distrusted and accused of treason. However, many non-Japanese did join and become productive members of the sangha. In their hundred-year anniversary book of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, the editor (2003: 41) described the attraction and articulation of non-Japanese in this way.

*The world had changed for the Nikkei forever. Never again wanting to be considered foreigners, the Nikkei named children with non-Japanese names, and the Japanese language was not taught to the youngsters. The Nikkei began to blend in with their surroundings. Non-Japanese, now curious about these people so mistreated during the war years, began to take an interest in the people, their culture - and their religions. Caucasians and other non-Japanese began to come into the community and visit the churches. Eventually interracial courtships turned into interracial marriages. Non-Japanese began attending the Buddhist services at the San Jose Buddhist church.*

*Over the years, society became more tolerant of mixed marriages. In the 1960's a fascination with eastern religions began in the U.S. as a whole. As Japan became more of a world economic power, interest in the Japanese culture began to increase throughout the United States and even more intensely in the Silicon Valley. More and more non-Japanese began to come into the community and into the temple. Some visited while others stayed.*

*Though still largely made of people of Japanese ancestry, the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin reflects an ever-broadening Sangha. The path is becoming more diverse, more interesting, broader... broader than you think.*

Worded this way, the newcomers first recognized the mistreatment of the Japanese American people, especially the internment camps. Second, they describe people coming into their community in a very humble way – in a spirit of learning and willingness to join the Japanese American community.

*Modern Times*

The church is still producing new groups to meet modern needs. The Dana Club, an organization dedicated to volunteer service for outside of the immediate community, participates in charities such as sorting food at Second Harvest and helps at Rebuild Together, a charity for repairing homes of elderly, disabled people. EcoSangha, a group focused on ecology and Buddhism, was formed in 2008.

One of the biggest concerning factors for the Buddhist Churches of America is a slowly dwindling membership, and the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin is not exempt. In 2008 it counted over 1000 families, and as of 2014 it counted 875. The older generation are dying out, and the young people raised in the church are not returning as adults.

One potential cause is that the attraction of an ethnic church is no longer a positive association. Many of the Japanese-Americans come from a multi-ethnic background. They are also the Yonsei and Gosei, the fourth and fifth generation born in America. Alfred Bloom wrote,

*When the immigrant Japanese were excluded from and demeaned by the dominant society, their ethnic character and the values and attitudes transmitted from Japan were effective in providing a rallying point for a community under siege... The appeal to be Shin Buddhist simply because one is Japanese or out of some family loyalty has proven inadequate to stem the loss of adherents or maintain the vitality of the community (1998: 39).*

The “cure” for many leaders in the BCA, including Bloom, was to end the ethnic focus of the BCA and shift to a more dharma centered approach that would allow new adherents to join (1998). While many agree and small portions of other ethnic groups

have been a part of the BCA since the beginning, many also are reluctant to yield to the possibility of becoming a minority in the future BCA. San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin in particular is part of a still thriving Japan Town, and would find it difficult to divorce many of the Japanese rituals and associations. Most of the people I spoke with, while willing to accept new converts, were interested in bringing back their children, grandchildren and their peers back to the church.

One other cause could be that membership is lost during the prolonged transition from childhood to adulthood. Children have a continual role and peer group in classes until they graduate from high school. At that time, many leave for college and there is not enough remaining peer group to feel peer pressure to attend. Once people are married and have children, they return to the church as adults overseeing their children's religious education. Now people are putting off marriage and family till later in life. The average age of new mothers in 2014 was twenty six, a record high (Martin 2015). If people are leaving the church at the end of high school and not returning potentially till their late twenties or early thirties, then there is a lot of time for them to form other attachments.

Another possible cause is the declining membership in organized religion in general. In the Pew religious study, 16% of all adults were unaffiliated with a religion, and nearly one in four in the young adult years 18-29 (Lugo, et al. 2008: 5). While the spread of atheism and agnosticism is one factor, another could just be a general decline in membership in formal institutions and organizations. Robert Putnam has charted the decline in membership in everything from churches and the PTA to bowling leagues (Putnam 1995; Putnam 2001).

Speaking to the members of the church, they gave various reasons why their children did not attend. Some of them said that their children were waiting to be parents to return, some said their children became atheists, and some just moved to areas of the nation where there were no Buddhist churches. Speaking to their children directly for their reasons was unfortunately outside of the scope of this paper. However, finding and tapping into the needs of the young community is going to become a vital part of continuing the Buddhist Churches of America.

#### *Summary of History Conclusions*

The Buddhist Churches of America has provided a pillar of support for the Japanese American Community. Over its century of history, it has been a place of religious and social support for generations. It has been a place for families to come and socialize. It has also been a place to foster Japanese culture from language classes to culture clubs. However, it changed to meet the needs of the community. After the internment, it was a key place to provide shelter for those who were coming back to the area. When the community got older, it was a place to help rally support for the elderly in the community. It continues to change and grow, dependent on the abilities and passions of those connected with the church.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Creating Movements - EcoSangha

EcoSangha is a Buddhist environmental movement in the Buddhist Churches of America. It is a fusion of Buddhist beliefs and environmental concerns. EcoSangha was founded in Seattle by Reverend Castro. Nancy imported to San Jose, and after nurturing the groups for several years, passed a resolution in the annual conference to have it be adapted as an organization wide resolution.

There are two intersecting anthropological interests present in the EcoSangha; the cultural specific expression of ecology and the formation and propagation of a social movement inside the Buddhist Churches of America.

#### *Environmental Anthropology*

Environmental anthropology is concerned with how the environment influences culture, and how culture impacts the environment. Julian Steward (1963; 1972; 2006) was the biggest early influence on environmental anthropology. He was interested in how the social structure was formed in response to the environment, and theorized that adaptive responses would be similar in parallel environments. This was elaborated by his successors to describe complex relationships between the ecological and the cultural (Barth 1966; Barth 1969; Geertz 1959; Geertz 1963; Hardesty 1977).

Much like the idea of the savage to contrast to civilized, nature is a construct to contrast with development. Protecting wilderness is a product of the intoxication of the

sublime landscapes and the preservation of the frontier mythos of untouched and undiscovered country (Cronon 1996; Glacken 1973; Newmyer and Coates 2000).

In a series of books and papers, Catton and Dunlap summarize the idea of culture apart from nature as the Human Exceptionalism Paradyme (HEP), and the idea that humans are enmeshed in a complex interdependency in a world with finite resources the New Ecological Paradyme (NEP) (Catton Jr and Dunlap 1978; Catton and Dunlap 1978; Catton and Dunlap 1980; Dunlap and Catton 1983; Dunlap and Catton 1994; Dunlap and Jr 2002; Dunlap and Van Liere 1978). Although there has been a thread of study in how people interact with their environments, it is only more recently anthropology has also come to embrace the combined nature and social worlds (Hastrup and Hastrup 2013).

As it has been clear that human activity has contributed to marked decrease in biodiversity and widespread global warming (Change 2014; Rogelj 2013), environmental anthropologists are uniquely suited to study human behavior in the lived environment and offer recommendations to mitigate the harmful effects of human activity.

In more recent years, environmental anthropologists have worked with local communities and NGOs to help represent their environmental understanding, mostly against corporations and governments. (Austin 2004; Casagrande, et al. 2007; Jian 2009; Little 2013; Pollini 2011; Rolston 2010; Treitler and Midgett 2007; West and Vásquez-León 2008; Westman 2013).

One specific subset of environmental anthropology is spiritual environmental anthropology. The spiritual traditions of the world often include how one should interact with the natural world. In many spiritual or religious traditions, nature is sacred and has

intrinsic value (Harvey 2005; Sponsel 2011). Anderson (2011) also makes the point that if you take out the stories of divine retribution for violating the rules, the majority of the spiritual relationship is practical interactions focused on ecology of space that culture occupies.

It is with this idea of recognizing how religious and cultural understanding guide our interaction with our environment that we turn to analyzing the religious and cultural aspects of Buddhist ecology.

### *Buddhist Ecology*

For many Westerners, Buddhism is a naturally ecological religion. Bielefeldt (2001) points out how for many Americans Buddhism and Zen have become associated with secular spirituality and values like simplicity, harmony, nature and peace. However, there is evidence that Buddhist societies are not inherently ecological. Nations that have large or majority Buddhist believers also struggle with overpopulation, pollution and deforestation. Williams (Williams 2010) points out that in Japan, Buddhism is mostly a conservative institution and as such usually sides big business. This is not necessarily proof that Buddhism is not ecologically based, but more that it is not an inescapable part of Buddhism. As Eckel (2010) framed it Buddhism environmentalism is cultivated, not inevitable.

There also is an interest in how Buddhism and ecology interact on a scholarly level. In 2003, Mitsuya Dake and David Matsumoto organized an international symposium on Buddhism and Ecology in Berkeley. In 2010, these papers were published. Inoue (2010) wrote about how a Buddhist approach to economics should be grounded in a natural



setting where natural resources are not seen as commodities, but unique existences with innate value. This way we should focus not on domination, but cohabitation. Kaza (2010) wrote a Buddhist critique and cure to consumerism. Consumerism promotes permanent identity over a dynamic and fluid experience, it promotes desire and harming, and fosters dissatisfaction. The solution to consumerism is to be satisfied by what you have, reaching out to others with metta or loving kindness, and minimizing harm, or in ecological terms, minimizing your carbon footprint.

