

REPLICATING SETTLER-COLONIAL SACRED SPACE ON STOLEN LAND:  
THE BYODO-IN TEMPLE IN KĀNE‘OHE, HAWAI‘I

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of replicated settler-colonial structures on unceded land using the Byodo-In Temple in Hawai‘i as a case study. In the late 19th Century, contract laborers emigrated from Japan to work on plantations in the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. These immigrants faced decades of mistreatment and discrimination, with the Caucasian elite often characterizing Buddhist religious beliefs as antithetical to American Christian values. These anti-Japanese sentiments came to a head after the Pearl Harbor attack when the United States government incarcerated a vast number of Japanese immigrants and their Japanese-American children under suspicion of treason based on their race. After the Allied victory and the United States’ engagement in the Cold War, the government sought to promote an image of America as a champion of racial unity to deflect criticism from its imperialist policies. During this era, an American corporation built the Byodo-In Temple replica as part of a larger development project in Hawai‘i. Using data from archives, interviews, and site visits, this study demonstrates the Byodo-In Temple’s involvement in settler-colonial industries that erase native (hi)stories, alienate the Indigenous population from their land, and support imperialist narratives circulated by and for the United States. This paper further argues that the Byodo-In Temple’s superficial connection to the local Japanese community and the dissimulated corporate greed that drives the temple’s existence complicate its authenticity as a Japanese sacred space. Finally, it calls for a decolonial reinterpretation of the site that would reaffirm native meanings of space while making apparent the temple’s settler-colonial history.

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Byodo-In Temple replica in Hawai‘i is relatively famous. In 2019, National Geographic featured the temple in an article titled *20 of the world’s most beautiful Buddhist temples* alongside a host of world-renowned temples, whereas the original in Uji, Japan that it was modeled on did not make the list ("The Byodo-In Temple Homepage" n.d.). The replicated temple has developed a reputation of its own that reaches far beyond the Pacific Ocean. In fact, I had never heard of a Japanese Buddhist temple in Hawai‘i until my undergraduate studies at McGill University in Quebec when one of my professors mentioned it during a class on Pure Land Buddhism in which we had discussed the Byōdōin of Uji, Japan. He said that there was an exceptionally good replica of the famous Japanese temple in Hawai‘i, a comment I did not think about again until I moved to O‘ahu for my graduate studies at Mānoa and decided to make the trip to Kāne‘ohe on O‘ahu’s Windward side to see it for myself. My first physical encounter with the Byodo-In Temple was confusing, the experience was not what I had expected and left me with many more questions than it answered. Although the temple complex was quite beautiful and looked straight forward enough, I felt a kind of affective dissonance in response to the presence of certain elements (human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic) I had not expected and the absence of others I would have thought essential to a Japanese Buddhist temple. I was unsure about the identity of the space I was in and doubted its authenticity as a Buddhist temple; I could not shake the feeling that I had been deceived. This affective dissonance resulting from my encounter with the physical components of the Byodo-In Temple demanded an explanation and propelled me into pursuing the temple as the subject of my research.

The Byodo-In Temple is a scaled-down, concrete replica of Byōdōin’s Phoenix Hall in Uji, located in the ‘Āhuimanu Valley at the foot of the Ko‘olau Mountains in Kāne‘ohe on the island of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i. The replica was built during the mid-to-late 1960s, not long after Hawai‘i acquired statehood. It is part of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, a sprawling cemetery complex on O‘ahu’s Windward side now owned by a Texan corporation called NorthStar Memorial Group. The Byodo-In Temple has had multiple functions over the course of its life, the most consistent of which continue to be its roles as a memorial, a columbarium, a religious site, and a tourist attraction. It has always been a prominent tool in the Valley of the Temples’ marketing strategy and is often cited as a must-see for visitors to Hawai‘i, in large part



due to the temple's aesthetic qualities. Paul Trousdale, famous for his real-estate development in Beverly Hills, was the lead developer of the memorial park, including the Byodo-In Temple which formally opened its doors to the public in 1968. He commissioned the temple to be a part of his cemetery meant to cater to Hawai'i's various identity groups, which was itself part of his larger housing development project in the Āhuimanu area. Management confidently announced the temple would be a religious and cultural center dedicated to the memory of the first generation of Japanese contract laborers to come to Hawai'i a century earlier.

In 1868, the first Japanese contract laborers emigrated to the shores of Hawai'i in search of financial gain. While many chose to return to their homeland after their three-year contracts expired, many more either went on to move to the West Coast of the United States or established residence in the Hawaiian Kingdom. This first generation of immigrants, the *Issei*, would go on to establish lasting communities in the Hawaiian archipelago and would prove to have a profound impact on its burgeoning multi-ethnic culture and various industries. The Japanese community of Hawai'i currently enjoys the highest average income of all local racial groups and holds powerful positions in local government. Many monuments speak to these achievements today, yet their contributions were not always celebrated. Early settlers struggled with racial biases as well as poor working conditions on the plantations where they both resided and worked. Many had to fight to gain the respect of other racial groups and for the right to take up both literal and metaphorical space. Their religious beliefs were also the target of Christian missionaries who felt threatened by Buddhism and the growing Japanese population in Hawai'i. This would be particularly true during the Second World War, when the United States interned a great many Japanese residents of the United States and their Japanese American children, whom they suspected to be secretly allied to the Meiji Empire. In Hawai'i, many of the people imprisoned were community leaders, including nearly all Japanese Buddhist priests. This was a time when Japanese culture and religion were effectively made illegal, as many members of the community had to abandon tradition and rapidly assimilate to Western visual markers of culture for survival. In this context, the visible reappearance of Japanese Buddhist temples and other cultural markers that occurred after the war speaks to the resilience of the Japanese community in the face of profound discrimination.

While the Byodo-In Temple's importance as a cultural landmark for the representation of Americans of Japanese descent residing on O'ahu might be obvious, it also represents a unique

opportunity for the study of replicated sacred space in settler-colonial contexts. Hawai‘i’s Byodo-In replica straddles typical definitions of the profane and the sacred, being a non-denominational Buddhist temple built at the behest of a Californian land developer which primarily serves today as a columbarium and tourist attraction. Its authenticity as a religious site is debatable, and the temple owners seemingly refuse to provide a clear answer on the subject. Though they desire that the same reverence be awarded to the replica as one would bestow on a traditional temple, management rarely hosts any events, religious or otherwise, on-site and does not currently employ a regular Buddhist priest. Furthermore, the temple’s size (being a scaled-down replica) could hardly accommodate traditional Japanese Buddhist rituals. It also distinguishes itself from other Buddhist temples built in the post-war era in Hawai‘i, as most temples in the traditional Japanese style of architecture date from the early 20th Century, reflecting the tastes of first-generation immigrants for temples that closely resembled those in Japan (Tanabe and Tanabe 2012, 19). It was most common for Buddhist temples built in the 1960s to mimic the appearance of Christian Churches in a style prominent local Buddhist scholars George and Willa Tanabe term “house of worship” (Tanabe and Tanabe 2012, 22). Although the Byodo-In Temple might have differed in form from its contemporaries, the use of concrete as a building material for Buddhist temples was common during this time (Tanabe and Tanabe 2012, 22). The authenticity of the site’s claim to the sacred is further muddled by the issue of Native Hawaiian land rights and America’s ongoing occupation of Hawai‘i. A detailed study of the temple sheds light on the geopolitical implications of the existence of replicated settler-colonial sacred spaces on occupied indigenous land and complicates our understanding of the unseen processes which are both born from and sustain the colonial project.

#### ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Most religious scholarship about Buddhism in Hawai‘i has focused on tracing the histories of its arrival to the islands and tracking the developments of the different sects that established themselves in the archipelago. Some studies have focused more specifically on particular temples, but all of these were denominational and active religious sites. Despite its popularity, the Byodo-In Temple in Kāne‘ohe has never been the subject of an individual study. Its name has been featured in a few works about Buddhist temples in Hawai‘i, first appearing in George and Willa Jane Tanabe’s *Japanese Buddhist Temples in Hawaii: An Illustrated Guide* as part of a chapter on the Buddhist temples of O‘ahu (Tanabe and Tanabe 2012, 51-52). Although the

authors are known scholars of Japanese religion, the book is admittedly not an analytical piece and rather serves as a reference or guide to the Buddhist temples of Hawai‘i. The Byodo-In’s short entry describes the temple’s history as a concrete replica and monument to the first Japanese contract laborers before discussing some of its key features, including the Buddha statue and the crematory niches at the back of the temple. The overall tone is complimentary and appears to want to incite readers to go visit the temple, declaring it to be “the centerpiece of the Valley of the Temples” (Tanabe and Tanabe 2012, 51). The Hawai‘i Byodo-In also features in a more recent publication from 2022 by Robert Edward Gordon titled *Buddhist Architecture in America: Building for Enlightenment*, in which he criticizes American Buddhist studies for not sufficiently addressing the role of architecture as an explicit endeavor and makes it his goal to initiate an inquiry into the teleology of American Buddhist temples (Gordon 2022, 2). He mentions that “the existence of a smaller but startlingly rendered replica of the Byodo-In Temple outside Kyoto (a symbol of the Japanese nation) situated in the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park on O‘ahu, testifies to how the Hawaiian Islands have become a new home for the Japanese” (Gordon 2022, 74). Gordon also names the Byodo-In Temple as one of the large-scale traditional or classical Asian buildings to have flourished in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, when “negativity towards Asians began to subside” (Gordon 2022, 156). He further argues that “the nostalgic and affective environments we see in Buddhist sites is a deliberate exercise. They create a sense of order and custom, a place of cultural refuge predicated on religious belief set amid a wider landscape that is markedly distinct from the spiritual and structural antecedents of their origin” (Gordon 2022, 157). This last point is particularly poignant when it comes to the case of the Byodo-In Temple as most people struggle to see its individuality given that it is a replica of a famous Japanese temple.

The lack of academic interest in the Byodo-In Temple can perhaps be explained by the fact that it defies traditional categorization, making it difficult to identify exactly what it *is* or *is not*, and consequently, it does not seem to fit into any particular area of study. Is it a religious site, a columbarium, a monument, a work of art, or a tourist attraction? Is it Japanese, American, or even Hawaiian? As a religious studies scholar, I cannot speak to its relevance to other fields with much certitude, but some of the temple’s aspects point to the reasons why it might not have been deemed worthy of inclusion in the realm of religious studies. Firstly, it is not regularly serviced by a priest, monks, or nuns, and does not have regular lay members, meaning scholars

would struggle to find many traditional ceremonies, rituals, or practitioners for analysis—the bread and butter of the typical religious scholar. Secondly, it is not an original but a mere replica of an existing temple that has itself been the subject of innumerable studies. How could studying a replica provide insights that have not already been gleaned from studies of the original? The question of its authenticity as a sacred space is central to understanding why an academic inquiry into the temple might not seem relevant or valuable to religious scholars. Material culture studies, on the other hand, offer a new framework from which to interpret the Byodo-In Temple. Locating it in time and space unveils its significance and reveals the unseen ways in which it interacts with a larger network of social, economic, and political forces that shape O‘ahu’s narrative.

An emerging field of study seeks to reevaluate academia’s relationship to replicas and demonstrate their viability as academic subjects, often by questioning Western assumptions about authenticity. Nelson Graburn, Maria Gravari-Barbas, and Jean-Francois Staszak undertook one such project in their 2022 edited book titled *Tourism and Architectural Simulacra* in which various scholars explore the significance of replicated large-scale constructions built for the sake of tourism. Bauer Bernhard and Canestrini Duccio’s contribution to the anthology utilizes the term *copysite* to refer to “replicas or imitations of certain monuments or groups of buildings of outstanding universal value that have received global fame through the tourism and marketing industry” (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 13). The authors decry how such sites are stigmatized as “fake” and thus robbed of their significance (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 13).

To address the issue of authenticity, Bernhard and Duccio emphasize the fact that even what we consider to be “original” historical items or sites undergo change and that concepts of authenticity and the value ascribed to replicas vary depending on the cultural context, mentioning that, in China, well-made copies are considered trustworthy and are not deemed less valuable than originals (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 16). The same can be said of Japan, where there are a variety of translations for “authenticity,” many of which have moral implications such as “trustworthy” or “faithful” (Henrichsen 2017, 261). Japanese architectural heritage conservation efforts often involve the complete dismantling and re-making of classic structures with new raw materials, such as is the case with the shrines of Ise (Henrichsen 2017, 278). In such cases, authenticity is not so much linked to the age and immobility of a structure’s materials, but rather to the quality of the craftsmanship and its faithfulness to the techniques originally used in the

making of the building. Christoph Henrichsen argues there are five criteria that determine authenticity in Japanese preservation efforts which are visual, structural, material, technical, and functional integrity (Henrichsen 2017, 264).

Sally Foster and Sian Jones offer further insight into the intricacies of historical and cultural replication for the sake of preservation in their monograph titled *My Life as a Replica: St John's Cross, Iona*, a study on the concrete replica of the St John's Cross in Iona, Scotland. The object of their work is located *in situ* and is meant to replace the damaged fragments that remain of the original cross, which are now housed in the site's museum. As do Bernhard and Duccio, they problematize labeling replicas as "fakes" or described as lacking the "history of felt relationships" of their originals (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 14). Foster and Jones' approach emphasizes the importance of interconnectivity between people, objects, and things in creating authenticity, also highlighting the importance of "production, creativity, and craft" (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 11, 21). They claim that "the optimum interest and value of replicas lies in their appreciation as part of a composite cultural biography that links and combines the lives of the original and all its reproductions" and as such they produced a narrative that follows both the lives of the original cross and its replica, as well as the various iterations in between (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 19). Bernhard and Duccio agree that certain copysites are no longer viewed as alien because of their geographical proximity to the site of origin, in which case they can contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 20). Foster and Jones contend that by better understanding replicas, we gain insight into the changing meanings and values associated with authenticity, which in turn inform how many heritage sites and museums operate (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 11). Understanding how replicas "work" can also contribute to "ethical and practical responses to post-conflict reconstruction" in war-torn areas (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 11).

While these works offer valuable insight into the study of replicas and succeed in justifying their academic importance, they still fall short of explaining the significance of the Byodo-In Temple. Bernhard and Duccio admit that copysites are "reproductions of cultural elements that already have been commodified" and contain only commercial value but still claim that the commodification of culture has both positive and negative aspects and that its criticism mostly stems from an anthropological approach rather than a practical one (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 14). They also attempt to destabilize the notion that cultural value is good while economic

value is bad (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 17). They assert that copysites are “plainly beneficial for the destinations where they were constructed” and “from a practical point of view the advantages of ‘duplitecture’ are undeniable for destinations and its visitors [sic]” (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 14). They cite job creation, the attraction of new investment, and publicity for the place the site resides in as positive effects of copysites, also praising them for relieving original settings from congestion and creating spaces meant to cater to large tourist flows (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 18). While these observations might be true of a vast number of copysites, they do not account for those located on occupied land. Hawai‘i, in particular, suffers from tourism which depletes its natural resources, raises crime rates, keeps locals trapped in low-paying jobs, makes a caricature of Hawaiian religion and culture, and where most of the industry’s economic benefits go to foreign investors. In short, Bernhard and Duccio’s analysis does not account for factors such as colonialism and ecology, both of which have very practical implications.

Foster and Jones’ study of St John’s Cross offers many similarities to the Byodo-In Temple in that both replicate religious items of worldwide cultural significance through a concrete medium and are even both located on islands, but the context of the Byodo-In Temple differs significantly. Once again, the settler-colonial context of the Byodo-In Temple sets it apart from previous studies about replicas, which Foster and Jones admit have mostly focused on “European sculpture, omitting the colonial angles” referring to museum replicas from the long 19th Century (S. Foster and Jones 2020, 12). Despite this recognition, their study does not warrant engagement with the topic of colonialism either, since their replica still resides in its place of origin and was designed with the goal of taking the place of the old cross fragments so that they might be better preserved. Furthermore, there is a marked difference between replicating single objects and replicating entire buildings or complexes. Bernhard and Duccio acknowledge that the creation of copysites is never purely motivated by a desire to replicate an original site, each having its own justifications which include but are not limited to tourism and profit (Bernhard and Duccio 2022, 17). The Byodo-In Temple was not built to serve as an exact substitute for its Japanese counterpart and was rather meant to fulfill new, unique roles (e.g., as a columbarium) that primarily serve settler-colonial corporate interests; its stated purpose as a monument to the first Japanese immigrants to Hawai‘i ties it to local history imbuing it with meanings that are completely foreign to the Uji temple. Hence, while composite cultural biographies might be essential to the study of replicated items or sites located in their place of

origin, copysites removed from their parent cultural contexts can take on lives of their own with meanings that transcend their association with an “original,” meanings that I would argue have intrinsic merit as an academic subject. By contextualizing the Byodo-In replica in both space and time, I submit that the site contributes to settler-colonial narratives that alienate Native Hawaiians from their land, ultimately aiding the United States in justifying and cementing their occupation of the Hawaiian Islands. This proposition demonstrates the value of investigating replicas in their own right and contributes to existing scholarship an analysis of a religious copysite that not only acknowledges but centers its settler-colonial context.

#### RESEARCH GOALS AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis paper seeks to answer the following questions: What does my affective experience at the temple mean? Who is the temple for, how is it used, and who benefits from its existence? What does the Byōdōin’s local replica signify? What does its existence in the context of O‘ahu mean for both the island’s and the temple’s identity? What does it mean for the Byodo-In to be a replica of a foreign religio-cultural symbol of nationhood, as Gordon refers to it, on stolen land? I approach these questions about the nature of the Byodo-In Temple Hawai‘i from an interdisciplinary perspective melding both religious and material culture studies. I employ Susan Stewart’s theory on the assimilation of private space, Daniel Miller’s objectification theory, Jane Bennett’s theory of vibrant matter, and (to a limited extent) affect theory in my analysis (Bennett 2010; Miller 2010; Stewart 1993). My research on the Byodo-In temple of O‘ahu is the first attempt at an in-depth scholarly interpretation of the site, and as such is primarily reliant on archival data, interviews, and site visits. The histories of Japanese settlement and the establishment of Buddhism on the islands are primarily sourced from books, articles, theses, and dissertations aimed at an English-speaking audience. While I had hoped to interview the Byodo-In Temple’s management and perform visitor surveys, the Valley of the Temples LLC and their parent company, NorthStar Memorial Group, refused to cooperate with my research and sought to dissuade me from pursuing my investigation into the Byodo-In Temple. In their responses, they used their status as a privately-owned cemetery to fend me off by referring to “privacy regulations” they refused to define. Their responses also made evident the malleability of the temple’s role and significance. The temple’s management often emphasizes the Byodo-In’s religious and cultural role in the local community in their marketing, but, in seeking to deter me, chose to emphasize that the temple was not active, insisting its primary role was as a

columbarium. I have relied on local newspaper archives (*Honolulu Advertiser*, *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*, *Hawaii Tribune-Herald*) for information about the temple's history and operations, meaning there are many gaps in the temple's biography section for which I was limited to speculation. Being a white, European temporary resident of the Hawaiian Islands, I recognize the limitations of my interpretations of local sites, culture, and history. However, this inquiry seeks to start a dialogue into the role of non-native replicas in hierarchies of sacred space and symbology on contested land, a topic hitherto under-represented in academic discourse.

#### STRUCTURE

This thesis is divided into an introduction, four substantive chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the history of Japanese immigration to Hawai'i starting in 1868 and follows the social, religious, political, and economic developments of the Japanese community through the early 20th Century, the Second World War, and ending with the post-war era when the Byodo-In Temple was built. This section also includes some contextual information about the evolution of Hawaiian governance from its time as a sovereign kingdom, the illegal deposition of the monarchy, its annexation as a territory of the United States, and, finally, when it was granted statehood. Chapter 3 then offers a biography of the Byodo-In Temple which seeks to historicize its existence in Hawai'i. The chapter begins by providing background information on the developers behind the Byodo-In's construction, followed by a recounting of the temple replica's creation as related through articles from local newspapers. The next section discusses the Byodo-In's presence and representation in various forms of media, which leads into a section dedicated to the temple's earlier advertising and involvement in the tourism industry. In a section titled "Corporate Interests," I present a timeline of the temple's ownership by several corporate entities with a greater emphasis on the current owners of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, NorthStar Memorial Group. The last section attempts to piece together the temple's religious-cultural activity over the course of its life from the little information acquired from archived newspaper reports and advertisements. Chapter 4 relates various aspects of the visitor experience(s) and attempts to showcase the affective power of the temple's components. This chapter is structured around the narrative of my own visit to the Byodo-In Temple, supplemented by some archival material. This chapter's sections represent what I perceived to be distinct areas



during my visits: the parking lot, the entrance, the bell, the meditation pavilion, the eastern wing, the main hall, the western wing, the reflecting pond, the gift shop, and the scattering wall, followed by an individual section dedicated to discussing the temple complex' wildlife. Finally, the fifth and final substantive chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the temple's place within the Hawaiian landscape and how its various roles relate to the settler-colonial project. It is divided into thematic sections, the first discusses the theoretical justification for my analysis, and is followed by sections discussing the temple's various roles as a memorial, a cemetery, and a tourist attraction, in that order. Chapter 6 utilizes the theoretical components mentioned above to demonstrate how the temple's various roles contribute to the effacement of Native Hawaiian interpretations of space and how they participate in settler-colonial industries that harm the islands.

#### TERMINOLOGY

Due to the multicultural and multilingual nature of the communities discussed below, I have chosen to abide by the following standards in my writing. Words from languages other than English, meaning Japanese and Hawaiian, are italicized and given a definition upon their first appearance in the text, and subsequent appearances are not italicized. Proper nouns whose meanings are not integral to formulating an understanding of the topic are not italicized or defined. When speaking of the Japanese community, I use the generational terms *issei*, *nisei*, *sansei*, and *yonsei*, which are capitalized when referring to a generational group but are left uncapitalized when referring to an individual. Issei refers to first-generation Japanese immigrants to whom the United States denied citizenship until the end of World War II, and, as such, are never referred to as "Japanese Americans." The Nisei, Sansei, and Yonsei refer to the second, third, and fourth generation of Japanese immigrants, respectfully. These groups had U.S. citizenship, beginning with the Nisei who, being born on American soil, were granted citizenship at birth despite their parents remaining aliens. These groups are represented under the term "Japanese American." I use the term American of Japanese Ancestry (AJA) sparingly, only to refer to the Nisei as it was their generation that popularized the term during the Second World War. I will also be quoting two local Japanese-American interviewees whose names have been changed to preserve their anonymity. Due to the fact that I do not recognize the United States' authority over the Hawaiian Islands, my use of the word "Hawaiian" refers exclusively to Native

Hawaiian culture, people, institutions, and places. On the other hand, I employ the term “local” to refer to the current inhabitants of the Hawaiian Islands who identify with the particular notion of local culture that exists today in Hawai‘i, and who may belong to any number of racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, I utilize the standard diacritical marks when spelling Hawaiian words except when quoting authors who omitted them, such as in newspaper articles and legal documents, as well as when writing the titles of companies who do not spell their names using the proper diacriticals. As for the temple, to avoid confusion and for the sake of accuracy, I spell the replica’s name “Byodo-In Temple” whereas I spell the original “Byōdōin” according to the way their respective managements have chosen to title them in the English language.

## CHAPTER 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter gives an overview of the Japanese community's history in the Hawaiian Islands from the beginning of contract immigration in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until the 1960s—the decade during which the Byodo-In replica was built in Kanēʻohe. In doing so, I address certain concomitant events in Hawaiian and US political history to better contextualize the Japanese immigrant experience and provide a background for understanding the forces behind Hawaiʻi's evolving racial politics. The following sections will also discuss the changes in the islands' religious climate, with particular attention to the contentious relationship between Japanese Buddhism and Christianity that defined much of this period. I hope to demonstrate how power politics, religious diversity, and racial biases all contributed to shaping Japanese and Japanese-Americans' lives in Hawaiʻi. In the following chapters, I shall explore how these forces continue to influence the interpretation of Hawaiʻi's religious, political, and physical landscape today.

### EARLY IMMIGRATION TO THE KINGDOM OF HAWAIʻI

At the end of King Kamehameha III's reign in the 1850s came a great decline in whale populations in the ocean surrounding the Kingdom of Hawaiʻi. This dealt a great blow to the country's economy as whaling had been its primary means of maintaining prosperity since entering the global market. The whales' scarcity led to the islands relying on a new, more stable product: sugar. Chronic labor shortages plagued this burgeoning industry due to epidemics of smallpox, measles, and other diseases introduced through contact with European explorers that continued to decimate substantial portions of the native population. Between 1852 and 1866, Hawaiʻi relied on the immigration of Chinese workers to make up for their lack of domestic labor. The Chinese rapidly became undesirable due to complaints from local white residents of their troublemaking, although this disdain was later attributed to the entrepreneurial savvy of Chinese immigrants and white business owners' fear of competition (Hunter, 21). Starting in 1868, Japanese workers supplanted the Chinese based on Hawaiian Foreign Minister Wyllie's recommendation to utilize the cheap Japanese workforce.

The first official Japanese immigrants to Hawaiʻi arrived in 1868, although there are records of sporadic shipwrecks bringing Japanese fishers to the islands decades before, and it is speculated that the two nations' peoples might have been in contact at an even earlier time. In 1839, an American whaling crew rescued seven Japanese people from a sinking ship one

hundred miles off the coast of Tokyo and brought them back with them to Maui (Hunter 1971, 32). Records show that a certain fifty-year-old man, whom the clueless Americans erroneously dubbed ‘Heshero,’ clung dearly to what were most likely Buddhist ritual items but that the whalers described as ‘idols’(Hunter 1971, 32). The missionary doctor that attended to the rescued Japanese attempted in vain to convert them to Christianity as the Japanese sailors explained to him that “the god of Americans is good for Americans, . . . and our gods are good for us” (Hunter 1971, 33). Reverend Hiram Bingham, leader of the first Christian mission to Hawai‘i and “enemy [of] every form and species of wickedness,” gave the so-called ‘Heshero’ a Christian burial despite his noted dedication to Buddhism and refusal to convert (Hunter 1971, 33). Historical records also tell of two more Japanese fishermen that were shipwrecked on the shores of a Hawaiian island in 1865.

The group of 148 Japanese immigrants, including 6 women and 2 teenagers, that arrived in 1868 was dubbed the *Gannen Mono* (First-year people) in reference to their having left Japan in the first year of Emperor Meiji’s rule. Most of them were young city-dwellers with little to no experience in farming who sought easy money abroad. They would arrive in a newly Christianized Kingdom; Puritan missionaries had been dispatched from New England to ‘the Sandwich Islands’ since the 1820s and had convinced powerful ali‘i or chiefs to accept the Ten Commandments as a basis for the law of their kingdom in a process Louise H. Hunter, author of *Buddhism in Hawaii, Its Impact on a Yankee Community* describes as the replacement of one *kapu* system<sup>1</sup> with another (Hunter 1971, 25). The Japanese men reported having difficulty adapting to the harsh and unyielding rules of the Puritan ethic (Hunter 1971, 25). Despite the Hawaiian *kapu* system already having been replaced before their arrival, native beliefs still held a lot of sway with the elder *kama ‘āina*,<sup>2</sup> and upon their arrival to Honolulu, the *Gannen Mono* bore witness to the activities of some remaining *kāhuna*.<sup>3</sup> One of the men, named Sentarō Ishii, expressed his shock at seeing ‘infernal sorcerers’ still ‘prowling about the island’ (Hunter 1971,

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<sup>1</sup> The *kapu* system is a religiously informed code of conduct that was officially sanctioned by Hawaiian royalty before its replacement with laws derived from Christian ethics. These rules regulated every aspect of Hawaiian life and continued to have an influence on natives long after they were formally discarded.

<sup>2</sup> The term *kama ‘āina* literally translates to ‘land child’ and refers to people native to Hawai‘i. Whereas it used to only apply to Native Hawaiians, its meaning has come to encompass people of all racial backgrounds born on the islands, and even more recently has extended to long-term residents as well. My use of the term here is reflective of the meaning it would have held at the time the events described took place, meaning it only includes Native Hawaiians (Ulukau "Hawaiian Dictionaries").

