ENFOLDING SILENCE

The Transformation of Japanese American Religion and Art under Oppression

BRETT J. ESAKI

Enfolding Silence

AMERICAN ACADEMY of RELIGION

ACADEMY SERIES

SERIES EDITOR
Aaron W. Hughes, University at Buffalo

A Publication Series of
The American Academy of Religion
and
Oxford University Press

GRAHAM GREENE'S CATHOLIC IMAGINATION
Mark Bosco, S.J.

COMING TO THE EDGE OF THE CIRCLE
A Wiccan Initiation Ritual
Nikki Bado-Fralick

THE ETHICS OF ANIMAL EXPERIMENTATION
A Critical Analysis and Constructive Christian Proposal
Donna Yarri

PAUL IN ISRAEL'S STORY
Self and Community at the Cross
John L. Meech

CROSSING THE ETHNIC DIVIDE
The Multiethnic Church on a Mission
Kathleen Garces-Foley

GOD AND THE VICTIM
Traumatic Intrusions on Grace and Freedom
Jennifer Erin Beste

THE CREATIVE SUFFERING OF THE TRIUNE GOD
An Evolutionary Theology
Gloria L. Schaab

A THEOLOGY OF CRITICISM
Balthasar, Postmodernism, and the Catholic Imagination
Michael P. Murphy

INCARNATION ANYWAY
Arguments for Supralapsarian Christology
Edwin Chr. Van Driel

DISABILITY AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY
Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities
Deborah Beth Creamer

MEETING GOD ON THE CROSS
Christ, the Cross, and the Feminist Critique
Arnfríður Guðmundsdóttir

MUSLIMS, SCHOLARS, SOLDIERS
The Origin and Elaboration of the Ibādī Imāmate Traditions
Adam R. Gaiser

RACE AND RELIGION IN AMERICAN BUDDHISM
White Supremacy and Immigrant Adaptation
Joseph Cheah

JOURNEY BACK TO GOD
Origen on the Problem of Evil
Mark S. M. Scott

BEYOND THE WALLS
Abraham Joshua Heschel and Edith Stein on the Significance of Empathy for Jewish-Christian Dialogue
Joseph Redfield Palmisano, SJ

TYPES OF PENTECOSTAL THEOLOGY
Method, System, Spirit
Christopher A. Stephenson

OTHER DREAMS OF FREEDOM
Religion, Sex, and Human Trafficking
Yvonne C. Zimmerman

LIBERALISM VERSUS POSTLIBERALISM
The Great Divide in Twentieth-Century Theology
John Allan Knight

IMAGE, IDENTITY, AND THE FORMING OF THE AUGUSTINIAN SOUL
Matthew Drever

RIGHTEOUS RHETORIC
Sex, Speech, and the Politics of Concerned Women for America
Leslie Durrough Smith

ENFOLDING SILENCE
The Transformation of Japanese American Religion and Art under Oppression
Brett J. Esaki

Enfolding Silence

The Transformation of Japanese American Religion and Art under Oppression

BRETT J. ESAKI

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

© Oxford University Press 2016

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Ruth Asawa, American, 1926–2013, *Untitled, ca. 1962,*
© Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, gift of the artist, 2005.90.9.
© Estate of Ruth Asawa.
Warning: All rights reserved. Unauthorized public performance, broadcasting, transmission, or copying, mechanical or electronic, is a violation of applicable laws. This product and the individual images contained within are protected under the laws of the United States and other countries. Unauthorized duplication, distribution, transmission, or exhibition of the whole or of any part therein may result in civil liability and criminal prosecution. The downloading of images is not permitted.

Isamu Noguchi, *Memorial to the Dead of Hiroshima*, a.k.a. *Arch of Peace,*
unrealized model, 1952.
Isamu Noguchi, *To the Issei*, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles, CA, 1983.
© 2015 The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, New York/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.
Reproduction, including downloading of Noguchi works is prohibited by copyright laws and international conventions without the express written permission of Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Esaki, Brett J.
Title: Enfolding silence: the transformation of Japanese American religion and art under oppression / Brett J. Esaki.
Description: New York, NY : Oxford University Press, 2016. | Series: AAR academy series | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2015035659 | ISBN 978–0–19–025142–0 (hardback: alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Japanese Americans—Social conditions. | Japanese Americans—Intellectual life. | Japanese Americans—Religion. | Arts, Japanese—United States—History. | Silence—Social aspects—United States—History. | Marginality, Social—United States—History. | Social change—United States—History. | Arts and society—United States—History. | Racism—United States—History. | United States—Race relations—History.
Classification: LCC E184.J3 E83 2016 | DDC 973/.04956—dc23 LC record available at http://lccn.loc.gov/2015035659

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2
Printed by Sheridan, USA

Contents

List of Illustrations vii

Acknowledgments ix

Introduction: "They're Just like White Kids": Genealogy and Theory of Japanese American Non-Binary Silence 1

Brief Genealogy of Japanese American Silence before Immigration 3

Brief Genealogy of Japanese American Silence after Immigration 9

Non-Binary Silences 18

Non-Binary Silences in Japanese American Art 25

1. Gardening, the Silence of Space, and the Humanity of Judgment 33

The History of Gardening Negotiating Multiple Forms of Oppression 37

Greg Kitajima, His Lineage of Garden Designers (Kinzuchi and Frank Fujii), and the Silence of Space 44

