

CAMPAIGNS BY ELITE NIKKEI TO SHAPE THE IMAGE OF
JAPANESE-AMERICANS AND JAPAN, 1900–1941

By

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores various ways in which Japanese and Japanese-American elites sought to promote a favorable image of both Japan and the Japanese diaspora in the first half of the 20th century—a time when tensions over immigration and Japanese expansion in Asia marred bilateral relations. Taking as a framework the inherent connection between the relations between a migrant's home and adoptive nations and her experience in the new country, this study explores the question of how elites (the only element of society capable of undertaking the campaigns executed) sought to improve the image of Japanese-Americans and also of Japan in the first half of the 20th century. It considers the question at hand from two interrelated perspectives: attempts to reform individual Japanese-Americans' modes of engaging with society at large, and transPacific social organizations' efforts to manage the perceptions that large bodies of Americans had of Japan.

Examining early 20th century Japanese travel guides, a 1940 history of Japanese-Americans written by the Japanese Association of America, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs records pertaining to discriminatory acts in the U.S., convention minutes for the Japanese-American Citizens' League and the New Americans conferences, correspondence of Viscount Shibusawa Eiichi, papers of Reverend Okumura Takie, documents of the America-Japan Society, propaganda booklets by the Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, the *Nippu Jiji* newspaper and English-language American newspapers, and more, this research uncovers many exciting conclusions. It is evident that, in the early stage of Japanese immigration, social elites on both

sides of the ocean promoted cultural assimilation as a way to demonstrate Japanese patriotism, and second-generation Japanese-Americans were strongly encouraged to work within the existing social structure and enthusiastically proclaim American patriotism to ensure that their American rights and citizenship were honored. After the passage of the so-called “Asian Exclusion Act” of 1924, elites in Japan utilized a children’s international friendship campaign to showcase Japanese craftsmanship and the refinement representative of the higher echelons of society by commissioning dozens of specialty dolls to be donated as gifts to the United States. Finally, it considers the joint propaganda-spreading activities of two very different organizations—the America-Japan Society and the Foreign Affairs Association of Japan—and finds the propaganda disseminated in the West to consist of four major themes: security, an inept Chinese government, other powers in China being unfair to Japan, and Japan’s situation constantly being compared to that of the West.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

AJS	America-Japan Society
CWAT	Christian Women's Association of Tokyo
JAA	Japanese Association of America (<i>Zaibei Nihonjin Kai</i>)
JACL	Japanese American Citizens' League
JANA	Japanese Association of North America
JHC	Joint High Commission
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NA	New Americans
NGK	<i>Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai</i> (Foreign Affairs Association of Japan)
SKJSK	<i>Sekai Kokusai Jidō Shinzen</i> (World International Children's Friendship Association)
WCTU	Women's Christian Temperance Union
WFC	World Friendship among Children
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
YWCAJ	Young Women's Christian Association of Japan

INTRODUCTION

“To establish oneself in the world a person must do all he can to appear already established.”

—Francois de La Rochefoucauld

In the early 20th century, Japan had an image problem. Actually, it had two image problems. Japan had recently undergone industrialization, built a strong military, started acquiring colonies, and was on a trajectory to become a power on the global stage, but Western images of Japan and Japanese-Americans presented a threat that, in the minds of many, prevented the country from being taken as seriously as the other leading powers. The two troublesome components of Japan’s image were: (1) the negative impression that Japanese emigrants in the United States were making, and (2) the Western perspective on Japan’s foreign policy, especially with regard to China in the 1930s. Efforts by elite Japanese and Japanese-Americans to improve the image of their native land and those living abroad in the period between 1900 and 1941 is the focus of this dissertation. In this overview, I will first address Japanese and Japanese-American efforts to manage the impression that Japanese-Americans were making on the mainstream before turning to a conversation about various unofficial diplomatic (which I refer to as “paradiplomatic”) missions aimed to mend strained bilateral relations between the United States and Japan.

The United States is often said to be a nation of immigrants and a place where, with sufficient persistence and hard work, a newcomer can achieve great success and enjoy a respected position in society. However, despite the common rhetoric about America being a land of opportunity, there are—and have always been—profound barriers to achievement for immigrants from certain nations. For example, Germans in the early 19th century, and later in the

century the Irish, were greeted with contempt by some of those already living in the United States. Around the turn of the 20th century, immigrants from Japan were met with hostility and faced significant challenges to making a living and settling in the new country. Many Japanese-Americans from this era tried to prepare for life in the United States by reading guidebooks before leaving Japan. The information given in these publications covered many facets of life, but often had a similar tone—one that urged immigrants to *gaman*, or persevere, in the face of adversity.

For instance, a 1904 guide for living in the United States urged healthy yet impoverished young men—especially those who wanted to study—to emigrate because economic conditions in Japan made self-supported study nearly impossible. Even if an enterprising person were to attempt to gain an education while also working, the guidebook asserts that it would require so much effort that the student would soon become “malnourished and sickly. . .a completely useless person.”¹ A far better option, it claimed, would be to work and study in the United States, a place where the wages were considerably higher and a person could support himself while spending less time at work, thus leaving more time to attend school and complete assignments.

This guide was not written by emigrants themselves, nor by any of the White Americans who were the dominant group in the culture that the Japanese were crossing the ocean to join. Instead, the guide and many others like it were written by elite members of the Japanese-American community and their counterparts back in Japan, who sought to shape and control the image of Japan and Japanese people held by Americans from approximately 1900 and until 1941. The perceived usefulness these works is reflected in the wide array of topics covered—

¹ *Shintobei*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Publishing Organization, 1904), 1.

from Western fashion and American social customs to gaining an education and becoming an entrepreneur in the United States.

These efforts to help Japanese-Americans better assimilate are one major topic of this dissertation. The other primary topic investigated in this study are paradiplomatic missions organized by notable individuals that aimed at strengthening ties between the United States and Japan. Taken together, the examination of these two phenomena reveal new connections between campaigns of elite Japanese reformers and their Japanese-American counterparts to craft a favorable image of Japanese-Americans and Japan. Moreover, these discoveries inform our understanding of the Japanese-American “model minority” myth, which the current literature maintains began in the immediate post WWII-era. However, the methods for safeguarding the image of Japanese-Americans employed in the late 1940s and 1950s were largely strategies from the campaigns discussed in this study, which were then adapted to fit the goals of the leaders of *Nisei*² Japanese-Americans.

The elites who orchestrated these various campaigns often had assistance from governmental agencies or individual politicians based in either Japan or the United States. In general, Japanese politicians and bureaucrats assisted in the campaigns in order to promote a more positive image of Japan, which they considered necessary for securing Japan’s position as a great power relative to other nations on the global stage. The American officials who lent their prestige to the campaigns of elite Japanese-Americans seem to have been motivated by a combination of political and economic interests, especially in Hawaii, which was home to a sizable Japanese emigrant community.

² Literally meaning “second generation,” this term is used to describe the children of immigrants, i.e., the first generation born in the new country of residence.

I found that in the period leading up to the “Asian Exclusion Act” of 1924, and (in terms of historiographical contribution, more importantly) after the passage of the act, rather than simply focusing on building up a political order in Asia, Japanese elites attempted to elevate the status of Japanese-Americans, and by extension, Japan, through a variety of assimilation and moral reform campaigns. These campaigns were remarkably similar in Hawaii and the West Coast despite key differences in the social and economic realities of each location. However, their approaches diverged somewhat after the passage of the 1924 legislation as the general focus in both locations shifted to helping the second-generation Japanese-Americans become model citizens on the mainland. In the case of Hawaii, the goal of statehood influenced the ways in which race was discussed in the public domain.

The experiences of Japanese-Americans were significantly tied to the perception of Japan in the United States, and in turn, the treatment of Japanese nationals in America had an impact on Japan’s international status. As such, in the post-1924 world, private, transPacific organizations worked to improve the image of both Japan and Japanese-Americans by crafting a specific image for consumption abroad in hopes of reducing tensions between the two nations. These paradiplomatic efforts included an exchange by American and Japanese children of ambassador dolls, with the dolls sent on behalf of Japanese children to the United States being ornate, very expensive, and showcasing both the skill of Japanese artisans and the refinement of Japanese high society in an era only recently eclipsed by the move to Westernize. This was meaningful and strategic because the vast majority of Americans had not come into contact with a Japanese person, and those who did likely saw farmers who grew up in rural Japan and whose lack of socially accepted mannerisms embarrassed Japanese and Japanese-American elites.

Other paradiplomatic activities included composing a large number of English-language propaganda materials that offered various rationales for the Japanese presence in China and a personalized effort by a group of Japanese elites to get these propaganda materials into the hands of Americans that the organization deemed sympathetic.

In order to examine the ways in which these various campaigns were composed and conducted, this study utilizes archival materials from both Japan and the United States, including: (1) the personal papers of industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi³ (1840–1931), an important advocate for and financial supporter of the anti-vice and assimilation campaigns in Hawaii as well as the Yokohama school for “picture brides,” (2) late-19th- and early-20th-century travel guides for Japanese moving to the United States; (3) records from the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ (MoFA) diplomatic archives; (4) an official history written by the Japanese Association of America (JAA, known in Japanese as the *Zaibei Nihonjin Kai*); (5) correspondence between members of the America-Japan Society (AJS) and American counterparts; (6) records of the Japanese American Citizens’ League (JACL); and (7) documents on the various activities of the Christian minister Reverend Okumura Takie of Honolulu, one of the earliest, and arguably the most important, advocates for creating a Japanese-American community in Hawaii.

Analysis of these and other materials reveal that from the turn of the 20th century until the early 1940s, Japanese-American organizations operating within the United States aimed their reform campaigns at lower class laborers to raise the image of the Japanese-American community as a whole. Their efforts were born out of frustration at Americans’ failure to distinguish between elites and laborers, thus treating all Japanese poorly as a result. On the other

³ Japanese (and other East Asian) names are given in standard Japanese order, surname followed by given name, unless the individual has previously chosen to use the opposite order in English.

hand, the Japan-based organizations sought to strengthen or at least preserve bilateral friendship during diplomatically challenging periods and often worked closely with American counterparts to this end. The government officials and governmental organizations were, for their part, invested in the propagation of an idealized Japanese-American image in order to further regional and international agendas: for Japan, the pressure to transform the image of Japanese-Americans from backward, alien, and unassimilable to culturally adaptable fit into a larger objective of securing a place among the powers on the global stage whereas Hawaiian officials promoted the idea of a “model” Japanese-American population as a way to quell opposition on the mainland to Hawaiian statehood.

Historical Overview

Japanese migration to Hawaii began in 1868 with an ill-fated group of officially sanctioned migrants whose effort at settling in the islands failed in large part because almost none of them were unaccustomed to agricultural work.⁴ Renewed efforts began almost twenty years later, and from 1885 until Japanese government-sponsored emigration to Hawaii ceased in 1894, some 28,000 Japanese went to Hawaii to work.⁵ The majority of these laborers hailed from rural, agricultural backgrounds; many came from a few key southwestern prefectures such as Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, and Hiroshima. The decades of economic and social turmoil that followed the 1868 Meiji Restoration⁶ led many to search for better options overseas in the late 19th century. Due to its close proximity to Japan, constant need for new laborers, and the availability

⁴ Akemi Kimura, *Issei Pioneers: Hawaii and the Mainland, 1885–1924* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1992), 13.

⁵ Kimura, 11.

⁶ The Meiji Restoration refers to the restoring of imperial rule to Japan that took place in 1868, following the approximately two-and-a-half centuries during which political power was held by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the name of the Emperor, and the subsequent political and social reforms.

of higher wages than could readily be earned in South America, Hawaii was a preferred destination for Japanese migrants. However, the number of people desiring to emigrate to Hawaii was far greater than those who were able to leave. For instance, nearly 29,000 applied to fill 600 slots for the 1885 voyage.⁷ Among those lucky few who were successful in reaching Hawaiian shores were not only men but also women: during the era of government-sponsored emigration, women comprised roughly twenty per cent of Japanese emigrants to Hawaii. Both sexes labored on sugar and coffee plantations under harsh conditions, with men usually cutting sugar cane and women stripping the leaves. The demanding work paid incredibly well in the eyes of the new immigrants (wages were roughly eleven times higher than what they could expect to receive for similar agricultural work in Japan) and this induced many to stay a few years or even permanently.⁸

Though some government officials and plantation owners worried about the sizable Japanese population that amassed in the decades following the commencement of regular immigration to the islands, Japanese labor was vital to the Hawaiian industries. The concern on the part of Hawaiian elites was that the Japanese seemed: (1) to resist assimilating into mainstream culture, and (2) were not afraid to strike in order to demand better pay and working conditions.

Also disconcerting to government officials and planters alike was the prospect of a new generation of Japanese-Americans able to vote. To offset the problem of Issei⁹ not assimilating, planters backed a scheme by the Reverend Okumura Takie to induce plantation laborers to become Christians, adopt American ways of living, and desist in their labor strike organizing.

⁷ Kimura, 13.

⁸ Kimura, 16.

⁹ Literally meaning “first generation,” this term is used to describe immigrants born in Japan.

Subsequently, when there were sufficient numbers of Nisei in Hawaii, Okumura started the New Americans Conference, an annual meeting where accomplished Nisei delegates met with leaders of the community or territory at large to discuss issues that were important to Nisei. The issues at hand during these conferences ranged from the ability of Nisei individuals to secure jobs and the needs of the Hawaiian economy to which elements were appropriate and desirable for Nisei to adopt from Japanese culture. However, because the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association heavily funded the conferences, much of the content was organized around the needs of the sugar industry.

After Hawaii was annexed by the United States in 1898, the practice of contract labor was abolished and Japanese laborers from the islands started moving to the United States mainland in significant numbers. The draw for laborers to come to the mainland was higher wages, which averaged twice the going rate in Hawaii.¹⁰ Also, the work on the mainland in farming, fisheries, and railroads was perceived to be less physically demanding than plantation jobs. This outflow of Japanese laborers from Hawaii became an acute problem after Japanese were barred from immigrating to the United States or its territories in 1924.

The American mainland also attracted a large number of immigrants who came directly from the Japanese islands. Their motivations to work abroad were similar to those who had earlier moved from Japan to Hawaii. Upon arriving on the West Coast of the United States, they immediately faced anti-Asian sentiment that had initially developed in response to Chinese immigrants, a group with a significant presence on the West Coast. The concerns on which the “yellow peril,” or fear of Asian immigrants, was founded was a feeling of anxiety in regard to relatively cheap Asian labor which they thought would undercut the wages of native-born

¹⁰ Kimura, 24.

workers and lower their standard of living. The concentration of Japanese laborers in a few western states, most notably California, re-kindled the anti-Asian sentiment.

In 1906, San Francisco suffered an earthquake that caused widespread fires and destroyed much of the city. In the disaster's aftermath, the San Francisco School Board moved to segregate children born of Japanese parents into substandard facilities to save the remaining functional schools for White children. The action outraged Japanese officials, who lodged protests on behalf of Japanese-Americans. President Theodore Roosevelt was gravely concerned about the possible negative ramifications for bilateral relations because he understood the reality of Japan's strong position in Asia (and its impressive navy) and did not want to offend the nation. Roosevelt was able to persuade the school board to compromise: it agreed not to segregate Japanese-American children if the immigration of Japanese laborers were halted. Subsequent to this, American diplomats met with Japanese counterparts to reach an agreement regarding Japanese immigration. The product of these negotiations was the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement" between the United States and Japan whereby Japan would be responsible for preventing laborers from going to the United States or Hawaii by denying them passports, in exchange for which the United States agreed to not legally bar the Japanese from entering the country. This accord saved Japan the humiliation of having its nationals rejected entirely by the United States. The fact that the president of the United States had to mediate a dispute between a local school board and a foreign nation speaks to the intensity of the anti-Asian discrimination on the West Coast.

However, there were a few exceptions to the Gentlemen's Agreement that allowed certain individuals to still immigrate to the United States. For instance, family members of Japanese laborers already working in the United States or its territories prior to the talks were

allowed to immigrate. As an additional measure to ensure the efficacy of the Gentlemen's Agreement, the two parties agreed that the Japanese government would track the whereabouts of its nationals residing in the United States through mandated registration at the nearest Japanese consulate. If all of the paperwork was valid, the immigrant would obtain a certificate of authenticity after registering. The Japanese government needed a presence on the ground in the United States in to ensure that its nationals did, in fact, have the necessary status and paperwork to be in the country per the terms of the Gentlemen's Agreement. The MoFA outsourced this job to the JAA. This organization was primarily comprised of Japanese-American professionals who had banded together in 1900 to protect the interests of the Japanese-American community at large. Many within this organization firmly believed that Japanese immigrants ought to conform to mainstream culture and that assimilation would help prevent members of the Japanese-American community from being harassed. The JAA launched a variety of campaigns to induce Japanese immigrants to adopt American customs and to shun activities seen as morally corrupting, such as gambling and prostitution—all while they were serving important consular functions for the community.

Shortly after the Gentlemen's Agreement came into being, an influx of Japanese picture brides began to land on the shores of the western states and Hawaii. Many American officials considered the wave of picture brides—who were allowed to immigrate under the Gentlemen's Agreement—to be evidence that Japan had not entered into the agreement in good faith.

Moreover, the practice of “picture marriages,” in which the future bride and groom exchanged letters and photos via a marriage broker but never actually met in person before legally entering into a marriage contract, was often misunderstood by Americans unfamiliar with the practice and aroused suspicion as to the motives of these women for coming to the United

States. The presence of Japanese women raised alarm for two primary reasons: (1) they might actually be working as prostitutes, and (2) they might give birth to many children, thus dramatically increasing the population of Japanese-Americans—including natural-born citizens who would eventually be able to vote.

When the Nisei came of age they operated in a society that had been openly hostile to their parents and questioned the legitimacy of the entitlements bestowed onto them as a result of their American birth. Many Americans suspected that the Nisei were loyal to Japan and could never culturally adapt to mainstream America. Among the many pretexts for discrimination cited by anti-Japanese agitators were the facts that many Nisei children and youth attended weekend or evening Japanese school in addition to public school, and the practice by the Japanese government of counting any child of Japanese parents whose birth had been registered with the Japanese consulate as a Japanese subject, essentially giving the Nisei dual citizenship. For their part, Nisei typically met these criticisms with overt demonstrations of patriotism and pledges of loyalty to the United States.

While Japanese-Americans were attempting to combat yellow peril sentiment with self-correcting behavior, events in the realm of international relations were jeopardizing diplomatic ties between the United States and Japan. In the first decades of the 20th century, Japan had been on a path of self-strengthening that evolved into aggression toward its neighbors. The United States and the European imperial powers in general had ambivalent feelings toward Japan's rapid progress in becoming a global power. When Japan handily defeated China in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–5), the Western powers generally applauded and accepted that the balance of power in the region had shifted to favor Japan. However, when Japan decisively and quickly defeated Russia in 1905, many Europeans and Americans became apprehensive of growing

Japanese power in the region. President Roosevelt did not share their alarmist view; he was glad for the Japanese victory and actively moderated peace talks between the two warring nations that resulted in the Treaty of Portsmouth in September of 1905. According to the terms of the treaty, Japan was given the Liaodong Peninsula (including Port Arthur, a year-round warm water port that the Russians eagerly sought to control) as well as Russia's former holdings in Manchuria (including the transSiberian railroad, which connected to Port Arthur). The document also acknowledged Japan's pre-eminent position in Korea, which became a Japanese protectorate that same year and was officially annexed as a colony a mere five years later.

The United States needed to interact carefully with Japan in order to increase, or even preserve, its economic position in East Asia via the Open-Door Policy, which aimed to protect the rights and opportunities of various imperial powers in China. The ideological foundation of the Open-Door Policy originated as a British prerogative via the Anglo-Chinese treaties of Nanking in 1842 and Wanghia in 1844. By the time American Secretary of State John Hays appropriated the concept in 1899, his country had become an "Asian power" by acquiring the Philippines in 1898. As latecomers to the grab for power in China, they jealously guarded their place at the table.

The Open-Door Policy also meant that the United States was constantly re-evaluating its relationships with other powers. For instance, British influence in the non-Western world was a source of consternation for the United States and therefore an irritant in Anglo-American relations, but these long-time rivals could come together in an effort to counterbalance Russian economic encroachment in Manchuria in the mid-1890s.¹⁰ After the Russo-Japanese War, however, power was redistributed in East Asia and the new threat to American interests came from Japanese expansion, especially into China.

As Japan became more involved in China it started down the road to what would become known as the Second Sino-Japanese War, or World War II in Asia. Americans who followed developments in that part of the world became increasingly critical of Japan. In response to Japanese aggression, Americans and Chinese alike called for and carried out boycotts of Japanese goods. With each battle in China the Japanese Army, and by extension, Japan, was subject to increasing criticism. On December 12, 1937, the Japanese sunk an American naval vessel, the USS Panay, in the Yangtze River outside of Nanking, on the eve of the infamously brutal invasion of that city. In order to prevent the Panay incident from seriously damaging bilateral relations between the United States and Japan, several relief funds for the victims were created by organizations with ties to the United States.

Thus, it was in the midst of these tensions in the relations between the United States and Japan that Japanese intellectuals, officials, and businessmen, sometimes in cooperation with American counterparts, worked to improve the image of their countrymen (and their descendants) living in the United States. In the early years of Japanese immigration, the focus of these groups' attention was on suppressing vice within Japanese-American communities and also encouraging Japanese-Americans to assimilate to mainstream society. Later, when the second-generation Japanese-Americans were coming of age, the focus was on making sure that they were accepted as "Americans" by the society at large. The methods employed at this stage were outward expressions of patriotism for the United States, de-emphasizing connections to Japan, and encouraging moderate political activity—such as not voting in a block along racial lines.

Historiography

My research builds on the work of pioneering scholars in Asian history, Asian-American history, and the history of international relations. Yuji Ichioka was the first to coin the phrase “Asian-American,” and his watershed scholarship set a standard for examining the lives and struggles of individual Japanese immigrants to the United States.¹¹ Prior to this, monographs on Japanese-Americans focused on the anti-Japanese sentiment on the American west coast or the governmental actions that resulted from the yellow peril. Ichioka uncovered reform campaigns by the JAA that sought to stamp out vice and persuade Japanese-Americans to assimilate to the dominant American culture. He also turned a scholarly eye to the picture bride school in Yokohama which taught basic skills for life in the United States. Though I address some of the same groups and institutions as Ichioka, my work analyzes them through a different lens. Whereas Ichioka primarily looked at the lived experiences of the average immigrant, I am more concerned with the motivations and actions of elite Japanese-Americans, and making connections between the reform campaigns of the first and second generations.

The transPacific dynamic of this topic was brought to the forefront within the scholarship of historian Eiichiro Azuma has done much to bridge the divide between Asian-American and Asian history. Notably, his work has demonstrated the interwoven nature of Issei, Japanese-American elites, and their counterparts in Japan in united efforts to reform the Japanese labor population in the United States.¹² Azuma identifies a Japanese-American embrace of Western racist ideology that these historical actors employed to assert Japanese superiority over other minorities in the United States, thus clearing the way for a subsequent mainstream acceptance of

¹¹ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988).

¹² Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Japanese-Americans as a consummate racial minority in the United States. The problem with this assertion, however, was that both mainstream Americans and Japanese immigrants of the laboring class viewed Japanese laborers as temporary sojourners with the sole purpose of earning money and returning to Japan rather than building Japanese-American communities. The idea of a visit in order to get extra funds and then returning to Japan was contrary to the image the elites wished to engineer.

Additionally, I consider efforts by private international organizations—groups that can be classified as “friendship” societies—to influence Americans to view Japan more favorably. The actions of these societies and clubs are the focus of the last two chapters, in which I investigate events such as the ambassador doll exchange, the proposed Joint High Commission (JHC), and literary propaganda campaigns. Some of these campaigns, notably the ambassador doll exchange program, have been the focus of previous scholarly attention, though the other campaigns I engage with have not been written about.¹³ I examine these campaigns through the lens of soft power—thus offering a new take on the topics that have been previously considered.

F. Hilary Conroy, Francis Conroy, and Sophie Quinn-Judge consider the intersection of Japanese immigration from Hawaii and Japan to the United States, and the contest between the United States and Japan in regard to influence and economic opportunities in China and Asia in general.¹⁴ They see the latter as being very much influenced by the former. They also devote scholarly attention to the work undertaken by social organizations to improve the relations between the United States and Japan. For instance, they briefly mention the proposed JHC that

¹³ The ambassador dolls have previously been written about, but mostly just in works for children. One scholarly exception (published in Japanese) is Hiroaki Koresawa, *Aoi Me no Ningyō to Kindai Nihon: Shibusawa Eiichi to L. Gyurikku no Yumei no Yukue* (Yokohama: Seiori Shobō, 2010).

¹⁴ F. Hilary Conroy et al., *West Across the Pacific: American Involvement in East Asia from 1898 to the Vietnam War* (Youngstown: Cambria Press, 2008).

Shibusawa very much wanted to see come to fruition. This commission would have been made up of private but esteemed American and Japanese citizens, such as prominent businessmen, who would meet to discuss topics important to both countries, attempt to reach agreements on these sensitive issues, and then make recommendations to their respective governments. They contend, however, that the proposal was doomed to failure even if it had come to fruition because the political atmosphere was too toxic for an unofficial body to be of effective.

The Immigration Reform Act of 1924, which effectively barred the vast majority of Japanese from entering the United States, was a crucial marker in American-Japanese relations; scholars generally agree that the insult Japan felt over this was one of the causes for the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Hirobe Izumi demonstrates how American missionaries and businessmen attempted to rally support to amend the bill by giving Japan a nominal immigration quota as even the “undesirable” European nations had.¹⁵ As the only monograph-length work on American and transPacific attempts to alter the infamous “Asian Exclusion Act,” Hirobe’s work occupies a crucial space in the historiography of the topic of early-20th-century Japanese immigration and how the immigration question affected United States-Japan relations in this era. He focuses on private groups, he asserts, because after the 1924 act was passed, official diplomatic relations had become ineffective. On the Japanese side, the MoFA did not want to appear as if it was meddling in the internal affairs of the United States so it did not lend aid to groups trying to amend the act. Similarly, when this issue was brought before Congress, that body asserted that the issue had already been addressed, and individual members did what they could to ensure that the executive branch, in the form of the Department of State, did not adopt a quota system for Japanese immigration. Operating along the lines of Izumi’s work, I also examine the agency of

¹⁵ Hirobe Izumi, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act* (Stanford: University of California Press, 2001).

private groups and their efforts to change the perception of Japan and Japanese-United States international relations. Likewise, my research confirms Izumi's and Conroy's assertions that the official diplomatic channels were not equipped to handle all aspects of relations between the two nations in this period. Moreover, leaders of the organizations I study did not have faith in the diplomats' ability to achieve desirable results. Hence, they decided to act on their own. I examine a number of transPacific campaigns initiated and managed by private groups—most dealing with the image of Japan, but also one that was intended to bring about political change.

The Asian-American model minority myth has only recently begun to be problematized, so scholarship on the topic is still quite limited. This myth is best known as a phenomenon dating from the late 1960s which holds that Asian-Americans are an asset to mainstream society because this ethnic group has low levels of crime and also high levels of educational achievement and, as a result, higher than average salaries. In the popular imagination, these attributes stem from Asian cultural traits such as hard work and respect for authority that are instilled in Asian-American youth from childhood by their parents. This myth pits Asian-Americans against other ethnic minorities, most notably African-Americans, and serves as a way to blame endemic poverty and crime within those communities on the afflicted communities themselves instead of examining institutional structures that contribute to the continual oppression of African-Americans and other minority groups.

Historian Ellen Wu traces the origins of the model minority myth for Japanese and Chinese-Americans and their efforts to be understood by the larger society by utilizing the media and associating with governmental agencies.¹⁶ Being the first in the discipline to explore the model minority myth and its origins, the importance of Wu's book is difficult to overstate. I

¹⁶ Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 72–110.

agree with Wu's analysis of the WWII-era activities of the JACL, including forming key partnerships with American governmental officials and skillfully utilizing mass media to portray the image of their community that they wished mainstream society would adopt. However, unlike Wu, I see meaningful continuities between the reform campaigns of the first-generation Japanese-Americans and the second generation (the group that Wu examines), as well as in transPacific efforts to shape the image of Japanese-Americans.

Outline

This dissertation consists of four chapters, which can be grouped together into two distinct units. The first examines methods utilized by elite Japanese and Japanese-Americans, often working through ethnic organizations, to influence the behavior and appearance of Japanese immigrants to the United States in order to promote a more positive image of both Japan and Japanese-Americans. The second unit applies Joseph Nye's concept of soft power to analyze international campaigns organized by Japanese elites, sometimes in cooperation with American counterparts, to showcase Japanese art and culture as well as present Japan's case for its aggression in China to American counterparts.

The first chapter explores efforts by elites in Japan sought to prepare emigrants for the journey to and life in the United States, often with the goal of ensuring that Japan, and Japanese people, were viewed positively. The two main tools utilized in these efforts were guidebooks and schools, especially specialized schools for women. The guides covered topics including how to dress and behave during the passage to the United States; what to expect at the customs and immigration office; how to find a job, attend school, or open a business; and how to maintain an American-style household and raise children. The schools were primarily aimed at picture brides,

as most of these women knew nothing of American customs or social norms.¹⁷ The young women who attended these schools received training in English and American morality as well as Western cooking and dress. For sources, I utilize Japanese travel guides dating from the turn of the 20th century and also records of the picture bride school to illustrate the specificity of the image the organizers hoped to achieve—middle-class and respectable. The involvement of noted statesmen in these efforts speaks to their national importance.

Chapter Two examines ways in which elite Japanese-Americans in the United States and Hawaii responded to the anti-Japanese pressures in their respective communities. For elites among the Issei generation, the responses were lifestyle and moral reform campaigns. The Nisei faced unique challenges that stemmed from their status as, on the one hand, American citizens, but on the other, members of a minority that was largely mistrusted and misunderstood. In this chapter, the sources are a history written by the JAA (one of the most active organizations of the early migration period), the official newspaper of the JACL, and notes from their conventions and other miscellaneous documents by the organization.

The next chapter considers two ambitious plans in the 1920s by transPacific organizations to improve relations between Japan and the United States by focusing on the personal level. By the time Congress passed the Immigration and Reform Bill of 1924, many private citizens familiar with U.S.-Japan relations felt that efforts to strengthen (or even maintain) a positive relationship through official diplomatic channels had failed. Instead, in their opinion, non-governmental people needed to become involved if relations were to move forward. The two campaigns explored in this chapter were aimed at school children and government leaders, respectively. The ambassador dolls campaign, initiated by the group World Friendship

¹⁷ In this case, the women were headed to the United States, but picture brides joined husbands in several different countries.

among Children, sought to demonstrate to Japanese school children and their parents that Americans were generous and had good intentions toward Japan. The JHC, proposed by statesman and industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi and Sidney Gulick, a former missionary to Japan and East Asia scholar, was quite different: if realized, it would have assembled Japanese and American businessmen to discuss pressing and sensitive issues in bi-lateral relations and advise official diplomats on the best course of action. Both of these efforts ultimately failed to achieve the goals the actors had hoped for, an analysis using the tools of soft power help to better explain how and why they failed. The ambassador doll program is a fascinating example of how the same campaign can be utilized by two different parties to serve completely different ends: in the case of the Americans, it was to re-enforce friendship and smooth over the great indignation that many Japanese felt over the passage of the immigration reform legislation in 1924, whereas for the Japanese it was an opportunity to showcase Japanese high culture and traditional craftsmanship not widely known in the United States. The proposed JHC was an attempt to mediate on the pressing bi-lateral issues that proponents felt had become mired in a diplomatic stalemate.

Finally, Chapter Four examines efforts of the America-Japan Society, formed in 1917 by influential statesmen and business leaders, to respond to Japan's aggression toward China. In one campaign, the organization executed a nationwide fundraiser for the victims of the USS Panay, which sunk in the Yangtze River outside of Nanking after the Japanese Army fired on it. Another of the organization's activities was to disseminate government-created propaganda that offered the Japanese perspective on the war in China. Studying these two approaches to influencing the American public reveals the complexity of the situation for an organization that was an avowed friend of the United States during a time of tremendous strain on their relationship. An

examination of this dynamic reveals the nearly impossible situation of appeasing both the Japanese government and Americans with connections to Japan. Ultimately their efforts failed but in ways that conform to the idea of soft power.

In summation, this study is concerned with the creation, modification, and preservation of images of Japan from the turn of the 20th century through 1941. I approach this task from two angles: investigating how Japanese-American elites attempt to manipulate the image of Japan via individual immigrants, and how public relations activities of private transPacific groups sought to influence American opinions on the Second Sino Japanese War by presenting Japan's version of events to known friends of Japan in the United States and also through fund raising for American victims of the Japanese military. Taken as a whole, this study offers an understanding of the core methods utilized by Japanese and Japanese-Americans to set the narrative about their own communities, sometimes in the same manner that other ethnic Americans had. However, the unique relationship between the United States and Japan had at least as much influence on the perception and fate of Japanese-American communities as the proactive campaigns organized by the community.

