San Fernando Valley State College

THE IMPRINT OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE SAWTELLE AREA OF WEST LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Geography

by

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPRINT OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF THE SAWTELLLE AREA OF WEST LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

by

Donald Keith Fellows

Master of Arts in Geography

September, 1968

Working within the framework of the geography of religions, and using some of the techniques and concepts of urban geography, this study investigated the imprint of the Japanese form of Buddhism upon the land and culture of the Sawtelle area of West Los Angeles, California.

The Sawtelle area is distinctively "Japanese," yet it lies within a typical American suburban setting. It was discovered that the original Japanese to settle the area were farmers who chose the site for its climate and its soil conditions, as well as for proximity to the Los Angeles market area. Their specialty was truck gardening and horticulture. Although they prospered in Sawtelle, they were forced to leave during World War II due to the relocation of Japanese in the Pacific Coastal regions. When they returned at the end of the war, they found the farming areas gone and many of them turned to
landscape gardening.

The majority of the Japanese in Sawtelle are Buddhists of the Jodo Shin Sect, and they show their intense awareness for religion in their reverence for their religious gardens. This is due, firstly, to the legend which tells that the baby Buddha was born in Lumbini Garden, India, and, secondly, to the Buddhist attempt to recreate the cosmos, the universe, in a small space near the temple or the home. Each element of the true Buddhist garden has important religious symbolism: the Guardian Rock upon which the universe symbolically rests, certain other rocks, stone lanterns, and shrubs.

Japanese Buddhism has been modified since its arrival in the United States, most importantly through contact with the American "way of life" and the American form of Protestant Christianity. Whereas in Japan religious worship was conducted mostly in the home, the situation is reversed in this country. The Japanese temple has become the American Buddhist Church. The Buddhist priest is now called the "reverend," and Sunday services are held, complete with organ, congregation, and hymns.

The interaction between Japanese Buddhism and the land and culture of Sawtelle has worked in both directions, and to the benefit of each. Japanese Buddhism has made an important impression upon Sawtelle's cultural landscape.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the great metropolitan region of Los Angeles, California, there is an intermingling of many different racial groups and cultures. Incoming "foreigners," however, often lose their unique identity, becoming submerged in time by the overpowering dominance of what has been called the "American Way of Life."¹ So great is the desire of most foreigners to become acculturated to American ways and to be accepted as "Americans," that they usually cast aside or tend to downgrade the old culture, language, or religion in order to embrace the new. Throughout Los Angeles, as in most American cities and urbanized areas, there are innumerable enclaves of foreign immigrants, along with their American-born descendents, yet most of these minute "culture regions" are scarcely recognizable as such.

There are some, however, that manage--despite the pressures and temptations--to withstand the urge to change and are able to retain certain elements of their ancient cultural heritage. One such enclave is the Japanese community in the suburban area known locally as Sawtelle. To the average visitor, Sawtelle may appear to be a typical American suburb. Yet, on closer observation, one notices a Japanese shopping center, a few houses with the Japanese ethnic
the presence of a large number of Buddhist religious gardens in the front yards of the Japanese * residences, as well as the building and gardens of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church. These latter elements mark the area as having a religiously-inspired cultural landscape. An investigator making a preliminary survey of the area would find himself confronted by a number of questions:

1. Why did the Japanese choose this particular site for settlement when there were many other potential sites? Why did they return to this area after having been forcibly removed during World War II?

2. What are the features of the Buddhist religion that promote group solidarity and cause the Buddhists to look at the land the way they do?

3. How has their form of Buddhism (Jodo Shin Shu) been modified in this new and American setting of Sawtelle?

4. What are the internal aspects of Jodo Shin Shu Buddhism in Sawtelle: What are the visible signs of a Buddhist imprint upon the cultural landscape?

5. What are the external aspects? What is the interaction of the Buddhists with non-Buddhists?

Essentially, these questions can be reduced to one primary question: Have the Japanese Buddhists, acting with varying intensity on the land and culture of Sawtelle, combined to produce a cultural landscape that can be identified as a religious one?

For the purposes of this study, the term "Japanese" will be used to denote all persons of Japanese ancestry. Differentiation as to country of birth will be made by referring to the classifications the Japanese themselves have used: Issei, Nisei, Sansei, Chisei, and Kibei. For the definitions of these terms, as well as others which apply to the Japanese and to the Buddhist religion, see the Glossary.
For a discussion of some broad questions as to the appropriateness of the study of the imprint of a religion upon a cultural landscape, the reader is referred to the works of such eminent proponents of the geography of religions as Sopher, Isaac, Zelinsky, Ficke- ler, and Broek, among others. These men generally agree that a study of the influence of religion upon the development of the cultural landscape has moved beyond the bounds of a restrictive consideration of past history. They are more concerned with the clarification of the role of religion in today's world, as it applies to the fields of study embraced by cultural geography. Although some of them, notably Isaac, believe that modern secular culture (especially in the Western world) either obscures or hinders the effective development of a religiously-inspired cultural landscape, the cultural geographer with an understanding of a particular religion will be able to offer a partial separation of the specifically religious from the social, economic, and ethnic matrix in which it is embedded.

Competent analysis of the Japanese Buddhist settlement in Sawtelle is more difficult than, for example, a comparable analysis of the impact of Islam in a North African city, or of Roman Catholicism in a Mexican pueblo. The reason for this is the time factor, the time needed to develop a unique and religious-oriented cultural landscape. While the Mormons, for example, have had more than a century in which to produce a cultural landscape in Utah that is recognizably Mor-
mon, the Japanese occupancy of Sawtelle has existed for only about forty years--and during this period there was a four-year interruption because of the "relocation" of the Japanese during World War II. The imprint of Japanese Buddhism in Sawtelle, therefore, does not date from the original settlement in the early 1920's. It stems, rather, from the return of the Japanese in 1946. Today, unlike some other religio-cultural enclaves in Los Angeles that have tended to "fade into the background" of the larger American culture, the Sawtelle community is generally recognizable as being Buddhist as well as Japanese.

The methodology of this investigation included prior knowledge of Buddhism, both the original Indian version and the various forms as practised by the Japanese, as well as innumerable field trips into the area. A number of interviews were conducted with the residents of Sawtelle, as well as with non-residents who have considerable knowledge of the region. In addition to library research, much information was gained from the Los Angeles City Planning Commission, the Fair Employment Practices Commission, the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau, and the Los Angeles County Farm and Home Advisors.
FOOTNOTES


8Ibid.


CHAPTER II

THE JAPANESE AND SAWTELLE

An observer of the Japanese community in Sawtelle today might well wonder why the first arrivals chose this area. These Issei were farmers, and nowhere in the area are there farms to be seen (photographs 1, 2). In place of agricultural acreage, there are clusters of apartment houses, blocks of single-family residences, a school, a playground, municipal office buildings, an industrial-commercial-manufacturing district, and a retail shopping section. In addition, there are nearly a dozen churches of various faiths and denominations. But, be it noted: the Sawtelle area was not always this way.

The original Japanese to arrive in the United States were hired to work as farm laborers in the truck gardening agricultural region near the San Francisco Bay. Excellent skills learned from the necessity of eking out an existence in their overcrowded homeland served them well in America. So well, in fact, that they soon began to seek their own farmland. When this was obtained, they out-produced their white competitors. This was due partly to their knowledge of successful truck farming, but more importantly to their willingness to work long hours. Using members of the immediate family as laborers, the Japanese farmer was in a good position to compete with the
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF SAWTELLE, NORTHERN PORTION

The view is looking west. The Freeway at the bottom of the picture is the San Diego Freeway. Santa Monica Boulevard is at the extreme right. It is a heavily traveled thoroughfare, lined on both sides with retail stores, banks, a movie theatre, state and city administrative centers, cafes, and gas stations. This northern portion has a high density of apartment houses. The West Los Angeles Municipal Offices (branch of Los Angeles) are located in this section on Santa Monica Boulevard, three blocks west of the Freeway. Residential area is on the left, southern third of the photograph, and many landscape nurseries can be observed.

(Photograph courtesy of the California Division of Highways, Department of Public Works, Los Angeles.)
PHOTOGRAPH 2

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF SAWTELLE, SOUTHERN PORTION

The view is looking west. The San Diego Freeway, which runs northwest-southeast at this point, is at the bottom of the photograph. The through boulevard at the left, southern portion of the picture is Olympic Boulevard. It is a heavy industrial, commercial, and manufacturing zone. The residential section of Sawtelle is on the right (north).

The West Los Angeles Buddhist Church, focal point for the Japanese Buddhists in Sawtelle, is situated three blocks west of the Freeway, two blocks north of Olympic Boulevard. The West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church (which is also exclusively Japanese in membership) is one block further west and one block north. Many landscape nurseries can be observed. The commercial-manufacturing zone can be seen at the upper left.

(Photograph courtesy of the California Division of Highways, Department of Public Works, Los Angeles.)
more numerous white farmers.

By the beginning of the second decade of this century, irritation at this "unfair competition" brought outraged cries of the "Yellow Peril" from the whites. The exclusion of Japanese, who had now begun to bring "picture brides" from Japan in order to raise families, was demanded in the halls of the United States Congress¹, and new restrictions were imposed on the movement and the operations of resident Japanese. Many of them moved away from the Bay Region and migrated to the Central Valley, to Sacramento and Fresno, and to points along the coast further south.

In all of Southern California there were only 58 Japanese in 1880, but after 1900 the number steadily increased because of agitation against them in the north. By 1910 there were 13,068. The number grew to 44,454 by 1940². In 1960, the Japanese population in Los Angeles County alone was 77,314³. In the beginning the tendency was for them to congregate in Los Angeles County, and the center of their commercial and social life was in the downtown Los Angeles section known as "Little Tokyo." In time, except for the merchants and professional men, the majority of the Japanese looked elsewhere for employment opportunity. As truck farmers producing melons, vegetables, and fruit, they looked for land that would be mild and relatively moist and would not require heavy irrigation such as would be needed in the dry inland valleys.⁴ They eventually selected the western
portion of the Los Angeles lowland (map 1), twelve miles from downtown Los Angeles, and only a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. The land was both vacant and cheap, and the soils were excellent for the preferred type of farming: horticulture and truck farming.5

The site proved to be a good one for the Japanese. Not only were the physical conditions nearly ideal, but the nearby metropolitan Los Angeles market area made them fairly prosperous. It was not long before they began to hire Mexicans to labor on the farms, and by the 1930's there was the beginning of a colonia in Sawtelle.

