

# The Influence of Japanese Culture on Contemporary Hawaii

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## Abstract

This paper explores the significant influence of Japanese culture on contemporary Hawaiian society, tracing its roots from the arrival of the first wave of Japanese immigrants in 1885 to the present day. Japanese traditions such as *Obon* celebrations, Buddhist temples, New Year customs, and food culture have become deeply integrated into Hawaii's multicultural identity. Additionally, the paper examines how values like reciprocal obligation, known as *giri*, have permeated local practices. By analyzing these cultural elements, this paper demonstrates the enduring role of Japanese heritage in shaping the daily life and collective identity of Hawaii, thus creating a distinctive cultural intersection between East and West.

Keywords : Cultural Elements, Multicultural Environment, Cultural Hybridity, Traditions, Diversity

## 1 Introduction

The history of Japanese immigration to Hawaii began in earnest on February 8, 1885, when the first group of 943 contract laborers arrived aboard the *City of Tokio*. These laborers were part of the *issei*, or first generation of Japanese immigrants, who were brought to work in Hawaii's booming sugar plantations. By the early 20th century, Japanese immigrants constituted a significant portion of Hawaii's population, profoundly influencing the islands' cultural, social, and economic landscape.

This influence persists today, with Japanese cultural practices visible across Hawaii's public and private spheres. For example, the *Obon* festival, a time of remembrance for deceased ancestors, and New Year's traditions such as *hatsumode* (the first visit to a Shinto shrine) have become staples in Hawaii's cultural

calendar. According to the State of Hawaii Data Book, in 2022, the total population of Hawaii was estimated at 1,440,196, with 314,102 residents identifying as Japanese (Hawaii State Data Book, 2022) , a testament to the lasting presence and influence of this community.

This paper provides a brief in-depth examination of how Japanese traditions and values have shaped Hawaii's modern-day culture. It addresses key historical milestones, religious practices, community events, and the impact of Japanese food and fashion culture, emphasizing the ongoing interplay between Japanese customs and Hawaii's multicultural environment.

## 2 Obon Celebrations

The *Obon* season, rooted in Buddhist

tradition, commemorates deceased ancestors and has become one of Hawaii's most prominent cultural events. The first recorded *Obon* festival in Hawaii took place on July 14, 1902, at the *Honolulu Honpa Hongwanji Mission Temple*. Over time, the festival has evolved into a major community event that transcends ethnic and religious boundaries, drawing attendees of various backgrounds.

During the *Obon* season, which spans from May to August in Hawaii, unlike Japan's typical celebration in July or August, Buddhist temples across the islands host *Obon* dances (*bon-odori*). These events, held on Saturday evenings, feature traditional Japanese music, *taiko* drumming, and dances, creating a vibrant atmosphere reminiscent of festivals in Japan. In 2024, for example, Oahu alone scheduled 29 *Obon* dance events, with 13 on Maui, 6 on Kauai, and 24 on the Big Island. These gatherings often include food stalls selling local and Japanese delicacies, crafts, and performances, offering a space where both residents and visitors can engage in shared cultural experiences.

In recent years, larger events such as the "*Megabon*" have further highlighted *Obon's* cultural integration in Hawaii. Organized by JCI Honolulu and the *Hawaii Todaiji*, the *Megabon* in 2023 drew over 15,000 attendees to Aloha Stadium. The second annual *Megabon*, scheduled for September 2024, is expected to exceed this number, further demonstrating how deeply Japanese cultural traditions are woven into Hawaii's social fabric.

The influence of traditional Japanese *Obon* celebrations in Hawaii goes beyond simply preserving a cultural ritual from a distant homeland. Over time, the integration of these celebrations has contributed to the multicultural mosaic that characterizes Hawaii's unique identity. Hawaii's geographic location, as a Pacific crossroads, has long made it a natural meeting point for diverse cultures, and the presence of Japanese immigrants since the late 19th century has played a pivotal role in shaping the local customs. What began as a solemn Buddhist observance has gradually

transformed into a vibrant, community-wide festival that attracts people from various cultural backgrounds, promoting inclusivity while still honoring its roots.