CHAPTER 1:
**GUIDEBOOKS AND A “PICTURE BRIDE” SCHOOL:
ELITE JAPANESE ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL THE PERCEPTION OF
EMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1898–1924**

At the turn of the 20th century, the immigration of a large number of Japanese laborers to the United States and Hawaii was a major source of difficulty in U.S.–Japan relations. The epicenter of the trouble was in California, where anti-Japanese agitators cited unfair economic competition and Japanese immigrants’ supposed unwillingness to assimilate as reasons to halt Japanese immigration. Politicians heeded this anger and passed a myriad of discriminatory ordinances and laws aimed at limiting the possibilities for Japanese advancement. But such moves offended Japanese leaders (and the public) back home, and unlike China, which was at this time weak and divided, the Japanese government was quite capable of asserting itself. Therefore, in 1907, diplomats of the two nations entered into the so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” whereby Japanese laborers would not be barred from immigrating to the United States if Japan would control emigration by refusing to issue passports to these individuals, preventing them from leaving the country. However, immediate family members of laborers already residing in the United States would still be allowed to enter.

The vast majority of Japanese emigrants in the first decades of the 20th century were small-time agriculturists. For those individuals, Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States, especially California, were seen as ideal locations to settle in. Immigrating to the United States appeared so promising that a term, *tobei netsu*, or “crossing to America fever,” was coined to describe this phenomenon.

Like other immigrants, Japanese were attracted to American wages, which were considerably higher than in their home country. Additionally, young men who emigrated

received a deferment on the mandatory two-year period of service in the Japanese Imperial Army. For individuals who were not first-born sons, there was even more incentive to seek one's fortune abroad, as land inheritance in Japan was based on a system of primogeniture. Of course, this only applied to farmers whose families still had a plot—land ownership and taxation reforms had made farmers increasingly vulnerable, and many had defaulted on loans taken out years before thereby losing their land.

A few decades after men began immigrating in large numbers, “picture brides,” or women who had legally married men they had corresponded with via mail but not yet met, began arriving in the United States to join their spouses. This practice was most common between the years of 1907—when the Gentlemen's Agreement came into practice—and 1921—when a bilateral agreement halted the immigration of picture brides. Most were following parental dictates as they would have back in Japan, but once abroad, they often discovered that they had many more options than they would have had if they had remained in Japan, in terms of work as well romantic partnerships.

This chapter will examine methods of what might be called image management, utilized between roughly 1898–1924, by which individuals and organizations sought to control and improve the image of Japanese people, and Japan itself, in the eyes of the Western world. The phenomena discussed herein are campaigns initiated by Japanese reformers and visionaries based in Japan, sometimes in cooperation with like-minded American counterparts, to mitigate challenges in the relationship between the United States and Japan resulting from the influx of Japanese immigrants to Hawaii and the western United States in the early decades of the 20th century.

These endeavors included various types of advice and training for emigrants, intended to address both practical concerns about everyday life during and after migration, and larger questions of regarding values and beliefs in their new home. Much of this advice was presented in the form of guidebooks and pamphlets written by Japanese reformers whose predominantly middle-class, Christian backgrounds, familiarity with the United States, and knowledge of Japan's international relations fostered a set of beliefs as to how Japanese emigrants, who were overwhelmingly from impoverished, rural families, should conduct themselves abroad. Some reformers also went beyond just writing guides; for instance, a few collaborated to open a tuition-free finishing school for "picture brides" in Yokohama.

To assist emigrants in navigating American life, the guides were, on the whole, quite comprehensive. They provided information on the personality traits and temperaments that were most likely to succeed abroad. They also included advice on American society, fashion, and customs; how to prepare for the steamship voyage and how to avoid seasickness; proper decorum onboard; what to expect during the immigration interview; where to go in case of trouble; information on various kinds of jobs and how to secure them; information on various schools and how to manage working one's way through school; how to succeed at business; and how to raise children in the United States. Even though the majority of the authors were Christian, the guides are relatively free from moralizing sentiment.¹⁸ Moreover, despite the existence of some ideological differences between the authors (for example, both staunch Marxists and Capitalists wrote guides), they presented, in historian Mitziko Sawada's words, a "unified front," and generally took much the same tone in their advice.¹⁹

¹⁸ Mitziko Sawada, *Tokyo Life, New York Dreams: Urban Japanese Visions of America, 1890–1924* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 124.

¹⁹ Sawada, 144.

Whether in authoring travel guides or opening schools, these reformers' activities reflected a characteristic pragmatism which sought to improve the actual conditions of the Japanese nationals residing in the United States. However, this genuine impulse to help was connected with, and perhaps subordinate to, calculated efforts to craft an image of the empire and its subjects as exceptional Asians who were studious, clean, and able to assimilate into the mainstream American lifestyle. This was in direct response to the ways in which the Chinese—the only large group of Asian immigrants to the U.S. at that point—had previously been perceived in the United States: as miserly, unclean, and unwilling to assimilate into American culture.

Motivation for Emigration

Noted statesmen were also among the advocates of Japanese “empire building” via emigration.²⁰ Ōkuma Shigenobu, an early advocate of the study of Western sciences and culture in Japan who founded Waseda University and served as prime minister from 1914–1916, wrote a preface in one guidebook enthusiastically promoting emigration, but, like others active in encouraging migration, he asserted that the task of promoting Japan abroad required a certain kind of person. He argued that a “kind, orderly, hard-working and peace-loving ethic” would make the Japanese welcomed anywhere. He also felt that considering the rapid population increase within Japan, as well as the “many places” outside of Japan endowed with resources but lacking people to put in the back-breaking work to make use of them, he asserted that Japanese emigration was a good solution.

²⁰ Eitarō Iijima, Ed., *Nikkei Imin Shirōshū* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1902), 18.

Similarly, Shiraishi Genjirō, a prominent industrialist, expressed his joy at the “enthusiasm” Japanese seemed to have for assisting in the development of other countries, especially in Latin America.²¹ Through migration, he “hope[d] for the growth of [the Japanese] race” in the Americas. Moreover, he believed that this national desire to establish a Japanese settlement abroad was “brave.” However, he warned that bravery was not enough; the emigrants also needed to have colonial knowledge and morality.²² As an example of this colonial morality, he cited the ability of Anglo-Saxons to settle the land that became the United States. He asserted that with very little support from their government, they were able to form a society, and ultimately a successful colonial project, due to the efforts and outlook of individual colonists. In a similar fashion, he said, the Japanese emigrants could do what governments could not by “sincerely cooperating” with one another to settle in new lands.²³

Though Anglo-Saxon pioneers were a group that authors like Shiraishi felt the Japanese overseas should emulate, Abiko Hisatarō believed that Japanese had some advantages over Caucasians when it came to colonizing places with extreme weather. Alaska, he claimed, offered a great opportunity for Japanese to settle abroad, since Caucasians could not “endure a long stay there,” and therefore few ventured to the remote territory. Perhaps he felt that, in the absence of Caucasians, Japanese could become the dominant racial group. In any event, he offered the example of a Mr. Yasuda who went to Alaska as an adventurer, and who made a steady living on the ice as a “fisherman-settler” with his “beautiful Eskimo wife.”²⁴

²¹ Shigenobu Ōkuma, “*Jobun*,” *Kaigai Katsudō no Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1906), 1–2.

²² Genjirō Shiraishi, “*Jobun*,” *Kaigai Katsudō no Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1906), 1–3.

²³ Shiraishi, 3.

²⁴ Hisatarō Abiko, “*Kōgyōteki no Jidai no Rekishi*,” *Kaigai Katsudō no Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1906), 104.

It was with a spirit of adventure and a selfless passion to improve unused land and promote the development of the Japanese empire that *tobei*²⁵ advocates hoped the Japanese emigrants would settle in the Americas. Shiraishi confessed to fearing, however, that the reality on the ground was quite different. During his travels abroad, he had only observed Japanese settlers being jealous of, in competition with, and in general at odds with one another. This behavior, he said, was fitting for the Chinese or Koreans, but not for Japanese. Thus, as mentioned above, he urged Japanese to go abroad with “colonizing morals” similar to those he saw in the Anglo-Saxons who settled the United States.²⁶ Many elites felt that it was superior personality traits, like the enthusiasm and bravery Shiraishi mentioned, that separated Japanese migrants from their Chinese predecessors, who they claimed migrated solely to earn money and return home wealthy.

Shiraishi was clearly trying to advance the idea of a fundamental similarity between historical Anglo-Saxons and contemporary Japanese. Underlying this was an assumption of Japanese exceptionalism that could be, and was, applied to many areas, from personal conduct to international relations. (This belief itself was one of the major factors driving Japanese colonialism in Asia.) The idea of Japanese exceptionalism was dependent on defining Japan through positive traits that a counterpart did not have, or focusing on the undesirable traits of others. Other Asians were the most frequent targets for comparisons that upheld the myth of Japanese exceptionalism—at least within Japan. Thus, a comparison of Japanese overseas acting as Chinese and Koreans were thought to have behaved might have been a way to shame colonists into behaving better so that they would not be viewed as other Asians—meaning, in the view of some, as less sophisticated people. Hence, it was not the act of emigrating that set the Japanese

²⁵ By itself, the term *tobei* means “crossing to America.”

²⁶ Abiko, 104.

apart, but rather their superior mindset. From this base, the Japanese would be able to further colonize.

Iwamoto Zenji of the Meiji Colonial Company felt that Japanese emigrants were well-suited to development abroad because they possessed “morals, knowledge and characteristics,” which were evident in the recent military victory over Russia.²⁷ Supposedly, the Japanese possessed a unique racial makeup as well. Iwamoto claimed that this was because the Japanese were descended from an ancient people who were the product of racial mixing due to “intrepid migration,” so Japanese were a people “blessed by nature.”²⁸

The claim to have a special racial makeup was a common assertion in this era; what is surprising is the suggestion that the unique ability for Japanese to develop other lands because of racial mixing that resulted from the migration of various peoples to the Japanese islands. Contemporary experts knew that early Korean immigrants had brought crucial technology to Japan, and even though he was a progressive (who had, in fact, dedicated a large part of his life to improving the status and opportunities for women in Japan), it is unlikely that Iwamoto would have considered Korean heritage as strengthening the Japanese. Curiously, there was a theory at this time which held that the Ainu, the indigenous people of the recently-conquered island of Hokkaidō, were actually descended from Caucasian tribes. Considering this, Iwamoto may have been attempting to forge a racial link between the Japanese and White Westerners.

Numerous Meiji-²⁹ and Taishō-era³⁰ elites adhered to this concept of Japanese exceptionalism, and attempted to define this in terms of racial or cultural differences that they saw between Japan and its Asian neighbors. For instance, Nitobe Inazō, a Christian educator and

²⁷ Zenji Iwamoto, “*Jobun*” *Kaigai Katsudō no Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1906), 1–2.

²⁸ Iwamoto, 1–2. Toyotomi led two unsuccessful invasions of Korea in 1592 and 1597, respectively.

²⁹ The Meiji era, named for the ruling emperor of the period, lasted from 1868 to 1912.

³⁰ The Taishō era lasted from 1912–1926.

celebrated intellectual and educator who had attended university in the United States, claimed that “while in India and even in China men seem to differ chiefly in degree of energy or intelligence, in Japan they differ by originality of character as well.” He also asserted that “individuality” was indicative of “superior races and civilizations already developed.” Clearly, Nitobe viewed the Japanese as being a different and exceptional kind of Asian.³¹

Other Meiji-era intellectuals also subscribed to the belief that in order to catch up with the West, Japan had to separate itself from the rest of Asia. This view was most famously articulated by the intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi in his essay “On Leaving Asia,” in which he asserted that China and Korea had an unfortunate habit of looking back in history and trying to regain a golden age of Confucianism; in his view, they were not capable of the kind of radical, forward-thinking change that Japan had been undergoing. In this sense, the Japanese were considered by these Meiji intellectuals to be an exceptional race that had a singular ability to progress, and who could even lift all of Asia out of the darkness of the past into a shining modernity. Moreover, many felt that Japan should send its excess population abroad to assist in developing other lands, whether these were farmlands in California, various countries of Latin America, or their Asian neighbors. In this way, they believed that Japanese talent could perform a great service to the world.

Concept of Empire

In 1893, a group of scholars, politicians, and officials established the *Shokuminchi Shakai*, or Colonization Society, to “promote peaceful expansion.” The impetus behind this move was a belief that sending people abroad would cement Japan’s claim to being a world

³¹ Inazō Nitobe, *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1905), Ch. 2.

power.³² The creators of this society believed that “[o]verseas settlement [was] a vital aspect of the national policy, adopted at the Meiji Restoration, of elevating our spirit, broadening our vistas, introducing new knowledge, and reforming people’s minds.”³³

Western colonialism, perhaps even settler colonialism, served as the model for Japanese expansion.³⁴ In a more tangible sense, expansion through emigration meant access to raw materials and more trade opportunities. If active “Japantowns” were established across the Pacific basin, Japan would have predominance over the region.

By 1900, the idea of empire had become crucial to plans for a rich and influential Japan.³⁵ However, in this model of empire, influence did not necessarily mean political control; there were places, such as the United States, that were crucial to Japan’s further development and that elites hoped to bring into Japan’s sphere of influence with no thought of political control. For instance, the magazine *Tobei Shimpō* stated that its purpose was “to establish an imperial beginning in America.”³⁶ Similarly, *Genkon Tobei Annai* (1903) argued that “national development and expansion of our population is the goal . . . [P]lant the seeds of power all over the world. Plant new homelands. America is large, wealthy, and promising.”³⁷ The implication was that Japanese labor would help to keep already-established industries running and assist in developing un- or under-utilized spaces.

Well-documented examples of this plan coming to fruition are the Hawaiian sugar and pineapple industries’ eventual dependence on Japanese labor, and the cultivation of new fields in California by Japanese laborers. Perhaps the most extreme example was George Shima, the

³² Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa, Eds., *Rediscovering America: Japanese Perspectives on the American Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 46.

³³ Duus & Hasegawa, 46.

³⁴ Duus & Hasegawa, 46.

³⁵ Duus & Hasegawa, 141.

³⁶ Duus & Hasegawa, 140.

³⁷ Duus & Hasegawa, 140.

“potato king,” who became a multimillionaire by transforming the barren fields of California’s San Joaquin Valley into a verdant and fully utilized agricultural area.

In return for sending its young men and women to perform this crucial, backbreaking work, Japan felt that it would benefit in numerous ways. Emigration meant that there was less competition for finite resources and jobs within Japan, and remittances sent from laborers abroad to family back in Japan would help the nation along in its development. Thus, great and mutually beneficial things would happen through a synergy of Japanese labor and American opportunity.

Preparing Emigrants for New Lives in the United States: Guidebooks

Guidebooks were a well-established facet of the literary market of Meiji Japan by the time that tobei guides began to be published. The genre of “self-help guides” emerged in Japan in 1871 with the translation of a famous American guide by Samuel Smiles; aimed at youth, it sought to foster personal responsibility and a healthy work ethic in its readers. These types of guides enjoyed widespread popularity, and a good portion continued to be aimed at young adults. The popularity of these guides is also attested to by sales figures: for example, one popular guide for students wishing to study in the United States sold over 100,000 copies.³⁸ Many of the authors were also Christian, so they had to, as Sawada puts it, “skillfully and inoffensively tread the precarious line between Christian beliefs and the conscious self-restraint conditioned by the inflexible ideology of loyalty to the state.”³⁹

The language used in the guidebooks reveals that some, if not many, of the proponents of Japanese emigration conceptualized it in terms of overseas expansion and even colonization. As in the case of other empires, Japan’s modernization and its supposed ability to mentor others was

³⁸ Sawada, 92.

³⁹ Sawada, 117.

an often-cited justification for colonization. For example, physician and author Mori Ōgai felt strongly that Japan's mastery over modern hygiene was one of the central reasons that the country could stand on par with the nations of Europe, an accomplishment that set Japan apart from the rest of Asia.⁴⁰

Despite the much-fabled Japanese capacity for efficient work, the appropriateness of traditionally admired traits in Japanese society such as humility, thrift, sacrifice, and perseverance were debated among some tobei advocates; at least some did not think these traits were acceptable in their new country. How, or even if, these characteristics fit into the discourse of empire were topics for debate among progressives of the time. Some elites felt that the goals of empire would be best served if Japanese emigrants abandoned the practices of thrift and sacrifice. They observed that people in Western nations invested more money into having a healthier, better-quality lifestyle. In contrast, this criticism held that even when Japanese people could afford to eat well, they would often try to save money by having “diets of poverty” which did not properly nourish them. It was even argued by some that excessive thrift was a “poison” that encouraged “negative and passive” behavior. This seemed to be in reaction to one of Americans' main criticisms of Japanese immigrants, which was that they lived miserly lives—not giving much, if anything, back to the local community—and instead saved their wages to remit to relatives back home.

However, the advice to eat more heartily and to spend more money on self-care clashed with advice offered in a guide to entrepreneurship (discussed more fully later in this chapter) that praised Japanese thrift, resourcefulness, and a willingness to live a life that their American

⁴⁰ Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 155.

counterparts would not “recognize as a human life” in order to get ahead.⁴¹ In fact, this guide presented thrift and sacrificing personal comfort as crucial tools that allows Japanese to succeed, and even speculated that these characteristics would even allow a Japanese entrepreneur to do better than his American counterparts—assuming that they all started from the same baseline (which, given the social disadvantages Japanese immigrants faced, would almost never have been the case in reality).

Thus, the elites writing the guides certainly did not have a set agenda beyond making Japan and Japanese people look good in the United States. Some authors seemed to feel that the best way to do this was to adopt American customs, even in one’s dietary choices, dress, and so forth, presumably because this would make him more respectable in the eyes of Americans from his earliest days in the new country. Others supported immigrants’ practices of living in a frugal, seemingly more Japanese style—as long as it helped the reader to achieve real, material success in the United States.

Regardless of the intellectual debate on the merits of thrift vs. spending that raged in the pages of guidebooks, for most Japanese, their circumstances did not allow for any real choice in the matter. Given their impoverished backgrounds, and the expense of migration, it was simply not realistic for them to spend more on food and other means of self-care. They had to economize just to survive in the period immediately following immigration to the United States.

One belief that was widely accepted among the writers of guidebooks was that the creation of an empire called for a proactive and expansive national body. According to this view, behaviors that were crucial to empire-building included taking risks to achieve greater profits, and developing businesses with a larger outlook rather than settling for comfortable safety. In the

⁴¹ *Shintobei* (Tokyo: *Tokyo Shuppan Kyōkai*, 1904), 46.

new, modern society, the Confucian stigma against merchants and pursuing profits was replaced by an understanding that business could be honorable as long as the businessman adhered to the basic tenets of the code of values and ethics known as *Bushidō*, namely honor and integrity.⁴² Nitobe authored an incredibly popular treatise on samurai ethics called *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*, an English-language book written in 1900 that was widely read in the United States. In this work, he posits that the values of the warrior class slowly trickled down even to commoners, so it is not surprising that guidebook authors would invoke the idea of Bushidō.

Aspects of the emigration experience covered by these guides included: how to prepare for the journey, how male and female passengers on the ship ought to conduct themselves, what to expect during an immigration interview, whom to contact in the United States in case of trouble, how to locate a job, how to select a school, and general guidance regarding the proper attitude in all of these endeavors, as well as sharp commentary on issues that had become points of contention between the United States and Japan. The seriousness of the discourse on emigration in the late-Meiji and Taishō periods is demonstrated by the fact that some of these publications had passages from well-known public figures such as Ōkuma and Shiraishi.

Sawada points out that one of the most enduring types was known as the *seikō*, or success, guide, which offered advice on a wide variety of topics. While some tips seemed more useful than others, all were offered in the hopes of instilling in their readers a mindset that “to be worthy, one must possess diligence, assume wholesome and pragmatic attitudes. . . and display cosmopolitan behavior.”⁴³ It is not surprising, then, that a prominent theme in the guides was the concept of a “success ethic.”⁴⁴ As the guides’ authors viewed the situation, it was necessary for

⁴² *Shintobei*, 105.

⁴³ Sawada, 91.

⁴⁴ Sawada, 118.

the people in general, and the emigrants in particular, to internalize a mental outlook that was conducive to success in order to build Japan's empire abroad.

Many elite members of Japanese society viewed the emigration of laborers abroad as a component of empire building, because these migrants would be able to facilitate trade between the two nations and, if properly schooled in Western manners, could also serve as unofficial ambassadors to introduce Japan to the people of the United States. Thus, Japanese emigrants were seen as a valuable asset for the nation as it sought to expand its influence.

There was disagreement, though, about who would be the "best" emigrants. Some advocated for already-educated Japanese to emigrate to the United States, and in particular, to areas such as the East Coast so that they could more effectively help bolster Japan's national power.⁴⁵ However, the vast majority of emigrants were impoverished farmers, and their appearance, mannerisms, and modes of living were a source of embarrassment for Japanese elites concerned with the country's image on the global stage as it attempted to secure its place among the great powers. Katayama Sen, a prolific and influential author of tobei guides, wrote of a scene he had witnessed on a steamship passage:

The truly wretched sight of the emigrants boarding the ship to Hawaii Look at them! Their clothing is Japanese. They hoist up the hem. They flap around with hemp-soled straw sandals on their feet . . . drape their towels around their heads. . . sling carrots and white radishes over their shoulders, and look triumphant as if returning home from the market in the next village.⁴⁶

Clearly, he was not impressed with how his fellow Japanese conducted themselves on board the ship to the U.S. He was not advocating that emigrants should spend recklessly to buy new Western clothing—second hand was acceptable; for Katayama, the crucial element was that

⁴⁵ Sawada, 93.

⁴⁶ Sawada, 130.

they should not look so strange and foreign to Americans.⁴⁷ Surprisingly, Katayama held these seemingly disparaging views of working-class people even though he was a committed, life-long Communist. The fact that he denounced the appearance and behaviors of the Japanese working-class emigrants so harshly speaks to the seriousness with which elites (including even those who espoused Communist views) undertook the job of protecting the image of the empire.

Japanese Exceptionalism

The compilers of the guidebooks were painfully aware of the reception that Japanese immigrants had been receiving in the United States, since many of them had themselves spent long stretches of time in the United States, and they sought to mitigate this by providing pertinent information. The preface of one such guidebook unequivocally stated that overseas emigration was not for those who would exacerbate the “migrant problem.”⁴⁸ It insisted that the book was not simply to tell stories of those who had succeeded abroad, but rather to emphasize why they had succeeded. The editor hoped to illustrate to the readers what Japanese were doing abroad and what they had achieved.⁴⁹ The emigrants whose stories made the cut and were included as inspirational stories were all said to possess something in common: a correct attitude.

For example, a guide for so-called “schoolboys,” or men who worked as domestic servants while attending school, warned against being haughty, refusing to do a menial task, or arguing with one’s employer.⁵⁰ Thus, it is clear that the guidebooks were not just intended to introduce the land and customs of the destination to the emigrants; they also explicitly instructed the readers on how to conduct themselves. The introduction to one guidebook included a section

⁴⁷ Sawada, 131.

⁴⁸ Gennōsuke Yokoyama, Ed. *Kaigai Katsudō no Nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1906), 1.

⁴⁹ Yokoyama, 1.

⁵⁰ *Shintobei*, 9.

titled “basics one must have to emigrate,” and it is telling that the first subheading in this section was “morals.” In it, the editor, Iijima Eitarō, identified patriotism as one of the primary requirements for a proper emigrant. He urged prospective migrants to learn about their own culture and to respect “one’s family and ancestors as well as the land that contains the graves of those ancestors.” He further insisted that as the nation was a “collective of the people,” the nation itself would “decay” if its citizenry did not have a proper moral education. This, he asserted, was the reason why it was imperative for emigrants to remember those left behind in Japan—not just their own family members, but the entire society. Through this kind of patriotism, emigrants could demonstrate to the rest of the world that Japan was a “proper country.”⁵¹ By invoking the immigrants’ presumed respect for and veneration of the homeland in his plea for “moral” behavior, Iijima was likely trying to curb unsavory behavior such as gambling and employing prostitutes—behavior that was prevalent in the majority male community and was seen as injurious to the image of Japanese-Americans.

A lack of education was held to be a major barrier separating Japanese-Americans from the model residents they might become. One guidebook made the case for the importance of education in creating an ordered Japanese-American society: citing the “chaos” that the Issei⁵² encountered when initially coming to the United States, the author claimed that they were “unwittingly” foolish people living an “insular” existence in the city who could not penetrate into “civilized society.” It explained that the quintessential early immigrant was such that if he earned some money, he would soon spend it. Thus, if he found himself without the means to survive, he would band together with others in a gang, and these gangs’ activities “made proper business owners suffer.”

⁵¹ Iijima, 12.

⁵² Literally meaning “first generation,” this term is used to describe immigrants born in Japan.

These concerns were not without merit, because not all Japanese businesses in the United States were legitimate. While there were many honest business operations, Japanese-run illegal enterprises such as prostitution rings existed as well. However, the guide suggested that these early Japanese pioneers were not inherently bad despite engaging in these kinds of behavior. Rather, it asserted that these misdeeds occurred because they simply did not know any better, and this was the reason that moral education should be given to would-be emigrants from Japan.⁵³ While this reference to criminal activity is disappointingly vague, it is clear that the editor felt that education was a crucial ingredient in engineering the best possible versions of overseas Japanese communities. It is important to note that a key underlying assumption here is that the Japanese immigrants were capable of change, and this inherent open-mindedness and flexibility set them apart from other Asian groups whom many Japanese elites felt were incapable of altering their ways.

Men's Guides

Many guides sought to dictate how Japanese emigrants presented themselves during the voyage across the Pacific Ocean; as the earliest emigrants were mostly men, the first guides often specifically addressed men and men's concerns. Though the passage across the ocean only took roughly one week, and readers were urged to make good use of this time. The reformers understood that this was more than just a period of travel; many of the immigrants would have their first contact with Americans during the passage. Unsurprisingly, these reformers set out behavioral expectations for both men and women that they felt would be appropriate in the United States.

⁵³ Hikochi Ishioka, Ed., *Hokubei Washinton Shū, Eiyō Koronbia Shū Nipponjin Jijo*, 28.

In a guidebook from 1902 aimed at male laborers, a section titled “Understanding the Steamship Passage” gives readers a general orientation of what to expect during the voyage across the Pacific Ocean. It informed readers on many topics related to proper grooming and behavior on board the ship, but it also sought to boost their morale. It warned them against being late to board the ship and advised them to wear Western-style dress, because Japanese clothes can appear “shoddy and . . . reflect poorly on Japan.” Moreover, as passengers, the guidebook tells readers to “have good posture” and to make sure to “understand at least a little English.” These things were important, the guidebook concluded, because these measures would allow readers to be respected by the ship’s crew. The respect of the ship’s crew would be an important boost of confidence for a young man heading for a new life abroad. Presumably, this punctuality, good posture, habit of wearing Western dress, and eagerness to use English were to be continued after landing, and would likewise encourage Americans to respect the readers as well.

Regarding standards of decorum during the passage across the Pacific, the guidebook suggests that readers “be elegant” by being mindful of their movements. Specifically, they were to avoid having “disheveled hair,” trim their beards regularly, and avoid nakedness aboard the ship because it would be “unsightly.” Additionally, they were instructed to wash their feet privately so as to not disgust the other passengers. In general, the guidebook recommended that readers look to the “customs and behaviors of [White] passengers” and emulate those when in doubt. As far as suitable pastimes, the guidebook urged readers to make use of the idle time on board by earnestly studying English, but “singing loudly” was to be avoided because it might disturb nearby occupants.⁵⁴ Just prior to disembarking, the pamphlet urged Japanese passengers to ensure their clothes [presumably Western clothes] were worn in the correct fashion, to trim

⁵⁴ Iijima, 34.

one's hair and beard, and to brush one's shoes and clothes. The guidebook concluded that these simple acts will improve the appearance of the passengers despite being "short and yellow."⁵⁵

It is clear that the editor wanted Japanese immigrants to conform to specific modes of personal expression and behavior from the moment they boarded the ship. But more than this, the guide seemed to offer readers hope that diligently adhering to these standards might gain them membership in elusive categories such as honorary Whiteness, and perhaps American masculinity. Which is to say, respect was attainable only if the immigrant proves him-or herself adaptable and constantly vigilant with regard to dress and behavior.

The men's guide for the passage contained a section that explained the immigration process. It told readers that upon docking they would have to submit to a physical examination, and that if certain "loathed" diseases were detected, the would-be immigrant's petition to enter the United States could be rejected. These diseases were broken up into groups. In the first category was Hansen's disease (also known as leprosy): if a passenger was found to have this, he was quarantined on Molokai Island (and likely remained there permanently). The second group consisted of highly infectious diseases such as small pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria, dysentery, cholera, and certain parasites. Applicants with these illnesses would be temporarily sent to a hospital on Angel Island to undergo treatment. The guidebook told readers that these diseases usually plagued the "lower classes," and were caused by poor sanitation. If there were instances of these illnesses onboard, fellow passengers would be quarantined for six to seven weeks.

The third group was the "most hated by society" and consisted of sexually transmitted infections: gonorrhea, scabies, trachoma, and syphilis. The United States government, the manual said, considered people with these afflictions to be undesirable, and as such they would

⁵⁵ Iijima, 63.

be denied entry. Thus, it was imperative that the would-be immigrant guard his health and seek medical treatment before undergoing the journey, if possible. This third group was the category most hated by society because in the eyes of the reformers, who were interpreting Victorian/Edwardian social mores and trying to get Japanese emigrants to conform to them, the presence of any kind of sexually transmitted disease was considered an indication of immoral living. Historian Ruth Rogaski posited that a “hygienic modernity” was an important component in justifying Japanese Imperial expansion in Asia.⁵⁶ Moreover, she asserts that practicing “hygienic modernity” was essential for Japan to be accepted as an equal to European nations.⁶⁵ The Japanese, as the most forward-thinking of the Asian nations (according to this theory), would naturally be drawn to taking a Western approach to health and hygiene. Taking this idea one step further in relation to Japanese immigration to the United States, it has connections to Western medical professionals’ campaigns for “healthy constituents of the national body” highlighted by Rogaski.

Navigating Masculinity in the United States

Elite tobei advocates were not always sympathetic to the situation of Japanese laborers who chose to emigrate. For instance, an editorial in *Amerika*, a monthly magazine published in Tokyo, observed in 1908 that some Japanese in the United States were “ignorant country yokels who don’t even know the ways of Tokyo [yet] act as if they were in their own provinces.”⁶⁰ Clearly this was not the picture of Japan and Japanese life that the editor wanted Americans to see, and he expected them to assimilate to American mainstream culture to some degree.

⁵⁶ Rogaski, 137.

Another vignette of troublesome immigrant behavior reported in *Amerika* was arrogance following Japan's military victories over China and Russia, which manifested in behaviors such as wearing old Japanese military uniforms and displaying the Japanese flag on the fourth of July. Furthermore, it claimed, "[o]ur countrymen living abroad have learned to swagger and snort and act with arrogance and haughtiness. This tends to offend people. Therefore, from this day forward, we must suppress our confident airs and seek to adopt the manners and customs of the host country."⁶¹ To combat these various types of offensive behavior, tobei advocates realized that they needed to devise a way to inform would-be immigrants on the customs, habits, and preferences of the American mainstream. One method was to include advice on social norms in the tobei guides.

The guides that gave advice men on post-arrival life in the U.S. often contained hints of the difficulty male Japanese immigrants to the United States and Hawaii faced in acclimating to American standards of masculinity. The acclimatization process was made more difficult for them due to the images of Asian men that had already formed in the national imagination with the earlier wave of Chinese immigrants: that of a man, perhaps smaller in stature than his American counterparts, sporting a long braid and possibly wearing ornate and feminine-seeming clothes. He was often imagined as working in a laundry or restaurant, or as a laborer working on the railroad. Due to these barriers, male Japanese immigrants struggled to adapt, especially when American standards of masculinity conflicted with their expectations for male identity and expression.

In *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*, Nitobe pointedly combated the stereotype that Japanese men were effeminate, indecisive, and deferential. The samurai class, he tells readers, developed out of "the manliest and most adventurous" warriors. Moreover, he employs the observations of

a foreigner in Japan who described the samurai as “all masculine with brutish strength.”⁵⁷

“[Rectitude, this] manly virtue, frank and honest as a jewel that shone the brightest and was most highly praised.” He derides the concept of *giri*, or acting out of obligation, which he believed started out as a beautiful practice but one that gradually morphed into a restrictive and even morally corrupt social compulsion. Nitobe argues that despite this, Bushidō was never similarly compromised because it “had a keen and correct sense of courage, the spirit of daring and bearing.”⁵⁸ Thus, in Bushidō, which he tells his readers permeated many aspects of society leaving no Japanese person untouched, communication and action were pure, honest, brave, and noble.