Construction of the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Sawtelle brought about encroachment from the north by residential tracts, and new subdivisions began to move in from the east. By 1941, the greater area surrounding Sawtelle (known as West Los Angeles) was primarily residential in character. Many of the Japanese farmers were forced to commute or to move further south to farming areas around the cities of Gardena, Torrance, El Segundo, Dominguez, and Long Beach. Some of them, however, joined the small force of professional home gardeners and nurserymen who catered to the wealthier residential areas to the east and north such as Beverly Hills, Bel Air, and Westwood.

The Japanese had begun to develop an ethno-religious enclave in Sawtelle, a development signalized by the establishment in 1926 of a branch of the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Church of Los Ange-
The reasons for the choice by the Japanese of the Sawtelle area can be partially discovered by noting the location of the area in its strategic location at the western portion of the Los Angeles lowland. Here it is situated near the Pacific Ocean where the climate is milder and more moist than the inland valleys (such as the San Fernando Valley and other valleys further east). It is closer to the Los Angeles market area than other agricultural areas further south, towards Santa Ana.

It is also to be noted that Sawtelle is convenient to the wealthier neighborhood to the east and north (Beverly Hills, Bel Air, and Westwood Village.) This is one reason for the heavy preponderance of professional gardeners and landscape nurseries in Sawtelle.
les. Meetings were held in a frame residential dwelling, with about fifty families as members. Some of the Japanese, however, left the Buddhist religion in 1936 and formed the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church with missionary aid from the Westwood Methodist Church. This division, plus the advent of World War II, brought a temporary halt to the development of the Japanese Buddhist culture in Sawtelle.

The Japanese, aliens and citizens alike, were forcibly evacuated from California during 1942*, and when they returned to the area in 1946 they found the farms gone, replaced by new housing subdivisions. Even their gardening jobs and nurseries were taken over by the Mexicans that had been left behind. Still, the majority of them did not move on. They stayed, bought homes, re-purchased the nurseries they had previously sold to the Mexicans, and resumed competition for the gardening jobs. By 1950 the centripetal force created by the presence of the Buddhist Church and the need for more gardeners brought an increased Japanese population in Sawtelle. Each time a house is put up for sale by a Caucasian, it is immediately "snapped up" by Japanese desirous of living in the area.

It would appear that these Japanese are not concerned over the loss of the farmlands. They have come to Sawtelle partly because

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such a movement is a general trend of the times, the shift from rural to urban areas, and partly because of their gardening interests. The question was put to a group of men at a meeting of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Men's Club. The consensus was that "this was the best place to live" in Los Angeles. Some had lived in Sawtelle prior to World War II and they returned because it was "home" to them; others, primarily because of their vocation as gardeners, came because of the potential. Some, especially the Nisei, chose Sawtelle because they felt "safe" there, and still others because it was close to the Buddhist Church.

Sawtelle today is a nearly self-contained community (map 2), as a land-use map discloses, but it is not a "ghetto" as the term is commonly used. Despite the general opinion prevailing in Los Angeles, it is not "mostly Japanese." Indeed, the Japanese account for less that thirty percent of the total population. While this percentage is considerably higher than the ratio of Japanese to other races in the state as a whole—where it forms about one percent—it scarcely suffices to make Sawtelle a "ghetto" area. The population of the studied area (as delimited on map 2) is estimated to be about 10,000, of which the Japanese account for about 1,950, or about 20 percent. It is also estimated that the Mexican-Americans amount to about 25 percent of the total. The balance of the population is Caucasian, fairly evenly divided among various races and religions. It was noted that no Ne-
MAP 2

LAND-USE MAP OF SAWTELLE

It is evident from this map that Sawtelle cannot be considered a "bedroom" suburb. It is not merely a place of homes, but a nearly self-contained community. Here there are police and fire stations, municipal offices, retail shopping sections, churches, elementary school, playground and park, and an industrial-manufacturing zone.
groes were seen in the area, either as workers or residents, and it is presumed that the exclusion follows the pattern of other similar, relatively middle-class neighborhoods in suburban Los Angeles.²

There is, however, a friendly, co-operative relationship between the Japanese and the Mexicans in Sawtelle. It was also discovered that the Japanese have now taken the larger share of the nursery and professional gardening businesses, and, as more Japanese move into the area, it is expected that the Mexicans will be "squeezed out" more and more.

A survey of Sawtelle discloses the marks of both "Japanese" and "Buddhist" patterns to the initiated. The exclusively Japanese-owned and operated shopping area along Sawtelle Boulevard displays typical American "shopping center" retail business and service activities: optometrist, druggist, markets, and so forth, as well as more exotic types such as import stores, art and flower arrangement schools, and "Oriental" cafes with appropriate Japanese markings and

²The population count of 10,000 was arrived at by multiplying the number of dwelling units in the study area by a family factor of 4.3 persons per dwelling. As there are about 2,185 dwelling units, the estimated total population would be about 9,340. The figure for the Japanese was found by totalling the number of families on the membership rolls of the major Japanese churches in the area, plus an additional "uncommitted" factor of 100 families. No authentic population statistics could be obtained because the Census Tracts and Social Profiles for West Los Angeles encompass too large a territory. The ratio of percentages for the three largest racial groups (Anglos, Mexicans, and Japanese) was taken from information supplied by the Los Angeles City Schools Public Information Service, and by the Japanese-American Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles.
symbolisms. The houses, with a few notable exceptions, display little in the way of ethnic or religious overtones. The people dress as the "average" American dresses, complete to teen-age girls wearing "mini skirts"—there are no kimonos in evidence.

The most distinctive evidence of the Japanese Buddhist imprint upon the cultural landscape of Sawtelle will be found firstly in the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church on Corinth Avenue, and secondly in the great number of Buddhist gardens displayed in the front yard landscaping of the homes. These two factors will be covered in greater detail in later chapters. Sawtelle is unique in its outward manifestation of its religious feelings. It is unique in that the evidence of a Japanese Buddhist imprint is easily recognizable. Evidence of a Christian influence, on the other hand, is difficult to recognize except during special religiously-oriented festivals such as Easter or Christmas.
FOOTNOTES

1 California State Board of Control, California and the Oriental (Sacramento: California State Board of Control, 1922), p. 11.


4 Opinion of A. E. Grimley, Director of the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau, April 11, 1968.


6 Fair Employment Practices Division, op. cit., p. 11.
CHAPTER III

THE HERITAGE OF BUDDHISM

Probably the single most important concept within the Buddhist religion is that of the "Middle Way." From this simple idea Gautama the Buddha developed a series of steps, both mystical and practical, that one must follow in order to attain Nirvana, or "union with God." If the average Japanese one meets in his daily routine seems an even-tempered person not given to either extremes of joy or anger, it is partly because of the principle of the Middle Way. The Buddha believed that life involved too much suffering and that the only way to avoid needless suffering was to avoid extremes, to follow the Middle Path or Way, and to understand the Four Noble Truths.  

Gautama Buddha believed that man should attempt to reach an understanding of his purpose in life. This meant a continual striv-

The Four Noble Truths:
1. All existence involves suffering (emotional or physical);
2. All suffering is caused by indulging desires (that is, seeking the wrong things);
3. All suffering will cease with the suppression of desires; and,
4. To achieve this suppression, and to gain Nirvana, one must follow the Noble Eightfold Path: right belief, right aspiration, right speech, right behavior, right livelihood, right effort, right thought, and right contemplation.

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ing to reach a "oneness with God," at which time man would attain a spiritual state wherein suffering would cease. To accomplish this task, Buddha set forth a series of rules which he called the Noble Eightfold Path, so that a man could purposefully pursue his goal. Although all of the eight steps are important, two of them are especially appropriate for consideration at this time: right thought and right contemplation.

Whether one is looking at the quiet beauty of the Buddhist religious garden, the delicate tracery of an authentic floral arrangement (called ikebana), or Buddhist art, it becomes obvious that more than beauty is being presented. To the Buddhist, these items allow him the opportunity for "right thought" and "right contemplation." Each is a tool to be used as an aid in following the Middle Way, a step along the Noble Eightfold Path. Because everyone has problems and conflicts and tensions almost every day of his life, the religiously-inspired garden or other art form is there to "soften the blows," to provide the sufferer the chance to renew himself.

The Japanese forms of Buddhism added new dimensions to Indian Buddhism. With the admixture gained from the religions of China as Buddhism passed through on its way to Japan, Japanese Buddhism became lighter, freer, less somber, and, in actuality, easier for the average man to understand. The largest of the Japanese Buddhist sects, the Jodo Shin Shu, added another Buddha from the
ancient past, Amida Buddha. By calling upon Amida Buddha, through the ritual of repeating the Nembutsu, one could gain additional "merit" and thus move a little closer to the attainment of Nirvana and peace of mind. And always there was the hope that one could reach "oneness" with the universe.