Mottainai movement is another way Japanese Buddhism connects with environmentalism. The concept behind mottainai is to respect resources, use them in gratitude and to not waste them. *Mottainai* literally translated is closer to “sacrilegious,” but is used more often in sense of “how wasteful”. An example of this philosophy is exemplified in the children’s book, *Mottainai Grandma*. In this book, a frugal grandma comically follows her grandchild around, making sure that her grandchild does not waste anything. *Mottainai Grandma* eats the leftover grains of rice in the bowl and on her grandchild’s face, recycles used tissues for crafts, and mandarin peels for a scented bath (Shinju 2005).

While mottainai has been an ethic in Japanese culture for decades, it was Kenyan Nobel Laureate Professor Maathai who connected Mottainai with conservation on a global scale when she mentioned it in her acceptance speech in 2004.

Another aspect of Japanese conservation is the idea of interconnection. American parents shame their children for not finishing their food by telling them of the starving children in another country; implicitly reminding them that they live a relatively

luxurious life and they should be grateful, while also setting up a dichotomy of have and have nots. Japanese parents do this as well, but they have another saying, which is to think of the farmer. The idea is that the farmer has worked hard to produce the food that you are now wasting.

### *Social Movements*

The anthropology of social movements is a subset of political anthropology. Anthropology is late to the social movements party. Social scientists had long come to a sophisticated understanding of how social networks, collective identity, resource mobilizations and other factors impacted the birth and growth of new movements.

### *EcoSangha Revolution*

In February of 2015, the Buddhist Churches of America National Council passed the EcoSangha Resolution. This resolution could best be summed up by the conclusion, "THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that each BCA temple be encouraged to adopt policies that promote an awareness of the profound implication of our behavior on future generations and to promote ecologically friendly behavior in the spirit of 'mottai-nai' (Castro 2015)." This was both the fruition of the tireless work of Reverend Don Castro and Karen Akahoshi, who created and nourished the EcoSangha movement, and the hopeful beginning of a new united Buddhist ethic of conservation and ecology.

### *EcoSangha Founding in Seattle*

Reverend Don Castro first saw the connections between Buddhism and the environmental movement back in the 1970s while he was studying Keigon Buddhism in college. Rachel Carson's (1962) newly published Silent Spring pesticides on crops and its

unintended connection with deaths of birds and other wildlife was the negative side of the coin of codependence and interconnection. As he studied more, he realized the historical Buddha, Shakyumuni was an ecologist and a conservationist. He not only understood the impact the natural world (ecology), but he wanted to end suffering (conservation). When Shakyumuni Buddha laid out the Four Noble Truths to end suffering, he was also laying out a path for engaged Buddhism to end suffering for the planet as a whole.

While life concerns like running the church and raising a family stayed in the foreground, he continued to study. Over a decade ago, he founded a new group in his church in Seattle, the first EcoSangha. The Seattle church adopted many practical ecological polices like partnering with a local group to compost after Obon, or setting up recycling bins. EcoSangha also flourished as a Buddhist interfaith group in nearby Seattle University. Reverend Diaz sees EcoSangha as a pan Buddhist movement; that ecology is a movement that all sects of Buddhism can agree on.

#### *EcoSangha Comes to San Jose*

Nancy was the person who brought EcoSangha to San Jose. It started when Nancy watched Al Gore's movie Inconvenient Truth. In her words, "Well I sat and I watched it, and I remember, just feeling... this great sense of responsibility and I had to do something. A paradigm shift." Although what Nancy would ultimately do was undecided at this point in the narrative, I want to take a moment to highlight word "responsible" instead of say, a calling or a passion. Speaking with other people who had initiated groups in the church, the act of founding groups was talked about in terms of responsibility and taking charge.

*All these [groups] wouldn't happen if someone didn't come forward. "I will take charge, I will be responsible, I'll get it started." - Hina*

*When ask people in the Sangha, "Who wants to be in charge," usually no one will stand up, but once you get someone in charge, a lot of people will come and help, which is nice. ... Nobody wants to be the leader, nobody wants to take the blame I guess." - Rob*

This focus on responsibility, duty and blame taking is another focus on humility. Instead of highlighting laudable characteristics of leaders like charismatic or clever, or beneficial outcomes like respect and prestige.

### *Expert Connections*

At this time, Nancy wanted to do something, but needed an orientation or place to start. However, she and her husband knew Reverend Castro and his interest in ecology.

*When I finished watching the movie, I told [my husband], I have to do something. He said, well, why don't you talk to ... the Rinban in Seattle. He's been doing ecology work for the last 25 years.*

*And uhm, I go up to Seattle frequently, and um, so I met with him and uh, two and a half hours later I had all the books and articles and pamphlets about Buddhism and ecology and he said, "You know that Buddha was the first ecologist? The first Ecologist and the first, ... well anyway, the first ecologist because he said that everything was interconnected, so we have great responsibility and taking care of the planet and ourselves; each other. Anyway, he told me how he had started a group called EcoSangha and it hadn't taken root in the temple but it did at Seattle University. So anyway, he's a really generous individual and he gave me all these things..."*

### *Starting the Group*

At this point, Karen returned home and decided to found a group at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin.

*So then I went back and I thought hmm, you know, the place that I want to do it is the temple, because our temple is so large and we could make a big impact on the environment,*

At the same time, Rob, the current Chairman of the Board, was also looking to start an ecological group. He had just returned from the national Buddhist conference that coincidentally was also held in Seattle. The conference had made several ecologically friendly choices, like eliminating gifting knickknacks that would probably end up thrown away, and returning to pitchers and cups for water distribution instead of bottles.

*... and so I got together with Rob, was thinking about wanting to do something. So we got together, and we got together a lot of people with like minds.*

The group came up with a mission statement and recommendations for conservation around the temple. The group will go on field trips to visit economically friendly places like an urban farm or the recycling plant. They also host recycling projects, for example gathering old shoes to be recycled. However, the biggest event is the annual Earth Day, when a Buddhist minded ecologist will come to speak, and a small fair is set up to showcase local environmental projects and businesses, recycling crafts and environmental education.

Many of the people I interviewed were in the EcoSangha, but I want to focus on two different types of volunteers – those with and those without a firm commitment to Ecology.

#### *EcoSangha Day*

#### DAN

Dan and his wife were already big conservationists. Dan had become interested in worm composting or vermiculture since 1995 and was already composting for the church

for many years. He had also bought recycling bins before they were very common for bottles and cans. He was one of the first people that Karen scouted.

*“... 1995 is when I first read that article on vermiculture, you know, worm composting and I go, “Wow that is so cool!” So I started that, just on my own at home. Then People heard about it, because I’d chitchat about it, you know. Then I had someone come and visit my scout group, because I thought it would be better for them to hear about it from someone else talk about it than to hear it from me, about composting. Not just about the hot-cold composting, but the worm, especially the worm composting. So I had them visit us. then naturally Rinban and Sakamoto Sensei heard about it that I’m getting into this kinda stuff and composting, then I saw at Obon I saw how much waste was being thrown away, oh wow, all those corn husk all that vegetables, fruits..! then I started asking Sakamoto sensei about the flowers on the altar, left over fruits. I said, you know I could use that. I’d be glad to start something up. So I set up with the worm bins, I kept the old things, made my own. Then we were talking about, I brought it up. The waste of the Obon, all that compost, you know I Could very easily build two compost bins, wouldn’t cost anything because I am going to use recycled materials, which was the pallets and stuff. And so they said, “Why don’t you go ahead and do it?” So I said, “Should I present it to the board and get the approval?” – They said, “No just do it.” So Boom! I grab some scouts and leaders and we had a little weekend party cleared the area and put two compost bins. So this was quite a while ago, before EcoSangha even came up. I was already doing it.”*

Dan had done several more practical ecological practices for the temple, including setting up recycling bins and encouraging use of instead of disposable utensils at the weekly volunteer luncheons by offering to do the dishes.

*Penny*

Penny had been invited to join by Karen. Penny was not indifferent to environmentalism, but being in the club brought it to a sharper focus. Jeanne though is a warm, kind person who has a lovely reputation for getting things done. One of the

impacts she has had on the group is making sure that there are science projects at every Earth Day, so that there is a project aimed at middle school boys.

Mottainai (literally "do not waste") is the Japanese moral of not being wasteful.

With the majority of Japanese immigrants working on farms, this ethic was especially

*Now that I'm leaving, and I've kind of given up my chairmanship, I feel really comfortable leaving it in good hands, because I know those people care, they're committed, they're conscientious, really dedicated, I feel really good about that."*

*"...My next goal is to make it become a national origination within the BCA, but I'm not ready to move ahead with it yet, I gotta move and get established, and I want to have Reverend Castro and work it out with him. I would like to make it go beyond our temple."*

Our EcoSangha group had made at least a presentation at another temple, but Nancy and Reverend Ruiz had bigger plans. They made good on this goal; just a few years later the EcoSangha was voted in by the BCA council. In a fortuitous or stressful stroke of luck, the 2014 BCA meeting was to be held in San Diego, where Nancy and her husband had relocated. Nancy drafted a charter for EcoSangha to be a national resolution, and it overwhelmingly passed. Two volunteers from our temple, Dan and his wife Margo, went down to help with the workshop afterward. They helped field questions from interested people and heard about many conservation activities that were already under way.