Another crucial aspect of respectable masculinity was financial solvency. Allowing oneself to fall into a precarious financial situation might result in becoming a public charge, which would reflect poorly on both the individual and also Japan. Thus, Iijima stressed that Japanese in the United States should be financially independent and “provide for himself.”

In American society, where just a couple of decades prior the concept of personal honor was sufficiently important that a gentleman might answer an insult with a challenge to duel, Iijima encouraged readers to take pride in being Japanese and not allow themselves to be taken lightly by anyone. Of course, Iijima was not advising that his readers issue duel challenges in order to uphold their honor (in fact, dueling is never mentioned in his guide), but he undoubtedly knew of this custom, and perhaps felt that drawing a connection between this American practice and similar practices in Japan’s own recent past would help his readers understand that the concept of honor was crucial in maintaining one’s place in the social order—just as it was in Japan.

⁵⁷ Nitobe, Ch. 1.

⁵⁸ Nitobe, Ch. 2.

But why were tobei advocates, writing for poor farmers and day laborers, stressing the importance of acting in ways that would uphold both their individual honor as men, and by extension, the honor of their homeland? This was largely because Japanese elites were very sensitive to the fact that their countrymen in the United States were being lumped into the same category as the Chinese laborers who came before them.⁵⁹ To people whose military had just demonstrated superiority over China, and whose nation had emerged not only as the dominant power in Asia, but the only non-Western power to become a colonial power, this lack of distinction between the two nationalities was especially infuriating.

One factor that distinguished a gentleman from others was his autonomy, or semi-autonomy, in Japanese society. He was not a wage laborer, and so he had more control over his time—the actual day-to-day circumstances of his life. This was in direct opposition to Chinese laborers, whose existence was similar to that of an indentured servant. Having more education and resources at his disposal, a gentleman had far more economic opportunities than his working-class brothers, and he would therefore not tolerate poor treatment from a supervisor (assuming that he had to work at all and was in a trade where he had a supervisor). Iijima seemed to understand the importance that assertiveness and standing up for oneself held in the cult of American masculinity, and like other Japanese elites of his day, he included these values in his tireless encouragement that Japanese immigrants adopt the trappings of middle-class respectability in the United States.

⁵⁹ Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 35. Lee contends that most Chinese laborers did not actually come to the U.S., but rather went to South America. However, this historical truth did nothing to quell the hysterical calls by exclusionists that a yellow peril of Chinese labor was pushing out native-born workers.

Iijima also advised his readers to undertake a “serious study” of whatever they engaged in.⁶⁰ By inviting men from the lower classes to take their labor seriously, he encouraged them to take themselves seriously as well. It is likely that receiving this sort of validation of the importance of their work from a highly-educated member of the social elite had a positive effect on readers’ sense of self. This encouraging of diligence was also to benefit the empire, of course. One of the basic arguments in favor of tobei was that it would enrich Japan through remittances, economic exchange, and technology in the form of new methods and innovation brought back to Japan by sojourners. Japanese migration to the United States and Hawaii served the new empire in a variety of ways, but only as long as those abroad were sufficiently productive.

Religion, Morality, and Behavior

Calls to assimilate into mainstream American culture did not only reflect attempts to improve the image of all Japanese; they often contained practical advice to assist individuals as well. While most of those advocating emigration to America were Christians, remarkably, they did not proselytize or advocate for conversion to Christianity, and overall made only occasional references to religion. For instance, the guidebook edited by Iijima advised immigrants to adopt a religion, because religiosity was a central tenet of American society (much more so than in Japan), and he alleged that people who were not religious were not trusted in the United States. In fact, he warned that in business, “one cannot recover one’s reputation if one has lost the trust of others, so people naturally have come to understand the need to protect their integrity toward others.”⁵⁵ Thus, he claimed that demonstratively practicing a religious faith would benefit immigrants’ business efforts because it bolstered their credibility.⁵⁶ Early Japanese visitors to

⁶⁰ Iijima, 17.

the United States believed that Americans were more earnest and passionate about their religion than adherents to Buddhism and Shintō, whose worship they characterized as “perfunctory.” It was thought that this strong sense of religiosity gave rise to the “firm moral code of American Protestantism,” which seemed to Meiji and Taishō observers to be one of the primary reasons that the United States was able to achieve stunning progress.⁶¹

Many of those active in the tobei movement, including people involved in creating guidebooks, had lived in the United States, and these experiences had made a profound impression on them. Some of the very earliest observations of the United States by Japanese are on the assumed piety of the people. A report from the Iwakura mission (1871–1873), an early official Japanese delegation to visit the United States, concluded that Christianity seemed to “[enter] their blood with their mother’s milk.”⁶² Historians Peter Duus and Kenji Hasegawa posit that in the immediate aftermath of Commodore Perry’s visit to Japan, a significant portion of the intelligentsia converted to Christianity, but by the turn of the 20th century, “admiration for American Christianity had faded,” in part because of the negative experiences Japanese converts had in the United States, and their disappointment at seeing the undesirable elements of American society such as crime, profanity, and possibly discrimination.⁶³

Thus, although guides like Iijima’s do not specify which religion the aspiring entrepreneurs should adopt, as the dominant religion in the United States Christianity was implied. And given the discrimination that non-Protestants experienced in the United States, Protestant denominations were likely more attractive to newcomers. It is safe to assume that those involved in creating these guides felt that adopting Christianity (or at least adopting the

⁶¹ Duus & Hasegawa, 17.

⁶² Duus & Hasegawa, 17.

⁶³ Duus & Hasegawa, 18.

outward expression of Christian practices) would be of the most help to the Japanese businessperson's social ambitions and general reputation. However, the guide refrained from directly advocating that its readers convert to Christianity. This was likely because tobei authors were balancing their endorsement for the West and things Western with an appeal to Japanese nationalism.

With regard to vice and crime, while Iijima asked his Japanese readers to remember their homeland, relatives, and ancestors, and behave in a manner that would not bring shame on them, Stanford's founding president, David Starr Jordan, believed that "the cure for delinquency [was] found not in rules; but in the moral backbone" of each individual.⁶⁴ These ideas worked in tandem, as Iijima's exhortations to let behavior be guided by a constant remembrance of family and country served as the grounding element for which Star was advocating. The hope of tobei authors and editors was that the readers would internalize the principles published in the guides.

The story of Satō Toyosaburō has some elements common to many men who became entrapped in the world of vice. Though a high school graduate and a talented artist who continued to sketch his entire life, after coming to San Francisco in 1904 he became an itinerant worker, taking many short-term odd jobs. His elder brother back in Japan, Saichi, corresponded regularly with him, inquiring after his well-being, sharing news from their village, and instructing him on what types of knowledge he should obtain in order to expand the family farm upon his return.

Saichi also asked Toyosaburō to save money so that the family could invest in improvements to their farm in Japan. However, Toyosaburō had developed a serious gambling

⁶⁴ David Starr Jordan, *The Days of a Man: Being Memories of a Naturalist, Teacher, and Minor Prophet of Peace* (Yonkers, NY: World Book Co., 1922), 79. This quote is from an address that Jordan gave to educators in Tokyo, but it is reasonable to assume that he would feel similarly in term of the general population of Japan, and for that matter, the United States.

addiction in the United States and, despite earning wages that exceeded the figure his elder brother asked him to accumulate, never returned home. Instead, he gambled the money away and became destitute.

As the years progressed, his family learned of his problem, and in his letters, Saichi begged Toyosaburō to stop gambling, but to no avail. Friends of Toyosaburō sent him small sums of cash when they could (which suggests that he was writing to them and sharing his misfortunes), and like Saichi, they begged him to stop gambling, and even to simply to return home to Japan as soon as he had enough fare for a ticket—even if he came back empty-handed. But Toyosaburō never heeded their appeals, and lived out the rest of days in his adopted country, never returning home. Perhaps he never accumulated enough money to purchase the steamship ticket, or perhaps he was unwilling to return without the savings he was supposed to acquire. Whatever his reasons, he labored for 29 years in the United States, and died alone and penniless in Depression-era California.⁶⁵

Balancing Education and Economy Successfully: The Case of the Houseboy

One way to ensure that the current and subsequent Japanese communities would not err in the ways that the earliest sojourners had was to fill a gap in the emigrants' understanding—to educate them on the realities of life in the United States and also on how they ought to behave to reflect well on Japan. The truth of the situation was that the overwhelming majority of Japanese emigrants were impoverished, and thus in a precarious position following migration. One of the most important lessons to impart to this group was self-sufficiency, as it would not be good for

⁶⁵ Kimura, 40–43.

Japanese-American relations to have emigrants from the former country become public charges in the latter.

Guidebooks often supplied information on how to “succeed” financially in the United States, which meant telling readers how to acquire both jobs and education after arriving in their new home. A fairly common pattern for a Japanese male immigrant to the United States was to take the role of a “houseboy,” or a young man who boarded as a domestic servant in the home of a well-to-do family and earned a meager wage in order to attend school. The age range for the archetypal houseboy was from the late teens to the mid-30s; many had completed junior high school in Japan. The aim of most houseboys was to attend high school and, if successful, perhaps even college. This position required only minimal English ability to start, as well as a basic understanding of Western cooking and similar household tasks. Thus, it was a job for which the enterprising migrant could quickly train—and they could continue to learn while on the job as well.

To many tobei advocates, the opportunities available in the new land greatly outweighed the risks. One guidebook adopted a question-and-answer style to convey information on studying in the United States to its readers.⁶⁶ In this guide, the author takes the persona of a mentor fielding questions from a group. In response to a question posed by one of his “students” about taking the risk of going to the United States to study, he answered: “you have been delivering milk and newspapers up until this point and you are twenty-four now It’s impossible to sustain study [in Tokyo] at this rate and you’ll soon be malnourished and sickly—[turned into] an utterly useless person.”⁶⁷ The conditions in Tokyo for working students were so bad that the

⁶⁶ The question and answer format was very common in guides from this period.

⁶⁷ *Shintobei*, 1.

author describes it as “a situation in which one can see people eating other people.”⁶⁸ Faced with such a situation, the author felt that the reader had no reason to “hesitate” about emigrating to the United States to achieve what seemed impossible, or nearly so, to accomplish in Tokyo.⁶⁹ Moreover, Katayama considered an impoverished background to actually be an asset to an aspiring student in the United States, because such individuals were accustomed to hard work and would be careful with their money. He conjectured that 90% of Japanese youth could expect to achieve success in the United States, as long as they possessed “tenacity, perseverance, and determination.” After all, he reminded readers, “[i]t is people, not money, who overcome the one hundred obstacles and achieve goals. Character, not one’s capital status, is the crucial ingredient.”⁷⁰

A houseboy had to prioritize his studies over simply earning money. One guidebook, titled *Shintobei*, said that in the United States it was possible to make ten times the going salary in Japan for many key jobs, and this made it feasible to support oneself while working one’s way through school, and also to occasionally send a little money back to family in Japan. In fact, so many Japanese immigrants (in all fields) were sending back remittances that by 1907, a total of \$2,000,000⁷¹ per year was being sent back, equal to nearly 2% of Japan’s total yearly value of exports.⁷² Despite the substantial ability to amass earnings in the United States compared to Japan, the guide reminded readers that it was very difficult to net a large income while attending school, and advised them against being “too greedy,” which could cause them to ultimately fail in their educational pursuits.⁷³

⁶⁸ *Shintobei*, 2.

⁶⁹ *Shintobei*, 1.

⁷⁰ Sen Katayama, *Tobei Annai* (1906), 6–7, IN Sawada, 25.

⁷¹ Approximately \$49,878,000 in 2017.

⁷² Kimura, 17.

⁷³ *Shintobei*, 2.

Thus, this guidebook insisted that this opportunity was not for everyone; it was only for the candidate who was industrious and committed to success. It was “hopeless” for a person who did not apply himself to his studies in Japan to emigrate to the United States with delusions of becoming successful. So, once again, a tobei advocate stressed diligence and tenacity to would-be immigrants. Moreover, the author advised that the life of a houseboy was also not for a person who was reluctant to take direction or who had an argumentative nature. A houseboy needed to be ready to take on odd jobs as his employer directed, and if he thought himself above a menial task or quarreled with the employer, trouble was sure to follow. The author reserved his most severe judgment for the houseboy who would haughtily think, “I’m a Japanese man, I will sell my labor but never my soul!” and then leave over a disagreement with the family over the allocation of chores. The author ventured that this kind of person would take all of his wages and spend them in “Chinese establishments” of ill repute.

Although the houseboy path offered the potential for success, the author warned his readers that the dismissal rate of houseboys was quite high; as many as 70–80% of houseboys were unsuccessful either because they were dismissed or because they left of their own volition.⁷⁴ However, the author urges his readers not to become this kind of *rōnin*, or drifter.⁷⁵ He mentions the unfortunate outcomes of “so many” who stayed in the United States for 10 or even 15 years without completing an education, and who were forced because of advancing age and a lack of prospects to return to Japan “without learning anything.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *Shintobei*, 9.

⁷⁵ The word *rōnin* literally refers to masterless samurai, but recently has also been used for someone who has failed the college entrance examination and is biding his or her time for another chance to enter. In this context, the author is probably trying to invoke both meanings. If the “houseboy” quits his job or is dismissed, he would be unable to continue his studies for a time, and also without an employer, or “master.”

⁷⁶ *Shintobei*, 9.

It is telling that this guide advised houseboys to be both assertive and submissive. The successful houseboy needed to have pluck and motivation to come to the United States with the intention to study rather than becoming a laborer, a path that in some ways was more difficult than manual labor. He had to possess sufficient desire to continue to pursue his education, keep up on his studies and enroll in progressively more demanding levels of education despite chronic fatigue. Yet despite their determination and firm resolve, houseboys had to be pliable, willing to do any task assigned, and not question or quarrel with their employers.

In this guide, the author offered some success stories of notable Japanese people in general to remind his readers of the struggles that all Japanese faced in the process of modernization, as well as a story of a successful houseboy to encourage readers considering this path. He first asked his readers to consider those at the “pinnacle” of Japanese society and to imagine the “life or death” struggles that they had endured to make it to their positions of prominence. Though the position of houseboy was not high-status, it was an opportunity. By referencing the hard road trodden by national figures, the editor was perhaps trying to demonstrate that the work of these Japanese in the United States was also valuable for the empire. It is doubtful that the readers or anyone else involved in the emigration movement seriously expected houseboys to be able to rise to the top of Japanese society, and so he offered a more believable, but still outstanding, example of a domestic servant succeeding in his field. This individual was close to 40 years old, and was a professor at a university in California. He had worked as a houseboy for ten years, and in this way, was able to complete his high school and undergraduate education. Moreover, his time in domestic service had given him a solid foundation of thriftiness and motivation that allowed him to finish graduate school while

remaining financially independent.⁷⁷ This professor certainly reflected well on the empire, and considering the formidable obstacles that Japanese faced in the United States, his tenacity was something to be readily admired.

The guidebooks also advised those who hoped to gain an education without working in domestic service. For instance, one guidebook introduced Ruskin College in Missouri to readers as an ideal setting for Japanese students. The reasons for this were many, but primary among them was the fact that its location in a small, rural town in the interior of the country made it an environment in which Japanese students could flourish free from the rancor of the “yellow peril” sentiment which raged on the West Coast. Moreover, there were compelling financial incentives to attend Ruskin College. The school owned land and allowed students to work in the school’s canning, farming, or woodworking operations to pay for tuition, and offered a method for students to arrange for credit with the school.

This same guidebook encouraged students without means to come to the United States to study regardless of the financial hardship, because, as it explained, schools had a long summer break in which it was possible to earn sufficient money to support oneself for the academic year. It indicated that a person could earn “several hundred” dollars in the summer months. Specifically, the book mentions jobs as farm hands and maids, and on private yachts in the capacity of sailor.

The advantages of agricultural positions were the abundant harvesting work during the summer, with no special skills required and pay of at least \$2 per day.⁷⁸ If one had the skills of a sailor, he could work on a private yacht, travel abroad, and earn between \$40 and \$80 per month.

⁷⁷ *Shintobei*, 11.

⁷⁸ Nearly \$50 in 2017.

⁷⁹ Jobs in housekeeping, the guidebook said, though not challenging, were not as attractive an option because they paid considerably less than the others listed.⁸⁰

Additionally, the guidebook also gave information on various types of sponsored students. The first group consisted of scholars without means who were supported by religious organizations. However, the guidebook noted somewhat sarcastically that these individuals often seemed to lose interest in religion once they graduated and no longer needed the financial support of the religious organization. The second category was composed of students who fabricated stories in order to solicit money from kind-hearted Americans. To juxtapose these two categories, the guidebook presented the case of students “who did not have money yet made their own way.”

The editor strongly urged that the readers follow the last example, taking breaks from school in order to earn tuition money, if necessary. In this way, it stated, Japanese students without means could become “great gentlemen scholars” in America.⁸¹ The clear implication was that self-reliance and not becoming a burden to Americans was the honorable path to gaining an education.

Writing in the first years of the 20th century, one anonymous houseboy who was able to complete high school in the United States, but was prevented from completing college due to the demands of his work as a domestic servant, offers a unique and telling look at the actual situation for male Japanese domestic servants. The essay, which he wrote in English, makes it clear that he had academic potential. Moreover, the man presented himself as one with a strong sense of self and a great amount of determination. As such, he possessed the qualities the *tobei* advocates

⁷⁹ Around \$1,000–\$2,000 in 2017.

⁸⁰ *Shintobei*, 17.

⁸¹ *Shintobei*, 16.

deemed necessary for success, yet he was a bitter middle-aged domestic servant at the time that he wrote his memoir.

His essay reveals the emasculation he felt in domestic service. In recounting his first day of work, he wrote: “when I first entered the kitchen wearing a white apron what an uncomfortable and mortifying feeling I experienced.”⁸² He also worried about the judgment of his male classmates back in Japan if they “found me out.”⁸³ In general, he said that in domestic service, “[t]here is no personal liberty when your manhood is completely ignored. Subduing my vanity, overcoming from the humiliation and swallowing down all of the complaints...”⁸⁴ He worried that the nature of his servile existence had slowly diminished his manhood because he was “inclining considerably sensitive” and as proof of this ominous statement, he recounted how, after his first week of domestic service, he locked the door to his room, threw himself on the bed and “sobbed to [his] heart[’s] contention [sic].”⁸⁵ Further evidence of his self-conscious emotional expression is the aside he gives to readers after describing his crying episode, “you might laugh at me, but none the less it was [the] true state of my mind at that moment.”⁸⁶

Even when he was able to move up socially by securing a position as a butler, he was bothered by the fact that the family that employed him created an artificial “gap” between themselves and him. He lamented, “I know I am a servant full well, but wish to be treated as a man.”⁸⁷ In another episode, the man was working for an elderly widow and was dismissed immediately when he offered his opinion on how she could reduce the cost of heating the house in winter. It was clear most of the man’s employers did not regard him highly, and he was very

⁸² Hamilton Holt, Ed., “The Life Story of a Japanese Servant,” *The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans as Told by Themselves* (New York: Routledge, 1906), 161.

⁸³ Holt, 162.

⁸⁴ Holt, 162.

⁸⁵ Holt, 162.

⁸⁶ Holt, 162.

⁸⁷ Holt, 165.

sensitive about this. His desire to be “treated as a man,” and penchant for offering employers his opinion, ran counter to the advice offered in *Shintobei*, which advised prospective houseboys not to quarrel with or question their employers.

The underlying theme in this man’s essay, however, is the pain he feels at having employers and fellow house staff disregard his pride and his humanity. This man’s lived experience demonstrates that the advice offered in guides—to be both a man who “would not allow himself to be taken lightly” and one who was not “haughty” or quarrelsome—was difficult to follow. It would seem, then, that tobei advocates considered having gainful employment (or at least not being destitute) an important cornerstone of Japanese manhood in the United States, even if the conditions of this employment humiliated and emasculated the immigrant. Many Japanese in this period were quick to point out differences between themselves and prior Chinese immigrants whom they thought were content working in slave-like conditions, so it is curious that they would have advocated for such a level of servility.

The vigilance with which the anonymous houseboy protected his sense of manhood in spite of challenging external circumstances was noticed and commended by at least one American man, thus reinforcing, or rather giving a boost to a manhood that was constantly under siege. The author had worked a summer as a domestic servant on the yacht of a Mr. C. and performed satisfactorily. When Mr. C. offered the author employment on his yacht for a second season, with a \$100 bonus at the end to help with his school expenses, the author refused because he had set his mind to leaving domestic service. The author’s conviction, the dignified way in which he held himself, and his ability to turn down such generous pay and the guarantee of employment to pursue work “in another direction [and] more congenial line” very favorably impressed Mr. C., who gave the author \$50 as a parting gift. Mr. C. predicted that with his

character and force of personality, the author would someday become a “great man” and emphasized that he admired the “hard spot within you.”⁸⁸ Having an American man of means, whom the author held in high regard, praise this “hard spot” when the author had previously been chastised, punished, and dismissed because of this same obstinate “hard spot” inside of him, was a most precious gift to the author.

Success in Business

The editor of one guidebook saw migration as an unparalleled opportunity for the financial development of individual Japanese emigrants and also the future of Japan. He urged Japanese emigrants to cultivate business acumen while in the United States, so they could share this knowledge with those in Japan and thereby help boost the economy in general. He believed there was a direct connection between the success of Japanese living in the United States and greater prosperity for those back in Japan.⁸⁹ In a broad sense, he believed that for the “future of the Japanese empire,” Japan needed to learn how to be competitive in the “very profitable” business world of the United States, and determine the reasons why Japanese immigrants were “behind” compared to White and Chinese business owners there. He had faith in scholarly predictions that the United States would be the dominant political, economic, educational, and cultural force in the 20th century, so he urged Japanese going abroad to absorb all of the lessons that they could.⁹⁰ Perhaps because he felt that a good partnership with the United States would ensure a large, healthy economy in Japan, he tied the Japanese social position with America directly to all of Japanese diplomatic relations in the world.

⁸⁸ Holt, 168.

⁸⁹ Though he does not specifically mention this, one way in which the prosperity of Japanese migrants in the United States could positively affect the economy in Japan was through remittances.

⁹⁰ Iijima, 2–3.

In terms of practical advice for starting a business, one guide covered many aspects of becoming an entrepreneur, with persistent exhortations to be frugal and determined. Thus, before becoming one's own boss, the guide asserts, it is necessary to work as an apprentice and do menial tasks such as cleaning, organizing packages, and attending to the mail. All the while, though, the apprentice should be earnestly studying English and memorizing the routine expressions that clerks must use when engaging with customers. Once the apprentice learns about his trade and has a sufficient command of business English, he may be promoted to sales clerk or even head clerk, eventually gaining enough experience and expertise to be prepared to run his own business.

One key thing an entrepreneur must have to start his business, of course, is capital, and apprentices were encouraged to always save, no matter how meager their wages. Once a business owner, however, the amount one could earn was uncapped, so the apprentice should “vigorously drive” himself to save in order to achieve his goal.⁹¹

This book insists that his quintessential “Japaneseness” could aid the aspiring entrepreneur to live and operate a business on less than his White counterparts. In terms of running a business, the Japanese penchant for frugality and hard work surpassed that of Whites, who, it said, would pay the most that they could afford in order to have a beautiful storefront. Moreover, Whites hire accountants and sales clerks instead of utilizing the labor of their family members. For living quarters, it asserted that White shop owners typically purchased a large house in a “quiet, unpopulated” place with a music room and many separate parlors, and resided there with family and servants. Thus, in total, this prototypical White shopkeeper may, according to this guide, hire as many as ten individuals.

⁹¹ *Shintobei*, 46.

To the author of this guide, this was wasteful behavior. He identified this (the wastefulness of Whites, and frugality of Japanese) as a key factor that accounted for Japanese success in the United States. In contrast to his White counterpart, his model Japanese shopkeeper, did not need to hire many, or any, employees, because his family worked as a unit. His wife could do the work of a maid, and his children could serve as clerks and accountant. The one employee he might need to hire would be a White youth to wait on customers, because the White clientele would be more comfortable being served by someone who looked like them. In his home life, too, the Japanese sole proprietor was seen by this author as more efficient, by living in quarters above or behind his store. In essence, this guide argued that by maintaining a life that to his White counterpart is “not a human life,” the Japanese entrepreneur was able to get ahead. Since this method of operating a business was more economical, the Japanese businessman was able to pass the savings along to his customers, making his store competitive. In fact, the author was so certain of this fact that he speculated that if a Japanese entrepreneur and a White entrepreneur were to start the same kind of store on the same scale, the Japanese shopkeeper could surpass his counterpart in sales.

Even if, however, the Japanese shop owner were to go under, through the tenacity of the family unit—his wife working as a cook, taking in washing, and watching other peoples’ children, his own children working for others and saving their earnings, and the former entrepreneur himself working as a clerk in another person’s establishment—the author of this guide claimed that they would probably be able to open another shop in two or three years’ time.⁹² The author argued that opening a business in the United States was considerably easier than in Japan. He mentioned a personal friend who had failed at business eight times, but each

⁹² *Shintobei*, 48.

time he failed, he tried again, and this “passion” enabled him to finally achieve success. This individual was said to have a thriving grocery store in upstate New York.

A testament to Japanese business acumen was the presence of Japanese-owned businesses in San Francisco, which, in 1895, included 10 inns, 10 guest houses, five Japanese-style restaurants, eight restaurants of European cuisine, 10 barber shops, two public bath houses, three courier services, six clothing shops, 27 shoe stores, and three laundries. In addition to these, there were 23 bookstores, arts sellers, silk sellers, and general stores. All of this grew out of a Japanese-American population of around 40,000. The collective industriousness of this small, long-enduring population who left Japan empty-handed, had marked the city in an undeniable way; the author stressed that there “was no place [in the city] in which there [was] not a Japanese-owned establishment.”⁹³

The guide listed a variety of businesses that Japanese immigrants could open, from Japanese-language bookstores to restaurants, but it specifically mentioned laundries as a business in which the Japanese could outperform the Chinese who dominated the industry. Laundries were an ideal business for the new immigrant because they required very little start-up capital or English language skill. Japanese-owned laundries, it claimed, were increasing to the detriment of the Chinese-owned laundries, because customers had the impression that Chinese laundries were unsanitary. Prior to the entrance of Japanese into this market, working-class customers had to patronize Chinese establishments in order to stay within their budgets. The guide does not say whether or not the general public considered the Japanese to be cleaner than the Chinese, but this is doubtful. The important point, though, is that the author considered Japanese to be more hygienic than the Chinese, and this, coupled with the aforementioned Japanese ability to work

⁹³ *Shintobei*, 46.

hard and live economically (which the author must have considered at least on par with the Chinese ability to do the same), supposedly allowed the Japanese to have an edge.

The keys to succeeding in entrepreneurship, then, were thrift, determination, and hard work. This contradicts the messages of other guides, which pleaded with readers to spend money taking care of themselves, and not sacrifice daily necessities to save money. Not only was it bad for their health, but it reinforced the stereotype that, like other Asians, Japanese too cared only about making and saving money. The more willing Japanese-Americans were to live in ways that deviated from American cultural norms, the more alien they were perceived to be, which did not aid the goals of either Japanese elites or settlers. However, the authors of guides presenting both messages seemed genuinely concerned with helping the Japanese-Americans establish quality lives in the United States, though one largely considered the short-term circumstances, while the other focused on long-term goals.

American Values and Communication Styles

One particularly troublesome issue for many Japanese men was communication. Katayama explained to emigrants that Americans were “forthright and defend honesty. . . [and] express what comes to their minds [T]hey hate people who do not express disagreeable thoughts.”⁹⁴ With this passage, he made his readers aware of the fact that what was considered polite in Japan (e.g. leaving uncomfortable or disagreeable things unsaid) was not considered polite in the United States—on the contrary, interacting with Americans in this Japanese manner would socially hinder the reader.

⁹⁴ Katayama, 41, IN Sawada, 175.

Iijima was also concerned with the ways in which Japanese communicated with Americans (and possibly even among themselves). After beseeching his readers to remember their homeland, he listed a series of personality traits (in addition to the previously mentioned transparency) that he felt would make his readers more accepted in American society, offering insight into what he thought was model masculine behavior. On this list were “discipline” and “frugality.” These were followed by a plea to adopt more “American” modes of living, such as “frankness,” “independence” and “piety.” He felt that emigrants would be better served by being “open” with their feelings and not “hiding” things. This practice of openly and honestly stating feeling, needs, and concerns stands in sharp contrast with how Japanese were typically acted, and especially with the concept of *gaman*, or stoically persevering in the face of a difficult situation. Overall, he felt that whether a person was pleased or displeased with a situation, communicating in a forthright manner was the best way to proceed.⁹⁵

Iijima seems to have believed that his recommended combination of sincerity and frankness would allow the reader to gain the respect of the Americans they encountered while preventing missteps that might bring additional hardship on Japanese immigrants when navigating interactions with authorities, neighbors, and customers. This manner of communicating was protocol for American standards of masculinity; by contrast, indirect speech, secretiveness, and passivity were traits that were gendered as “female” in mainstream American society. For example, gossip was (and still is) considered to circulate mostly in female groups, and the likelihood of a gossip engaging directly with whomever the subject of a rumor to obtain the entire story is unlikely. Thus, in order to conform to the cultural norms of American

⁹⁵ Iijima, 16.

masculinity, and to have at least a chance of being treated as an equal, Iijima urged his readers to be assertive and vocal in any situation.

Iijima's personal background likely made him more invested in improving the image of the nascent Japanese-American community. He was a graduate of the University of Tokyo, and at the time that he penned his guidebook, he was studying economics at Stanford University. As a young Japanese student in California, he was intimately acquainted with the growing anti-Japanese sentiment there, and his desire to help future emigrants to be better prepared likely stemmed from some of his own less-than-positive personal encounters. Iijima's apparent commitment to the development of the Japanese Empire is evident by his later work as a customs agent in Korea, and subsequently as the manager of a Japanese-owned mine there.⁹⁶ It seems that Iijima's exhortations to Japanese immigrants in the United States behave morally to reflect well on Japan was indicates a part of a larger effort to develop a Japanese empire abroad.

Iijima was also an associate of David Starr Jordan; he even accompanied Jordan on the steamship passage to the United States when he first left Japan in 1900.⁹⁷ Iijima's worldview was undoubtedly influenced by this great scientist and scholar who advocated for "individual initiative and personal adequacy" in Japanese education (a system that he found to be still rooted in the feudal age, and thus lacking). It is likely that Iijima felt these were qualities for which all, but especially young men, should strive, and that they could also be guiding principles for the intrepid Japanese who settled in America and founded overseas Japanese colonies.

⁹⁶ Iijima, 81.

⁹⁷ Jordan, 81.

Encouraging Marriages to Prevent Vice and Immorality

After 1907, the flow of Japanese laborers from Japan was dramatically reduced, per the Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan. This near-halt of Japanese immigration was due to intense anti-Japanese sentiment and outrage over what exclusionists considered a large influx of Japanese—which was to say, approximately 30,000 per year.⁹⁸

As paradoxical as it might seem, many Japanese elites dedicated to solving the “immigrant problem” advocated for more immigration—their solution, though, was to send Japanese women instead of more Japanese men. There were exceptions in the Gentlemen's Agreement that allowed immediate family members of laborers already in the United States to still immigrate. Taking advantage of these, Japanese elites advocated the immigration of Japanese women as brides for Japanese men already living in the United States. By becoming wives, it was felt that these women would help improve the image of Japanese immigrant communities, which were, up to that point, overwhelmingly male and young. Many young men enjoyed recreational activities that were fodder for the vitriol poured out by anti-Japanese agitators, and cases of men losing themselves in a world of vice were numerous. It was hoped that the immigration of Japanese women, and subsequent marriages of Japanese men, would curb these trends.

Some tobei advocates believed that it was not possible for any immigrant man to live a morally correct life unless he was married and had a family. In fact, one Christian tobei advocate, Shimanuki Hyōdayū, claimed that the success or failure of an individual (male) immigrant depended entirely on the presence of a family.⁹⁹ Following the logic that single men would ultimately succumb to vice, the tobei advocates feared that vice would encumber a man to

⁹⁸ Sawada, “Appendix 1: Japanese Immigration to the United States, 1891–1944,” 8.

⁹⁹ Sawada, 124.

the extent that he could no longer function as a productive member of society. However, they believed that the presence of wives would do two things to avoid this danger: they would curb debauchery and vice, and they would transform settlements into actual communities, ones which were more similar to those of mainstream America. Since most laborers could not afford to take several months off and return to Japan to seek out a mate, a substitute method for emigrants to find a wife was devised—picture marriages.

Women's Guides

The prospective brides in these marriages—the women who would “save” Japanese men from themselves and better their communities—also received advice from guidebooks on how to travel to the New World. The Young Women’s Christian Association of Japan (YWCAJ) published one such guidebook for women. As one might expect, considering the large numbers of “picture brides” whose arrival in the United States was re-igniting debates over Japanese immigration, the expectations for the appearance and decorum of female migrants were even more circumscribed than those for men.