Masumoto and Asawa on the Silence of Space 63

Gaimenteki Doka and Religious Ideas in the Silence of Space 67

Afterword and Caution 72

2 Origami, the Silence of Self, and the Spirit of Vulnerability 75

Two Selves and the Marginal Man 76

A Brief History of Origami 81

Linda Mihara, Japanese American Origami Artist 95

Teaching Origami and the "Nice Girl" 105
Japanese American *Kami* 112
The Potential Space and the Silence of Self 113
The Spirit of Vulnerability 119

3. Jazz, the Silence of Time, and Modes of Justice 120
Introduction to This Song of Justice 122
First Time through the Form: Japanese American Multiracial History 128
Repeat to the Top of the Form: The History of Jazz 132
Turnaround: *Ma* and the History of Jazz 144
Ensemble Section: Minidoka Swing Band 146
Solo: Anthony Brown 155
Coda: Justice and the Silence of Time 165

4. Monuments, the Silence of Legacy, and *Kodomo Tame Ni* 168
Introduction to the Potential Problems of the Silence of Legacy 170
Japanese American Value of Monuments and Controversies over Monuments 172
Robert Murase's *Japanese American Historical Plaza* 179
Isamu Noguchi's *To the Issei* 191
Multiplicity in the Silence of Legacy 202

Epilogue: "Whiz Kids"? Racial Shamelessness, the Model Minority, and the Future of Silence 207
Cycles of Racism and Corresponding Non-Binary Silences 208
The Future of Silence 210

Appendix: Background Information Sheet and Interview Questionnaire 215

Notes 219

Bibliography 245

Index 259

Illustrations

Figures

0.1 Illustration of binary silence between two sounds. 21
0.2 Illustration of silence with its own characteristics. 21
0.3 Spatial illustration of non-binary silence. 22
1.1 Sample Design Process. 48
1.2 Typical *bonsai* shape. 49
1.3 Tracing of one of Fujii's trees. 53
1.4 Tracing of a tree pruned by Kitajima. 53
1.5 Tracing of a tree knuckle on one of Fujii's trees. 54
1.6 Step 1 of Pruning. 59
1.7 Step 2 of Pruning. 61
1.8 Step 3 of Pruning. 61
1.9 Ruth Asawa, American, 1926–2013, *Untitled*, ca. 1962, detail, galvanized steel wire, 68.6 x 99.1 x 99.1 cm. 66
2.1 Integrity/Independence and Intimacy/Interdependence. 79
2.2 Linda Mihara, *Peace Sphere*, 1994. 99
2.3 Nine connected cranes facing in a single direction. 100
2.4 Dual Instruction. 106
2.5 Transformation 1. 107
2.6 Transformation 2. 108
2.7 Group Instruction. 109
2.8 The Potential Space. 116
2.9 Non-Binary Silence. 117
3.1 "Row, Row, Row Your Boat." 125
3.2 Musicians and Students in Performance. 161

4.1 *Japanese American Historical Plaza*, Portland, Oregon. 183
4.2 Isamu Noguchi, *Memorial to the Dead of Hiroshima*, a.k.a. *Arch of Peace*, unrealized model, 1952. 195
4.3 *To the Issei*, Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, Los Angeles, California, 1983. 197

Table

3.1 Japanese American Interracial Marriage Rates, 2000 Census. 131

Acknowledgments

FIRST, I WOULD like to thank the following academic mentors: Rudy Busto, Rita Nakashima Brock, Joanne Doi, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, and Paul Spickard. Anthony Brown has been generous with his time and care commenting on the jazz chapter. Research was supported by three fellowships, listed chronologically: The North American Doctoral Fellowship from The Fund for Theological Education; The Fred Ho Fellowship from the Asian American Studies Institute at the University of Connecticut; and the Dean's Advancement Fellowship from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Research was assisted at every archive, library, and site visit. Thanks to the Board of the Santa Barbara Buddhist Church; Bob Fisher of the Wing Luke Museum, with guidance from Sharon Suh; Cathy Schlund-Vials and the late Fred Ho for their assistance at the American Studies Institute at University of Connecticut; Robert Hori of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center; Heidi Coleman of The Noguchi Museum; Tony Cheng of the Library of Origami USA; and, Laura Baxter of the Minidoka Swing Band.

I would also like to thank all of the interviewees for their generosity with time, insights, and visions and for granting me access to see them perform and to observe their workspaces. The work has been rich and rewarding thanks to their graciousness. I hope that my work honors your contributions to the beauty, acuity, and innovation of Japanese American art, religion, and silence.

Last but certainly not least, I deeply appreciate the emotional support of family and friends. Love to my grandparents, some recently passed, whose presence is felt throughout the book and to my *sansei* parents who listened to chapter ideas for years. From first to final draft, I am deeply thankful for the spiritual and intellectual support of my life partner, Kristy Slominski. Thanks to all.