### *Conclusion*

Key actors, appealing to religious sentiment and small sustainable changes in practices.

EcoSangha is a uniquely Buddhist response to environmentalism that imbeds humans deeply in the environment instead of as owners and stewards. As such, for the

sake of mutual dependence the goal is to do as little harm as possible, but also not adopting strict self-deprivation. Because of the passion and interests of a few people, the connections they shared, they were able to share this philosophy in both abstract and practical terms to a large audience. A subject for future study would be to survey different temples and see how they adapted the new resolution.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Networking and Volunteering

#### *Getting Help – Private Spaces*

This section is in particular regards to the Japanese American community social norms inside the Buddhist church in receiving aid in the community context.

Sumi founded Sangha support over twenty years ago. Today the members do acts of compassion; sending get well cards to sick members, helping out once a month at the local women’s homeless shelter, planning a variety of classes throughout the year, and many more activities. However, when Sumi founded the group she envisioned helping out the ministers. The very first project did not go well.

*... some of the sangha members would complain that they were always sick in the hospital, and ministers would never come for visitation.*

*So I went to Reverend Watanabe, and I asked him, “What do you ministers need help in? I am planning to get a group of people, volunteers to help in different areas but I need to know from you what you think you need help?”*

*“Visitation,” [Reverend Watanabe] said. “We are so busy with day to day work that we don’t get the chance to communicate well with Sangha members.” And so it was really my intention that we help with visitation. That was the first thing.*

Sumi gathered a group of nurses and physical therapists willing to give their time to visit sick or disabled Sangha members. However, for many years that function went unused.

*It didn’t turn out that way because the Japanese culture as a whole, they are very unwilling to open up their homes, or admit they really need help from the outside. But it’s rather against an ethnic backlash.*

*Even this woman who lives right across from the temple, and her daughter is one of our dharma school teachers [declined help]. I taught dharma school for almost thirty years, and I said “[To her daughter, Suzy], your mother I understand is sick, we can help you with respite care. We can go visit her, take care, and you can do grocery shopping, do your errands and all that.”*

*Even she, as someone I knew very well, and she’s right here so it would be no problem for volunteers to go see her, and it would be those professional nurses to go do this.... Even someone like her, close to the temple, close to people she knew, was very reluctant.*

Many of the Sangha Support members I interviewed also knew of people in their families who would benefit from respite care, but would not come forward. Karen

*The hard thing about being Japanese, is that personal privacy... You don’t want some person to coming to your house, it’s almost like you’re sharing... I don’t want to call it dirty laundry, but, you know.*

*There’s a sense of privacy that’s cultural, because in Japan, you’re never invited to a person’s home. When you go out, you always go out for dinner or coffee or tea. It’s rare, very rare, that you’re invited to the home unless you’re related. Because your home is totally private.*

*It’s filtered down to the Japanese Americans that sense of privacy keeps you from letting people in, in more ways than one, if you know what I’m saying. Even my mother-in-law, when she could have used respite care, with Sangha Support providing, “Oh no, my house is too messy. I don’t want them seeing how we live.” You know, that kind of thing. They’ll think of all these reasons, you don’t want them to come in, even though it would be very nice. That’s very common, very common among Japanese.*

This reluctance to let people into private spaces was a common theme in my interviews with Japanese American members. One member related even if her children had nothing to eat, she would not go to a food bank. Some of this would be to save face. The concept of face, as Goffman (1955) would put it, would be to maintain positive image of self in social relations. This would include suppressing information that would cause one to lose face in your social network.

However, this reluctance seems to go beyond just face work or privacy. Even when there was knowledge of that person's need, the person in need would still be reluctant to seek help. This would be a rejection of the asymmetrical power relationships of receiving aid. It is important to note here though that this seems to primarily to equals in your community. People who are in your family are expected to help each other. Professionals are also allowed to help. For example, visits from the ministers, whose job includes visits to the sick and disabled, are expected to perform their duties.

It would therefore be interesting to look at the exceptions to this rule. One Japanese American family connected to the church had an adult child, Jim, who had a rare and potentially fatal medical condition. Expensive surgery and therapy would greatly increase his rate of healing and recovery, but it was well outside of that family's finances. Jim's family was insistent on handling the matter themselves. However, friends of the family set up a charity event and strong-armed Jim's mother into accepting the money. They continued to host the event annually for several years, and Jim's recovery was remarked by his doctors to be exceptional.

Another exception would be the one family who has taken advantage of Sangha's Support respite care. Not too long ago, a Japanese American young woman, Dani, experienced a devastating medical condition, and her parents returned from abroad to take care of her. Though they were not members of the church, they were told about the program at the local senior center. Members of Sangha Support regularly go to read to Dani, and spend some time with her mother. When I asked the Sangha Support members why the family was able to ask for support, they universally replied that it was because of

the severity of the need that they were willing to look outside their social circle for support.

Speaking with Mark, a Japanese American man who is a member of the Berkeley Buddhist church, he said that their members regularly requested aid for personal reasons. However, he also claimed that the membership Berkeley Sangha is highly fluid, with a lot of students who come and go as they attend University of Berkeley or the nearby Institute of Buddhist Studies. San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin is a lot more stable. Many people I interviewed had been born elsewhere, but they had also been part of the congregation for decades.

According to Mark's theory, Dani's family was able to seek aid precisely because they were not members of the San Jose Buddhist Church Sangha. They would not lose face in their social circle for seeking out much needed aid.

The one other story I heard about receiving aid was also to outsiders to members of the Boy Scout Troop. Every few years the Scoutmaster, Frank, takes his troop to Hawaii for a weeklong trip to experience local attractions and activities. On one particular trip the first activity was volunteer work, cleaning up trash on the beaches. Halfway through the day they found that their vans had been broken into and their possessions had been stolen. They called and filed reports, but then returned to cleaning up the beaches. The Hawaii Visitor's Bureau reached out the Boy Scouts, but they turned down their initial offer for help.

*We had to tell them, "We have a schedule... [But somehow the Visitor's Bureau] found out where we staying, and they found out our schedule, where we going.*

*The next day we were planning to do a catamaran ride thing out on Waikiki beach, doing a surfing lesson thing. .. So we did our thing early morning, and coming back on to the beach in Waikiki we could see a mass of people right where we going to land; there were all these TV stations [with] their cameras [and] the lights. I saw that and said, "oh nooo," so I took off my t shirt so I wouldn't be identified with the rest of the scouts. Big coward. I kind of got off and stood to the side.*

*But man, they came right around, interviewed the scouts, and some of the other leaders. They just wanted to know what happened, what was going on, and [they told us] how they were sorry, but so proud of you boy scouts, [how you still] cleaned up [the beaches] after you got robbed and stuff.*

*Then in the meantime at the Hawaii Visitor's Bureau, this person, I still have her name, I am still in contact with her. She knew where we going, so she contacted with all these different places: the Bishop Museum, the Polynesian Cultural Center, Dole Pineapple, a couple of the real local restaurants... they all gave us tickets, everything was free. The Bishop museum, everything was free.*

*We went to this place for dinner, real nice place, Rainbow Drive Inn. The owner met us the day we were going to be there. It's really interesting; [because] it's Hawaii, he comes in his Tank top and shorts. We didn't know he was the owner. He looked like all the people working there. "All these guys here, whatever they want, it's theirs. Just serve them."*

*Then we went to the Polynesian cultural center, same thing: Free entrance, go in do whatever you want, see all the shows, have a meal, free. We go to Dole Pineapple, same thing – free entrance, free smoothies. So we figure, "Wow, that's way too ..."*

*At the same time people were sending checks to the visitor's bureau people, to reimburse our scouts, you know.*

*We had this big farewell dinner thing that we're having at the... at it's called The Willows in Honolulu. It is a really nice place, a buffet local food kind of stuff. The Hawaii's Visitor's Bureau people, and Attorney General of Hawaii wanted to come, and a couple of TV stations wanted to come. But the Hawaii Visitor's bureau told the TV stations, "don't come let them enjoy dinner and stuff, and we'll find out maybe after that you can come."*

*So, at that time we said, “No, really, you don’t need to...” but then figured out we better, because then we can thank them for what they are so generously donating. So she came, the attorney general came, there’s two more people, I can’t think of who they were. They picked up the tab, the whole thing. The attorney general present each one of us a state coin, and he said he only gave out five so far, five of those, they were all to dignitaries and or people... That’s the real... choker. Like some of us did cry. Then the TV station guys came after dinner and interviewed a bunch of us again. And ACTUALLY most of us were just thanking the people of Hawaii and those different places, and tried to name the places, because that will giving them [credit].*

*That was big, and it was all because we volunteering. That’s how we got connected. I forget how much, we got a whole bunch of money – we reimbursed the scouts that needed their cameras replaced and stuff. And then we sent the rest of the money back to the visitor’s bureau and said thank you very much, it’s awfully generous. In the mean time we wrote thank you cards to all the individual people – and we told them, “you did a super job, you know we just really appreciate it, and I know you can use the money for all the other people who are stranded or need help.” There’s a good relationship we have, kind of bonded.*