All religions have some concept of "God," but the Buddhist thinks of God as the "cosmos," the entire universe, not as a "personal, anthropomorphic Being." Consequently, the Japanese Buddhist attempts to have this cosmos, this universe, close to him so that he can truly feel that he is a part of it. A painting of flowers, trees, or a landscape recreates a small portion of nature, and thus the observer can participate in nature by contemplating the art form. The same applies to sculpture, to flower arrangements, to religious gardens, and even to architecture. An Anglo-American might look at a painting or a towering building and think only of the outer aspects of beauty and design, as well as utilitarian and materialistic elements. The Japanese, on the other hand, thinks of the inner essence, the soul, or inner being, of the art form or structure.¹

The Japanese in Sawtelle have not had the time to develop any great monuments to their religion comparable to those in Nara or Kyoto, Japan, but the imprint of the religion is most easily discernible in the Buddhist garden. The Buddhist garden is a complex work of art, yet its beauty, as mentioned above, is derived from its inner
meaning, its symbolism, its seeming simplicity. The garden is a universe in miniature: nature compressed and idealized into a symbolic form that is nearer perfection than nature in its original, untouched state. The garden is for contemplation, primarily. It is for communion with nature and one's own soul.

Most of the Buddhist gardens in existence today stem from the original designs created by the master landscape gardener, Soami, during the 16th century. His gardens (sketches 1 and 2) were designed for Buddhist temples in Japan and expressed the "one infallible and inexorable rule that everything must be to scale, and that one part must never violate the laws of classic proportion by outweighing any other part." Whereas pre-Buddhist gardens reflected the native pantheistic religion of the Japanese people with large ponds, bridges connecting islands, and perhaps a large stone representing the abode of the gods, Soami strove for simplicity. While the Japanese gardens in Nara or Kyoto are more elaborate than those in Sawtelle, the true Buddhist garden, whether large or small, always contains most of the same, basic features.

There is always the one large stone that stands out above all the others: the Guardian Stone. To the pre-Buddhist it was Mount Sumeru, home of the Immortals. To the Buddhist, it is the symbolic representation of the Universe Itself. There are other stones, given fanciful names by Buddhist priests long ago, which symbolize certain
SKETCH 1

SHIN-STYLE OF BUDDHIST HILL GARDEN


The original drawing was made by the great Japanese temple landscapist, Soami, in the 16th century, and was reproduced during the 19th century in Japan by Jiro Hirada.

It is a design for a religious garden for one of the Buddhist temples and contains almost all of the elements that should be used in an authentic Buddhist garden.

LEGEND:

1 Guardian Stone
2 Stone Lanterns
3 Waterfall
4 Main Hill
5 Companion Hill
6 Bridge
7 Waiting Stone
8 Tree of Upright Spirit
9 Idling Stone
10 Seat of Honor Stone
11 Koru Matsu (Japanese black pine, Pinus thunbergii)
SHIN-STYLE BUDDHIST HILL GARDEN
SKETCH 2

SO-STYLE OF BUDDHIST HILL GARDEN

The source for this sketch is the same as for Sketch 1, and is an adaptation of an original drawing by the great Japanese temple landscapist, Soami.

This is another, less elaborate version of a Buddhist temple garden.

LEGEND:

1 Guardian Stone
2 Waiting Stone
3 Hill Stone
4 Worshipping Stone
5 Stone Lantern
6 Fence behind garden
7 Protecting Screen
8 Main Hill
9 Pathway
10 Bridge
11 Koru Matsu (Japanese black pine, *Pinus thunbergii*)
SO-STYLE BUDDHIST HILL GARDEN
attributes that one should attempt to attain. Special groupings of rocks become a realistic duplication of nature's beauty.

There is usually present a stone lantern (toro), which was used in the temple gardens to supply light for nighttime strolls. These are rare in Sawtelle in front-yard gardens due to losses by theft. The ones remaining are usually cemented to the ground. Some gardens also have a small stone pagoda, which is a symbolic representation of the stupas—the markers designating the burial place of a Buddha—in India.

Most prevalent of the trees found in the Buddhist garden is the Japanese black pine (pinus thunbergii; called matsu by the Japanese, bonsai by many Americans) which symbolizes long life. When two are placed together, they signify a husband and wife growing old together. Shrubs are often pruned in special ways in this continuing attempt to relate the dwelling to its natural surroundings. Some of the tree-shrubs are pruned into "ball-shaped" mounds that are to symbolize rounded hills receding into the distance.

The amount of space available for the garden determines how many of the symbolic elements will appear, and the better gardens will always have the most important ones present: the Guardian Stone, the black pines, the companion rocks, and the stone lantern. It might be noted, however, that the concept of the religious garden comes from Japan where the predecessors of the American Issei lived on
small house lots, where space was at a premium and could not be used in frivolous manner. Because the garden was a serious matter to them, the Japanese built the house in such a way as to leave space for the meditation garden. A small hill, usually dirt left over from the excavation for the house's foundation, was made on the side of the house overlooked by the living room. Trees and shrubs grown on the slopes were placed in such a way as to conceal the small size of the hill. A narrow, winding path was usually placed in a sunny space, bounded by tiny pagodas and stone lanterns. The Japanese of Sawtelle have considerably more room, yet they too tend to compress the religious garden into one corner of the front or back yard, leaving the balance of the yard in lawn. (sketch 3)

A drive through almost any suburban community in America will disclose the obvious fact that western-style American gardens are stylized, too, but in a more or less geometric design. The American garden will have straight lines, rectangles, and squares. A front yard has a lawn, with shrubs placed across the front of the dwelling. But the Japanese Buddhist garden, displaying the features described above, will stand out as something unique. The Buddhist garden is all curves and is seldom level, with the exception of the Zen Garden which is made to symbolize the sea or a lake, with carefully smoothed sand raked to simulate gentle waves "lapping gently" about the foot of a predominant large stone. The true Buddhist garden never has
SKETCH 3

TYPICAL BUDDHIST GARDEN IN SAWTELLE

Here one may observe the most common features to be found in the average Buddhist garden in Sawtelle. Most of the gardens are "dry," that is, there are no streams or waterfalls. Some, however, are quite elaborate, comparing favorably (if on a smaller scale) to the gardens shown in Sketches 1 and 2. Almost all of them have a lawn separating the religious garden from the sidewalk. Some of them have additional plants and shrubs that are not a part of the Buddhist symbolism, but are used to fill in large bare areas.

LEGEND:

1. Guardian Stone
2. Stone Lantern
3. Japanese black pine (*Pinus thunbergii*)
4. Companion Stones
5. Pathway
6. Hill
7. Lawn
TYPICAL BUDDHIST GARDEN
IN SAWTELL
bright flowers, for colorful flowers would disturb, if not destroy altogether, the impression of a landscape seen from afar.\footnote{7}

The concept of the religious garden is carried into the hymns sung by many American Buddhists during their worship services, especially the one entitled "In Lumbini's Garden." This beautiful hymn was written to commemorate the ancient legend which told of the birthday of the baby Gautama. When the child was born to his mother, Queen Maya, in the Lumbini Garden near the palace of his father, the rajah, the Immortals came to worship him. A miraculous spring burst forth beside the child, carried to the spot by a bamboo flume, and the Immortals bowed in awe. Kneeling on a large, flat stone, the gods bathed the baby Buddha in the pure spring water. Every year in the spring, followers of the Jodo Shin Shu celebrate the birthday of the Buddha with a Flower Festival (Hana Matsuri). During the worship service, the celebrants approach a flower-bedecked shrine on the altar which contains a tiny statuette of the Buddha. They bow and pour a small amount of tea over the figure of Buddha—a symbol of the baptism by the gods. The membership then sings this hymn:

\begin{verbatim}
In Lumbini's Garden

Softly blew the breezes
On that summer morn,
In Lumbini's Garden,
Where the Lord was born.
\end{verbatim}
From the earth sprang flowers,
Birds in warbles sang,
While through earth and heaven
Strains of music rang.

Gods of men and angels,
All for worship came,
Glory to Lord Buddha,
Glory to His Name. 8

Thus, in a way, each individual garden belonging to a Japanese Buddhist is a re-creation of that legendary Lumbini Garden.
FOOTNOTES


4 Ibid., pp. 11-12.


6 Taylor, op. cit., pp. 141-142.


8 From Hana Matsuri Order of Service, West Los Angeles Buddhist Church.
CHAPTER IV

MODIFICATION OF JAPANESE BUDDHISM
IN THE AMERICAN SETTING

Buddhism was successful in Japan primarily because it offered peacefulness and serenity to a troubled people bound to the earth. With the passage of time and because of its acceptance of other religions and faiths, Buddhism continued to change. The Buddhist believed that enlightenment and good works were all that really counted and any way that led to this goal was good. Thus, the Japanese Buddhism that arrived in the United States in the latter stages of the 19th century continued to change, just as Indian Buddhism had changed during its passage through China and Korea (1st through 6th centuries after the beginning of the Christian era). The first Buddhist temple to be established in the United States was founded by priests of the Jodo Shin Shu in 1898 and the first modification to be made was in the name: the Buddhist Church of San Francisco.

Other modifications followed rapidly. In Japan the temple was used mainly for important religious holidays and for festivals, weddings, and funerals. The home was the place for individual worship. In the United States this custom began to change. The temple became a "church" as well as a social center, "a focal point through
which ties with the homeland could be preserved, ... and served to effect group unification. "1

As Japanese Buddhism moved out from San Francisco, the reformation continued, observable in the processes of acculturation and assimilation of the people, the wide-ranging changes in church organization and methods of worship and ritual, the beliefs of the individuals, and attitudes towards the old customs and traditions.

Acculturation and Assimilation

Although the Japanese residents of Sawtelle were involved in this process of change, the change did not proceed fast enough for them to move into American society unnoticed or unhindered. From the days of the "anti-Japanese riots" in the Bay area in the early 1900's to the sad day in 1924 when further Japanese immigration was forbidden, * movement into new areas did not alter the attitudes of distrust, fear, and of distress over the ill-disguised condescension on the part of their Caucasian neighbors. Although they tried to overcome these feelings, they were never quite able to shake off the stigma of

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* The Immigration Act of 1924, passed into enactment by anti-Japanese forces, was repealed in 1952 by the Immigration and Naturalization Act, which, in turn, has been criticized by many as inequitable and made the "quota system" more rigid than before. It did, however, aid the Japanese immigrant by eliminating the racial or color bar to naturalization, and no one is excluded from entry because he is not eligible for naturalization. Today, Japanese can own property in the state of California, and do not have to resort to the subterfuge of having the property listed in their children's names.
being considered "aliens." They were better treated in the Los Angeles area than elsewhere on the Pacific Coast, but the "good things" that seemed available to most Americans remained unavailable to them. The prejudice against their race, their appearance, their lack of facility with the English language, and their "foreign" religion, were difficult obstacles for them to overcome.

