

American Imperialism

When my parents grew up in Hawaii, they said that if they spoke pidgin in school they would have their hands slapped with a ruler. They were told that they must learn to speak English in the way Haoles speak it in order to get ahead in the world. When my brothers and I grew up here in Los Angeles, we never heard Hawaiian pidgin except on those rare occasions when an aunt or cousin would come to visit us.

To us it was like listening to English with big blank spaces of melodic and friendly sound. After becoming a minister and being invited to Hawaii many times, I became fascinated with pidgin. I once saw a page from the Bible which was written in pidgin and displayed at the Bishop Museum in Oahu. After reading it several times over, I thought: 'If someone could talk about Jodoshinshu in pidgin, the Nembutsu and Buddhism in general would be a lot easier to understand. The label of pidgin as an inferior means of communication is not borne out by the number of people who use it in daily life in Hawaii.

Although America is undeniably the most polygot and ethnically diverse county in the world the mixtures are carefully graded. West European values and attitudes form the base upon which all other groups, people, and cultures must define themselves. And yet like Hawaii, the ever-increasing non-West European groups are changing the face and base of what defines an American. In spite of last-stand political and religious groups, America will redefine even its most fundamental core values. A belief in a single creator God is not an absolute necessity for a stable and united people, nor for the establishment of ethical and moral behavior. If harmony is dependent on agreement in all important matters, we will never achieve even a modicum of harmony. Because in important matters such as child rearing, marriage, food tastes, attitudes on death, definitions of success, when to speak out and when not to, etc., each tradition will assert its own position as opposed to another's. Our unity is in our diversity, and traditional America does not like it, and fundamentalism is making a last stand against it. In the long run of course, they cannot win. America can no longer be West European in its core values, To try to hold on to the past can only result in the confusion, acrimony, and racism which plagues Western European nations today in regards to their citizens of color.

Fundamentalist religion in America is in its heyday, but this too is a last stand. The "one true religion" mentality will go the way of Cro-Magnon man, and with it hopefully, American Imperialism. Though Humanism may eventually become dominant in America, Buddhism will remain an important minority stream. It will remain as a healthy side stream, so long as it retains its directness and simplicity, much like the persistent vitality of Dakine Pidgin. It is like the difference between "Are you planning to go and not return or are you planning to go and return?" and "You go stay go, or you go stay come?" Myokonin tend to speak Pidgin.

Gassho,
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