The YWCAJ guidebook informed readers about several aspects of the early immigration experience, including preparations for boarding the steamship, behavior during the passage to the United States, what to expect at customs, and how to get assistance if they found themselves in trouble. The target audience for this pamphlet was the picture brides, who were arriving in sufficiently large numbers to contribute to tensions in Japanese-American relations. Japanese elites understood from the start that these women would be under scrutiny by exclusionists, and also everyday Americans who would be curious to see what kind of women came from Japan.

This is why the appearance and decorum of female emigrants was felt to be even more crucial to the nation's image than men's.

The YWCAJ guide is very explicit about what women should wear and how they should conduct themselves onboard the ship. First, women were instructed to bring leather suitcases, if they could, because leather was attractive, and they were discouraged from bringing a knapsack with a drawstring because these “look[ed] cheap.”¹⁰⁰ Items the readers were told to pack in the attractive leather cases included plenty of undergarments, cosmetics, and a handkerchief. They were instructed to bring a sufficient amount of Japanese split-toed socks if they were wearing Japanese clothing, and to never wear their wooden sandals without socks when going on deck so as not to show the flesh of their legs. If wanting to wear Western dress, the guide told readers that fashion trends changed in the United States faster than in Japan, so the women should either be sure that their clothes were not already “outdated” or wait until they reached their destination to make this purchase.¹⁰¹

It is interesting that the YWCAJ did not express any preference for picture brides to don Western dress instead of Japanese-style garments. This is a curious contrast to the earlier men's guides, which explicitly endorsed Western clothing, and made no mention of quickly evolving fashion trends in the United States (although to be fair, men's clothing styles generally changed less rapidly than women's at this time). It seems that for a Japanese man to be accepted, he must dress in a Western-style suit, yet Japanese woman seemed to have the prerogative of selecting Western or traditionally Japanese clothing according to their own preferences, in line with the common practice in Japan at the time. In Japan, although Western dress was acceptable for women at this time, a woman who wore a *kimono* (provided that it was in good condition and

¹⁰⁰ YWCAJ, *Tobei Fujin Kokoroe*, (Yokohama: Tokokousyutokoro, 1912), 63.

¹⁰¹ YWCAJ, 1.

clean) was generally seen as more conservative, and therefore more proper. Moreover, the YWCAJ guide was published in 1911, in the early stage of picture bride immigration, when only around 3,000 women were arriving in the United States per year, so kimono-clad women did not raise many eyebrows. But things would change quickly: by the end of the decade, when the number of women emigrating reached approximately 10,000 per year, guides had begun urging women to wear only Western-style dress in order to showcase how adaptable these Japanese women were to the mainstream American culture.

Equally important to the YWCAJ was the women's behavior aboard the ship. They were cautioned against revealing too much about their personal backgrounds in conversations with others. Unfortunately, the guide does not specify if this reticence applied to all onboard—that is, if it applied to both other Japanese emigrants and non-Japanese passengers. These women were starting a new life abroad, and also meeting their husbands for the first time upon landing. As such, they would have purchased new clothes for the voyage, possibly even with the assistance of family members. This enabled each woman to put her best face forward, and (if she thought it necessary) possibly to conceal the true nature of her personal or family circumstances—as long as she did not volunteer any information. It is safe to assume that the YWCAJ was concerned that if the women discussed their backgrounds with other passengers, they could become compromised somehow—either physically or in terms of perceived status. This would be especially true for members of hereditary social castes who traditionally faced extreme discrimination, and who migrated in high numbers hoping to escape the stigma they had been born into. If they successfully kept their personal history to themselves, it was possible to simply identify as “Japanese” in the United States. But even for women who were not attempting to escape such stigma, having the poverty of their families known by others was felt to taint the

image of all picture brides, and by extension all Japanese women, abroad. The reality of this advice meant that there was scarcely a topic of conversation that was safe for these women to discuss.

Not surprisingly, the guide advised women to beware of interactions with men; to “not give an opportunity” for any “unfortunate” situation to occur. Even if the man was “very kind,” women were told to keep their distance. And most importantly, women should never, under any circumstances, enter a man’s sleeping quarters or use his restroom.¹⁰² The potential dangers of interacting with men onboard were numerous. There was always the possibility of seduction or assault. Another guide, from 1901, recounts the example of a Japanese woman who was sexually assaulted by a group of Caucasian men after being brought into one of their cabins.¹⁰³

Women were also warned to be vigilant against becoming an unwitting victim in a criminal scheme. A shockingly high number of Japanese prostitutes working in the United States and Hawaii did not choose that profession, but were lured abroad under false pretenses, or simply abducted. In fact, there were smuggling rings comprised of Japanese gangsters which existed for this exact purpose. Moreover, these illicit organizations sometimes outsourced such “recruitment” to sailors, because they had access to rural young women who were generally uninformed about travel and life in America. To help ensure women’s safety, the YWCAJ arranged with a prominent Japanese shipping line, the Tōyō Kisen Steamship Company, to have a “kind, well-informed stewardess” on each voyage who would look after the women in the third-class cabins.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² YWCAJ, 1.

¹⁰³ Hyōdayū Shimanuki, *Saikin Seikaku Tobei Annai* (Tokyo: Chuyodō, 1901), 103; Sawada, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Michi Kawai, *My Lantern* (Tokyo, 1939), 142.

As in the case of all immigrants, a clean bill of health was crucial to gaining admission to the country. To prevent the spread of illness, women were warned against lending out their handkerchiefs to others.¹⁰⁵ They were similarly encouraged to visit the doctor on board the ship to make sure that they did not have hookworms. The guide also told women that eating pickled Japanese plums helped with seasickness, so they should take a supply that would last for the duration of the voyage.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, the guides for women do not mention sexually transmitted diseases, unlike the guide for men discussed previously. This could have been because the YWCAJ assumed that these women had not had prior sexual experiences, or perhaps the editor did not want to include it because to foreigners, it might reinforce the stereotype that Japanese women often engaged in prostitution.

In a section on immigration procedures, the guide tells women what kinds of questions they should expect to be asked during interviews at the Angel Island facility. Among the things they would be called on to provide was detailed information about their husbands. They were also told of a “teacher” at immigration who spoke Japanese, and who would be available to help if the women had trouble expressing themselves.¹⁰⁷ The “teachers” referred to in this guide were Japanese-American members of the YWCAJ in California, who volunteered to go to Angel Island when a steamship arrived and greet the female Japanese passengers, let them know about local resources, and discourage them from engaging in prostitution.¹⁰⁸

The YWCAJ pamphlet gave information about places the women could turn if they encountered difficulties or got into trouble in the United States. These organizations included the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) offices in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and

¹⁰⁵ The handkerchief was important to hygiene because it was used in bathing.

¹⁰⁶ Kawai, 142.

¹⁰⁷ YWCAJ, 2–3.

¹⁰⁸ YWCAJ, 2.

Honolulu, as well as the Japanese Women's Home in Seattle.¹⁰⁹ The purpose of these safe houses was to rehabilitate prostitutes, provide aid to women who were at risk, and help them find ways to live respectable lives. However, prostitutes were not the only at-risk group of Japanese women in the United States and Hawaii. A home for abused picture brides was opened in Honolulu by a Japanese Christian missionary, Yeiko Mizobe So, who had been brought to Hawaii by Reverend Orramel Gulick (brother of the above-mentioned Sidney) and his wife Anna, in 1895.¹¹⁰ The need was so great, in fact, that the home sheltered over 700 women in the ten years that it operated.¹¹¹ Some of these homes, however, forced women to convert to Christianity; in the case of Cameron House in San Francisco, the women were not permitted to marry and leave the home unless the woman's legal guardian approved of the match.¹¹² The actions and situations of Japanese women in general, but specifically picture brides, were scrupulously and stringently observed by both Japanese organizations and anti-Japanese exclusionists. Thus, it was imperative for the image of Japan, as well as the safety of the women themselves, that they knew where to go for assistance in the event that they found themselves in an unfortunate predicament.

Picture Brides and the Image of the Japanese-American Community

Unfortunately, but perhaps unsurprisingly, picture marriages were fraught with problems. Kawai Michi, a Christian activist and proponent of ties between Japan and the United States who served as the first National Secretary of the YWCAJ, felt that simple farm women were best able

¹⁰⁹ YWCAJ, 3–4.

¹¹⁰ Keli Yoshie Nakamura, "Yeiko Mizobe So and the Japanese Women's Home for Abused Picture Brides (1895–1905)," *Asian & Pacific Passages: The Migrant with a Thousand Faces*, *Amerasia Journal* (2010), 16–17.

¹¹¹ Nakamura, 1.

¹¹² For more information about the restrictions placed on women and girls in rescue homes, see Mildred Crowley Martin, *Chinatown's Angry Angel: The Story of Donaldina Cameron* (Palo Alto: Pacific Books, 1986[1977]).

to adjust to their new life in America. Ambitious women, on the other hand—especially those with some education and who were “expecting to move in a larger world”—were highly likely to be disappointed with their husband’s situation.¹¹³ If the couple were Christian, Kawai believed that they would have a comparatively stronger marriage, in part due to better mutual respect and understanding, including the husband’s “wider outlook and greater consideration for women.”¹¹⁴

In the early years of Japanese immigration, instances of divorce or spousal abandonment were much higher than was the case for counterparts in Japan. It was often the case that the picture bride felt cheated. To gain the best possible wife (or in some cases, any wife), Japanese men in America would often fabricate, or obfuscate, their personal details—telling prospective brides that they were successful landowners (when in fact they were migrant laborers) or well-off shop owners (when in fact they were merely shop assistants). Also, the men frequently had their photographs touched up, or simply used outdated photographs. Occasionally, though, they used a photograph of a completely different person.

Many picture brides were therefore horrified when they learned the true details of their new husband’s situation. Subsequently, disillusioned picture brides often began new relationships with other men. There were few Japanese women in the United States in the early years of the 20th century, so those who were available could take their pick of Japanese men—or choose to make their own way without a husband. The latter option, though, was difficult for any Japanese woman; to provide for herself without falling into prostitution was extremely challenging, and women in this situation gravely concerned the YWCA and YWCAJ.

Whether she married another man or tried to make her way in life on her own, instances of wives abandoning their husbands were seen by social elites as bringing great shame on the

¹¹³ Kawai, 139.

¹¹⁴ Kawai, 139.

Japanese-American community. And unfortunately, this phenomenon was sufficiently common to gain the attention of outside observers. For instance, between 1885 and 1907, an estimated 25% of Issei marriages in Hawaii ended in divorce.¹¹⁵ Japanese Protestant elites, set on educating immigrants from their home country, considered these instances of divorce to be due to “the weakness of Japanese females” and “the degradation of female morality.”¹¹⁶ The actions of these women, they argued, fed anti-Japanese sentiment, which was growing rapidly at that time.¹¹⁷

Even if they did not engage in illicit activities, or leave their marriages, there were numerous other ways for these women to potentially lower Americans’ opinions of Japanese immigrants. For example, most wives were active in the local economy, and worked alongside their husbands in the fields or shops, in addition to cooking for dozens of area bachelors and taking in washing for extra income. While the severe gender imbalance in the Japanese-American community meant that Japanese women in the United States and Hawaii had more economic opportunities than their counterparts in Japan, one of the most common forms of female engagement with the economy—laboring in the fields—was harshly condemned. Kawai cited this situation, in which women worked alongside their husbands in the fields, as one of the primary reasons for anti-Japanese sentiment. If women were working in the fields, she thought, it meant that their children were not being properly supervised or raised. In essence, she concluded, a woman was choosing money over her own children out of greed, and she felt that this was abhorrent to Americans.¹¹⁸ A guide on raising children produced by the Japanese Association of

¹¹⁵ Nakamura, 1.

¹¹⁶ Sidney Lu, “Good Women for Empire: Educating Overseas Female Emigrants in Imperial Japan, 1900–1945,” *Journal of Global History*, vol. 8, issue. 3 (Nov. 2013), 452.

¹¹⁷ Lu, 452.

¹¹⁸ Lu, 450.

America (JAA, known in Japanese as the *Zaibei Nihonjin Kai*) coldly accused Japanese parents of “caring about watering the fields but not about their child’s temperature.”¹¹⁹

The importance of these wives and future mothers to the perception of the Japanese-American community, and by extension, Japan itself, is further evidenced in the language of a 1916 guide published by the JAA, in cooperation with the YWCAJ. This guide reminded readers that they were “obliged to demonstrate the virtue of Japanese women and compel Americans to admit them as first-rate women of the world.”¹²⁰ As such, it continued, the work of an Issei Japanese-American wife exceeded the typical duties of creating a home of “comfort” for her husband. Her special, additional, mission was to create a moral household, by discouraging “unsavory conduct, foul speech, gambling, drinking, and smoking.”¹²¹ This vigilance was seen as necessary to uphold the national honor of Japan and to prevent the next generation from inheriting the vices of their fathers.

The guidebooks and leaflets did help some women to better understand the society they had immigrated to. For instance, 17 years after moving to the United States, one woman wrote to Kawai share how hearing her speak at the emigration bureau in Hiroshima, and also taking several guides with her when she emigrated, greatly aided her in the challenging task of interacting with American neighbors and raising two children while being isolated from other Japanese in a rural Nevada town.¹²²

¹¹⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, “A Guide for Pregnant Women and Those Raising Children” (1918), translated into Japanese, with special cultural commentary by the JAA.

¹²⁰ Azuma, 53–4.

¹²¹ Azuma, 54.

¹²² Kawai, 142.

A School for Picture Brides

The JWYCA was quite concerned by the many issues surrounding the emigration of Japanese women to the United States. They noted that because of internal conditions in Japan, the number of female emigrants to the United States would only continue to increase. The headquarters had received complaints about the “morals” of Japanese women who had settled on the West Coast of the United States, and in Hawaii and Shanghai, China.¹²³ In 1915, the California branch of the YWCAJ asked the headquarters of the YWCAJ in Tokyo to conduct a study of Japanese female immigrants on the American West Coast.¹²⁴ With the aid of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce, they dispatched the national secretary, Kawai, to investigate conditions of Japanese women in several North American cities, including San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, as well as Vancouver and Victoria in Canada.¹²⁵

In her many travels abroad, Kawai had become aware of the presence of Japanese prostitutes and, understandably, was quite sensitive to the assumption that Asian women, and Japanese women in particular, either were prostitutes or were in some other way morally compromised. During a stop in Singapore on one of these voyages, the ship’s manager placed a new passenger, a European prostitute, in the cabin that Kawai was sharing with a young Japanese charge—presumably because the manager thought “Orientals are of the same sort [as the woman].”¹²⁶ Kawai insisted that the woman be removed from her cabin, probably to prevent her charge, a “pretty, unsophisticated [18-year-old] country girl” traveling to Germany to work in a Japanese-owned shop, from being exposed to that profession. Having taken responsibility for keeping the young woman safe during the passage, Kawai was vigilant to shield her from “the

¹²³ Kawai, 142.

¹²⁴ YWCAJ, 1.

¹²⁵ Kawai, 136–7.

¹²⁶ Kawai, 120.

other passengers and [to help her avoid] those who had deteriorated in the loose life of some Oriental port city.”¹²⁷

Another YWCAJ member also discovered, to her disappointment, the disgraceful ways that her countrywomen were conducting themselves on transPacific voyages. She was concerned by their poor hygiene, odorous luggage, body language, and loud conversations.¹²⁸ She wondered “how to educate these ignorant rural women who know nothing and turn them into ‘ideal women’ quickly.”¹²⁹ In order to mitigate the behavior of these young women, the YWCAJ member gave them pamphlets compiled by the organization with the intention of helping to prepare women such as these for the challenges of living in the United States. In this brief encounter, the YWCAJ member described herself as a mother “[who] looks at her daughters and wants them to appear beautiful so that they will not be disliked by others.”¹³⁰

When Kawai began her investigation of the situation of Japanese women in the United States and Canada in the spring of 1915, she found a need for the YWCAJ within the community of would-be emigrants in Japan. Kawai noted that there was a wide assortment of Japanese people among her fellow passengers; she traveled with many Japanese women whom she described as “a cross section of lower middle-class Japanese” including a dance teacher, a middle-aged geisha, a hair dresser, several older women from the countryside, a group of dancing girls who were to perform at the upcoming Pan-Pacific Exposition, and several wives; of the latter group, some were women already residing in the United States, and who had returned to Japan to visit family, whereas others were new picture brides. Of all of the Japanese women that she traveled with, she evaluated the picture brides most harshly, describing them as:

¹²⁷ Kawai, 120.

¹²⁸ Lu, 450–451.

¹²⁹ Lu, 451.

¹³⁰ Lu, 451.

[m]ostly from country communities and look[ing] queer, even to me; for no one had told them that their huge pompadours stuffed with ‘rats’ had long since gone out of style in America, and that their efforts to beautify themselves with an excessive use of powder resulted only in giving an impression of uncleanness.¹³¹

After docking in San Francisco, Kawai, “like an elder sister,” lectured the picture brides on topics that were pertinent for the women, such as methods for cleaning one’s hair, nails, shoes and handkerchiefs, how to walk in American shoes, and the differences between Japanese and American toilets. She also discussed American social customs, and some preferences of the American people related to typical home life and moral standards. She stressed that the women had a strict responsibility to follow the dictates of the land that they had come to live in. After addressing the women for a little over an hour, she had to leave the immigration facility for an appointment, but she remembered looking back at the building as she left and seeing “a flutter of white handkerchiefs waving in appreciation” for the little wisdom she had been able to impart. As a result of this experience, she recognized that there was a crucial need to better prepare Japanese women before they embarked on the journey to the United States.¹³²

She met with the top government officials about immigration and went to New York City to study the situation of European immigrants there and how they were assimilating. She spoke with experts who were working to provide education for these immigrants and learned about the theories behind the education for European immigrants. She also went among the immigrants in various parts of the cities. She became closely involved with the group she was observing, even living with some female Japanese immigrants and their families to investigate, first-hand, “every aspect” their lives and to learn their “hopes and sorrows, successes and failures, temptations and dangers” as well as to determine the causes of these. Additionally, Kawai met with the Japanese

¹³¹ Kawai, 137.

¹³² Kawai, 138.

Consul and the JAA, as well as individual Japanese immigrants in the United States from both the public and private sectors. She also met with many Americans to solicit their opinions about Japanese women living in the country.

One result of Kawai's investigations was the YWCAJ setting up an immigration liaison, and starting its own immigration bureau in California. This program enlisted female English-speakers from the YWCAJ membership to work as translators and guides for new arrivals. These women would go to Angel Island when a steamship arrived from Japan and greet the female Japanese passengers. The representative would counsel the women, and make them aware of job opportunities, presumably in an attempt to keep them from falling into "sinful" occupations. In total, Kawai's observation tour in the United States lasted one and a half years, but the effects of her efforts to improve the transition for newly arrived women from Japan had an impact that lasted for many years thereafter.

As a result of her investigations in the United States and Canada, Kawai wrote a series of YWCAJ guides specifically for picture brides headed to the United States. These pamphlets were presented in the easy-to-understand voice of a fictional teacher, Mrs. Nishida Yoneko, described as the highly educated and socially competent wife of a businessman who was living a comfortable middle-class life in New York, answering questions for three naïve young picture brides from the countryside. The information in this guide was revealed in three scenes between the "teacher" and her "students."

In the first scene, Mrs. Nishida hosts the women in her home in Japan, explaining ways to successfully interact with Americans, and how to adjust their style of dress and grooming in order to not appear strange in the United States. This lesson included information on the correct

ways to wear Western clothing and apply cosmetics, as well as a discussion of appropriate gestures and manner of speaking.

The next scene is set on the steamship to the United States, where Mrs. Nishida visits the young women in their third-class cabins. She is elegantly attired in stylish Western dress, and gives the women advice about things such as avoiding seasickness, and also warns them not to keep aromatic foods in the cabin (presumably because the smell of strange food wafting through the air might be unpleasant for other passengers, leading them to form an unfavorable impression of the cabin's occupants).

In the third and final scene, Mrs. Nishida once again visits the three young women in their cabins, and finds that they had tossed dirty clothing on the beds, so she urges them to keep the room orderly. She also warns them about talking to strange men on the ship. At the end of the guide, Mrs. Nishida enlightens the young women about what to expect when they get to customs and immigration, and instructs them on typical restroom protocol in the United States.¹³³

Historian Sidney Lu argues that by invoking the roles of socially recognized superiors, such as an elder sister, a mother, or a teacher, the YWCAJ was “normaliz[ing] the social hierarchy” that existed between the authors and readers of these guides. The authors were predominantly middle-class and educated elites, while the picture brides were overwhelmingly from impoverished, rural backgrounds. This was one way in which the organization sought to ensure the women's submission to the YWCAJ and its dictates.¹³⁴

Simply writing guides for picture brides, however, was not felt to be sufficient to ensure that they successfully adapted to life in the United States and avoided activities and occupations that would reflect negatively on Japan and Japanese people abroad. When the YWCAJ members

¹³³ Lu, 451.

¹³⁴ Lu, 451.

learned of the “kind and passionate” work their American sisters were performing for Japanese female immigrants to prevent them from falling into a life of crime, they felt inspired to match their efforts by starting a training school for these women.

The corpus of information that Kawai amassed therefore served not only as the basis for the JYWCS’s pamphlets, but also guided the establishment of the school for picture brides, and helped to pinpoint the exact needs of this population. The aim of this school was to better prepare the women for life in the United States, ensure that they would not fall into a life of ill repute, and uphold a positive image of Japanese womanhood.

In October of 1917, on the anniversary of the founding of the YWCAJ, the organization held a seminar on the “problem of migrant women,” and invited prominent leaders including the mayor of Yokohama, the Speaker of the Japanese House of Representatives, and the Governor of Kanagawa Prefecture, who also delivered a speech to “congratulate and encourage” the migrants. The school officially opened in November. It was funded by donations, which allowed it to offer its classes to prospective emigrants free of charge. Many of its instructors were Japanese women who were professional educators, who gained additional credibility by having lived in the United States themselves.¹³⁵

The structure of the school itself reflected the needs of its students. It was an exercise in structured flexibility, suited to both short-term and longer-term students. It seems that the YWCAJ was glad to disseminate information to as many women as possible and by whatever means they could. The typical student was a picture bride who had traveled from a rural area to the port city of Yokohama, and was either awaiting a physical examination or medical treatment, or the departure of the steamship that would take her to her new home.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Lu, 451.

¹³⁶ Kawai, 141.

Classes on the Yokohama campus were held daily from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, and on Saturday mornings. In order to keep the schedule both Christian and patriotic, there were no classes on Sundays or national holidays. Students were welcome to join at any time, without waiting for the beginning of the semester. Moreover, there were no formal enrollment procedures; women could simply drop in whenever they had time. Likewise, if a student felt that she had mastered the material in a particular course, she could stop attending, without jeopardizing her ability to participate in other classes.

The curriculum included classes on morals; advisories for moving to the United States (including knowledge about the voyage itself and immigration procedures upon arrival in the United States); English conversation; the political and social situation in United States and Hawaii (specifically information about anti-Japanese sentiments); American manners and customs; scientific housekeeping, divided into three parts—cooking, washing, and home management; sanitation and personal hygiene; raising children in the United States; and American fashion.¹³⁷

However, despite the best efforts of those who compiled and made available guidebooks for emigrants, concerns regarding Japanese immigrants in the United States persisted. By the early 1920s, there was a general feeling in the United States that the Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan was failing. This was not because the Japanese-initiated campaigns failed; causes included the influx of picture brides to the West Coast, and the steady flow of Japanese laborers moving from Hawaii to the mainland, a stream of migration not prohibited by the Agreement.

¹³⁷ By 1917, elites no longer endorsed kimono-wearing among picture brides because the practice seemed to backwards and alien to many Americans.

Conclusion

In the first two-and-a-half decades of the 20th century, the entry of primarily working-class Japanese immigrants to the West Coast of the United States and Hawaii was met with anti-Japanese sentiment and calls for excluding subsequent Japanese immigration. The main complaints were that Japanese unfairly competed with native-born laborers, and that they were reluctant to assimilate.

Japanese social elites identified the crude habits, general lack of sophistication, tendency to hold fast to their local culture, and propensity to participate in vice as the reasons Americans turned against the Japanese. The negative attention placed on Japanese-Americans was extremely embarrassing, and threatened the narrative Japan wanted to present to the world: a strong and modern nation on par with the West and capable of leading other Asian countries in the 20th century.

One approach to mitigating the image crisis taken by some advocates of emigration to the United States and Hawaii was the production of guidebooks, so that would-be emigrants would have a better understanding of the situation they would be entering, and have strategies in place to avoid potential problems. While some guides were intended for a general readership, most were targeted either at either men or women. In general, these guides extolled hard work and a correct, which is to say, modern, attitude. These guides also strongly advocated immigrants' assimilation into mainstream American culture.

Many Japanese elites were enthusiastic about Japanese overseas expansion, viewing it as a method of unofficial empire via migration that benefitted Japan in tangible ways, such as freeing up resources for those left in Japan, gaining remittances from those aboard, opening of new markets, and introducing new forms of technology in farming, business, etc. Moreover, if

excess labor from Japan could help to develop unused land in other countries, and in this way, earn the gratitude of the natives and the recognition of the world for their sacrifices, Japan's global image would receive a great boost. The trajectory that the Japanese-American experience was taking in these early decades was alarming, though, because it was furthering neither Japan's desired global image nor its quest for beneficial overseas expansion.

These guidebooks highlight early Japanese-American attempts to fit into the gendered social roles of the new country. This was especially challenging for men, because many Americans already had an image of Asian men as effeminate, which was exacerbated by the types of work they accepted, such as domestic service. The YWCAJ emigrant school in Yokohama, which trained mostly picture brides headed to the United States, is another indication of the seriousness with which the Japanese elites treated the problem of cultural assimilation for Japanese-Americans. The school offered many skill-based classes, such as lessons in the English Language and Western-style cooking; the fact that an equal emphasis was placed on cultivating a proper Western appearance illustrates the importance that a positive national image held within the discourse of overseas migration.

Regardless of the sincerity with which some migrants may have embraced American life, or the earnestness with which organizations and prominent individuals promoted assimilation, the sheer volume of Japanese immigration to the West Coast continued to raise alarm within sectors of the native-born American population. It was to contend with this residual yellow peril sentiment and its various manifestations that these assimilation projects were undertaken by Japanese elites; efforts that capture the zeitgeist of Japanese-U.S. relations in the early decades of the 20th century.

CHAPTER 2:

SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE UNITED STATES AND HAWAII: SHAPING JAPANESE-AMERICANS INTO AN ACCEPTABLE MINORITY

In the 1920s, Japanese residents of Walnut Creek, California were encouraged to look out their windows at night and carefully observe. They were not searching for rare celestial occurrences, or even being vigilant about thieves; rather, they were spying on their neighbors at the behest of the foremost authority in the community—the powerful Japanese Association of America (JAA, known in Japanese as the *Zaibei Nihonjin Kai*), an organization with official backing from the Japanese government. These watchful neighbors were on alert for Japanese-Americans who might be headed to a gambling den. If a stealthy gambler did make it to the gambling den unseen, he would likely encounter a representative of the JAA, who would sternly tell him not to enter, because gambling was unacceptable in proper American society and his money could be put to better use.

In the United States, Japanese-American elites partnered with governmental organizations as well as individuals to assist members of their community in adapting to their new environment and becoming productive members of society. These campaigns were designed with one key objective in mind: to quell the anti-Japanese sentiment that was growing as the number of Japanese immigrants increased. The two main criticisms levied against Japanese immigrants were (1) that they accepted lower wages, thus harming native-born workers, and (2) that they were unable to assimilate to the dominant American culture. While both Issei¹³⁸ and Nisei¹³⁹ community leaders embraced governmental entities and received assistance from them

¹³⁸ Literally meaning “first generation,” this term is used to describe immigrants born in Japan.

¹³⁹ Literally meaning “second generation,” this term is used to describe the children of immigrants, i.e., the first generation born in the new country of residence.

to further their objectives of advancing acceptance of Japanese-Americans, the agencies and individuals providing aid differed along generational lines, with Issei receiving help from the Japanese government and Nisei (who were mostly dual citizens of the United States and Japan) accepting assistance from American government officials.

In the case of the Nisei community leaders, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs cooperated with, and even relied on, the JAA to help execute the “Gentlemen’s Agreement” between the United States and Japan, which effectively prevented the immigration of Japanese laborers. With this limited consular authority, the JAA served the Japanese-American population by issuing official documents, but its prominence also allowed it to advance social reform campaigns that induced Japanese immigrants to assimilate into American culture and abstain from vice.

A generation later, in the build up to WWII, Nisei leaders cooperated with those in power locally to demonstrate pliability and loyalty to the United States. Nisei in the continental United States held biannual conferences, and in Hawaii a prominent Christian minister and community leader, Okumura Takie, organized an annual conference for Nisei to meet and speak with various prominent individuals from the community such as politicians and businessmen.

Initial Forays into the United States

The JAA was established in San Francisco in 1900, in response to an especially discriminatory act—quarantining the entire Asian population of the city because there had been an outbreak of Bubonic plague in the Chinese quarters. A group of prominent Japanese businessmen banded together to protest the unnecessary quarantine, which was harming their businesses. The mayor at the time, James Phelan, was the force behind the quarantining all Asian

residents of the city. Phelan was one of the most outspoken proponents of banning Japanese immigration; after his time as mayor, he served California in the United States Senate for six years, where this issue became one of his primary agendas. The JAA eventually became the preeminent organization of Japanese-Americans, and many of the leaders had originally come to the United States as students whose families had the means to support their international study.

In 1940, the JAA authored a history of the Japanese in the United States, beginning with the earliest castaways in the mid-19th century. This book reveals many of the JAA leaders' attitudes, such as pride in being Japanese and the belief that the Japanese provided a great service to California and other western states whose economies they had helped to build, especially through transforming previously barren fields into flourishing farmland. The JAA also believed that Japanese-Americans had the potential to be an important bridge between Japan and the United States, though they seemed to feel that more preparation was needed before that bridge could manifest. Unfortunately, the book does not spell out exactly what they considered the hindrances were. One can speculate that perhaps they did not believe that Americans were receptive to the idea of learning more about Japan and developing more friendly relations with it at that time, because the influx of Japanese laborers willing to work for low wages had already created an atmosphere in which many locals had no desire to associate with Japanese people. Additionally, Japan's aggressive foreign policy agenda in Asia alarmed many Americans, especially those living on the West Coast.

Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of Japanese in the United States were of the laboring classes, the JAA considers the Japanese immigrants of the mid- and late-19th century, the vast majority of whom were students at American universities, to be the foundation of Japanese-American society. These students, they claimed, established meaningful connections

to their new home in the United States; in other words, they assimilated. These early migrants were able to board in American households, where they were exposed to “righteous living” by the ideological descendants of Puritan settlers.¹⁴⁰ Even though these households were mere boarders’ lodgings, the JAA drew an ideological connection to these American paragons of the “Protestant ethic” by arguing that having simply lived temporarily in this milieu boded well for the developing young adults, most of whom were hosted by “faithful and pious Christian” families who were said to have imparted sincere moral teachings to the Japanese students.¹⁴¹ This preference for Christianity is not surprising considering that most of these men came of age in the early Meiji period, when Christian missionaries were active in Japan, and were from well-off families (social elites were among the first to adopt Western ideas because they came into contact with foreigners whereas those from lower social strata did not). Moreover, being Christian opened doors for young students, as the missionaries had vast networks.

The JAA’s history also says that the character of these first students was “outstanding,” because they had been shaped by persevering in their studies despite the obstacles they had encountered, and had thrived in their new environment and excelled in academic performance and moral conduct.¹⁴² Having been exposed to American culture, and in many ways embraced it, the book insisted that their resolve to stay in the United States had become even stronger. Still, the JAA wrote that the resistance encountered by these individuals was a continual reminder of their status as an “other.”

It cannot be assumed, however, that these elites were ready to abandon their Japanese identity completely. After all, the JAA considered itself the “brain and bone” (i.e., framework) of

¹⁴⁰ *Zaibei Nihonjin Kai* (JAA). *Zaibei Nihonjin Shi*. (San Francisco, 1940), 17.

¹⁴¹ JAA, 17.

¹⁴² JAA, 17.

Japanese society in the United States, “actively involved in the front lines of overseas development.”¹⁴³ The JAA’s desire for immigrants to “fit in” to American society was a conflation of their respect for American culture and their desire to reflect well on their country of birth.

The JAA thus presented these early students as promising youths who often shared a sense of mission to expand the reaches of Japan, and to build a new national that reflected the formidable legacy of the Meiji Restoration. In this sense, it maintained, each of these individuals had “bathed” in the lively culture of the new land and contributed to building an international image of a “modern” Japan, while becoming leaders within the Japanese enclaves in America.¹⁴⁴ According to the JAA, the earliest Japanese residents in the United States made a favorable impression; it was the subsequent deluge of economically motivated workers that in their view blighted this early image of the empire and its emigrants.¹⁴⁵

Like “Human Bullets”

When large numbers of un-skilled Japanese workers came to American shores, already-established elite Japanese residents retained a position of leadership within the Japanese immigrant communities in areas such as “industrial management, organization, and proper guidance of thought.”¹⁴⁶ The JAA claimed that it was this quality of leadership which “set the Japanese population apart” from other immigrant groups: where other groups were comprised only of low-skilled and uneducated migrant workers, the Japanese community had many highly

¹⁴³ JAA, 32.