Enfolding Silence

Introduction

"They're Just like White Kids"

GENEALOGY AND THEORY OF JAPANESE AMERICAN NON-BINARY SILENCE

AFTER MY GREAT-AUNT'S funeral, I had the honor of sitting at my paternal grandmother's dinner table, surrounded by my grandmother and her remaining siblings. This was the eldest of my grandmother's siblings, so all were gathered to pay their respects. My parents were also there, not sitting, but walking around the house cleaning, preparing food, serving food, and eating. The table was full of dishes that my grandmother had spent the last few days making, and conversation went from Serena Williams's recent tennis championship to jokes about sisters' and brothers' idiosyncrasies.

At one point, one of my great-uncles asked me what I do, and my late-twenties self explained that I was a graduate student studying religions and art and how Japanese Americans have used them to form communities and to create a sense of home. Then, my grandmother squared her shoulders, formed intense eyes, and turned to her brothers and sisters. She said, "See, both he and his brother—they're just like White kids." My grandmother was full of conviction, and I looked around and saw the table of elders nodding with confidence. I did not understand what was being agreed upon and began to feel self-conscious that I did not seem Japanese enough or maybe seemed too educated; in other words, I was ashamed for seeming too "White." But, even though I felt my own palpitations, I sensed my extended family's pride. So I asked my grandmother, "Well, what do you mean by that?" She simply replied, "You're not afraid. You can say what you want."

At this point came a torrent of information. My grandparents and my grandmother's siblings talked of their experiences in the World War II internment camps, fighting in Italy in the 442nd Infantry Battalion, the interruption of a farming job when news broke about the attacks on Pearl Harbor, and finding work in canneries after internment. Later, during the drive home, my parents explained that they were still in shock because they had heard only a little of that information and had never learned about my great-uncle's narrow escapes from death in the War.

This moment altered how I thought of my grandparents' and other Japanese Americans' silence around the internment years. Yes, I heard information from my grandparents' generation that they had not told my parents, but more profoundly for me, I learned that my extended family had chosen silence *and* when to end silence. I understood that, instead of feebly hiding from their pain, they were willing to talk about their traumatic experiences, but only on the condition that the listener be somewhat equanimous while hearing it. I began to discern a contrast in this respect with my parents' generation, who overall were outraged by the injustices that their parents had experienced. I understood that my grandparents' generation had difficult memories to discuss, but did not want to pass on their pain to their children and did not have a remedy for the injustice that their children could take up. For reasons such as this, mentioning internment memories to their children might lead to negative consequences instead of a productive discussion like the one I witnessed. By contrast, my generation would not to be knocked off-center after listening to such memories. They understood that I had these qualities from only a few sentences about my life, and significantly because of my grandmother's endorsement.

Moreover, I myself recognized that I was not afraid of hearing these emotional realities. As they told me their embodied, often painful memories and debated each other about internment and its aftermath, I soon came to know that I *was* psychologically secure enough to listen to these realities, to understand their complicated legacy, and not to jump to conclusions. Namely, I learned to see my relatives as survivors of racism who have led imperfect lives under incomprehensible circumstances with indeterminate futures. At that moment, I felt that I belonged at the table.

Here, I must emphasize that I am not asserting that White Americans are without fear or that people of color are full of fear. Rather, for my elders, White Americans seem not to second-guess their appearance, demeanor, and word choice; they seem to act as if they know themselves

and know what they want, whereas minorities must choose their words carefully. In their view, I was "like White kids" because they felt that I had a strong enough sense of self and identity to hear about emotionally straining racism and not to mishear them, be hurt, or become uncontrollably angry. From this experience, I began to rethink Japanese American silence around the internment experience and racism in general.

For example, for historical and social reasons that will be outlined later, it is common for Japanese Americans in general and scholars of Japanese Americans in particular to interpret the silence around internment as racial shame and repressed pain that came from this time period. Yet, when my elders addressed their experiences, they did not seem ashamed, and it did not seem like they had never spoken about their experiences. They also did not try to repress one another as they spoke. I did not find them breaking down in tears or meekly discussing their victimhood. Instead, they carried on a conversation, albeit an impassioned conversation. They vociferously debated issues, acknowledged injustices, told funny stories, and marveled at some of the absurdity of their American experience. In short, I came to understand that there is much more to Japanese American silence than victimhood and repression, and choosing silence does not always mean denial, paralysis, or buried anger, sadness, guilt, and shame.

This book is the fruit of this re-examination of silence, and it was developed with careful attention to the practices and works of Japanese American artists who engage the depths of silence.

Brief Genealogy of Japanese American Silence before Immigration

Japanese Americans have developed dynamic and complex silences in response to a history of oppression within the United States and Japan; as a result, silence has become a strategy of resistance and a symbol of survival. A central silent strategy of resistance has been appearing to conform while inwardly maintaining one's beliefs. This practice was developed in Japan in response to religious persecution and then was utilized in the United States in response to repeating cycles of racism. While this strategy of resistance has centuries-long roots in Japan, Japanese Americans have called it *gaimenteki doka*, or outward assimilation. Outward assimilation is a primary mechanism of creating multilayered silences, and both

strategy and silence have been resources for the spirituality and survival of Japanese and Japanese American people.