The Issei worked diligently in their fields and endured the intolerance with a stolid impassiveness and did little to protest. They were successful enough in time to purchase the property for the Los Angeles Flower Market (a "clearing house" for flowers from all over Los Angeles County) in downtown Los Angeles and to nourish their one great hope that their children, the Nisei, would be able to reach the goal of final acceptance as full-fledged Americans.*

The Issei made many different attempts to bridge the gap: some of them left their Buddhist sects to join a local Christian church where membership offered distinct social advantages, and they saw to it that their children attended the Christian Sunday Schools. The Buddhist churches sought to counter this trend, but it was a losing cause. As the Nisei grew older, they developed a derisive attitude towards the traditions of their ancestral homeland and were embar-

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assed by the quaint garb, customs, and language of their parents. So great was the age difference between the Issei (who, in the period before World War II, were in their fifties and sixties) and the Nisei (who were still in their 'teens) that the communication or "generation gap" was almost impossible to breach. The Nisei pushed ahead, striving for education, believing that the attainment of college and graduate degrees would bring acceptance in American society.

The white community, however, was not ready to accept the Nisei. A master's degree or doctorate was no guarantee that the Nisei could find work befitting his accomplishment. Many of them were forced to return to the farms or the gardening businesses of their parents. Then, before disillusion had time to set in, a new crisis arose: the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor.

By 1941 the majority of the Japanese in California, and in Sawtelle, were American citizens. They were shocked by the outbreak of the war with Japan, but their sympathies were with America. It was a double blow to them, when anti-Japanese-American forces in California, aided by years of propaganda put out by the Hearst Press, succeeded in convincing military authorities that it was dangerous for the Japanese-Americans to remain on the West Coast. In 1942, the order was given for the forced evacuation of all Japanese--citizens and aliens alike--from the coast.

There was no one to defend the Nisei, to protect his constitu-
tional rights, and he went to the internment centers with his parents. Many of the Nisei were allowed to enroll in colleges to the east, and many enlisted in the Armed Forces where they gained fame in all war zones, especially in Italy where the famous 442nd Battalion gained the somber honor of sustaining the highest casualty rate of any American fighting unit.

World War II was a turning point for many Japanese in America. To the Issei, it meant the end of the faintest hopes that acceptance would ever be theirs, and to some of them it seemed as if the Nisei were somehow being traitorous to the ancestral homeland. To some of the Nisei, it meant leaving Buddhism for Christianity. Many of them were so desperate to prove their loyalty to the United States that they wanted to cut any tie which might create prejudice against them.

At the end of the war, the Japanese were allowed to return to the West Coast and to California. Once again many of them returned to the Sawtelle area and resumed the life they had led before the war. Perhaps it was the new freedom "to be themselves," possibly the result of guilt feelings on the part of the whites who had once turned against them, but many of the Japanese returned to the Buddhist religion they had left because of the war. They were able to do so without fear of censure on the part of their non-Buddhist friends. It might also be said that the Nisei had finally become an "American"
in the truest sense of the word. He could decide for himself. The Reverend Kitagawa, an Episcopal priest and an Issei, put it this way:

Being an American, as against being a Japanese, does not reside in the fact that one cannot speak the Japanese language or that he cannot appreciate the Japanese arts. If there is anything which characterizes the American, it is his freedom from every form of communalism—tribal, ethnic, cultural, and religious. To be sure, he lives in groups and communities; he is not an individualist who denies social solidarity of any kind, but he is a person to whom his and everybody else's individual personality is more important than every group.6

Although many of the Nisei young men and women became active in Christian churches, a large number chose Buddhism, but the Buddhism they wanted to return to was itself forced to change to receive them. They were no longer to be considered as "uneducated peasants" or "mere" farmers. They were an educated group, more highly educated than most of the other racial groups in California, as a consideration of educational attainment will attest (Table 1). They took their education seriously (as anyone who has had to compete against them in the academic field well knows) and it is possible that this desire for educational achievement stems from the Buddhist insistence upon learning as a worthwhile goal. Although most Orientals of other religions hold similar views towards education, their views were strongly influenced by centuries of Buddhist control of temples and institutions of higher learning prior to the arrival of Christianity and other modern religions.

A noted Buddhist authority, A. S. Geden, wrote that for cen-
Table 1

SCHOOL LEVEL COMPLETED BY PERSONS 14 YEARS OLD AND OLDER, BY SEX


There were striking differences in the educational attainment of the Japanese as compared to other racial groups in California in 1960. Both Japanese men and women were ahead of the white population in the level of education attained. Eighty percent of both Japanese men and women had completed one or more years of high school, compared with seventy-three percent of white men and seventy-six percent of white women. The same relationship held at the college level,7
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Level Completed</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Japanese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Filipino</th>
<th>Other Nonwhite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population, 14 Years Old and Older</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 1-4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 5-6</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grades 9-11</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>43.3</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3 Years</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>15.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more Years</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

turues all education in Japan was in Buddhist hands. According to
him, Buddhism introduced "art," medicine, molded the folklore of the
country, created its dramatic poetry, deeply influenced politics and
every sphere of social and intellectual activity.  

A new generation arrived after the end of World War II, the
children of the Nisei, the Sansei. The Sansei have moved beyond the
Nisei in many ways and have become more fully assimilated into
American society. Yet, it is interesting to note that the Nisei and
the Sansei share a common attitude toward their Japanese heritage.
Unlike the descendents of other races, they tend to display an air of
scorn or ignorance about their ethnic past. In answer to the question
"Are you Japanese?" they will usually reply, "I'm an American." In
contrast, the son of Irish-born parents will say, "I'm Irish." The
same holds true for many other nationalities such as the Italians,
English, Dutch, etc. While few can speak the language of their ances-
tors with any degree of fluency, most wish they could. The Nisei and
the Sansei, however, seem bored with the subject, and reply, "I
can't speak a word of Japanese." This attitude, of course, does not
apply to all children and grandchildren of the Issei, and even some of
the most stubborn are now beginning to reconsider. Youth groups at
the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church are engaged in most of the
same activities as similar groups in Christian churches, but they
seriously study the Buddhist religion and most of them attend classes
at the nearby Japanese Institute of Sawtelle. The Institute was founded by a Nisei minister of the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church with the aid of the Buddhist Church in order to teach Japanese culture and traditions, as well as the language.

It is in the area of employment that one can best observe the rapidity of assimilation of the Sawtelle Japanese. Income within the investigated area is estimated to be much higher than for Japanese elsewhere in California. According to Bureau of Census figures, the median annual income for Japanese in the state in 1959 was $4,388.\textsuperscript{10} Two reputable sources within the Sawtelle area estimated that the current median annual income of Japanese males in Sawtelle is about $7,200.\textsuperscript{11} Even allowing for increases due to inflation, there is strong evidence that the Japanese in Sawtelle rank higher than Japanese elsewhere in the state.

The reason for this higher income rate is probably related to the type of employment held by the Japanese. Here there are a great number of skilled professional gardeners and nurserymen in addition to well-educated men in other professions: teachers, lawyers, aircraft structural engineers, salesmen, auto mechanics, etc.

A final note concerning the assimilation of the Sansei was supplied by a Nisei father who spoke rather despairingly of his teen-age

\textsuperscript{11}Information furnished by the Reverend Arthur Takemoto of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church and Fred Miyata, car dealer.
son who wore "his hair extremely long, listened to loudly played rock and roll music all day, and affected the mannerisms of the hippies."

The Buddhist Church in an American Setting

The Japanese community in Sawtelle is a typical American sub-community in many respects, yet the presence of the well-supported and well-endowed West Los Angeles Buddhist Church offers evidence of "something alien" or "mysterious." Surprisingly, however, this church, although founded by and for Japanese Buddhists, is apparently more American than it is Japanese, and its mode of worship and type of organization has been strongly influenced by Protestant Christianity, American-style.

The West Los Angeles Buddhist Church is a branch of the Jodo Shin Shu, the largest Buddhist sect in the United States, and the largest in Japan. World-wide Buddhism is divided into two main sections: Theravada, which claims to be the closest in concept and practice to the ancient Buddhism as taught by Gautama Buddha, and is followed in India, Ceylon, and Southeast Asia, and Mahayana, which is followed in China, Korea, and Japan. Mahayana claims to be the "greater vehicle" of learning because it offers "salvation" to all

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5 Jodo Shin Shu means, literally, "The Pure Land School of Buddhism as taught by Shinran Shonin." Jodo is the "pure realm of consciousness," a state of mind, of being, as evidenced by the life of one of the greatest of the Buddhas, Amida Buddha. Shin refers to Shinran Shonin who reorganized the older Jodo school of Buddhism. Shu means "sect" or "denomination."
who would follow Amida Buddha and earnestly seek the truth in everyday life. Mahayana Buddhism, and consequently the Jodo Shin Shu, considers meditation and contemplation important, but not to the exclusion of participation in society.

Jodo Shin Shu is controlled by the "mother church" in Japan, the Hompa Hongwanji in Kyoto. Priests have little to do with the individual's manner of worship, but handle rituals concerning marriage and death and relationships with the ancestors. In America, however, the Jodo Shin Shu follows the pattern of Protestant Christian denominations. The United States headquarters is in San Francisco in the offices of the Buddhist Churches of America, but control and operation of the individual churches is in the hands of the local congregations. The National Headquarters, under the guidance of a presiding bishop (who is elected by the member churches), provides guidance and teaching, and supplies ministers to churches who need them. There is wide variation in operation and methods of worship in the local churches, for there is no direct influence from above. They do, however, tend to celebrate the largest festivals such as Hana Matsuri, Obon, and New Year's at about the same time.