*Obon's* evolution in Hawaii reflects how traditional Japanese practices have adapted to the islands' multicultural environment. Today, the celebration incorporates local elements, such as Hawaiian music and regional cuisines, blending them seamlessly with traditional Japanese customs. The inclusion of local food stalls alongside traditional Japanese delicacies at *Obon* festivals is an example of this cultural fusion. This synthesis highlights how Hawaiian society has not only accepted but also embraced *Obon*, allowing it to grow and flourish within the local context.

Furthermore, the *Obon* festival has become an occasion for both cultural preservation and innovation. With the rise of larger events such as *Megabon*, *Obon* has transcended its traditional religious and ethnic origins to become a celebration that resonates with broader Hawaiian society. These mega-events, which attract thousands of attendees, serve as a testament to *Obon's* continued relevance and its ability to evolve while maintaining the essence of its origins. The festival now stands as a bridge between generations, with younger Hawaiians—many of whom may not be of Japanese descent, participating in and carrying forward the traditions of their elders.

In this way, the integration of *Obon* celebrations into modern Hawaiian culture illustrates the broader trend of cultural hybridity that defines the islands. It is not just a preservation of Japanese culture but a living, evolving tradition that adapts to its surroundings. Through these celebrations, Hawaii continues to celebrate its diversity, weaving together various cultural threads into a shared communal experience that honors the past while looking toward the future.

### 3 Buddhist Temples and Shinto Shrines

The introduction of Japanese shrines and temples to Hawaii by Japanese immigrants has had a profound and lasting impact on the islands' religious and cultural identity. When Japanese laborers, or *issei*, arrived in Hawaii in the late 19th century to work on sugar plantations, their religious practices were central to maintaining a sense of community and cultural continuity in a foreign land. For many of these immigrants, Buddhism was not only a spiritual guide but also a way to preserve their traditions amidst the challenges of plantation life. As a result, one of the first priorities for the Japanese community was to establish Buddhist temples, which became the cornerstone of their social and religious lives.

In 1889, the arrival of *Soryu Kagahi*, the first Japanese Buddhist priest, marked a significant moment in the development of Japanese religious institutions in Hawaii. *Kagahi*, a priest from the Jodo Shinshu sect, helped establish the first Japanese Buddhist temple in Hawaii, the *Hilo Honpa Hongwanji* on the Big Island. This temple quickly became a hub for the Japanese immigrant community, providing a space for religious services, cultural events, and social support. *Kagahi's* efforts laid the groundwork for the spread of other Buddhist sects, such as the *Jodo sect*<sup>(1)</sup>, *Nichiren-shu*<sup>(2)</sup>, *Shingon-shu*<sup>(3)</sup>, and *Soto-shu*<sup>(4)</sup> across the Hawaiian Islands. These sects established their own temples, each contributing to the spiritual and cultural diversity of the Japanese community.

As these temples grew in number and influence, they became more than just places of worship. They evolved into multifunctional community centers, offering a wide range of services that extended beyond the spiritual realm. For example, many temples opened preschools, providing early childhood education rooted in both Japanese culture and Buddhist teachings. These schools not only taught language and tradition but also helped to pass down values such as respect, humility, and compassion to the younger

generations. Additionally, temples offered elderly care programs, providing support for the aging Japanese population, and Japanese language instruction, ensuring that the language and cultural practices of the immigrants could be preserved. These initiatives helped temples remain relevant to the evolving needs of the community and fostered a strong sense of continuity between generations.

Youth organizations, such as the Young Buddhist Association (YBA), also played a vital role in keeping younger generations connected to their cultural heritage. The YBA provided a space for youth to engage in social and community service activities, reinforcing the values of mutual support and compassion that are central to both Japanese and Buddhist teachings. These organizations offered a way for Japanese American youth to blend their cultural traditions with their experiences growing up in Hawaii, creating a bridge between their ancestral heritage and their local identity.