Before Japanese Americans immigrated, Japan underwent multiple centuries of national unification, many of which were designed to resist and to conform to pressures from Western nations. Internally, these processes of unification oppressed many groups of Japanese people, including particular religious groups.

One major example of oppression for unification was the response to Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When Christian missionaries arrived in Japan in the sixteenth century, some *daimyo* (regional military rulers) saw this as an opportunity to establish rulership. *Daimyo* competed over territory, resources, political influence, and the legitimacy to rule, and embracing the otherness of Christianity was one way to distinguish themselves from others who largely practiced Japanese religions. Christian missionaries in Japan in the sixteenth century were Jesuits from various nations. In 1549, Portuguese Francis Xavier first arrived in Japan, followed by Italian Jesuit Alessandro Valignano in 1579, and followed by other Portuguese and Spanish Franciscans and Dominicans from the Philippines at the end of the sixteenth century.[1] As early as 1563, a few *daimyo* converted to Catholicism, had their associates convert, and held mass conversions of their subjects. Then, non-Christian *daimyo* rightly saw Christianity as a mark of belonging to an opposing faction. Using this logic, when a non-Christian *daimyo* would defeat a Christian *daimyo*, the victorious *daimyo* asserted his domination by eliminating Christianity from the newly conquered lands. Thus, for politicians and warlords, Christianity represented a foreign religion and a domestic, rival political identification.

Jesuit missionaries took actions that confirmed this political interpretation of Christianity to local Japanese government officials. By agreement, missionaries were allowed to build churches and to convert people, but only within designated zones. With their zeal to proselytize, missionaries felt too hampered by the zoning and would sneak out, sometimes with Japanese people's assistance, to convert people and to preach to already converted Christians. This defiance did not sit well with Japanese officials, because it seemed to contest their authority. First, Jesuits had broken the official agreements. Additionally, since Christianity was part of the political identity of many *daimyo*, it seemed that converting Japanese to Christianity was increasing the power of certain *daimyo*. For these reasons and several others, the government banned Christianity in 1587.[2]

As non-Christian *daimyo* defeated Christian *daimyo*, they began sweeping reforms to remove potential subversives, including the public execution of Japanese Christians. In these exchanges, we can see the conflict of political and religious interpretations of Christianity. Politically speaking, Christians represented the presence of banned foreigners and defeated *daimyo*. Religiously speaking, many Christians did not see their religious identification as one that could be dropped when the government changed. Hence, their refusal to renounce Christianity under threat of death may not have solely represented a refusal to assent to a new political system, but was also an expression of religious identity. As instructed by the Jesuits, Japanese Christians valued martyrdom as a symbol of the power of Christianity. This value of martyrdom also matched Japanese ideals of overflowing beauty and spirit, where one's inner strength is fully expended in the face of death. From these influences, martyrdom was valued for its demonstration of strength, beauty, and Christian faith. Some execution locations became Christian holy sites, and some of the executed became holy martyrs for Japanese Christians.

As the country became more clearly controlled by a non-Christian government, it switched its policy from executing Christians to forcing apostasy under the threat of execution. Though many refused the opportunities to apostatize and were executed, others understood that the new government primarily wanted a public statement that they were not Christian, which would be a public performance of political assent to the new government. Those Christian movements that survived the persecution similarly adopted a policy of outward conformity, or in other words, publicly seeming non-Christian while privately believing in and practicing Christianity.

To be more nuanced, the underground survival of Christianity depended on removing any sign of Christianity that could be noticed by government surveyors. This included transforming communal ritual sites and home altars to appear non-Christian, because officials would probe these sites for indications of Christianity. In the home, this involved not only hiding Christian objects in secret compartments but also making objects appear non-Christian. An example was the creation of the image of Maria-Kannon. Scrolls and other images of the Buddhist goddess Kannon were created to include the iconography of Mary, such as having Kannon hold a child. These outwardly assimilated rituals, symbols, and practices—that would keep Christianity a secret—became the foundations of the traditions of *Kakure Kirishitan* (Secret Christians), traditions that have been passed down to the present day. [3]

As historian Stephen Turnbull argues, the Secret Christians eventually stopped considering the outwardly assimilated practices as accommodations to government surveillance; rather, these practices became their spiritual heritage. Turnbull makes this argument by comparing sixteenth-century Catholicism to Kakure practices in the twentieth century. The primary sacrament of the modern Kakure was baptism, and this served several functions, such as welcoming people into the religious community, absolution, and cleansing. Their practices matched the guidelines in sixteenth-century Catholicism for performing baptism when there was no priest available. Additionally, Turnbull discovers that they expanded upon the practices and ideas of baptism that the early Jesuits taught. For example, they incorporated the Shinto meaning of water as purification, which cleanses a person before entering divine spaces.

In such ways, the survival strategy of outward conformity not only preserved Christian traditions but transformed them. First, the heritage of the Kakure has lost the fullness of an open Christian practice of worship and community. On the other hand, Shinto and Buddhist meanings supplemented Christian beliefs and practices. That is, outward assimilation was a process of surviving under discipline, preserving what was considered most important, and discarding other elements, resulting in rich, hybrid systems of symbols and ideas. This process of surviving was utilized later by those avoiding persecution and cultural erasure during Japan's "Westernization."

