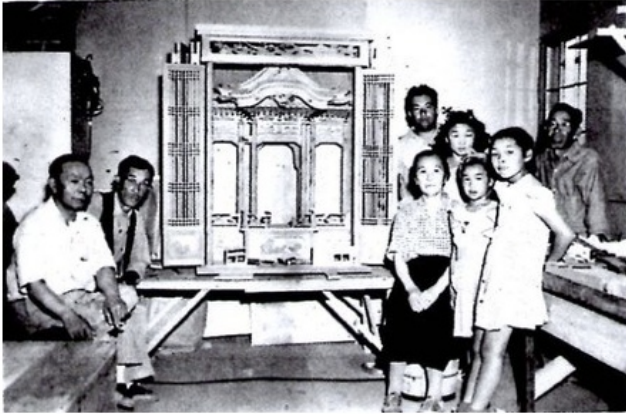


## Shibata butsudan

Gentaro and Shinzaburo Nishiura were accomplished carvers of Buddhist shrines long before their forced removal to Heart Mountain. Trained in Japan, they designed the Japan pavilion for the Panama Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco in 1915. The brothers were the master carvers who created three large (nearly five-foot tall) butsudan commissioned at Heart Mountain. One is in the collection at JANM (made for Reverend Chikara Aso and featured in Art of Gaman), another is in a private collection and the third, shown here, is in Fukuoka, Japan. It was shipped to Japan in the 1980s by Reverend Tesshin Shibata, who commissioned it in 1945 at Heart Mountain.



July, 1944. Heart Mountain. The four men in the photo were associated with its construction; from left to right, they are Choji Sakaguchi, Shinzaburo Nishiura, Shingo Nishiura, and Gentaro Nishiura.



Figure 8: Photo courtesy of the George and Frank C. Hirahara Collection, Washington State University Libraries, Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections.

April, 1945. Hanamatsuri dedication. Standing are Reverend Tesshin Shibata and, on his left, Shinzaburo Nishiura. (Discover Nikkei)

example. This practice is reverting, according to Rev. Candice Shibata.

The migration of the butsudan from Heart Mountain to Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and finally to Stockton, CA, where Rev. Shibata retired, and subsequently to Japan, puts the object, the family and its long history of Buddhist practice in transnational and historical context.

What was unknown until recently is that perhaps unique among butsudan carved during the wartime years, this one features scenes of barbed wire, a guard tower and barracks carved in interior panels.

These were specially ordered by Rev. Shibata and made public recently when yonsei Candice Shibata, the 14th generation of Shibata priests, and the first female priest in the lineage, visited Japan last year. She is the great-granddaughter of Rev. Shibata and the fourth generation in the U.S. of Buddhist priests in the Shibata family.

The accompanying news article shows Candice, her great uncle and details of Heart Mountain scenes. The Japanese headline reads:

“Concentration camp suffering carved into butsudan: tells the story of experience in the U.S.” in a series on “70 Years after the War”.

This object permits an exploration of how people kept religious traditions alive while confined and also how Buddhist leaders responded to external social pressure to shed associations with Japan by calling religious spaces “churches” instead of “temples,” for