<sup>3</sup> The term *kāhuna* is used in this study to refer to Hawaiian ritual specialists.

25). After arriving at the plantations where they would live and work, the group of Japanese contract workers was sorely disappointed by the reality of their situation and complained to the Japanese government about their poor living conditions, insufficient pay, mistreatment by the plantation overseers (called *lunas*), and “their inferior status compared to that of other ethnic groups” (Kimura 1988, 4). As a result, two Japanese officials came to Hawai‘i to investigate the matter and soon after they left, forty immigrants (including 3 women, one baby, and the two aforementioned shipwrecked fishermen) returned to their homeland (Kimura 1988, 3). When their three-year contracts expired in 1871, thirteen men returned to Japan while the remaining 90 established residency in Hawai‘i (Kimura 1988, 3). Due to this sour experience, the Japanese Government halted immigration to Hawai‘i for the following 17 years.

When David Kalākaua ascended to the throne in 1874, he set about trying to improve his kingdom’s economy. He negotiated a reciprocity treaty with the United States and business would pick up again in the Hawaiian Islands, creating more labor shortages (Hunter 1971, 28). Negotiations for Japanese immigration resumed with King Kalākaua making Japan the first stop on his 1881 world tour (Kimura 1988, 3). During his voyage, Kalākaua was accompanied by Attorney General Armstrong and, although himself a nominal Episcopalian, Kalākaua suggested to Armstrong that they introduce Buddhism to the islands as they had previously done with Christianity, perhaps as an attempt to woo Japanese officials (Hunter 1971, 29). Several years later in 1885, 943 Japanese immigrants sailed from Yokohama to Honolulu Harbor to work on Hawaiian plantations (Hunter 1971, 29). Not only were they a much larger group than their predecessors, but they were also mostly rural folks already accustomed to farming who hoped to escape the economic burdens caused by the Meiji government’s deflationary program, which had unevenly impacted small business owners and farmers (Hunter 1971, 30). King Kalākaua, accompanied by a troupe of *hula* dancers, went to greet the Japanese migrants himself and welcomed them in broken Japanese (Hunter 1971, 30). Three days later, the new arrivals displayed some of their traditional sports (*kendō* and *sumō*) to the king at the immigration compound (Hunter 1971, 30). While most of them were assigned to different plantations scattered across various islands, a few remained on O‘ahu to build the Queen a Japanese garden (Hunter 1971, 30). A year later, Japan signed a convention allowing free and voluntary emigration of their citizens to Hawai‘i, leading to further immigration between 1886 and 1894.

As plantation communities grew, local immigrant workers began to build Shinto shrines to

perform ordinary protection, luck, and abundance-inducing rituals. Most lay folks were used to doing these rituals without the presence of Shinto priests, who were markedly absent from Hawai‘i at the time, given that Japan’s organized State Shinto did not sponsor any missions there. The first major shrine was the Hawai‘i *Izumo Taisha* in Honolulu, built in 1907 primarily to facilitate Shinto wedding ceremonies, still uncommon among commoners in Japan, and which should be performed in public according to Christian norms (Abe and Imamura 2019, 268). Shrines also served as venues for community gatherings, including New Year’s celebrations and sumo wrestling competitions (Abe and Imamura 2019, 268). There was also a rising need for funerary rites among Japanese immigrant populations, who up until the importation of Buddhism, had been forced to bury each other without proper rituals. The 1886 Irwin Convention, the accord between Japan and the Hawaiian Kingdom that first allowed Japanese nationals to work under contract in Hawai‘i, ensured that plantations would provide Japanese workers with adequate burial grounds, but in the absence of Buddhist priests, the immigrants could not perform the crucial funeral services (Hunter 1971, 31). Hunter explains that Buddhists “attached profound significance and deep sentiment to traditional burial and *hōji* (memorial rites)” (Hunter 1971, 31). According to an old Buddhist legend, Buddhist priests instantly knew parishioners had died from the *shin-botoke* (newly dead) knocking on their family’s temple doors; however, there were no temples in Hawai‘i, hence no doors for them to knock on and, more importantly, “no one to chant the sūtras, burn incense, and throw open the gates of Amida’s Pure Land for the forgotten dead who had been buried ignominiously in shallow, unhallowed graves” (Hunter 1971, 31). One Mrs. Kame Nakamura recalls that in these early years of immigration “there was a Caucasian mortuary on Maui, but the Japanese had a crude way of bathing the body, putting it in the rough wooden coffin provided by the plantation and carrying it to the common cemetery and burying it” (Kimura 1988, 63). To many of the immigrants, rituals such as Buddhist memorial rites provided structure and meaning to life as well as solace when faced with afflictions and misfortunes; the absence of these time-honored traditions caused many to experience “acute psychological stress situations”<sup>4</sup> (Hunter 1971, 31). Despite the rising need for proper funerary rites, Buddhist emissaries would have great pains establishing Buddhism

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<sup>4</sup> Hunter used this term which describes a type of psychological phenomenon and recommended reading the 1954 work of Elizabeth K. Nottingham in *Religion and Society*, p.32ff for more information.

among the *Issei*.<sup>5</sup> Buddhism's influence and public image in Hawai'i were in such a bleak state at the time that subsequent Japanese Buddhists sometimes referred to the early 1890s as the 'Dark Ages' of Buddhist history in Hawai'i (Hunter 1971, 46).

The earliest recorded arrival of a genuine Buddhist priest was not until 1889 when Sōryū Kagahi became the first of his ilk to make the crossing. Before his voyage, he had been advocating from Kyoto for a missionary presence in Hawai'i. With financial and material support from local Buddhists, he established the first Japanese Buddhist temple of the Hawaiian Islands in Hilo in April 1889—the Hilo Honpa Hongwanji. He then traveled around the islands for seven months before sailing back to Japan, never to return. Buddhism was suffering in Japan as well, having barely survived violent persecution at the hands of the Meiji government due to Buddhism's association with the Tokugawa Shogunate. By 1876, the imperial government's oppressive measures had relaxed, but the opening of the island-state to the West pitted Buddhists in a battle for survival against the encroaching Christians. In Japan, the conservative Buddhist leadership followed a strict directive termed *haja kensei*, roughly translated as 'crushing evil and spreading the truth,' to purge the country of heresy (Christianity) and to restore Buddhism—which they considered to be Japan's true religion (Hunter 1971, 45). As such, they immediately withdrew support for Kagahi's mission when he proposed equating Jehova with the Buddha, decrying it as a perversion of the Dharma. Years later, these kinds of syncretic doctrines would gain much popularity, particularly among members of the *Jōdo-shin-shū*, or the True Pure Land School.

On the other hand, after observing Kagahi's activities in Hawai'i, the Hawaiian Evangelical Association voiced criticism against "a Buddhist organization among us, which encourages drinking habits" (Hunter 1971, 35). Ironically, Buddhism's biggest foe in Hawai'i would come in the form of a Japanese Christian man named Takie Okumura, who after his arrival to Honolulu in 1894, would dedicate his life to converting his countrymen, whom he perceived as depraved and immoral, to the teachings of Christ. Okumura's mission would prove difficult, as the Japanese contract workers clung steadfastly to their ancestral beliefs. Concomitantly, *Jōdo-shū* (or Pure Land) and *Jōdo-shin-shū* leadership in Japan finally committed to undertake mission work in Hawai'i after they received news of conmen feigning to belong to the Buddhist priesthood

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<sup>5</sup> A term from the Japanese for "first generation" that usually refers to immigrants from Japan that arrived before the passage of the US Immigration Act of 1924.

embezzling money from plantation workers (Hunter 1971, 59). As the majority of the Japanese in Hawai‘i came from southern prefectures where the True Pure Land school was most popular, most early Buddhist activity in the islands is associated with this school. The first Jōdo-shū temple in the archipelago was built in 1896 in Paauhau on Hawai‘i (Big Island) through the arduous work of Gakuō Okabe, who over the course of several months had traveled between plantations seeking donations for the construction of a place of worship, all the while toting an Amida Buddha statue on his back. The following year, the Honpa Hongwanji foreign missions program officially added Hawai‘i to its roster and sent its priests Sanju Kanayasu to Hilo and Shōi Yamada to Honolulu. Their arrival was believed to bring about the end of the ‘Dark Ages’ and to engender “the true dawning of the light of the Blessed One” in the words of one of the most influential Buddhist leaders of Hawai‘i, Bishop Yemyō Imamura (1867-1932) (Hunter 1971, 62).

The 1890s were also a turbulent era for Hawai‘i in the political realm. The United States Congress approved the McKinley tariff in 1890, which increased taxes on sugar imports. This heavily affected sugar planters and sent the islands into an economic depression. Plantation owners, mostly white Americans, saw a solution to this problem in the annexation of Hawai‘i by the United States, and, in 1893, they staged a coup forcing Queen Lili‘uokalani—not without protest—to abdicate, thus terminating the hundred-year-old monarchy. The Republic of Hawai‘i, an interim minority government with Judge Sanford B. Dole at its helm, briefly took over in 1894 pending annexation, securing control of Hawai‘i for the American businessmen responsible. Despite the illegality of the coup, all states engaged in diplomatic relations with the archipelago recognized the new government internationally (Hunter 1971, 54). This event spelled the end of Native Hawaiian sovereignty over the islands. The American oligarchy moved swiftly to pass a law restricting immigration of the “heathen elements.” Disgruntled Christian missionaries, who viewed the Issei as “wayward in religion and aliens withal, . . . a blight on a community committed to the propagation of Christianity and to immigrants the growth of American ideals,” supported these restrictions (Hunter 1971, 46). This treatment of their emigrants enraged the Japanese government, who over the following years would flex their military power to protect their citizens from antagonism, leading to tense relations between the young Republic and the Japanese Empire. Under the new regime, the Japanese were ineligible for naturalization because of mounting fears surrounding the notion that, due to their superiority



in numbers (29,000 Japanese had emigrated to Hawai‘i between 1886 and 1894), they would overwhelm other races on the political scene and wrestle control of the islands away from the white American usurpers (Hunter 1971, 31, 55). Hawai‘i’s annexation also coincided with Japan’s victory in the Sino-Japanese War which was celebrated with much fanfare in downtown Honolulu. The apparent rise in nationalistic sentiments in the local Japanese community was met with trepidation by the Caucasian ruling class. In 1898, with the advent of the Spanish-American War, the United States government formally annexed the Hawaiian Islands as they saw an advantage in placing naval bases in Hawai‘i to reach the Spanish Philippines.

#### POST-ANNEXATION IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY

According to the census of 1900, the Japanese represented 40% of the population of the Hawaiian Islands whereas only 26% were of Native Hawaiian ancestry, and a mere 17.5% were white (Hunter 1971, 68). That same year, Congress passed the Organic Act which nullified the former Hawaiian Kingdom’s Constitution and legal code, instating those of the United States in their stead. This act served as a double-edged sword, denying Japanese immigrants who had previously been made subjects of Hawai‘i American citizenship, as the law at the time only allowed “whites and Africans” to be eligible for naturalization (Kimura 1988, 16). On the other hand, annexation freed Japanese immigrants from the obligations of the labor contracts that had brought them to Hawai‘i, leading to a mass exodus of Japanese workers from the plantations and allowing many of them to move to the West Coast of the United States. The years from 1900 to 1907 were thus known collectively as the period of free immigration when more than 68,300 Japanese immigrated to Hawai‘i (Kimura 1988, 13). In 1907, however, an Executive Order banned Japanese immigration to the Continental United States from Hawai‘i, Canada, and Mexico. In 1908, American and Japanese diplomats met to discuss the mounting anti-Japanese sentiments in California and came to a so-called Gentleman’s Agreement by which the Japanese Government offered to only issue passports to close kin of immigrants already residing in the United States and its territories, which included the famous “picture brides” (Kimura 1988, 15). This agreement would hold until 1924, when the United States passed the Japanese Exclusion Act. The U.S. government barred all immigration from Japan except nonquota immigrants, meaning government officials in diplomatic service, ministers and merchants in addition to their wives and children under 18, bonafide students, and travelers who planned to stay less than 6

months (Kimura 1988, 15).

As shown by the census delineations, outsiders frequently perceived the Issei as a homogeneous ethnic group. Amongst themselves, however, they identified more strongly along prefectural lines, and those differences defined much of their day-to-day experiences. The plantation laborers lived in relative isolation from larger local society with their communities being almost exclusively comprised of fellow Japanese nationals. Communities were even further segregated, with most immigrants being housed on the same plantations and barracks as other members of their prefecture or *ken* (although this phenomenon was reinforced by the tendency of immigrants to move to plantations harboring their friends after having finished their first contract) (Kimura 1988, 24). White plantation owners employed this approach as part of a strategic move in their “divide and conquer” approach to the managing of their laborers in order to prevent unionizing. This policy was partially responsible for prefectural groupings to retain strong significance for the Issei well into the early 20th century. In 1935, a man was even quoted as saying that the immigrants’ “regional characteristics [were] reflected in the formation of a mini-Japan [in Hawaii] and, in general, even their occupations [differed] by prefectures” (Kimura 1988, 28). For instance, prefectural associations or *Kenjin-kai* were prominent, serving as mutual-aid groups and facilitating Japanese socio-cultural events. The locally-raised *Nisei*<sup>6</sup> lacked their parents’ memories of their homeland and did not share the needs that the *Kenjin-kai* fulfilled for the Issei. Chukichi Furuyama, an issei who had come to Hawai‘i as a teenager, was quoted as saying “Hawaii-born are not concerned with the prefectural background of their parents” (Kimura 1988, 26). This divide was further accentuated by the fact that many *Nisei* were American citizens by birth, based on the principle of *jus soli*, which grants citizenship to anyone born on United States soil, whereas their parents remained ineligible for naturalization.

In the early phase of immigration, most migrants hailed from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi, while later waves brought more residents from Fukushima and Okinawa (Kimura 1988, 49). Cultural differences and variations in dialect caused a rift between these waves of immigrants as they made communication between groups difficult. Okinawans felt this divide most pervasively, being the latest arrivals to Hawai‘i and the most culturally distinct from other Japanese immigrants. Immigrants from earlier waves held the advantage of already being

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<sup>6</sup> From the Japanese for “second generation.” It is used to refer to children of the Issei who possess American citizenship and grew up speaking English.

established in local business. Issei from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi, sharing similar dialects and cultures, united under the Honolulu Joint Prefecture Association. Their predominance meant that their dialect, *chūgoku-ben*, became the standard for Japanese speakers in Hawai‘i, as only elites spoke standardized Japanese. Those from prefectures such as Fukuoka that spoke other dialects were often ridiculed for not speaking *chūgoku-ben* and found themselves obligated to learn it. These difficulties made their impression on the Issei who saw great importance in teaching their children standardized Japanese. Buddhist temples and Christian churches were some of the earliest institutions to offer Japanese-language education in Hawai‘i.

In 1898, Reverend Kanayasu in Hilo and Reverend Sato in Kona, both Hongwanji priests, founded the first Buddhist ‘schools’ in the back of plantation temples, where they taught the basics of the Japanese language, morals, and etiquette (Hunter 1971, 86). By 1900, a couple of Jōdo-shū *terakoya* (temple schools) had cropped up as well on Big Island. Despite the end of the “Dark Ages,” Buddhist priests still struggled in the early decades of the new century. Many Issei still felt suspicious of them due to the remaining presence of some imposters trying to swindle locals (Hunter 1971, 82). In addition, since priests did not receive any financial support from their sects’ headquarters in Japan, they generally lived in poverty and relied on donations to survive. Still, missionary priests provided a plethora of much-needed services for their communities. They officiated at temple rites, gave the dead post-humous names, celebrated *hōji* (memorial services, usually done weekly, monthly, then annually), consecrated graves before the popularization of cremation, consoled the grieving, chanted *sūtras* at private services, and presided over socio-religious gatherings at plantations. Besides their traditional religious roles, they also provided help to the Issei and their families in other ways. They wrote letters for those who were illiterate, arranged marriages, arbitrated family quarrels, settled labor disputes with plantation management, registered births and deaths with the Japanese consulate, organized *fujinkai* (women’s associations) and Young Men’s Buddhist Associations, administered Sunday school, and taught traditional sports (*kendō* and *jūdō*) to the youth. By the 1920s, the presence of Buddhist priest impersonators had much declined, and parishioners’ suspicion gave way to admiration and respect. One pioneering priest in these decades was Rev. Y. Imamura, well-loved and known for having established several Hongwanji temples across the Hawaiian Islands.

Christian parishes were the first to open Japanese language schools in Honolulu (Hunter 1971, 86). Unlike Buddhist schools and temples that could be more hostile to widely ostracized

prefectural groups such as Okinawans, churches fostered more understanding between them, as they were known not to discriminate between localities and boasted members from all *ken* (or prefectures) in their congregation (Kimura 1988, 79). Rev. Seikan Higa, the first Okinawan minister in Hawai‘i who arrived with his family from Japan in 1921, became known for being outspoken against social injustice and oppressive systems. Non-Okinawan religious leaders also fostered inclusivity, such as Rev. Chimpei Goto of Kaneohe Methodist Church and his wife Umeno Goto. She said that in addition to providing organized baseball teams and inter-area tournaments linking the youths of Windward churches, “when the Okinawan children came to our church we told them that there was nothing to be ashamed of their Okinawan background and that they were just as good as the children of other prefectural backgrounds” (Hunter 1971, 81). Okinawan immigrants practiced both their native Buddhism and Christianity, but due to prejudice, many chose not to attend the Hongwanji temples utilized by other immigrants. One Okinawan priest named Rev. Houn Tamayose, who had come to Hawai‘i in 1920, served at the Higashi Hongwanji temple in downtown Honolulu before moving to the McCully temple in 1936. Under his leadership, those temples became accessible to parishioners from all prefectures belonging to the Higashi Hongwanji sect and he became an important figure within Okinawan communities. In 1938, Rev. Chiso Yosemite of Honpa Hongwanji founded the Jikoen Buddhist temple in Honolulu with the help of fellow Okinawans, finally giving them a Buddhist religious center of their own, providing them a place for social and cultural activities (80).

#### IMMIGRATION FROM OKINAWA. PREJUDICE, AND INTERNAL RACIAL STRATIFICATION

Beginning their migration to Hawai‘i in January of 1900, Okinawans were the last major prefectural group to emigrate from Japan to the Hawaiian Islands. Despite their late arrival, they represent the 4th largest prefectural grouping among Japanese migrants. Notoriously persecuted by the Japanese in their native land, Okinawans did not escape discrimination from them in Hawai‘i. They were frequently denied individual identity by Japanese workers who, rather than calling them by their names, referred to them as *Okinawa*, which became a derogatory term in plantation communities. Even Portuguese, Hawaiian, and *haole*<sup>7</sup> lunas started doing the same,

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<sup>7</sup> A term that used to imply anything foreign to Hawai‘i and has, not without controversy, evolved to refer exclusively to white people (Ulukau "Hawaiian Dictionaries"). This moniker has historically excluded Portuguese people, as in Hawai‘i they were considered racially distinct from other Europeans. It continues to be a fraught term today, with some claiming it to be inoffensive and others considering it a slur. It is used here

treating Okinawans as a second-class group. Japanese immigrants from many prefectures reinforced their perceived superiority over their Okinawan peers by self-identifying as *Naichijin* or “the people of Japan homeland” in opposition to the Okinawans. One man, Sadao Asato, recalls being rejected by a certain Mr. Malcom Macintyre for a position at Canadian Life Insurance Co. due to his provenance. He states: “The first questions he asked me were, ‘Are you from Tokyo? Are you from Kyoto? Are you Hiroshiman? Are you Yamaguchin?’ When I said, ‘I am an Okinawan,’ he said, ‘Then you are not eligible,’ and rejected my application. So I told him, ‘Okinawa Prefecture is part of Japan and the Okinawans are genuine Japanese and not an inferior race’ . . .” (Kimura 1988, 75). While their customs were often ridiculed and construed as proof of their inferiority by others, the Okinawan Issei always thought of themselves as equal to everyone else. However, certain prefectural groups that had also experienced discrimination due to old stereotypes imported from Japan, such as Kumamotons, Fukuokans, Wakayamans, and Fukushimaans, as they were then called, were more sympathetic to Okinawans (Kimura 1988, 68).

The discrimination the Okinawan Issei faced was also passed down to and internalized by their children, who unlike their parents, often felt ashamed of their Okinawan identity (Kimura 1988, 76). In plantations that shared a predominance of ‘Naichi’ and Okinawan families, group fights would break out between children. One Okinawan Nisei recalls one day being stoned by students from other Kenjin on his way to school (Kimura 1988, 76). Children would sing ‘*Okinawa-ken-ken Buta Kau-kau*’ or ‘Okinawa Prefecture, Hog-raiser, Hog-eater’ in reference to Okinawans’ propensity to raise pigs and eat pork dishes, animals considered inferior by the rest of Japan. After hard years toiling on the plantations, many Okinawans turned to hog-raising as a primary source of income (Kimura 1988, 58). Although they continued to be looked down upon by members of other prefectures who considered hogs dirty animals, it proved to be a successful enterprise. To this day hog raising is considered to be one of the foremost contributions Okinawan immigrants made to Hawai‘i. This practice was popular on O‘ahu, with major centers for hog raising located in Moilili in 1910 and later moving to Kāne‘ohe. Rev. Chimpei Goto’s widow recalls the hardships they witnessed Okinawans face during their time at the Kaneohe Methodist Church.

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to accurately and concisely relay the specific socio-economic, ethnic, and racial distinctions implied by the original author when they used the word.

When we came to Windward Oahu in 1927, most Okinawans lived in Kahaluu . . . The other Kenjin farmers . . . looked down upon the Okinawans, and they created an indescribably unpleasant atmosphere when the Okinawans were around even though they did not hurt them physically. The children of the other Kenjins inherited the attitude of their parents and tormented the children of Okinawan parentage . . . We were deeply concerned about the effects of the persecution on the Okinawan children if it continued . . . ” (81)

#### LABOR STRIKES, AMERICAN VALUES, AND SOCIAL CHANGE

The turn of the century brought about significant changes in the socio-economic landscape of Japanese sugarcane laborers. After the annexation of Hawai‘i by the United States, plantation workers began working together to change their poor labor conditions. The year 1900 alone saw 22 work stoppages, 20 of which involved Japanese immigrants (Kimura 1988, 89). This represented more strikes on Hawaiian plantations than there had ever been in the 19th century according to the U.S. Labor Commission. Apart from complaints about violent lunas, one of their primary concerns regarded their wages. It became clear that the Japanese workers were being paid the lowest wages out of all the ethnic groups represented in plantation labor. Caucasians were being paid the most, followed by Native Hawaiians, Chinese, and South Sea Islanders. This disparity led Japanese workers to campaign for racial equality.

The Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association (HSPA) had long ignored Japanese workers’ demands for equal wages. The workers’ frustrations came to a head in 1909 when over 1,500 Japanese laborers united to perform the first major plantation strike on O‘ahu. The strike lasted about 2 months and saw few concessions. The Commissioner of Labor’s report described it as a failure due to a lack of support from the larger Japanese community. The Japanese Consul General, for one, had opposed the strike from the beginning, and even Japanese Buddhist priests were employed in some places to help pacify strikers into returning to work. This event polarized local Japanese language newspapers, with some supporting the cause and others decrying it for bringing shame to the rest of the Japanese immigrant population. Many people outside the Japanese community perceived it as a nationalistic movement because participants were almost exclusively Japanese and their goals only encompassed the bettering of fellow Japanese workers (Kimura 1988, 92). The community at large believed the Japanese had pitted themselves against other ethnic groups (Kimura 1988, 92). After the end of the strike, authorities imprisoned its leaders for a brief period before eventually pardoning them. One such detainee describes being greeted by a large crowd upon their release and stated during the celebrations that ensued that

“the strike may have caused some ill-feeling between the Japanese and Americans and disturbed the peace of the community, but it called the attention of the general public to the fact that the Japanese were not an ignorant people contented with a discriminatory slave-like existence, but they were a people with human dignity and aspiration” (Kimura 1988, 95-96). The U.S. Commissioner-General of Immigration echoed this sentiment, denouncing the HSPA’s racist policies. He believed that by maintaining the ‘Orientals’ at a standard of living below that of Americans, they were impeding the Americanization of Hawai‘i (Kimura 1988, 101).

Another perceived obstacle to the Americanization of the foreign element was the influx of unacculturated Japanese women to Hawai‘i. The already vast Japanese population grew even further between 1908 and 1924 during the *Yobiyose Jidai* or “period of summoning kin” when an estimated 62,277 Japanese immigrants, most of whom (an estimated 30,633) were women, crossed the ocean to join their family members (Kimura 1988). This was the era of the so-called “picture brides” who sailed from Japan to wed the single Japanese men who had made the crossing before them and whose arrival led to a marked increase in birth rates among the Japanese community. Picture brides existed before the annexation, but their number reached its zenith during the period of the Gentleman’s Agreement when 14,276 of them came to Hawai‘i. The practice began when contract laborers realized that they would not accumulate the wealth they had expected in the three years of their contracts, and would not be able to return to Japan as soon as they had hoped. Individual immigrants’ parents or close relatives would choose a bride from their town or village, and the two prospective spouses would send each other photographs of themselves for evaluation, and with both sides in agreeance, a wedding ceremony would take place in Japan without the groom present. These weddings either took place at the village shrine in Japan or in front of the *kamidana* in the groom’s family home (miniature home altar) with the help of a Shinto priest and members of both families in attendance (Kimura 1988, 143). This way, picture brides became legally wed to the emigrated workers and were allowed passage into Hawai‘i. However, in 1904, the U. S. Government ended legal recognition of ceremonies with one of the parties in absentia (Kimura 1988, 143). This resulted in a new practice whereby Christian ministers would officiate mass weddings of 60 to over 100 couples at a time on the wharf, immediately after the brides disembarked. This practice displeased the newlyweds, and from 1912 on they were allowed to marry at a place of their choosing, usually either churches, shrines, or the homes of officiants. Many of the brides were sorely disappointed by their new

lives, usually due to the deceit of the men they came to wed who lied about their age or appearance using inaccurate photos, about their jobs, available resources, and the difficult labor and housing conditions on the plantations. Quite a few of them either fled, hurt themselves, or committed suicide as a result. Honolulu's Susanna Wesley Home, founded by the Women's Society of Harris Methodist Church (the first Japanese Methodist church in Honolulu), which usually operated as a dormitory for orphans and children of Hawai'i's rural areas, became an unofficial shelter for runaway picture brides.

As immigrants gradually moved away from the plantations to cities and towns, the new economic rivalry between the white elite and Japanese business owners began to fuel anti-Japanese attitudes. The disgruntled white establishment openly made Buddhist institutions the targets of their racist propaganda, much to the pleasure of Christian missionaries who still struggled to compete with the Dharma's popularity and had maligned Buddhism for decades (Hunter 1971, 93). Religious schools also became an area of competition between the two foreign religions, and Christians began severely criticizing Buddhist teachings for being un-American. In response to these aggressions, Rev. Y. Imamura worked tirelessly to mend Buddhism's public image and announced on behalf of the Honpa Hongwanji that their curriculum would be dedicated to "the encouragement of American thought and system" (Hunter 1971, 97). He heavily encouraged young Nisei to abide by American principles and endeavored to use the Buddhist schools as preparation for American citizenship. Reverend Ernest Hunt (1876- ), head of the Honpa Hongwanji English Department, and his wife Dorothy, also an ordained Buddhist, later joined Imamura's efforts and began to champion Buddhism as an inherently "Caucasian religion" (Hunter 1971, 154). Despite these attempts, the American public refused to believe the Japanese priests were capable of, or willing to, implement these ideals (Hunter 1971, 99). Hunt asserts that these "religious antipathies generated innumerable petty quarrels between Buddhist and Christian educators and became increasingly a more significant factor in the ever-widening breach between the American and the Japanese communities" (Hunter 1971, 99-100). Christian priests responded by stressing to secular leaders the indivisibility of Americanness and Christ; in their view, the Americanization of the islands could never be complete without the eradication of "oriental heathenism" (Hunter 1971, 111). Buddhism became inextricably tied to Japanese nationalism in the minds of the paranoid haoles as they came to realize the important role Buddhism played in maintaining "the language, habits,



dress, and culture of Japan, . . . accentuating the differences between East and West” (Hunter 1971, 111). The editor of the *Advertiser*, Edward P. Irwin, went so far as to contend that certain tenets of Buddhism were diametrically opposed to the Constitution of the United States but Imamura argued to the contrary, insisting that Buddhism was not antithetical to U.S. democracy and that its values aligned with American ones—their religion was simply misunderstood (Hunter 1971, 112).