The West Los Angeles Buddhist Church is typical of California's Buddhist churches in its history, membership, and operation. It began as a "branch" of the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Church in 1926 with a membership of from 40 to 50 families. By 1928, ministered
to by priests from Nishi Hongwanji, it had begun regular Sunday services which included a well-attended Sunday School. Its growth was slow but steady until 1942, when the evacuation of the Japanese brought a temporary interruption in its existence. At the end of the war, the church was reactivated and membership increased sharply, as was the case for the Jodo Shin Shu in general in Los Angeles County (maps 3 and 4) when the number of churches increased from five in 1940 to eleven in 1968.

The present church structure for the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church (photograph 3) was constructed in 1950 for a membership of 175 to 200 families. A second story was added for classrooms in 1955, and in 1965 an apartment building was built across the street from the church to serve as a residence for the priest and a dormitory for students from out of the state, or from Japan. Present-day membership includes 317 families, of whom the great majority are Nisei and Sansei. There are a few Issei remaining, most of them acting as "pillars of the church," but control and operation is in the hands of the Nisei.

After a number of interviews in the Sawtelle area, this writer came to the view that the Japanese Buddhists have a greater sense of "religious solidarity" than do those of other faiths. A comparison, for example, of the membership rosters of the two largest Japanese ethnic churches, the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church and the West
MAP 3

DISTRIBUTION OF JODO SHIN SHU CHURCHES

LOS ANGELES, 1940
MAP 4

DISTRIBUTION OF JODO SHIN SHU CHURCHES

LOS ANGELES, 1968
DISTRIBUTION OF THE JODO SHIN SHU
Churches or Temples
1968

SCALE
0  5  10
miles
PHOTOGRAPH 3

THE WEST LOS ANGELES BUDDHIST CHURCH

PHOTOGRAPH 4

THE WEST LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY METHODIST CHURCH
Los Angeles Community Methodist Church (photograph 4) disclosed that seventy-four percent of the Japanese Buddhists have managed to find residence within two miles of their church (Table 2). Of the Japanese Methodists, however, it was found that only fifty-two percent of the membership lived within two miles of their church. Both churches have a number of members who live at varying distances from Sawtelle. In addition, although some of them have joined other churches in the new locations, loyalty causes them to maintain their association with the Sawtelle churches. The clustering of the Japanese near their churches is vividly seen in the map portraying their distribution (map 5).

An interesting facet of the membership roster of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church is that not all of its members were originally members of the Jodo Shin Shu. They may have belonged to such sects as Nichiren, Jodo, Rinzai Zen, or Soto Zen, but, as the Jodo Shin Shu is the only Buddhist church nearby, this is the church they attend.

There are nine churches representing other denominations in Sawtelle, and, surprisingly, most of them are of the conservative or fundamentalist faiths (map 6). Four of them cater to the Japanese, particularly the Oriental Missionary Society Holiness Church and the Sawtelle Southern Baptist Church. One is a declining Shinto temple, the Tenrikyo Church. The others are primarily for whites.
It is evident that more of the Japanese Buddhists wish to live near their church. It is probable that the reason lies in the fact that Buddhism remains "alien" to most whites, consequently followers of Buddhism tend to congregate together out of feelings of security in numbers. Another reason might be that most of the Japanese who are Methodist are Nisei and Sansei and thus have less hesitancy in moving away from the ethnic community to associate intimately with non-Japanese. Away from Sawtelle, the Japanese who are Methodist do not hesitate to join a Methodist church which may be almost exclusively white.

TABLE 2

JAPANESE IN SAWTELLE
COMPARISON OF DISTANCES
FAMILIES LIVE FROM THEIR CHURCH

TABLE 2.
MAP 5

DISTRIBUTION OF JAPANESE BUDDHISTS AND JAPANESE
METHODISTS IN SAWTELLÉ

1968
MAP 6

DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCHES IN SAWTELLE

1. West Los Angeles Buddhist Church
2. West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church
3. Tenrikyo Church (Shinto)
4. Faith Tabernacle
5. Sawtelle Southern Baptist Church
6. First Baptist Church of Sawtelle
7. Oriental Missionary Society Holiness Church
8. Vacant Church Building
9. First Methodist Church
10. Christian Science Church
11. Community Church
12. Church of Christ
The Role of Women in the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church

Women in Japan held a secondary role in Buddhism. The temple controlled ritual worship, the father in the home conducted the family religious services, and the mother was kept in the background. In the United States, however, the woman's role began to change. Sussman, in his book on Community Structure and Analysis, suggested that the success of the urban church depended upon the amount of effort and energy expended by women. The greater the proportion of women in the population, as well as in the congregation, the greater would be the religious participation. This is an obvious fact, which can be demonstrated by the observation of church festivals of any faith in Los Angeles, and was dramatically illustrated at the May celebration of Hana Matsuri at the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church. Not only did women participate in the religious worship services (by approaching the altar and symbolically baptising the baby Buddha) but they were actively working in the festival booths in an area behind the church. They also serve as Sunday School teachers, and one woman plays a continuing role in the weekly Sunday services as organist. In addition, the church has an active Ladies' Guild, which supports other church activities, and a Japanese-name organization for women called the Fujin-kai.

Modifications in Worship Services
As suggested above, the entrance of women into active church participation brought additional changes. During some of the interviews conducted, this writer gathered the impression that had the men retained complete control over the operation of the church and its activities there might have been fewer changes or modifications. The church structure itself does not "look" Japanese or "Buddhist" (compare photographs 3 and 4). It is typically American in design and structure. It is only the large Wheel of Life (sketch 4) in place of a Christian Cross on the northern side of the exterior that definitely marks the church as not being Christian. During certain festivals banners displaying Buddhist symbols or Japanese language characters will be observed. During other times it is the religious garden fronting Corinth Avenue which stands out (to the informed as to Buddhist symbolism) as something distinctly Buddhist.

Inside the church, there is a large kitchen and recreation

*The Buddhist Wheel of Life refers to the constant cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, as one seeks Nirvana. The prime difference between Hinduism and Buddhism is that the Buddhist believes he can attain Nirvana during this life.
hall, Sunday School classrooms, and a large, airy, well-lighted
sanctuary complete with rows of chairs, an organ, a pulpit, and an
altar. On first examination, one can discover no resemblance to the
Buddhist temples of Kyoto or Nara. It is strictly "American-style"
and Protestant in its approach to religious worship. When the ser-
vice begins the organ plays, and the congregation sings hymns (such
as "Lord Buddha Knows the Truth"). There are responsive readings,
a sermon touching on everyday life and its problems and the Buddhist
approach to their solution, and an offering. A Roman Catholic would
find the gassho beads reassuring, as the Buddhists clasp the beads
and murmur their Nembutsu. But it is in the altar that few changes
or modifications can be seen.

The altar of the Buddhist church is nearly identical where-
ever one finds a branch of the Jodo Shin Shu. Spread across a wide
"stage" and normally sheltered by closed curtains are the most re-
vered symbols of Shin Buddhism: golden statuettes of Gautama and
Amida Buddha and their "saint" Shinran Shonin. When the curtains
are opened, the altar is ablaze with light, reflected on gold-leaf
scrollwork and calligraphy; red and black lacquered chairs and tables;
the figures of the crane and turtle; and books containing the sacred
words inscribed in the sutras of ancient Buddhism, and the works of
Shonin.

The Buddhist priest stands at the pulpit, and though he speaks
of the Nembutsu, the Lotus Sutra, and the Middle Way, he preaches. When he leaves the pulpit and meets with the members of his congregation, he is referred to as sensei (teacher) or, simply, as "reverend." The larger Buddhist churches have from two to six priests, but the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church has two. One is a Nisei, who speaks English and ministers primarily to the Nisei, Sansei, and Chisei; the other comes from Japan and speaks only Japanese, and ministers to the older Issei and the new Issei who have recently immigrated to the United States.

While some may find the Buddhist church to be some sort of a paradox—reaching out to a new way of life and worship, while at the same time clinging to the old customs, traditions, and rituals—it is not actually any different in this respect than Lutheran, Catholic, or Jewish churches. The Nisei minister suggested that before one could completely do away with the old, something of great value must first replace it.

In essence, the Japanese Buddhism that came to America some seventy years ago has changed to a new form which might properly be called American Buddhism. In the monthly magazine of the National Organization, the Buddhist Churches of America, The American Buddhist, each issue has some article commenting on the future and growth of "American" Buddhism. It is probable that American Buddhism will in time grow even closer to the form of American Pro-
Modification in Buddhist Symbolism

The importance of the religious garden to Buddhists in Japan was stressed in Chapter III. It is understandable that the Japanese might wish for some place where the individual could escape from the overcrowded conditions and pursue his hope of becoming one with the cosmos. In such crowded quarters, the small garden, rich in symbolism, would refresh the weary man or woman. In a sense, the Buddhist garden is a man’s own private temple, his own place of worship. It is important to the Buddhist that his garden be authentic, that it not be designed in a "hit-or-miss" fashion. It must have all the essential elements required to be a faithful, though perhaps smaller copy of the nearest temple garden. Transference of the concept of the religious garden to the United States and to Sawtelle, however, was not accomplished without modification, despite the sincere efforts of the new immigrant.

The Japanese, assuming he attempted to be faithful in his recreation of the Buddhist garden, might find difficulty composing his garden. He might not be able to find the same kind of rocks or stones that had been used in Japan. The trees and shrubs he was accustomed to might not survive in an area with less precipitation and higher temperatures. Compromises were made, and the garden in Sawtelle is different from the one in Japan. Probably the most strik-
ing difference is the presence of a lawn. There is no room for such luxuries on the small lots of Japan.