*Even two years after that activity happen, my cousin who was working for the state then attended dinner function where Hawaii’s visitor’s bureau people were there also and had to do a report He said, “hey, guess what, they talked about you guys at that dinner”. We said, “wow, they’re still talking about it?” Two years later. We were all on TV, I don’t know, for a few days there.*

*In fact, after the scouts left I stayed back, I was going to stay out in Oahu to stay with my cousin and my uncle then go to Maui for another week or so. After all the scouts left, I went out to dinner with my cousin and my uncle, and by chance I had my orange Hawaii T-shirt, the one we were all wearing, not thinking, just eating dinner. And I caught some people looking.....*

*One family came to me, ready to cry, are you one of the scouts. And I told them yeah, I was, and they thanked me. They thanked me for continuing to do that community service after the way the people of Hawaii treated us. It always makes me cry. We have a memory book for that year. We kept all the newspaper clipping, the boys will never forget that, never forget that. Good and bad memories.*

This story was of a time that his troop was aided after a robbery. The scout members were given emotional succor by giving them preferential treatment at the places they were visiting, and were reimbursed for their losses. However, it is more straightforwardly read as a story of where their virtuous behavior – continuing volunteering after being robbed – was rewarded. In short, from Frank’s perspective, this was not a story about receiving charity. The gifts they received was not solicited by the Boy Scout Troop, and the remarks from the TV personal and the family in Oahu cement that the Hawaiian people in the story were moved by their generosity and were reciprocating in kind.

Frank told me this story was told in an attempt to describe volunteering and interconnectivity. Earlier, when asked why he volunteered, Frank said, “...because of Buddhism, the interconnectedness... it goes ‘round, and I can’t help but the interconnectedness, the interdependence, and again your own selfish enjoying. Round and round.”

The story was to establish how the events helped forge connections between the troop and all of the generous donors; the companies, the Hawaii Visitor’s bureau, and all the people who sent in money to help the troop. He noted how he was still in touch with the women from the Visitor’s bureau. His cousin was still attending functions where they remarked on the incident.

Another aspect of the story is the ethos of humility, or if seen negatively, humble bragging. The continuing of volunteer work was downplayed as just another event, and the focus of the story was on the generosity and kindness by the people and business

community in Hawaii. Although they were gifted more money than they needed for reimbursements, they returned the excess. They could have put the excess into a scholarship fund for the Boy Scouts, or kept it for the year.

Frank also included self-critical negative information, for example including the detail of when he hid from the reporters. Humility in Japanese culture and in Buddhism tends to reflect an acceptance of faults instead of a focus on strengths. Another interviewee, Yuuto, said unlike Christianity where there is a transformational testimonial, that in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism the dark side is understood and accepted.

*There is acknowledgement that one is not past that - this mechanism continues. Ah, now that I have seen my negative side - the dark side continues. The dark side is the ego, and we always have that ego. That testimony would be as blind as they were before. I have heard that they used to be this way and now they are better - we always have this dark side which is looking out for the self, that part is included and accepted.*

Frank's aside about hiding from the reporters was at once an acceptance of his own shortcomings, and a subtle highlight to the bravery of his troop and staff who braved the reporter's questions.

So there are several interesting facets of this story in the context of receiving aid. The aid was from the people of Hawaii to a California Boy Scout group, or to emphasize an earlier point, across social groups more than within social groups. The aid received was not charity, but reciprocal giving for the boy scouts own volunteer work. This was in a way why he was able to build an acquaintance with the woman from the visitor's bureau, because while it was an intimately tailored gift to arrange for all these gifts, it was an equal relationship.



To summarize, it is not the social norm to seek help for personal and family matters in the community setting. The exceptions are when there is great need, help is given from outside their social circle, when aid is a reward instead of charity, and when aid is given unsolicited – to the point of forcing the receiving to accept after protesting.

### *Giving Help – Public Spaces*

In direct contrast to receiving community support in the private sphere, attending events that are helpful in the community sphere are completely acceptable. However, it is important that the aid is reciprocal – that you give back in equal measure to the best of your abilities.

An experience that drove home this message was signing up my son for Dharma School. I usually work on Sundays and so rarely attended weekend services, but those times I could participate, and my son was not visiting his dad, I signed him up for Dharma School so that my emergency contact info was available. I discovered that this made me mandatorily responsible for performing crossing guard duty two Sundays and refreshments for two Sundays<sup>13</sup> that year, even though my son only attended Dharma school once. Appeals to evade this responsibility due to the difficulty of helping or lack of use of services fell on deaf ears. At the time it was frustrating, since it was tense bargaining with my job for those Sundays off, but in retrospect performing those duties was very instructive.

---

<sup>13</sup> The Hondo, the main church building for services, is across the street from the Dharma School classrooms. After the Dharma school classes, refreshments are served in the annex of the gym, which is on the Hondo side of the street.

Another way giving is subtly enforced is that all regular donations to the church are published in the monthly bulletin. Donations of small amounts, such as purchasing during fundraisers, or participating in raffles, or donating petty cash during *oshoko*,<sup>14</sup> are anonymous. A person can also request that your donation is anonymous, although it is relatively rare.

This way of giving was perhaps best exemplified by the movie theater when it first was established. Seeing the movie was on a donation basis, so you could go to the movies for free. However, before each show they hung the donation amounts on a wire across the theater so it was public knowledge how much everyone donated. It was certain that people were paying attention to how much everyone donated, and so as not to be seen as a mooch or stingy people by their community members, they made sure to donate what they could, and some even competed to see how generous they could be.

Giving is recognized is through the Volunteer Recognition, a fancy tea party and award program put on by Mari every year. Anyone in the Sangha or Japan Town community can submit an award for someone who has given to the community. Many times this giving has been done quietly for years; donating flowers to the altar, caring for plants in the community common areas, reporting graffiti so it can be quickly cleaned up, being an exceptional helper at Lotus Preschool. Although Mari believes that these volunteers would continue to help regardless of recognition, she hopes that the gratitude and awards helps keep volunteers motivated.

Another interviewee, Yuuto said it like this:

---

<sup>14</sup> A ritual of burning incense in front of the Buddhist altar in front of the church.

*The western way tends to be toward the future, almost oblivious to how we got there, Jodo we are now, but the realization we only got to this point by the actions of other people. We are here because of the efforts of others. Our work is for that of others too. In western culture, once we are aware that we are out there, we feel guilt, like we have to pay this debt. But in Buddhism it more of a sense of opportunity - We grateful we recognize this. That is the awakening, this attitude of grateful giving; that we have the opportunity to give back. If I didn't realize this, I would go on only thinking of myself.*

In this way, Mari's Volunteer Recognition is as much for those who submit the award request as it is for the recipient. It is a way to express gratitude and acknowledge the people in the community who have given selflessly.

#### *Community – Outside the Sangha*

There are a few groups that involve themselves in charity work outside the Sangha and the Japanese American community. This tends to be more asymmetrical in giving; sending large amounts of money to disaster victims or helping with homeless shelters.

The primary group devoted to this kind of volunteer work is the Dana Club. Dana, or selfless giving is one of the six Pāramitā,<sup>15</sup> or attributes of people well on their way to becoming bodhisattvas. Rob, the creator and coordinator of the Dana club, explained it this way, "Practicing Dana, which is helping other people, volunteering to me is helping other people, helping out at the church, or the sangha, or people in the community." At the time he was the Chairman of the Board, he saw that the Christian churches were always involved in acts of charity, and wanted to have a similar experience for the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin Sangha.

---

<sup>15</sup> There rest are Moral conduct, Forbearance, Diligence, Contemplation and Wisdom

The Dana club is essentially an e-mail list. Rob schedules activities. One activity is helping with the sorting food at the Santa Clara Second Harvest, a large food bank that distributes food to many hungry families. Another regular activity is providing labor during Rebuild Together! which helps with repairs and improvements on the houses of low income homeowners. They also sponsor a birthday event at Yu-Ai-Kai, the local senior center. The birthday events celebrate the birthdays of all the seniors in a two-month period in a party with prizes and refreshments.

With the potential exception of Yu-Ai-Kai, these events have very little continued interaction with the recipients of giving. The Second Harvest food sort is done in a warehouse, putting large quantities of food into smaller boxes to be distributed to other food banks that will distribute the food to the hungry. The day I went, we were sorting grade B carrots into 25 pound boxes. Rebuilding Together! Does include interaction with the homeowner, but it is not an enduring connection. Instead, the enduring social interaction is with other volunteers.

Another group that volunteers regularly is Sangha Support. Sumi has connections to the local homeless shelters, and helped bridge the connection.

*Eventually we branched out to outside community because my connection was American Association of University Women[AUW]. When I joined them there was a homeless committee already built over a period of years through the Georgia Travis Center<sup>16</sup>.*

*With my connection with AUW I thought, "Okay, I'm going to involve Sangha Support in feeding the homeless; because it's just right here, close to us, and they desperately needed other groups and*

---

<sup>16</sup> Georgia Travis was a remarkable local figure who established a women and children's homeless shelter in the local area, named posthumously the Georgia Travis Center. Her center is now part of the LiveMoves, a network of seventeen homeless shelters in the area.