Other priests in the sangha at the time were not as dedicated to this cause as Imamura and continued to preach in the same way they had since their arrival, meaning without any conscious effort to align their teachings with American ideals. Nevertheless, they would gradually absorb his ideas. Although Buddhism was a force to be reckoned with, the Issei made up most of its adherents. There was a big rift between the Issei and their local-born children, whose identities were more entrenched in the burgeoning local culture than the Japanese ways of old. Adapting Christian mores and ideas to Buddhism became a skillful means for Buddhist clergy to attract the younger generation to their ranks (Hunter 1971, 130). Hunter attributes the ease of this assimilation to the innate flexibility of Buddhism and Japan’s history of adopting a syncretic approach to religion. Buddhist missions began adopting Christian terminology; the Hongwanji called its temples ‘churches’ and its priests ‘Reverends,’ one Jōdo Mission even dubbed the celebration of Sakyamuni Buddha’s birth ‘Buddhismas’ (Hunter 1971, 131). For his part, Bishop Imamura modified *gāthas* (Buddhist religious songs) to resemble Christian hymns with titles such as ‘Joy to the World, the Buddha Has Come,’ which congregants sang at the English-language services he had newly implemented. Some temples even modified their physical appearance to read more Christian; for instance, the Honolulu Jōdo temple added pews, and the Honpa Hongwaji Betsuin was outfitted with a pipe organ. Missions also began offering community services based on existing Christian ones, founding associations such as the Hongwanji YMBA, and embracing the concept of Sunday school. In the 1920s, Bishop Imamura started conducting Western-style marriages at the Honpa Hongwanji. He had obtained a license to officiate weddings in 1908, still unheard of for Japanese Buddhist priests at the time. Imamura once stated that “true religion ought to rise above and be applicable to any country and nationality and so assimilate with every state and nation” (Hunter 1971, 132). He had recognized that in addition to modifying their practices, Buddhists would have to mold their sectarian Japanese doctrines into a universalist teaching centered on the historical Buddha, better suited to

a population that generally had a rudimentary understanding, if any, of Buddhist doctrine.

After World War I, while these religious and racial rivalries unfolded, the cost of living in Hawai‘i rose significantly. The meager wages of the Japanese plantation laborers, however, stagnated at 77 cents per 10-hour workday, the same as they had been a decade earlier in the aftermath of the first plantation strike (Kimura 1988, 96). In 1919, laborers from all islands started organizing to raise their wages. Many youth organizations cropped up, including the Waialua Young Buddhists’ Association, which held a rally on October 25th of that year. In December, the Japanese Federation of Labor held its first meeting in Honolulu and decided then to manage all requests for increased wages. They chose to negotiate for wages of \$1.25 per day for men and 95 cents for women (Kimura 1988, 97). The HSPA rejected their demands in February 1920, at which point Japanese workers joined a group of Filipinos who had halted their labor since January and went on strike. The O‘ahu-wide labor strike encompassed 2,000 Filipinos and 4,000 Japanese (Kimura 1988, 97). The HSPA responded with an eviction notice for all strikers and their families, resulting in 10,000 Japanese people leaving their homes (Kimura 1988, 97). Some were taken in by friends, while a great majority sought refuge in Honolulu. Unfortunately, the world was still in the throes of a pandemic, and over twenty percent of the evicted population contracted influenza, leading them to suffer many casualties.

Plantation owners and the English-language press heavily criticized the strikers, once more linking the movement to Japanese nationalistic sentiments, although, as the Hawaiian Board of Missions of the Congressional Church pointed out, these accusations lacked any evidence of a link between the union and the Japanese government (Kimura 1988, 98). Fearing a racial conflict, the pastor of the Central Union Church, Albert W. Palmer, called a meeting with the dean of the University of Hawai‘i and several prominent Japanese businessmen to propose the dissolution of the Japanese Federation of Labor, the end of the strike, and the formation of a bargaining group to represent workers from all ethnic backgrounds (Kimura 1988, 99). The Japanese union agreed to the so-called Palmer Plan and disbanded; however, the HSPA completely rejected it. Prominent Japanese Christian missionary Takie Okumura convinced officials of the HSPA that the Buddhist priesthood was responsible for stirring up unrest in their workforce (Hunter 1971, 116). While it is true that Buddhist leaders supported the cause of the Japanese workers, a false rumor would soon run rampant among the larger local community that the strike was an attempt by Buddhist priests to gain control of the plantations and curtail the

Americanization of the islands through manipulation of their mindless flock. In retaliation, the Territorial Legislature passed Act 30 of 1920 to abolish Japanese language schools in Hawai‘i, opposition to which had sprung from their association with Buddhism; the act was later declared unconstitutional in 1927 by the US Supreme Court. The plantation owners subsequently donated funds for Okumura to preach against Buddhism in all major districts of Hawai‘i. Regardless, Buddhism’s popularity and presence in the islands continued to grow. As time went on, the heavy toll exacted by the pandemic made continuing the strike difficult. Bishop Hosen Isobe of the Soto Sect Buddhist temple organized a meeting between the new Laborers’ Association and the HSPA that resulted in the end of the strike on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1920. Although workers returned to the plantations without any guarantees from the planters, they eliminated the wage gap based on ethnicity soon thereafter.

Not all Christians were opposed to the strike, and in 1921, a caucasian Pastor named Hugh V. White used the same accusations of anti-Americanism levied against Buddhists to criticize the plantation owners’ treatment of their employees (Hunter 1971, 116). He stated that despite their ‘benevolent intentions,’ the sugar industry was a fundamentally undemocratic feudal system that made difficult the inculcation of the American ideals of political liberty, democracy, independence, and self-respect to school-children, as they did not live in conditions which reflected these ideals (Kimura 1988, 101). The following decades brought steady improvements in living and working conditions. In spite of Takie Okumura’s efforts to keep Nisei on the plantations, many Japanese immigrants left and those who remained were raised to the role of overseer while their now vacant positions in the fields were filled by Filipinos (Kimura 1988, 101). Japanese social mobility was on the rise.

Despite these changes, the strike caused a deepening of negative public sentiments toward the Japanese people, their culture, and their beliefs. The government was skeptical of them in part due to the mounting militarism of the Japanese Empire. Fearing a security threat, the military and the FBI established a Hawai‘i office for mutual intelligence surveillance. From studies conducted between 1922 to 1933, the Army concluded that there was indeed a “Japanese menace” (Board 2012, 6). In anticipation of war, the Army War Plans Division drafted a Hawai‘i defense plan that involved martial law and internment of “enemy alien Japanese” among other things. With Bishop Imamura’s death in 1932, Ernest Hunt struggled to keep spreading his intersectorian ideals; despite these efforts, the late 1930s saw the resurgence of Japanese

nationalistic sentiments. According to Louise H. Hunter “the animosity of religious difference and mutual distrust of race” reignited opposition to the Japanese and their faith—Buddhism (Hunter 1971, 20). Okumura and his family continued their crusade against Buddhism and Buddhist education. By that time, fearing the ‘Yellow Menace,’ the United States government had already passed the Japanese Exclusion Act in 1924 to put an end to immigration to the United States from Asia, thus halting all influx of settlers from Japan to Hawai‘i. Japan received the news very negatively and it only served to sour the two nations’ already declining relationship. This act is often considered an important precursor to the events of the Pacific War. It also aggravated the Issei and further complicated the pre-existing issue of dual citizenship of their children (Hunter 1971, 148). Despite efforts to limit the growth of the Japanese community, the population of Hawai‘i was almost 43% Japanese by 1940 (Board 2012, 5).

#### WWII AND JAPANESE INTERNMENT

In 1941, the Pearl Harbor attack of December 7<sup>th</sup> marked another turning point in the history of Japan's relationship with the United States. From that moment on, the United States government would consider Japanese Americans threats to national security and implement the security plan devised twenty years earlier by the Army. From the start of the war in 1941 to October 1944, the military took over the local governance of the Hawaiian Islands and instated martial law. Authorities immediately began questioning people suspected of having continuing ties to Japan such as religious leaders. The changes described by Jane Okamoto Komeiji, 16 at the time, echo the testimonies of countless other Japanese Americans living in Hawai‘i.

There was no differentiation made between the Japanese in Hawaii and the Japanese in Japan. ‘Once a Jap, always a Jap’ was heard often . . . Anything Japanese was frowned upon and looked down upon as ‘un-American’ . . . Mother, whose language was Japanese, increasingly interspersed her speech with English words. She, who also had always worn a kimono, began wearing dresses hastily made for her . . . Japanese knick-knacks, books, and photos taken in Japan were burned, torn, or put away. The Shinto shrine and picture of the Emperor and Empress of Japan were taken down from their high perches. Also removed from the walls were Japanese artwork and calligraphy scrolls. However, the *butsudan* (Buddhist altar) . . . [was] kept in place . . . I didn’t speak Japanese outside of our living quarters. (Board 2012, 14)

As Abe and Imamura noted in their survey of Japanese American survivors of World War II, many people became disconnected from Japanese traditions including Shinto, largely due to its association with Meiji State Shinto and because of stigma and racism. On the other hand, some

interviewees claimed that “their sense of Japanese ethnic identity stimulated them to strengthen their religious practice to some degree, while others insisted that their religious practice brought them closer to their true Japanese ethnic identity” (Abe and Imamura 2019, 275). In other words, religious items and ceremonies continued to embody their Japanese heritage. Abe and Imamura conclude that distancing from aspects of Japanese cultural and religious identity was necessary for Japanese Americans to survive the wartime period.

In Hawai‘i, the FBI rounded up over 200 people and sent them off to detention centers on the evening of December 7, 1941 (Board 2012, 218). These numbers would only increase when Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, which led to the internment of over 110,000 people across the United States and its territories (Abe and Imamura, 267). On O‘ahu, most detainees were sent to the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS) Detention Barracks on Ala Moana Boulevard pending relocation (Board 2012, 218). An estimated 1,440 local Japanese had been interned by the end of the war, which was less than 1% of the over 157,000 people of Japanese ancestry residing in Hawai‘i at the time (Board 2012, 218). The INS quarantine station on Sand Island was soon converted to Hawai‘i’s primary temporary detention center and held incarcerated Japanese folk from late 1941 to late 1943 before they were sent to more long-term centers on the continent (Board 2012, 218). Those who did not leave the islands were mostly sent to the Honouliuli camp (nicknamed ‘hell valley’) in Leeward O‘ahu, the largest one of the 13 internment camps of Hawai‘i (Board 2012, 220). The camp only ever held a maximum of 320 persons at one time but had been built to accommodate as many as 3,000 (Board 2012, 220). Despite the harsh conditions and being housed in cabins with 8 to 10 other detainees as well as a non-fraternization policy between guards and prisoners, the detainees were reportedly treated with respect by the Army personnel and they developed a mutual sense of camaraderie (Board 2012, 220).

In addition to interning Japanese community leaders, American authorities increased their scrutiny of Japanese culture and religiosity. The FBI saw Shinto shrines as especially dangerous due to their perceived ties to State Shinto and Emperor worship. The government agency consequently either closed or destroyed the shrines and harassed shrine operators with frequent questioning and threats. Unlike on the West Coast, many shrines in Hawai‘i managed to survive the war through the efforts of local Japanese communities, although they never fully regained the status and following they had once enjoyed. Reasons for this disparity include the fact that

practitioners were not interned for the duration of the war and that white Americans did not surveil Japanese communities with the same intensity due to differences in Hawai‘i’s racial and ethnic distributions (Abe and Imamura 2019, 278). The FBI arrested and interned Japanese Buddhist priests, who had now become prominent community leaders, for the duration of the war. As a result, most families of the interned priests had to halt services and other activities performed at the temples (Hunter 1971, 190). Nevertheless, the government permitted many Buddhist temples to reopen before the end of the hostilities and these temples consequently took over many of the rituals and community functions offered by Shinto shrines, such as weddings and New Year’s celebrations, with parishioners being the ones to provide regular services in the absence of priests (Abe and Imamura, 268).

The story of Lois Tatsuguchi Suzuki, only a child during the war, and her family showcases some of the difficulties the families of Buddhist priests encountered at the time. On the day of the attack on Pearl Harbor, her father, Reverend Goki Tatsuguchi of the Shinshu Kyokai Mission and teacher at the McCully Japanese language school, busied himself all day clearing the areas that had been struck and bringing offertory rice from the temple to emergency relief centers (Board 2012, 45). Soon after he came back later that night, their family heard a loud knock at the temple door, which their father went to answer. He never returned. They would go two weeks without any news of him, completely in the dark about what had happened to Lois’ father. Anxieties were high as rumors circulated about arrested Japanese nationals, claiming they were all shot and put onto ships to be sunk in the Moloka‘i channel, or that they were all to be interned on Moloka‘i. Finally, the news would come from Rev. Tatsuguchi in the form of a postcard requesting some necessities be brought to him before he was relocated to the Sand Island Detention Center. He would spend the rest of the war at a concentration camp on the West Coast of the United States and his family would not see him again until the end of hostilities. Throughout this time, the family only communicated via censored letters. The sudden departure of her husband was very difficult on Lois’ mother, who had six children under the age of 12 at the time and did not speak or read English (Board 2012, 47). The family would sustain itself and the temple through the help of some members and friends, in addition to donations from services and temple programs her mother conducted, since she was also ordained. Financial stress was a big issue for all Japanese families who had lost people to detention centers, and mothers struggled to find work. In addition, Japanese assets had been frozen during the war, and temple

activities had to be cut back due to curfews, blackouts, and restrictions on congregating. Many members, Lois remarks, understandably stayed away in the early years of the war from fear of arising the suspicion of local authorities.

The Nisei generally did not dare to be Buddhist during the war as “Christian ministers had threatened them with internment should they persist in professing an alien creed, Rev. Ernest Hunt [permitted to continue preaching due to his status as a British national] recalled that some of his parishioners felt so intimidated that they refused to walk on the side of the street where a Buddhist temple was situated” (Hunter 1971, 193). Older generations were even more deeply affected by the closing of temples, Hunter argues, as Buddhism brought meaning and structure to their existence. In addition, the closure of temples and the internment of their priests meant Japanese communities no longer had access to proper funerary and memorial services, causing them even further anguish. Many turned to *shin shūkyō*, or new religions, that borrowed from Shinto, Buddhism, and some Christian elements and had been introduced to Hawai‘i before and during the war years, such as the Shinto-oriented Tenrikyō or the eclectic and ever-so-popular *Seichō no Ie. Tōdaiji*, a homegrown new religious movement of Honolulu, also gained traction during the war.

Mabel Kawakami Hashisaka describes how her mother coped with the lack of accessibility to Buddhist practice: “Mother was a Buddhist, but there were no Buddhist churches to attend because all the ministers had been interned. So she went to a Christian church to pray for my brothers” (Board 2012, 27). On the other hand, some Christian proselytizers such as the Okumuras redoubled their efforts during what they saw as a competitive edge against the spread of Buddhism they had been fighting relentlessly since the turn of the century. Tomi Kaizawa Knaefler remembers missionaries regularly coming to the homes of Japanese families to invite children to Sunday school, and although Buddhist, her father accepted the offer stating “Sure Yoshie can attend your Sunday school. You will teach her about God, and anything about God is good” (Board 2012, 87). Contrary to what her father had anticipated, Yoshie was not taught acceptance but rather that her father was “a lost soul, a heathen, an idol-worshipper bound for Hell” and that America was a Christian nation, and that her parents’ refusal to worship the American God made them ungrateful. Missionaries went as far as to change Yoshie’s name to Faith because according to them she needed a “Christian/American name” (which she later changed back to Yoshie). She desperately pleaded with her parents to convert but her father

replied “Don’t worry Yoshie. There is only one God, but there are many ways to that God. We are all right” (Board 2012, 87). Her father’s words demonstrate the prevalence of universalist, syncretic thinking among the Japanese when it came to religion, partly resulting from the earlier work of priests such as Rev. Imamura, although his efforts had still not been enough to persuade certain Christians of his argument.

Like many children of Issei, Tomi Kaizawa Knaefer remembers being unaware of the degree of the fears and frustrations her parents shouldered, as their traditional stoic and protective nature kept them from sharing their burdens (Board 2012, 82). Instead, they endured and accepted their fate, following the Japanese motto of “*Shikata ga nai*” —a sort of equivalent to “*c’est la vie*” or “what must be must be.” The internment of Issei leaders and the closing of Buddhist temples was just another part of the war. Many Nisei on the other hand recall feeling confused and betrayed by their ancestral country (Board 2012). Yoshie Tanabe, 10 at the time, reflects on these feelings years later: “My initial feelings were, *Why did I have to be born Japanese? Why couldn’t I have at least been Chinese—at least China is our ally! Why couldn’t I have been born a haoile with blonde hair and blue eyes?* I began to resent my parents. I hated Japan and told my sad parents so. How much I regret that now!” (Board 2012, 86).

Most Japanese Americans felt a need to prove their value and desperately wanted to contribute to the war effort. Originally not permitted to join in active combat, they sought clever ways to show their worth. Eventually, the U.S. Government, somewhat reassured of the Japanese in Hawai‘i’s good intentions, created the 100th Infantry Battalion in 1942 and later the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in 1944 to be exclusively manned by Japanese Americans. Young Japanese American men eligible for combat jumped on the opportunity and volunteered in staggering numbers. Their heroic deeds would go down in history and their renowned valor in combat did much to dispel suspicions that Japanese Americans were not loyal citizens of the United States. “In March 1943, my two older brothers, Norito and Keiji, volunteered for military service and served in the U.S. Army’s 442nd Regimental Combat Team . . . Father told them, ‘*Kuni no tame ni tsuku saneba nara nai*’ (‘Since you are citizens of the United States, you must serve your country’)” (Board 2012, 27). The 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team are also said to have been big proponents of the term American of Japanese Ancestry (AJA) and to have contributed to its popularization (Densho Encyclopedia Contributors 2020). This manner of referring to Japanese Americans became standard in Hawai‘i during



WWII when the Nisei and Issei made great efforts to “Americanize” in order to assuage the U.S. government’s doubts about their suspected allegiance to Imperial Japan. It was preferred over the Japanese term *nisei* or the phrase “Japanese American,” which fell out of favor for ordering the words “Japanese” before “American.” Today, it is mostly used to refer to Japanese American baseball leagues (called “AJA Leagues”) and Japanese American war veterans (Densho Encyclopedia Contributors 2020).

V-J Day received mixed feelings from the Japanese immigrant community. Families were relieved that their sons would return from the front and their fathers from internment and that they would no longer have to live under suspicion of being traitors to the United States (Board 2012, 83). Yet the end of hostilities also brought sadness. There were anxieties about the two atomic bombs that the United States military had dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki which had led to Japan’s surrender, as a great many immigrants hailed from Hiroshima ken. Many concerned families organized relief efforts and sent supplies to Japan’s devastated communities. The end of the war was a boon, certainly, but it was wrought through immense and unforgivable acts of violence and came at the cost of the lives of many of the kin of Japanese locals.

#### POST-WAR ERA AND THE RISE OF THE NISEI

After the end of the war, some Issei struggled to accept Japan’s defeat and began circulating strange rumors of America’s defeat and Japan being victorious. Some falsely believed a Japanese fleet would arrive at Pearl Harbor and that, from then on, Hawai‘i would be ruled by Japan. One such person was Buddhist priest Jisho Yamazaki, whose claims made public in 1946 caused great backlash and led to his arraignment in Circuit Court, and eventually his indictment by the grand jury on charges of disloyalty to the United States (Hunter 1971, 199). The rumors quickly dissipated, but a few fanatics kept their beliefs for years and banded under the banner of the Hawaii *Hisshokai* (Hawaii Victory Society) (Hunter 1971, 84).

The United States government released Japanese-Americans and aliens from internment and permitted them to return to their homes as the AJA soldiers also made their way back from the front. Despite the Nisei having proven their loyalty to the American regime through the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regiment’s battle prowess, Hawai‘i was still a heavily militarized area and had been the site of a Japanese surprise attack, leading some to continue distrusting Americans of Japanese ancestry. Much like the previous generation had done during the plantation strikes in the early decades of

the 20th century, second-generation Japanese Americans (Nisei) in the 1950s became heavily involved with local politics and were a driving force behind social progress. The returning soldiers, no longer content with plantation life, began organizing labor unions that had been suppressed during the war, leading to the Great Hawaii Sugar Strike in 1946, which ended plantation paternalism in Hawai‘i (Board 2012, 84). Veterans were now also able to attend university through military programs that opened new avenues to many and aided in accelerating their upward social mobility. A great number of AJA Democrats were elected to legislative seats in the November 1954 general elections for the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Territory of Hawai‘i and seized control of both Houses, bringing about a change in Hawai‘i’s political order, which had heretofore traditionally been Republican (Ogawa 1978, 377). In addition to tax revisions, land reform, increased educational funding, industrial safety, veterans and worker’s benefits, a significant part of their platform pushed for Home Rule and endorsed statehood for Hawai‘i (Ogawa 1978, 379). The desire for statehood had been acutely present since the pre-war era as representation in the U.S. Congress became more obviously dire to the island economy. One of the biggest obstacles to entering the Union had been the “Japanese question,” which aimed to determine whether or not the Japanese in Hawai‘i could make “good Americans” (Board 2012, 6). Decades later in 1959, Hawai‘i was granted statehood through the Nisei’s efforts.

The 1950s and 1960s heralded a new era for the Japanese-American relationship. The Cold War would now preoccupy Washington D.C., and the reformed Japanese became key allies to the cause of global democracy (and capitalism). Japan itself went about changing its international reputation from a warmonger to a beacon of peace. Japanese-Americans somewhat adopted this idea as well, in the hopes of quelling tensions with other ethnicities in the United States. Progressively, the United States government came under criticism for their treatment of their Japanese residents during the war and felt mounting pressure to issue reparations. In 1952, Asian aliens were for the first time granted the right to apply for U.S. citizenship. While many took advantage of this policy, some remained discontented with the United States, still bitter about their treatment during the war. Yuriko Tsunehiro tells of her previously incarcerated father’s refusal to become a U.S. citizen, to which she had responded, not without much regret, “Why? How ungrateful...” (Board 2012, 91). She recalls her father’s explanation of his decision.

He said he was not ungrateful and had done more than his share to serve America by nurturing a whole generation of good citizens [through his work as a Japanese language school teacher]. He was certain he had done nothing against the United States government;

he was dissatisfied with never having had the opportunity to say so when interrogated during his confinement . . . My accusing him of being ungrateful hurt him deeply. His Japanese citizenship was the one and only thing that could not be taken away from him, and hanging on to it was his final protest to America. (Board 2012, 91-92)

Such changes and the ascension of AJAs to positions of political power, which would have been impossible just a decade earlier, reflect an important shift in residents' perceptions of the Japanese. Dennis Ogawa, a prominent professor of American Studies at the University of Hawai'i and expert on local Japanese Americans, attributes this change in attitudes to "the ability of Japanese Americans to involve themselves in this multicultural focus of "localness" which, in addition to World War II and social mobility, helped to ameliorate the tensions and suspicions of the previous decades and allowed Japanese to emerge not as a "menace" but as partners in the designing of Hawaii's future" (Ogawa 1978, XX). Many Nisei had come out of World War II's hostile climate toward Japanese culture with no desire to reprise the practices imported from their Issei parents.

In November of 1945, Buddhist priests began to make the journey home to Hawai'i from internment facilities. The temples that had been closed reopened, and others that had remained open during the war regained their leadership. The Buddhist priests then set off to rebuild the religious properties that had fallen into disrepair during the war years due to neglect and lack of funds. They made short work of it and soon enough the sangha was even adding new, bigger temples to the Hawaiian landscape. Shinto shrines and priests, however, suffered ridicule and threats of deportation—some of which came from the Nisei heroes who had returned from the front. The Executive Board of the Hawaii Interracial Committee eventually took a stand against deportation and professed the difference between State Shinto and independent Shinto sects. Meanwhile, Buddhism had not been tainted by the atrocities of war as Shinto had and it became an important tool in spreading the notion that there existed an ideology of non-violence endemic to Japan. Their ideas were well received, and few dared to cast doubt on the integrity of their faith (Okamura and his generation of proselytizers had largely passed away). Buddhism was presented as a global religion whose message was very much in tune with American ideals. Some even claimed that postwar Buddhism was "strongly imbued with the American spirit" (Hunter 1971, 207).

Imamura and Hunt's ideas preached so long ago finally took off in the 1950s and 1960s. Christian and Buddhist men and women of the cloth now began to espouse an attitude of mutual

respect and appreciation for each other. Undoubtedly influenced by the Christian ecumenical trends of the period, priests of different sects elected to unify and streamline their teachings to Western audiences. Buddhist priests were sometimes called upon to perform interfaith rituals such as the 1966 multifaith dedication ceremony of the new chancel of Central Union Church, the first of its kind in Hawai‘i. Buddhists had become confident of the positive effects of their faith on the local population and began attempting to get the public to recognize their beneficence. Hoping to generate better understanding between Christians and Buddhists, the Hawaiian Buddhist Council proposed to add a new state holiday on April 8th called “Buddha Day,” whose stated aim was to expound “American tolerance and acceptance of ‘Freedom of Religion’” to the entire world (Hunter 1971, 203). Even the vice-president of the First National Bank of Hawai‘i espoused these ideals and, at the thirty-second annual International Island YMBA Convention, suggested that Buddhists “merchandise” their religion using persuasion techniques to captivate non-Buddhists (Hunter 1971, 206). As the following chapter on the Byodo-In Temple will demonstrate, it appears that they took his advice.

## CHAPTER 3. THE BYODO-IN REPLICA

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will discuss the history of the Byodo-In Temple in Kāneʻohe. I will begin by sharing the results of my archival research about the temple's construction, corporate ownership, marketing, and public perception, before exploring its engagement with the local community through public events, services, and ceremonies. In anticipation of this task, I would like to address my omission of information regarding the way the land presently occupied by the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park was used before it was turned into a cemetery. I struggled to find records of its use prior to development. The only information I could find about the 'Āhuimanu Valley's indigenous meaning comes from its name which translates to "bird cluster" in English, *hui* meaning flock ("Hawaiian Dictionaries"). Some speculate that the valley gets its name from the fact that Native Hawaiians might have used the area to catch and tie together birds from nearby *Mokumanu* (lit. bird island). In 1845, over sixty years after Hawaiians first made contact with European vessels, Kamehameha III granted a portion of 'Āhuimanu to the Catholic Mission allowing them to build the first Catholic school in Hawai'i, which demonstrates the valley's early significance in negotiating sacred space and sovereignty.

Despite being unable to ascertain the original use and significance of the land found at this location, it is important to note that all 'āina<sup>8</sup> is sacred, even the areas bearing no artifacts nor structures explicitly indicating the land was used to help fulfill a religious or political role in pre-contact society, and the occupation of any stolen indigenous land is egregious. It is also important to note that of the various companies which have managed the Valley of the Temples, none have acknowledged the valley's indigenous past as part of their interpretation of the site or, to my knowledge, sought to uncover it. I will leave the difficult task of uncovering the story of the land occupied by the Valley of the Temples' past to another as it somewhat exceeds the scope of this study. Nevertheless, I hope that my work will elucidate some of the processes and repercussions of the effacement of land's indigenous (hi)stories and interpretations of space.

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<sup>8</sup> A Hawaiian term meaning land, or that which feeds (Aikau and Gonzales 2019, 393).



Figure 13. Map of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park by Eric Olason for NorthStar Memorial Group (Olason 2013).