¹⁴⁴ JAA, 30.

¹⁴⁵ JAA, 32.

¹⁴⁶ JAA, 4.

skilled and well-educated members, thus the Japanese-American community with “an entirely different appearance.”¹⁴⁷

Despite the presence of these diverse social elements, the settlers were surrounded by adversity. Ineligible for American citizenship, disadvantaged in some states by land ownership bans and myriad other legal prohibitions, and reliant on the distant Japanese government to intervene in instances of unjust treatment, their situation was untenable. Thus, the Japanese immigrant community painstakingly negotiated a space for themselves in between the two nation-states.¹⁴⁸ From the outset, the JAA believed that the nascent Japanese communities were at a disadvantage within “an existing society [where mainstream Whites] boast their power and superiority.”¹⁴⁹ The JAA thought that in relation to the dominant group, Japanese immigrants “thoughtlessly” mingled and scattered, rarely congregated, and allowed themselves to become engulfed within the mainstream society, seldom making forays into the larger entity that surrounded them.¹⁵⁰

Alarmed by this, the JAA sought to create a cohesive society of Japanese immigrants and their descendants in America. On a political level, average Japanese laborers “created a society that had extremely few political and legal links [to Japanese society].”¹⁵¹ As such, these sojourners “fought against mental anxiety” in not having direct support from either country, and were forced to “[overcome] thousands of new experiences, and [to proceed] as if they were human bullets.”¹⁵² What ties existed to the homeland were the travels and correspondence of a small number of Japanese on either side of the Pacific Ocean. The JAA believed that the

¹⁴⁷ JAA, 32.

¹⁴⁸ Azuma (2005) masterfully describes the positionality of Japanese immigrants in the United States as “in-between” peoples.

¹⁴⁹ JAA, 3.

¹⁵⁰ JAA, 3.

¹⁵¹ JAA, 3.

¹⁵² JAA, 3.

suffering of individual immigrants could be lessened, and that banding together could strengthen the relative position of the entire group. With political connections to the homeland, the educated and economically advantaged JAA felt they were in a position to lead their compatriots in creating a respectable minority in the United States.

The JAA viewed Japanese-Americans as important cultural brokers between the two countries, and felt that Japanese residents of the United States had much to offer both nations. From their vantage point, the Japanese in America appeared well suited to provide needed labor and were “peerless pioneers of industry” who could facilitate trans-Pacific trade in terms of American dealings with Asia.¹⁵³ Japanese-Americans, they believed, also represented a source of assistance to their mother country’s international relations as “a pioneer group full of combative spirit to advance Japan’s overseas development, a group of forerunners to introduce Japan abroad, and also people of great sincerity.”¹⁵⁴

These objectives were part of a JAA platform that included introducing Japan to the broader world, acting promptly to smooth bilateral relations when necessary, and encouraging greater understanding between the two nations. In terms of cultural sharing and transPacific friendship, tens of thousands of Nisei had been born in the United States, comprising a domestic cadre of Japanese-Americans who could “serve an important role by representing a unique contribution to the future of both countries.”¹⁵⁵ Clearly, the JAA felt that Japanese immigrants could be most useful to Japan by remaining in the United States and making inroads into that society, rather than taking their earnings and returning to Japan where an excessively large population was placing a strain on the country in many ways.

¹⁵³ JAA, 4.

¹⁵⁴ JAA, 4.

¹⁵⁵ JAA, 4.

However, the capacity of Japanese-Americans to live up to this potential was limited by their position in the new country. Japanese-Americans could only aid their homeland in gaining the friendship of the United States if they consciously formed immigrant communities and worked toward these purposes. Organization and a shared vision could achieve what individuals could not; it would allow these patriots to be useful to Japan. Moreover, the JAA knew that assimilation was key to gaining the trust of Americans, and that the United States would only enter into a close friendship with a nation it could relate to.

From the earliest days of Japanese immigration, Christian organizations had assisted these newcomers to the United States; yet it was the more established segments of Japanese society—the skilled and educated elites—who had the most exposure to, and enjoyed the most aid from, American Christian organizations. The participation of elite Japanese-Americans in Christian organizations demonstrates the appreciation this group had for mainstream American culture. The activities they chose to pursue in partnership with these groups, however, speak to their commitment to improving the image of the Japanese community in the United States, and their continuing desire to protect the image of the homeland through their activities in their new country of residence.

In time, elite Japanese-Americans rose to lofty ranks within some Christian organizations, and were also active in the formation of new religious associations. Among the most important of these early groups was the Gospel Society, which gradually developed as a central meeting place for Japanese students in San Francisco. This society operated a boarding house for newly arrived immigrants, and performed various services for newcomers such as assisting with job placement. This religious organization was of paramount importance in training the first cohort of JAA leaders, as well as in constructing their ideals regarding the kind

of community these leaders envisioned creating; notably, one which showed deference to the dominant Christian culture.¹⁵⁶ It was for building this kind of exemplary diasporic community that the JAA hoped to enlist rank and file laborers.

While certain members of the Japanese upper classes did genuinely admire American culture, there can be no doubt that adoption of American cultural norms was also seen as a means for immigrants to gain acceptance. Likewise, it is clear that in addition to their desire to improve the situation of the Japanese immigrant community, these efforts were intended to project the desired image of the homeland to members of the host society. And while these efforts were directly motivated by the circumstances of immigrants' daily lives in the United States, their love of their homeland and concern over its international image was clearly also a motivation for many of their choices of actions.

Labor contractors often brought Japanese agricultural workers to the United States, and most Japanese agricultural laborers went to Hawaiian sugar plantations or to farms in California. These agricultural workers were mostly impoverished farmers or farm workers from the Japanese countryside who relied on contractors to pay their passage and to loan them start-up funds for their new life abroad. These immigrants were often mistreated due to their vulnerability, and frequently found themselves locked in unequal power dynamics with contractors who exerted great control and influence in their respective recruiting areas in Japan. It was not uncommon for these immigrants to arrive in Hawaii or California with no feasible way of returning home.

Starting in roughly 1890, a significant increase in Japanese immigration caught the attention of American officials, prompting calls for regulation. One event in particular was

¹⁵⁶ JAA, 32.

heavily reported by newspapers, and helped to brand Japanese immigration as a flood of undesirables. Two steamships, the *Remus* and the *Pemptos*, docked in Pacific harbors in 1891 carrying large numbers of Japanese passengers. American newspapers were quick to characterize the immigrants as “low-class and densely ignorant.”¹⁵⁷ The elites in the Japanese immigrant community were keenly aware of the impression their “remarkably provincial” fellows were making in their host country, and this served as a catalyst for the formation of organizations such as the JAA to combat this view.¹⁵⁸

In Hawaii, Japanese laborers were recruited to toil on sugar plantations and remained a vital and large segment of the work force, so calls to bar their entry to the islands were absent in the mainstream. Despite a prevailing myth that race relations were better in Hawaii, the Japanese were not treated as equals. Ethnic tension was a constant presence on the plantations, fueled partly by unequal pay scales and housing; Portuguese workers earned significantly more than their Asian counterparts and lived in single-family cottages, whereas Asian workers lived in poorly constructed shared housing units. This disparity between the treatment of White and Asian workers was one of the driving forces behind two significant Japanese-orchestrated labor strikes in the early 20th century. The comparatively low wages and substandard buildings in which the Japanese were housed are indicative of the discrimination these immigrants faced both in Hawaii and the United States proper in the *fin de siècle* era.

Prominent Japanese immigrants in Hawaii sought ways to improve the status of Japanese residents of the islands. The most notable Japanese person to address the problem of both the image and status of his fellow countrymen was Okumura, who dedicated the better part of his life to building a strong Japanese community in Hawaii. Notably, he envisioned a society that

¹⁵⁷ Sawada, 41.

¹⁵⁸ JAA, 47.

was free from vice. He crusaded against prostitution, both as an officer in a rescue organization and in cooperation with the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). He also wrote about the evils of the prostitution trade in his various publications, some of which were distributed to Japanese plantation workers free of charge.¹⁵⁹

For Okumura, education was the path to assimilation, and thus acceptance into mainstream society, as well as a way to gain economic freedom. He therefore spent a great deal of energy in attempts to properly educate Japanese-Americans. He opened half-a-dozen schools of various levels, even turning his family home into a boarding school for Nisei students. Additionally, Okumura traveled extensively to spread his message. He undertook two official visits to Japan to gain financial and moral support for his various undertakings from prominent individuals there, and also made several trips throughout the Hawaiian Islands to proselytize for Christianity and Americanization.

Non-Skilled Workers Enter the Equation

The most common characterizations of Japanese immigrants were that they were "inassimilable," and that they were a detriment to the American labor force. The rising number of Japanese in the United States, fed by both continued immigration and a concomitant increase in the Japanese-American birth rate, were also a concern for many, leading to fears that they would eventually gain control of territory by becoming a majority in the local population. Compounding the alarm of so many exclusionists was the persistent argument that Japanese could not be "true" Americans because traditional Japanese values, such as loyalty to the homeland and the emperor, would be taught in immigrants' homes and in the ethnic schools

¹⁵⁹ "Local and General." *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. Nov. 13, 1916. P.3.

many Japanese children attended to supplement their American education. These were some of the beliefs regarding Japan and the Japanese people that the JAA assiduously tried to counter by advocating for adaptability and conformity, a choice rooted in concern for protecting the image of Japan and Japanese immigrants in the eyes of the host society.

Though most Americans viewed all Japanese as quite similar, the reality was that Japanese-Americans were a tremendously diverse group. While the majority of Japanese immigrants were laborers, primarily from agricultural backgrounds, they came from locations in every part of Japan. the three prefectures that sent the most laborers were Fukushima Prefecture, located in the northeast of the main island, Honshū; Hiroshima Prefecture, on the southwest coast of Honshū; and Kyūshū Prefecture, on the island of Kyūshū, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan. There was also great diversity among emigrants' motivations for leaving Japan. Some left because they were not firstborn sons, and stood no chance of inheriting land, while others emigrated in hopes of improving their economic or social position.

As such, the responses to “yellow peril” sentiment varied. While some Japanese organizations chose to fight injustices they faced, others thought it was more prudent for the Japanese immigrants to change. One group that challenged the anti-Japanese sentiment with protests was the Japanese Association of North America (JANA). Formed in Seattle in 1900, it included a smattering of local organizations, eventually merging with the Seattle Japanese Chamber of Commerce in 1931. JANA represented Japanese-Americans in Washington State, Northern Idaho, Alaska, and parts of Montana. The expressed aim of the organization was to preserve Japanese culture, and also to act as an intermediary between Japanese immigrants in the United States and the government of Japan. JANA also petitioned American authorities when it felt that Japanese residents in their territory were being treated unjustly.

One such example of this was when the JANA president, in conjunction with the Seattle-Japanese Commercial Club and the Japanese Merchants Association, protested the candidacy of H.M. White for the position of United States Immigration Commissioner at the Port of Seattle. Their concern was that as a Washington State legislator, he had sponsored a bill that would have excluded Japanese from the state.¹⁶⁰ Astonishingly, White responded to this protest by insisting that he only sponsored the bill because another legislator had asked him to, denied that he thought it would be offensive or harmful to the Japanese, and, after offering these excuses, even drafted a resolution to revoke their complaint which he expected the respective leaders to sign.¹⁶¹ Needless to say, the Japanese community organizations' leaders did not receive this response enthusiastically. The president of JANA reminded White that as a non-member of JANA, he did not have the standing to propose a resolution. As to White's explanation of the anti-Japanese bill that he had proposed the previous year, he wrote, "you may be a good man. . .yet there are many others who are equally good and who have not committed themselves publicly against the Japanese."¹⁶²

The JAA was similarly active in protesting injustices aimed at Japanese in the United States. George Shima, a millionaire agriculturalist based in California's San Joaquin Valley, served as the first president of the JAA. Although perhaps best known at the time as the "potato king," he regularly petitioned the American government on behalf of the Japanese living within his jurisdiction.¹⁶³ He protested vociferously against the legislation that was known as the "Alien

¹⁶⁰ H.M. White to C.T. Takahashi. Correspondence. May 14, 1913. "The Japanese Problem in the United States, vol. 5." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Archives.

¹⁶¹ White to Takahashi. Correspondence. April 24, 1913. "The Japanese Problem in the United States, vol. 5." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Archives.

¹⁶² Takahashi to White. Correspondence. May 6, 1913. P.2. "The Japanese Problem in the United States, vol. 5." Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Diplomatic Archives.

¹⁶³ United States House of Representatives. "Japanese Immigration: Hearings Before the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization." 1921.

Land Law.” In a telegram to the United States Senate in advance of debate on this legislation, Shima wrote:

The Japanese who are here have tried to keep both the word and the spirit of all laws and treaties. They have settled in this land of liberty and equality with trust and confidence in the American people. We appeal to you and to your assistants to consider well the result of any unfavorable legislation upon them and American industry as well. We hope justice and humanity, which we conceive to be the fundamental principles of the American nation, will not be forgotten at this time.¹⁶⁴

It is highly significant that Shima appealed to cherished American ideals of fairness and equality, and also qualified the right of the Japanese to be treated according to these principles because of their status as law-abiding residents. Since the passage of the Gentlemen’s Agreement in 1907, the JAA had engaged in several wide-spread campaigns to induce Japanese in the United States to settle permanently and assimilate in accordance with mainstream American modes of living and self-expression, as well as educational campaigns aimed at Americans to help them better understand Japan and the Japanese in the United States. Thus, while the JAA protested discriminatory practices, a very large part of its energies was spent in trying to mitigate tensions with the larger American society by reforming the Japanese communities.

The Gentlemen’s Agreement and the Ascendancy of the JAA

Because of the JAA’s significant ties to the Japanese government, it was the most formidable of the various organizations representing Japanese in the United States. To appreciate these ties, we must consider the diplomatic situation between the United States and Japan in the early part of the 20th century. It was evident that mass entry of un-skilled Japanese workers was

¹⁶⁴ “Will Vote on Alien Bill.” *Omaha Daily Bee*. May 3, 1913. Daily Sport Extra. P.1.

the main point of contention in California, and both the Japanese and American governments had a vested interest in satisfactorily resolving this conflict. As discussed above, the diplomatic agreement reached between the United States and Japan in 1907, dubbed the Gentlemen's Agreement, was an informal accord wherein Japan agreed to monitor and restrict the emigration of its own nationals to the United States. In return, the American government agreed not to place an official restriction on Japanese immigration. The main alteration in the emigration policy of Japan was the creation of two separate categories of visas for skilled and un-skilled laborers, with the quota for un-skilled visas set very low.

By 1907, the JAA was operating at two levels, and was partially under the aegis of local Japanese consulates. The central body of the JAA was comprised of regional offices organized around the consulate in a particular city; these offices oversaw local JAA branches. The terms of the Gentlemen's Agreement necessitated a Japanese governmental presence on American soil to monitor the influx of its nationals, as well as to track and verify the legitimacy of these people. With this sophisticated organization already established on the West Coast, the JAA was well-placed to provide the necessary oversight.

Beginning in 1909, the Japanese consulate delegated administrative authority to the JAA's central bodies, which in turn authorized local branches to act as their proxies. The JAA was permitted to oversee consular transactions including processing marriage and divorce applications, requests to travel back to Japan, and paperwork necessary for legal residents to summon spouses and other family members to join them in the United States. Most importantly, the JAA was also charged with the task of checking the legitimacy of visas and issuing residency certificates to individuals determined to have lawfully entered the United States. The JAA went one step further, however, by taking photographs and gathering demographic information

concerning occupation, financial status and family connections of residents.¹⁶⁵ These data were used in tracking individuals, and was shared among local associations in a self-policing effort to curb vice, and by extension, combat Americans' yellow peril fears.

As the drive toward assimilation took on an increasingly desperate tone in the face of mounting anti-Japanese hostility in the United States, the JAA began to consider the moral fiber of residency certificate applicants. No longer was it sufficient just to have orderly immigration paperwork issued from Japan; now the petitioner must also live a life of probity. It was at this juncture that the JAA began to implore rank and file laborers to demonstrate to their American hosts that Japanese immigrants were worthy of equal legal treatment by adopting mainstream cultural practices.

Moral Reform Campaigns

One example of how financial prudence and morality were encouraged was the anti-gambling campaign devised by local JAA chapters in cooperation with both Buddhist and Japanese Christian organizations in 1908. This campaign was comprised of two stages: at first gambling was just discouraged in general, but later individual repeat offenders were directly shamed. In the first phase, posters were displayed in places frequented by Japanese immigrants, and anti-gambling representatives even stood at the entrances of gaming halls to discourage them from entering. The second phase sought to shame habitual gamblers to reform, and entailed releasing the personal information of repeat gamblers to the immigrant newspapers and forwarding the disgraceful publications to relatives back home in Japan. Gambling addicts who might hope to escape from their sordid past by moving to another state were often horrified to

¹⁶⁵ Ichioka, 163.

learn that JAA chapters had an extensive communication network and many contacts in Japan, and that blacklists were quickly shared. Beyond these social ramifications, incorrigible gambler could have their residency certificates revoked by the local JAA office.¹⁶⁶

Once the campaign was established, the JAA formed special local committees to manage existing efforts to curb the social ill of gambling, and charged them with pursuing three additional objectives. First, the committees were to encourage members of the Japanese community to observe their neighbors and inform their local JAA branch of gambling activities. Second, the committees were to order all hotels, boarding houses, labor camps, stores, and other places patronized by Japanese immigrants to expel known gamblers. The committees also shared information about culprits with local American authorities when it was felt that an individual was beyond the reprimand of the community. The general practice was for gamblers to be picked up by police and questioned for information, which could be potentially damaging to the gambling house operators. If the individual was cooperative, he was released to begin anew in society. Last, the committees were charged with finding alternative, wholesome ways for Japanese laborers to entertain themselves, and creating facilities to host these alternative activities.¹⁶⁷

Building a moral community and effecting total social isolation of miscreants were the goals. The JAA considered the lack of community centers as one of the contributing factors in Japanese immigrants turning to vice. In their view, an established, wholesome community that offered appropriate alternative activities would facilitate permanent settlement and correct living.

The Japanese MoFA recognized that the JAA was engaging in some level of surveillance of the Japanese-American community. In a memorandum to the foreign minister in 1920, Baron Shidehara Kijurō wrote that the JAA kept a record of its members that in many ways “resembles

¹⁶⁶ Ichioka, 177.

¹⁶⁷ Ichioka, 178.

a *koseki*,” the official family registry used in Japan. He continued by saying that the JAA branches tracked the “identification and standing” of their community members, and explaining that the JAA’s residency certification is “accepted, apparently, at their face value” by the Japanese consular staff, and that without a certificate from the JAA, a Japanese subject has very little recourse to petition the consulate.¹⁶⁸ It is clear that the JAA held considerable sway over the populations it served.

Thus, members of the JAA, as resolute Japanese subjects upholding their duty to their homeland, turned their efforts to supporting the government’s aims in the era of the Gentlemen’s Agreement. However, their long-standing beliefs about the important positionality of Japanese in the United States compelled them to direct their newly acquired authority towards these various reform campaigns. They framed these campaigns along patriotic lines, a fundamental unifying element in a group with the “utmost devotion to think about their home country. . .[and whose] sincerity burn[ed] uninterruptedly.”¹⁶⁹

Although the JAA was not active there, similar campaigns were underway in Hawaii. Okumura began to evangelize on plantations from September of 1894, and he began with the Ewa Plantation. After one month of preaching, he started offering evening classes there to teach the workers practical skills, such as English language training, and to instruct them in Christian doctrine. An important component of his efforts, and one of the main motivations for his missionary work, was to curb vice among Japanese laborers.

At that time, a great number of plantation laborers were unmarried, and since the facilities lacked recreational opportunities (it was even difficult to procure a newspaper there), the men frequently gambled, drank, and engaged prostitutes—all of which were readily

¹⁶⁸ Baron Shidehara Kijurō to Count Uchida Kōsai. Correspondence. October 28th, 1920.

¹⁶⁹ JAA, 66.

available.¹⁷⁰ However, Okumura felt that his evening class seemed to have some positive effect on the attitudes and recreational choices of these workers.

One example of these positive effects was the story he shared about the impact of Koyama Shikazō's conversion to Christianity on his fellow workers. The men of the Ewa Plantation slept 10 or 12 in a room with only about six feet of personal space each, and with nothing else to do, they resorted to playing gambling card games to amuse themselves in the evenings. According to Okumura, Koyama started attending Okumura's evening class and converted. Soon after this, he got an old box and constructed a makeshift desk on which to study the Bible or write letters in the evenings instead of gambling. Apparently, the young man in the bed next to him followed suit, and eventually, all of his bunkmates adopted a similar habit in the evenings, thus putting an end to the gambling in their room.¹⁷¹

Okumura credits the new convert's reliability, studiousness, and the English that he had picked up in Okumura's classes for his being selected by a manager to work in the plantation store, a position much preferred to the exhausting physical labor of the fields. Presumably reliability and studiousness were traits that he developed after his religious conversion. After working in the plantation store for a few years, Koyama was able to secure employment at a major merchandising store, and went on to have a successful career as the proprietor of his own business. For Okumura, these kinds of stories were the all-important evidence that the evening schools helped to purge the camps of "bad habits" and allowed a space for "study and 'spiritual fulfillment'."¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Fusa Nakagawa, *Take Okumura: A Life Lived in Service of Japanese in Hawaii*, Trans. Kenneth Reddington (Tokyo: Ozorasha, 2015), 56–7.

¹⁷¹ Take Okumura, "The Falling Leaves in Paradise, No. 5," IN Nakagawa, 57.

¹⁷² Nakagawa, 57.

Stamping Out Prostitution

As in other places, prostitution among Japanese immigrants in Hawaii was an embarrassment to prominent members of the Japanese community; they were painfully aware of how the practice contributed the native-born population's negative image of the immigrants and the country they came from. Prostitution could be found in many places on the islands, including some plantations, where a hut was specially designated for that purpose.¹⁷³ The downtown district of Honolulu also had a smattering of brothels, often conjoined with gambling parlors and managed by organized crime syndicates.

In the period before Hawaii became an American territory, prostitution was begrudgingly tolerated. For instance, there was a system of registration whereby prostitutes could notify the local police of their vocation and submit to regular medical examinations to become "authorized prostitutes."¹⁷⁴ The preponderance of Japanese women among the registered prostitutes of Hawaii was striking: in 1900, a survey by the Hawaiian Department of Health recorded 147 prostitutes in Honolulu, 135 of whom were Japanese.¹⁷⁵

Japanese- and American-run Christian organizations in the United States took up the cause of eliminating prostitution. This problem had long been a rallying point among Japanese elites in the United States. As early as 1882, Japanese elites had been trying to prevent prostitution by getting to the heart of the Japanese prostitution problem—human trafficking. Many Japanese prostitutes in the United States had been transported by rings of pimps, sailors,

¹⁷³ Nakagawa, 75.

¹⁷⁴ Nakagawa, 77.

¹⁷⁵ Fusa Nakagawa et al., *Tosa kara Hawai e: Okumura Takie no Kiseki* [From Tosa to Hawaii: The Footsteps of Takie Okumura], (Kōchi: Hattsubaimoto Kōchi Shinbun Kigyō, 2000).

and merchants who lured these women, often under false pretenses, and delivered them into the hands of brothel owners upon reaching the United States.¹⁷⁶

Okumura had been troubled by the sight of Japanese prostitutes on the street since his first days in Hawaii. He regularly engaged in debates with prostitutes and pimps that he happened to meet in the streets of Honolulu. A typical encounter was one in which Okumura urged the individual to enter a more “respectable” occupation. An equally typical response was that while a grown man could only earn \$15 per month by working on a plantation, a prostitute could earn around \$200 in the same amount of time. One bold woman responded to Okumura’s criticism by claiming that she was a “patriot” because she was helping Japan to become a rich nation (presumably by sending remittances home to family in Japan).¹⁷⁷

To Okumura, this woman and the others of her profession were most certainly not patriots. They were part of an industry that he viewed as “the shame of our country.” But Okumura did not blame the women themselves for the occupation they had entered. He believed that “as one who has been appointed to the work of [education]” he had a moral imperative to “save” the women from the “three causes of their degradation[:] ignorance, poverty, and misery,” and resolved to help them find more dignified professions.¹⁷⁸

In 1900, he became an officer of the Protective League of Honolulu, an organization that rescued prostitutes who had been abducted or otherwise forced to enter that line of work. The League rehabilitated them, and helped them learn to function as respectable members of society. One element of this rehabilitation was education and vocational training.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ JAA, 32.

¹⁷⁷ Nakagawa, 76.

¹⁷⁸ Nakagawa, 76–79.

¹⁷⁹ “Organized for Work: The Protective League of Honolulu Elects Officers.” *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. Dec. 4, 1900. P.5.

In an effort to establish restrictions on prostitution, Okumura met with the Japanese Consul-General of Honolulu, but the meeting did not result in any concrete actions to address the issue of Japanese prostitution. Moreover, legal action against the gangs which ran many of the prostitution enterprises was often very challenging, as they were quite formidable. They had succeeded in intimidating many community members, to the extent that it was difficult to convince anyone to testify against them, which significantly hindered efforts to break them up. One gang even published a newspaper, the *Rising Sun*, which in 1899 ran a series of editorials threatening Okumura personally. One such letter read:

We must remove Takie Okumura no matter what. The campaign to move the prostitutes out is not active now, but as long as Okumura is in Honolulu, we do not know when he will activate the campaign again. We cannot sleep peacefully. We must take drastic measures to get rid of him.¹⁸⁰

Joint efforts by the WCTU and the Hawaiian Evangelistic Society also failed (though only after a spell of violence, with organized crime retaliating against the reformers).¹⁸¹ Prostitution was finally curbed in Hawaii with the passage of the Conan Order of 1896, which restricted bordellos to a specific neighborhood, and the subsequent Great Honolulu Fire of 1900, which destroyed much of this area.¹⁸²

After the fire, Okumura and some associates cooperated with authorities to build criminal cases against gangsters who ran illegal prostitution rings and, as a result of these efforts, many of these gang members fled to other islands or entered other professions, thus greatly reducing the footprint of Japanese prostitution in the Honolulu area. Unfortunately for Okumura and his fellow campaigners, prostitution expanded again when a very large brothel was built by American and Japanese partners in the old bordello district. Okumura and his colleagues were

¹⁸⁰ Nakagawa et al., 73.

¹⁸¹ Nakagawa et al., 79–80.

¹⁸² Nakagawa et al., 81.

able to petition the government to force the establishment to close on Sundays, but the only real outcome of this seems to have been that it made Okumura feel a little better about the situation.¹⁸³

In the era of the Gentlemen's Agreement, efforts to reduce or eliminate prostitution in conjunction with local law-enforcement officers proved successful from the outset. One such success occurred in Fresno, California, where the local JAA chapter formed a close alliance with the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Church to eliminate prostitution from the city. Their efforts were focused specifically on a seedy red-light district with the demeaning sobriquet "China Alley." Through this effort, some less-prominent figures in the Japanese prostitution matrix, such as prostitutes and pimps, were periodically arrested. Ultimately, Fresno's most notorious brothel operator was placed under arrest, and was deported as an undesirable alien in 1914.¹⁸⁴ Thus, Japanese men who were involved in prostitution also became targets of JAA reform activities.

*Adopting the Cultural Trappings of American Life*¹⁸⁵

The shibboleth of *gaimenteki dōka* (external assimilation, i.e. adopting the outward appearance and customs of native-born Americans) became a major campaign of the JAA. This campaign manifested in many ways, from recommendations to adopt Westernized sartorial styles and maintain neighborhoods' appearances to encouragement of proper behavior within personal interactions. The proponents of this method of fitting in believed that all Japanese living in the

¹⁸³ Nakagawa et al., 83–4.

¹⁸⁴ Ichioka, 179.

¹⁸⁵ Much of the material that deals with reform campaigns on the American mainland during the early period of Japanese immigration has previously published elsewhere: (1) Helen Kaibara, "Looking Forward to America: Japanese Elites and Campaigns of Cultural Assimilation into Mainstream Society in the United States, 1903-1924," IN Michael Baas, Ed., *Transnational Migration and Asia: The Question of Return*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), ; and (2) Helen Kaibara, "The TransPacific Origins of the 'Model Minority' Myth of Japanese-Americans," *Studies on Asia* series IV, vol. 4, no. 2 (October 2014), 5-34.

United States, regardless of sex or age, should wear Western clothing. This was partially to distinguish them from Chinese immigrants, who infamously preferred their traditional garb and were ridiculed by Americans for it.¹⁸⁶

Additionally, the JAA entreated Japanese residents to return some of their earnings to the local community by purchasing American-made items. The purpose of this was to counter fears that the Japanese immigrant population was damaging the economy, while at the same time demonstrating their capacity to adapt to the dominant culture. More importantly, contributing to the local economy helped newcomers develop a sense of affinity with their new place of residence, which was seen by the JAA as a prerequisite to immigrants' permanent settlement and assimilation into American society.

The JAA also promoted the idea that living spaces and furnishings should fit American standards, and in public spaces within Japanese neighborhoods, markers of foreignness such as large signs in Japanese were discouraged. Social interaction was also directed along the lines of American cultural norms. Wives were directed to walk alongside their husbands rather than behind them, as was typical in Japan at that time, to negate Americans' image of gross marital inequality in Japanese society. A JAA campaign also encouraged Japanese-Americans to celebrate American holidays in lieu of Japanese ones, and to pay respect to the larger Christian culture by not working on Sundays.¹⁸⁷

The Anti-Japanese Prevention Campaign

By 1920, anti-Japanese sentiment in the mainland United States had intensified significantly, and the situation was quite toxic. Okumura was concerned that the yellow peril

¹⁸⁶ Ichioka, 185.

¹⁸⁷ Ichioka, 185.

sentiment prevalent on the West Coast might spread to Hawaii, and he set out to proactively combat this. In 1921, he made his second official visit to Japan, primarily to gather support for the so-called “Anti-Japanese Prevention Campaign.” During his stay, he again met with a number of influential people, including Baron Shibusawa Eiichi, head of the Japanese-American Relations Committee; Prime Minister Hara Takashi; Foreign Minister Uchida Kōsai; Dr. Takuma Dan; Dr. Nitobe Inazō; Viscount Kaneko; Dr. Soyeda; Admiral Baron Uriu; and S. Asano.¹⁸⁸ He was able to secure “written approval” for his new campaign from many of these eminent men.

The campaign that Okumura envisioned was extensive. He intended to spend a year traveling with his eldest son to a number of plantations across the Hawaiian Islands. At each location, they planned to appeal to the Japanese workers, urging them to abandon vice and to conform to a style of living in agreement with Protestant American values. He also planned to meet with the owners and management of the plantations to smooth out any differences or misunderstandings which might exist between them and their Japanese employees. In this way, he hoped to simultaneously improve the living and working conditions of Japanese immigrants, and enhance the management’s opinion of their Japanese workforce.

To enact this campaign, however, Okumura needed funding, not only to cover the costs of travel, but also to pay the replacement minister that he would have to hire for the year that he would be absent from his church. The total he needed to raise for this undertaking was \$3,000,¹⁸⁹ and he was quite particular about where he sought it. He heavily petitioned prominent American families in Hawaii such as the Athertons, Castles, and Cooks, as well as prominent non-Christian Japanese like Shibusawa. He was concerned that if funding came from Christian groups, his efforts would be erroneously seen as a Christian campaign, which might be off-putting to some

¹⁸⁸ Sidney Gulick. “Americanizing the Japanese of Hawaii.” *New York Herald*. June 11, 1922. P.2.

¹⁸⁹ Confidential memorandum. Maikiki Christian Church Archives. Honolulu, HI. April 11, 1921.

Buddhists. Likewise, if the funding came from the Japanese government, it might appear as if Japan was attempting to influence Hawaiian society.¹⁹⁰

Soon after returning from Japan, Okumura, along with his Yale-educated son Umetarō, began visit various Hawaiian islands to assess the situation on the ground and to teach. The Okumuras enjoyed support from Japanese across Hawaii who were “interested in [his] Americanization work.” For instance, when the educational campaign brought them to Maui in May of 1922, local Japanese elites gave a banquet in their honor at the Grand Hotel.¹⁹¹ They also received support for their efforts from local clergymen, both Japanese and American.¹⁹²

In a sense, Okumura’s methods were similar to those concurrently being employed by the JAA in the mainland United States, which is to say: campaigns of assimilation and education. He urged the Japanese in Hawaii to better themselves, and at the same time, to Americanize. The primary vehicle for disseminating this information was personal meetings with key members of the Japanese community where they were most abundant—on the plantations.