*organizations to do it”. ....That’s how Sangha Support got started in outside community work, is my through my connection with another organization that is already very much involved in the community. So, the idea of the beginning of Sangha Support, and then evolving over a period of time to include the outside community, then my, my. MY personal theme is the purpose of this committee is compassion in action.*

Once a month, three or four members of Sangha Support would cook a large lunch and serve it at the Georgia Travis Center. One member is the leader. She will decide the menu and purchase the supplies, which will later be reimbursed to her by Sangha Support. The time I attended, we met in the kitchen in the Church building. We made a spaghetti and simple salad, chatting amiably about families, about my project, and other daily life subjects. When the food was finished, we loaded it up and drove the few blocks over to the Georgia Travis Center.

The Sangha Support had aprons that the Sangha Crafters had made quite some time ago, but we were provided hairnets by the Georgia Travis Center. The food was joined by desserts that were already provided by another source, and lined up cafeteria style in the area that served as the dining space. Women would sign their names before going to down the line. If they came back for seconds, they would put a check next to their name. The women sat by themselves or together at the tables, and only interacted with the volunteers at the food line.

There was a lot of food left over, to the dismay of our group. After lunch was over, we cleaned up in the Georgia Travis kitchen before returning to the vehicle to drive back to the church. “It is times like this that I really feel like a Buddhist,” one of the women said, and everyone nodded in agreement. Though we had not participated in any overt

religious activity like chanting, singing, or discussing Buddhism in any direct way, we had nonetheless given without expecting a return; an act of Dana. The aprons were gathered by the leader to clean before handing them over to the next crew, and we disassembled for the day.

The fundraisers for disaster relief were also an opportunity of giving. Nancy was described a fundraiser she had coordinated to benefit the survivors of the Eastern Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011. She had organized a movie screening of “My Father’s Drum (Lewin 2011)” and food sale. They had raised over 10,000 dollars to send to the survivors. However, a central aspect of the story was the generosity of Mark.

*“Mark, I don’t know if he’ll talk though... He’s very modest.*

*I said [to Mark], “Let’s raise more money by selling food because it’s going to be right after church and they’ll be hungry.”*

*Mark said, “Okay, what about [asking the] boy scouts [for help]? Let’s have Nikkei dogs”, he said. Nikkei is another word for Japanese-American. Mark made up these recipes for Nikkei dogs, making the hot dogs slightly Asian. He made hot dogs with Wasabi Mayonnaise and sprinkled with Nori, and all that.*

*When it came time to [reimburse him for the supplies for the hot dogs] before we send the money to Japan, he said, “No no”, he said, he donated it all by himself; hundreds of dollars. He’s that kind of guy.*

*Here’s another [story]. When the earthquake happened, he said, “Okay, we’re going to sell chicken teriyaki”. And he got together all these people and he sold chicken teriyaki at the church. He’s an amazing volunteer, and modest, very modest. .... But that just amazed me, when he said, “No no no, I’m going to pay for it”. It just amazed me; hundreds of dollars. He just said, “I’m going to Costco, how many hot dogs do you want?” And he just, you know, bought several hundred, and he got a few guys together and they barbecued hotdogs. He didn’t want any glory; he didn’t want anyone to know. That’s the*

*real true spirit of giving, dana? You know what dana is, selfless giving? That's Mark.<sup>17</sup>*"

Cynically, you could say that Mark's efforts to keep his donation anonymous might have traded the regard that he would have earned in the community for his generosity for the larger regard he got from specifically from Nancy, who herself was a key member of the community. While this is what actually happened, I do not think there is any reason to doubt Mark's intentions to give anonymously and without personal gain. As stated earlier, one of the acknowledgments of Jodo Shinshu is that it is impossible for us to live outside of our own egocentric selves, and outside of the community and world which we are embedded.

However, these and other stories about giving focus on the volunteers, for many reasons. Primarily, it is because there is very little interaction with the people receiving the charity. The funds are being donated to organizations who will distribute them to people in need, which is not necessarily a negative aspect. These organizations should have a better grasp of the local area and more familiar with disaster relief. However, there is also certainly the pattern that the more asymmetrical the giving/receiving relationship, the more likely that the giving will be to people outside of the Buddhist and/or Japanese American community and the less interaction they will have between volunteers and recipients of services.

It was this connectionless giving that was most primarily associated with the ideals of Dana, or selfless giving. It is a decidedly one-way relationship, with the recipients

---

<sup>17</sup> Nancy, interview 6/4/2013

being unable to respond or repay those who are assisting them. However, it was this giving that provided the volunteer with solidarity with other volunteers, and with a sense of generosity.

*Dana is supposed to be selfless giving, but I had a discussion with the reverends before. "If I feel good about giving Dana, is that selfless or... (laughs) it's kind of... am I doing it because it feels good, or is it selfless, you know?" It's kind of strange.*

### *Conclusion*

Although it is not tit for tat, giving and receiving in the Japanese American community is roughly reciprocal in nature. Benefits for the community are freely given, but giving is also informally but closely monitored by many people in the social network. To ask the community to assist in personal and familial problem is not just a matter of family boundaries, it is because the giving/receiving dynamic would be skewed to put the receiver in a socially disadvantageous position-even if they know that the help they need is available. On the other end of the spectrum, giving to those in need is something that as seen as extremely noble, but does usually lead to building connections with the recipient. Instead, it helps build community between other volunteers who are also giving selflessly.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Bringing it All Together – Staffing Obon

The Obon Festival is arguably the largest annual event that happens at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin. This is a Japanese cultural heritage open-air festival, with carnival games, Japanese food, Japanese music like enka and taiko drumming, and culminating in Japanese folk dancing. Not only do sangha members attend, but their extended families as well; their children and grandchildren, many of them lapsed members. The outside community comes too, making this an important event for relations to the non-Buddhist and/or non-resident community.

In 2014 the total attendance for both days was 21,190. Obon is often reported by new members as their first point of contact with the Buddhist church. Obon is also an important fundraiser for the church, with it raising over \$300,000 in 2014. In contrast, the Generation's campaign earned over \$400,000 during the course of the year, and the other sources of income totaled \$660,000 (Betsuin 2014). The success of the event is largely due to volunteer labor; the many hours needed to plan, set up, work, and take down Obon that are largely provided for free. This chapter will examine what that labor entails, and how it is recruited.

#### *Obon Overview*

For the whole weekend, Fifth Street is closed between Taylor and Jackson. During the day people flow across the street, between the games on the parking lot next to the classroom building, across to the food that is located in the gym and its shaded parking lot. The booths are simple games, like a penny toss or a golf game. The booths are

constructed of metal pipes, metal joints, canvas walls and ball bungee cord tie-downs, allowing for both shade and air to circulate. At the front is a raffle for a large cash prize, for which people have gamely been selling tickets to friends and neighbors.

The food has changed over the years. The hamburger booth was replaced by *imagawayaki*<sup>18</sup>, and last year the soba stall changed into the more popular ramen. Teriyaki chicken, freshly barbequed on the Sixth Street lot, corn on the cob, tempura vegetables and shrimp, freshly rolled sushi, bubble tea, pot stickers, rice, and more. Almost all of the dishes are cooked during the event. There are drinks sold as well; sodas, bottled water, and alcohol.

There are non-food booths on this side of the street. In the annex, the BCA sells plants and crafts, and on the street and lawn are the flower booth, the book booth and Generation's campaign booth. This booth is run by the board to explain the campaign to improve the church buildings to meet seismic codes and other concerns. The Hondo is open, and docents are there to answer questions of curious visitors.

Every few hours the doors are shut so the ministers can give an introductory Buddhism lecture to those interested. Back out on the street, there are festive lanterns overhead, gifted and decorated in honor of passed loved ones. In the middle of the street are three decorated stages; the largest in the middle and two smaller ones a few yards in each direction. These will be used at night; during the day the space between serves as

---

<sup>18</sup> A popular Japanese festival dessert food. A short, cylindrical dessert with a pancake like bread and filled with something sweet, most often sweet bean paste.

stage area for entertainment, like various Taiko Drummer groups and the Chidori band, which sings enka<sup>19</sup>.

There are also the ubiquitous elements of large, public event. Porta-potties line the street to alleviate the demand on the few bathrooms in the buildings. Security are present, as well as a first aid station. ATMs are available, as well as a cash changing booth. Last year, to help aid the congestion of people who parked in front of residences, a free shuttle service from a large parking lot to the event was added.

At night, if female participants have brought a yukata to change into, they can walk around the outside of the office building back to the Sixth Street building. The volunteers help these participants through the steps of putting on their yukata, and help properly tie and bow the obi.

Dancers gather to the north on Fifth Street and then order themselves into several rows based on chalk lines on the street. The sangha put on workshops to teach the dances beforehand, but the dances are simple enough that most can muddle their way through with a little guidance.

The president introduces the dancers who will be the guides and who will dance on the various platforms to remind experienced dancers or guide beginning dancers on the steps for each dance.

There are several items that the San Jose Obon uses; *ogi* (a folding fan), *ochiwa* (a rigid fan), *kachi-kachi* (wooden clackers not unlike castanets), and *tenugui* (a small,

---

<sup>19</sup> A popular music type in Japan that has a similar style to traditional Japanese music. You might be familiar with the enka song, Suki-yaki (Ue wo Muite Arukou), by Kyu Sakamoto, that topped the US charts in 1963.

colorful towel). While there are many dancers, there are also many spectators, and most of the booths stay open, still serving food throughout the event.