As time passed, these temples and shrines began to attract not only Japanese Americans but also people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. The inclusive nature of Buddhist teachings, which emphasize compassion, mindfulness, and the interconnectedness of all beings, resonated with many in Hawaii's multicultural society. Today, Buddhist temples in Hawaii are attended by individuals from various ethnic and religious backgrounds, contributing to Hawaii's reputation as a place of religious tolerance and diversity. The annual *Obon* festivals, for instance, have become a shared cultural event that draws people of all backgrounds to celebrate the lives of deceased ancestors through *bon-odori* dances, traditional music, and food. In this way, Japanese religious practices have transcended their original community and become woven into the broader fabric of Hawaii's cultural and spiritual life.

Moreover, Shinto shrines, while fewer in number than Buddhist temples, have also contributed

to Hawaii's religious diversity. The establishment of shrines like the *Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha* and *Daijingu Temple* introduced Shintoism, the indigenous religion of Japan, which focuses on the veneration of *kami* (spirits) and the natural world. Shinto rituals, such as blessings for homes, businesses, and vehicles, have been embraced by locals of various backgrounds, becoming an integral part of Hawaii's spiritual practices. These ceremonies are often performed during important life events, such as the New Year, births, and weddings, and continue to attract people who seek blessings for health, prosperity, and good fortune.

The architectural beauty of Japanese temples and shrines also adds to their significance in Hawaii. The *Byodo-In Temple*, a replica of a 950-year-old Buddhist temple in *Uji, Japan*, is one of the most iconic religious landmarks in the islands, symbolizing the enduring connection between Japan and Hawaii. This temple, along with others, serves as both a place of spiritual reflection and a popular destination for visitors, further reinforcing the deep cultural ties between the two regions.

Ultimately, the introduction of Japanese shrines and temples by Japanese immigrants has not only preserved traditional Japanese spiritual practices but has also enriched the broader religious landscape of Hawaii. These institutions continue to serve as places where people of all backgrounds can come together, fostering a spirit of interfaith dialogue, community support, and cultural preservation. In modern Hawaii, the presence of these temples and shrines underscores the enduring role that Japanese religious practices play in shaping the islands' diverse and vibrant spiritual landscape. Through their ongoing contributions, these institutions reflect the harmonious blending of cultures that defines Hawaii today, ensuring that the spiritual legacy of the Japanese immigrants remains alive for future generations.

#### 4 New Year Traditions

The influence of traditional Japanese New Year customs on the modern New Year celebrations in Hawaii is another profound example of how cultural practices from Japan have been woven into the islands' diverse traditions. Japanese immigrants brought with them various customs and rituals when they first arrived in Hawaii in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and these customs have become an integral part of Hawaii's broader New Year festivities. Over time, these traditions have blended with Hawaiian, Chinese, and other cultural practices, creating a unique and inclusive way of welcoming the new year in the islands.

One of the most notable Japanese New Year traditions in Hawaii is the preparation and consumption of special foods known as *osechi ryori*. These elaborately prepared dishes are believed to bring good fortune, health, and prosperity for the coming year, with each item symbolizing a different wish. In Hawaii, many local families, regardless of their ethnic backgrounds, have embraced this tradition. Supermarkets and local eateries often offer *osechi* boxes filled with delicacies such as sweet black beans (*kuromame*), fish cakes (*kamaboko*), and herring roe (*kazunoko*), reflecting how the tradition has been integrated into the local culinary landscape.

*Mochi* pounding is another Japanese New Year tradition that has found a lasting place in Hawaiian celebrations. The pounding of rice to create *mochi* (sweet rice cakes) is not only a communal activity but also a way of symbolizing the bringing together of the community for good fortune. In Hawaii, families and community groups gather to participate in or watch *mochi*-pounding events, often in conjunction with other New Year festivities. These gatherings are especially popular in Buddhist temples, where they serve both as a form of cultural preservation and as a social event that welcomes people from different backgrounds. The making and eating of *mochi* during New Years have transcended its original religious significance,

becoming a symbol of community, togetherness, and shared celebration.

