

Bukatsudo and the Sport of Cultural Assimilation

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Despite over a generation passing since changes to Japan's migration laws resulted in huge increases to Japan's residential Filipino population, it is vague as to what extent Filipino culture has been passed on to their children. I make this claim because in spite of one of the largest locations the Filipina practices her culture being at Roman Catholic Churches (RCCJ hereafter), the numbers of young adults at these communities are seldom seen. This is because almost all of them disappear upon their entrance into junior high school and their participation within *bukatsudo* club activities.

In this research, I point to the Japanese *bukatsudo* activity as the prime factor leading to the culture assimilation of children into Japanese society. In their examination of religion in new immigrant groups within the United States Stephen and Wittner (1998) show how immigrants in America use religious institutions to transfer their culture to their next of kin. It is due to this attachment to religious institutions, shows Mullins (1987) that cultural assimilation frequently occurs over a process of several generations. In opposition to these studies, research within the RCCJ illustrates a strong pressure placed upon junior high school students to join and actively participate in club activity. Because club groups often monopolize the free time of their members, second-generation Filipino children become unable to attend mass or other church activities with their mothers.

What makes this research significant is how practices of using religion to pass culture from migrant to child are deemed ineffective regardless of the migrants' religious community. Whether Muslim, Christian, Jewish or even Thai Buddhist, the pressure children face to become a member of a *bukatsu* group club is a ubiquitous part of Japanese education. For this very reason, once children become a member it is difficult for them to opt out on Sunday to join their parents in religious worship. Instead, they are excused from attending with their foreign parent during their junior (and sometimes high school) career. After this hiatus, few children return.

This paper is divided into four sections. **Section one** discusses how migrants convey ethnic culture to their children through the use of religious institutions and how *bukatsudo* interferes with this transition. The **second section**

defines *bukatsudo* and explains the system of Japanese education. This includes a concise historical summary of how *bukatsudo* is different from sports for the mythical connection it has with internal training practices valued by the samurai class of the Edo period. This section continues by explaining the contemporary practice of *bukatsudo*, its excessive time commitments and the hierarchical relationship between junior and senior classmates. The **third section** discusses policies implemented to balance children's work/leisure time passed in 2002 called *yutori kyôiku*. In accordance with this policy, the Japanese school week was shorted from six days to five. This section discusses how in spite this increase in leisure time, the importance Japanese parents and children place on church activities remain low. Finally, in **section four** we conclude with some suggestions to policy makers concerning the relationship between religious activity (as a local for cultural practice) and compulsory education. When discussing integration of immigrants into Japan society policy makers should remember that many religious communities are willing to work with local officials as long as they are given the chance to represent themselves. This begins by being given enough time to teach their children.

Given its proximity to culture both domestic and foreign, religious communities must not be forgotten when addressing a smooth transition of culture from immigrants to their children. If Japanese society continues using club activities as an informal means for cultural assimilation, it will soon find that due to inactivity those religious communities most concerned about the welfare of Japan's ethnic citizens will have already disappeared.

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