The first dance is an easy dance to get everyone from the starting points to an oval (or concentric ovals, since there are a few different tracks to accommodate the number of dancers). At that point, the minister says a few words, and the music begins – provided live by the Chidori band and San Jose Taiko. Once on the track, the dancers will continue along the circles in a counter-clockwise direction. The dances themselves are short sequences that are repeated, and most incorporate many of the same simple steps. The dances change from year to year as old dances are retired and new ones are added to the festivities.

On Sunday night after the last dance, the street will be cleared for street traffic again. All those willing help dismantle the booths and stages, which gives a great boost to the packing up process. Deconstruction and clean-up will continue into next week, just like construction and set up had started early on the week previous-or in some cases, much earlier.

### *Three Models of Volunteer Recruiting*

There are roughly three volunteer gathering models that Obon uses; friends and family, group members, and internet recruiting.

Many of the booths are run by families. The responsibility for running many of these booths have been passed down through members of families through the generations, although one family booth is fairly recently founded. The whole family is expected to participate in helping, and draft their family and friends, and if not enough,

those friend's friends to provide labor. Requests are made in person, over the phone, and via email lists until enough help is drafted.

Booths run by groups recruit from within their groups. Depending on the size of the organization, this could be voluntary or expected labor. People will be assigned shifts in a meeting or via email. Some groups will put up a shared spreadsheet that people can add their names to as well. Not only are some booths run by groups, but Obon is orchestrated by a committee who oversee each aspect of Obon.

The church also recruits online from the general public. The church lists volunteer opportunities on websites like vounteermatch.com and volunteerspot.com. This allows people not affiliated with any specific group, or not even acquainted with the church to sign up to help. This also allows jobs that require many man-hours to access more people.

### *Serial Volunteering*

Rick, the current head of Obon, is an energetic man who enjoys the challenge of putting on a big event. Previous to handling Obon, he ran the Firefighter's Chili Cook-off. When asked about the success of Obon, he lays the success to the efforts of volunteers, especially volunteers that take on multiple shifts.

*You see a women selling sushi. Something makes you notice her – maybe it's her colorful kerchief in her hair, or her warm smile. Later on that day, you stop at the information desk and that same lady is there, selling raffle tickets. Near dusk, you decide to stop for strawberry shortcake and there the woman is again, helping to make desserts. It is men and women like her, that volunteer their time over and over again that are the heroes of Obon.*

Shifts for the day of Obon are constructed so that they all change out volunteers near the same time, so that one can volunteer at multiple places without scheduling conflicts. As I became acquainted with members of the temple, I saw the volunteers who helped out with more than one booth and worked several shifts were more than generous and hardworking with their time. They were also fulfilling various social obligations. For example, they might be part of the BWA, friends of the family of the teriyaki chicken booth, and part of the Sangha Support Crafters, and thus obligated to help out at each of their booths in turn. With this in mind, the non-serial volunteers with fewer commitments are just as vital to the success of Obon. Reaching out to new communities that are not heavily overbooked with commitments is the way to help alleviate the strain on multiply booked volunteers, while also allowing entry for new members to join the community.

### *Benefits of Volunteering*

Every year, Rick tries to improve and troubleshoot the Obon festival. One of the challenges he found out about is that cooking rice for sushi called for an all night shift the day before. He investigated to find out that yes, they were cooking rice all night long, but they were also chatting and enjoying themselves. He found that it was not a problem but a party, and left well enough alone.

Socializing is certainly one of the benefits of volunteering. Working as a team, chance for idle chit-chat and shared labor is one of the ways that Obon deepens bonds of those working together to volunteer.

Another is that certainly the gratitude of the person in charge of the booth or activity. High schoolers who were involved in activities that required volunteer hours were able to get those hours signed off by volunteering. In larger groups, like construction, the person in charge of the event might give a speech praising everyone for their hard work. However, more often in my experience, in smaller venues people were thanked individually. In booths where food was served, workers were often given free food or drinks at the end of their shift.

While this was common practice, it was not always seen by the community as a good thing. For one, unless the person for the booth was paying for those meals out of their own pocket, those meals were coming at the cost of additional sales for the church. Also, it was not a practice that could be universally observed. Many jobs, like construction or being a docent for the temple, had no material objects to share. The money changing booth also could not hand out cash at the end of their shifts.

Aside from social and material gains, workers could also obtain knowledge. For instance, one volunteer that I spoke with who had signed up online was excited that she got to learn how to roll sushi. For younger volunteers, this is one of the first job experiences they might have, from serving customers, maintaining the booth and handling cash.

### *Conclusion*

Obon is large, festive event that requires much work to plan and execute. The success is largely dependent on volunteers, both those deeply embedded in the

community who volunteer multiple shifts or part of the larger community that only volunteers for a few hours.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

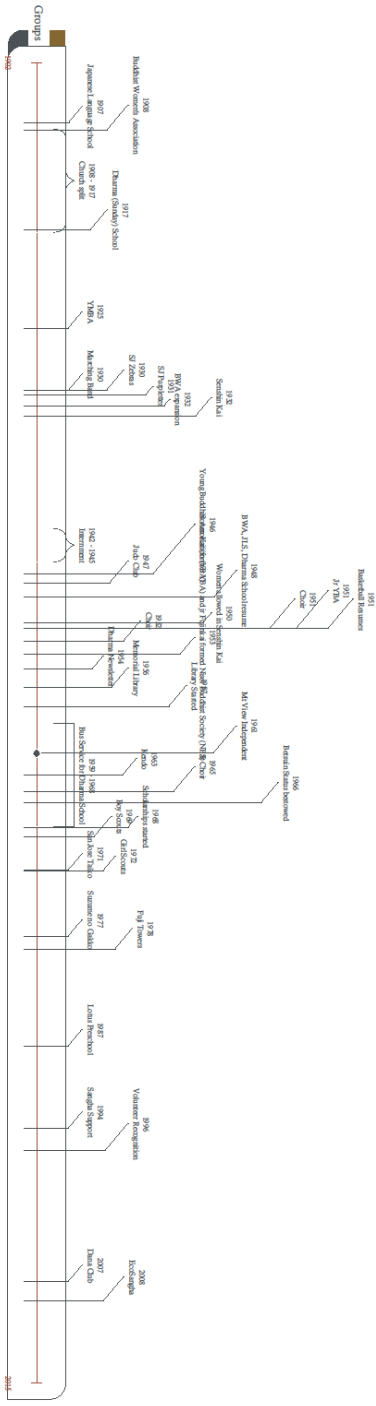
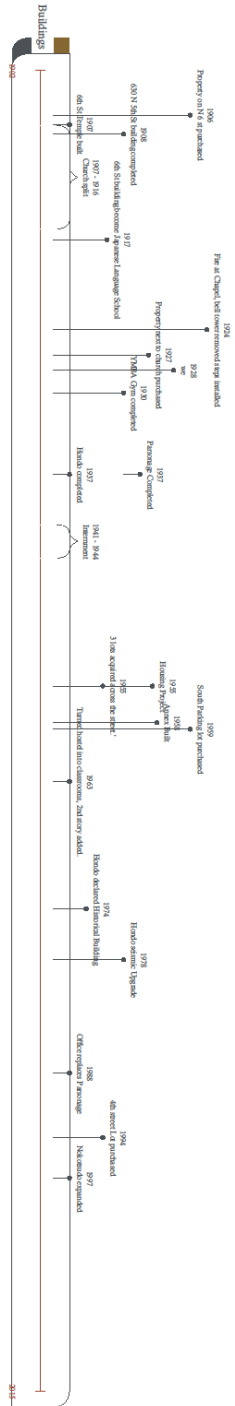
Throughout this paper, I have tried to offer different snapshots of the San Jose Buddhist Church community. It is a Japanese American ethnic church that has been here for over one hundred years and adapted to American culture. There are many places of overlap where the Japanese American identity has broken down with both racial identities with more Non-Japanese members joining and the changing biracial identities of many Japanese descendants. It breaks down religiously in the social aspects with its connection to Japanese culture in the Japan Town community both by participating in many secular endeavors. Yet at the core of the Japanese American community and the Buddhist traditions, there are values about selfless giving, interconnectedness, and compassion. This makes volunteering an activity that cuts across social boundaries.

Being a volunteer also allows helping to shape the future of the community. For example, the EcoSangha movement was started by people with a passion who connected to people's interests, and the social networks built a new direction of environmental consciousness in the BCA. This movement not only impacted the Buddhist Church Betsuin and the San Jose Japan Town communities, but the whole of the BCA organization. In the future, Reverend Castro is aiming to bringing EcoSangha to an inter-Buddhist connection.