*Hatsumode*, the tradition of the first visit to a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple in the new year, is another deeply rooted Japanese practice that has adapted to Hawaiian society. While Japan traditionally celebrates the New Year with shrine visits, in Hawaii, people of various cultural backgrounds now participate in this custom, visiting temples for blessings of health, happiness, and prosperity. Some of the largest temples, such as the *Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha-Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine* in Honolulu, see thousands of visitors during the New Year period, many of whom are not of Japanese descent but have embraced the practice as part of their own holiday rituals.

Additionally, the traditional *Kadomatsu* (bamboo and pine decorations) and *shimekazari* (sacred straw rope decorations) that adorn homes and businesses during the New Year in Japan have also been adopted in Hawaii. These decorations, which are believed to welcome the gods of the new year and bring good fortune, are commonly seen across the islands during the holiday season, adding a distinctly Japanese aesthetic to the festive atmosphere in Hawaii. This practice, combined with Hawaiian and other cultural symbols, showcases how the islands' inhabitants blend multiple traditions to create something uniquely their own.

Fireworks, long associated with Chinese New Year traditions, are also a significant part of the Hawaiian New Year celebration. Although this custom did not originate in Japan, the use of fireworks as a means to ward off evil spirits has become part of a shared cultural tradition that includes influences from both Japanese and Chinese New Year customs. The fusion of these practices is emblematic of Hawaii's multicultural approach to celebration, where traditions from different backgrounds complement rather than compete with one another.

In recent years, large public events such

as Honolulu's Japanese Cultural Center's New Year's *Oshogatsu* Festival have brought together thousands of residents and visitors to celebrate with food, music, and cultural performances. These events emphasize the role of Japanese New Year traditions not only in preserving heritage but also in fostering a broader sense of community. Much like the Obon season, the New Year celebrations in Hawaii have transcended their original religious and ethnic boundaries, becoming part of the island's multicultural identity.

Ultimately, the integration of Japanese New Year customs into modern Hawaiian culture illustrates the rich tapestry of influences that define the islands' celebrations. Just as with *Obon*, these traditions have evolved and adapted, becoming a part of the shared cultural identity of Hawaii. Today, the New Year in Hawaii is not just a time to reflect on the past but also a celebration of the diversity and interconnectedness of its people. Through these customs, Hawaii continues to honor its history while embracing a future shaped by the blending of many different cultural traditions.

## 5 Boys' and Girls' Day Celebrations

The Japanese holidays of *Hina Matsuri* (Girls' Day) and *Kodomo no Hi* (Boys' Day) have become an integral part of Hawaii's cultural landscape, blending Japanese traditions with local customs in a way that reflects the islands' multicultural ethos. Initially observed as private, family-oriented celebrations by early Japanese immigrants, these holidays have grown to be embraced by the broader community, illustrating the enduring influence of Japanese culture in Hawaii. Today, Girls' Day (March 3rd) and Boys' Day (May 5th), which has evolved into a broader celebration known as Children's Day, are recognized not only by Japanese American families but also by those of diverse backgrounds, reinforcing Hawaii's spirit of inclusivity.

One of the most enduring symbols of *Hina Matsuri* is the display of *hina* dolls, which represent the imperial court of ancient Japan. Although this practice

has become less common in recent years, many families in Hawaii still pass down these beautifully crafted dolls as treasured heirlooms. These dolls, often elaborately arranged on tiered platforms, serve as a connection to Japanese heritage and offer a moment for families to reflect on the importance of tradition and cultural preservation. Even in households where the display of hina dolls has faded, the spirit of Girls' Day is still celebrated with gatherings and special foods, reflecting how Japanese customs have evolved within Hawaii's dynamic cultural environment.

Another tradition tied to both Girls' Day and Boys' Day is the consumption of mochi, a sweet rice cake that has become a beloved treat in Hawaii. Businesses like the *Nisshodo Candy Store*, which was founded in 1920 by *Asataro Hirao* from *Hiroshima*, continue to produce red and white mochi specifically for these holidays. Local residents place orders to celebrate with family and friends, often sharing the traditional delicacies beyond Japanese American households. This exchange of food symbolizes the broader integration of Japanese traditions into Hawaii's collective culture, where culinary customs from various ethnic backgrounds are often shared and enjoyed by all.