The period of "Westernization," or Japan's nineteenth-century modernization project, was riddled with religious oppression and forced transformation, and it was in this period that Japanese Americans immigrated.[4] Modernization was part of the Meiji Restoration (the Meiji Era, 1860–1912), which was inspired by the threat of Western imperialism. In 1854, Commodore Perry's American warships forced Japan to open trade relations, and consequently Japan was compelled to sign unequal trade treaties with Western nations. Instead of simply acquiescing to the demands, Japan capitalized on the opportunity and learned as much as possible from Western nations, with the end goal of becoming equal.

Ideologically speaking, the Japanese government felt that becoming equal to Western nations involved the creation of a unified, modern nation that would put Japanese people on par racially with Americans and Europeans. They believed that such a unified nation required a central government, a modern educational system, and a single, philosophically coherent religious system. To these ends, universal education became a goal, and the

Japanese government sought advanced scholarship in technology, medicine, economics, philosophy, religion, and politics. Women's education was promoted, and in 1900 the government required at least one girls' high school per prefecture.[5] These sweeping changes were funded largely through the heavy taxation of the farmer class, and the economic turmoil inspired large-scale immigration to the United States. These changes also included overhauling the religious organization of the nation, including transforming local religious sites into satellite national religious sites.

The scope of the "restoration" was unprecedented in Japan, but many of the methods of transformation were not new to the Japanese people. In *Of Heretics and Martyrs*, historian James Ketelaar describes the Meiji reconfiguration of Japan's religions, and notes how it followed patterns and technologies from the seventeenth-century persecution of Christians. In brief, Ketelaar describes a four-step process: establishing local regulatory offices; using these offices to survey the size, membership, wealth, and activities of local temples and shrines; shutting down temples and otherwise removing elements deemed undesirable or extraneous; and restructuring local festivals and practices to fit the new, acceptable mold. This process was often violent, but sometimes did not initially appear so because it was extended over a long period. In one example, the initial survey seemed relatively harmless, albeit intrusive, but 30 years later officials used it as a guide to know where to apply violent restructuring. From these experiences, the Japanese people came to understand that government surveillance implied the possibility of future violence. In addition, as outlined in the discussion of Secret Christians, the Japanese learned that one could avoid violence by either changing exterior religious practices or ceasing them.[6]

Utilizing these methods, the Meiji government targeted Buddhism and indigenous traditions to remove them or to bring them in line with the centralized religious system. Ketelaar argues that the government targeted those practices that seemed the most carnivalesque. For example, diviners, mediums, exorcists, minstrels, and some local pilgrimages were banned. The government's argument was that these occupations and activities directed money and productivity away from the central government. In practice, the government targeted religions that seemed to question the superiority of the new, central government. Accordingly, it sought to remove Buddhism, with its origins outside Japan, and indigenous Japanese religions that did not place religious authority in the new, central Japanese government. The government targeted religions and their

practices, and then, if it did not ban them altogether, ensured that the rituals were transformed to emphasize the central government's authority, or it simply replaced the rituals.[7] Instead of waiting to be targeted, some Buddhist sects and indigenous religions often initiated changes to match the perceived demands of the government—outward assimilations that would allow them to continue to exist. Once again, the Japanese people—if they did not fully participate in the new colonial desires of Japan—found ways to assimilate the appearance of religious practices to match the intruding demands of government surveyors.

While these outward assimilations were certainly subversive from one perspective, it should also be noted that they followed the modern Japanese conception of religion, which allows one to behave according to one religion while believing another. As Michihiro Ama argues, cultural imperialism and orientalism combined to create the modern term for religion in Japan. It is *shukyo* (宗教), which means doctrines, so it implies that a religion has a set of rigid doctrines. Ama traces the first use of *shukyo* in this capacity to the unequal treaties with Western nations, where it was used to translate the English word "religion." In this way, it is linked to cultural imperialism. Ama also argues that *shukyo* represents the influence of cultural imperialism because it implies a Western understanding of religion that focuses on central creeds and doctrines. It further implies that folk traditions, which often did not have rigid creeds and consisted of myriad hybrid belief systems and practices, were not religions.[8] Ama illustrates that this degradation of folk traditions was part of the orientalist depiction of the inferiority and incoherence of non-Christian Asian religions.

There were several consequences for this definition of religion. The Meiji national policy did not protect folk practices under the legal category of religion, allowing the government to intervene in folk practices and Shinto shrine affairs.[9] However, the translation also meant that the government was officially concerned only with doctrines and rites, leaving the inner beliefs or interpretations of religious practices unregulated. For this reason, the modern Japanese conception of religion keeps outward rites and doctrines separated from inward beliefs, opening the possibility for outward assimilation without inward transformation.[10]

This policy and translation began with the Meiji Restoration, and thus Japanese immigrants to the United States were familiar with this understanding of religion and the government enforcement of the outward appearance of religion. This meant that Japanese Americans understood that governments valued doctrinal religions, while some folk traditions

could be passed on by considering them "cultural" traditions, as long as they did not interfere with "religion." Transformed, hybridized, and hidden traditions can be found in Japanese American culture, including practices of art.