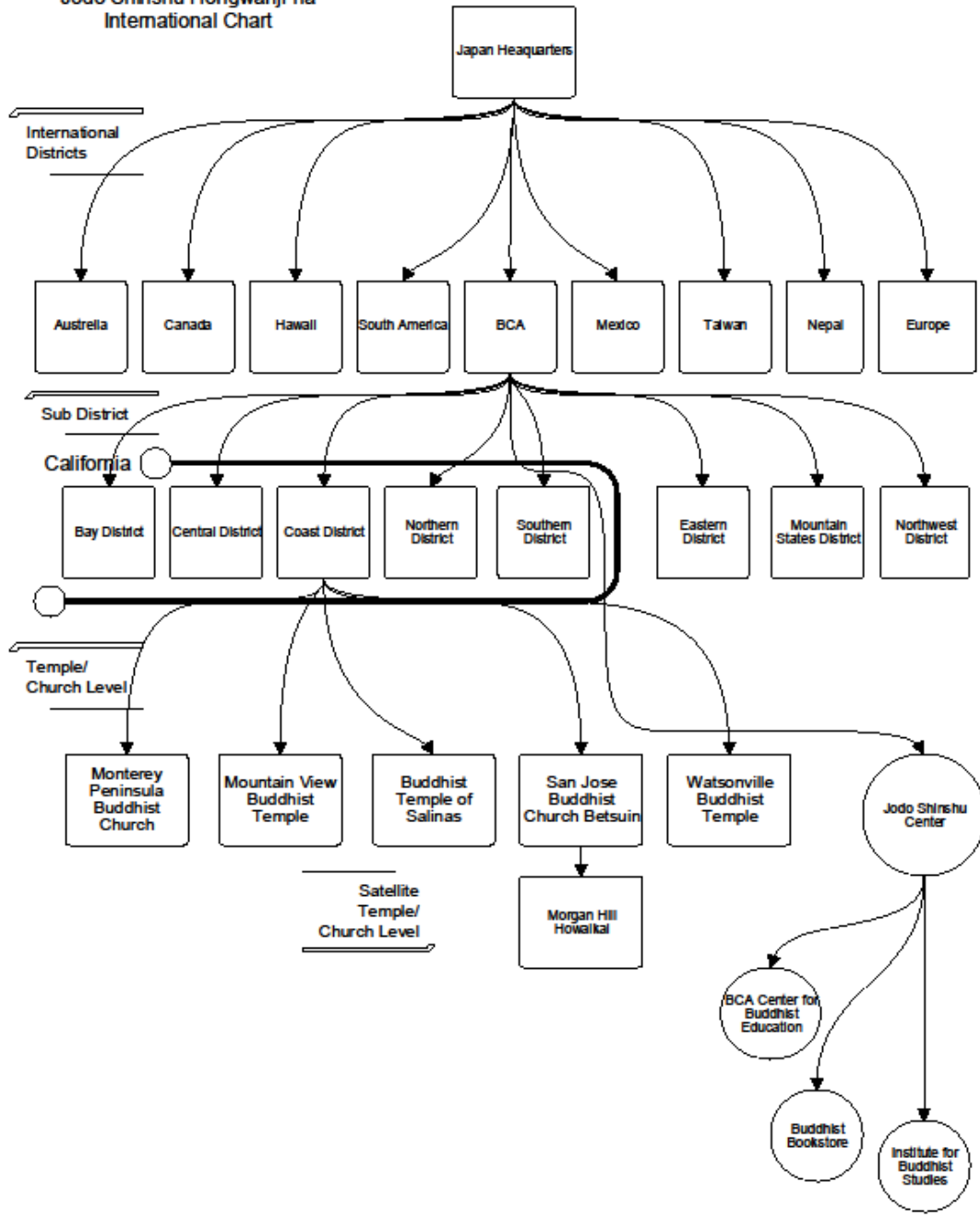
The community of the San Jose Sangha will continue to change. I hope that the enduring values continue for generations to come as and are shared with the people today.

APPENDIX I

### San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin Timeline



### Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha International Chart



## REFERENCES

1950 Golden Anniversary: San Jose Buddhist Church 1949-1950. City: San Jose, California: Buddhist Church of San Jose.

Anderson, Benedict

1983 *Imagined Communities* London. Gilley, Bruce (2004): Against the concept of ethnic conflict. In: *Third World Quarterly* 25(6):1155-1166.

—

2006 *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books.

Anderson, Eugene N

2011 Drawing from traditional and 'indigenous' socioecological theories. *Environmental anthropology today*:56-74.

Austin, Diane E

2004 Partnerships, not projects! Improving the environment through collaborative research and action. *Human Organization* 63(4):419-430.

Barth, Fredrik

1966 *Models of social organization*. Royal anthropological institute of Great Britain and Ireland.

—

1969 *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Differences*. Little, Brown.

Bender, Eugene I., and George Kagiwada

1968 Hansen's Law of "Third-Generation Return" and the Study of American Religio-Ethnic Groups. *Phylon* (1960-) 29(4):360-370.

Betsuin, San Jose Buddhist Church

2003 *1902-2002 Our First Hundred Years*. City: San Jose, CA: Centennial Yearbook Committee.

---

2014 San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin 2014 Annual Report.

Bielefeldt, Carl

2001 Comments on Tensions in American Buddhism.

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2001/07/06/july-6-2001-comments-on-tensions-in-american-buddhism/15941/>.

Bloom, Alfred

1998 Shin Buddhism in America: A Social Perspective. *In* The faces of Buddhism in America. C.S. Prebish and K.K. Tanaka, eds. Pp. 31-47: Univ of California Press.

Broom, Leonard, and Ruth Riemer

1949 Removal and return: The socio-economic effects of the war on Japanese Americans. Volume 4. Univ of California Press.

Bunnag, Jane

1973 Buddhist monk, Buddhist layman; a study of urban monastic organization in central Thailand. City: Cambridge Eng.: University Press.

Carrithers, Michael Blaine

1983 The forest monks of Sri Lanka: An anthropological and historical study.

Carson, Rachel

1962 Silent Spring. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Casagrande, David G, et al.

2007 Problem and Opportunity: integrating anthropology, Ecology, and Policy through adaptive Experimentation in the urban uS Southwest. *Human Organization* 66(2):125-139.

Castro, Reverand Don

2015 The EcoSangha Resolution. *Wheel of Dharma* 37(3).

Catton Jr, William R, and Riley E Dunlap

1978 Environmental sociology: a new paradigm. *The American Sociologist*:41-49.

Catton, William R, and Riley E Dunlap

1978 Paradigms, theories, and the primacy of the HEP-NEP distinction. *The American Sociologist*:256-259.

—

1980 A new ecological paradigm for post-exuberant sociology. *The American Behavioral Scientist* 24(1):15.

Caudill, William, and GEORGE VOS

1956 Achievement, culture and personality: The case of the Japanese Americans. *American Anthropologist* 58(6):1102-1126.

Change, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

2014 *Climate Change 2014—Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Regional Aspects*. Cambridge University Press.

Committee, Centennial History Project

1998 *Buddhist Churches of America, A Legacy of the First 100 Years*. City: San Francisco, CA: Buddhist Churches of America.

Cronon, William

1996 The trouble with wilderness: or, getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History* 1(1):7-28.

D'alisera, JoAnn

2004 *An Imagined Geography: Sierra Leonean Muslims in America*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

DeMello, Margo

2000 *Bodies of inscription: A cultural history of the modern tattoo community*. Duke University Press.

Dunlap, Riley E, and William R Catton

1983 What environmental sociologists have in common (whether concerned with “built” or “natural” environments). *Sociological inquiry* 53(2-3):113-135.

—



- 1994 Struggling with human exemptionalism: The rise, decline and revitalization of environmental sociology. *The American Sociologist* 25(1):5-30.
- Dunlap, Riley E, and William R Catton Jr  
 2002 Which function (s) of the environment do we study? A comparison of environmental and natural resource sociology. *Society & Natural Resources* 15(3):239-249.
- Dunlap, Riley E, and Kent D Van Liere  
 1978 The "new environmental paradigm". *The journal of environmental education* 9(4):10-19.
- Eckel, Malcom David  
 2010 Is Buddhist Environmentalism a Contradiction in Terms? *In How Much is Enough?: Buddhism, Consumerism, and the Human Environment*. R. Payne, ed: Wisdom Publications.
- Embree, John Fee  
 2013 *Japanese Village* 56. Volume 5. Routledge.
- Fast, Danya, et al.  
 2013 Did somebody say community? Young people's critiques of conventional community narratives in the context of a local drug scene. *Human organization* 72(2):98-110.
- Fetterman, David M  
 2010 *Ethnography: Step-by-step*. Volume 17. Sage.
- Fukuda, Curt and Ralph Pearce  
 2014 *San Jose Japan Town: A Journey*. City: San Jose, CA: Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMsj).
- Geary, David  
 2008 Destination enlightenment: Branding Buddhism and spiritual tourism in Bodhgaya, Bihar. *Anthropology Today* 24(3):11-14.

Geertz, Clifford

1959 Form and variation in Balinese village structure. *American anthropologist* 61(6):991-1012.

---

1963 *Agricultural Innovation: The Processes of Ecological Changes in Indonesia*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gellner, David N

1990 Introduction: What is the anthropology of Buddhism about? *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21:1-18.

Gellner, David N.

2001 *The anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism : Weberian themes*. City: New Delhi ; Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gigengack, Roy, and Paul van Gelder

2000 Contemporary street ethnography: different experiences, perspectives and methods. *Focaal* 36:7-14.

Glacken, Clarence J

1973 *Traces on the Rhodian shore: Nature and culture in Western thought from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century*. Univ of California Press.