Okumura’s Anti-Japanese Prevention Campaign was comprised of four main tenets. The first was to “encourage Japanese to discard their mistaken ideas.” Next, he urged them to “adapt to American customs and manners.” This was followed by the need to help the Japanese community recognize that educating or otherwise training Nisei to become “a good and loyal element” in their new home was not “an act of disloyalty to Japan or their forefathers.” Lastly, he “encourage[d] the Japanese in taking the initiative in bringing about a peaceful and lasting solution of all problems.” If these aims could be achieved, he reasoned, “all problems would be solved and the two peoples [could] live in harmony and friendship.”¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Nakagawa, 104–5.

¹⁹¹ “Personal Mention.” *The Maui News*. May 22, 1922. P.8.

¹⁹² “Personal Mention.” *The Maui News*. April 21, 1922. P.6.

¹⁹³ Sidney Gulick. “Americanizing the Japanese of Hawaii.” *New York Herald*. June 11, 1922. P.2.

One example of the kind of situation in which the Okumuras intervened was related to concepts of decency and inadequate facilities for laborers. On one plantation, the Japanese had been criticized for walking to the bathhouse naked, both men and women. Okumura discovered that the workers were doing this because the bathhouse did not have a changing room, and they feared that their clothes would be stolen if they were left outside while they bathed. Another similar quality-of-life issue on this plantation was the building that housed the toilets. There were fifty families living on the plantation, yet the building could only accommodate six people at one time. After the Okumuras brought this to the attention of the managers, the situation was reportedly amended, and the Japanese laborers could live with more dignity and comfort and avoid being criticized for perceived indecency.¹⁹⁴

On the whole, supporters considered the campaigns to be “very successful” in promoting better understanding and relations between plantation managers and their Japanese employees, and in enhancing the living conditions of said workers. They also believed that the work of the Okumuras had made great strides in “counteract[ing] mischievous propaganda of agitators,” which, they asserted, had been “the chief cause of the [labor] strikes and bad feelings [between employers and employees].”¹⁹⁵

At the end of his year of travel, Okumura deemed the campaign a success. He wrote to Shibusawa that it had succeeded in changing the attitudes of some, though others still “pursued their own interests and behaved poorly,” thus somewhat negating the complete success of the campaign.¹⁹⁶ Still, after reading Okumura’s report summarizing his efforts to Americanize the plantation workers, Shibusawa concluded that endeavor “greatly contributed the improvement in

¹⁹⁴ Nakagawa, 105.

¹⁹⁵ F.C. Atherton et al. to Shibusawa Eiichi. Correspondence. June 23, 1925. Shibusawa Papers, vol. 34, 574.

¹⁹⁶ Okumura to Shibusawa. Correspondence. March 5, 1926. Shibusawa Papers, vol. 34, 576.

communication between American employers and Japanese employees.”¹⁹⁷ To Japanese elites gravely concerned with both the well-being of their fellow countrymen and the American image of their homeland, this was a great success.

Settling Down and Handling Money Wisely

Many leaders who comprised the core of the JAA as well as Okumura had seriously engaged in study of Western values and American culture and politics before emigrating and thus might have felt that they could appeal to an intrinsic sense of American justice and equality or a Christian sense of brotherhood to evoke better treatment. To this end, some of these Japanese-American elites believed that if Japanese immigrants demonstrated their earnestness to assimilate into American culture, Americans would respond positively. Assimilation was both an ideological and practical goal given that the Japanese (like other immigrant groups) were judged *en masse* by the American public.

The JAA condemned the self-interested ways in which individual workers accrued money in preparation for the journey home, as well as their reluctance to forge a Japanese community. The JAA felt that this characterization of Japanese immigrants’ “sole aim” as working to accumulate resources for the return to Japan exacerbated nativist sentiment that the Japanese had a deleterious effect on local economies where large numbers of Japanese-Americans had settled.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, Okumura was concerned about the activities of Japanese in Hawaii where the rapidly increasing number of Japanese raised the anxiety of Whites in a myriad of ways even though Japanese labor was vital to local industry.

¹⁹⁷ Shibusawa to Atherton et al. Correspondence. Oct. 16, 1925. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 575–6.

¹⁹⁸ JAA, 5.

In 1911, the JAA embarked on a major campaign to combat return migration by attempting to popularize the idea of permanent settlement among Japanese residents. They invited prominent speakers from Japan with a pro-settlement agenda to address large groups of migrant workers in an attempt to persuade them to sink permanent roots in the United States.¹⁹⁹ The JAA enlisted the help of two prominent Japanese nationals: Nitobe Inazō and Shimada Saburō, both of whom went on extensive lecture tours to spread the message of permanent settlement. Nitobe Inazō, a Christian educator, was a celebrated intellectual and educator who had attended university in the United States, while Shimada was a member of the Japanese Diet and a well-known Christian.²⁰⁰ The JAA hoped that these carefully selected modern men would impress Americans and inspire Japanese immigrants.

In extending invitations to Nitobe and Shimada to address Japanese living in America, the JAA was fostering broadened meaning of “home” in the Japanese immigrant community—one that discouraged return migration. Moreover, there was an explicit intention to support the growth of authentic “Japanese-American” communities. The blueprint for these settlements was one they hoped would be palatable to Americans, Japanese immigrants, and Japanese still in the homeland.

The JAA advocated permanent settlement over financially motivated temporary sojourns for the Japanese residing in their jurisdictions because in such a numerically small immigrant group, the fortunes of all Japanese, regardless of socioeconomic status, were linked. Disseminating information about methods of assimilation and attempting to ignite a desire to be accepted into American society among the laborers absorbed much of the energy of the JAA. Fiscal responsibility was a pivotal component of the paragon of virtuous living espoused by this

¹⁹⁹ Ichioka, 186.

²⁰⁰ Ichioka, 186.

organization and it envisioned this for Japanese immigrants in the United States. One implication of this exhortation to spend wisely was that laborers were expected to view the stint of working in the host country as a window to building a permanent life in America, rather than as a brief hiatus from responsibility or a stepping-stone to an aggrandized life in Japan. To this end, the JAA set clear expectations on ways in which money was not to be handled.

The Question of Japanese Women in the United States

The behavior and perception of Japanese women in the United States were of particular concern to Japanese leaders and the educated classes on both sides of the Pacific. American officials uniformly viewed women arriving from Japan with suspicion. American policy makers and immigration officials especially disapproved of the practice of marriage by proxy such as in the case of “picture brides.” The underlying suspicion was that these women were entering the country ostensibly to become brides but were in fact destined for brothels. One illustration of this distaste for proxy marriages can be found in a newspaper article reporting that immigration officials were denying landing permission even to Japanese women who made the journey lawfully, which crowed “Henceforth, when a little brown man would marry a maid from Japan he will not take chances with Japanese romances—He’ll adopt the American plan.”²⁰¹

At issue in this debate were the transPacific marriages between male Japanese immigrants in the United States and Japanese picture brides. This practice of long distance marriage was an adaptation of the Japanese custom of employing a marriage broker to arrange a suitable match, and the procedure for arranging these marriages was fairly straightforward. The man would send his demographic information to a marriage broker in Japan, and the agent would

²⁰¹ “Blocks Alter to Marriage.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 27, 1905.

match his information with that of a Japanese woman whose parents had also registered her with the broker. In most cases geographic background, lineage and socioeconomic status were carefully aligned. In lieu of meeting face-to-face as in a formal visitation, as was customary before the wedding ceremony, the two parties exchanged photographs and letters via post. The crux of American suspicion of picture brides was ignorance of Japanese wedding practices. After both sides agreed to the marriage, the woman would go to the local magistrate in Japan with paperwork from the broker to register the marriage and be officially entered into the husband's family registry. This registration was the only legal requirement for marriage in Japan—after this, the couple was legally united in the eyes of the Japanese government, even if they had never met.

Immigration officials in some West Coast ports began to require that a husband and his picture bride wife remarry according to American law upon her arrival before she would be allowed to enter the United States.²⁰² The Japanese consul lodged a protest, but the United States Commissioner-General of Immigration supported a ruling, which held that “picture marriages” were invalid.²⁰³ Thus, the JAA's efforts, which had been in cooperation with various religious organizations, did not win the important contest in the arena of public opinion surrounding Japanese women in the United States. Hence, working to reform the popular opinion of Japanese women was a crucial element in the quest to craft a favorable image of Japanese-Americans.

Assimilation Technology for Nisei

While the elite modes of shaping the Issei were to hold classes on American customs, operate campaigns to eliminate vice within the community, and encourage permanent settlement

²⁰² “Blocks Alter to Marriage”

²⁰³ “Consul Will Lodge Protest.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. February 8, 1905.

by organizing a speaker series, elites working with second-generation Japanese-Americans used a different approach: conventions. In the late 1920s, two organizations representing Nisei began holding conferences that addressed issues which were important for this group. The Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL), was formed in California in 1929 by a small group of older Nisei with professional backgrounds, and the first national convention was held the subsequent year. The New Americans (NA) were delegates to a conference of the same name organized by Okumura Takie in Honolulu beginning in 1927.

Both organizations sought to help second-generation Japanese-Americans navigate the difficult political, economic, and social terrain of the interwar period. In addressing the Nisei delegates to the third NA Conference, Okumura spoke of the need to foster strong, intelligent leadership for the respective Japanese-American communities. He felt that the leadership of the next generation should be known "among the Americans and other people in the community" and so he conceived of this conference partly as a space for promising Nisei to meet and engage with non-Japanese leaders of the community. More importantly, it was an opportunity for the delegates and invited speakers (who were leaders of the larger community) to discuss issues and for the Nisei to "realize [their] duty and responsibility to [the] territory." Lastly, he urged the delegates to stay in touch with the invited speakers and to "cultivate their friendship continuously."²⁰⁴ Okumura knew that as they matured, they would need the support and mentorship of established, non-Japanese community members to ensure that their needs were met.

²⁰⁴ New Americans Conference report, 1929, 4.

The Economy

One of the most pressing issues for young Japanese-Americans in this era was the economy, and more specifically, employment. The position adopted by both organizations was conservative, which is to say that, in general, they advocated that the Nisei remain in agricultural jobs. The reasons for this are varied and perhaps included pressure from White allies—at least some of the powerful Caucasians who befriended Japanese-American leaders and assisted in their advancement also had vested interests in having Nisei stay in agricultural positions. For example, the Castle and Coke families, both prominent plantation owners, financed many of Okumura's programs for Nisei. It is also true that agriculture was a reliable contingency option in a bad economy for Nisei—a group that faced social discrimination and that was familiar with horticulture.

In Hawaii, where the economy of the entire territory was tied to the prosperity of its key industry, sugar production, the pressure on the Japanese-Americans to remain in the industry was immense. The sitting governor from 1921–1929, Wallace Farrington, as a speaker at the second annual NA Conference, presented jobs in Hawaiian sugar plantations as appropriate work for Nisei while insisting that he was not attempting to “drive the Orientals[sic] into the sugar industry.”²⁰⁵ He contended that he simply desired to illustrate how the plantations were evolving with the times and the demands of the workforce, giving a few examples. For instance, he told his audience that when labor contracts were outlawed, many speculated that the plantation system would no longer be able to function. The same scenario played out, he told his audience, when workers demanded stand-alone housing as opposed to barracks, and again when the plantations were able to accommodate employees who had attended college.

²⁰⁵ New Americans Conference report, 1928, 13.

On the topic of plantation conditions, the Nisei delegates were not so easily placated by assurances from the speakers that things were improving. For this group, the improvements were not coming fast enough. In response to the comment from a young man in the audience that the plantations would better be able to recruit laborers if the work were “sufficiently attractive,” Farrington stated “there isn’t any industry in the world that makes itself over to suit the whims of individuals.” Though the industry was evolving, this process could not happen too quickly if the companies were still to be economically viable.²⁰⁶ Another speaker, a nonagenarian and a scholar, told attendees that the plantations had undergone remarkable change within his lifetime and that they were continually improving. He stressed that he did not wish to see more Filipinos working on the plantations because all of their wages would go to the Philippines instead of circulating in the local economy.²⁰⁷

Similarly, on the topic of “Industry and Occupation,” chaired by a professor from the University of Hawaii, the delegates freely criticized the plantations. One delegate argued that it was pointless trying to get Japanese-Americans to stay unless there were real opportunities for advancement. The plantations, he argued, were not offering enough for American citizens to work there. “All they want,” he stated, was “cheap labor.” Another delegate pointed to the inequitable treatment of the Japanese workers vis-à-vis Caucasian employees and gave the example that in the Japanese residential area, all visitors must leave by 7:30 pm but people were free to come and go as they wished in the White residential area. Several delegates expressed a desire for plantation authorities be more personable, and not surprisingly, the delegates said that the pay was insufficient.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ New Americans Conference report, 1928, 13.

²⁰⁷ New Americans Conference report, 1928, 14.

²⁰⁸ New Americans Conference report, 1929, 6–8.

There was a tension in Hawaii between preparing youth for jobs on the plantation and supplying them with a well-rounded and solid education from which they could pursue a number of options. For instance, Governor Farrington supported altering the high school curriculum so that it would emphasis vocational training at the expense of traditional academics. In 1927, a speaker at the conference proposed limiting access to education for students who did poorly on tests and seemingly did not possess much academic ability. This logic held that if these individuals were pushed through higher grade levels, they would only consume important, finite resources.²⁰⁹ However, Issei parents often dissuaded their children from working on plantations and encouraged them to take study seriously so that might enjoy a better life.

One conference speaker asserted that if an untalented youth spent time trying to gain an education, he might not be content to work on a plantation though this might have been the only job that matched his ability. This would be because the youth would feel like he had wasting his many years of study.²¹⁰ A manager for the Oahu Plantation ventured to say that “a boy with a diploma over estimates his worth” and a college degree moves “from the living room to the attic in 25 years.”²¹¹ In a session in the fourth annual conference, though, a speaker offered slightly more measured remarks. He said that though “each person is entitled to as much education as he can get” there are too many overly educated young people in the territory. Another speaker concurred, contending that Issei parents were “pushing their children through college” even when the individual had a lackluster academic record and no “capacity” for study at that level. For their part, it is clear that many Nisei did not wish to endure the same hardship that they saw their parents go through, and were reluctant to work on the plantations. The Nisei delegates

²⁰⁹ New Americans Conference report, 1929, 8.

²¹⁰ New Americans Conference report, 1927, 8.

²¹¹ New Americans Conference report, 1928, 12.

challenged the speakers' suggestion that some Nisei should not be given full access to an education in order to ensure a steady supply of plantation laborers.²¹²

It would seem, then, that White, elite speakers at the NA Conference desired Nisei to work on the plantations because it would “save” the Hawaiian economy by ensuring that the sugar industry had a steady supply of English-speakers who would spend their wages in the local economy rather than send it abroad. Even if Filipino laborers were a viable replacement, by the late 1920s, Congress was considering placing immigration restrictions on this demographic, which made recruiting Nisei all the more important. Ideally for the industrialists, Nisei workers would be sufficiently educated to be competent in their jobs and perhaps have a general working knowledge of most subjects, but several speakers at the NA Conference showed a lack of support for ungifted students to advance to higher levels of public education—perhaps they did not support the idea of advancement for even a majority of students.²¹³

This segment also condemned Issei parents who encouraged their offspring to attend college because it fostered what they thought were unrealistic expectations in the minds of Nisei. Even if college-educated Nisei were to have a job on the plantation, they would not be as malleable as their less-educated parents were. As long as the Nisei could be convinced to labor on the plantations and to not ask for too much, the captains of industry and the politicians did not have to search for other, more challenging solutions to keeping Hawaii's economy healthy—perhaps even while improving the living quarters of plantation workers. Okumura himself told convention attendees to acknowledge the “dignity of labor” and realize that the conditions on the plantation were “a secondary matter.”²¹⁴

²¹² New Americans Conference report, 1927, 9.

²¹³ Eileen Tamura, *The Americanization Campaign and Assimilation of the Nisei in Hawaii, 1920 to 1940*. (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Hawaii, Manoa, 1990), 149.

²¹⁴ Tamura, 183.

On the West Coast of the United States, some among the leadership of the JACL also advocated that Nisei either remain in, or return to, the agricultural industry. One editorial in the organization's official newspaper the *Pacific Citizen*, from November of 1932, asserted that the Nisei were "fortunate to face a depression" because it was teaching them "prosperity is not an everlasting thing." It also suggested that people who were frequenting soup kitchens and bread lines failed to put money aside when times were good and so were currently in difficult circumstances partly due to personality flaws. Presumably, observing so many facing hard times was making the Nisei more practical because the editorial claimed that the lack of employment opportunities in the cities forced them to consider previously undesirable options, like farming. The author could not conceal his joy when he wrote about young men who were just coming of age were staying on the farm "no longer [being] attracted to the illusion of gay city life." Rather, they were inclined to establish themselves in the comparatively stable and very necessary agricultural industry.²¹⁵

Several years later, in 1941, the president of the Nisei Farmers Federation of California, Thomas Yego, addressed delegates to the JACL intermountain regional conference. In his talk, he pleaded with fellow Nisei, and especially those who were already engaged in agriculture, to purchase land. The reasons that Yego gave for the urgency of Nisei to buy land were patriotic. He argued that purchasing land would be a tangible way to demonstrate Nisei loyalty to the United States. Not only was it a way to better anchor oneself in the United States but it also meant paying more taxes, and thus supporting the functioning of the government. He strongly recommended Nisei who were engaged in tenant farming to take up diversified farming on their own land, presumably because tenant farming was not very highly regarded. Additionally, Yego

²¹⁵ New Americans Conference, vol. 4, 1928, 3.

asked all in the audience to learn a useful trade in order to prepare themselves to be of service to the United States if needed, “the defense program needs capable welders and electricians and this is our chance to prove ourselves” he quipped before asserting that the Nisei ought to make clear they were unequivocally American.²¹⁶

While Japanese-American elites consistently urged Nisei to establish themselves in the agricultural industry, the reasoning had shifted over time between the Great Depression and the eve of American involvement in WWII. During the depression, the JACL urged Nisei to engage in farming because it was safer from an economic standpoint, and having fellow Japanese-Americans become established and self-sufficient was a priority for the organization. However, it is likely that the JACL also wanted Nisei to settle down and raise strong families in the countryside far away from the corrupting influences of cities—and the epicenters of anti-Japanese sentiment. In this sense, Nisei elites shared the concern for guarding Japanese-American morality, or at least the image of morality, that so preoccupied efforts of the Issei elites. Also like Issei leaders, the JACL was quite concerned about ensuring that the Nisei had stable finances and were investing in local economy so as not to raise the ire of anti-Japanese agitators. However, while Issei leaders sometimes invoked their followers’ sense of patriotism to Japan in order to convince them to assimilate to American society, JACL leaders encouraged Nisei to be both practical and demonstrative about their loyalty to the United States.

The political activities of Nisei, especially voting, were a cause for concern for both anti-Japanese agitators who feared Nisei would vote as a block, and to Nisei allies who feared that they were not sufficiently active in politics to safeguard their interests. A manager for the W.W. Diamond plantation, in his conversation with delegates to the NA Conference on a panel about

²¹⁶ New Americans Conference, vol. 4, 1928, 3.

political activities, asked that they not enter politics in order to “obtain something that [they] as a racial group [would] want.”²¹⁷ The implication here is for Japanese-Americans to not vote in a way that assists only their ethnic enclave at the expense of other groups. Similarly, Frank Atherton, a business executive and philanthropist, told delegates to the second NA Conference that they should avoid the “temptation to form a clique” and vote for a Japanese-American candidate simply because of race.²¹⁸

Several delegates indicated that possible coercion was a reason that they were not eager to vote. The typical scenario was a plantation manager “bull dozing” workers into voting for pro-plantation candidates, with the implication that not casting a vote for these candidates might result in a lost job.²¹⁹ Another delegate shared a similar story: on the small island of Niihau a plantation owner by the name of Robinson “rules with an iron hand.” The delegate claimed that this man’s employees must “vote as he says or get out.”²²⁰ In response to this, the chair of the panel, W.W. Diamond Plantation manager Berndt said that it was not improper for Robinson to “lend [his employees] a guiding hand” in deciding which candidate to support. Moreover, Berndt asserted as employees ought to “serve [the employer’s] interests” before revealing that he also advises his employees on politics if they ask him though he never expects his workers to vote a certain way.²²¹

In addition to voting, delegates felt that true civic engagement was required of the fully assimilated and politically responsible Nisei. There were a number of ways to do this. One Nisei delegate proudly asserted that she was “as politically active as any white woman” and urged her

²¹⁷ New Americans Conference report 1929, 8.

²¹⁸ New Americans Conference report 1928, 2.

²¹⁹ New Americans Conference report 1929, 6.

²²⁰ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1929, 9.

²²¹ New Americans Conference report, 1929, 14.

fellow delegates to become involved in causes that they cared about and to attend “soap box rallies” and also to be active at the very local level—the precinct.²²²

By 1940, when WWII was raging in other parts of the world, the Nisei elites were very concerned with seeming patriotic in the eyes of mainstream America. Nisei leaders advocated investing in their country as a definitive way of showing patriotism. Moreover, a long-cherished belief held that the United States was comprised of a large number of hard-working individuals living off of the land, or creating something tangible and meaningful with their hands, all coming together despite their differences to form a nation. In this sense, Nisei elites (possibly knowingly) were accessing an important part of the national psyche and making Nisei seem less like a threat.

Japanese-American elites as well as Caucasian panelists at these conventions sought to inspire Japanese-American youth to take a more active role in government and within their respective communities. An editorial in the *Pacific Citizen* in April 1935, harshly denounced non-voting Nisei as “slackers who neglect to perform their duties as good citizens.”²²³ The author warned Nisei not to be “lulled into a false sense of security”²²⁴ because no encompassing anti-Japanese legislation had been passed because several anti-Japanese bills had recently been introduced which would, if passed, severely limit the activities and economic life of the Nisei.

Other ways Nisei could become politically active was to volunteer locally or participate in caucuses for local political parties. During the first annual NA Conference in 1927, the mayor of Honolulu, Charles Arnold, used his address to the delegates as an opportunity to urge Nisei to become involved in politics at the grassroots level in order to achieve “visibility” within the community. This visibility would also demonstrate to the population at large that Nisei cared

²²² New Americans Conference report, 1929, 9.

²²³ *Pacific Citizen*, vol. 7 (83), April 1935, 1.

²²⁴ *Pacific Citizen*, vol. 7 (83), April 1935, 1.

about civic life.²²⁵ Another speaker at the 1927 NA Conference told attendees that they should become politically involved because it would demonstrate that they could be the best kind of American and reflect well on Japan itself.²²⁶

Perhaps the most important political question of the day in regard to Japanese-Americans was the issue of dual citizenship. Japanese and American criteria for recognizing citizenship at birth were at variance with one another: the United States employed *jus soli*²²⁷ and Japan adhered to *jus sanguinis*.²²⁸ The fact that Japanese-American children were being claimed as subjects of the Japanese Empire in addition to the fact that American men of Japanese descent had to travel to the consulate each year and petition for a deferment for mandatory military service in Japan, further ignited the anti-Japanese feeling in Hawaii and the West Coast of the United States.

Several of the speakers at the NA Conference told the delegates that Nisei must have impeccable ability to communicate in English. Delegates were told that they must “think entirely in English,” and when they become parents they must “see to it that English is spoken at home, on the playground, at all times.”²²⁹ A few speakers at the NA Conference acknowledged the fact that the Nisei had a large task in front of them in terms of proving their loyalty to the country and worth to mainstream society. One speaker told delegates that they would need to “demonstrate the possibilities within you to those who do not know you.”²³⁰ Furthermore, like many other speakers at this conference, he contended that Nisei were in a good position to adopt only the best aspects of both cultures, and in this way, could discard undesirable traits of American

²²⁵ New Americans Conference report, 1927, 4.

²²⁶ New Americans Conference report, 1927, 6.

²²⁷ Literally “right of soil” and sometimes referred to as birthright citizenship, the principle of *jus soli* means that anyone born in a state’s territory has a right to citizenship in that state.

²²⁸ Unlike *jus soli* citizenship, states that use the principle of *jus sanguinis*, or “right of blood,” determine who has the right to citizenship based on their parent(s)’ citizenship, rather than place of birth.

²²⁹ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1929, 10–11.

²³⁰ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1929, 10.

cultural citizenship (presumably things like racism) and help to bring society forward. In short, Nisei had “a wonderful opportunity to make [their] lives worthy and valuable component parts of the community.”²³¹

The concept of cultural synthesis was frequently brandished in the *Pacific Citizen* as well as at the NA Conference. For example, after listing bravery, politeness, and appreciation for beauty as some of the best traits of the Japanese, a speaker at the NA Conference pronounced “it is well to infuse American manners with Japanese gracefulness.”²³² JACL President Saburō Kido was not worried about keeping the favorable parts of Japanese culture as much as he was anxious that Nisei were not adopting American culture quickly enough. In an opinion piece written in the *Pacific Citizen* in 1935, Kido tells Nisei of the crucial importance of self-promotion in crafting the Nisei and Japanese-American image. In urging readers to embrace the “new” tool of self-promotion, he asserts that “modesty has prevented self-publicity” by Japanese-Americans, and that this was a tragic situation, because if the Japanese-Americans were not their own mouth pieces, another (likely unfriendly) party would be sure to define them in unflattering terms.²³³

A Proto–“Model Minority” Myth in Hawaii

A curious discourse on the assimilability of Japanese-Americans emerged in Hawaii from the 1920s; it is one that foreshadows a better-known phenomenon that emerged a few decades later in the Cold War Era: the Japanese-American “model minority” myth. The “model minority” myth refers to misconceptions about Asian-Americans that arose in the 1960s and reached a peak in the 1970s and 1980s, but are still remarkably prominent today. While the current myth is

²³¹ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1929, 11.

²³² New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1929, 13.

²³³ “President’s Corner.” *Pacific Citizen*. February 1941. P.3.

understood to include all “Asian-Americans” or sometimes just “Asians” writ large, the concept was first understood in regard to Japanese- and Chinese-Americans. This better-known “model minority” myth came into being at a time when the race relations in the United States were under scrutiny because of Cold War tensions from without, as well as from within due to the Civil Rights Movement. Adept cold warriors from both the first and second worlds gathered information to use as propaganda against the other in the contest to win over hearts and minds in the third world.

Cold War Historian Odd Arne Westad categorizes the cultural and value-laden impulses that accompanied the political and social systems of the two sides. The duality of ideological dogma consisted of the American claim to be an empire of liberty as opposed to the Soviet claim to be an empire of justice.²³⁴ As such, racial strife in the United States, which revealed American society to be very unjust, was ample fodder for the Soviet propaganda machine. This kind of publicity had the potential to be quite damaging to the United States because many of the “third world” countries that were the targets of the power struggle between the United States and Soviet Union were populated by people with complexions similar to those minorities who faced discrimination in the United States.

Thus, the United States needed to demonstrate to the rest of the world—and especially to the so-called “third world”—that it was making substantial progress on the issue of race, and Japanese-Americans were able to fill this position to a degree. The powerful significance in upholding Japanese-Americans as a racial success story is that they were a group who had been wrongfully interned during WWII; moreover, in most cases internment meant financial ruin for Japanese-American families. Nonetheless, the myth holds, Japanese-Americans were able to

²³⁴ Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

recover from this catastrophic mistreatment and thrive less than two decades later. A total lack of resentment for having been interned and a seeming faith in American systems (demonstrated by the fact that they did not hold protest rallies or marches) is key to the myth.

A typical interpretation of the Japanese-American “model minority” myth holds that Japanese-Americans have a higher level of education than other racial groups, including Whites, and higher incomes than the national average. It also points to low numbers of criminal activity among Japanese-Americans. When asked what accounted for these seemingly remarkable accomplishments, proponents of the myth regularly turned to culture as an explanation. According to this belief, the Japanese, or simply “Asian,” respect for elders and society, as well as the emphases on hard work, diligent study, and self-reliance, were responsible for the impressive Japanese-American communities. It is significant that propagators and believers of the myth never consider the possibility that Asian-Americans would ever need economic aid from the state. The larger implication for celebrating Japanese-Americans and Asian-Americans as a “model minority” in the Civil Rights Era is that it attempted to delegitimize the very real and pressing needs of other minorities, notably African-Americans, and blamed their “culture” for the poverty and crime in their communities.

Historian Ellen Wu posits that the “model minority” myth was crafted in the 1960s by cooperation between Chinese and Japanese-American community leaders and authorities in the larger community, including politicians and journalists to whom they supplied information that flattered their communities.²³⁵ The Japanese-American leaders of the JACL even courted Hollywood in first years of the 1950s to make a feature film about the 442nd Regimental Combat Team which was one of the most highly decorated units in the history of American warfare. This

²³⁵ Wu, 150–209.

film, *Go for Broke!*, which was released in 1952, did much to positively shape the American mainstream's image of Japanese-Americans in the crucial years immediately following the war by reminding viewers of Nisei valor in the recent war.²³⁶

Like Westad's analysis of the Cold War serving as impetus for American spin doctors to showcase Japanese-Americans as a "model minority" in order to offset the damage to the country's image during the Civil Rights struggle, White elites in Hawaii found Japanese-Americans politically expedient for their own objectives (just as they had always been economically expedient). Soon after Hawaii became an American territory in 1898, American elites living on the islands began to call for statehood. By the early 1920s, however, politicians on the mainland publicly questioned whether Hawaiian statehood would be entirely positive. At issue was the racially diverse makeup of the islands. Anti-Japanese congressmen from the western United States, especially California, raised the alarm that with the Japanese-Americans in Hawaii consisting of nearly 50% of the total population of the islands, Hawaiian statehood could bring an unwelcome change through voting. Though the hesitation to admit Hawaii to the union was in fact driven by racism and no amount of assimilation by the Japanese-Americans or other non-White groups would have been able to assuage the fears of the exclusionists on the mainland in this era, Japanese-American leaders and White allies went to great lengths to demonstrate their ability to assimilate.

The tone of the convention was conservative due to the nature of the speakers invited and also Okumura's general approach, which was cautious and accommodated the needs of the established powers. This does not mean that the Nisei delegates simply accepted the views and suggestions of these powerful speakers though; on the contrary, they sometimes challenged them

²³⁶ Wu, 88–91.

and let their demands be known. However, the fact that they were in dialog with the established powers, and that they had made significant strides in assimilating to Hawaiian mainstream (Caucasian) culture, and had thus far not engaged in block voting, gave the established powers hope that the Nisei would work with the existing economic, political, and social structures of the islands rather than try to dismantle them. In essence, the image that Nisei delegates presented at the NA Conferences was of a cohort of young people who were not afraid to question authority but who were ultimately willing to work within the existing structures in the territory.

My research reveals a connection between a proto-“model minority” myth in Hawaii and the pervasive and self-congratulatory idea among Whites that that Hawaiian society was mostly free of racial prejudice, especially when compared to the racially-charged atmosphere in California and other places on the west coast. In fact, more than a few politicians publicly asserted that Hawaii could be a model for how a peaceful, multiethnic society could operate. For example, former Hawaiian governor George Carter, when addressing delegates at the NA Conference, cited examples of prejudice against and mistreatment of Japanese-Americans on the American mainland—mostly in California—and then juxtaposed this with Hawaii saying, “I think it very fortunate that Hawaii is not dominated by Californians.”²³⁷ Not only did many powerful Caucasians believe that Hawaii lacked a significant race problem, some even attempted to inform Nisei of this. A speaker at the third annual NA Conference, talking about the requirement that all travelers from Hawaii present a birth certificate upon entering the mainland, asserted:

The authorities are not disposed to discriminate against you, but you are discriminating against yourself when you know what is on the statute books and

²³⁷ New Americans Conference vol. 5, 1929, 11.

do not come forward and get your certificate Birth certificates will be necessary just so long as we have an immigration statute on the books of the federal government.²³⁸

The statute the governor referenced was the National Origins Act in the Immigration Reform Bill of 1924, also known as the Asian Exclusion Act. This legislation effectively halted Japanese immigration to the United States and made it necessary for those coming from Hawaii to show evidence of American birth when traveling to the mainland. The legislation was able to pass because of anti-Japanese sentiment, which in turn was pervasive on the West Coast because of the wide cultural gap between Japan and the United States. Thus, there would be no need for Japanese-Americans to submit to procedures they considered racist if they were better able to assimilate to mainstream culture because the special requirements on Hawaiians traveling to the mainland would ostensibly disappear.

The reason that the idea of a relatively colorblind Hawaii was a narrative that White, conservative leaders embraced was because the “Japanese question” had become such a point of contention on the mainland. Some in positions of influence publicly wondered how much Hawaii’s bid for statehood, if successful, would alter the racial and cultural makeup of the United States. In particular, the voting power of the Hawaiian Nisei was unnerving for anti-Japanese agitators.

The prospect of a Nisei voting block made even Hawaiians who were generally sympathetic to the Nisei cause nervous. As one speaker at a NA Conference put it, the Nisei should not “vote in block and knife everybody else just by reason of race.”²³⁹ More importantly, he contended, if the Nisei were to “act as [they] should not act [vote as a block]” the very future

²³⁸ New Americans Conference vol. 5, 1929, 11.