## MAKING THE BYODO-IN TEMPLE

also built around 25,000 homes throughout Southern California (Oliver 1990). He started his career in real estate in 1946 when he established the Trousdale Construction Co. (Oliver 1990). His early projects involved building tract homes and planning entire communities “complete with churches and shopping centers, including many in minority areas” such as Long Beach, Wilmington, Compton, and the San Fernando Valley (Oliver 1990). It was in 1954 that Trousdale built his titular luxury housing on a 410-acre ranch in the northern area of Beverly Hills (Oliver 1990). Trousdale first became interested in building in Windward, O‘ahu between 1946 and 1947. In 1952, he started associating with H.K. Castle, the owner and president of Kaneohe Ranch. That same year, Centex, a construction company from Dallas, Texas headed by two brothers from a wealthy oil family, the Murchisons, partnered with Trousdale for a development project in California ("Centex Trousdale" 2012). In the mid-1950s, Trousdale became president of the Waikiki Development Company and formed a sales and development corporation called Hawaiian Housing with the Murchisons ("Centex Trousdale" 2012). This officially marked the beginning of his expansion into Hawai‘i, where he built pricey residential communities, a hotel in Waikiki, and eventually the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park. In 1957, the Hawaiian Housing Corporation bought the exclusive rights to develop Kaneohe Ranch for the following 15 years and announced Centex’s partnership with Trousdale, the Murchisons, Hawaiian Housing Company, and Kaneohe Ranch Company in developing 10,000 homes in Windward O‘ahu ("Centex Trousdale" 2012). Centex would go on to build many more homes in Hawai‘i and is still a major building company across the United States today ("Centex Trousdale" 2012). Trousdale was involved in at least one other cemetery project in Santa Barbara called El Camino Memorial Park, for which he was chairman of the board and where he was eventually buried in 1990 (Oliver 1990).

In 1963, Trousdale and the Murchison brothers opened the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park in Kāne‘ohe, and in 1966, almost a decade after beginning their venture in Windward, O‘ahu, built the Byodo-In Temple ("About us" n.d.). The same year Trousdale and the Murchisons built the Memorial Park, the Honolulu Advertiser reported that the 4.5-mile Kahaluu Cut-off Road that leads from Likelike Highway to “the proposed \$60 million Ahuimanu subdivision” came under fire from Councilman Richard Kageyama for not following the proper legal steps in setting up the road as an improvement district ("Bids Opened For Road to Ahuimanu" 1963). The article further asserted that “though the City [was] initiating the project,

Ahuimanu Investment Co. [had] promised to foot the entire development bill" ("Bids Opened For Road to Ahuimanu" 1963). W. Lawrence Clapp, who happens to have been the head of the Valley of the Temples Corporation, was involved with the Ahuimanu Investment Co., whose offices also happen to have been at the same address as the Valley of the Temples Corporation's headquarters (Schreuder 1972). The Kahaluu Cut-off Road was vital to providing car access to the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park. There is thus strong reason to believe that the Trousdale-Murchison group owned and operated the Ahuimanu Investment Co. and were also responsible for the construction of said road.

This would not be the last time Centex-Trousdale would come under scrutiny for rushed construction in 'Āhuimanu Valley. In 1972, residents began complaining of excess runoff from the construction of Ahuimanu Investment Co.'s new project, the Kahaluu Colony Village. The construction site was located along the Kahekili Highway and was accused of blocking the road and endangering the bay's ecosystem. A man reported driving along the Kahekili Highway only to find "mud pouring off the land on both sides of the area near the Valley of the Temples" (Hopkins 1972). The Dillingham Corporation, who Centex-Trousdale had contracted to construct the Byodo-In and whose owners, the Dillingham brothers, had personally invested in the construction thereof, were also held accountable for their involvement in the project. A man named H. C. Hopkins argued that the Dillingham corporation had not followed proper protocol before performing the land's grading, and, as a result, mud was flowing into the river before reaching Kāneʻohe Bay. He further added that there had been numerous complaints about all the developments in the 'Āhuimanu area from residents over the course of a year and a half, giving the example of "the fertile topsoil stripped from the area behind and adjacent to the Byodo-In Temple for use in the extension of Kahekili also flowing into the bay" (Hopkins 1972). He proceeded to chastise the Dillingham corporation for claiming, in the words of their representative, that they were "not in the dredging business in Hawaii" and that they did not even own a dredge, despite the largest dredging company on Oʻahu being Hawaiian Dredging & Construction Co., a subsidiary of the Dillingham Corporation (Hopkins 1972). In other words, the involvement in these projects of all the major players behind the construction of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, and more particularly the Byodo-In Temple, demonstrates that the cemetery complex I will be discussing presently was conceived of as only a small part of a much larger development project. Paul Trousdale was notorious for building not just homes, but entire



communities and all the amenities required to sustain them; rather than being an isolated project, the cemetery was part of fulfilling Trousdale's goal of creating a community. It is evident from the two examples above that his team did not respect proper protocol during their development of the 'Āhuimanu area which led to significant problems for residents and the Kāne'ōhe Bay's ecosystem. The Byodo-In Temple is a product of these illegal and dangerous practices, which ultimately show a complete lack of respect for the local community and the land on which they reside.

The construction of the Byodo-In Temple<sup>9</sup> in Kāne'ōhe officially began on January 12th, 1966 with a ground-breaking ceremony that included Buddhist blessings. Its erection was an important event that all major local newspapers reported on as opening day, set for June 1968, approached ("Buddhist Faithful Watch As Temple Is Dedicated" 1968). Building the temple complex was an ambitious project that took around three years to complete and was an expensive addition to the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, costing around 2.6 million dollars in 1968, the equivalent of around 21.8 million dollars in 2023 ("June Dedication Planned for \$2.6 Million Temple" 1968). The Byodo-In was set to take up 7 of the 45 acres designated for the Japanese section of the memorial park ("June Dedication Planned for \$2.6 Million Temple" 1968). The Valley of the Temples Corporation, headed by W. Lawrence Clapp, hired the Dillingham Corporation's Hawaiian Dredging and Construction Co. as their contractor for the project ("Temple Here to House 3-Ton Bell" 1968). On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1968, four days before the temple's dedication ceremony, the Honolulu Star Advertiser published a brief notice from the Valley of the Temples Corporation declaring that the Hawaiian Dredging & Construction Company had completed their contract under the Provisions of Section 193-42 of the Revised Laws of Hawai'i (1955) as it pertained to the "Temple (Byodo-In) Columbarium Building together with outbuildings situated at Ahuimanu Valley, Kahaluu, Oahu, Hawaii" ("Owner's Notice of Completion of Contract" 1968).

The Valley of the Temples Corporation consulted with Hawai'i's most prominent Buddhist bishops and mission leaders—Kanjitsu Iijima from the Nichiren Mission of Hawai'i, Tetsuei Katoda from the Shingon Mission of Hawai'i, Zenkyo Komagata from the Soto Mission

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<sup>9</sup> The temple complex built on O'ahu is officially named the Byodo-In Temple despite it being redundant, as the suffix *in* already indicates its status as a temple. *Byōdō-in* translates roughly to 'Temple of Equality.' Additionally, the Hawai'i temple only replicates part of the multi-building Byōdō-in complex—its Phoenix Hall or *Hō-dō* and associated pond, Buddha, and bell/bell house.

of Hawai‘i, Ryoichi Shirayama from Higashi Hongwanji, Kanmo Imamura (son of Bishop Yemyo Imamura) from Honpa Hongwanji, and Kyodo Fujihana from the Jodo Mission—since the inception of the company’s project to build a Buddhist temple in their memorial park. The clergymen, in conjunction with Trousdale, selected both the site of the temple’s construction and the building it was to be modeled on. They reportedly chose the Byōdōin in Uji’s Phoenix Hall for its beauty, cultural status as a Japanese national treasure, and because it was an object of reverence for all Japanese Buddhists regardless of their sectarian affiliations ("It’s a National Treasure" 1968). In 1052, during the late Heian Period, Regent Fujiwara no Yorimichi received the Byodo-In, then a villa, from his father Michinaga, and converted it to a Buddhist temple. A year later, in 1053, Fujiwara no Yorimichi built the *Amida-dō* or Amida Hall, more commonly known as the Phoenix Hall or *Hōō-dō* since the Edo Period. The hall gets its name because, from the front, it resembles a bird spreading its wings and has a pair of ornamental phoenixes on its roof. The presence of a reflecting pond imitates the Treasure Pond of *Gokuraku* (Amida’s Western Paradise) which is said to reflect the palace’s image—Japanese artists considered symmetry a mark of perfection characteristic of a paradisaical land, hence its importance in the design of the hall ("Byodoin Temple Map" n.d.). The Phoenix Hall was itself meant to be a replica of Amida’s palace (Jpn. *Gokuraku-jodo*), and many people of the Heian period regarded the temple as its earthly manifestation. The *Zoku Honcho Orai Den* (Second Imperial Court Records of People Reborn in Paradise), a Heian-period book, advises: “If you are suspicious about the existence of Gokuraku, pray at the temple in Uji” ("Byodoin Temple Map" n.d.). The main hall houses an Amida Buddha Seated Statue 2.4 meters in height. The Phoenix Hall is the only surviving building from the Fujiwara Regent Period and was thus made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 1951, the Japan Mint redesigned the 10 yen coin to feature the Phoenix Hall, showcasing its great cultural value to Japan and its close association with Japanese national identity (Japan Mint n.d.).

The Kāne‘ohe temple is a scaled-down replica of the 900-year-old Phoenix Hall of the Byōdōin in Uji. The new temple’s architect R. T. Katsuyoshi, known for his work in temple reconstruction, made six trips to Japan in preparation for the project (Fruto 1968). He went there to study the original temple in person and to confer with the project’s landscape architect Kiichi Teomon Sano, known for designing the imperial gardens in Kyoto. The Japanese government provided plans of the Phoenix Hall to Katsuyoshi from which he drew those for the Valley of the

Temples project ("June Dedication Planned for \$2.6 Million Temple" 1968). The new temple, unlike its wooden predecessor, was built using around 3,000 specially cast concrete components that were chemically treated and subsequently painted to give them "an antiquated effect" ("Ancient Japanese temple is being duplicated here" 1968; Fruto 1968). In spite of these 'aging' efforts, an article from 2013 found that "the Uji original is now unpainted contrasted with the bright orange of the Kaneohe replica" (Hommon 2013). In preparation for its concrete duplication, Charles Wyndham Watson, president of the Hawaiian Dredging and Construction Co., went to Uji to study the original temple, famous for its method of assembly which did not require any nails (Wright 2002). Some of the items furnishing the concrete prayer hall would still be made of wood, including a large Buddha, panels, and a filigree screen mimicking those in the temple's Japanese counterpart (Fruto 1968). The aforementioned woodwork was produced in Japan and would not arrive in O'ahu until a year after the temple's dedication ceremony ("June Dedication Planned for \$2.6 Million Temple" 1968). The temple's tile roof was also custom-made in Japan and was reportedly considered the largest ever made for an American structure (Fruto 1968).

The temple gardens were another point of pride for the Valley of the Temples Corporation and were hailed as the largest Japanese gardens ever built outside of Japan. To execute the plans drawn by Kiichi Teomon Sano, the corporation hired Ronald Shigeru Kawahara, a noted Honolulu landscaper ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). Kawahara traveled to Kyoto to meet with Sano and discuss how best to satisfy his vision of imitating the historical Buddha's birthplace, the Lumbini Gardens ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). Sano conceived of the temple complex as an example of the concept of *Shak-kei* ("borrowed scenery"), which refers to the process of incorporating elements from the background landscape into the composition of the garden space. He stated in an interview, "In this particular locale, the perpendicular Koolau mountains with their cascading waterfalls make an ideal Shak-kei and create a perfect backdrop for the garden. With such spectacular natural scenery, including the natural streams which surround the temple, one cannot help but admire the works of Mother nature" ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). Some of the specimens they planted on the grounds were pine and plum trees, bamboo, lotus root, and mondo grass ("It's a National Treasure" 1968). Kawahara said of the pines that "stately Japanese Black Pines" would have made an important contribution to a peaceful atmosphere reminiscent of


Shakyamuni's birthplace, but lacking the ability to grow them in the tropical climate of Hawai'i, they elected to use indigenous species instead ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). Some other local specimens he used were Strawberry Guava, Formosan Koa, Paper-bark, Allspice and Tecoma trees which he planted according to the *Zokibayashi* ("Broom Forest") style to "give one a feeling of natural woodiness and quiescence of nature" ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). Kawahara was conscious of the temple's Hawaiian setting, which he expressed by choosing to "add a slight gaiety" to the color palette by including pastels in the low shrubbery ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968). He also chose to incorporate a man-made waterfall by the pavilion to foreground the natural waterfall in the Ko'olau but acknowledged its inability to compete with the beauty of nature. The waterfall flows into a two-acre reflective pond lined with volcanic moss rocks chosen for their "ruggedness and individuality" and for lack of the Japanese river-worn rocks present at the Byodo-In in Uji ("Original Byodo-in Constructed by Fujiwara Clan" 1968).

In addition to its prayer hall, the Byodo-In complex includes a teahouse, a bell house, and a meditation pavilion. The bell house supports an impressive bell made of 3 tons of brass that measures 5 feet in height ("Temple Here to House 3-Ton Bell" 1968). The bell was cast in Japan to resemble one housed in an identical structure at the Byodo-In of Uji. This ancient bell or *Bonshō* ("sacred bell") is believed to be 900 years old and to have come from India. It is one of three bells famous in Japan for the beauty of their sound, calligraphy, and shape ("Temple Here to House 3-Ton Bell" 1968). In Japan, the bell from Byodo-In is primarily praised for the aesthetics of its shape. The bell is rung using a 6-foot-long, 6-inch-thick pole suspended between two ropes to emit a deep tone meant to manifest good luck ("Temple Here to House 3-Ton Bell" 1968). According to a Hawaiian Dredging and Construction Co. spokesman, the bonshō's \$13,000 replica (equivalent to \$109,025 in 2023) was set to arrive on June 7th of 1968, before Hawai'i's Buddhist Bishops were meant to perform the temple's dedication ceremony ("Temple Replica Dedication Set" 1968).

The temple's dedication took place on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1968, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to Hawai'i. The ceremony began with rituals adapted from Hawaiian religiosity, such as the parting of the maile lei, as is customary to most businesses' grand opening on the islands ("Buddhist Faithful Watch As Temple Is Dedicated" 1968). The Buddhist bishops who participated in the dedication were those who had

performed blessings at the ground-breaking ceremony and represented a great variety of Buddhist sects; they were Kanjitsu Iijima from the Nichiren Mission of Hawai‘i, Tetsuei Katoda from the Shingon Mission of Hawai‘i, Zenkyo Komagata from the Soto Mission of Hawai‘i, Ryoichi Shirayama from Higashi Hongwanji, Kanmo Imamura from Honpa Hongwanji, and Kyodo Fujihana from the Jodo Mission ("Temple Replica Dedication Set" 1968). They performed what a contemporary article described as appropriate Buddhist rites which started with the burning of incense and ringing of a bell as the priests climbed the steps to the temple ("Buddhist Faithful Watch As Temple Is Dedicated" 1968). Koi fish were released into the temple's two-acre pond for the fulfillment of *Hōjō-e* ("meeting for the release of living beings"), the release of captive animals back into the environment as a show of compassion and a means of accumulating good karma ("Buddhist Faithful Watch As Temple Is Dedicated" 1968). The resounding sound of the bonshō being rung concluded the ceremony. A crowd of over 200 people had come to witness these rituals; notable guests included Mayor Neal Blaisdell, previous president of the Valley of the Temples Corp. H. W. B. (Hod) White, and president of the Dillingham Corporation Lowell S. Dillingham ("Buddhist Faithful Watch As Temple Is Dedicated" 1968). Following the dedication ceremony, the temple would open its doors to the public for free on June 8th and 9th from 11 am to 5 pm. The Valley of the Temples Corporation advertised its grand opening to the public through newspaper ads such as Figure 2.


Valley of the Temples  
invites you to view  
**HAWAII'S BYODO-IN**  
*A Monument To Japanese Artistry*



**INITIAL PUBLIC TOURS**  
**JUNE 8 and 9**  
**Saturday and Sunday**  
**11:00 AM to 5:00 PM**

Our recently completed replica of Japan's 900 year old national treasure — the famed Byodo-in at Uji, Japan — was three years in the building.

A Buddhist religious and cultural edifice planned with the assistance of Hawaii's bishops



and mission leaders and dedicated with Buddhist rites, this multi-million dollar temple and garden is the most outstanding Japanese complex to be built in America in modern times.

Valley of the Temples proudly invites you to see • Hawaii's Byodo-in.

*Valley of the Temples*  
47-200 KAHAKILI HIGHWAY

Figure 14. An ad for Valley of the Temple's Byodo-In as it appeared in the Wed, June 5th, 1968 issue of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin.

On November 15th, 1969, over a year after the temple's opening, Bishops Kanjitsu Ijima, Tetsuei Katoda, Zenkyo Komagata, Ryoichi Shirayama, Kanmo Imamura, and Kyodo Fujihana gathered once more to finally enshrine the finished Buddha statue or *Gohonzon Butsu* ("object of devotion Buddha") ("Buddha Figure Enshrined at Valley of the Temples" 1969). Ralph C. Honda<sup>10</sup> was the master of ceremonies for the event which opened with the ringing of the bell and the Bishops walking solemnly to the temple's main hall. W. Lawrence Clapp, then president

<sup>10</sup> Ralph Chikato Honda (1907–2004) was an important nisei community leader who promoted Buddhism and worked to improve the relationship between Japanese and Americans. Among his many accomplishments, he was notably instrumental in keeping Buddhist temples open during WWII to ensure Japanese families would have access to funeral services. He was a founding member of the Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship Foundation as well. The Honpa Hongwanji named him a Living Treasure of Hawai'i in 1997 (Nakamura 2017).

of the Valley of the Temples Corporation, unveiled the statue. 83-year-old Kohachiro Yokoyama, the ex-president of the sister club to the Windward Oahu Rotary Club in Shirayama near Kyoto, had commissioned the temple's Buddha statue from Masuzo Inui, the descendant of the family that had carved the original statue in 1053 ("For Rotarians" 1969). Jocho, known as the most talented Buddhist sculptor in Japanese history, carved the original image of the Amida Buddha and this statue is the only remaining piece of his work today ("Sculpture and Craft" n.d.). The statue is an exact copy of the Amida Buddha from the Uji temple, 18 feet tall without its pedestal, weighing 11 tons ("For Rotarians" 1969). Inui's process involved selecting blocks of wood for their strength and fine grain before gluing them together to align the grain with the general form of the figure, a technique called *Yosegi-zukuri*, ("wooden mosaic work") also referred to as the Jocho style ("Buddha Figure Enshrined at Valley of the Temples" 1969; "Sculpture and Craft" n.d.). After he had finished shaping the wood, Inui covered the statue with cloth and applied three layers of gold lacquer followed by gold leaf. Using the same method, he gilded the filigree screen depicting 52 Bhodisattvas located behind the seated Buddha. The Buddha was touted as the largest *Gohonzon Butsu* outside of Japan ("Buddha Figure Enshrined at Valley of the Temples" 1969). Yokoyama was so thrilled about the project he even called the 'Āhuimanu temple "a more beautiful setting for the Japanese Buddha because of the mountains behind the temple and the lake in front" ("For Rotarians" 1969). He revealed in an interview that the delays were due to his dissatisfaction with the gold leaf covering the statue and his insistence on having it artificially aged further.

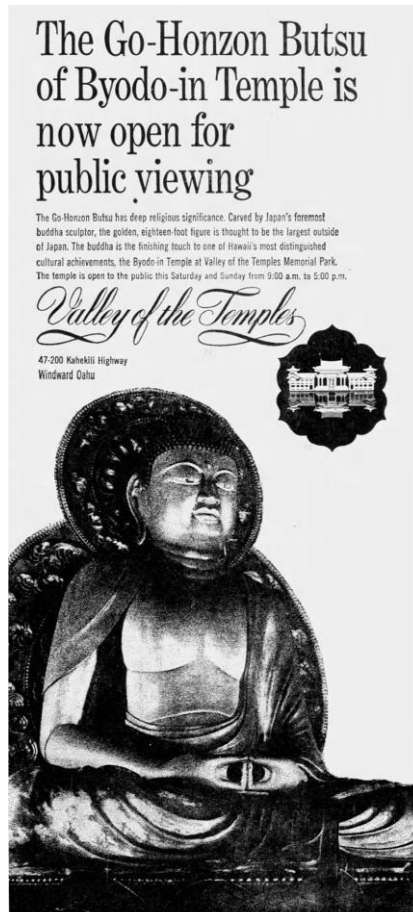


Figure 15. An ad announcing the arrival of the Buddha statue to the Byodo-In Temple that appeared in the Sat, Nov 29, 1969, issue of the Honolulu Advertiser.

#### MULTIMEDIA REPRESENTATION

From opening day, the Valley of the Temples management started promoting the temple as “a Buddhist religious and cultural center” for the community (The Valley of the Temples Corporation 1968). They would advertise regularly in the papers, either with large ad space or through smaller listings in event columns. Their promotional materials frequently invoked the temple’s aesthetic appeal and the Byodo-In rapidly grew in notoriety for its beauty. The temple was even mentioned in a column about photography in the Honolulu Advertiser in October of 1968 with the author naming it “one of the most photographed structures here in the past few months” before giving the reader suggestions on what kind of film<sup>11</sup> to use to best capture the

<sup>11</sup> He suggested using Ektachrome-X by Kodak, noted for its vivid rendition of primary colors.



temple's vivid colors (Ito 1968). It was even possible to acquire film on site as the Byodo-In Temple gift shop carried Fuji Film products ("Fujicolor and Fujica Special! " 1972). In 1987, a photographer named Rick Peterson turned heads for his photography at the Byodo-In, with reporter Don Chapman stating that "it wasn't so much the juxtaposition of geishas and a punker that turned heads as photog [sic] Rick Peterson shot pictures at the Byodo-In in Kaneohe. It was the Reeboks worn by the geishas—pictures from the knees up only" (Chapman 1987). This was far from being the temple's only controversy with regards to media production, but it illustrates how important it was for the Byodo-In Temple to appear authentic, which precluded representations of the temple that emphasized the clash between tradition and modernity. It is unclear what Chapman meant by "geishas," but it is possible that Rick Peterson brought in geishas for a photo shoot or, more likely, that at one time the temple clothed their tour guides in kimonos and the author simply used an inappropriate term to refer to them. The temple management occasionally posted ads in the papers for job openings, the first appearing in 1969 and offering "Girl Friday Type Jobs" that would require working as a guide, answering the phones, and some unspecified office duties. Knowledge of the Japanese language and customs was considered "helpful" but not necessary. The ad also described the temple in attractive terms, calling the working conditions "pleasant" at the "beautiful and authentic Japanese Temple" ("Byodo-in Temple has positions open for "Girl Friday Type Jobs"" 1968). The temple management would later recruit tour guides outright in the 1970s and 1980s ("Part-Time Tour Guide" 1979).

In addition to being one of the most popular locations for amateur and professional photography, the Byodo-In Temple also began making appearances on television. In the summer of 1971, KHET and Channel 11 aired the Hawai'i Gagaku Kenkyukai's special performance of *gagaku* ("elegant music"), a rare 1,250-year-old style of Japanese orchestral music, recorded at the Byodo-In temple ("gagaku: oldest orchestration" 1971). It was the first color broadcasting of the educational television series "Green Room" produced by the Hawaii Educational Television Network in cooperation with the University of Hawai'i College of Continuing Education and Community Service ("Gagaku to Launch ETV 'Green Room'" 1971).

In 1977, the temple served as the backdrop to an episode of the popular children's television show *Benji* and unwittingly became embroiled in a controversy with racial overtones. The show's production made announcements in the news as well as all Windward schools about

the shooting of the episode being open to the public and an opportunity for children to meet the titular dog; however, casting only selected Asian-passing children to appear in the scene on the day of shooting (Imig 1977). A disgruntled parent wrote in to “The Kokua Line,” a column from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin titled in which Joanne Imig regularly doled out advice to her readers. They complained that “not only were the Oriental kids favored for the filming, but they received Benji posters and knickknacks while the haole youngsters and others were left out” (Imig 1977). Responder Joanne Imig confirmed these events but explained that, according to the production manager, the scene filmed at the temple was meant to represent a Japanese setting, clearing up their decision to only film “20 Oriental-appearing children” leading Benji into the temple, but production assured that children of all races were included in crowd shots (Imig 1977). These events highlight the reality of racial relations in Hawai‘i at the time, which, as any other place under American rule, were often tense despite the popular rhetoric of the islands being a “racial paradise” devoid of prejudice and conflict, directly countering the Byodo-In’s role in perpetuating this narrative (more on this in Chapter 5).



Figure 16. 1982 ad from the State of Hawai‘i trying to attract film production companies to the islands. A photo of the Byodo-In Temple is the first image featured.

The Valley of the Temples Corporation later began marketing to film and television producers as a low-cost substitute for shooting on-location in Japan. In December of 1982, the State of Hawai‘i’s Film Office ran a full-page ad titled “This is Hawaii?” (fig. 4) with photos of the Byodo-In Temple, Parker Ranch, giraffes on Molokai, Kokee, Haleakala crater, and the Honolulu skyline to show off the variety of “looks” Hawai‘i could provide and to attract movie producers in search of “exotic” shooting locations (Donnelly 1982). The ad ran in newspapers such as the *Hollywood Reporter*, *Daily Variety*, and the *Weekly Variety* (Harada 1983). By this point, Hawai‘i had served as a backdrop for productions like *Hawaii Five-O*, *Charlie’s Angels*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and *Magnum P.I.* (Harada 1983). A reporter noted that the ad copy used typical tropes about Hawai‘i as the “paradise-of-the-Pacific” to emphasize the beauty of the scenery and ideal shooting conditions (Harada 1983). In 2005, ABC’s hit TV series *LOST* made headlines in Hawai‘i due to of the many scenes that were shot on O‘ahu, including the Byodo-In Temple, which served as Korean character Sun’s family home in the episode titled “House of the Rising Sun” from the show’s first season (“Lost” 2005). The show made the news again in 2010 when a group of *LOST* fans (fig. 5) organized a tour of the show’s filming locations on O‘ahu, which included a stop at the Byodo-In Temple (Chun 2010). Film tourism is now a major player in attracting visitors to the islands, and there exist a multitude of tours featuring the shooting locations of blockbuster films or hit television series. The Byodo-In Temple’s management makes sure to mention some of the most well-known television shows the temple appeared in on its website’s homepage, naming *Hawaii Five-O*, *Magnum, P.I.*, and, of course, *LOST* (“The Byodo-In Temple Homepage” n.d.).

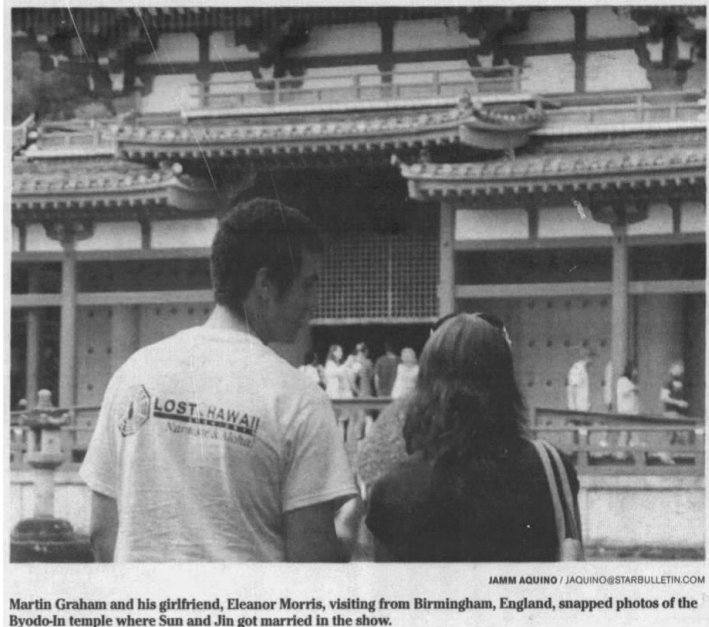


Figure 17. Photo by Jamm Aquino published in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin's Feb 2nd, 2010 issue. The image depicts a couple on a tour of the various shooting locations for the TV show LOST posing in front of the Byodo-In Temple. The person on the left is wearing a "LOST Hawaii" T-shirt (Chun 2010).

