

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY  
Manzanar, California

*Ind. File*

In reply, please refer to:

OPA:LA:AGC

May 21, 1945

MEMORANDUM TO: Ralph P. Merritt  
Project Director

FROM: Alan G. Campbell  
Project Attorney

Re: Rev. Shinjo Nagatomi ✓

1. Mr. Nagatomi has an 18 year old son in Japan. His other three children are all in this country. One of them was born in Canada; the other two were born in the United States. His son is attending a Buddhists Theological School in Japan. It is Mr. Nagatomi's understanding that theological students are deferred from military service in Japan as they are in this country. Of course he does not know whether or not that has been changed since the war started. It is his hope that his son will complete his education, become a Buddhist priest in Japan, and take over the church and priesthood which Mr. Nagatomi has inherited from his father. If his son does that, there will be no reason for Mr. Nagatomi to return to Japan, and he does not intend in that case to go back there. He wants to be where he thinks he is needed and he thinks he will be needed here in any case, and that he will not be needed in Japan if his son takes his place there.

2. Mr. Nagatomi intends to remain in Manzanar until the center closes because he thinks that the people will need him here until that time since he is the only Buddhist priest in Manzanar. After the center closes he will go to San Francisco if his church there is re-established, and if he is needed there. Otherwise he will go to Philadelphia. Mr. Chapman interested him in Philadelphia and wanted him to go there soon, but he feels he is needed more here at this time.

3. Mr. Nagatomi says that the philosophy of Buddhism is that its teachings are universal truths, and that there is no necessary connection between Buddhism and any particular race or people or language or culture. When Buddhism was brought to China, it was adapted to Chinese culture and to the Chinese language. In Korea it was adapted to the culture and language of that country, and in Japan it has been adapted to the cul-



ture and language of Japan. There is no Buddhist hierarchy. Each sect in various countries has its own church government. The Shinshu Sect, to which Mr. Nagatomi adheres, is a sect in Japan and was first formed in this country about 50 years ago. During that time the ruling bishop in the United States has been appointed by the church authorities in Japan but this fact has been a historical circumstance and is not necessarily inherent in the philosophy of the church. The aim has been to educate Nisei or other English speaking students in Buddhist theology in Japan and to carry on the church through them so that a theological school would finally be established here. From that time on the Buddhist priests in this country would study theology in the United States, and the expectation has been that the church here would then become autonomous. There is no essential relationship between the Japanese language and Buddhist teachings or ritual. It would be Mr. Nagatomi's expectation that eventually the church in this country would be conducted by Americans, that the services and other activities would be conducted in the English language, and that the congregations and the ministry would alike be English speaking so that there would be an American Buddhist church as much separate from the Buddhist churches in Japan as those churches are from the Buddhist churches in India, China, or Korea, or as much separate as the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States is from the church of England. All of this is perfectly consistent with Buddhism, and there is no nationalistic purpose in his church which would impel him to work toward any different end.

A significant step in this direction occurred at the meeting of Buddhist priests several months ago in Topaz. At that time there was formed the Buddhist Churches of America, and all connection with the church in Japan was severed. Mr. Nagatomi no longer is a priest of the Buddhist church in Japan but is rather a priest of his own church here under the authority of the Buddhist churches of America. The Buddhist churches of America will take the San Francisco Buddhist church over. That church will be headquarters for the national organization which will have administrative jurisdiction over Buddhist churches all over the country.

Mr. Nagatomi has always been supported by his congregation in this country. Neither his salaries nor expenses have been paid by the church or the headquarters in Japan. He is as interested that Caucasians become Buddhists as that converts be found among the people of Japanese ancestry. In other words his views and the policies of his church may be compared to

those of missionaries and churches, such as the Methodist Church in Japan. The purpose in either case is to spread the doctrine of the church throughout the world on the theory that such doctrines are the Truth. The dissemination of foreign culture is not an end in either case although there is an element inevitably of such dissemination as long as the original missionaries are foreigners. The philosophical purpose, however, apart from the dissemination of doctrine, is more to create a bridge between cultures than to transplant one culture or to replace one with another.

4. Mr. Nagatomi was born in Japan on December 24, 1901. He graduated from high school in Japan and attended Ryukoku University in Kyoto, Japan, from April, 1919, to April, 1927. He lived in Canada from April, 1930, to January, 1934. He was then in Japan for nine months and came to San Francisco in September, 1934, where he was the priest of the San Francisco Buddhist church until May, 1942. Evidently he came in on a non-quota immigrant's passport. No question has been raised as to his immigrant status in this country. He answered "yes" to alternative Question 28. He was granted leave clearance in August, 1944.



Alan G. Campbell  
Project Attorney