With the passage of time and because of continued movement of people from one area to another, some of the authenticity has been lost. As the old Issei passed from the scene, the Nisei tried to carry on. Usually they worked from photographs or drawings from Japan, but their art form was not the same. Of the religious gardens found in Sawtelle, many are quite authentic, but some are pale copies. When asked if the people who owned the gardens realized the symbolism represented, a group of gardeners replied in near unanimity that such would be doubtful. One man said that most of them probably understood that there was some religious meaning, but he doubted whether they knew just what it was. Another replied that many of his customers did not care about the religious heritage or meaning and merely wanted something "Japanese" near them. To this type of person, the garden is ethnic—it is Japanese, not Buddhist. Another gardener replied that he designed many of the gardens, but was generally given a "free hand" to do as he wished. He knew of the symbolism involved and he tried to use as many of the elements of the garden as he could. But the designs were his own. Another gardener, one who specialized in the growing of bonsai (dwarfed trees and shrubs), said that he never designed a religious garden unless the customer wanted one. He thought most of them had at least some un-
derstanding of the religious significance.

One might wonder why the gardens have persisted in this country after such a long period of time. Because of the desire of the Japanese immigrants to be accepted as American and to be assimilated into American society, why have they hung on to the religious garden which is certainly not typically American? It is likely that the following three reasons are involved:

1. Most of the Buddhist priests are either Japanese-born, or completed their ministerial training at a Buddhist temple in Japan. Educated in the homeland where traditions are still strong, they tend to keep Buddhism "pure" by stressing the ancient symbolism.

2. Many of the finest gardeners in Sawtelle have been Kyoto-trained: the authentic religious garden in the front of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church was designed by Miyako, an Issei who had been trained at a Buddhist monastery in Japan.

3. Some of the older Issei still active in the church and in the Sawtelle community try to keep alive the old traditions, particularly with the Buddhist gardens.

Thus, although modified by new conditions, the symbolism remains. Extraneous shrubs and trees may intrude upon the background of the religious garden; beds of bright flowers may appear around the borders; and a broad lawn may be present, but the Buddhist garden is there: compact and meaningful.
FOOTNOTES


4Spencer, loc. cit.


8Ibid., p. 25.


CHAPTER V

INTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE JAPANESE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY

In Chapter I, the question was asked: Have the Japanese Buddhists, acting with varying intensity on the land and culture of Sawtelle, combined to produce a cultural landscape that can be identified as a religious one? In order to answer this question it was first necessary to understand why the Japanese chose this locale. Then the heritage of their Buddhist religion was considered, so that their reasons for creating a religio-cultural landscape could be known. Finally, the modifications that have occurred during the time that has passed since Buddhism came to this country were examined. Now the actual religious manifestations that exist in Sawtelle will be analyzed.

Architectural Design

The observer entering Sawtelle hoping to discover a large number of homes with the traditional "temple-style" design would be disappointed. The area is typically American. There is no specific style represented, for the area is composed of houses of varying ages. Some were built during the early 1920's and these homes, wooden frame dwellings with sagging rooflines, are now surrounded by the relatively newer California "rancho-style" bungalows constructed in
the late 1930's as farming activity was gradually being displaced by
the pressure of population movement toward the west. With the mush-
rooming freeway construction throughout the city of Los Angeles dur-
ing the 1940's and 1950's, many of the houses elsewhere displaced by
the road-building construction found their way to Sawtelle. During
the 1960's, a few new homes were built (photograph 5), and some of
them show distinctive ethnic touches. The greatest change in the
area, however, has been the emphasis on apartment houses (photo-
graph 6) in the northeast portion of Sawtelle.

When questioned about the lack of definite ethnic or religi-
ously-inspired "touches" to their homes, the Japanese Buddhists who
were interviewed agreed that the prime reason was lack of money.
One said: "When we came back to Sawtelle after the war, few of us
had enough money to build our own homes or to do much in the way of
remodeling. We took the houses as they were and added nothing."
Another said: "We took an emotional beating during the war. Although
we were American citizens, we were often treated as if we were the
enemy. When we came home, we just wanted to fit into the back-
ground. We didn't want to stand out as anything but just plain Ameri-
cans."

One young Nisei engineer explained that many of the Nisei
were afraid to put too much money into their homes for fear they
might lose them, as they did during the war. The story might have
PHOTOGRAPH 5

Single-family residence of recent construction, with many Japanese and Buddhist religio-cultural features. The architectural design might be called "Hawaiian Modern," but even if true it would ignore the antecedent Japanese Buddhist forms which have been modified in Hawaii. The house is fronted by an authentic religious garden.

PHOTOGRAPH 6

Apartment house completed in July, 1968. It has distinctive Japanese ethnic touches as well as some Buddhist symbolism (which is not apparent in this photograph). It is possible that more of the new houses and multiple units will follow this lead and in time Sawtelle may have more in the way of the Japanese "flavor" in house and apartment design.
been different had the Japanese not been forced to leave their homes for the period of four years. It takes time to establish a truly religious-cultural landscape. Perhaps if they are left alone they may yet find the time to develop one.

The Religious Garden

Despite the paucity of religious manifestations in the Sawtelle area, such as monuments and structures, the Buddhist garden is prevalent enough to be considered a definite manifestation of the imprint of religion upon the cultural landscape. There are over one hundred of these gardens in Sawtelle (map 7) and 80 percent of them are owned by Buddhists. Comparison of the location of the gardens with the membership rosters of both the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church and the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church disclosed the fact that 26 of the gardens were owned by Japanese Methodists (map 8). The oddity of this fact was explained by one of the Buddhist gardeners who admitted that he had free rein and made his gardens the way he wanted them. The Japanese Methodist owners probably thought the uniqueness of the garden was strictly "ethnic" not religious.

The most elaborate and authentic of the religious gardens is, appropriately enough, the garden of the Buddhist Church. In this garden (photographs 7 and 8) are most of the important features of a true temple-style Buddhist garden. It was designed by a landscape
MAP 7

DISTRIBUTION OF JAPANESE BUDDHIST GARDENS
IN SAWTELLLE

All of the Buddhist gardens shown in the map have at least three of the major elements of an authentic religious garden. Almost all of them have the large Guardian Stone and the "companion" stones. The Japanese black pine (pinus thunbergii) is another constant feature. Some have stone lanterns, pagodas, and pathways. Most are "dry gardens" with white rock or sand simulating water if such is desired.

The great majority of the Buddhist gardens are concentrated near the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church which is located at the corner of Corinth Avenue and La Grange Street.
Of the more than one hundred Buddhist gardens in Sawtelle, 80 percent are owned by Buddhists who are members of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church. An interesting fact is the 20 percent that are owned by members of the West Los Angeles Community Methodist Church which is exclusively Japanese in membership. It is probable that non-Buddhists who have religious gardens consider them to be "Japanese" not "Buddhist" and do not, perhaps, have any understanding as to the religious symbolism represented.
SAWTELLE

Japanese Buddhist Gardens
- Owned by Japanese Buddhists
- Owned by Japanese Methodists

West Los Angeles
- Buddhist Church
- Community Methodist Church

SCALE
0 1000 2000 ONE INCH EQUALS 1000 FEET
Northern portion of the religious garden of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church. Although a trifle heavier in shrubbery than one might expect, the placement of the proper elements is correct. Here one can see the winding pathway, the stone lantern, the Guardian Stone, the black pines, and a large stone which serves as the "companion" stone. On top of this latter stone is a bronze statue of Jodo Shin Shu’s revered "saint" Shinran Shonin.

Southern portion of the religious garden of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church. This section features the "tea garden" portion of the garden. Here one can see the bamboo flume which is symbolically to carry the water to the bathing basin for the ritual baptism of the baby Buddha. Because of the Buddhist Sunday School children's habit of playing in the water and the mud, the basin has now been removed. The flume no longer carries real water.
gardener named Miyako who had studied religious gardening under Jodo Shin priests in Kyoto. Also included is a bronze statue of the revered "saint" Shinran Shonin.

Because most of the gardens in Japan do not have running water, the majority of the Sawtelle gardens also eliminate actual streams. In the manner of a dry garden (photograph 9), the water is simulated by white sand; the waterfall by white rocks; thus evoking the idea of water bubbling over a small cliff and winding its way through the garden. In some of the gardens tree ferns have been added, and the shrubs have been trimmed to represent hills receding into the distance (photograph 10).

A close second to the beautiful garden of the Buddhist church is the one belonging to Mr. Shohei Iwamoto, one of the founders of the church. On the front of his apartment house is a traditional and authentic religious garden designed by a gardener who, like the one who designed the church’s garden, had studied in Kyoto. Here (photograph 11) one sees many of the ancient touches: the living waterfall and flowing stream, a small bridge, stone lantern, the Guardian Stone, and the proper accompaniment of trees and shrubs. On the side of the building is another garden, a Japanese "Tea Garden" (photograph 12). This garden is not as common as the other type (which is adapted from the shin-style garden), but the religious meaning is more apparent. The Tea Garden is often used as a setting for
PHOTOGRAPH 9

BUDDHIST DRY GARDEN

This authentic Buddhist Garden is placed in the front of a recently-constructed apartment house. The Guardian Stone is dominant and stands to one side of a replica of a waterfall. Both the waterfall and the "stream" are composed of white rock and gravel.

PHOTOGRAPH 10

ELABORATE RELIGIOUS GARDEN

This elaborate Buddhist garden fronts a typical single-family dwelling in Sawtelle. The "rounded" shrubs symbolize hills receding into the distance. Also present are such features as: the Guardian Stone, Japanese black pines, and a stone lantern.
PHOTOGRAPH 11

SHIN-STYLE RELIGIOUS GARDEN

This garden fronts an apartment house belonging to one of the founders of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church, Mr. Shohei Iwamoto. It is perhaps the most authentic of all the Sawtelle Buddhist gardens, with the possible exception of the garden at the church. It was designed by a skilled gardener who was trained at a Buddhist temple in Kyoto, Japan. All of the major symbolic features are present. One of the most interesting is the stone slab which serves as a bridge across a stream.