Brief Genealogy of Japanese American Silence after Immigration

Japanese Americans continued to transform their religious traditions and to develop silences as they faced racism and other forms of oppression in the United States. Immigrants to the United States primarily came from farmers and fishermen in the southern prefectures who were bankrupted and destabilized by the overhaul of the Japanese government. Also among the immigrants were people educated by American Christian missionaries and those removed from power during the government transition. The government supported emigration to the United States because of a substantial national income from remittances. The government also thought of it as an opportunity to convey a positive image of itself through the uprightness of its emigrants. In respect to the desired positive self-image, Japan instituted a policy that contract laborers had to prove that they were healthy and skilled.[11]

From the United States' perspective, Japanese workers were an important resource. Specifically, they helped to meet the demand for Hawaiian plantation labor, and on the mainland they filled the loss of laborers after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. However, many Americans quickly became anxious about Japanese people, and built upon the anti-Chinese movement in their efforts to remove the Japanese laborers and immigrants. In 1907, the Gentlemen's Agreement was enacted, which virtually ended the immigration of Japanese men. However, it also allowed for family reunification, which enabled wives to immigrate, and this was a loophole for women in Japan to marry as picture brides and then come to the United States. Later, the Immigration Act of 1924 officially ended the immigration of all Japanese. This meant that Japanese American men primarily arrived between 1888 and 1907, and women between 1888 and 1924. In addition, there was a predominance of contract laborers among men, though the occupations in America did not necessarily correlate with the former occupations in Japan. Many women came as wives of these men, but it should be noted that many of the women chose to marry immigrant

men in order to access opportunities to utilize their Western education, such as in medicine and English, as well as to advance in social class.

Early immigrants experienced other aspects of Japan's modernization project, including mandatory education, government suppression of potential dissidents, and an introduction to ideologies of the modern Japanese race and nation. In these ways, Japanese Americans were familiar with political suppression, national unification, nationalistic militarism, religious persecution, and economic disparity, and when they faced similar oppressive realities in America, they applied the same strategy of outward assimilation in order to survive.

From first immigration and culminating in the Immigration Act of 1924, Japanese were subject to overt racism in the United States, including violent attacks by American nativists, political marginalization, and stereotypical images.[12] Many who came ashore were greeted by jeers, were spit on, and had objects thrown at them. These physical attacks and concurrent political marginalization were often extensions of the racist oppression of Chinese immigrants. For example, many Japanese American students, called "schoolboys," took up the domestic labor jobs formerly occupied by Chinese. In mainstream culture, fears of Asian male domestic laborers proliferated, with special anxiety that they occupied some of the same spaces as White women while husbands were at work. In these racist images, Asian men disturbed the purity of White men's homes and they often plotted to rape the White women. Likewise, many White Americans conflated the Japanese American practice of picture brides with Chinese prostitution. As previously mentioned, the phenomenon of picture brides spread because of the Gentlemen's Agreement, so the expansion of this presumed practice of prostitution was ironically due to nativist fears of Japanese families. To deepen the irony, actual Chinese prostitution, which supposedly also upset the purity of White families, was expanded by the White demand for prostitutes. For nativists, the purity of Western states was at stake, while their very fears were expanded by White support of prostitution and the successes of their own anti-Asian political movement.

In response to the racist conflation of Asian peoples, Japanese Americans and the Japanese government often worked to distinguish Japanese from Chinese immigrants. This anti-Chinese rhetoric by Japanese Americans was part of the larger ideology called Japanese occidentalism, which argued that Japan could advance by borrowing from the best of the West and by removing other Asian cultures, which would supposedly purify Japanese cultural roots.[13] Japanese occidentalism also

manifested itself in some labor competitions with other Asian immigrants in the United States, when Japanese laborers would band together at the expense of other Asian immigrant groups.[14]

Hence, Japanese Americans responded to early racism by distancing themselves from Chinese culture and adapting to American culture. Their process of adaptation echoed the strategy of outward conformity developed earlier in Japan. While the Japanese strategy was for the purpose of surviving religious persecution and the imperial restructure of the nation, Japanese Americans likened their struggle to those of a recent adoptee who does not fit into a new family. The term for this process of adaptation was *gaimenteki doka*. Japanese American historian Yuji Ichioka illustrates that the first generation (*issei*) of Japanese Americans debated how to transform their culture in the United States and focused on the contrast between *gaimenteki* and *naimenteki*.[15] *Gaimenteki* (外面的) literally translates to "associated with the exterior surface," and in this respect an adoptee would learn to act like the new family but inwardly retain the spirit of the original family.[16] It generally refers to transformations in culture that are externally visible, such as etiquette and dress. *Naimenteki* (内面的) is "associated with the interior" and includes the adoption of both the actions and inward values of the new family. Proponents of *gaimenteki doka* argued that the adaptation to American culture was expedient, superficial, and was part of a duty to appear acceptable for the sake of the larger community. Additionally, they argued against *naimenteki doka* because the internal could not be changed or did not need to be changed.