²³⁹ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 15.

of Hawaiian democracy and independence could be at risk.²⁴⁰ In this worst-case scenario, the United States Congress could appoint a commission to administer the islands rather than the representative democratic system it currently enjoyed.²⁴¹ Many speakers emphasized the same point, though most were not as blunt, and it is clear that this was a major issue for conference speakers. The purpose of the conference was to give a space for community leaders to voice their concerns to Nisei and for Nisei to respond to this and ask questions. A brief survey of delegate responses to the conference reveals that many of the objectives of the conference seem to have achieved some measure of success.

The delegates' reactions to the conference speakers varied, as opinions within any group might. Some were quite critical. For instance, outspoken delegate and newspaper journalist Ted Kurushige took issue with a speaker who defended the practice of plantation owners dictating to employees how they ought to vote by claiming that the boss' interests would be the employees' interests because they rely on him for a livelihood. He questioned "how far must respectable citizens submit to the dictates of his employer and bruise his conscience, and at the same time keep his job?"²⁴²

For many delegates, however, meeting community leaders at the conference influenced them greatly and perhaps made them more sympathetic to the views presented by the speakers. The reflections of several delegates reveal such thoughts. Esther Ogawa wrote that discussing pressing topics gave "much light and food for further thought." She also felt that "gratified" that the "older generation—both Japanese and American—are so deeply interested in our welfare."²⁴³ Yoshiko Kimura felt that the positive reassurance she got from the speakers at the convention,

²⁴⁰ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 17.

²⁴¹ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 14.

²⁴² New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 14.

²⁴³ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 20.

who were representative of leaders of the larger Honolulu community, were able to cancel many of the “suspicions and stories of cheap prejudice” that Nisei regularly hear.”²⁴⁴ Similarly, Hajime Suyama said that he “inspired and impressed” by the conference” and that he had “changed [his] views concerning certain problems” because of the conference.²⁴⁵ The *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*’s write-up on the third NA Conference is worth quoting at length because it is so revealing:

Perhaps the most gratifying feature of this conference is that the New Americans—citizens of Japanese ancestry—are endeavoring to help themselves. They are ready and eager to take responsibility. They are not asking favors or gratitudes [sic] in their civil life. They are not seeking subsidies in their economic life. They want to move forward, and win success, on the basis of their own capabilities In Hawaii it is being proved every day that the golden door of opportunity is wide open for individual ambition, irrespective of race, family, wealth.²⁴⁶

This op-ed appeared in July of 1929 in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, a newspaper owned, edited, and published by Wallace Farrington, the then-governor who had been in office since 1921. Governor Farrington was also a regular speaker at the NA Conference and a strong backer of the Okumuras’ attempts to westernize and Christianize the Japanese-American population in the territory. Since it was apparent to elites in Hawaii that the “Japanese question” was a major stumbling block to being admitted to statehood, proponents of statehood had to take action to change the view of the islands held by those in the mainland, especially in places with high levels of racial tension. If successful, elites in Hawaii could lobby for statehood secure in knowing that at the very least conservatives on the mainland would not immediately think that Hawaiian statehood would exacerbate the racial strife of the country.

Two elements were used to produce the effect of a harmonious post-racial society: the NA Conference and newspapers. Though Hawaii was geographically removed from the

²⁴⁴ New Americans Conference, vol. 5, 1930, 23.

²⁴⁵ New Americans Conference, vol. 4, 1929, 24.

²⁴⁶ “Press Editorial Comments.” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. July 31, 1929. P.13.

mainland, there were close ties between politicians in the islands and the United States. For instance, Governor Farrington had close ties to President Warren Harding (who had appointed him) and they frequently discussed the situation in Hawaii.²⁴⁷ The news of the NA Conference spread to the mainland via word of mouth as well as through newspapers. Many elites in Hawaii considered inexpensive Asian labor to be an absolute necessity for the local economy, yet they also strongly desired statehood. Knowing that the strongest protestation from the mainland was because of the “strangeness” of Japanese culture, the obvious solution was to induce them to behave differently—the NA Conference was a powerful vehicle for achieving this just as newspaper coverage was crucial in convincing others that the Nisei were more pliant than they perhaps were. Hence, the op-ed of the aforementioned *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* was one of many media to reach the intended mainland audience.

Conclusion

With the passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1924, the Gentlemen’s Agreement was effectively nullified when Japanese were barred from immigrating to the United States. The implications for the JAA were severe: its influence ultimately waned because the source of some of its stature was removed. The 1924 Immigration Act included a provision that no person “ineligible for citizenship” would be allowed to immigrate to the United States. Many acquainted with the Japanese situation considered the measure to be specifically aimed at Japanese, especially in light of the 1922 decision by the United States Supreme Court. In that decision, *Ozawa v. the United States*, the Supreme Court ruled that Japanese were not eligible to become citizens. The disappointment the Japanese immigrant community felt over the 1924 legislation

²⁴⁷ Gary Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865–1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

was both moral and structural. Crestfallen Japanese social elites felt that their efforts had been in vain in the face of this latest institutionalized humiliation. In Japan as well, many reacted to the news with feelings of indignation. Shibusawa was incensed, maintained uncharacteristically terse correspondence with American counterparts about the subject, and pushed for many years to remedy the situation in a way that would remove some of the insult given to Japan and the Japanese.

The end of the Gentlemen's Agreement meant a considerable scaling back of activities of the JAA, including the "lifestyle" and "anti-vice" campaigns which had been designed to both foster the growth of solid Japanese communities and also to make a specific impression on American observers. It also considered the voices and desires of the Nisei who by this time were maturing and becoming leaders in their own right. On the mainland, a new organization, the JACL, established by Nisei in 1929, was navigating the perilous social and political landscape of the interwar period with only the rhetoric of ultra-patriotism to shield them against hostility.

Hawaii had not been a part of the Gentlemen's Agreement and did not have a JAA branch, so the story there is somewhat different than that of the mainland. The activities considered in this study are centered on the Reverend Okumura, who felt passionately about education for all Japanese-Americans, but especially the Nisei. Examining Okumura's long relationship with the Nisei of Hawaii and his efforts to help them advance along conservative lines, and while keeping the interests of the territory as a whole in mind, has shown how White elites utilized the symbolism of Nisei carefully showcased as a safe minority group that was quickly assimilating and shared the interests of the governing powers.

CHAPTER 3:

CHARMING AND ATTEMPTING TO NEGOTIATE: SOFT POWER CAMPAIGNS OF THE 1920s²⁴⁸

In the mid-1920s, the relations between the United States and Japan were severely strained due to the disagreements surrounding immigration which culminated in the passage by the United States Congress of the National Origins Act in 1924. This act effectively prohibited Japanese laborers from immigrating to the United States. Two years later, an organization called World Friendship among Children (WFC) orchestrated the sending of thousands of dolls to Japanese schools as a gesture of goodwill and cultural exchange. In response, the Japanese-American Relations Committee headed by Baron Shibusawa Eiichi and the Ministry of Education (MoE) mounted a campaign to send fewer, but more impressive, dolls of the finest Japanese craftsmanship depicting court life of an often-mythologized era. Just as the American organization wanted to portray the United States as a friendly and generous nation, the Japanese organization chose to reciprocate by sending the finest dolls possible in order to showcase both the sophistication of Japanese craftsmanship and also the elegance of Japanese high culture, an element that not many Americans knew about considering that the vast majority of Japanese-Americans had working-class origins.

In this chapter, I examine two transPacific campaigns that attempted to maintain positive relations between the United States and Japan in latter half of the 1920s. These campaigns were conceptualized (and in the case of the doll exchange anyway) executed by individuals such as Sidney Gulick and Shibusawa Eiichi, who had a long history of promoting friendly relations between the United States and Japan and reveal the frustrations of those who committed

²⁴⁸ Parts of this chapter covering the ambassador dolls were previously published as: Helen Kaibara, "Far from Child's Play: Doll Diplomacy following the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924," *Rikkyo American Studies*, no. 38 (March 2016), 179–205.

significant portions of their lives to creating positive bilateral relations. By 1924 when the immigration legislation passed in the United States, Japanese-American reformers and their American partners attempted to bypass official diplomatic channels because these appeared to be clogged due to hostile feelings on both sides. The doll campaign was very much a “charm offensive” and organizers hoped that by focusing on the benign realm of children’s play and family holidays, they could bring citizens of both nations into dialog in an environment that was not likely to trigger hurt feelings.

The proposed Joint High Commission (JHC) was to be a board made up of private citizens from both nations who would meet and calmly discuss the difficult and stressful issues that were damaging relations between the United States and Japan. The members were to be private citizens, preferably prominent businessmen who were relatively free of ties to either government.

Organizers conceived of the JHC as a sort of think tank that would brainstorm solutions to these challenging diplomatic issues of the day and then advise their respective governments. It was ultimately rejected because the American side did not want to be bound to accept arbitration from this group (even though the organizers explicitly stated that the solutions the JHC shared with government officials were only suggestions).

While on the surface the ambassador doll campaign and the JHC appear to be very different, they share some important qualities: they were both born out of the desperation of people like Shibusawa and Gulick who were eager to see difficult issues between the two countries resolved and frustration with the channels of official diplomacy, which did not seem to be working very well. Moreover, they were both paradiplomatic efforts that can be analyzed using the lens of soft power.

The Concept of Soft Power in Unofficial Diplomacy

At its core, soft power is “getting others to want what you want,”²⁴⁹ but there is not a straight-forward equation between wielding soft power and seeing the desired result. Joseph Nye, the Political Scientist who coined the term in 1990, tells us that soft power is like love—“easier to experience than to define or measure, but no less real for that.”²⁵⁰ Soft power also cannot simply be reduced to influence because there are other means to achieving influence, namely threats and payments. Thus, soft power is a synergy of “inducement and attraction” which often leads to cooperation.²⁵¹ The ability to wield soft power is not dependent on traditional measures of power such as a large population or a strong military. This means that even a small, poor country can mount a successful soft power campaign with strategic efforts as long as the message is clear, consistent, believable and appealing.

The wielding party is not necessarily always, or even usually, a governmental agency. Perhaps the most obvious example is the export of culture. To use the case of the United States again, American music, television programs, and social values reach throughout the globe, all the while shaping the world’s image of the country. Though distributors of American culture sometimes work in tandem with the governmental agencies, these cultural products normally carry messages outside of the governmental control are not necessarily political in nature.²⁵² However, even when the message is political, it may also be critical of the government.²⁵³ In such a case, the very fact that a non-governmental entity—say a Hollywood film studio—is able

²⁴⁹ In all of his publications on soft power, Joseph Nye gives some variant of this exact definition.

²⁵⁰ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2009), 1.

²⁵¹ Nye, 6.

²⁵² For more information about non-governmental institutions partnering with governmental agencies to disseminate American culture or American messages abroad, see Emily Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Cultural and Economic Expansion, 1890–1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

²⁵³ Nye, 15.

to criticize the government can in and of itself be a powerful affirmation of often-touted political freedoms.²⁵⁴ Other, perhaps quieter, non-governmental institutions that regularly wield soft power while displaying the tenants of American society are churches, corporations, social organizations, and universities. Taken together, these official and unofficial institutions are producers of information that has the potential to become soft power.

Nye theorizes that the soft power a given country can produce is determined primarily by three factors: its culture, its political values, and its foreign policies. The caveats, of course, are that the culture being exported has to be attractive to the recipients, the political values espoused must actually be followed domestically and abroad (if applicable), and the foreign policies executed must be seen as legitimate and moral in the eyes of the would-be audience.²⁵⁵ Since it is impossible for a country to formulate a soft power campaign that would appeal to all other nations, successful propaganda campaigns utilize “narrow casting,” or carefully selecting the audience for a specific message.²⁵⁶ A message that stresses shared values between the sending and receiving countries is more likely to create common ground, and with this sense of camaraderie the sending country can gain concessions from the receiving countries. Establishing common ground is important because it legitimizes the desires of the sending country and this perceived legitimacy means that the sending country encounters less resistance to its agenda.”²⁵⁷ Thus, the sending country can more readily induce the receiving countries to want what it wants. However, the wielding party must be careful about the veracity of its message because Nye tells us that absolute propaganda often harms public policy objectives and may jeopardize the overall credibility of the sending nation.

²⁵⁴ Nye, 16.

²⁵⁵ Nye, 11.

²⁵⁶ Nye, 113.

²⁵⁷ Nye, 10.

In order to be successful, the message of soft power has to match the situation—or at least not be obviously at variance with reality, as such a discord could jeopardize the message.²⁵⁸ In fact, policies which are “narrowly self-serving or arrogantly presented” are, according to the theory of soft power, “likely to consume rather than produce soft power.”²⁵⁹ Additionally, Nye tells us that in order for soft power to be effective, the propagator must know exactly how the message is being understood by the recipient and adjust it accordingly.²⁶⁰

Despite being difficult to measure, soft power is able to produce tangible results. For example, Nye asserts that the Berlin Wall could not have been demolished by hundreds of hammer-swinging individuals if it “had not first been pierced by a long transmission of images of the popular culture of the West that breached the wall before it fell.”²⁶¹ The main currency of soft power is to bring about cooperation through attraction in such a way that the recipient feels duty-bound by a set of mutual values to act in order to protect or create a situation in accordance with those values. Nye calls this ability to influence what others want “co-optive power” and asserts that it is determined by the “attractiveness of one’s culture.” Another important ability that can be gained through the use of soft power is the ability to “manipulate the agenda of political choices,” casting some options as being so unworkable as to be impossible.²⁶²

Watching the displays of soft power executed by the United States and Europe, the utility of this medium was not lost on the Japanese. However, neither the American mass campaign nor the Japanese targeted campaign were able to generate much soft power due to the intensity of mutual distrust in the two nations. Western media coverage of Japan’s increasing aggression

²⁵⁸ Nye, 111.

²⁵⁹ Nye, 110.

²⁶⁰ Nye, 111.

²⁶¹ Nye, 49.

²⁶² Nye, 7.

toward its neighbors stymied the soft power that could have been generated from the doll exchange. A group called the *Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai*, (Foreign Affairs Association of Japan), was founded in October of 1931 by Japanese politicians and intellectuals in order to present the Japanese account of current events to a foreign audience.²⁶³ Associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), it served as its propaganda wing and disseminated several publications during Japan's involvement in China in the 1930s.

Doll Diplomacy in the Aftermath of the “Asian Exclusion Act”

The passage of the 1924 National Origins Act was a crushing blow to those who were engaged in efforts to improve cultural, diplomatic and economic ties between the two nations. Noted Japanophile and long-time advocate for close American-Japanese relations, Sidney Gulick, lamented that this single act of Congress destroyed decades of work fostering Japanese goodwill toward the United States. Many in Japan were shocked by news of the Exclusion Act, and some were confounded by the seeming inconsistency in American behavior toward Japan. For example, in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake just one year prior to the passage of the Asian Exclusion Act, Americans impressed Japan with their generous disaster relief and seeming goodwill toward the Japanese people. This outpouring of heartfelt generosity may have given the impression that Americans cared about the wellbeing of Japanese in a general sense; thus, many Japanese were stunned when the United States Congress barred Japanese from emigrating because it was seen as an official pronouncement on the inferiority of Japanese. In response, Gulick and his associates desired to show the Japanese that most Americans had positive feelings for them.

²⁶³ *Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai* (NGK). *Contemporary Japan*. June 1932. P.1.

Sidney Gulick had a personal interest in improving relations between the United States and Japan. Born into a prominent missionary family with strong ties to Asia (and Hawaii), Gulick was drawn to Japan and preached there for 25 years, living among Japanese people and mastering the language. He also eventually began writing books on Japan and the Japanese people for an American audience, and became a recognized authority on Japan. For several years he was a member of the faculty in the department of theology at Doshisha University in Kyoto and a visiting scholar at Oxford University.²⁶⁴

An undertaking as large and complex as repairing the relations between the two necessitated the creation of a specialized task force. On June 25, 1926, the Executive Committee of the National Committee on American-Japanese Relations met to consider how to react to the Immigration Act. Recognizing that the political climate in the United States was too rancorous for an assertive political campaign against the 1924 legislation, they instead resolved to conduct less obvious campaign.²⁶⁵ They also resolved to avoid touching on any matter that could possibly be controversial. The committee decided to focus its efforts on the world of children and play, initiating a “charm offensive” to introduce light-hearted, non-threatening, family-oriented and highly artistic elements of Japanese culture to a general American audience—particularly things they believed mainstream Americans would find palatable. Given the highly contentious and fractious political climate, this “charm offensive,” they felt, would offer the best opportunity for Americans to “begin to know Japan as she really is.”²⁶⁶ While their primary aim was to soften Americans’ attitudes towards Japan, a secondary objective was to demonstrate the largess and

²⁶⁴ For a complete picture of Sidney Gulick’s life, see the biography: Sandra Taylor, *Advocate of Understanding: Sidney Gulick and the Search for Peace with Japan* (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1984).

²⁶⁵ Sidney Gulick to Shibusawa Eiichi, June 25, 1926, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 14.

²⁶⁶ Committee on World Friendship among Children (WFC), “Doll Messengers of Friendship: A Project for Promoting Understanding and Goodwill between America and Japan,” *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 15.

goodwill of average Americans toward the subjects of the Japanese Empire amid the strained relations caused by the Exclusion Act. In essence, the project was designed to repair both the image of the United States in the eyes of Japan and also improve the image of Japan that many in the United States held.

Dolls as Non-Political Ambassadors

It is clear from Gulick's correspondence that the poor relations between the United States and Japan and the talk of possible armed conflict coming from war hawks weighed on him heavily. This situation was likely one factor in his desire to create an organization that would help strengthen the cause of peace by connecting with future generations. In June of 1927, Gulick and others working under the auspices of the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America created the WFC, which was tasked with coordinating a campaign to send "doll ambassadors" to Japan to be a "valuable influence. . .in cultivating goodwill between America and Japan."²⁶⁷ The efforts of the WFC inspired the formation of the Japanese *Sekai Kokusai Jidō Shinzen Kai* (SKJSK, or World International Children's Friendship Association) in early 1927 by statesman and staunch advocate of positive Japanese-American relations, Shibusawa Eiichi, and members of several prominent Japanese-American organizations in Japan. The SKJSK would eventually respond to the WFC's doll ambassador project by sending their own doll ambassadors to the United States—dolls which demonstrated the sophistication of Japan's artistic heritage and also showcased the refined lifestyles of historical courtiers to Americans largely unaware of Japanese

²⁶⁷ Gulick to Shibusawa, June 17, 1926, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 12.

culture, and which were thus presumably intended to challenge the limited and unflattering image of Japan and the Japanese held by many Americans.

The doll ambassador project was first conceived of by Gulick as a way to meet the primary objective of the WFC to encourage feelings of friendship between the children of Japan and the United States—in soft power terms, cultivating lasting relationships. The campaign would also have the benefit of educating Americans on the finer points of Japanese culture while demonstrating American goodwill to the Japanese. The first major project of the committee was to organize a massive collection of dolls, to be sent to Japan in time for the celebration of the *hinamatsuri*²⁶⁸ festival in 1927.²⁶⁹ The WFC hoped to collect dolls from “every community [in the United States]” to “join the doll families of Japan.”²⁷⁰ The committee aspired to send 100,000 dolls to Japan.²⁷¹

A main component of the *hinamatsuri* celebration is a prominent display of a family’s heirloom dolls in homes that had daughters. The dolls were in the likeness of a non-specific imperial couple and various members of court, such as musicians, court ladies, and ministers. The dolls are typically quite small, roughly six inches, made of porcelain and clothed in intricate court attire. As a part of the festival, girls typically dress in *kimono* and visit each other’s houses to view their *hinamatsuri* dolls (on display only this one day each year) and eat special sweet treats. The girls also receive gifts from their parents and friends, and the entire family traditionally go to pay respects at a Shintō shrine.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ This festival is usually known as “Girls’ Day” in English, and is celebrated each year on March 3rd.

²⁶⁹ WFC, 15.

²⁷⁰ WFC, 15.

²⁷¹ Gulick to Shibusawa, September 15, 1926, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 19.

²⁷² Louis Frederic, *Japan Encyclopedia*, trans. Kathe Roth (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 313.

Gulick's choice of hinamatsuri as an introduction to Japanese culture is an interesting one considering that it is not the only children's festival in Japan. *Tango no Sekku*,²⁷³ as it was then called, was another possibility. On this day, families hoist kites in the shape of ornamental carp above the house to represent how many children are in the household, hang iris and Artemisia leaves in the doorway to prevent the entrance of misfortune, and eat specially prepared rice cakes. Images of the folk hero Kintarō, usually showing him as a boy with a samurai sword and helmet, are displayed as well. However, that was an image that was not likely to be well received in the United States considering Japan's military aggression in Asia was the cause for considerable alarm in the Western world; these concerns presumably contributed to the choice of hinamatsuri as the focus of the goodwill campaign.

Gulick was especially careful to ensure that the doll ambassador project received as much publicity as possible in the United States. Perhaps he wished to reach a wider audience than just school children, their parents, and those who were connected in some way to schools, but it is also likely that he wanted to have stories published in the American media that were not about the immigration question or Japan's increasing militarism and power in Asia; and in Japanese headlines, a break from the description of how "yellow peril" sentiment was becoming entrenched in western states. In this way, Gulick was practicing one of the basic tenets of what would later become known as soft power, agenda setting, or steering the course of a dialog to focus on what the wielder of soft power desires to talk about.

Gulick was deliberate in his efforts to alert news outlets, both in the United States and in Japan, of the WFC's activities.²⁷⁴ In fact, he even arranged for American journalists to travel to

²⁷³ This festival, formerly referred to as "Boys' Day" in English, is now known as "Children's Day" (*Kodomo no Hi*) and is celebrated annually on May 5th.

²⁷⁴ Gulick to Shibusawa, June 17, 1926, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 12.

Japan with the dolls and take video footage to create newsreels for widespread distribution back in the United States.²⁷⁵ The lengths Gulick went to in order to have the doll ambassador events recorded demonstrates his commitment to the project and his belief that publicity about it would eventually improve the relations between the United States and Japan by encouraging feelings of affinity and friendship among the children of each nation towards the children of the other nation.

Selecting this doll festival as a means of encouraging international discourse between children lent itself nicely to newspaper write-ups, but also to implementing a general education campaign to teach Americans about some of the finer points of Japanese culture that would be able to avoid the fraught political and social debates occurring at that time. In addition to the above-mentioned concerns, Hinamatsuri, specifically, was chosen because it embodies Japanese family values; as Gulick wrote, it was “a beautiful family custom” that he desired to make known to Americans.²⁷⁶ He realized that this festival, imbued with positive and appealing values, could be a powerful generator of goodwill—essentially of soft power.

The educational campaign began with a pamphlet about hinamatsuri written by the committee and augmented with photographs (sent by Japanese friends of committee members) of hinamatsuri celebrations that showed the dolls displayed in the home, how Japanese girls dress for the festival, and the sorts of activities that comprised the celebrations.²⁷⁷ This pamphlet was sent to thousands of American schools, churches and other organizations along with a request for donations of American dolls to be sent to Japan. The committee hoped that through this campaign, American children and their families would become “acquainted with [the] beautiful

²⁷⁵ Tamakoto to Iyetatsu Tokugawa, June 3, 1935, America-Japan Society Archives, box A1–15.

²⁷⁶ WFC, 15.

²⁷⁷ WFC, 15.

custom of Japan's Doll Festival [and] learn something of Japan's love for children and home.”²⁷⁸

Indeed, the story of the ambassador dolls was picked up by major newspapers both in the United States and in Japan.

However, the doll campaign was not without its detractors. Gulick confided to Chinjirō Matsuura that some had criticized the campaign as a waste of time and money. Others asserted that dealing in children's toys could not bring about an improvement in relations between the two, sometimes terribly misunderstood, nations.²⁷⁹ This compelled Gulick to justify his doll ambassador project to his Japanese friends, who he feared might wonder about both his priorities and those of the other committee members.

As justification for the project, Gulick specifically linked the doll mission to the prospect of future improvements in diplomatic relations by insisting that it would produce “a great fund of good feeling [that] will spring up in the minds and hearts of the children and young people” of the respective nations, such that “in the decades ahead only friendly relations may prevail between our two nations.”²⁸⁰ Due to the toxicity that had by this point permeated discussions surrounding the Exclusion Act of 1924, he felt that a positive, non-controversial, and unequivocally non-political educational campaign would be the best way to clear the proverbial air surrounding Japanese and American relations. However, he was careful to reassure his Japanese counterparts that the turn toward utilizing soft power in no way signified that he and his American cohort were abandoning the fight to repeal the 1924 act—he saw it as a prerequisite if the next attempt to repeal the law was to be successful.²⁸¹ Gulick's approach was to prepare the

²⁷⁸ WFC, 15.

²⁷⁹ Gulick to Matsuura Chinjirō, December 18, 1926, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 31.

²⁸⁰ Gulick to Matsuura, December 18, 1926, 32.

²⁸¹ Gulick to Matsuura, December 18, 1926, 32.

United States Congress and their constituents in order that they might eventually be open to revising the humiliating National Origins Act of 1924.

Moreover, in a subsequent letter, Gulick explicitly drew a connection between the doll ambassador project and the eventual repeal of the controversial legislation. He confided in Shibusawa that the committee felt the goodwill created by the project in both America and Japan would be “a valuable help” when the time was right for Congress to take the matter up once again. He further indicated that “this doll project [is an important part] of our program for creating those conditions which will lead to a final revision.”²⁸² Lucy W. Peabody, the Chair of the WFC, echoed this sentiment in a letter to Shibusawa:

If we wait for policies which are to come thru our Parliaments and Senates, we shall fail. If we prepare the hearts of the children, as you are doing, and as we are endeavoring to do, we shall find, in years to come, men and women who behave in this great principle. I do not feel it is a childish thing we are doing. You [Shibusawa] are leading as a great Statesman in Japan when you co-operate with the movement for World Friendship thru these Doll Messengers.²⁸³

Thus, it is clear that the doll ambassador program was directly connected with the so-called “Asian Exclusion Act.”

American Doll Selection and Transport to Japan

Considering that the American dolls would be joining Japanese families as “messengers and ambassadors of goodwill and friendship,” the WFC established specific criteria for the dolls they hoped to send. In this way, it sought to actively manage the image of America that was to be presented to Japan via the doll project and impart ideas of gendered middle-class life. The result of this gendered division of labor by the children would be a doll fit to be an ambassador to the

²⁸² Gulick to Shibusawa, April 4, 1927, 57.

²⁸³ Lucy Peabody to Shibusawa, February 18, 1928, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 155.

children of Japan. Along with the dolls would be information about the children who sponsored them (and presumably an explanation of which segment of the class did what in preparation).

First, the committee stipulated that the dolls had to be new and of good quality. This was important, it insisted, because the dolls would embody a culture to be admired—and perhaps emulated. It suggested that the dolls purchased should cost between \$2.50 and \$4.00 (around \$35–\$50 in 2017), a relatively accessible cost for a middle-class family.²⁸⁴ The WFC also mandated that the dolls were to resemble “attractive American boys and girls.”²⁸⁵ Moreover, a special emphasis was placed on the doll’s clothing. The figures were to be thoughtfully and meticulously dressed “since they will serve as models in a country where habits and customs are undergoing rapid changes.”²⁸⁶

The committee reproduced a gendered division of labor prominent in the United States at the time. It suggested that within a sponsoring class, the girls specialize in the aesthetic tasks of selecting the dolls and making their outfits. They emphasized that home-made clothing was more personal, deliberate and caring, and would facilitate a more intimate feeling between the sending and receiving parties than if the dolls were sent with store-bought outfits. It would also showcase the handiwork of American girls in a generation when the ability to sew and mend clothes was a desirable trait in a homemaker. Boys, on the other hand, were to be proactive in arranging the logistics of sending the dolls to the WFC for transport to Japan. Each doll was to have a railway and steamship ticket as well as a passport with visa, which the boys of the class were to procure by sending \$1 to the “Doll Travel Bureau” (the office of the Commission on International Justice and Goodwill of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America—the parent

²⁸⁴ WFC, 14.

²⁸⁵ WFC, 15.

²⁸⁶ WFC, 16–17.

organization of the WFC). Thus, the committee very clearly specified the kinds of doll ambassadors it was seeking to collect, and how they would be presented, and how the children should achieve this.

In keeping with the notion that the doll was an “ambassador,” the group of children sending each doll (usually a class, but also church groups and other organizations such as Girl and Boy Scout troops) were to compose a message of goodwill for the doll to carry to its new home in Japan. They were told that this message should express a desire for unity with, and general goodwill toward, the Japanese children who would be receiving it. Upon initial examination this appears to simply have been a friendly gesture from the American children to their Japanese counterparts. However, one of the primary objectives of the WFC was to facilitate a sense of camaraderie between the children of these two nations. The hope was that fostering a feeling of sameness would, when these children grown into adulthood, temper the voices that call for war. In soft power speak, this is building relationships, and it has much the same function that the WFC imagined it would—it makes a client state inherently more receptive to the agenda of the sender because the wielder seems more familiar than alien, and therefore more trustworthy.

Finally, when all of the preparations had been completed, each class or group was encouraged to hold a farewell ceremony for the doll before it was shipped to a port city to join other dolls in a final send-off. This event was open to parents and community members, in which the goodwill message was read and hinamatsuri was explained to the guests, educating on-lookers about the festival in order to possibly improve the average American’s view of Japan and garner support of Americans for the campaign.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ WFC, 14–16.

Before they left on the steamships, however, the voyagers were honored with one last farewell ceremony. The roughly 12,000 dolls collected was far short of the initial target of 100,000, but the doll ambassadors generated publicity with multiple send-off celebrations as dolls were sent to Japan in stages.²⁸⁸ The doll send-offs were held in upscale and impressive locations, and the committee was diligent in ensuring that there was extensive press coverage. The first such ceremony, in which the initial 1,000 dolls collected from American children received a last farewell reception before being placed on steamships, was held at the Hotel Plaza in New York City.²⁸⁹ The fanfare that accompanied the send-off raised interest among the public helped to spread information about hinamatsuri and complicate the image that some of the onlookers may have held about Japan. Getting domestic support is a crucial element of cultivating soft power abroad, and though Gulick did not call it as such, he and the others of the committee inherently understood this.

Reception in Japan

Upon arriving in Japan, the dolls were divided into groups and placed on display in Osaka and Tokyo for several days. After the dolls had toured the country, they returned to Tokyo for a welcome ceremony on March 3, the day of hinamatsuri; this celebration was considerably more impressive than their send-offs in New York, which were held over many weeks. The reception, which was on the scale of those for human emissaries, was held at the spacious new facilities of the Young Women's Christian Association of Japan (YWCAJ) building in Aoyama.²⁹⁰ The WFC and the SKJSK hoped that the ceremony would involve school children,

²⁸⁸ "Gifts of Friendship," *New York Times*, March 14, 1927, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 72.

²⁸⁹ Gulick to Shibusawa, December 20, 1926, 25.

²⁹⁰ Koresawa, 92–93.

especially schoolgirls, to a great extent.²⁹¹ This objective was met: more than 1,000 schoolgirls attended as invited guests; several hundred boys and adults also took part.²⁹² The ceremony also attracted an impressive number of political elites, including several members of the Imperial Family and government ministers, such as the Japanese Ministers of Education and Finance, and other politicians.²⁹³

The Master of Ceremonies was Matsuura Chinjirō, the Vice-Minister of Education, who also delivered the opening speech. The dolls were presented by the American ambassador, Charles MacVeagh, who spoke to the diplomatic mission about the toys, speculating the event would be remembered as “one which has greatly helped to forge the chain of complete understanding and friendship between America and Japan.”²⁹⁴ In his subsequent address, Shibusawa Eiichi, perhaps the biggest supporter the WFC had in Japan, waxed poetic when he took the stage and delivered a speech about the wonder and possibility of childhood. He recalled the importance of the Boys’ Day festival to the foundation of his own personality when he was young and invoked the hope that the children assembled there today would skillfully lead the way of international friendship by using the proverb, “the child is father to the man.”²⁹⁵

The ceremony also featured various entertainment and pageantry. After the speeches, the Toyama military band played the national anthems of both Japan and the United States. The ceremonial exchanging of the dolls was the highlight of the evening, and 40 American school girls had been selected to make the trip to Japan to participate. The American girls were met by an equal number of Japanese girls on the stage and performed a scripted transfer of the dolls

²⁹¹ Tamakoto to Iyetatsu Tokugawa Iyetatsu, June 3, 1935. America-Japan Society Record. A1-15.

²⁹² “Official Welcome to Dolls: Ambassador, Like Santa Claus, Gives Dolls to All Good Girls,” *Japan Advertiser*, March 4, 1927, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 58–60.

²⁹³ Koresawa, 93–94.

²⁹⁴ “Official Welcome to Dolls,” 58–60.