PHOTOGRAPH 12

TEA GARDEN

A Japanese "tea garden" at the side of Mr. Iwamoto's apartment house. Although not as prevalent as the standard or traditional religious garden, it has more of a deep meaning to the reverent Buddhist. The Tea Garden, with the flume, the Guardian Stone, the bathing basin, and the kneeling stone, is symbolic of Lumbini Garden, India, where tradition says Gautama the Buddha was born. While the traditional, larger garden is often seen in the front yards of Sawtelle, this compact little garden is often found in the patios and backyards of Buddhist homes.
the traditional Japanese "tea ceremony" and is emblematic of the birthplace of Gautama Buddha.

Another garden, more elaborate than the average, is the one fronting the priest's residence across the street from the Buddhist Church (photograph 13). Three blocks north on the same street one can observe a Zen garden (photograph 14).

Other Internal Aspects

It is possible in some religious enclaves to observe items of religious apparel being worn by the residents, such as one might find along Fairfax Avenue in Los Angeles. In such an area of orthodox Jewry, one often sees the men with prayer shawls and caps. But in Sawtelle, where a majority of the Japanese residents are Buddhist, such is not the case. The Japanese Buddhists dress as do the other residents of the area.

Except for certain festival days, such as during Boy's Day when a large paper fish (carp) is flown from a flagstaff, there are no outward symbols of the Buddhist religion.

Inside each home, however, belonging to a Japanese Buddhist, there is a butsudan (Buddha-shelf). It is before this butsudan that the individual conducts his daily prayers and meditation, and the family gathers to conduct a joint worship. But it is not visible from the street.
PHOTOGRAPH 13

GARDEN OF PRIEST'S RESIDENCE, SAWTELLE

Authentic religious garden is located at the front of the combination priest's residence and students' dormitory, across the street from the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church.

PHOTOGRAPH 14

ZEN GARDEN IN SAWTELLE

With the exception of the succulent plant behind the large Guardian Stone, the presence of the wide expanse of white sand and gravel, with the strategic placement of additional rocks, symbolizes the broad universe. The sand in a well-kept Zen Garden is carefully raked to represent waves lapping about the stones.
CHAPTER VI

EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE JAPANESE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY

Examination of the Sawtelle area disclosed no evidence of the culture established by the original Japanese settlers, other than the commercial landscape nurseries that are found throughout the area. The passage of time, which includes the four-year period of evacuation and relocation, and the encroachment of residential subdivisions, has quite effectively erased any religious or ethnic cultural features produced by the first Issei. Sawtelle has changed considerably since the 1920's, a fact which is not unique. It is a universal process constantly at work in all communities. Sawtelle has changed from a primary agricultural region to a residential one bounded by commercial, industrial, manufacturing, and retail zones. Present day patterns of land-use reflect this change (refer to map 2, p. 20).

There is present, however, an aspect that is unique for the average suburb: the ethnic shopping center on Sawtelle Boulevard. This was not present prior to the late 1940's, at least not as a Japanese retail area. Japanese people had owned shops there before World War II, but lost them to Caucasians and to Mexican-Americans during the war. When they returned in 1946, they began again to make the area an ethnic one. Today (map 9) this compact shopping zone is loc-
MAP 9

JAPANESE BUSINESS DISTRICT

SAWTELLE
JAPANESE BUSINESS DISTRICT
SAWTELLE

LA GRANGE STREET

Residence  
Sporting Goods  
Dress Shop  
Credit Union  
Plumber  
Realtor  
Barber Shop  
Medical Bldg.  
Restaurant  
Beauty Salon  
Realtor  
Cafe  
Imports  
Glass Company  
Barber Shop  
Art School  
Garden Supply

SAWTELLE BOULEVARD

Gas Station  
Residence  
Residence  
Residence  
Nursery  
Flower Arranging  
School  
Market  
Dry Cleaner  
Nursery  
Optometrist  
Dentist  
Drug Store

MISSISSIPPI STREET

Not To Scale
ated in the southeastern section of Sawtelle and is exclusively owned and operated by Japanese. Here, in what appears to be the typical neighborhood shopping center, there are the usual businesses and services: drug store, market, plumber, optometrists, beauty and barber shops, realty offices, etc. For the Japanese, however, there are specialized stores and cafes, such as the cafe featuring tempura (shrimp cooked in batter), and a market which sells squid, octopus, and shrimp. There is an art school for Japanese painting and a flower-arranging (ikebana) school. These schools, as well as the three large import stores, appear to do the better part of their business with non-Japanese. One of the import stores (photograph 13) has a small religious-style garden in a front planter. Although the owner admits to a certain amount of religious symbolism, the small garden was put there to supply the "Japanese touch" to the store.

One of the most striking aspects of Sawtelle is the high density of landscape nurseries (map 10). They were once spread throughout the area studied, but the encroachment of apartment houses has reduced their numbers, leaving them in a heavy cluster in the southeast quadrant. This may be readily observed by consulting aerial photographs of Sawtelle (photographs 1 and 2).

Most of the nurseries are of a commercial nature (photograph 14), but there are a great number of "backyard nurseries" scattered throughout the area. While the large commercial nurseries do a
PHOTOGRAPH 15

JAPANESE IMPORT STORE

One of the three Japanese import stores on Sawtelle Boulevard. The name of the store in both English and Japanese, the "Japanese" or "oriental" design and decoration along the front of the store, and the small religious garden in the planter on the right, provide proof of ownership. In the small planter to the left are statuettes of Gautama Buddha. The cafe on the right is well-known to Caucasians, primarily because of the authentic Japanese food served (including the specialty: tempura, shrimp fried in batter.)

PHOTOGRAPH 16

JAPANESE LANDSCAPE NURSERY

This nursery is typical of the few very large commercial nurseries that cater to transient trade. Although the Japanese residents of Sawtelle do patronize this nursery, it was observed that the greater part of the customers were Caucasians, at least during the spring and summer. This nursery also has for sale items for use in the traditional Japanese Buddhist religious garden: large rocks, stone lanterns, and the black pine. It is also noted throughout the west for its large collection of bonsai (dwarf trees and shrubs).
Prior to the beginning of the 1960's, the landscape nurseries were spread over more of the Sawtelle area. Since that time, encroachment on the area of multiple units, primarily in the northeast quadrant, has forced the "clustering" of the nurseries into the southeastern portion. The area to the west of Barrington Avenue is almost exclusively residential. The only "nurseries" to be found in this section would be gardener's own "home-grown" plants and shrubs which can be seen in rows alongside the home.
great percentage of their business with Caucasians from nearby residential areas, many of the smaller ones cater almost exclusively to the Japanese gardeners who make up over 30 percent of the labor (or employed) force in Sawtelle. It is in this sense that Sawtelle serves as a kind of gardener "pool" for the surrounding Caucasian neighborhoods. One cannot miss the evidence of the great number of gardeners. Their pick-up trucks, complete with power lawn mowers, seem to be parked in every other driveway in Sawtelle on a Sunday. Many of these gardeners are able to supplement their income by raising their own shrubs and plants in small cans. Many of the homes have rows of these potted plants lined alongside the house.

The Japanese of Sawtelle have a good relationship with their Caucasian neighbors, and not only in the business sense. Whenever the Buddhist Church holds a festival, Caucasians come out in large numbers to participate. Similar to the long time tradition of American churches, the Buddhists hold their festivals to accomplish three things. The first is to celebrate some worthy religious event with a solemn worship service. The other two objectives, to have a lot of fun and to raise money, are done well. The Hana Matsuri festival, held in April of each year, celebrates the birth of Buddha. In conjunction with this serious event, they used to hold a two day festival, with food and game booths, and authentic Japanese entertainment such as judo, karate, Kabuki dancers, etc. But so popular did this
festival become that the members of the church were unable to attend. Thus, the church now holds two Hana Matsuri festivals: one for the Buddhists, and one for their Caucasian friends. The festival held in 1968 was well attended on both weekends, and the report given at the meeting of the Buddhist Men's Club claimed a gross income for the festival of $13,000.
CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY

The objective of this thesis was to determine whether the Japanese Buddhists, acting with varying intensity on the land and culture of the suburban Los Angeles community of Sawtelle, have been able to produce a cultural landscape that can be identified as a religious one. The problem was admittedly a difficult one, due to the lack of a long enough "time factor" for the Japanese Buddhists to produce any lasting monument to their religion, and because the enclave is not exclusively a Japanese area. Buddhism is not the only religion represented in Sawtelle, nor the only one catering exclusively to Japanese. Still, the Japanese Buddhists, amounting to about twenty percent of the total population, have produced a religious imprint upon the cultural landscape of the area that is greater than their numbers might warrant.

The Japanese who settled Sawtelle in the early 1920's were mostly farmers and gardeners, and they chose this land because of climatic conditions and soils which were ideal for their type of agricultural efforts. Also important was the fact that the land was relatively inexpensive at that time and was near to the metropolitan Los Angeles markets. After building their agricultural enterprises to a
prosperous level, they lost them all during World War II when the Japanese were forced to leave the state. At the end of the war, they returned to resume their former pursuits. Except for gardening, however, it was not the same. The farmland was gone, replaced by residential subdivisions. The Japanese remain in Sawtelle rather than search for new locations, because most of the men are professional gardeners—and Sawtelle is ideally located near the wealthy communities of Bel Air, Beverly Hills, and Westwood Village. Further, many of the younger men have left all agricultural pursuits and have entered the professions as engineers, teachers, architects, and so forth. They tend to stay close together, rather than "risk" conflict with non-Japanese (or even non-Buddhists) elsewhere. The area cannot be considered a "ghetto" in the normal sense of the word, despite the tendency of outside Japanese to move into the area at every opportunity. A minority today, the Japanese Buddhists may well be the majority in the near future.