#### TOURISM AND ADVERTISING

Despite the apparent solemnity of its setting in a cemetery, the Byodo-In replica was expected to be a lively tourist attraction from its inception. Even before the temple's opening, people were already expressing some awareness of the tension nascent from a highly publicized tourist destination operating in what was otherwise a place of mourning. One article from June 6th, 1968, calls the temple a "cultural attraction" stating that it was "expected to be not only a major tourist attraction but a cultural and religious center for members of the State's Buddhist missions" (Fruto 1968). Another article from June 5th, 1968 opens by pointing out that "Cemeteries are not ordinarily tourist attractions, but Oahu has one that is different" before praising the memorial park for the beauty which they attribute to its setting near the Ko'olau Mountains as well as the park's meticulous groundskeeping ("A monument re-created" 1968). They appear to be impressed by the project and applaud the business savvy of the Valley of the Temples Corporation.

Here again, is an example of a commercial project that will be a valuable addition to the community. Valley of the Temples is a profit-oriented corporation, whose owners include Paul Trousdale and Texas financiers Clint Murchison Jr. and John Murchison. Their development plan is imaginative, attractive, and expensive. The temple alone cost more

than \$2 million. It will contain a number of niches but its expense will be commercially justified only by its enrichment of the surrounding park . . . It will be used as a Buddhist religious and cultural center, but also promises to become a “must see” for local residents and tourists alike. (“A monument re-created” 1968)

To attract tourists, the Valley of the Temples management needed to extricate the Byodo-In Temple from the confines of its association with the dullness of cemeteries. A column from 1975 meant to offer suggestions of places best suited for day trips featured an article about the temple. Its author, Murry Engle, seemingly resolves these contradictory meanings by stating that the temple elevates the memorial park to “far more than a final resting place,” calling the temple “a complex of exquisite Oriental beauty designed for the living, a place of peace and reflection” (Engle 1975). The temple’s Japanese aesthetics and religious nature conceptually reconcile grief and tourism by eliciting from visitors the respectful quietude required for grieving relations to comfortably engage in mournful remembrance of the departed while still fulfilling the touristic appeal of the exotic.

The temple’s management employed certain re-occurring motifs in its ad copy. They frequently mentioned the temple’s beauty and its resemblance to the *Hōō-dō* in Uji, implying a transportive quality to the space—visiting the Byodo-In was like stepping into an idealized vision of traditional Japanese culture. An article from 1971 titled “The Peace and Quiet of Ancient Japan” describes Byodo-In as having “an aura of Oriental tranquility [that] pervades the air” invoking the popular appeal of Japanese exoticism<sup>12</sup> (“The Peace and Quiet of Ancient Japan” 1971). An ad that ran in 1972’s tag line “MADE IN HAWAII” (Fig. 6) plays off of the site’s resemblance to Japan while still emphasizing that it was made in Hawai‘i. The ad thus achieves two goals: it attracts potential guests seeking an approximate experience of Japanese culture while still emphasizing that this experience is only made possible through local ingenuity—in other words portraying the Byodo-In Temple as integral to the Hawaiian landscape. The ad copy entices its readers by pointing out the temple environment’s unique ability to faithfully recreate the Japanese ambiance to such a degree that visitors might even forget they are not in Japan and ends with a reminder that “You don’t get a chance to see Japan every day while you’re in Hawaii,” once again grounding the unique transportive experience in a local context, appealing to tourists and residents alike. Another ad from 1971 (Fig. 7) claimed in

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<sup>12</sup> This perception of traditional Japanese culture as inherently tranquil can perhaps be traced back to the writings of D. T. Suzuki known to have popularized an inaccurate portrayal of Zen Buddhism in the West.

bold lettering that the Byodo-In was “Hawaii’s most distinguished cultural achievement” citing its “deep religious significance.” Three photos meant to illustrate these claims show the temple casting its reflection in the garden’s glassy pond, a kimono-clad woman holding up a paper parasol, and a close-up of a peacock’s head.<sup>13</sup> The Valley of the Temples management intended for the temple to impress, and when appearing in print, its name was frequently paired with superlatives to convey its cultural significance. The temple complex’ various components were often touted, without certainty, to be the biggest of their kind outside of Japan. The gardens, the temple’s roof, and the Buddha statue were all afforded this treatment. For instance, the Honolulu Star-Bulletin’s Pacific Heritage column listed the Byodo-In as the “largest Buddhist center in [the] U.S.” (“Pacific Heritage” 1968).



Figure 6. An ad for the Byodo-In that ran in the Tue, Feb 15, 1972 edition of the Honolulu Advertiser.



The Figure 7. An ad that ran in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin on Tue, March 2nd, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Peacocks were introduced to Hawai‘i in the 19th century and were famously Princess Ka‘iulani’s favorite bird. They are considered invasive to the local ecosystem and Ahuimanu is known for having a large feral population of peacocks that often disrupts the peace of local inhabitants.

Byodo-In Temple was blatantly marketed to attract tourists, a fact the public began speculating on before the temple was even completed. In an attempt to capitalize even further on the temple's touristic draw, the Valley of the Temples Corporation controversially began charging guests to visit the previously free-to-enter Japanese temple replica about a year and a half after the Byodo-In's opening day. An article from 1970 laments the \$1 ticket price (\$8 in 2023) comparing it to the 10-cent entry fee for the temple's namesake in Uji, inciting readers to "make [their] own sociological comments on this development" (Becker 1970). Another complaint about the cost of entry to the temple appeared in "The Kokua Line" column in 1971. The author asked Joanne about the veracity of the rumors surrounding the admission fee to "the Japanese temple in the Valley of the Temples," expressing consternation at charging a fee to enter a cemetery (Imig 1971). Joanne went on to elucidate the issue, confirming that entry to the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park was still free of charge, and that plot owners would not be charged to see the Byodo-In Temple (Imig 1971). However, the Valley of the Temples Corporation explained that the \$1 visitor fee was only in place to "help off-set costs of maintaining the temple and surrounding Japanese gardens" in addition to providing compensation to the Buddhist priest who worked there full-time (Imig 1971). The official explanation appears to have been that the temple had been built strictly for inurnment and that management had not expected the Byodo-In to become a popular tourist attraction (Imig 1971). Ironically, in 1984 the Byodo-In Temple was featured in an article for the December issue of the Travel and Leisure magazine that mentioned its hired priest, Rev. Yoshikami (Chapman 1984). A reporter playfully commented that Yoshikami "could become a tourist attraction" himself after being featured in the magazine's story (Chapman 1984). By 1994, the Byodo-In Temple had made 10<sup>th</sup> place in a ranking of O'ahu's "top attractions" ("Top attractions island by island" 1997).

#### CORPORATE INTERESTS

One of the earliest mentions of the Byodo-In in the newspapers is from a 1967 Honolulu Star-Bulletin article that condemns the corporation for its predatory sales tactics after many of its customers from both O'ahu and Guam filed complaints over the course of several years for misrepresentations (Altonn 1967). At the time of the article's publishing, one niche was valued at \$1,890 (\$15,851 in 2023) but, according to the salesmen, they were expected to rise to a value of \$3,000 (\$25,160 in 2023) by 1969. These niches were often paid in installments, with a \$189

(\$1,585 in 2023) downpayment followed by scheduled monthly payments of \$27 (\$226 in 2023) for the next two years. Door-to-door sales representatives from the Valley of the Temples Corporation tricked locals into buying niches by lying about the (at the time) highly respected Dillingham Corporation's level of involvement in the project. While it had only been contracted to build the temple, salesmen contended that the Dillingham Corporation was also financing it. By buying niches, the customers were told they would supply additional funds towards the completion of the development project and later benefit from selling their niches back to the Dillingham Corporation for a profit. The script the Valley of the Temples had supplied to its sales team also suggested that Lowell Dillingham wished for his employees to purchase niches. Dillingham released a statement to his employees regarding the use of their company name by Valley of the Temples.

When Valley of the Temples Memorial Park first opened, a special area in this Memorial Park was set aside by the cemetery management to be offered to Dillingham Corporation employees on attractive terms and prior to placing this area on sale in the open market. At that time, over three years ago, I sent you a letter with the sole purpose of bringing this opportunity to your attention. It was never my intention for any salesman to take advantage of my letter or name to high pressure any of you to make a purchase because of your connection with Dillingham Corporation. (Altonn 1967)

He further chastised the sales representatives for their use of "high-pressure sales tactics" and asked the Valley of the Temples management to cease and desist. These marketing schemes appear to have extended far beyond the archipelago, with one Hawaiian-born Japanese resident reporting having received a phone call from Valley of the Temples whilst overseas. They were still pushing the idea that purchasing niches at "some kind of Buddhist shrine," in the words of the informant, was a financial investment with guaranteed returns. The Japanese interviewee shared that they knew of many locals that had "bought into it," citing one man that had purchased four niches for \$7,560 claiming they would be worth \$20,000 in the next 20 months. This prognosticated rise in value came from the expectation that the niches would sell fast and that due to the limited space inside the Byodo-In, demand would soon exceed capacity. At least those were the claims made by Valley of the Temples salesmen. Disgruntled customers, including a Japanese American couple from Aiea and a Christian minister, said that demand for the niches failed to grow and that the company was still attempting to sell them to the public almost two years after they had initially purchased niches from the corporation (Altonn 1967). Salesmen often encouraged potential investors to sign contracts in a hurry and terms appeared to change



after their initial negotiation; most notably, promises regarding the resale of the niches to the Valley of the Temples were not honored and explicitly scrapped from the contracts. The Valley of the Temples Corporation managed to distance itself from this affair by removing blame from its executives and accusing individual salesmen of going off script and using unsanctioned sales techniques.

Years went by with little commotion about the Valley of the Temples Corporation's business ethics and after over 25 years of business, on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1993, the Valley of the Temples Corporation merged with Associated Memorial Group, a limited liability company owned by a corporation from Delaware called Loewen Group International, INC., which acquired and operated many cemeteries and funeral homes across the United States (Declaration/Certificate of Merger 1993). Under their direction, the cemetery started running mail-in order advertisements in the newspapers (fig. 8) that had a distinctly less ostentatious style than the Valley of the Temples Corporations' ads.

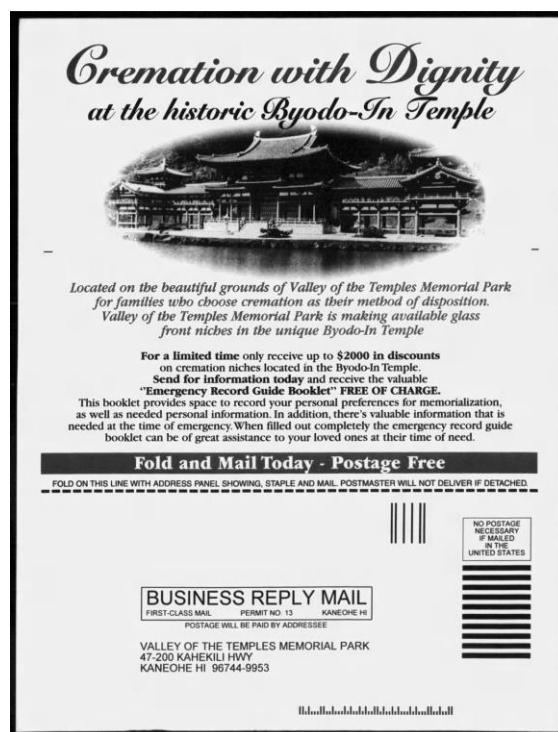


Figure 18. Advertisement that ran in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin in 1997 (Temple 1997).

The merger would only last until November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001, when Associated Memorial Group LTD filed for Bankruptcy and sold all of its assets, including Valley of the Temples Memorial

Park, to RIGHTSTAR VOT LLC (Voluntary Petition in Bankruptcy 2001; Order Sale 2001). Not too long after that, in 2007, Vestin and Comerica Bank & Trust filed a foreclosure action against the RightStar corporations for defaulting on their mortgage.

On July 13th, 2010, a Texan company named NorthStar Memorial Group LLC (NSMG) acquired the deed to the Valley of the Temples under the name of their local subsidiary Valley of the Temples LLC from Commissioner Marie N Milks, whom the mortgage companies had appointed to sell the bankrupt RightStar corporations' assets (Commissioner's Deed 2010). In 2014, only a few years after acquiring the Memorial Park, NorthStar Memorial Group announced an expansion to the cemetery grounds with a new 10-acre area called "Ocean View Terrace" that included "thousands of burial options ranging from private hedged estates with ocean views to a lava rock wall cremation garden and an acre-sized Japanese shrine garden . . . designed for Hawaii's diverse customers" as indicated by the inclusion of "Asian influences" like the shrine garden and "feng shui elements" ("Ahuimanu Cemetery Expanding" 2013). Clarence K. Lau, the fengshui consultant for the expansion, re-read the valley and its surrounding mountain range through the lens of this ancient Chinese art (Russell 2023). He assigned foreign symbolisms to the Ko'olau mountains—one peak he named "triangle mountain" and ascribed to it a meaning of authority while another became a turtle with its mouth tilted upward for longevity (Russell 2023). The presence of all five traditional Chinese elements—water, wood, fire, earth, and metal—affirmed the Memorial Park had achieved harmony, according to him, with the ringing of the Byodo-In's bell representing metal (Russell 2023). The expansion would open in March 2015. The Valley of the Temples LLC paid for an advertisement mimicking a newspaper article for the new area's opening that ran in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser ("Dawn of a New Era for Valley of the Temples Memorial Park" 2015). It describes the Ocean View Terrace's effect on the cemetery by saying it "further raises the park's status as a world-class landmark" before mentioning the Byodo-In Temple, for which "the Valley of the Temples is perhaps best known," as another exceptional asset elevating the Memorial Park from just a place of mourning to a place worth visiting in its own right ("Dawn of a New Era for Valley of the Temples Memorial Park" 2015). The ad asserts that the temple offers a variety of experiences, attracting "thousands of visitors each year to worship, meditate or simply appreciate its beauty" ("Dawn of a New Era for Valley of the Temples Memorial Park" 2015).

NSMG's business model is self-admittedly based on the acquisition of funeral, cemetery,

and cremation locations, most of which “began as family-run businesses or small corporations” (“NSMG website” 2017). Since its inception in 2004, NorthStar has amassed over 85 funeral and cemetery locations across 12 different states (Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Florida, Illinois, Ohio, Maryland, Arizona, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington, and Hawai‘i) (“NSMG website” 2017). In Hawai‘i alone, they have acquired 7 locations: Diamond Head Mortuary, Homelani Memorial Park and Crematory, Kona Memorial Park, Maui Memorial Park, Nakamura Mortuary, Hawai‘i Memorial Park Mortuary at Valley of the Temples, and Valley of the Temples (“NSMG website” 2017). NSMG’s founders describe the company as the “guiding light” of the death industry; much like their namesake the North Star was known to guide navigators, NSMG is meant to lead its various acquisitions to safety, or more particularly to financial success (“NSMG website” 2017). The company faces the difficult challenge of having to appeal to two audiences: the mourning families their cemeteries cater to and potential acquisitions—failing cemeteries seeking financial support. This tension is visible throughout their website. Their threefold mission statement to care for the dead, comfort the living and help families plan ahead seems to convey the kind of reverence and propriety typically afforded grief-stricken families, yet the capitalistic undertones of their industry become obvious in areas such as their website’s ‘careers’ and ‘acquisitions’ tabs, that appeal more to their ability to generate profit rather than their sincere desire to help families grieve.

NSMG’s website provides valuable insight into its company goals, values, and marketing tactics. The homepage includes a fifteen-minute video shot in 2022 briefly discussing the company’s history and showcasing some of its most prized and visually stunning locations. The video is divided into “chapters,” the seventh of which, titled “Local Brands, World Class Support,” centers around the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park (“The Guiding Light” 2022). The opening shot is of the Byodo-In Temple, demonstrating its importance in their marketing for Valley of the Temples. A voice-over by Jeff Short, the Sales Manager of Valley of the Temples, begins by affirming that “What makes Valley of the Temples very unique is partly the Byodo-In Temple. It was built in 1968 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the first Japanese immigrants here on O‘ahu. It draws in 250 to 300,000 visitors every single year. In 2018, it was the 50th anniversary of the time it was built and we had our own postage stamp here at the Byodo-In Temple” (“The Guiding Light” 2022). He goes on to discuss how NSMG prefers that their ownership of the cemetery not be advertised to families, fearing that knowledge of, in his

words, a “corporate brand from the mainland” owning the cemetery might put off their local consumer base ("NSMG website" 2017). He praises NorthStar’s monetary investment in Valley of the Temples, which allowed them to build their own mortuary ("NSMG website" 2017). Short also recalls his first meeting with NSMG co-founder, President, and Vice Chairman of the Board Brian Sullivan, in which Sullivan encouraged him to appreciate the desirability of his position as Sales Manager, emphasizing his ability to make a difference on both a community and a company level ("NSMG website" 2017). At the beginning of the video, Sullivan says the following about his and co-founder Mark Hamilton (Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of the Board)’s shared vision for their company.

We wanted the whole organization to be a sales organization. We wanted every employee in the business to be a raving fan and enough of an advocate for what we do. Even though their job isn’t in sales—their job might be in administration, funeral staff, grounds caretaker, or whatever—irrespective of what their job description was, they were equipped and capable of saying if you ever have a need, you need to come here. ("NSMG website" 2017)

In spite of NSMG’s sales-oriented approach to the funeral industry, the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park has had some recent financial troubles, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On February 9th, 2021, the Hawai‘i Department of Taxation issued a tax lien to Valley of the Temples LLC which owed \$109,482.17 in General Excise Tax to the state (Certificate of Tax Lien 2021). A year later, the company received a letter releasing them from said lien (Release of Tax Lien 2022). The pandemic greatly hurt the Byodo-In Temple economically and it is now a shell of its former self. As of 2023, the temple still lacks a Buddhist priest, is working with a skeleton crew, and has halted all community events.

#### RELIGIO-CULTURAL EVENTS

The Byodo-In Temple’s current management refused to assist me in my research, meaning I had to rely exclusively on publically accessible written records describing the temple’s activities and operations. There are few sources of information about the regular operations of the Byodo-In Temple over the years apart from the press, with sporadic news reports and listings in the events columns providing some clues as to what might have been common occurrences. These sources can still give us an idea of the kind of engagement the temple had with the local community, although it is impossible to assess how frequently the rituals they mention were practiced. There is reason to believe that the Byodo-In used to conduct regular services and at least some religious

ceremonies throughout the 1970s and 1980s. From these articles, it is safe to assume that a certain Rev. Yoshikami worked at the temple and was involved in the community, regularly activating the Byodo-In Temple as a Buddhist place of worship.



Figure 19. Photo by David Yamada depicting Rev. Egen I. Yoshikami ringing the bonshō for the bicentennial of the United States. The image appeared in the July 5th, 1976 edition of the Honolulu Advertiser.

The Valley of the Temples Corporation hired Rev. Egen Iwasaburo (Mitsue) Yoshikami (1906–1999) around the time the temple first opened. He had previously served as resident minister of Honpa Hongwanji Hawai‘i Betsuin and the New York Buddhist Church before working at the Byodo-In Temple, where he stayed until his retirement ("The Rev. Egen Iwasaburo Yoshikami" 1999) (Chapman 1984). There is some indication that he might have held regular services. An article from 1970 states that he would perform regular Buddhist prayer services in memory of the dead every morning at 11 a.m., except on Mondays and Fridays ("For the Dead" 1970). There is significantly more information about the occasional ceremonies that he conducted at the temple, but this disparity in the quantity of data might be due to the relative newsworthiness of special events as compared to recurring ones. On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1971, Rev. Yoshikami offered Buddhist New Year’s Day services, or *Shusho-e*, at 10 a.m. at the Byodo-In replica; the temple advertised that he would engage in a discussion on the topic of Amidism on that same day, demonstrating his desire to teach locals about Buddhist doctrine ("Buddhist New Year" 1970). On July 4th, 1976, Rev. Yoshikami rang the temple’s bell for the nationwide bell-ringing celebration of the bicentennial of the United States in a great display of American patriotism ("Celebrating in a big way" 1976). In 1979, he organized a *Hōjō-e* ceremony in which he gave dozens of children and teenagers small koi fish to release into the reflecting pond, as the priests had done for the temple’s dedication ceremony in 1968 (Donnelly 1979). His last publically recorded contribution to the temple’s life happened on October 10th, 1988, when he performed a traditional *Omote Senke* Fall Tea Ceremony in the temple gardens ("Omote Senke Fall Tea Ceremony"). There are records of at least one other priest, Bishop Hosen Fukuhara (1937-2019), working at the Byodo-In Temple, although the exact dates of his employment are unclear.

Destination weddings became increasingly popular around the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1979 the Hawai‘i Visitors Bureau wrote an article that called getting married in Hawai‘i “the new ‘it thing’” calling the islands “a perfect setting for a beautiful beginning”(Landen 1979). One of its suggested locations was of course the Byodo-In Temple. The three key features it highlighted were the Ko‘olau, the fact of its being a replica, the bridge and water features (including the koi), and finally, the bell, which the couple could ring for a long and happy married life (Landen 1979). The Byodo-In Temple has consistently remained a popular location for wedding ceremonies, a service that is still offered today. The temple’s

website states that the Valley of the Temples LLC currently charges \$800 (plus tax) per hour for exclusive access to the grounds, with a maximum of two hours during business hours ("Byodo-In Temple - Weddings" n.d.). This fee includes access to the temple and surrounding area for the ceremony and up to 10 guests after which the couple will be charged \$2 per additional guest ("Byodo-In Temple - Weddings" n.d.). The couple must also purchase a photography permit of \$200 (plus tax) for them to be allowed to take wedding photos on the premises, furthermore, the temple does not provide a photographer, guests are expected to hire their own ("Byodo-In Temple - Weddings" n.d.).



Figure 20. Photo advertising the temple as a wedding venue taken from the Byodo-In Temple website. A couple can be seen embracing under the *bonsbō*, their heads hidden from view by the bell ("Byodo-In Temple - Weddings" n.d.).

The next recorded event held at the Byodo-In Temple was a grand (re)opening on June 22nd, 2002, between 10 a.m. and 7 p.m, possibly organized due to the temple's ownership having transitioned from Associated Memorial Group LTD to the RightStar Corporation ("Grand Opening June 22nd " 2002). This was also the first time Bishop Hosen Fukuhara appeared in

promotional materials for the temple; he was depicted feeding a bird from his hand, a practice he would become known for. Tea was served all day at the gift shop, there was a lion dance performance, as well as blessings of the temple, gift shop, and meditation house, a tribute to the flag at the scattering wall, a Pa'u Princess and Escort was present, and small koi fish were on sale. The temple advertised this event as “fun for the whole family” (“Grand Opening June 22nd ” 2002).

In 2009, during the cemetery's transition from RightStar to NorthStar Memorial Group, the Byodo-In Temple began hosting an event sponsored by the Japan Religious Committee for World Federation called the Jazz Peace Concert on the last Saturday of each month (“Events Column” 2009). Mihoko Maier, a local artist and jazz vocalist, was behind the idea (Russell 2009). She sang accompanied by a rotating cast of musicians on a makeshift stage in the temple's left wing and a table that featured Maier's paintings would be set across from the performing artists. The Byodo-In Temple has often served as an art gallery of sorts, displaying the works of various local artists such as Hisae Shouse's *sumi-e* ink drawings (“Hisae Shouse displays a sumi-e ink drawing” 2017). Guests attending the concert were still expected to pay the park admission fee (Russell 2009). The event's sponsor, the Japan Religious Committee for World Federation, represents a group of religious dignitaries and care-home directors for victims of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. They regularly attend the annual Pearl Harbor Day remembrance at the Arizona Memorial where they pray for peace as part of the event's program. Maier said that “working with the religionists from Japan has provided a unique insight into the relations between the U.S. and Japan and has made me appreciate the importance of the healing process since World War II” (Russell 2009). That same year, students of sensei Miura from the Jiki-Shinkage-ryu School of Naginata, a traditionally all-female Japanese martial art, performed a *Shiho-giri* ceremony to show respect for the souls of the dead using a 400-year-old naginata, a weapon resembling a pole mounted with a sword (“‘Shiho-giri’ performance at Valley of the Temples” 2009; “Temple Events” 2016). Attendance also required paying the admission fee, then \$3 for an adult, \$2 for seniors, and \$1 for children (“‘Shiho-giri’ performance at Valley of the Temples” 2009).

In 2011, after the Valley of the Temples LLC took over control of the temple, management advertised a ribbon lei demonstration event (“Ribbon Lei Demo” 2011). The temple offered DIY kits for purchase and still charged the regular admission fee (“Ribbon Lei Demo”



2011). In 2013, the Byodo-In Temple participated in All Souls Day, a Christian holiday in remembrance of the departed, offering food, face painting, and selling luminary bags for families to celebrate their dead relatives ("Byodo-in Temple hosts All Souls Day" 2013). In 2014 the Windward Unity Church sponsored an Anela Meditation Gathering at the Byodo-In Temple, for which management still charged admission (\$3 for adults) ("Meditation Gathering" 2014). There was a brief revival of tea ceremonies at the Byodo-In Temple in 2016 when it hosted them monthly ("Tea Ceremony" 2016). The Mokichi Okada Association, a Japanese new religious movement primarily associated with energy healing, sponsored at least one of these, and a certain Richard and Jan Mills, both practicing Buddhists, also reportedly performed the ceremony that year ("Tea Ceremony" 2016). The temple was quite active in 2016, hosting various lessons on Ikebana and mindfulness for which the temple continued to charge “a nominal admission fee” that they claim “supports upkeep of the grounds” ("Tea Ceremony" 2016; "Temple Events" 2016).

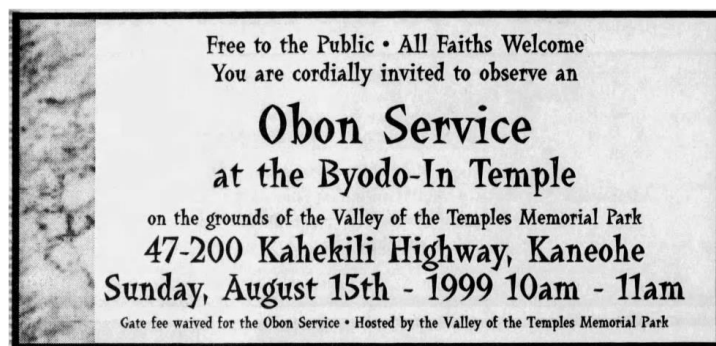


Figure 11. Ad from 1999 for the Byodo-In Temple's Obon Service. The event was free and the temple encouraged all faiths to attend (Obon Service at the Byodo-In Temple 1999).

Another recurring event at the Byodo-In Temple over the years has been its Obon ceremonies. In 1999, under the direction of Associated Memorial Group LTD, the Byodo-In Temple first advertised its free Obon service planned for August 15th (Fig. 11). It was notably advertised as an inclusive “all faiths welcome” event. It would not be until NorthStar Memorial group acquired the Memorial Park that the newspapers would again announce an Obon ceremony. Marine Hawaii published a listing for another Obon festival in August 2014 and vaguely described what events were to take place, listing “dance performances, ceremonies, demonstrations and more” ("What's happening on, off base, volunteer opportunities" 2014). The Obon festival would continue to occur yearly until 2018, with entertainment including taiko

drums, martial arts, bon dances, food booths, floating lanterns, a lever harp, and closing with the singing of “Hawai‘i Aloha” (“Bon Dances in Hawaii” 2016; “Fourth Annual Obon Festival” 2016; “Mahalo” 2017). The temple’s last recorded festival also happened to honor the Byodo-In Temple’s 50th anniversary.