The concern was partly about religion because one difference was the degree to which people wanted to accept the American value of democracy and American interpretations of Christianity.[17] Underlying splits in the community were perspectives on the content, stability, and vibrancy of the spiritual core of Japanese Americans; namely, they were determining whether there was a core worth preserving. They were debating how much of American culture they should adopt, and which culture—Japanese or American—is dominant or better. This transformation was pressed by the overwhelming realization that they needed to make changes to survive. In these ways, "assimilation" in the term "outward assimilation" does not refer to an inferior group transforming to become like a superior group, like many sociological theories of assimilation assert, rather a group being faced with potentially dangerous forces and responding by choosing to preserve elements deemed important from its culture and finding ways to bolster them. That is,

gaimenteki doka is both a process of making disciplining gazes not notice or otherwise feel unthreatened, and of determining what is most important to a people and protecting it in their core. It is not a concession, but a process of external silence with internal spiritual vitality and an attitude of facing oppression for survival.

The forces that pushed Japanese Americans to use *gaimenteki doka* were never clearer than during World War II internment.[18] The government and military forced more than 110,000 Japanese Americans in western zones out of their homes, into assembly centers or prisons, then into concentration camps, and finally out of these camps. This was without exemptions of citizenship status, military service, gender, age, or religious affiliation. The experiences initiated profound changes in the Japanese American community, such as the upheaval of family organization, physical scattering, psychological turmoil, and the loss of property and income. Administrators created camp policies and the organization of facilities in order to undermine patriarchal authority and Japanese family structure. For example, everyone ate communally at mess halls, which kept parents from purchasing and providing food, and stopped parents and other elders from preparing family meals. Instead of immigrant parents bringing in more income than their children, jobs were more often given to American-born children. The official argument was that English-speakers could be more easily trusted and instructed, but in practice this policy took authority away from parents and fomented antagonism between generations. Due to such policies and organization, people of similar ages formed strong social groups that separated themselves from others, and English-speaking youth found themselves with more authority and ability to determine their own choices and organizations.

Despite the abrupt disruption of life and uncertainty for the future, Japanese Americans had remarkably few violent protests during their incarceration. This does not mean, however, that Japanese Americans were not upset and did not find ways to express their anger. As historian Gary Okihiro describes in "Religion and Resistance in America's Concentration Camps," internees found ways to express their frustrations using coded language. For example, their term for the "barracks" in which they lived was *buraku*, which refers to outcaste ethnic groups in Japan.[19] Using coded language, religious gatherings, and the transmission of folk beliefs, Japanese Americans were able to find a sense of solidarity and to express their discontent to each other while avoiding the gaze of police and administrators.

Japanese Americans also engaged in art and decorated their barracks with gardens.[20] Forms of art without a focus on Japanese language did not seem threatening to camp administrators, so these were allowed and were encouraged in some cases. In addition, as theater scholar Emily Colborn-Roxworthy describes, even with the official association of Japanese culture with disloyalty, many Japanese cultural arts were allowed.[21] This was because administrators focused on the appearance of internees' Americanness for public relations, so performances would generally be allowed if they could be cast as pro-American. For example, Japanese classical dancing (*ondo*) and theater (*kabuki*) could be performed on American holidays such as the Fourth of July under the argument that *nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) were thanking *issei* for their American citizenship.[22] That is, by taking art and rituals and assimilating the appearance or timing in the annual calendar, the inward emotions and religious messages could be preserved.

There were a variety of reasons to participate in art in the camps. For many internees, art projects were simply ways to fend off boredom. For others, the arts served multiple purposes, from sustaining their composure to higher spiritual pursuits. Moreover, the arts, since they were allowed in the camps, became vehicles to pass on religious ideas that would be discouraged or banned if taught through language and doctrines. Thus, the arts became a vehicle for outwardly assimilating religious ideas, transforming them into seemingly harmless artistic or cultural ideas that could be transmitted in the camps.

For Japanese Americans, there were obvious benefits of seeming harmless, such as not being assaulted and killed by armed guards, but camp administrators also benefited. Camp administrators worked under the mandate to democratize Japanese Americans, and thus taught democracy classes.[23] They actively competed against administrators of other camps to prove that their policies and physical layouts minimized disruptions in camp life. They were therefore pleased with themselves when Japanese Americans did not riot. Moreover, several outside groups benefited from Japanese American peaceful adjustment. There were sociologists and anthropologists who took advantage of the unusual historical circumstance, as well as the isolation and consistency of the population, to do scientific studies on Japanese Americans. Additionally, White American artists, such as Dorothy Lange and Ansel Adams, took it upon themselves to make a photographic argument that Japanese Americans were fully American.[24] Lange and Adams photographically documented the

internment experience and took care to capture the even temper, positive attitude, and American customs of Japanese Americans in the camps. This included photographs of internees doing American things like playing baseball and marching in a band, smiling while in school, wearing American clothes, and working at American jobs. Photographs, newspaper articles, and government propaganda films all worked to illustrate the safety of the camps and the positive attitude of internees.

Thus, the results of *gaimenteki doka*, while silently preserving Japanese culture, religious ideas, and a history of survival, also helped to legitimate the self-image of America as a beneficent, democratic, meritocracy that valued education and family—all ideals contested by the realities of the internment. Such ironies of *gaimenteki doka* are sustained in nearly every practice developed from it, including those continued outside the contexts of severe discipline.