The transformation of Boys' Day into Children's Day reflects an evolution of Japanese customs to suit the broader cultural context of Hawaii. Originally celebrated to promote the health and happiness of boys, the holiday now includes all children, aligning with Hawaii's commitment to inclusivity and diversity. Colorful *koinobori* (carp-shaped windsocks) are still flown during this time, symbolizing strength, perseverance, and the wish for children to grow up healthy and strong. The sight of these vibrant *koinobori* flying across homes, schools, and public spaces in Hawaii demonstrates the lasting visual and symbolic impact of Japanese traditions on the islands' cultural celebrations.

Over the years, local schools and community

organizations have incorporated elements of these Japanese holidays into their own activities. For example, schools often host special events where children craft their own *koinobori* or create paper *hina* dolls, allowing children of all backgrounds to engage with and learn about Japanese culture. These events not only serve as a way to honor Japanese heritage but also foster an appreciation for the diversity that characterizes Hawaii.

Furthermore, Hawaii's multicultural community has contributed to a unique fusion of traditions. On Girls' and Boys' Day, families may celebrate by combining Japanese customs with elements from Hawaiian, Chinese, or Filipino traditions, showcasing the islands' diverse cultural influences. This blending of customs is particularly evident in the food shared during these celebrations, where alongside traditional mochi, families may also enjoy local Hawaiian dishes, further illustrating the cultural hybridity that defines Hawaii's identity.

Ultimately, the integration of *Hina Matsuri* and *Kodomo no Hi* into modern Hawaiian culture demonstrates the adaptability and resilience of cultural traditions. While the original customs may have shifted over time, the core values of honoring family, celebrating children, and preserving heritage remain central. These holidays, once exclusive to Japanese American families, have now become community-wide events that invite all of Hawaii's residents to participate, bridging cultural divides and strengthening the sense of shared identity that defines life in the islands. Through the continued celebration of these festivals, Hawaii not only honors its Japanese roots but also reaffirms its commitment to inclusivity, multiculturalism, and the harmonious blending of diverse traditions.

## 6 Reciprocal Obligation

The Japanese concept of *giri*, or moral obligation, has deeply influenced social interactions in Hawaii, shaping both personal and community

relationships. Introduced by the *issei* (first-generation Japanese immigrants), *giri* is rooted in a sense of duty, gratitude, and reciprocity, emphasizing the importance of maintaining social harmony through mutual respect and the exchange of favors. Over time, this practice has permeated Hawaiian culture, becoming a key aspect of daily interactions not just within the Japanese American community, but also among the broader population.

One of the most common expressions of *giri* in Hawaii is the tradition of bringing a host gift when visiting someone's home. Whether attending a family gathering, a casual dinner, or a larger celebration, it is customary to bring a small token of appreciation, often in the form of food or local delicacies. This act reflects the principle of *giri*, demonstrating respect for the host's hospitality while fostering a sense of gratitude and mutual obligation. What began as a Japanese custom has become an expected norm in Hawaii, transcending ethnic boundaries and reinforcing the islands' emphasis on community and interpersonal respect.

Another deeply ingrained practice linked to *giri* is the tradition of *omiyage*. In Japan, *omiyage* refers to the act of bringing small souvenirs or gifts back from travels to share with family, friends, and coworkers. This custom, passed down through generations of Japanese immigrants, has become an integral part of modern Hawaiian culture. When someone returns from a trip—whether it's to another island, the mainland, or an international destination—it is common for them to bring back small tokens, often food items, for those in their social or professional circles. The gesture not only acknowledges the thoughtfulness of the traveler but also strengthens relationships by showing that the recipient was remembered, even during the journey.

*Omiyage* culture in Hawaii has been embraced by various ethnic groups, highlighting the widespread influence of Japanese values in shaping local customs. The exchange of *omiyage* creates a sense of connectedness within communities and workplaces,

where the act of giving and receiving fosters goodwill and strengthens bonds. For example, someone returning from a vacation to Japan might bring back matcha-flavored snacks, while another person traveling to the mainland might offer macadamia nuts or locally made chocolates. These gifts, however small, reflect the continuing legacy of *giri* in promoting a culture of reciprocal care and generosity in Hawaii.