Figure 12. Ad from 2017 for the Byodo-In Temple's free Obon Celebration. The change in verbiage from fig. 11 might be to appear less "religious" and attract more visitors (Obon Celebration 2017).

In 2018, The United States Postal Service launched a stamp to commemorate the Byodo-In Temple’s 50th anniversary. The new postage stamp depicted a colorful illustration of the temple designed by art director Greg Breeding with original art by Chicago artist Dan Cosgrove. The postal service commemorated the issuance of the Priority Mail stamp with a dedication at the temple on January 23rd. Attendees were able to purchase stamps for \$6.70 a piece and have them hand-canceled for free with a “special pictorial postmark” (Wu 2017, 2018). Present were Dennis Boser, the area operations director of Hawaii Funeral Services, Kanani Alos, the Kaneohe postmaster, Glen Sears, the project engineer and manager, and Carole Hayashino, the president of the Japanese Cultural Center. In a rare acknowledgement of Hawaiian self-determination and individuality, Hayashino said of the Byodo-In Temple that it “stands as a symbol of Japanese

culture and tradition” and “a symbol of friendship between Japan and Hawaii and it’s a tribute to King Kalakaua and the kingdom of Hawaii for welcoming the Japanese immigrants long ago” as well as recognizing “the spirit of the issei pioneers, the first generation of immigrants from Japan who paved the way for future generations of Japanese in Hawai‘i” concluding that the “postage stamp honors this friendship, this history, and the aloha spirit” (Wu 2018). She challenged the temple’s narrative which forefronts Japanese and American reconciliation in favor of aligning it with the Gannenono’s connection to the Hawaiian Kingdom.

The Byodo-In Temple’s interactions with the public were not limited to dedicated events. Most people who have come into contact with the temple over the years have done so in their capacity as visitors, whether locals or foreigners. There is little recorded information regarding what the visitor experience might have entailed at different points in the temple’s history, which the next chapter will seek to weave with my experience of visiting the temple in 2023.

## CHAPTER 4. VISITOR EXPERIENCES

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I recount my own experience of visiting the temple grounds with particular attention to my sensory engagement with the various aggregates which come together to form the Byodo-In Temple as well as the affective responses these encounters elicited in me, at times comparing them to archival information about past visitor experiences. My aim with this chapter is to help readers unacquainted with the Byodo-In get a sense of what a visitor experience might entail in the year 2023 and perhaps glean some insight into the embodied knowledge I acquired from visiting the temple so as to make more perceptible the ways in which this experiential knowing has guided this study.

The Byodo-In Temple complex shares many aspects of its presentation with museums and national parks, utilizing the built environment to “regulate” and “organize” visitor emotions by creating what Jennifer Ladino calls “an affective trajectory” (Ladino, 2019). The Valley of the Temples management wants to curate a certain affective experience that emphasizes the sacredness and religious nature of the site. The Byodo-In’s religious status and its added role as a columbarium doubly sacralize it—the temple’s religious aura encourages visitors into a state of contemplation and pushes them to reverence due to the presence of human remains. Though much of this is achieved through the presence of replicated items of Buddhist material culture, management is careful not to alienate potential customers by emphasizing that “the Byodo-In Temple is a non-practicing Buddhist temple which welcomes people of all faiths to worship, meditate or simply appreciate its beauty” (“The Byodo-In Temple Homepage” n.d.).

While the built environment plays an important role in shaping visitors’ interpretation of the site, I agree with Ladino who urges us to consider “the emotionality of the natural landscape or the way it intersects with the semiotic one” (Ladino, 2019). While the temple’s founders, architect, landscapers, and management exert a large degree of control over the complex’ environment, they are not the sole actants within this assemblage. These other, more uncontrollable, forces act independently from the will of the temple’s operators, at times supporting the desired interpretation of the site and at others moving us to interact with it differently from what the Valley of the Temples LLC intends. Even the temple’s carefully curated objects and physical constructs can detract visitors from the intended affective course. For these reasons Jane Bennett argues that “there is thus something to be said for moments of methodological naiveté, for

postponement of a genealogical critique of objects. This delay might render manifest a subsistent world of non-human vitality” (Bennett 2010, 17). I hope to diversify and broaden our understanding of the factors that come together to form visitors’ interpretation of the Byodo-In Temple through the following account of my experience visiting the temple supplemented by some observations from other visitors, both past and present. I have divided this exploration into sections based on what felt to be distinct areas of the temple complex during my visit.

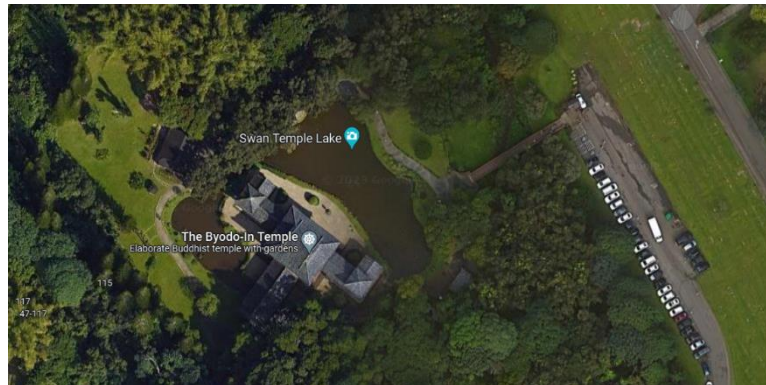


Figure 213. Google Maps satellite view of the Byodo-In Temple and surrounding area (Maps 2023).

#### THE PARKING LOT

Most visitors to the Byodo-In Temple arrive either in their cars or on tour buses. For those who drove themselves, as my companion and I did, parking spots line a short stretch of road that leads to the ticket booth. In all my visits, the lot has always seemed relatively full, though I have also never struggled to find parking. The side of the parking area closest to the temple faces a thicket of trees and bushes, while the other has cars come face to face with rows of gravestones, some dangerously close to the asphalt. Having cars nestled so close to someone’s final resting place felt irreverent, and we could not help but wonder how friends, family, or even the departed, would feel about having their graves in this location, as we certainly would not wish to be buried there. Multiple signs warning tourists of thieves pepper the area, advising visitors to lock their cars. There were reports of thievery at the Byodo-In Temple as early as 1980 when a British couple wrote a sour letter titled “Warning to tourists” in which they complained of Honolulu’s “crime problem” (Stanwix and Stanwix 1980). They bemoaned having expensive camera equipment stolen from their car and chastised the Police Department for their lack of concern with finding the delinquent(s) responsible (Stanwix and Stanwix 1980). They appealed to the county’s sense of morality before degrading the police and judicial system operating in Hawai‘i

saying, “Surely, Honolulu, you don’t call this justice to have your tourist go shopping, sightseeing, and swimming with all their goods strapped to them to prevent thievery. We came from a country where ‘crime doesn’t pay.’ Please do not spoil a beautiful island with ‘crime that does pay’” (Stanwix and Stanwix 1980). Little did they know, tourism has been a strong factor behind the increasing crime rate in Hawai‘i, and that their participation in the tourism industry was contributing to thievery in Honolulu (Trask 1999). An article from 2003 confirms that until 2001, break-ins were frequent at the Valley of the Temples, and in particular at the Byodo-In Temple since it was “a popular tourist attraction,” however after the cemetery hired a security guard, theft decreased significantly (“Cemeteries: Security is increased” 2003).

Once we had parked, we walked toward the line that had formed at the ticket booth, a small cabin covered in various signs—some outlining the temple’s rules or its hours of operation (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily), others advertising new developments in the cemetery and plots for sale. A sign that particularly stood out to me was one of the latter, with “own a piece of paradise forever” written in bold lettering in both English and Japanese. Its wording immediately alerted me to the Valley of the Temples’ use of the “Hawai‘i as paradise” narrative, which made me question the company’s ethics and reticent to trust in its sincerity. The sign offered a scannable QR code to easily access more information about the advertisement for a Valley of the Temples project called “Eternal Resorts,” which I will be discussing in Chapter 5. We then acquired tickets from the agent at a rate of \$5 per adult, for which we paid by credit card as the temple no longer accepts cash transactions.

#### THE ENTRANCE

Armed with our \$5 tickets, my companion and I crossed a long bridge over what I would later discover was North Hālawā Stream. Many visitors stopped at the bridge’s midpoint to take pictures of themselves in front of the temple. I was curious about the stream and also stopped at the bridge’s midpoint to inspect it more closely. I could recognize that it was most likely a natural stream rather than a man-made one from the vegetation that surrounded it and the way the earth sloped around it, but there was no information about it to be found on-site, so I resigned myself to doing some personal research after my visit. We continued to walk toward the temple that was now coming into view. It was quite a picturesque scene, and the complex looked truly magnificent. It was not the temple alone that impressed me, but the entire tableau before me,

though the temple's architecture coupled with its bright coloring certainly commanded attention. The immensity of the misty Ko'olau Mountains above it imparted to the temple complex an ethereal atmosphere. In 1991, a woman expressed similar awe at witnessing the juxtaposition of the constructed building and the natural landscape in a piece published in the Honolulu Star-Bulletin. She wrote the following.

I remember the first time I saw the roof of the Byodo-In Temple curving upward toward heaven. The awesome peaks of the Koolaus behind the temple pointed skyward, too. At once a spirit of oneness and balance came over me. I saw that a man had chosen to express a dignity of human spirit by placing the edifice to his beliefs where it could be contemplated against the background of nature's own eternal order. (Scott 1991)

The Ko'olau Mountains thus play an important role in visitors' interpretation of the temple complex. After walking up to the reflecting pond, we were greeted by a weathered sign greatly resembling one that would usually be found at a museum. The signage plate provided a brief explanation about the temple's origins and significance before discussing the Amida Buddha statue housed in the main hall. It was one of two signs mentioning the Gannenmono, the other being a much older metal plaque affixed to a stone now hidden by overgrown foliage. Attached to the sign's metal legs were two laminated sheets of paper with arrows pointing in opposite directions and emoticons representing the temple's various features arranged in the order one would encounter them were they to follow the direction indicated by the corresponding arrow. Although guests are free to roam in any direction, most visitors chose to follow a clockwise trajectory around the complex, as we did. This might be due to the fact that immediately to our left was the large bonshō being rung at somewhat regular intervals by a constant supply of visitors.

#### THE BELL

Choosing to follow the most popular route, my companion and I waited in line for our turn to ring the bell. Its sound resounded intermittently across the entire complex, but far from being a nuisance, the bell's sound had a delightfully calming effect on me. Its tone is so low that over the course of the visit, I found it had faded into the background and become virtually unnoticeable. Whilst in line, we encountered another informative sign, this time about the bell. We read it diligently, although I cannot say the same for most visitors. The bell house was another good photo opportunity, and many people would pose with their hands clasped around the rope before letting it go to emit the bell's telltale sound. Once it came to my turn to reach for the large rope, I

made sure to examine it more closely. It was very wide and strong, and although it appeared to be a uniform color from afar, it was made of a variety of colorful threads all braided together. To ring the bell, I had to wrap both of my hands around this rope, feeling its twisted shape against my skin. After a moment of apprehension, I finally let it go, watching the taught rope go limp once again and the wooden rod hit the bell in the same spot it had so many times before. This was one of the most thrilling interactive experiences at the temple as it engaged most of my senses to make for a memorable event that registered with multiple parts of my body.

#### THE MEDITATION PAVILION

After leaving the bell house, visitors reach a fork in the road and can either climb up a hill to their left toward the meditation pavilion or turn right and enter the temple. We chose to stop by the meditation pavilion first since we would likely not return to this area after crossing the temple. The climb up took some careful maneuvering between the intricate root system at our feet. I doubt it had been a part of the landscapers' original design as the roots made accessing the pavilion quite difficult, and rendered it completely inaccessible to people using wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches. Despite the difficulty of the climb, the lush environment coupled with the sound of rushing water from the fabricated waterfall that separated the pavilion from the temple made for an enjoyable experience. The air smelled of flowers and was markedly cooler, perhaps because of the trees shading us from the sun. Once we reached the pavilion, there was not much to do other than look at the small Buddha statue to its left and enter the structure. The pavilion had a small octagonal bench at its center on which guests could sit, and, supposedly, meditate (though I have yet to see such an occurrence). Perhaps its lack of engaging activities and its inaccessibility could explain why the pavilion was so desolate in comparison with the complex' other features. We admired the elevated view from the hill and once we felt we had been there long enough, retraced our steps to the fork in the road.





Figure 14. Photograph by author of the meditation pavilion with a small shrine inhabited by a stone Buddha statue at its side.

#### THE EASTERN WING

Reaching the fork once again, we chose to turn right toward the temple's eastern wing. We crossed a short bridge onto the small island on which the temple rests. We could see the entrance to the temple's main hall a few yards in front of us and immediately to our left was an awkward set-up consisting of a table backed by a large banner advertising some of the cemetery's real estate offerings and finally a television (fig. 15). Some of the time, visitors might encounter a salesperson seated behind the table. As a first-time visitor, their role was not immediately apparent to me, and I had assumed the person seemingly standing guard at the temple's entrance was perhaps a docent, waiting to educate visitors and take them on guided tours of the temple. Even a cursory interaction with them would perhaps not completely elucidate their role, as they are trained to provide some alluring background information about the inclusive brand of sacredness the temple claims to offer. Continuing toward our goal, we arrived at the doors to the temple. There were multiple shoe racks there waiting to receive visitors' footwear and many more signs directing us to remove our shoes before entering the temple, some obviously older than others. As we removed our shoes, my companion wisely said that you could truly know a person from their slippers and pointed to some weathered shoes bearing deep imprints indicative of daily wear, which prompted me to ask myself who the people visiting this temple with me were and to consider the reasons they might have to be there. The experience of removing my footwear forced me to slow down and take my time exploring the interior of the temple, rather

than rush through it. The sensation of my feet on the cold concrete of the temple floor was somewhat of a shock that helped mark the transition from outside to inside, profane to sacred, distant to intimate. When the temple first opened, however, they would offer free shoe coverings to visitors desiring to enter the temple (Becker 1970). Sometime in the mid-70s, management abandoned the shoe coverings and began requiring the removal of all footwear before entering the hall.



Figure 15. Picture by author of sales table at the eastern entrance of the Byodo-In Temple's main hall.

#### THE MAIN HALL

The main hall was remarkably dimmer than the gardens, and it took my eyes a brief moment to adjust to this abrupt change in lighting conditions. The room was quiet and smelled of incense. The Buddha statue stood tall and took up most of the space in the room (fig. 16). Visitors usually walked in front of the statue to light incense as an offering, perhaps reciting an internal prayer. Next, they usually turned to look out at the pond from the open doors immediately behind them across from the Amida statue. The area outside the Buddha room overlooking the pond was also one of the more popular photo opportunities. An article from 1970 mentions there used to be a guestbook for visitors to sign in the temple's main room (Becker 1970). As for me, I scoured

every corner of the room, being careful not to let my voice get too loud from excitement when I found some interesting detail and shared its discovery with my companion.

The items of this area spoke powerfully to me, perhaps due to the sacred nature of the space they were in, and the precise attention with which they had been arranged. It was not the magnificent Buddha that interested me most, however, but all the other additions to the space that seemed more recent or, to me, more out of place. I noted the presence of metal crests lining the room's walls which represented the major local Japanese Buddhist sects, the Izumo Taisha Shinto shrine, and a Christian cross (fig. 17). The cross was one of two crests which did not represent Japanese Buddhism and the only one that was not representative of a traditionally Japanese religion. The presence of this cross and the lack of representation of faiths other than Buddhism, Shinto, and Christianity made me realize that the religiously inclusive narrative put forth by the temple's founders had a very particular intention—the temple appeared to represent a newfound friendship between Christianity and Japanese religiosity, as well as unity among Japanese Buddhist sects. The next items to draw my attention were a large *daikin* (metal, bowl-shaped bell) and a large donation box. Despite the temple's apparent lack of a Buddhist priest, the signage on these items, in addition to their mere presence, implied that the temple was active when it was not. The *daikin* had a yellow paper sign with a handwritten warning that read “FOR SERVICES ONLY,” yet the bell was covered in a thin layer of dust, and had sat in the same spot, adorned with the same sign, for at least the past four years that I had been visiting the temple. The donation box on the other hand had a metal plaque on its side that stated, “Free will offering, blessed is he who is compassionate and generous a prayer, will be offered in your behalf,” while a smaller paper sign with the computer-printed words “donations here” and an arrow pointing to an opening was taped to the top of the box. This sign emphasized the absence of a Buddhist priest even further, as I wondered who exactly would be praying for me if I made a contribution. It was also not clear what these donations were used for, since the temple was inactive and served only as a tourist attraction and columbarium; activities which I thought must both provide ample revenue to the Valley of the Temples LLC. These items, although common to religious sites, were now more akin to props that perpetuated a false image of the temple as an active place of worship, as it had perhaps been a long time ago.



Figure 16. Picture by author of Amida Buddha Statue in the main hall.



Figure 17. Picture by author of the Christian cross on the wall in the main hall of the Byodo-In Temple.

#### THE WESTERN WING

After exiting the main hall and putting our shoes back on, we found ourselves in the Western wing of the temple which leads toward the gift shop. There, we were greeted by a couple of local craftsmen selling their goods from behind plastic folding tables (fig 18). Their presence felt strange and out of place. The items they sold did not fit the Japanese theming of the locale, nor did they have any apparent connection to Buddhism, except perhaps for a spiritual self-help book one of the vendors had authored which must have dealt with some religious themes. After passing them, we were once again out in the gardens and crossed a small bridge over part of the pond which was teeming with koi of all sizes and colors. They congregated in that area because it was closest to where the fish food was sold and that was where most visitors (usually children) naturally wound up feeding them. The area was also rife with birds, which people delighted in feeding the fish food to as well.



Figure 18. View from within the western wing after exiting the main hall. A few tables are set up for local vendors.

#### THE REFLECTING POND

The temple's water features are a constant companion to visitors along their journey, being a part of every discrete area of the complex. The largest of these is the pond that stretches around the temple grounds as if embracing the main hall. The considerable number of koi fish inhabiting its waters have consistently been one of the temple's main attractions, and their brilliant scales often caught my eye as their movements brought discernable vivacity to an otherwise placid body of water. The Byodo-In's tranquil setting offers little excitement, making the large and lively fish a much-needed respite from what might otherwise be a dull experience for children. Multiple visitors recall their parents taking them to feed the koi fish after visiting family members' graves, a tradition they perpetuated with their progeny (Ramos 2016; Yano 2023). Records show the temple sold fish food as early as 1970, then for a mere 16 cents (Becker 1970). This is another aspect of the visitor experience meant to parallel that of the temple in Uji, which also grants visitors the opportunity to feed the koi fish inhabiting its reflective pond. In an article from 1970, a visitor equated his experience of feeding the fish in Valley of the Temples with that of feeding the koi at the Hōō-dō in Uji, recalling that in both places the fish congregated around him in a colorful display (Becker 1970). An article from 1976 dedicated to disclosing locations around O'ahu where one might be able to view carps attests to the apparent popularity of koi fish at the time, entreating its readers to "discover the fascination of koi for [themselves]" ("The Mystical Carp" 1976). With this objective in mind, the article, from the aptly-named "Day Trip" column, recommended interested parties visit the Byodo-In Temple, a location already known to



connoisseurs ("The Mystical Carp" 1976). Only a few steps away from the hall's western exit visitors may acquire fish food from the gift shop, allowing them to directly interact with the delightful aquatic creatures. Guests are not permitted to feed the fish anything other than the food sold by the gift shop.

#### THE GIFT SHOP

The structure that now serves as a gift shop at the Byodo-In Temple once used to be a tea house, which was repurposed sometime in the 1970s. In 1987, the Goya family began operating the temple gift shop, which they were still in charge of ten years later in 1997 according to an interview for the Honolulu Advertiser (Shirkey 1997). It appears that the RightStar Corporation renovated the gift shop in conjunction with some other of the temple's features in 2002, soon after they acquired the temple from Associated Memorial Group LTD ("Byodo-in Temple Celebrates" 2002). These renovations included "additions to the temple and grounds" which might refer to the juice bar that now neighbors the gift shop and where guests can acquire a drink served in a pineapple ("Byodo-in Temple Celebrates" 2002). I found this last feature of the temple complex to clash with its "traditional Japanese Buddhist temple" theming, and their choice to offer the played-out pineapple drink instead of something more thematically appropriate like tea puzzled me. Ironically, the juice bar stands right next to what once was a tea house.

Of all the areas the temple had to offer, I spent perhaps the longest amount of time browsing in the gift shop, as I felt that by looking at the collection of items management had gathered for sale, I might gain a deeper understanding of the temple's self-perception and intended audience. All of the items in the gift shop could warrant a close reading of its own, but for lack of space, I will focus my discussion on a few key items which appeared most interesting to me. Outside of the shop were a variety of machines one could acquire souvenirs from including a penny press, a collectible medallion machine, and a non-functional Honolulu Zoo-themed photo booth. They also had a display of various purchasable miniatures of famous landmarks from across the world such as the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building, and of course, front and center, the Byodo-In temple. Inside the shop was a wide range of offerings, many of which were Byodo-In souvenirs like shot glasses, t-shirts, mugs, keychains, magnets, postcards, etc. On the other hand, there were also items more loosely connected to the

temple like Buddha statuettes of a range of styles, keychains representing each of the animals of the Chinese zodiac, or, most tenuously of all, miniature katanas resembling the weapons of different anime characters. The gift shop also sells fortunes for \$1 each that visitors can grab from a transparent plastic box on the counter. My partner and I chose to acquire some, which we opened and read aloud to each other. The instructions stated that were our fortunes to be unfavorable, we could tie them to a tree to rid ourselves of bad luck, which is when we noticed a tree and several bushes with a multitude of little paper fortunes tied around their branches.

#### THE SCATTERING WALL

Leaving the gift shop behind, we ventured toward the back of the temple where a long stone wall stands solitary (fig. 19). This area was dedicated to scattering the ashes of the dead and had several brown boards covered in removable plaques identifying all those whose remains went through this process. The plaques furthest from the temple appeared older, weathered, and tarnished, whereas those closest to the temple still shone vibrantly. The wall was removed from the main traffic area and few people ventured behind the temple to observe it. Of all the names displayed, fewer than half were identifiably Japanese. Some plaques were for individuals, others represented entire families, and there were still empty slots waiting to be filled. The name of a man who operated a U.S. submarine during WWII and died in 2007 is inexplicably the only one directly printed on one of the boards, taking up the same amount of space as two plaques. Near the scattering was the rear section of the temple where the cremation niches kept the urns of paying customers. This area was inaccessible to those who did not have a code to enter, reserving the space for friends and family of the deceased, employees, and potential buyers. This area contained another Amida Buddha statue, this time depicting him standing up. I was unable to find more information on this piece, perhaps due to the fact it was not made publicly accessible. Unable to enter, I peeked through a darkened window to catch a glimpse of the interior, where I saw rows of wooden shelves with cubbies just big enough for an urn, each protected by a pane of what appeared to be glass. I could observe a few offerings left here and there around some of the niches that contained urns, but many of them remained empty.



Figure 19. Picture of the area designated for the scattering of ashes that is located behind the temple. A long stone wall donning seven plaques with the names of the deceased whose ashes were scattered there can be seen.

#### THE “WILDLIFE”<sup>14</sup>

The Byodo-In Temple boasts many animal creatures such as koi, black swans, turtles, frogs, birds, lizards, stray cats, and supposedly peacocks. I have yet to encounter a peacock on my many visits to the temple, and the only indicator there might have once been peacocks on the grounds came from the temple’s website and a few signs here and there warning visitors not to approach the wild creatures (fig. 20). Peacocks remain emblematic of the temple, and their likeness is still used on merchandise such as their branded reusable bags. Two other animals can be found on said tote bag and are also strongly associated with the temple’s identity—the koi and the black swan. There is currently only one swan on the premises, but there used to be at least two in the past according to photographs used in old marketing pamphlets. The swan is so emblematic that the gift shop even carries some crystal swan sculptures. Arguably, a few more animals have at times redefined the meaning of Byodo-In Temple visits. Rabbits, for instance, began to invade the Byodo-In landscape around 1992. They became synonymous with the temple experience for many people (Shirkey 1997). Around Easter, the gift shop employee, Kevin Goya, said that kids would make off with rabbits they had captured from the temple grounds and a few days after Easter, mothers would call asking if they would accept rabbits or just abandon them on the grounds, once the magic of the pets wore off and families no longer wanted to take care of

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<sup>14</sup> I am using quotation marks to reference how the Byodo-In Temple management titled its website’s section on the same topic.



them (Shirkey 1997). After the Hawaiian Humane Society heard of this however, they immediately took action, as rabbits are invasive to Hawai'i and are known to have damaged the ecosystem in other areas such as Manana Island. By 1995, the rabbits were gone, but people still came with carrots, expecting to see them. Around 1997 people began abandoning stray cats, who are also known to damage the ecosystem by endangering native bird species. Stray cats continue to be an issue at the Valley of the Temples to this day. Neither are mosquitoes sanctioned participants in the Byodo-In Temple assemblage, but they arguably have their fair share of influence on the visitor experience, as their incessant attacks were what eventually motivated me and my partner to leave the temple, an abrupt and uncomfortable end to our visit to be sure.



Figure 20. Weathered sign petitioning guests not to interact with the wild peacocks.

Although the details of my visitor experience might appear trivial, they provide important insight into the various forces, both planned and unplanned, that come together to communicate the identity of the space the Byodo-In Temple occupies. These elements create an atmosphere that can either support or detract from the Valley of the Temples LLC's intended interpretation. The unease the conflicting messages of the Byodo-In assemblage had caused me revealed the site's complexity and hinted toward its uniqueness and perhaps deceitful nature.

## CHAPTER 5. MEANINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE

### INTRODUCTION

Despite being a replica, the Byodo-In Temple of Kāneʻohe has developed unique meanings grounded in place that warrant analysis. Understanding the various interpretations of the site and the forces that shape them provides valuable insight into larger socio-political themes. If, as Jennifer Ladino sustains, all landscapes are “‘discursive apparatuses’ through which politics are negotiated at local, regional, national, and international scales,” then even a replicated landscape has a useful story to tell (Ladino 2019). To better understand the significance of the Byodo-In Temple, I conducted field and archival research. These methods revealed that the temple’s life and influence have exceeded its association with its original model in Uji, Japan. Far from simply being a Buddhist temple, the Byodo-In is a monument to Japanese immigration, a cemetery, and a tourist attraction and has become an actor in an interpretation of Hawaiian space that furthers America’s illegal occupation of Hawaiian land. It embodies the complex intersection of local racial politics and histories that takes place in the negotiation of sacred space on stolen land. The Byodo-In appears as a benevolent religious site dedicated to inclusivity and peace between all races and creeds when analyzed in isolation, but contextualizing it reveals its crucial role as part of an assemblage (Valley of the Temples Memorial Park) that profits from dispossessing the Native Hawaiian people. The Byodo-In replica centers narratives that exclude *Kānaka Maoli*<sup>15</sup> from interpretations of the Hawaiian landscape, simultaneously strengthening the island of Oʻahu’s fashioning as American and erasing indigenous (hi)stories, thus contributing to the ongoing illegal occupation of Hawaiian land.

I have structured this chapter into several thematic sections. I begin with the theoretical framework used in describing how the land was emptied of its original meanings to make way for its interpretation as a Japanese temple. In the following section, I explore the temple’s official and most visible meaning as a religious memorial/monument celebrating Japanese immigration to Hawai‘i through Buddhist material culture. I move on to discuss its second official role as a final resting place for human remains as a part of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park. In the last section, I analyze the implications of the temple’s involvement in Hawaiian tourism.

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<sup>15</sup> A Hawaiian term for the native people of Hawai‘i (Aikau and Gonzales 2019, 396).