In the time period after World War II, the transition of Japan from an enemy to a democratic and capitalist ally occurred in a matter of two decades. Accordingly, Japanese Americans went from being imprisoned en masse as enemy aliens to being eligible for citizenship. While before and during the war Japan's success contested America's ideological dominance, after World War II Japan's success resuscitated it. Postwar, the United States felt that it had defeated Hitler's military and persecution programs, and it zealously displayed its defeat of Japan with the atomic bombs. These military successes, depicted with images of atomic bomb clouds and flattened Japanese cities, proved to many Americans that the United States was exceptional on intellectual, physical, and spiritual levels. In relationship to Japan, its superiority was reinforced by images of the economically desperate postwar Japanese and of the American Occupation that supposedly rebuilt Japan as a demilitarized, productive, democratic, and religiously free country.

Soon the rise in communist countries' military and scientific power during the Cold War once again questioned America's dominance. The development of science and technology by the Soviet Union, such as the Sputnik satellite and nuclear weapons, made it seem possible that the United States would not be at the forefront of science and that it could be annihilated by communist weapons. Many communist governments also violently oppressed organized religions, so that the existence and potential dominance of communist nations threatened America's foundational ideal of religious freedom. However, from Americans' view, Japan stood in contrast to communist nations, because Japan—at least according to its newly

imposed Constitution, which was written to match the US Constitution—supported religious freedom, capitalistic business, and democracy. In these ways, changes in international politics made Japan quickly move from enemy to ally. Further, Japan stood as a symbol of American military domination, and this enhancement of American masculinity made Japanese men seem impotent by contrast and Japanese women and the nation seem passive and happy recipients of American masculinity.

The decreased threat of Japan accordingly helped Japanese Americans find a limited welcome in the United States. While prewar Japanese Americans could not find jobs that matched their college degrees, postwar the degrees counted more often. With more and higher paying jobs, it seemed as if within one generation Japanese Americans were able to build from nothing and to move into middle-class status. This in part explains the founding of the model minority myth, which is a racist image that argues that Asian Americans are harder working, better at mathematics, and excel at technical, emotionless endeavors more than other groups, including Whites.[25] While it may appear to be a positive image, this was a continuation of former racist depictions of Japanese people. Prewar, Japanese people were thought to be fungible, mindless, and slavish workers for the Japanese empire, and their economic success was considered the result of inhuman intense and non-compassionate labor. In the postwar period, the earlier images of Japan were layered onto the new image of economic growth, leading to a renewed fear of hyper-productivity for the sake of imperial aspirations at the expense of human emotion. For example, the model minority myth was used in the 1980s to explain Japan's rise in technological and industrial power.

Japanese Americans thus were uncomfortably welcomed into the American citizenry. Many war-weary Japanese Americans welcomed this change from enemy to ally and silently acquiesced to life under provisional acceptance. To this end, many focused on economic stability and further assimilation in hopes that this would help the next generation of Japanese Americans avoid a recurrence of similar racism. To many Americans and Japanese Americans themselves, this was a tacit acceptance of the new racist characterization as the model minority.

Meanwhile, the Japanese American community was changing by connecting to a variety of racial and political groups. These connections were not made simply because of the community's rising economic status; rather, the experience of internment, along with an increased social status, gave Japanese Americans a diverse set of connections to racial,

religious, and artistic groups. For example, the internment experience caused many to empathize with other marginalized peoples and to forge political coalitions. The newly developed diversity led to internal tensions, some of which could be seen in the Third World Movement and the Asian American Movement of the 1960s. At this time, radical and left-leaning Japanese Americans conducted protests at San Francisco State University. Among other demands for consciousness-raising, they wanted the development of ethnic studies courses. These students were also inspired to protest by other college students who were protesting the Vietnam War. However, some Japanese Americans were on the other side of this debate, including San Francisco State University's S. I. Hayakawa, who decried the protests and argued that the demanded changes were unnecessary. In such ways, Japanese Americans formed coalitions with other marginalized peoples and formed coalitions against them.

Japanese Americans also joined others in cultural and artistic endeavors. Many were involved in African American culture, including music. Others associated with White Americans in resistance music and countercultural artistic and religious movements. Japanese Americans connected to these groups through politics, religion, art, and business, as well as through interethnic and interracial sex. Sexual relationships were influenced by contexts of war, the American Occupation of Japan, and mixed neighborhoods, and this has contributed to an increasing number of mixed-race Japanese Americans.

These various connections informed Japanese Americans' political views on internment and helped them to gain experience in many levels of politics. This helped empower them to take political action to redress internment injustices, but by no means was this effort unified. The most politically supported position was for monetary reparations for property and income loss. However, some did not want any political action to be taken, some wanted a statement acknowledging wrongdoing, some wanted a larger amount that included other losses, and some wanted a more comprehensive redress. Generational divisions could be seen, because younger Japanese Americans were the primary organizers of the political action. The younger generations, younger *nisei* and *sansei* (third generation), often struggled to get the older former internees to testify. To explain this reticence, some in the redress movement and the official report from the US Commission of Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians labeled the pervasive silence after internment a sign of trauma, and compared it to the silence of rape victims.[26]