Beyond the exchange of physical gifts, the spirit of *giri* extends into the broader social fabric of Hawaii. Acts of kindness and favors often come with an unspoken understanding of reciprocity, where helping someone creates an obligation to repay the gesture in the future. This can be seen in various aspects of daily life, from lending a helping hand during family events or community projects to offering assistance in times of need. The reciprocal nature of *giri* ensures that social bonds are maintained and that individuals feel a sense of responsibility toward one another, reinforcing the island community's strong emphasis on collectivism and mutual support.

*Giri* also plays a significant role in formal relationships, particularly in business and professional settings. The tradition of gift-giving during holidays or business exchanges, such as *ochugen* (mid-year gift) and *oseibo* (end-of-year gift), reflects the Japanese value of showing gratitude and respect. In Hawaii, these practices have influenced professional etiquette, with many businesses and individuals continuing the tradition of exchanging gifts as a way to honor partnerships and express appreciation. This ongoing practice demonstrates how *giri* has been adapted to fit the local business culture, where maintaining good relationships is crucial to both personal and professional success.

Moreover, *giri's* emphasis on duty and obligation resonates with the broader Hawaiian values of *ohana* (family) and *kokua* (helping others), both of which prioritize community well-being and support. In this way, Japanese customs around *giri* have found

a natural alignment with local Hawaiian traditions, further integrating the concept into the islands' way of life. Whether through gift exchanges, helping neighbors, or maintaining a strong sense of social responsibility, the principles of *giri* continue to thrive in modern Hawaii, fostering a culture of care, reciprocity, and mutual respect.

Ultimately, the integration of *giri* into Hawaiian culture illustrates how Japanese values have contributed to the islands' emphasis on interpersonal relationships and community cohesion. The concept, which was initially practiced within the Japanese immigrant community, has since evolved and blended with local customs, influencing the social dynamics of Hawaii as a whole. Through these practices, Hawaii continues to reflect its multicultural heritage, where traditions from diverse backgrounds are not only preserved but also adapted to create a shared, inclusive cultural identity.

## 7 Food Culture

Japanese food culture has had a profound and lasting impact on the modern food landscape of Hawaii, blending seamlessly with local flavors to create a culinary fusion that reflects the islands' multicultural heritage. The introduction of rice as a dietary staple by Japanese plantation workers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries set the stage for this influence. By the 1930s, rice had become a fundamental part of the Hawaiian diet, with consumption rates far exceeding those in the continental United States. Even today, rice remains a central component of meals in Hawaii, reflecting its importance in both Japanese and local cuisines. Whether served as a simple accompaniment or used in more complex dishes, rice symbolizes the foundation of Japanese culinary contributions to Hawaii.

One of the most iconic representations of Japanese influence on Hawaii's food culture is the plate lunch, a beloved local meal that originated from the

*bento* boxes brought to work by Japanese plantation laborers. These *bento* boxes typically contained rice, pickled vegetables, and small portions of fish or meat, and over time, this simple, practical meal evolved into the modern plate lunch, which usually includes two scoops of rice, macaroni salad, and a combination of meats such as *teriyaki* beef, fried chicken, or pork. The inclusion of Japanese elements like *teriyaki* sauce in these dishes highlights how the flavors of Japan have become integral to local Hawaiian cuisine. Restaurants like Zippy's, founded by Okinawan immigrants in 1966, continue this tradition, offering their signature Zip Pac, a *bento*-style meal that combines Japanese-inspired flavors with local favorites such as spam, fried chicken, and fish.

The incorporation of Japanese ingredients into Hawaii's everyday cooking has also been widespread, with items like *shoyu* (soy sauce), *miso*, and *tofu* becoming staples in local kitchens. *Shoyu*, in particular, is a key ingredient in many Hawaiian dishes, often used in marinades, dressings, and sauces. Its savory, *umami* flavor has made it an essential component in the preparation of meats, fish, and vegetables, blending harmoniously with other local ingredients to create a distinct flavor profile that defines many Hawaiian meals. Similarly, *miso*, traditionally used in Japanese soups and sauces, has found its way into local recipes, adding depth to dishes such as *miso*-glazed fish or *miso* butterfish, a popular item in Hawaiian restaurants.