#### MECHANISMS OF EMPTYING AND RE-INTERPRETING

In forcing its rule on the Hawaiian Islands, the United States government granted itself ultimate authority over the determination of the religious and cultural value of the land it illegitimately occupies. The state prioritizes sites that contribute to the narrative of American supremacy over the islands, while it devalues Hawaiian sites and relegates them to a distant past deemed irrelevant to Hawai‘i’s current occupants (Saranillio 2019, 52). The erasure of Native Hawaiian (hi)story embedded in the landscape provides settlers with land manufactured into a blank slate on which they can freely apply their own meanings and project their own identities. Settler colonialism bases itself on a false dichotomy between two periods—one before and one after the arrival of the settler—that asserts that the land before its settlement by colonizers belonged to no one (Barker 2018, 1135). The fact that “the land was not empty prior to colonial incursion but was occupied by many sophisticated Indigenous societies” and the continuing presence of Indigenous peoples on the land destabilizes this “false temporal barrier,” as Adam J. Barker calls it (Barker 2018, 1135). Thus, settler societies often “reshape the land around them, attempting to obliterate markers of a past that do not conform to settler historical narratives” (Barker 2018, 1135). This act of erasing and replacing is not always evident and operates on what I describe as a scale from visible to invisible. By visible, I mean acts that blatantly cover up indigenous meanings of space even when confronted with immediate and irrefutable evidence of these pre-existing (hi)stories. Whereas an invisible approach is one where a group or individual on colonized land does not seek out and is thus ignorant of these indigenous interpretations of space of the land they occupy, assuming the prior emptiness of the landscape by operating within the framework of the false temporal barrier described above, and thus is not fully conscious of the effacement they perpetrate. The harmful effects of a visible act of erasing might be more apparent, but invisible acts that contribute to the erasure of native (hi)stories can be just as, if not more, harmful in their inconspicuousness. These mechanisms are not fixed events in time, but continual processes constantly reinforced by the settler-colonial structures both within and without us. This scale in no way absolves those closer to an invisible approach from responsibility for the harm their actions cause, it is simply a tool to better understand the myriad ways settler colonialism operates, both seen and unseen, consciously and subconsciously, intentionally and unintentionally, so that we may in turn be held more accountable for our participation in it.

Settler-colonial institutions and corporations are frequently those committing more visible erasures of Native Hawaiian meanings of place as they possess the power, resources, and illegitimate authority to determine the spatial organization of the islands. The United States military notoriously rid the landscape of its once omnipresent native religio-cultural meanings and replaced them with its own interpretation and organization of space to lay claim to the land. Some of these reinterpretations are more apparent than others, with prominent areas such as *Pu‘uloa*,<sup>16</sup> otherwise known as Pearl Harbor, that the United States famously requisitioned and refashioned into a naval base and whose native name likely fell into disuse, as many other place names did, after the government’s ban on the Hawaiian language at the turn of the century. Despite a revival in *‘ōlelo Hawai‘i*<sup>17</sup> in the 1970s, many places have retained their imposed English names and interpretations. It is important to note that military occupation of space also has immediate physical repercussions. The military appropriation of Pearl Harbor altered its geological and ecological features to such a degree that it contributes to the disruption of the great migration of various fish from Malama Bay (Estores and Tengan 2010). The coral reef, once a bountiful source of sustenance, is now barren and in some places continues to be polluted (Estores and Tengan 2010). Military occupation and reinterpretation of space keep Native Hawaiians from caring for Pu‘uloa by physically barring their entry due to so-called military security reasons and preventing them from accessing shoreline resources (Estores and Tengan 2010).

Settler colonialism can also contribute more discretely to a re-narrativizing of space that overtakes its indigenous meanings through the actions and interpretations of individuals. Susan Stewart describes the way by which a person assimilates private space as follows, “For the environment to be an extension of the self, it is necessary not to act upon and transform it, but to declare its essential emptiness by filling it” (Stewart 157). In other words, the appropriation of space through “filling” presupposes the essential emptiness of that space; erasure is a subconscious prerequisite to an interpretation of space as part of the self, as home. Settler colonialism grounds itself in a temporal splitting that follows a near-identical process. Individual and communal acts of “filling” and transforming (though the latter is not necessary to this process) constantly reinforce the settler colonial assumption of the land’s essential emptiness

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<sup>16</sup> Translated as “long hill” in English.

<sup>17</sup> This phrase means “Hawaiian Language” in English.

before colonization that allows settlers to assimilate colonized indigenous space by imbuing it with their own identities. Daniel Miller elaborates on the process of spatial assimilation in his description of British couples' ability to assimilate drab government housing through decoration (Miller 2010). He finds that they decorated their dwellings as a result of their alienation from their surroundings (Miller 2010). In other words, our own alienation from our surroundings pushes us to create "home" through our selection and arrangement of *stuff*<sup>18</sup> which both represents and shapes us (Miller 2010). This same alienation is what prompts settlers to fill and modify their surroundings with stuff; they hope to make the space their own by projecting onto it their identities and desires—but a landscape that spells home and belonging to one person may exclude another.

In the same way that the government housing Modernist architects and state ideologues imposed on Miller's British tenants alienated them, the environment colonizers build and narrativize alienates Indigenous people. This erasure ignores the vibrancy and agency Native Hawaiians ascribe to the natural world, changing the way residents, including many *Kānaka*<sup>19</sup> themselves, interact with the landscape, and furthering their alienation. Miller acknowledges the agency of stuff, the power it has over us, and how we affect and are affected by it in what he terms a "dialectic of mutual creation" (Miller 2010). Stuff has its own agency through which it affects our behavior, thoughts, and identities. Thus, in addition to alienating Native Peoples, colonial settler stuff also changes them through a form of agency—what Jane Bennett calls "thing power" (Bennett 2010, 18). In her book *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett states that ". . . an actant never really acts alone. Its efficacy or agency always depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces" (Bennett, 21). Bennett argues that if we move away from an anthropocentric conception of the material world, we can begin to see an actant not just as a monolithic self enacting a singular will, but as "neither an object nor a subject but . . . an operator . . . which, by virtue of its particular location in an assemblage and the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time, makes the difference, makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalyzing an event" (Bennett 2010, 9). Thus, change results from an assemblage of forces with varying forms of agency who come together for some time to act as a

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel Miller uses the term "stuff" which he refuses to define instead of "object" as a means of broadening the scope of material culture studies (Miller 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Kanaka (singular) and kānaka (plural) refer to human persons and mean Hawaiian when capitalized (Aikau and Gonzales 2019, 396).

fluidly bound, heterogeneous structure, as the expression of agency or thing-power of all sorts of actors: human and non-human, organic, and inorganic.

I posit that the Byodo-In Temple is an assemblage of people, objects, things, or simply “stuff” made of organic and inorganic materials, capable of producing change. The assemblage called Byodo-In Temple is itself an operator or actant influencing and influenced by the other actants that make up a larger assemblage—the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park. By filling the landscape with its aggregated materials, this assemblage I call the Byodo-In Temple assimilates the land it occupies by declaring its essential emptiness. This is to say that as a settler-colonial assemblage occupying Hawaiian space, the Byodo-In presumes the absence of the land’s indigenous meanings and instead adorns it in a way that signifies its own identity. Paul Trousdale, founder of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, saw no intrinsic value, indigenous or otherwise, in the lands he purchased for development. He once said of his career “It’s thrilling to take a worthless mountain or swamp and create something beautiful and lasting. It’s exciting” (Oliver 1990). His perception of value and beauty was driven by profit and an anthropocentric perception of the landscape as an inert object to be acted upon. He saw the transformation of the environment he participated in as the most significant, if not only, factor involved in the creation of meaning and value for the land he acquired.

Settlers alienate Kānaka from their homeland by forcing them to live in and move through landscapes of assembled environments that they have little to no control over and that do not represent them. Settlers are actants that catalyze the coagulation of stuff into an assemblage capable of reinforcing settler-colonial narratives through an agency, or thing-power, stemming from but also exceeding the sum of its parts (Bennett 2010). My adoption of Bennett’s model of vibrant matter in no way intends to minimize the role settlers play in the erasure and replacement of native meanings of place. Bennett herself states that “this notion of confederate agency does attenuate the blame game, but it does not thereby abandon the project of identifying . . . the sources of harmful effects. To the contrary, such a notion broadens the range of places to look for sources” (Bennett 2010, 37). A theory of vibrant matter thus does not minimize the agency of humans but raises the agency of non-human matter in contributing to change.

When settlers to make themselves at home in unfamiliar lands they often project themselves onto the environment by filling it with materials they associate with their own cultural identity and arranging them according to their own mores in a process that presupposes

the land's emptiness. As a monument to Japanese presence in Hawai'i, the Byodo-In Temple performs the same emptying of the area it occupies as the one Stewart and Barker observed—it is an essential emptying that does not overtly attempt to discredit or hide indigenous narrative interpretations of the land, yet the presence of the assemblage's various actants and their overwhelming lack of acknowledgment of the area's native (hi)stories still contributes to the American colonial project. Colonialism is not always overt; it extends into almost every aspect of our existence in complex and insidious ways. Most individuals who once were or are now actants in the Byodo-In assemblage (including visitors) are likely not fully conscious of how they contribute(d) to a colonial narrative interpretation of the land that dispossesses Native Hawaiians. Nevertheless, their strong role in catalyzing, promoting, enabling, or profiting from settler-colonial modifications in the environment contributes to the assemblage's appropriation of space through renarrativization which presumes the absence of the pre-existing interpretational framework connecting Kanaka Maoli to *'āina*.<sup>20</sup> The Byodo-In, and more broadly the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, contribute, partly through the affects they illicit in visitors, to interpretations of the United States as a custodian of idyllic racial relations and religious freedom, and furthers notions of Hawai'i as paradisaical land that reinforces the nation's claim to sovereignty over Hawai'i.

#### MEMORIAL—THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JAPANESE RELIGIO-CULTURAL VISIBILITY

The Valley of the Temples Corporation partially decided to build the Byodo-In Temple to commemorate the first generation of contract migrants to Hawai'i from Japan in 1868. To this day, it stands as a celebration of Japanese presence on the Hawaiian Islands. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the lives of Japanese migrant workers were difficult and often marked by poverty, violence, and prejudice. Their addition to the various ethnic groups already populating the Hawaiian Kingdom was calculated and desired by both plantation owners (almost exclusively white, Christian, American men) and the Hawaiian monarchy, who perceived them as racially related to Hawaiians and saw them as a means of ensuring the country's economic prosperity. The Issei struggled to establish themselves in foreign lands but ultimately contributed greatly to the amelioration of the working and living conditions on plantations for all, regardless of race, and fought relentlessly for equality.

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<sup>20</sup> Hawaiian word for land, literally "that which feeds" ("Hawaiian Dictionaries").

Buddhist priests were some of the earliest leaders of newly established Japanese communities often divided by prefectural differences. In addition to offering spiritual solace and cultural grounding to the Issei amid the culture shock they experienced, Buddhist leaders were some of the first to open Japanese language schools to teach standardized Japanese to the Nisei children. In doing so, they sought to bridge the language barrier between at times mutually unintelligible regional dialects which had contributed to establishing and maintaining a social hierarchy of *ken* within the Japanese immigrant community. Buddhist missions united the Japanese community through their role as teachers, religio-cultural repositories, and community advocates. After the illegal annexation of Hawai‘i by the United States, Buddhist priests such as Yemyo Imamura actively sought to paint Buddhism as a natural proponent of American values in order to carve out a safe space for Japanese migrants to exist in American society without fear of prejudice. Christian proselytizers who felt the grasp of their God over the islands weakening waged holy war against Buddhism as the heightened fear of the “Yellow Menace” paralleled the increasing number of Japanese aliens in Hawai‘i. Worried that the ever-growing number of Buddhists would eventually gain total control of the islands, Christians began painting Japanese culture and religiosity as anti-American, stoking racial conflict. Buddhism’s role in the Americanization of Japanese immigrants is undeniable, but it emerged as a defense mechanism for the protection of Japanese residents of Hawai‘i in the face of great discrimination.

The attack on Pearl Harbor which instigated the United States’ entry into World War II further exacerbated the already precarious position of the Issei and Nisei in American society. Being Japanese was effectively criminalized and many prominent community leaders, such as Buddhist priests, were interned in concentration camps for the duration of the war. While the treatment of the Japanese immigrant community in Hawai‘i was notably less cruel than that suffered by Japanese communities in the continental United States, they were still afflicted by the discriminatory practices of a local community under the influence of American military rule and its propaganda—local civilians, military personnel, and FBI agents often failed to recognize the distinction between the Japanese enemy and the Japanese neighbor. With Buddhist priests gone, religious activities largely halted as temples closed and bans on the congregation of Japanese immigrants and their children severely limited the activities of the few that remained open. Justified fears of retribution also contributed to this decline in attendance as they often led to self-censorship among the Japanese community—markers of Japaneseness were abandoned,



destroyed, or hidden, and the Japanese language was rarely spoken outside of the home. First-hand accounts from Nisei testify of the psychological schism their treatment during the war inflicted upon them. Many recounted the deep betrayal they felt from their parents' homeland, some even reported developing a hatred of their Japanese heritage which stayed with them long after the end of the war. After being forced to renege Japanese cultural practices as a means of survival, many chose not to reprise them, whether as a conscious dismissal of their heritage or by force of habit. Despite only lasting four years, the rapid acceleration of Japanese assimilation caused by the war years had lasting repercussions on subsequent generations of Japanese Americans by greatly distancing them from their ancestry.

In light of American society's recurring attempts at religious and cultural subjugation of the Japanese immigrant community, the reaffirmation of Japanese religio-cultural symbols in American space is a testament to Japanese American resilience in the face of oppression. The existence of a monument such as the Byodo-In would have been near impossible before and during World War II, and it was only in a post-war context that the Japanese American community began to enact the reclamation of their right to cultural visibility in American space, not in small part due to the sacrifice of the lives of innumerable Nisei soldiers during WWII, conceptually redeeming Japanese Americans in the eyes of the public by proving their loyalty to the American government and, by extension, American ideals and the American way of life. Robert Gordon's recent publication on the significance of Buddhist architecture in America states that "it is the more durable presence of a building that truly anchors a foreign cultural import into the fabric of a society. . . The architectural achievements of Buddhists embody the emotions, values, and practices associated with their religious and cultural instantiation. The buildings are important insofar as they ground and formalize the religion's place in the country." (Gordon 2022, 3). By virtue of their robustness and sedentary nature, buildings are indicators of long-term settlement. Religious structures like the Byodo-In replica thus symbolically cement the presence of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in the Hawaiian landscape.

The resurgence of visible Japanese religio-cultural markers in public space would not have been possible without the American government's support. The United States saw its post-war occupation of Japan and the country's "democratization" as a turning point in its relationship with the island nation. Japan was no longer an enemy but an ally to America's Cold War project of worldwide Capitalist domination. Japan slowly began reconstructing its international image by

painting Buddhism, which had not been tainted by association with the Meiji government like Shinto, as an inherently peaceful tradition, and embracing it as an innate part of Japanese cultural consciousness. The appeal of Japan's oriental mystique to American audiences resulting in their widespread enjoyment of traditional Japanese arts and aesthetics likely contributed to white, Christian America's acceptance of increased Japanese religio-cultural visibility. In addition, these visible markers of cultural and racial diversity once shunned and deemed "un-American" became elements of American propaganda during the Cold War (Saranillio 2019, 53). In the first part of the twentieth century, Congress resisted Hawaiian statehood based on its being too "Asiatic," and it was during this period that proponents of statehood first began trying to repackage racial diversity from a threat to a means of furthering Cold War America's agenda. Post-World War II, European imperialism became heavily criticized as nations in Asia, Oceania, Latin America, Africa, and Europe began decolonizing. Dean Itsuji Saranillio states that this transformation of global politics made "Cold War ideologues [realize] that Hawai'i's multiracial population could be used to capture the 'hearts and minds' of newly decolonized nations . . . This "nation of immigrants" story helped achieve seemingly permanent control of Hawai'i through statehood while creating a multicultural image of the United States that aided the establishment and maintenance of U.S. military bases throughout much of Asia and the Pacific" (Saranillio 2019, 53). And thus was born the now ubiquitous narrative of Hawai'i as a racial paradise, a narrative that allows and encourages assemblages such as the Byodo-In Temple to exist whilst also being strengthened and reaffirmed, even constituted, by their presence through the dialectical process of mutual creation Miller describes.

The Byodo-In Temple in Kāne'ohe's function as a memorial follows similar patterns to most modern memory sites. According to Jennifer K. Ladino, memorials are designed to confront difficult histories and to provide a "'moral message' in material form," intended to give voice to sectors of society historically denied that right, or to promote cultural pluralism (Ladino, 2019). Ladino distinguishes between memorials and monuments, two words often used interchangeably in the English vernacular. "Monuments," she says, "refer to built structures on a grand scale (think Washington Monument), which tend to (but don't always) celebrate dominant national narratives and reinscribe official histories. Memorials, by contrast, can be as simple as a plaque and tend to mark sites of grief or trauma. Memorials recognize a messier past and give expression to American publics that are 'diverse and often stratified'" (Ladino, 2019). Despite

these differences, there is a possibility for overlap, with many monuments also containing memorials (Ladino, 2019). Considering these distinctions, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact terminology one should use in reference to the Byodo-In—it certainly gestures toward the difficult history of Japanese immigrants’ discrimination under American rule, but the temple is also designed as a large-scale built feature that arguably celebrates and reinscribes national narratives. Even though it is not outwardly discernable to most people, the temple utilizes and reinforces narratives the United States has employed since the end of World War II to justify its settler-colonial projects. As demonstrated above, the site’s stated memorial narrative is born out of the reconciliatory sentiments that emerged between Japanese Americans and white, Christian America following the end of World War II and the reinterpretation of racial diversity as Cold War propaganda. Despite its efforts, the United States has proved time and again that it is not concerned with racial equality and religious freedom when it does not derive benefit from them; for example, in the post-9/11 context, Muslims are regularly discriminated against for (in name only) sharing their faith with extremist groups, and mosques are often targeted as the sites of hate crimes—a pattern which resembles the persecution Japanese Americans and their immigrant parents endured after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Saranillio points out the irony of sites framing the US as wardens of peace and racial unity through diverse cultural representations since when they are “read against the grain, each national/ethnic structure also represents imperial relations that were initially established through the militarized violence of U.S. empire” (Saranillio 2019, 54). The Byodo-In contributes to a reinterpretation of Hawaiian history that centers settler-colonial experiences and dynamics, thus reaffirming American rather than Native Hawaiian historical events as the islands’ defining narrative.

This is not to say that the history of Japanese immigrants’ persecution at the hands of a white American ruling class should be ignored or forgotten, as they are now, for better or for worse, also a part of the history of the islands. However, the significance of the Byodo-In Temple is only a reaffirmation of ethnic pride in space defined as American because the United States government was the perpetrator of the oppression and violation of the local Japanese community’s human rights. This interpretation excludes Native Hawaiians from the Byodo-In Temple’s narrative. Ending our analysis of the Byodo-In Temple with its significance as symbolic of the vindication and reconciliation of Japanese Americans with the United States would presume that Hawai‘i is essentially American land. In addition, the position Japanese and

Japanese Americans occupy in Hawai‘i today has greatly changed since World War II. Currently “local Japanese dominate state institutions” in Hawai‘i, blurring the distinction between the U.S. government and the Japanese community according to Candace Fujikane (Fujikane 2009, 64). This makes those in positions of political power complicit in the United States’ illegal occupation of the islands as they “substantially *comprise* the state” (Fujikane 2009, 64). A part of the local Japanese American community continues to urge for deeper introspection in their engagement with local racial politics, Fujikane among them. She states that as “settlers . . . [they] cannot hide behind the cover story of [their] oppression,” but notes that those who speak out about these complex issues are labeled “anti-Japanese,” which only serves to “preserve Japanese structural power by realigning [their] critical position with anti-Japanese white-racism” (Fujikane 2009). Thus, the Byodo-In Temple assemblage appropriates Japanese American suffering and Buddhist material culture to reinforce a racial paradise narrative that justifies the United States’ illegal occupation of Hawai‘i.

#### A SETTLER-COLONIAL CEMETERY

The Byodo-In replica is part of a cemetery called Valley of the Temples Memorial Park and was designed to house ashes in an area with restricted access at the posterior section of its main hall. Its involvement in a business that sustains itself by selling plots of land for the interment of human remains complicates the site’s interpretation. The Byodo-In Temple features heavily in promotional materials for the cemetery, standing out as a location endowed with particular charm. As discussed in Chapter 3, the current owner of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, NorthStar Memorial Group (NSMG), possesses seven cemetery locations in Hawai‘i as of 2023, and owns over eighty-five funeral and cemetery locations across twelve different states, yet advertises Valley of the Temples Memorial Park as one of its most prized acquisitions. Interestingly, NSMG selected a photograph of the Byodo-In Temple as the representational image for the entirety of the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park in their website’s ‘locations’ tab, revealing that the Byodo-In Temple’s image is synonymous with the Valley of the Temples’ brand. The NSMG website’s introductory video, whose section on the Valley of the Temples, aptly titled “Local Brands, World Class Support,” opens with shots of the Byodo-In Temple and a narration by Valley of the Temples Sales Manager Jeff Short. He begins by asserting that “What makes Valley of the Temples very unique is partly the Byodo-In Temple,” demonstrating

the symbolic significance of the Byodo-In has within the larger assemblage of the Valley of the Temples ("The Guiding Light" 2022).

The existence of American cemeteries on Hawaiian land is a material signifier that asserts the longevity of their colonial occupation. Author of *The Cemeteries and the Suburbs, Patna's Challenges to the Colonial City in South Asia*, Rebecca Brown affirms that “The burial of members of any society creates a physical marker,” in her case marking British Imperial presence in India (Brown 2003, 168). Modern cemeteries in Hawai‘i such as the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park “anchor and produce colonialism and colonial discourse” (Brown 2003, 151). They are complex sites of negotiation that reveal “the interconnections and interruptions involved in spatial othering and the concomitant historical grounding in the soil and past” (Brown 2003, 169-170). Through burial, land marked as a gravesite is imbued with heavy, sticky meaning; the direct physical merging of corpse and soil associates the land with the identity of the deceased. The affective power of death “sticks” very strongly to the places it is associated with. Common tropes in the horror genre illustrate the power associated with places of death and the fear they illicit, often depicting ghosts as being tied to either the site of their interment or the site of their demise, waiting to torment unsuspecting victims. A British woman named Emma Roberts expressed similar sentiments about a cemetery in the city of Patna in the 1830s, during the United Kingdom’s occupation of India.

The crowded charnels belonging to the Christian community of India are usually sufficiently dreary to fill the breasts of the living with horror and disgust, but that of Patna asserts a painful pre-eminence over all the rest; and if the dead could feel discontented with the place of their interment, a fact supported by ghost-stories of great authority, they would assuredly arise from graves dug in this unhallowed spot, and flit and gibber through the streets: a most effectual plan to rid themselves of their Pagan and Moosulman neighbours, who are exceedingly superstitious, and refuse to enter dwellings which have the reputation of being haunted. (Brown 2003, 167-8)

Cemeteries do not only evoke disgust and fear, however, and often elicit deep feelings of grief and attachment in visitors. These emotions and gravesites’ association with the afterlife imbue it with sacred qualities. In his study of 21<sup>st</sup> Century American cemeteries, Thomas Harvey explains that “community opposition to redevelopment plans is strengthened by the sacred nature and historical significance of cemeteries, along with associated regulatory laws—aspects that do not apply, for example, to abandoned rail yards or underutilized school grounds” (Harvey 2006, 296). Of the nine different property tax classes, the State of Hawai‘i has zoned the land the

Valley of the Temples Memorial Park occupies as “preservation,” indicating land meant for conservation. These classifications determine which state department oversees the area as well as its property tax rate. Lands zoned for preservation fall under the jurisdiction of the Hawai‘i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR). The department’s officially stated mission is to “enhance, protect, conserve and manage Hawaii’s unique and limited natural, cultural and historic resources held in public trust for current and future generations of the people of Hawaii nei, and its visitors, in partnership with others from the public and private sectors” (DLNR website). This classification is typical for cemeteries in the state of Hawai‘i, representing American culture’s putative valuation of burial grounds. Their disturbance is considered offensive, sacrilegious, or immoral; after all, American gravesites are even protected from it by law. Yet, government-sanctioned land developers have notoriously not afforded this customary reverence to historical Native Hawaiian burial sites.

In *Ē Luku Wale Ē*, a record of the devastation caused by the construction of the H3 highway, Kapulani Landgraf and Mark Hamasaki expose the controversies surrounding the state of Hawai‘i’s improper treatment of Native Hawaiian sites of religious and cultural importance (which at times included human remains) discovered during the state’s archeological assessments of the land marked for the trajectory of the highway. When faced with an archeological discovery, rather than deviating the route of the road, the state’s policy was to bury the unearthed heritage sites with car wheels and continue with construction. These wheels were meant to “enable future investigations to locate archeological features using remote sensors” according to Paul Cleghorn, leader of the archeological team contracted to perform the land assessments (Hamasaki and Landgraf 2015, 150). Another archeologist hired to work on the excavations conducted for the H3 commented, “We could have found the burial site of Kamehameha I, or another Honokahua (site of more than 1,000 Hawaiian burials on Maui), and they would have had us move it” (Hamasaki and Landgraf 2015). Professor of Hawaiian Studies Lilikalā Kame‘eleihiwa lamented the destruction of one such site, the Kukuioikāne Heiau, for the sake of the H3, stating: “We have lost an incredible treasure of the Hawaiian ancestors. Every time somebody drives over it, they are driving over the bones that have been buried at that heiau” (Hamasaki and Landgraf 2015, 151). The mistreatment of Hawaiian religious sites containing human burial grounds recounted here is but one example of a rampant phenomenon across the islands. The sacrality of these spaces was completely disregarded by the colonial government as

the graves of Native Hawaiians were desecrated through forced relocation, burial under concrete, or plain destruction for the sake of so-called “development.” The Hawai‘i state legislature passed a bill that established burial councils for each island in order to protect Native Hawaiian burial grounds, yet pressures to develop ‘āina continue to threaten Indigenous *iwi*<sup>21</sup> (Landgraf 2010, 37). In contrast, such treatment of profitable post-contact cemeteries is practically unheard of and would undoubtedly elicit widespread outrage. Many scholars such as Christian Henriot recognize the value of examining cemeteries in colonial contexts as “cemeteries [reveal] much about colonialism’s spaces of inclusion and exclusion, tension and contestation, and urban transformation” (Henriot 2012, 109). The disparity between the treatment of Native Hawaiian sacred spaces and settler sacred spaces demonstrates a hierarchy of the sacred that helps define the spatial organization of the land and reinforces settler-colonial rule.

Through the affective power of death, foreign-owned cemeteries assert the authority of settlers to reinterpret and re-sacralize Hawaiian land by irrevocably inserting themselves into the Hawaiian landscape. Cemeteries such as the Valley of the Temples engage in a particular kind of real estate that often guarantees purchasers’ indefinite right to the plots they buy and promise the everlasting preservation of their graves. Unlike other forms of real estate where plots of land often and easily change hands, cemeteries imply everlasting ownership. While these lofty claims are impossible to actualize due to the inevitability of change that occurs through the interactions of all sorts of actants (one need only look at the way historical Native Hawaiian remains are now treated), they have significance in legitimizing the American occupation of Hawai‘i. Scholars such as Brandy McDougall and Georganne Nordstrom have recognized this phenomenon elsewhere, stating that “colonial corporate structures have consistently created and appropriated stories in efforts to make believable the notion that their claims to the lands are equal to or supersede Hawaiians’ claims, so as to justify American colonial occupation and its corporate interests” (McDougall and Nordstrom 2015, 161-2). The sacred affects caused by the presence of human remains on and in the land and the narrative of indefinite ownership associated with it serve this purpose for the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park, whose primary interest remains profit. In *Coca-Globalization*, Robert J. Foster explains that our current global capitalist system of citizenship “presumes that in the world of corporate persons, the first and foremost

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<sup>21</sup> Hawaiian for “bones” (Aikau and Gonzales 2019, 396). I use this term here to be faithful to Kapulani Landgraf’s verbiage in the source material.

responsibility is to shareholders. . . This imperative [greatest possible return on investment] — and no other—provides the moral force behind business” (R.J. Foster 2008, 156). The guiding principle behind the actions of the Valley of the Temples as a corporation will always be profit, and their acts of morality begin and end with that goal in mind. As a privately-owned cemetery, the Memorial Park’s *raison d’être* was always to profit from the sale of their real estate, which takes the form of plots and niches, and their policy regarding the everlasting memorialization of people’s lives was put in place only as a means of furthering this goal.