Goffman, Erving

1955 On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry* 18(3):213-231.

Gombrich, Richard Francis, Richard Gombrich, and Gananath Obeyesekere

1988 *Buddhism transformed: religious change in Sri Lanka*. Volume 8. Motilal Banarsidass Publ.

Hannerz, Ulf

1992 *Cultural complexity: Studies in the social organization of meaning*. Columbia University Press.

Hansen, Marcus Lee

1938 The problem of the third generation immigrant. Volume 8. Augustana Historical Society.

Hardesty, Donald L Donald L

1977 Ecological anthropology.

Harvey, Graham

2005 Animism: Respecting the living world. Wakefield Press.

Hastrup, Kirsten, and Kirsten Hastrup

2013 Nature: Anthropology on the edge. *Anthropology and nature*:1-26.

HistoricalProjectCommittee

1974 Buddhist Churches of America, 75 Year History. Volume II. City: Chicago, Il: Norbart, Inc.

Hur, Nam-lin

2007 Death and social order in Tokugawa Japan: Buddhism, anti-Christianity, and the Danka system. Harvard University Asia Center.

Hwang, Sean-Shong, Rogelio Saenz, and Benigno E Aguirre

1994 Structural and Individual Determinants of Outmarriage Among Chinese-, Filipino-, and Japanese-Americans in California. *Sociological Inquiry* 64(4):396-414.

Inoue, Shinichi

2010 a buddhist economics for saving the earth. *In How Much is Enough?: Buddhism, Consumerism, and the Human Environment*. R. Payne, ed. Pp. 117-142: Wisdom Publications.

Jian, Li

2009 Socioeconomic barriers to biogas development in rural southwest China: an ethnographic case study. *Human Organization* 68(4):415-430.

Kagawa-Singer, Marjorie, et al.

2002 Comparison of the Menopause and Midlife Transition between Japanese American and European American Women. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 16(1):64-91.

Kapferer, Bruce

1994 *SOCIAL/CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY: Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*. Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah. *American Anthropologist* 96(1):172-174.

Kashima, Tetsuden

1977 *Buddhism in America : the social organization of an ethnic religious institution*. City: Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

Kaw, Eugenia

1993 Medicalization of Racial Features: Asian American Women and Cosmetic Surgery. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 7(1):74-89.

Kaza, Stephanie

2010 *How Much is Enough? In How Much is Enough?: Buddhism, Consumerism, and the Human Environment*. R. Payne, ed: Wisdom Publications.

Kikumura, Akemi, and Harry HL Kitano

1973 Interracial Marriage: A Picture of the Japanese Americans<sup>1</sup>. *Journal of Social Issues* 29(2):67-81.

Knoke, David, and James H Kuklinski

1982 *Network analysis*.

Kuwayama, Takami, et al.

2004 The 'World System' of Anthropology: Japan and Asia in the Global Community of Anthropologists. S. Yamashita, J. Bosco y JS Eades. *Making of Anthropology in East and* 382:35-56.

LeCompte, Margaret Diane.

1999 *Designing & conducting ethnographic research*. City: Walnut Creek, Calif. :: AltaMira Press.

- Lee, Sharon M, and Marilyn Fernandez  
1998 Trends in Asian American racial/ethnic intermarriage: A comparison of 1980 and 1990 census data. *Sociological Perspectives* 41(2):323-342.
- Leighton, Alexander H  
1946 governing of men.
- Lewin, Cal dir.  
2011 Great Grandfather's Drum. 57 minutes min. Opticus Media.
- Little, Peter C  
2013 Vapor Intrusion: The Political Ecology of an Emerging Environmental Health Concern. *Human Organization* 72(2):121-131.
- Lugo, Luis, et al.  
2008 US religious landscape survey. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.
- Martin, JA, Hamilton, BE, Osterman, MJK, et al.  
2015 Births: Final data for 2013. National Center for Health Statistics.
- Martinez, DP  
1990 The Dead: Shinto aspects of Buddhist ritual. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21(2):199-209.
- Maxwell, Andrew H  
1998 Motorcyclists and community in post-industrial urban America. *Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development*:263-299.
- Melendy, H. Brett, and H. Brett Melendy  
1984 Chinese and Japanese Americans. City: New York, N.Y.: Hippocrene Books.
- Murchison, Julian M.  
2010 *Ethnography essentials : designing, conducting, and presenting your research.* City: San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Musick, Marc A, and John Wilson  
2007 *Volunteers: A social profile*. Indiana University Press.
- Newmyer, Stephen T, and Peter Coates  
2000 *Nature. Western Attitudes since Ancient Times*. JSTOR.
- Ong, Aihwa  
2003 *Buddha is hiding: Refugees, citizenship, the new America*. Volume 5. Univ of California Press.
- Payne, Stephen M.  
2008 *Santa Clara County harvest of change : an illustrated history*. City: Sun Valley, CA: American Historical Press.
- Perreira, Todd LeRoy  
2004 *Sasana Sakon and the New Asian American: Inter marriage and Identity at a Thai Buddhist Temple in Silicon Valley*. *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries*:313-337.
- Pollini, Jacques  
2011 *The difficult reconciliation of conservation and development objectives: The case of the Malagasy Environmental Action Plan*. *Human Organization* 70(1):74-87.
- Putnam, Robert D  
1995 *Bowling alone: America's declining social capital*. *Journal of democracy* 6(1):65-78.
- 
- 2001 *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Pyle, Kenneth B.  
1996 *The making of modern Japan*. City: Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath.
- Radin, Paul  
1946 *Japanese Ceremonies and Festivals in California*. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 2(2):152-179.

Robertson, Jennifer

2005 Introduction: Putting and keeping Japan in anthropology. *A Companion to the Anthropology of Japan*:3.

Rogelj, J

2013 Long-term climate change: projections, commitments and irreversibility.

Rolston, Jessica Smith

2010 risky Business: neoliberalism and Workplace Safety in Wyoming Coal mines. *Human Organization* 69(4):331-342.

Ruth, Benedict

1946 *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword. Patterns of Japanese Culture.* Charles E. Tuttle Company Inc. Copyright 1946, Renwed 1974.

Schneider, Barbara, and Yongsook Lee

1990 A Model for Academic Success: The School and Home Environment of East Asian Students. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 21(4):358-377.

Shinju, Mariko

2005 *Mottainai Grandma.* City: Tokyo, Japan: Koundonsha.

Southwold, Martin

1978 *Buddhism and the Definition of Religion.* Man:362-379.

---

1983 *Buddhism in life: The anthropological study of religion and the Sinhalese practice of Buddhism.* Manchester University Press.

Spencer, Jonathan

1990 Tradition and transformation: Recent writing on the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21(2):129-40.

Spickard, Paul R.

1996 *Japanese Americans : the formation and transformations of an ethnic group.* City: New York  
London: Twayne Publishers ;

Prentice Hall International.

Sponsel, Leslie E

2011 The religion and environment interface: Spiritual ecology in ecological anthropology. *Environmental Anthropology Today*. Routledge, New York:37-55.

Steward, Julian Haynes

1963 Handbook of south american indians. Volume 7. University of Michigan-Dearborn.

---

1972 Theory of culture change: The methodology of multilineal evolution. University of Illinois Press.

---

2006 The concept and method of cultural ecology. *The Environment in Anthropology: A Reader in Ecology, Culture and Sustainable Living*:5-9.

Takahashi, Jere

1997 Nisei/Sansei : shifting Japanese American identities and politics. City: Philadelphia, Penn.: Temple University Press.

Taylor, Frank J

1947 Home Again. *Collier's Weekly*, February 15, 1947: 88.

Treitler, Inga, and Douglas Midgett

2007 It's about water: Anthropological perspectives on water and policy. *Human Organization* 66(2):140-149.

Tsurutani, Hisashi

1989 America-bound : the Japanese and the opening of the American West. City: Tokyo, Japan: The Japan Times.

Tweed, Thomas A., and Stephen R. Prothero

1999 Asian religions in America : a documentary history. City: New York: Oxford University Press.



- Van Esterik, Penny  
1992 Taking Refuge: Lao Buddhists in North America. Arizona State University.
- Weiner, Mark Stuart  
2006 Americans without law : the racial boundaries of citizenship. City: New York: New York University Press.
- West, Colin Thor, and Marcela Vásquez-León  
2008 Misreading the Arizona landscape: Reframing analyses of environmental degradation in southeastern Arizona. *Human Organization* 67(4):373-383.
- Westman, Clinton N  
2013 Social Impact Assessment and the Anthropology of the Future in Canada's Tar Sands. *Human Organization* 72(2):111-120.
- Williams, Duncan Ryuken  
2010 Buddhist Environmentalism in Contemporary Japan. *In How Much is Enough?: Buddhism, Consumerism, and the Human Environment*. R. Payne, ed: Wisdom Publications.
- Wilson, John  
2000 Volunteering. *Annual review of sociology*:215-240.
- Wilson, John, and Marc Musick  
1997 Who cares? Toward an integrated theory of volunteer work. *American Sociological Review*:694-713.
- Wolcott, Harry F  
1999 *Ethnography: A way of seeing*. Rowman Altamira.
- Yanagisako, Sylvia Junko  
1975 Two Processes of Change in Japanese-American Kinship. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 31(3):196-224.