Another area where Japanese culinary techniques have left a lasting mark on Hawaiian food culture is in the preparation of *poke*, a traditional Hawaiian dish made with raw fish. Historically, *poke* was prepared with simple seasonings like sea salt and *limu* (seaweed), but the introduction of Japanese flavors has transformed the dish into what it is today. Modern *poke* is often seasoned with *shoyu*, sesame oil, and green onions, blending Japanese and Hawaiian elements to create a flavorful fusion. The popularity of *poke*

has exploded in recent years, not only in Hawaii but across the mainland United States, and the influence of Japanese culinary methods, particularly the use of raw fish and seasonings, has played a major role in its rise.

The Japanese love for fish and seafood has also influenced Hawaii's broader food scene. *Sushi*, *sashimi*, and *tempura* have become staples in local restaurants, often adapted to suit Hawaiian tastes and ingredients. Local varieties such as *spam musubi*, a dish that combines the Japanese rice-and-*nori* concept of sushi with Hawaii's love for spam, demonstrate how Japanese techniques have been adapted to reflect the unique food preferences of the islands. Similarly, *saimin*, a noodle soup dish that blends elements of Japanese ramen with Chinese and Filipino influences, highlights the multicultural evolution of Hawaii's food culture. This humble yet deeply satisfying dish is a testament to how Japanese culinary traditions have seamlessly integrated with other cultures in Hawaii, creating something entirely unique to the islands.

The influence of Japanese food culture extends beyond individual dishes to the broader culinary ethos of Hawaii, which emphasizes balance, simplicity, and the harmonious blending of flavors. This approach mirrors Japanese culinary philosophy, where the natural flavors of ingredients are highlighted and celebrated. Whether it's the meticulous preparation of fresh fish in poke or the careful seasoning of meats with *shoyu* and *miso*, Hawaii's food culture has embraced this philosophy, resulting in a cuisine that is both deeply rooted in tradition and constantly evolving.

Ultimately, the contributions of Japanese food culture to modern Hawaii reflect a broader narrative of cultural exchange and adaptation. Japanese immigrants brought their culinary traditions with them to the islands, where they have been embraced, adapted, and fused with other influences to create a uniquely Hawaiian food culture. Today, the flavors of Japan are deeply woven into the everyday meals enjoyed by residents and visitors alike, serving as a reminder of

the enduring connection between the islands and the Japanese community that helped shape its identity. Through food, Hawaii continues to celebrate its rich multicultural heritage, with Japanese cuisine playing an essential role in that story.

## 8 Aloha Shirts

The iconic aloha shirt, synonymous with Hawaiian fashion and casual elegance, has its roots in the creativity and resourcefulness of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. During the early 20th century, Japanese women, often working on sugar plantations, repurposed the vibrant, lightweight fabric from old *kimonos* to sew loose, comfortable clothing for their families to combat the tropical heat. These garments were characterized by bright, bold patterns featuring florals, landscapes, and other nature-inspired motifs, which would eventually become the hallmark of the modern aloha shirt. The fusion of Japanese textile design with the relaxed, open-collar style of the shirt was the foundation for a garment that would come to represent not just the fusion of cultures in Hawaii, but the laid-back spirit of the islands themselves.

The term "Aloha Shirt" first appeared in a 1935 advertisement by *Musa-Shiya the Shirtmaker*, a business owned by Japanese immigrant *Koichiro Miyamoto* in Honolulu. *Miyamoto*, along with other early shirtmakers, saw an opportunity to combine traditional Japanese fabrics with Western-style shirts, creating garments that were uniquely suited to Hawaii's climate and culture. The shirts quickly gained popularity among locals for their comfort and style, and their distinctive patterns began to attract attention from tourists looking for a souvenir that captured the essence of Hawaii. This marked the beginning of the aloha shirt's transformation from a locally produced garment into a global fashion symbol.