The Valley of the Temples Memorial Park’s website states that they guarantee both permanent entitlement to and perpetual care of the resting places they sell, whether they be the niches of the Byodo-In Temple or burial plots ("Valley of the Temples Memorial Park & Crematory" 2023). On a second website operated by NorthStar Memorial Group that advertises the services they provide at two of their cemetery locations, including the Valley of the Temples, they define permanent entitlement as follows.

Eternity is at the core of everything we do. For thousands of years, global cultures have valued the concept of ongoing life—of unceasing continuance of family lineage—and today we make it possible through permanent, irrevocable entitlement. In many countries, traditional cemetery property is at-risk for revocation or subject to limited-time leases. Here, interment rights stay in your name forever. We own all of our land outright, are a private entity and proudly abide by all U.S. property laws, so you can rest assured that your investment is secure in absolute perpetuity. ("Eternal Resorts by Northstar Memorial Group" n.d.)

Their intent here is clear and undeniable; using words such as “eternity,” “unceasing,” “permanent,” “irrevocable,” “forever,” and “perpetuity,” all within three sentences, NSMG clearly emphasizes their intent to permanently own the land they operate on currently. They justify this statement by reasserting their legal ownership of the lands their cemeteries are on, though only legitimate within the framework of the American legal system. Their claims defy the reality of the illegality of the United States’ seizure of the Hawaiian Islands by asserting plainly that their cemeteries are all based on American soil. Another irony of their statement involves NSMG’s distancing of the Texan company’s own country and the “many countries” where “traditional cemetery property” finds itself at risk of disruption, asserting their country to be different. According to them, American law protects interred remains from desecration—yet as Kapulani Landgraf and many others have shown, the United States government overtly disturbed



Native Hawaiian burial sites and continues to threaten their peace by endorsing foreign investment and development's encroachment on Hawaiian land.

“CEMETERIES FOR WHOM?”

This leads us to the same question Christian Henriot posed in his work on settler-colonial cemeteries in Shanghai: “Cemeteries for whom?” He cautions against the simplistic answer “to benefit Shanghai residents,” calling the truth much more complex (Henriot 2012, 116). He argues that “the Western settlers created spaces for their enjoyment, to which one was admitted according to ethnicity, wealth, religion, etc” (Henriot 2012, 116). Though the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park appears to be for everyone, it invites wealthy settlers by creating spaces for their enjoyment while socio-economic factors create barriers to entry for many locals. The company has always targeted Japanese and Japanese American buyers, who now boast the highest average income of all Hawai‘i’s racial groups. Yet the sales and marketing teams take every opportunity to remind people visiting the grounds or browsing their website that the Byodo-In is a “non-practicing Buddhist temple which welcomes people of all faiths,” indicating their fear that the temple’s Buddhist aesthetic may lead potential clients to think that the Byodo-In is a purely Buddhist columbarium and dissuade them from purchasing niches (“The Byodo-In Temple Homepage” n.d.). Since the 1930s there has been a great decline in the Buddhist following of Hawai‘i, with 90 temples shutting down since then, a phenomenon some scholars attribute to various factors, some being the closure of plantations and the local integration of younger generations who no longer rely on temples for their social and cultural needs (Gee 2011). Today, most local Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i no longer identify as Buddhist, and the younger generations have experienced a kind of cultural alienation resulting from the gap between their localized culture and that of their elders. Carrie Y. Takahata’s poem *Making Yonsei* tries to make sense of these feelings. She notably addresses her mother asking, “How am I supposed to know anything but Buddha’s not just the sculpture in our living room, the one my friends made fun” a passage prompted by her interaction with Buddhist material culture that expresses the disjointed relationship she has with her family’s Buddhist faith (Takahata 2002, 73). In my interview with a recent visitor to the temple, a local 22-year-old descendant of Japanese plantation workers, Carl Sakamoto described feeling that the Byodo-In was not meant for him, as he was not Buddhist (Sakamoto 2023). Despite the temple’s drive for inclusivity and

its role as a monument to Japanese immigration to Hawai‘i, he could not see himself fully represented by it—his identity as a local<sup>22</sup> was much stronger than his connection to Japanese culture and religion (Sakamoto 2023). Dennis Ogawa recognized this shift in social identity as early as 1978 when he observed that “descendants of the early Japanese immigrants no longer identify with Japan, nor do they feel the need to prove their Americanism. Rather they have become reasonably content to call themselves ‘locals’” (Ogawa 1978, XX). Younger generations of Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i can experience great anguish because of their disconnection from the culture of their ancestors, but they find solace in their belonging to local community and culture.

If the Byodo-In Temple can no longer rely on a strong local Japanese American consumer base, the question of its intended customer posed earlier still stands. In 2017, NorthStar Memorial Group launched a new business venture called “Eternal Resorts” that opens the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park to the possibility of “destination memorialization,” a new concept that encourages foreigners to purchase a spot for their memorialization in a country different from the one they resided, and presumably died, in (“Eternal Resorts by Northstar Memorial Group” n.d.). Their website welcomes potential customers into an “everlasting paradise found, where the traditional barriers of burial no longer apply” and encourages them to buy “immaculate” and “desirable” land in “the most magnificent funeral and memorialization destinations on earth” (“Eternal Resorts by Northstar Memorial Group” n.d.). They also assert that the land “has never before been devoted to cemeteries” to entice buyers (“Eternal Resorts by Northstar Memorial Group” n.d.). The statement implies the absence of any native significance to the environment, readying it for the projection of clients’ identities through memorialization; it declares the land’s essential emptiness. Not only do settlers colonize Hawai‘i in life, but now also in death; through the concept of “Eternal Resorts,” human remains can now fly over to “paradise” and claim space in the Hawaiian landscape, presumably forever. Even the name, “Eternal Resorts,” evokes a kind of post-mortem tourism by linking this new service to the hotel industry.

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<sup>22</sup> A term with many meanings in contemporary Hawaiian society, but generally indicating someone born and raised in Hawai‘i regardless of race, but some exclude white people or *haoles* from its meaning. See Dennis M. Ogawa’s preface in *Kodomo No Tame Ni*, page XX for a more detailed description (Ogawa 1978, XX).

#### TOURIST ATTRACTION

As demonstrated by its formal appellation, the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park offers services that far exceed its primary purpose as a cemetery. Unlike the terms “cemetery” or “graveyard” which rarely transcend their association with death and its accompanying negative affective states, the title “Memorial Park” opens the space to the idea of leisure and enjoyment of the environment implied in the word “park.” It is now more frequent for American cemeteries to embrace a variety of roles in the communities they serve. Thomas Harvey notes that despite their traditional sacredness, “ordinary urban cemeteries are increasingly viewed as amenity landscapes that provide historic, scenic, and ecological values to the communities that surround them” (Harvey 2006, 295). American cemeteries traditionally include places of worship such as churches or chapels, hence the Memorial Park’s inclusion of a Japanese Buddhist Temple can be understood as a natural extension of this practice in response to the needs of Hawai‘i’s ethnically diverse population. As previously stated, this was not the sole reason behind the Valley of the Temples Corporation’s decision to build the Byodo-In replica. As seen in Chapter 3, newspaper articles dating from the late 1960s report that the Valley of the Temples Corporation had planned to profit from Hawai‘i’s lucrative tourism industry through the addition of the Byodo-In to their site well before its opening day. One article mentioned that the temple would “contain a number of niches but its expense will be commercially justified only by its enrichment of the surrounding park . . . It will be used as a Buddhist religious and cultural center, but also promises to become a “must see” for local residents and tourists alike” (“A monument re-created” 1968). The owners saw the Byodo-In primarily as a lucrative venture into tourism, it was at least the driving motivation behind its construction. This statement also makes clear the symbolic significance the Byodo-In Temple has within the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park; its addition would affect how the rest of the grounds were interpreted.

The Valley of the Temples Corporation hoped to increase the Memorial Park’s visibility and attract a wider range of potential buyers by constructing an attractive tourist destination. The Byodo-In would subsequently appear in many articles geared toward tourists that would list places to visit or even provide full itineraries. These articles and the various advertisements the Valley of the Temples would publish often emphasized the Byodo-In’s Japanese aesthetic for its exoticism, essentializing Japanese Buddhist material culture to play off popular, reductive stereotypes about Japan. The Byodo-In meets at least the first requirement of Haunani K. Trask’s

model of cultural prostitution, “the purpose is entertainment for profit” rather than a “joyful” and “authentic” celebration of the culture it represents (Trask 1999, 144). The emphasis the Byodo-In’s management put on the exotic appeal of Japanese culture in their advertisements reveals that they sought to attract visitors to whom Japanese culture was unfamiliar and foreign. The Byodo-In Temple, which had purportedly been built as a monument to the Gannenmono and to serve as a Japanese “Buddhist religious and cultural center” did not prioritize a Japanese or Japanese American visitor demographic, local or otherwise, instead trying to attract English-speaking tourists and residents. The various goods sold at the temple gift shop support this theory, containing many souvenirs and trinkets associated with different Asian countries and only a vague predominance of Japanese items. The temple’s website states that they “sell a variety of unique oriental items, such as miniature temple bells, Buddha statues, Goddess of Mercy figurines, Japanese wedding gowns, kimonos, happi coats, Ichi-ban headbands, prints, and artworks by local artists and much more” (“Temple Gift Shop” n.d.).

Another aspect of the Byodo-In Temple’s official branding includes its description as a “paradise on earth,” coinciding with its namesake’s intended design as a replica of Amida’s palace in the Western Paradise. The temple website’s homepage describes it as “a lushly landscaped paradise nestled in a cleft of the pali” (“The Byodo-In Temple Homepage” n.d.). Temple management emphasizes the Byodo-In’s intended affective qualities as proof of their claim, stating that “visitors describe this destination as beautiful, peaceful, and restful” (“The Byodo-In Temple Homepage” n.d.). The beauty of the grounds and the sensory experience that accompanies its various features contribute to building a tranquil atmosphere characteristic of Orientalist perceptions of Japan and of what people widely conceive of as “paradise.” Furthermore, the temple’s messaging cultivates an inclusive atmosphere where all who enter are accepted as the common tensions of mundane life dissipate to make way for peace within the temple grounds’ boundaries.



Figure 222. Picture taken in the main hall at the Byodo-In Temple depicting two juxtaposed signs on a donation box. The text implies that someone working at the temple, presumably a Buddhist priest, would offer prayers for each donor.

The Byodo-In Temple is rarely the target of criticism for its involvement in Hawaiian tourism, and this may possibly be due to its various other roles obscuring the depth of its touristic nature. It might seem natural to have visitors at a Buddhist temple, as many others do, and even for it to rely heavily on income from tourism for survival; however, the Byodo-In's primary purpose was never religious, but rather to fulfill the founding corporation responsible for its construction's imperative to generate revenue. By fashioning itself as a memorial to Japanese immigration, employing Buddhist priests, and consulting local Buddhist leaders, Japanese craftsmen, and even the Japanese government, the temple was able to build a sense of authenticity despite being built by white American investors for profit. Disney used similar tactics to nativize its most recent project, the Aulani Resort. By commissioning Native Hawaiian artists, employing Native Hawaiian cast members, and acquiring authentic Hawaiian objects to decorate the hotel with, "Disney has created a scenario in which the company and its Cast Members emerge as authorized spokespeople for Hawai'i, trained and deemed responsible to represent Hawai'i in a culturally sensitive and responsible way," according to McDougall and Nordstrom (McDougall and Nordstrom 2015, 171). The Byodo-In also positions itself as an authority on Japanese religion and culture. Most components of its assemblage work hard to cultivate an affective trajectory for visitors that creates a sense of sacredness appropriate to a

religious site. The site is peppered with signs explaining proper temple etiquette (fig. 21) and the employee positioned at the entrance of the main hall is trained to provide a simple explanation of Amida Buddha and the original temple in Uji's significance; that is of course before inviting guests on a tour of the back portion of the temple, where the cremation niches are kept, and trying to convince them to buy a spot in the columbarium. The Valley of the Temples was able to make the Byodo-In Temple appear endemic to the local Japanese community, despite its founders and current owners having no personal ties to that community and only seeking monetary gain.



Figure 223. Picture taken in the main hall at the Byodo-In Temple in 2023 depicting a daikin labeled "for services only."

One key element missing from the Byodo-In's current presentation is a Buddhist priest. Management has employed at least two in the past, and it is clear from a makeshift memorial shrine in the Buddha room that the priest who had most recently worked there, Bishop Hosen Fukuhara, passed away. However, the Byodo-In Temple has not employed a Buddhist priest for at least the last four years. In describing how Aulani Resort failed to capture Hawaiian culture, McDougall and Nordstrom explain that "elements and symbols of the culture are divorced from their function and place in Hawaiian culture precisely because it is impossible to capture the actual purpose and functions without incorporation of the people who use and understand them" (McDougall and Nordstrom 2015, 172). This explains the affective dissonance I experienced

during my visits to the Byodo-In. Despite the tranquil atmosphere, reverence of the guests, the presence of the Buddha statue, and even the religiously appropriate interactive moments of my visit—ringing the bell and burning incense—something felt artificial. What was missing were the religious people whose culture the materials that surrounded me came from. The ritual implements scattered around the Buddha room spoke to me from their dusty corners, telling me that they longed to be held and utilized by someone who knew how (fig. 22). In the end, it was the thing-power of the Buddhist stuff that surrounded me, the very items meant to lend authenticity to the site, that betrayed the absence of the local Buddhist community and directed me to question my surroundings.



Figure 224. Picture of a stone Buddha statue wearing a lei in the Byodo-In gardens.

By design, few people today know that the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park is a foreign-owned company. NSMG is aware of the appeal of locally-owned businesses to Hawai‘i residents and of the stigma associated with large foreign corporations. The sales manager at Valley of the Temples states in a promotional video from NSMG’s website that the Texan company wanted to keep the involvement of a “corporate brand from the mainland” secret from locals ("The Guiding Light" 2022). Despite being a foreign owned-complex that seeks to manufacture its local belonging, the Byodo-In Temple also bears evidence of actual local community engagement. There are many visible materials visitors have left behind as offerings

such as lei, seashells, and endemic flowers (both organic and inorganic) that assign to the temple a distinctly Hawaiian atmosphere (fig. 23). In addition to local material culture, many local people are present on the grounds. Management allows a few local craftspeople to vend their wares on folding tables in the right wing of the temple, and visitor Carl Sakamoto pointed out the presence of workers who spoke pidgin at the ticket booth, whom he said made him feel more at ease by localizing the temple (Sakamoto 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The Valley of the Temples may harm the local community more than it helps it. Most of its revenue from the Byodo-In's involvement in tourism, an industry that has been heavily criticized by the Hawaiian sovereignty movement for exploiting local culture, resources, and Native people, enriches not the local community but foreign corporate investors. Haunani K. Trask defines tourism in Hawai'i as "a mass-based, corporately controlled industry that is both vertically and horizontally integrated" (Trask 1999, 139). Since tourism is a corporate industry, Foster's description of the morality of corporations still operates in this context. Corporate tourism in Hawai'i is and always will be at odds with Native Hawaiian sovereignty because it is not profitable to corporate tourism and directly threatens its existence by delegitimizing the corporations' ownership of Hawaiian land. Trask explains that locals, Hawaiians in particular, do not benefit from the industry, as most companies behind its infrastructure are foreign, and that "Profits . . . are mostly repatriated back to the home country. In Hawai'i, these "home" countries are Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Canada, Australia, and the United States" (Trask 1999, 138). Japanese investors are the most prolific of these, acquiring great amounts of land across the Hawaiian islands for exorbitant prices (Trask 1999, 138). Since 1984, their billion-dollar investments have been behind the outrageous rise in the cost of renting and buying property in Hawai'i (Trask 1999, 146). The post-war boom in tourism and hotel construction led to a significant influx of U.S. American settlers after 1959 that was accommodated by largescale development of luxury housing and suburban communities that displaced Native Hawaiian people who relied on the native ecosystem for resources (Goodyear-Ka'opua 2014, 59). To only name a few examples of tourism's environmental impact, it depletes O'ahu's groundwater supplies, endangers indigenous fauna and flora, and destroys the coral reefs—the immense scale of the "megaresort complexes" that plague the islands call for more water and services than are



needed for the local population alone (Trask 1999, 138). When Haunani K. Trask wrote about the harmful effects of tourism on Hawai‘i in 1999, tourists outnumbered residents 6 to 1 and Native Hawaiians 30 to 1, disparities that have only increased since then (Trask 1999, 138). Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘opua says that the notoriously abusive sugar plantations did not disappear, but were just replaced by hotels and resorts in the post-war era (Goodyear-Ka‘opua 2014, 59). Paul Trousdale was a major player in land development during this period—he was responsible for building a hotel in Waikiki and for much of the transformation of Kāne‘ohe into a mirror of American suburbia (Oliver 1990). With this knowledge, the Valley of the Temples Memorial Park becomes a part of a larger development project that completely changed the face of O‘ahu, repurposing land that already had indigenous roles and meanings that allowed for the delicate island ecosystem to thrive and provide bountiful resources to its inhabitants who, in turn, took great care to ensure its continued survival. Now, most Native Hawaiians struggle to adapt to the ever-rising living costs of their homeland while tourists indulge in the dwindling resources of an occupied island nation.

The Byodo-In Temple’s various roles as a memorial/monument, columbarium, and tourist attraction distinguish it from other Japanese Buddhist temples on the island of O‘ahu and complicate its interpretation. Some of these roles are more immediately recognizable than others and obscure the temple assemblage’s participation in settler-colonialism and industries that harm the Hawaiian Islands and its Indigenous people. Revealing these roles puts the temple’s authenticity into question and demonstrates how authenticity can be manufactured at copysites to further settler-colonial corporate interests.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

My affective response to the Byodo-In Temple reflects the various contradictions the site embodies, the first and arguably most striking of which is the fact its management markets the temple as a Japanese Buddhist center of deep religious significance despite it being a non-denominational, non-practicing temple whose primary purpose is to enrich its owners through the sale of crematory niches. The second contradiction rests between the Valley of the Temples LLC's *reputation* as a caring corporation that responsibly and appropriately aids its patrons in their time of need and its *identity* as a corporation motivated primarily by profit. A similar tension exists between the temple's double sacrality—as a religious site housing the Amida Buddha statue and as a place of mourning for those owning cremation niches—and the fact that its founders explicitly intended for it to participate in O'ahu's tourism economy. Finally, the temple's founders, the Valley of the Temples Corporation, and current owners, NorthStar Memorial Group, are both foreign companies who have taken part of a sacred indigenous geography away from Native Hawaiians and re-sacralized the space according to their own desires and interpretations. These corporations justify their presence by localizing their economic ventures, purposefully deceiving residents into thinking the Valley of the Temples cemetery is locally owned and as such implying it emerged from and serves the local community. The Byodo-In Temple plays a key part in this localization process by forging a link between the cemetery and a powerful local Japanese community. Its role as a monument to the Gannenmono inserts the temple into a local history and community that its owners are not a part of, while its double role as a religious center and columbarium creates a solemn and reverent affective visitor experience that implies the temple's sacredness. Both of these tactics legitimize the Byodo-In's (and the cemetery's) presence in Hawai'i and make the fact that the temple's existence is motivated by economic gain difficult to perceive. Thus, the appearance of authenticity is key to the Valley of the Temples management's strategy when it comes to branding the Byodo-In Temple.

So, is the Byodo-In Temple authentic? It all depends on our interpretation of authenticity. While it is a replica, it certainly fosters authentic religious experiences and has hosted authentic religious ceremonies performed by authentic Japanese Buddhist priests. The temple's founders made the replicated items—the Buddha statue, the bell, the gardens, etc—with the aid of the Japanese government and traditional Japanese craftsmen to ensure their construction would

follow the appropriate methods and utilize the correct materials, which, according to Japanese standards, is sufficient to declare an item's authenticity. The temple management has always proudly promoted information about the Byodo-In's faithfulness to its Japanese model, to draw both tourists and potential niche owners. Nevertheless, the Byodo-In Temple can mean many different things to different people at different times, and although its management carefully curates and enforces some of these meanings, they cannot control all of them. Some are unabashedly recalcitrant, born out of an ungovernable and unpredictable intermingling of human and non-human forces, at times reinforcing the temple's official narrative while at others offering new opportunities for interpretation. For instance, the grandiose Ko'olau Mountains might perfectly fit into a reimagining of the 'Āhuimanu Valley as a paradisaical Japanese oasis to some, while to others they might profess a deeper truth, one that divulges the sacred (hi)stories of O'ahu and its people, one that is otherwise hidden.

In this view, many aspects of the Byodo-In Temple authenticate it, yet the intention behind the temple is not entirely sincere. The Valley of the Temples management has been and continues to be intentionally deceitful—the temple's "authenticity" became a tool to hide the corporate interests behind the temple's creation and continued existence while concealing the truth about its foreign development and ownership. Furthermore, authenticity becomes a critical matter when it is embroiled in colonialism. The Byodo-In's place on the island and the interpretation it forces onto indigenous space is inauthentic to Hawai'i since its narrative excludes Native Hawaiians. How can a replica of a religio-cultural symbol of Japanese nationhood, owned and operated by an American company, be authentic to Hawai'i? The fact of its being a replica is irrelevant in determining the Byodo-In Temple's authenticity, or lack thereof. It is rather its context to which we must look for an answer. Had the Byodo-In Temple replica been located in Japan its authenticity would not be as contentious, but its presence in Hawai'i complicates its meaning. Focusing the dialogue of the Byodo-In's authenticity around its faithfulness to its Japanese counterpart diverts attention from the preeminent question of its authenticity to Hawai'i and further obscures how, as a settler-colonial structure, the temple is born of and contributes to the United States' ongoing occupation of the Hawaiian islands.

By erasing indigenous narratives of place, the Valley of the Temples and its Byodo-In replica sever Kānaka's connection to their ancestors, both human and non-human, and alienate them from their land. This erasure removes competing interpretations of space that do not

include the United States, making their control of the Hawaiian Islands seem natural. The Byodo-In further incentivizes American dominion over the islands by contributing to the false narrative of Hawai‘i as a racial paradise, which the American government has invoked to justify U.S. imperialism since the beginning of the Cold War. Valorizing sites that reveal Hawaiian sacred geography, therefore, threatens an interpretation of the islands that justifies, incentivizes, and nativizes American dominion. Although the erasure of indigenous meanings of space began with Trousdale’s development of the ‘Āhuimanu Valley, it is a continuous and ongoing process, whereby the presumed emptiness of the land is constantly being reinforced through the presence of constructed environments and material culture that exclude Native Hawaiian narratives.

What can be done? A first step would be for NorthStar Memorial Group to acknowledge indigenous presence by doing more than just arbitrarily naming a few areas of the cemetery in the Hawaiian language. In 2018, Carole Hayashino, then president of the Japanese Cultural Center, reinterpreted the Byodo-In Temple replica as “a tribute to King Kalakaua and the kingdom of Hawai‘i” during the unveiling ceremony of the temple’s postal stamp (Wu 2018). Her reimagining of the Byodo-In Temple not as a symbol of Japanese American resilience and friendship with the United States but as a tribute from the Japanese immigrant community to a self-governed Hawai‘i sounds appealing, but it is complete fiction. Ignoring the Byodo-In Temple’s past and how it currently dispossesses Native Hawaiians allows the corporations which profit from it to continue to do so without taking responsibility for the harm they cause. Hayashino’s narrative further nativizes the temple, which ultimately only benefits NorthStar Memorial Group. A better system would follow an approach similar to some outlined in *Detours : A Decolonial Guide to Hawai‘i*, where various contributors have already begun to suggest appropriate ways of reintroducing indigenous (hi)stories and mappings into the Hawaiian landscape. Craig Howes, who experimented with decolonial tours of Downtown Honolulu and the Capitol District, suggests that “a decolonial tour must be stratigraphic—layered—because one place often serves many ends as power relations shift” (Howes 2010). A potential avenue would then be to create a layered narrative experience of the site, one which would include the temple’s true history and its intersection with Native Hawaiian history, which could potentially highlight the Gannenmono’s dealings with the Hawaiian Kingdom and their shared experience of the United State government’s usurpation of Hawaiian rule. The indigenous (hi)stories of the valley are another important element needing to be reintroduced to the Byodo-In’s interpretation.

Although they might be difficult to recover, these (hi)stories hold great importance in the fight for Hawaiian sovereignty, as Joe S. Estores and Ty P. Kāwika Tengan demonstrate in their contribution to *Detours*. They quote a man they refer to as Uncle Joe who “uses embodied storytelling as a way of ‘authorizing an indigenous genealogy of the land’” (Estores and Tengan 2010). In other words, recirculating indigenous narratives of place re-asserts Native Hawaiian’s genealogical connection to the land which not only helps to heal the intergenerational trauma of environmental alienation but also further empowers them in the reclamation of their right to self-governance.

By understanding how the Byodo-In Temple “works” (see S. Foster and Jones 2020) as a replicated foreign religious site on stolen indigenous land, we are better able to respond to its complicity in erasing indigenous meanings of space. Historicizing, locating, and experiencing the temple allowed me to piece together the mechanisms of meaning-making at work behind its creation and day-to-day re-imagining. The temple complex has a multi-layered identity that fashions itself first from assuming the prior insignificance of the land it stands on, next from the interactions of all of the components that make up its assemblage and the co-creative forces forming the Valley of the Temples. These identities, as a columbarium, a monument, a religious site, and a tourist attraction, form a web of interconnected and malleable meanings that *are* the Byodo-In Temple and all of which contribute to sustaining the force that permits them to exist—the American Empire. The Byodo-In Temple’s role in a privately-owned American cemetery means it participates in cementing the colonizer’s connection to the territory they occupy in a physical ritual binding of flesh and soil in which the identity of the colonizer is permanently merged with the land, or at least implied to be. The Byodo-In’s memorialization of the first generation of Japanese immigrants to Hawai‘i asserts its authority to relate local history and in part own that narrative, which artificially injects the temple and its owners into the local Japanese community, making its existence appear authentic to the islands. Despite being an inoperative religious center, the temple still benefits from the inflated value, importance, and reverence traditionally afforded to sacred sites which obscure its capitalistic core. These other roles which give the Valley of the Temples LLC the appearance of benevolence also seemingly relegate the temple’s participation in Hawai‘i’s exploitative tourism industry to an afterthought, when, in reality, potential revenue from tourism was one of the driving forces behind the temple’s construction and the crux of its subsequent owners’ business plans.

More research will help clarify the phenomenon of foreign-owned cemeteries in Hawai‘i and the symbolic role they play in establishing a hierarchy of the sacred that maintains settler-colonial supremacy over the islands. NorthStar Memorial Group alone owns several cemeteries and mortuaries in Hawai‘i, leading me to suspect there are many more like it that trade in a macabre genre of real estate that offers “forever deeds” to its customers and charges such a high price of admission as to preclude the participation of locals, including Native Hawaiians. The connection between cemeteries and tourism in Hawai‘i also deserves reflection, especially in light of the emerging “destination memorialization” described in Chapter 5. Despite the Byodo-In’s popularity and design making it stand out from the others, it is one of several columbaria at Valley of the Temples, one of many Buddhist temples on the island of O‘ahu, and one of several replicas of Japanese religious “stuff” that dot the Hawaiian landscape such as the Daibutsu of Kamakura’s scaled-down replica at Foster Botanical Gardens, or the half-sized replica of the Itsukushima Shrine torii in Mō‘ili‘ili. Continued research into the multitude of Japanese religious replicas in Hawai‘i could potentially elucidate a connection between these seemingly disparate items and contribute to building a new understanding of how replicas operate in colonized spaces.

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