On examining the religious manifestations in Sawtelle and noting the more than one hundred Japanese Buddhist gardens, it is obvious that Buddhism exerts quite a hold upon its adherents. The particular form of Buddhism followed in Sawtelle is the Jodo Shin Shu, and this sect stresses the search for peace of mind and the attainment of the highest goal, union with God, or Nirvana. Jodo Shin Shu holds a special reverence for two of the Buddhas: Gautama, founder of Indian
Buddhism, and Amida, "patron saint" of the Shin movement. Because contemplation and meditation are considered worthy efforts, the adherents of Jodo Shin Shu have a high regard for anything that makes such efforts successful. The Japanese Buddhists of Sawtelle have emphasized the Buddhist garden—emblematic of the birthplace of the Buddha, the Lumbini Garden.

Jodo Shin Shu Buddhism did not arrive unchanged during its journey from Japan. The first contacts with the American way of life and the Protestant forms of Christianity in San Francisco made immediate alterations in its concept. The meeting places were now "churches" rather than "temples." The church was no longer restricted to ceremonial activities, but began to emulate the modes of worship and methods of operation of the Christian churches nearby. In the attempt to hold on to their members, Jodo Shin Shu became almost a Buddhist version of a Christian church. The father might still conduct private worship services for his family in front of the household shrine, the butsdan, but the family began to "go to church" on Sundays and their children attended Sunday schools, just as did their Christian friends. The Japanese themselves began to change with their association with American society. The oldsters, the Issei, did not find acculturation easy and were not assimilated into the new society. But their children, the Nisei and the Sansei, have made great progress towards full assimilation and now hold
many jobs that were once denied them. As to questions such as where
to live, where to work, and which religion to follow, they now have
freedom of choice in such matters.

From the end of World War II, the Jodo Shin Shu has experi-
cenced rapid growth. The number of churches in Los Angeles County
has grown from five in 1940 to eleven in 1968. The members of the
West Los Angeles Buddhist Church are extremely loyal and there is
a tremendous desire to live near the church. More than 70 percent
live within two miles of the church. One of the reasons for this spurt
in activity and membership is the increased role given to women who
had previously been denied active participation. Another reason for
the increased enthusiasm of the younger Japanese for the church is
probably due to its increasing resemblance to the average Protestant
Christian Church—with classrooms, social hall, kitchen, pulpit
and sanctuary, organ and hymns, youth groups, and ladies and men's
clubs. The priest is now called a "reverend."

While there are few homes that have any architectural fea-
tures which might be considered either ethnic or religious, the pres-
ence of the religious gardens offers evidence of the sense of deep
religious feeling by the Japanese Buddhists. It may be true that many
of the owners of these gardens do not understand the deep symbolism,
yet they know that they are "somehow" religious, and that they are
"Buddhist" in origin. This parallels, somewhat, the use of Christmas
symbolism by many Christians who do not understand the true meaning behind it.

Basically, the true, authentic, traditional Buddhist garden will have certain elements present: a large, light-colored stone that is called the Guardian Stone; the Japanese black pine; companion rocks; and a mound of earth representing a mountain. There will often be trimmed shrubs pruned into "rounded, ball-shaped" forms to represent hills receding into the distance. The Buddhist garden not only represents Lumbini Garden, but is an attempt to re-create the universe in miniature. It is a place for a man or a woman to contemplate the mysteries of the cosmos and to try to discover a way to attain Nirvana.
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

As to the future course of events in Sawtelle, there appear to be two possible directions from which Buddhism will have to choose. It may be that the newer generation will drift away from the religion of their parents, in much the same manner as the Nisei once did. Whether they return to Buddhism or remain attached to the Christian faith of their choice is problematical. The Sansei and the Chisei may find that Buddhism is more secure for them, with fewer problems than those involved in trying to fit in with a "white man's religion." Or, with their almost complete "Americanization," they may feel no fear or distrust, and thus move away from the "safety" of Sawtelle and the security of an ethnic locale, to enjoy the challenge of meeting the Caucasian in "his own backyard."

It is also possible that the children may find that the new freedom they are experiencing will allow them to be Buddhist if they so desire, without fear of censure or ridicule from their Caucasian friends, neighbors, or co-workers. If so, then Buddhism will receive an influx of "young blood" that almost every religious organization hopes for today.

The future of the Buddhist community in Sawtelle depends on
the Sansei and the Chisei, and on their parents, the Nisei. The English-speaking minister, a Nisei, of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church recognizes this problem, and in the Church Bulletin, he wrote:

... We must remember that what was once good for the Issei, is not necessarily good for the others. Time since, has moved some 50-60 years and so, we have a lot of catching up to do. What the Issei have done was great and their urging us on to continue is to perpetuate our faiths. To merely carry on per se or on a status quo basis is not perpetuation. Let's look at the statistics of our churches. How many of the people between the ages of 28-39 years of age are actively sharing the load of our churches? Why the vacuum? Nationwide, statistics show these are the men that hold key positions in our society, in business enterprises and in administrative positions. Where are our men in our churches? Perhaps we need an evaluation. This is the year for us to innovate new ideals. And, I am often made to feel that innovation may well be to go back to the fundamentals of Buddhism where men dealt with men on the grass-root level, where men communicate with men.¹

In issue after issue the same sort of muted plea is heard, not only in the West Los Angeles Buddhist Church Bulletin, but in the Buddhist Churches of America national magazine, the American Buddhist.² The need is not theirs alone, however, for it would seem that the Buddhist faith in America is experiencing the same trauma, the same frustrations, as those shared by most of the Christian denominations.

However, unless disaster strikes again--such as the forced evacuation and relocation of World War II--the Buddhist movement in the Sawtelle area appears to be well-founded and staunchly-defended.
At a meeting of the Buddhist Men's Club, there was no wringing of hands, no crying despair. Instead, there was optimism for the future. As more and more Japanese seek to move into the area, more apartment houses will have to be built to receive them, and the Church will be forced to expand again and again to contain its share of the new residents. The number of individual single-family dwellings will decrease, and the number of religious gardens will automatically decrease in corresponding degrees. And yet, many of the recent apartment buildings have the most authentic Buddhist gardens to be found in the area (photographs 9, 11, 12).

Perhaps there will be other manifestations of Buddhism developed within the area, but it is doubtful whether any will have the emotional impact of the contemplative beauty of the true religious garden.

It would be interesting to make additional studies of similar Buddhist enclaves in other parts of Los Angeles, or elsewhere in California or the Pacific Coast. Perhaps similar religious manifestations may be found in London, Brazil, or wherever there may be a large concentration of Japanese Buddhists. If a Buddhist church or temple is present in their midst, would the prime manifestation of religiosity be the religious garden?

It would be interesting to make a future investigation and re-analyze the Sawtelle area in ten years time—to learn if the gar-
dens have increased or decreased in importance, or whether some new pattern will have emerged. With an increase in freedom, will the Buddhists disperse throughout the greater Los Angeles area with a subsequent reduction in the intensity of their religious feeling? Or will they increase in density in the Sawtelle area, and with increased wealth build new homes and multiple-units with Buddhist touches more clearly defined?

Or, will the Buddhist, perhaps even more acculturated as Americans, confine their religion to the inside of their homes, to the butsudan in the corner of their living room, next to the color television set?
FOOTNOTES


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amida</td>
<td>The Buddha of &quot;measureless light.&quot; One of the five most important Buddhas in Mahayana Buddhism, and now one of the great gods of Asia. Originally, Amida was a Buddhist monk who had such a store of merit that his followers could draw upon it by repeating his name. (See Nembutsu.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>Generally refers to Gautama (Gotamo to the Japanese) Buddha. He is not the only Buddha, but the most important one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>Grew out of Hinduism, but attempted to avoid the dogma and ritual of the parent religion. It is the Middle Way—the avoidance of extremes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butsu</td>
<td>Japanese for &quot;Buddha.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butsuden</td>
<td>The &quot;Buddha-shelf;&quot; family altar which contains a small representation of Amida Buddha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chisei</td>
<td>The &quot;fourth&quot; generation of Japanese in America and the third generation to be born in this country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hompa</td>
<td>&quot;The original&quot; or &quot;the orthodox.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongwan</td>
<td>&quot;The Vow of Amida Buddha.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hompa Hongwanji</td>
<td>The &quot;Mother Temple&quot; in Kyoto, Japan. World Headquarters of the Jodo Shin Shu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issei</td>
<td>Born in Japan; emigrated to the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodo</td>
<td>The &quot;pure land,&quot; or the &quot;pure realm&quot; of consciousness. A paradise where the faithful go after death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jodo Shin Shu</td>
<td>The Pure Land Sect founded by Shinran Shonin as an improvement over the original Jodo Sect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kibei</td>
<td>American-born Japanese who were educated in Japan and returned to this country to live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahayana</td>
<td>Considered by its followers as the &quot;Greater Vehicle&quot; or &quot;Basket&quot; of learning. It offers greater freedom than its competitor, Theravada. It is the form followed in China, Korea, Japan, and parts of Viet Nam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nembutsu</td>
<td>&quot;Namu Amida Butsu.&quot; A ritual recitation which allows the speaker to gain some of the merit or virtue acquired long ago by Amida Buddha. It means, literally, &quot;I place my faith in Amida Buddha.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nichiren</td>
<td>An ancient and large Buddhist sect which calls for the worship of Gautama Buddha. It means &quot;The Sun Lotus.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nisei</td>
<td>The &quot;second&quot; generation of Japanese in America, and the first American-born generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sansei</td>
<td>The &quot;third&quot; generation of Japanese in America, and the second generation to be born in this country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensei</td>
<td>&quot;Teacher.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shinran Shonin</td>
<td>A monk of the ancient Tendai Sect in the 13th century. He taught that absolute reliance on Amida was everything.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu</td>
<td>&quot;Sect&quot; or &quot;Denomination.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sutra</td>
<td>Authoritative scripture of Buddhism. A discourse or parable with a teaching lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theravada</td>
<td>The &quot;Way of the Elders.&quot; Claims to be nearly unchanged since the days of Gautama Buddha. Followed primarily in Ceylon and Burma.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toro</td>
<td>Stone lanterns often found in Japanese Buddhist gardens. Once were lighted with candles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zen</td>
<td>Meditation school of Buddhism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>