As Hawaii transitioned to a tourism-based economy in the mid-20th century, the aloha shirt gained international recognition. Tourists from around

the world would visit the islands, purchasing these vibrant shirts as a way to take a piece of Hawaii home with them. The influx of visitors spurred a boom in the production of aloha shirts, with many local manufacturers incorporating a wider range of designs, from traditional floral and tropical patterns to more modern interpretations. This period also saw a shift in the fabric used, with *kimono* silks being replaced by rayon and cotton blends, making the shirts more affordable and accessible to a wider audience.

The aloha shirt's journey from casual island wear to formal business attire culminated in the 1960s and 1970s, when Hawaii's government and business leaders began promoting it as a more appropriate and comfortable alternative to Western-style suits. This movement, known as "Aloha Friday," encouraged professionals to wear aloha shirts at the end of the workweek, eventually leading to the widespread acceptance of the aloha shirt as formal attire. In 1965, the Hawaiian Fashion Guild successfully lobbied for the adoption of aloha shirts as standard business wear, and by the 1970s, even high-ranking government officials and corporate executives could be seen wearing them at important functions. This marked a significant cultural shift, as the aloha shirt came to symbolize not only the relaxed lifestyle of the islands but also a uniquely Hawaiian expression of professionalism.

Today, the aloha shirt is worn on all occasions, from casual beach outings to formal events, representing the blend of Japanese craftsmanship and Hawaiian cultural identity. The shirt's evolution from repurposed *kimono* fabric to a global fashion staple highlights the deep influence of Japanese immigrants on Hawaii's cultural landscape. The distinct patterns and designs that adorn aloha shirts often pay homage to both Japanese and Hawaiian aesthetics, featuring elements like cherry blossoms, waves, and tropical flora, further illustrating the harmonious blend of the two cultures. Moreover, many modern designers continue to draw inspiration from traditional Japanese

textiles, infusing their collections with a sense of heritage while creating new, innovative designs that keep the aloha shirt relevant in contemporary fashion.

The aloha shirt stands as a symbol of Hawaii's rich multicultural history, representing the islands' ability to merge diverse influences into something uniquely its own. Through the ingenuity of Japanese immigrants and the continued evolution of the shirt's design, the aloha shirt remains a vibrant reflection of Hawaii's spirit, a garment that bridges the past and present, and a testament to the enduring connection between Japan and Hawaii.

## 9 Conclusion

The influence of Japanese culture on modern-day Hawaii is vast, permeating nearly every aspect of life, from religion and community events to food and fashion. Since the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants in 1885, Japanese traditions have become deeply woven into Hawaii's social fabric. Festivals like *Obon*, religious practices centered on Buddhist temples, and New Year's customs are embraced by people of diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the enduring influence of Japanese food and the concept of *giri* reflects how deeply integrated Japanese heritage is within Hawaii's multicultural identity.

By studying the historical and contemporary influence of Japanese culture in Hawaii, this paper highlights the unique blending of East and West that continues to shape Hawaii's evolving identity as a cultural crossroads in the Pacific.

### Notes:

- (1) Jodo sect introduced by Shizuka Sazanami in 1899.
- (2) Nichiren-shu introduced by Gyoun Takaki in 1902.
- (3) Shingon-shu introduced by Hogen Yujiri in 1902.
- (4) Soto-shu introduced by Senyei Kawahara in 1903.

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# 現代ハワイにおける日本文化の影響

佐藤・しげと・ランス

## 要約

本稿は、1885年に最初の日本人移民の波が到来してから現在に至るまで、日本文化が現代ハワイ社会に及ぼした重要な影響について考察する。お盆のお祝い、仏教寺院、正月の習慣、食文化などの日本の伝統は、ハワイの多文化アイデンティティに深く組み込まれています。さらに、本稿では、義理（giri）として知られる相互的義務などの価値観がハワイに住む日系人の慣習にどのように浸透してきたかを説明する。これらの文化的要素を分析することで、本稿では、ハワイの日常生活と集団的アイデンティティを形成する上での日本文化の継承と永続的な役割を示し、東西の独特の文化的交差点を生み出すことを説明する。

キーワード：文化的要素、多文化環境、文化的ハイブリッド性、伝統、多様性

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