²⁹⁵ “Official Welcome to Dolls,” 58–60.

from the Americans to the Japanese. The Japanese girls on the stage were led by Tokugawa Yukiko, granddaughter of Prince Tokugawa, former President of the House of Peers in the Japanese Diet. Once the dolls had been handed over, the girls treated the audience to a musical performance. The American and the Japanese girls in turn sang an original work by a Japanese composer. The Japanese girls went first, singing in Japanese, and the American girls followed by singing the same song in translation.²⁹⁶

The human delegates from the United States wore stylish dresses each of her own choosing, while their Japanese counterparts were dressed in navy-blue uniforms, each with a black arm band attached to her sleeve in mourning for the former emperor. Princess Teru later recalled that she envied her American counterparts because, unlike she and her classmates from Gakushūin (a school deeply connected to the Imperial family), the American girls were able to wear attractive civilian clothes, did not have to queue in a military-style formation, and chatted with impunity between speakers.²⁹⁷ Thus, the friendship-building exercise among the children revealed some differences in social behavior and may have ignited a small amount of envy in the Japanese girls who were expected to stand at attention and could not freely chat with neighbors in between events.

As for the role of the dolls, although many of them were destined to reside in private homes or in school collections, some would serve as physical reminders of American goodwill toward Japan in more official capacities. For instance, “Miss America,” the largest and most impressive doll, and 48 dolls representing each of the then-48 American states, were added to the holdings of the Tokyo Museum of the MoE after a private showing to Shigeko, the Princess Teru, the eldest (and at the time, only) child of the Emperor Shōwa and Empress Kōjun. This

²⁹⁶ “Official Welcome to Dolls,” 58–60.

²⁹⁷ Koresawa, 94.

impulse to document and display was common to all events connected to the doll ambassadors. In fact, the WFC had films from these events compiled into a commemorative motion picture, a copy of which was returned to the United States.²⁹⁸

The WFC and the SKJSK used a bi-level approach to garner support for the doll campaign. Average school children acquired dolls and labored to prepare them for travel on the one hand, and incorporated them into their festival celebrations on the other. Parents also became participants by attending both farewell and welcoming celebrations as did social and political elites, as the pageantry of the official reception demonstrates. Thus, the WCF and the SKJSK designed certain activities to appeal to disparate segments of the population. Indeed, most political scientists agree that “narrowcasting” is the most effective method for a wielder to get a message to a client.

Distribution of the Dolls

Despite having gathered only a fraction of the number of dolls the WFC had hoped to collect, the doll ambassador campaign was hailed as a great success in almost every corner. The reach of the doll campaign meant that roughly one half of all the kindergartens and elementary schools in Japan received one of the American doll ambassadors.²⁹⁹ The actual effectiveness of the campaign was dependent on cooperation of the Japanese MoE once the dolls were in Japan, as it was this body that arranged for individual schools to receive the dolls. Shibusawa had presented the doll ambassador plan to the ministry in early 1926, and the final pervasiveness of the campaign is in large part due to his efforts to ensure effective partnership with the

²⁹⁸ “Official Welcome to Dolls,” 58–60.

²⁹⁹ “Remarks at Reception of Japanese Dolls at Girls [sic] Commercial High School, Brooklyn, N.Y. by Mr. K. Uchiyama,” *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 137.

ministry.³⁰⁰ However, the WFC provided the funding for each doll to travel to its respective new home.

Gulick was adamant in his belief that individual doll ownership was essential to the mission of the project because it would allow Japanese children to create a strong emotional bond with the doll (and thus, presumably, to develop an affinity for the United States). Therefore, he and the WFC advocated presenting the dolls to individual students, but the ultimate decision of whether to do this, and if so, the manner in which this was to be done, was left to school administrators. Thus, once a doll had arrived in a school and was displayed for the students, the administrators determined where the doll would reside. In cases where they determined that an individual student should have the doll, some sort of contest—usually an academic one—ensued. Typically, an essay contest was used to determine which female student would have the honor of taking the doll home to join her hinamatsuri collection. In keeping with the mission of the doll ambassadors, the essays were usually on the topic of how to foster world friendship among children.³⁰¹

The Question of Reciprocity

The committee was quite pleased with the warm response of the Japanese people toward the doll ambassadors, and many of the recipients indicated that they wished to demonstrate their appreciation by some sort of reciprocal action. However, Gulick was adamant that he did not want Japanese children or families to “feel under any necessity” to send Japanese dolls to American children in return for the doll ambassadors sent to Japan.³⁰² He insisted that the

³⁰⁰ Gulick to Shibusawa, April 15, 1926, 6–9.

³⁰¹ Gulick to Shibusawa, April 15, 1926, 6–9.

³⁰² Gulick to Shibusawa, November 12, 1926, 21–22.

endeavor was not a “doll exchange” but an “expression of goodwill,” and, equally important, an exercise that may help to foster better relations between the two nations in the future. In this sense, he felt that the sending of American dolls to Japan was sufficient because it allowed “[American] children to understand and appreciate a beautiful Japanese custom . . . and convey to the Japanese children something of the goodwill which our children are beginning to feel through this enterprise.”³⁰³ Thus, he felt that Japanese children, parents and officials should not trouble themselves to reciprocate, and that a nicely-penned thank you note to the American children who sent the dolls was all that was needed to cement the warm feelings generated by the mission.

However, despite Gulick’s insistence that reciprocity was unnecessary, some prominent Japanese did not feel that they could let the goodwill gesture go unanswered. From a cultural perspective, doing so would mean leaving a debt unpaid. Gulick’s position on this matter is quite puzzling. Having lived in Japan for a quarter century, surely he would have known that the Japanese would feel duty-bound to reciprocate. The only plausible explanation for Gulick’s stern insistence that the Japanese not send dolls in return (and suggested a number of more economical alternates) is that Gulick did not want to burden the recipients of the dolls because Japan had suffered a series of economic downturns.

As it happened, though, his Japanese counterparts had it in mind to repay the act of American kindness on a grand scale—perhaps in an effort to re-set the image that many Americans had about Japan. In this way, Shibusawa and his associates hoped to influence the discussion about Japan that was taking place in the United States and counter some of the negative ways in which their country and fellow Japanese were being viewed.

³⁰³ Gulick to Shibusawa, November 12, 1926, 21–22.

In early 1927, the *Sekai Kokusai Jidō Shinzen Kai* (or World International Children's Friendship Association, referred to in this paper as the SKJSK) was formed by members of several prominent organizations that had for years been working toward improved relations between their nation and the United States. The members of this new organization, especially Shibusawa, made clear that they wished to send Japanese doll ambassadors to the United States. When he learned of their intentions, Gulick warned the new committee that undertaking such a project as the doll ambassadors was "very much more serious and costly than one would expect who has had no experience in the matter."³⁰⁴

As an alternative to sending dolls to the United States, Gulick suggested that there might be some other way that the Japanese committee might reciprocate the shipment of the American doll ambassadors, perhaps something "equally effective and far less costly," especially, he asserted, since sending dolls would "merely be an imitation" of what his organization had done.³⁰⁵ Instead, he suggested that Japanese schools send albums, though not more than two from each school, which could feature artwork by the children on the theme of childhood in their country. Pupils might, for example, submit drawings representing hinamatsuri or other children's festivals, or perhaps something of home life or Japanese traditions, even nature scenes—anything that would convey how the artist experienced his or her world, and would introduce an authentic image of Japan to American children.

Gulick also proposed as a second alternative that the schools in Japan that had received dolls might send a "friendship bag" to their American doll sponsors. This concept was that each of the children at a school would each add a "picture or any inexpensive thing" that he or she

³⁰⁴ Gulick to Shibusawa, February 10, 1927, 40–42.

³⁰⁵ Gulick to Shibusawa, February 10, 1927, 40–42.

might want his or her counterparts in the United States to have.”³⁰⁶ However, Gulick reported to Shibusawa that the general consensus from the members of his committee was that the album would be preferable, and with characteristic frugality, he pointed out that this option would be the less expensive option for the school children when it came time to send the parcels to the United States.³⁰⁷ Shibusawa then shared the contents of Gulick’s letter suggesting the friendship bag and picture book as reciprocation for the American ambassador dolls at a SKJSK meeting. They decided, however, to go ahead with the idea of sending Japanese ambassador dolls to the United States instead of the other options suggested by Gulick, and also to allow the Japanese MoE to decide the details of the dolls (including what kind of dolls to send and how to dress them).³⁰⁸ Shibusawa then met with the United States’ Ambassador to Japan, Charles MacVeagh, about the prospect of sending ambassador dolls to the United States. Shibusawa asserted that the American ambassador dolls had done much to mend the relationship between the United States and Japan, and asked MacVeagh to inform President Calvin Coolidge of how well the American dolls had been received in Japan. MacVeagh suggested that the SKJSK delay the shipment of Japanese dolls to the United States so as to maximize the publicity of the exchange; sending the dolls at the end of the year would help to keep the doll ambassadors in the minds of people on both sides of the Pacific Ocean longer, and thus increase the ultimate success of the project. The SKJSK subsequently decided to send the Japanese ambassador dolls during the Christmas season of 1927.³⁰⁹ Shibusawa met with officials in the Japanese MoE in charge of overseeing

³⁰⁶ Gulick to Shibusawa, February 10, 1927, 40–42.

³⁰⁷ Gulick to Shibusawa, February 10, 1927, 40–42.

³⁰⁸ Koresawa, 102.

³⁰⁹ Koresawa, 10.

elementary schools in Japan and agreed that the MoE would arrange the details of the doll ambassador campaign.³¹⁰

Creation of the Japanese Dolls

Utilizing the donations of over 2.6 million school children, the SKJSK proceeded with the ambassador doll campaign. The organization commissioned highly-skilled artisans to craft 58 custom dolls—one for each of the 47 Japanese prefectures, and 10 representing major Japanese cities and Japanese-held territories: Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Kobe, Nagoya, Yokohama, Korea, Taiwan, Kuril Islands, and the Canton area in China; the dolls representing the Japanese territorial holding abroad were, tellingly, dressed in kimono.³¹¹ The final, most impressive, doll was “Miss Dai Nippon,” who represented Japan as a whole and was presented as a gift of the then-Emperor’s daughter Shigeko. “Miss Dai Nippon” stood three feet tall and cost around \$350 (in 1927 dollars), and the others were between two and two-and-a-half feet tall and cost approximately \$200, making the Japanese dolls between 50 and 80 times costlier than the dolls sent to Japan by the WFC. However, due to their smaller number, the final cost of the Japanese dolls was only roughly one-third of the total cost of the American doll project.³¹²

The funds to pay for these exquisite dolls were collected entirely through small contributions by individuals, primarily children, parents, and teachers, whose generosity far exceeded the expectations of the planners.³¹³ The MoFA had initially budgeted ¥3,500 for

³¹⁰ Koresawa, 105.

³¹¹ Koresawa, 110.

³¹² “Honor Wax Princess: Doll Royalty Visits U.S. as Good Will Ambassadors,” *Riverside Enterprise*, December 10, 1927, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 103–105.

³¹³ Koresawa, 112.

shipping, but in the end, this was not needed;³¹⁴ the funds collected totaled ¥27,000, which was more than sufficient to pay for the dolls and the cost of shipping them to the United States.

In the case of children, the average donation was one sen.³¹⁵ While this may sound like a trifling amount, Koresawa points out that in 1927, rural children may only receive this amount during major festivals, and during hard times, children may only receive this amount once per year.³¹⁶ Though the Japanese economy was depressed after the devastating Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, Koresawa asserts that in the minds of the parents and children who had been delighted by the gift of the American dolls, reciprocation was considered “natural,” so there was no dissention.³¹⁷

All of the dolls were completed by September 10th. After this, the dolls representing each of the prefectures were sent to those respective prefectures for a showing and to be designated as official ambassadors before returning to Tokyo to participate in a formal departure ceremony. By the end of October, all of the dolls had been gathered in Tokyo and on November 3rd the SKJSK held a farewell ceremony.³¹⁸ These prefectural showings were garnering local support for the campaign throughout the country. The stated purpose of this Japanese doll ambassador program was to thank the Americans for the dolls sent to Japanese children for hinamatsuri, but it is also likely that the decision to send dolls that were hand-crafted by eminent artisans was an attempt to illustrate the sophistication of the Japanese cultural arts to a nation which had, through its legislature, deemed their emigrants to be so undesirable that they were banned.

³¹⁴ Koresawa, 113.

³¹⁵ Sen were a smaller denomination of currency that were used in Japan until 1953; 100 sen was equal to ¥1.

³¹⁶ Koresawa (p. 13) also gives an example of the real-world purchasing power of one sen, to illustrate the opportunity cost of participating in the Friendship Doll program: in 1927, one sen could buy two *manju*, a small grilled sweet bean bun.

³¹⁷ Koresawa 112–3.

³¹⁸ Koresawa, 110.

Thus, the 58 Japanese dolls were markedly different from their 12,000 American counterparts.³¹⁹ Most notably, they were of a much higher quality. While the WFC had stipulated that each American doll should be well-made, and even set a recommended retail value for the dolls, which were all mass-produced. The Japanese dolls, on the other hand, were hand-crafted artisanal productions, as were their wardrobes, home furnishings, tea sets, musical instruments and the cases for all of these items. Thus, unlike their American counterparts, the Japanese dolls were made by the top crafters of the day and intended to mesmerize rather than amuse. Japan was doing its best to secure favorable outcomes via traditional routes of diplomacy, but these had proven not effective. It was time to beguile and charm Americans with refined elements of Japanese culture.

Who Accompanies the Dolls to the United States?

The SKJSK and the WFC disagreed on who should accompany the dolls to the United States. This person would have an important task: to explain the dolls, and thus, Japanese culture to an American audience. The WFC suggested a Japanese-American couple (the wife was bilingual, had lived in Japan for several years, and was socially connected in Japan) but the SKJSK rejected this idea. Though the records do not indicate why other representatives were chosen, it seems likely that the SKJSK wanted to have a delegation with a higher, more official, status, and with ties to the Japanese government, to ensure that the doll mission would be taken seriously in the United States. Thus, the human entourage that accompanied the dolls had official connections to the Japanese state. When the Japanese dolls arrived in San Francisco in October of 1927, they were in the care of a delegation of four, led by Sekiya Ryūkichi, special envoy to

³¹⁹ “Honor Wax Princess,” 103–5.

the United States and former director of general education of the Japanese MoE. In fact, Sekiya resigned as director of general education specifically to accompany the dolls on their several-months-long tour of the United States.

On the tour, Sekiya's main duty was to give lectures that helped American audiences understand the uniqueness of the Japanese doll ambassadors, especially the craftsmanship of the dolls, and explain their many, many personal effects (including a variety of weather-appropriate clothing and kimono with a unique family crest embroidered on each) to audiences mostly unfamiliar with Japanese customs and everyday items.³²⁰ Receptions for the Japanese dolls were held in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Los Angeles and Riverside before departing California to be shown in Chicago, New York, Boston and Philadelphia; they were then broken up into eight groups and sent to more remote parts of the United States—a journey that would take months. In fact, there were over 200 requests from various cities and towns to have an opportunity to display some of the dolls.³²¹

Reception in the United States

As was the case when the American dolls arrived in Japan, speeches made at the welcoming ceremony for the Japanese dolls emphasized the ties of friendship between future generations on both sides of the Pacific Ocean that they symbolized, and discussed the possibility of peace between the respective nations. This was a reception with very distinguished guests, including the wives of former American presidents Woodrow Wilson and William Howard Taft, and the wife of Republican presidential candidate Herbert Hoover. (Eleanor

³²⁰ “Japanese Visitors Feted at Inn as Tribute to Goodwill Offering,” *Riverside Enterprise*, December 11, 1927, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 107.

³²¹ Gulick to Shibusawa, December 12, 1927, 101.

Roosevelt viewed the dolls in a more intimate setting at the home of a family friend, Whitelaw Reid.) A former Ambassador to Italy, Robert Underwood, composed and read a poem for the occasion. Also, like the reception for the American doll ambassadors in Japan, this reception had a full film crew documenting the proceedings.³²² Japanese Ambassador Matsudaira Tsuneo, addressing a crowd at the National Theater in Washington, D.C., joked that he was glad to have 58 “fellow ambassadors” to aid him in his duties. Then striking a more serious, if hopeful, note, he asserted that the dolls “can do what I can not [sic] . . . [because] they will have an unrestricted entrée to the beautiful world of innocent happiness, disinterested friendship and unaffected fraternity—the world of childhood, the doors of which are but slightly opened for diplomatic officials.”³²³

The Secretary of Labor for the United States, James J. Davis, echoed Matsudaira’s comments in his subsequent remarks. He asserted that a “new diplomacy” made up of a “spontaneous outpouring of good feeling from the various peoples themselves” was developing, and speculated that it would “serve as an outlet for this splendid new sentiment.”

Our governments still need their formal representatives, to handle the solemn matters of state. But this is no longer enough. It does not bring the people themselves into the direct personal contact and understanding they seem to desire. So they have taken to sending to each other ambassadors of their own—representatives not of national policy, but spokesmen sent to carry the real heart sentiments of the people themselves If the future mothers of our peoples once take into their hands the work of spreading their tender good will, then friendliness and good will are still more certain to come.³²⁴

³²² Gulick to Shibusawa, January 20, 1928, 125.

³²³ “Address of the Japanese Ambassador, Tsuneo Matsudaira, at the Japanese Doll Reception at the National Theater, Washington, D.C., Tuesday, December 27, 1927,” *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 121.

³²⁴ “Remarks of the Honorable James J. Davis, United States Secretary of Labor, at the Reception of the Doll Ambassadors from Japan, National Theater, Washington, D.C., December 27, 1927,” *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 121–123.

All of the Washington, D.C. newspapers carried stories of the reception for the doll ambassadors from Japan, many of these stories featuring photographs of the exquisite dolls.³²⁵ Throughout the United States, at hundreds of public viewings of the dolls in venues both large and small, in formal receptions and more casual events, many thousands of people came to see the dolls.³²⁶

These viewings were equal parts entertainment and education, and the Japanese presenters seemed eager to utilize these events as opportunities to impart the values of their culture. For instance, a Mr. Uchiyama's comments at a reception at a high school tied the dolls' stoic expressions to Japanese cultural traits. He explained that the dolls were not only lifelike in that they had the features of Japanese women but also in how they displayed the fabled stoicism of his culture. He told the audience "owing to their traditional discipline, most Japanese are not accustomed to showing their feelings in public." Thus, the unchanging, painted faces of the dolls were supposed to be a representation of Japanese emotional equanimity and self-control. He drew on a contemporary event for his audience and ventured to say that being ever "reserved and conservative. . .the true character of Japanese women is shown at the time of some great disaster" such as the devastating earthquake of 1923.³²⁷

Thus, the WFC and the SKJSK executed a wide-scale soft power campaign using doll ambassadors to serve two main purposes: (1) to mend the American image in Japan following decades of increasing hostility towards and discrimination against Japanese immigrants in the United States, which culminated in the passage of the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act, and (2) educating Americans about Japanese culture through the sharing of Japanese family values

³²⁵ Gulick to Shibusawa, January 20, 1928, 125.

³²⁶ Ernest W. Clement, Untitled news article, *Japan Times*, March 26, 1928, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 38, 141.

³²⁷ "Remarks at Reception of Japanese Dolls at Girls' Commercial High School Brooklyn, N.Y. by Mr. K. Uchiyama," 136–138.

(through the connection with hinamatsuri) and artisans' crafts, in the hopes of softening Americans' attitudes towards Japan and perhaps creating an atmosphere in which a repeal of the 1924 immigration law was possible.

Regardless of the similarities and differences among the receptions and viewings of the American and Japanese doll ambassador missions, nearly every aspect of these missions was carefully documented and publicized, for this was essential to these projects' objectives. As mentioned above, a film compilation of Japanese reception ceremonies for American dolls was created and distributed in the United States. And in the case of the Japanese doll delegation to the United States, a commemorative book of the receptions was created and sent to the governors and mayors of the districts that sent dolls. Special copies were presented to the Empress Kōjun and her daughter, the Princess Teru.³²⁸ Gulick was careful to arrange for press coverage during the presentation of the books to the women of the Imperial Household, and took great pains to ensure that the books could be delivered to both women despite considerable scheduling conflicts. He used the timing of the book presentation ceremony, on the third anniversary of the American dolls' arrival in Japan, to generate as much publicity as possible. He also arranged for news wire services to pick up the story and spread it to media outlets back in the United States to keep the doll mission in the minds of ordinary Americans.³²⁹

Within the strained and antagonistic political environment of the post-Exclusion-Act era, the members of the WFC actively re-focused their energies away from direct efforts to overturn the legislation and instead attempted to create a space within which subsequent attempts to address the situation may prove more fruitful. The SKJSK later joined in this endeavor, with similar aims. The preferred approach was the employment of doll ambassadors, tasked with the

³²⁸ Gulick to Shibusawa, June 25, 1929, 168.

³²⁹ Gulick to Shibusawa, January 18, 1930, 173.

dual purpose of presenting their native culture to those in the other nation, and to foster goodwill between the two nations. That a completely non-political “charm offensive” in the form of doll diplomacy was felt to be both necessary and the best way to, in a roundabout fashion, achieve their aims, indicates just how tenuous, hostile, and fractious the relations between the United States and Japan were following the passage of the Asian Exclusion Act in 1924.

The Joint High Commission

By 1920, Shibusawa Eiichi, an extremely prominent businessman and former bureaucrat, desired a better way to bring about satisfactory outcomes to issues relating to Japanese immigrants in the United States. He was convinced that the “many complexities and intrinsic difficulties” of the bilateral relations “could not be solved by . . . Japanese and American diplomats alone.” The professional peacemakers could, it seemed, benefit from “expert investigation and suggestion[s].”³³⁰ He selected the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco of that year as the venue in which he unveiled this plan.³³¹ He followed this announcement up by forming the Tokyo Committee on Japanese-American Relations, headed by himself and composed of Viscount Kaneko, Baron Y. Sakatani, Dr. J. Soyeda, Dr. M. Anesaki, and Dr. S. Yamada. With the committee thus created, Shibusawa set out to further promote the idea of a group to “study the questions, exchange opinions, and make suggestions” to the governments of the United States and Japan on how to manage sensitive issues surrounding Japanese immigration and Japanese nationals living in the United States and Hawaii.³³² He attempted to

³³⁰ Shibusawa to George Wickersham. Correspondence. June 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 28.

³³¹ Conroy et al., 137.

³³² Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 46.

gather support from friends in the United States for the idea of the JHC in early June 1923 with an intensive letter-writing campaign.³³³

He asserted that the committee was able to “distinguish quite clearly” between the issues of immigration of Japanese nationals and the poor treatment of those already lawfully residing in the United States, and the latter needed to be improved.³³⁴ Shibusawa felt that there were those in the America who were sympathetic to the Japanese position and would be ready to listen. He was also hopeful because the United States, for its part, had a track record of handling international disputes through hearing the input of an unofficial commission. For instance, with Canada in regard to fishing rights.³³⁵

Those working to bring about closer relations between the United States and Japan felt that the Washington Naval Conference of 1921 had done much to improve bilateral relations by having “removed the irritation and fire” from the problems surrounding Japanese immigrants in the western states.³³⁶ Undoubtedly, Japanese willingness to compromise on international arrangements, such as the buildup of navies, did much to foster positive feelings among American government officials, though it is doubtful that this sentiment would have trickled down to the average citizen in the states in question. However, Shibusawa felt that this brief warming of feelings set the stage for action, and he wished to capitalize on it to bring about the JHC.³³⁷

³³³ F.C. Atherton to Shibusawa. Correspondence. October 20, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 83.

³³⁴ Eiichi Shibusawa, “Statement on the Emigration Question” to *Nichibei Kanke Inkai. Ryūmon*. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 37.

³³⁵ Shibusawa, “Statement on the Emigration Question,” 37.

³³⁶ “Suggestion to Form a Joint High Commission.” *Japan Advertiser*, May 16, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 32.

³³⁷ Shibusawa, “Statement on the Emigration Question,” 24.

A.J. Atherton of Honolulu agreed to the idea of the JHC, but suggested that it might be better for “as frank an expression of views and study of the subject” as possible if the commission were composed of business leaders rather than officials appointed by the two nations. He recommended that the commission members be appointed from among the members of the United States Chamber of Commerce and the Associated Chambers of Commerce of Japan, respectively.³³⁸ Similarly, other business leaders who were favorably inclined toward Japan also supported the idea of the JHC, but expressed a preference for the commission to be “unofficial” rather than an “official” capacity—at least initially.³³⁹

Sidney Gulick, a close associate of Shibusawa, worked to enlist support among those in favor of promoting good relations between Japan and the United States and set an assertive schedule for bringing the JHC into existence. He convinced business tycoon and co-founder of U.S. Steel, Elbert Gary, and former United States Attorney General, George Wickersham, of the urgency of securing the JHC in the winter by discussing the political situation. Gary agreed that the National Committee on American-Japanese Relations should hold “a public meeting for presenting to the American people this plan for the Joint High Commission,” in the fall of 1923, if possible. After this initial meeting, Gulick hoped that the representatives of the Committee would then travel to Washington D.C. in the middle or latter part of November to present the idea of the commission to the Harding Administration.³⁴⁰ The plan was to hold a meeting of a “small committee” in mid-September consisting of Gary, Wickersham, and perhaps Frank Vanderlip, and Henry Taft, if possible, as well as “two or three more outstanding men” to work out the complete details.

³³⁸ A.F. Atherton to Shibusawa. Correspondence. October 23, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 81.

³³⁹ A.F. Atherton to Shibusawa. Correspondence. October 23, 1923, 81.

³⁴⁰ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 51.

In a similar vein, Morton Prince felt that the JHC would be “excellent.”³⁴¹ He feared, though, that the problem in forming one would be “ignorance” and “indifference” rather than antagonism. He suggested that Shibusawa’s group recruit “well-known Americans” like the former president of Harvard University, Charles Eliot, to petition President Warren Harding. In essence, he thought it would be most prudent if Americans subsequently approached Congress and proposed the commission.³⁴²

Eventually, the Japanese Ambassador met with members of the State Department about the issue, but an agreement was not reached. Robert Lynch assessed the situation as “negative results” though conceding that there was no “hostility or unfavorable attitude” from the officials, but lamented that neither had there ever “been given enthusiastic approval.”³⁴³ A meeting of the afore-mentioned “small committee” never took place. Gulick attempted to get these prominent figures into a room together to discuss the possibility of forming the JHC, but due to “the extraordinary pressure of duties” placed on the men in their ordinary lives, it proved to be impossible.³⁴⁴

In another attempt to promote the notion of the JHC, Gulick presented the idea to the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of Churches, and the response was comparatively more positive. The committee was generally supportive of the concept but took issue with the name of the proposed entity. Declaring that the scheme seemed “more likely to succeed if we do not use that name,” they passed a resolution on the proposal in which the body was referred to as simply “a committee.” The resolution stated:

³⁴¹ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923, 51.

³⁴² Morton Prince to Miyaoka. Correspondence. November 11, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 85.

³⁴³ Robert Lynch to Shibusawa. Correspondence. August 21, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 95.

³⁴⁴ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. January 17, 1924, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 151.

We realize that the awakening of Asia and her rapid acquisition of important elements of Occidental civilization inaugurates a new era in world-history [sic] in which Asia is to play a new and increasingly important role. Whether that role shall be one of peace, goodwill and mutual cooperation, or one controlled by increasing suspicion and fear between the East and the West, will depend largely on the attitude of the Western nations themselves, and especially on the United States. It has seemed to many of our citizens who have become familiar with the question raised by this more intimate and ever-increasing contact with the Orient that the United States might well adopt a more adequate Oriental policy.

We therefore respectfully request our Government [sic] to establish a Commission to study afresh the whole question of the relations of America and China and with Japan, empowered to confer corresponding Commissions established by the Governments [sic] of these countries on all matters deemed advisable.³⁴⁵

Sidney Gulick sought support in any corner available. He was passionate about the cause of friendship between the United States and Japan because he had spent over 25 years living and teaching in Japan. Thus, he was personally invested in seeing some of these problems resolved. For instance, when visiting Honolulu, he tried to promote the idea of the JHC to Hawaiian Japanese-American leaders. He met with various groups, including the Rotary Club, and in this way, was able to connect with “several groups” of businessmen and garner support for the commission.³⁴⁶ However, the opposition was also on a speaking circuit. Former California governor and notorious Japanese exclusion advocate, Hiram Johnson, and others visited the Hawaiian Islands in 1923 to investigate the situation surrounding the Japanese-American communities and the immigration question. They were interested in passing legislation that would restrict advancements of the Japanese-American communities nationwide. Some of the campaigns being considered were to halt further immigration from Japan, to deny American citizenship to American-born Japanese who had returned to Japan, and to amend the United States Constitution to deny American citizenship to American-born children of aliens ineligible

³⁴⁵ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. January 17, 1924. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 151–2.

³⁴⁶ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. June 23, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 44.

for citizenship. Gulick urged Hawaiian leaders to seek resolutions from various clubs and organizations to be used on the mainland to “offset propaganda” of the California politician calling for these measures.³⁴⁷ Furthermore, Gulick hoped that these resolutions explicitly call for the creation of the JHC to make a full investigation before Congress was able to act of these proposals.³⁴⁸

However, Gulick’s hopes were not to manifest in Hawaii. Island leaders were reluctant to endorse the proposed JHC because it was generally known that Secretary Hughes was opposed to it.³⁴⁹ In general, many of those consulted supposed that President Harding and Secretary of State Hughes would not endorse or even agree to the idea of the JHC until after the election of 1924.³⁵⁰

Despite enjoying the support of high-profile individuals, the idea of the JHC met with considerable resistance on the mainland as well. In some cases, the supporters questioned if the idea was really the best approach. For instance, Gary felt that “there was [at that time] little public interest or discussion of California-Japanese questions.”³⁵¹ Moreover, others believed that the “problems in Europe are now so pressing” that the United States administration would not want to “divert attention to a matter of such relative unimportance as the Japanese question.”³⁵²

Another reason why the scheme of the JHC did not gain support was due to simple misunderstandings. Some, including members of the California Japan Relations Committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, thought that the Committee would “have power to decide matters jointly so that all that would remain would be for the two [G]overnments [sic] to ratify the treaties or agreements” suggested by the Commission.³⁵³ Moreover, the JHC was not

³⁴⁷ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. June 23, 1923, 44.

³⁴⁸ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. June 23, 1923, 44.

³⁴⁹ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. June 23, 1923, 44.

³⁵⁰ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 51.

³⁵¹ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923, 51.

³⁵² Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 52.

³⁵³ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 46.

endorsed on the American side because it kept the issue of Japanese immigration in the public eye and in the run up to the 1924 presidential election, at least some politicians did not want to bring more attention to the subject.³⁵⁴

An additional concern in forming the JHC was the issue of recruiting the right people. Some forecasted that appointments would be especially difficult to make. This was because on top of the already taxing requirement that they lay aside their primary occupations to participate in the commission, the members would have to “be acceptable to both labor and capital, who, as a general rule, take diametrically opposite views on the Japanese question.”

Thus, Gulick encountered serious resistance on many fronts in his attempts to advance the idea of the JHC in the United States.³⁵⁵ On a superficial note, some did not like the name of the proposed body. The adjective “high” was confusing, and perhaps misleading considering that the suggestions coming out of the commission would be non-binding. In response, Gulick proposed “Joint Friendly Commission” or simply “joint commission” as possible alternatives.³⁵⁶

More crucially, there was a considerable doubt as to the efficacy of the JHC. For example, Gulick told Shibusawa that the proposed commission could not deal with many of the issues that the Tokyo Committee had proposed to address because many of these, such as the land laws and school regulations, were purely domestic issues (and moreover, state and local matters) into which a foreign government could not get involved.³⁵⁷ “The federal government cannot coerce a State [sic] Government [sic] in any matter in which the people of the State [sic] are defiant.”³⁵⁸ Gulick ventured to suggest that perhaps Shibusawa did not truly appreciate the

³⁵⁴ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923, 46.

³⁵⁵ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923, 46.

³⁵⁶ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 46–7.

³⁵⁷ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 47.

³⁵⁸ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923, 47.

American system of federalism since this dual system did not exist in Japan.³⁵⁹ Compared to the Japanese system where, “a score of the real leaders” decide a course, Gulick asserted that “American politics are most difficult and complex,” thus, even if a joint commission like the one being proposed were to endorse a well-reasoned solution and millions of Americans endorsed it, there would still be no guarantee that it would be adopted. As such, due to the system of dual governance in the United States, Gulick concluded that the JHC that would “solve these difficulties and completely remove them” to the extent of eliminating “anti-Japanese antagonism” was impractical. Thus, only education remained as a viable method to reduce the tensions.³⁶⁰

Despite the fact that the idea of the JHC was unlikely to come to fruition, Gulick was hopeful that it still might, and that it could fill a crucial role in enlightening the public. He felt that both countries needed the JHC for “the education that it would bring.” In that sense, he asserted that even if the commission “might not solve much—or even anything—it will still be useful.”³⁶¹ Charles Cheney also saw the educational value in the proposed body to deal with questions concerning immigration, around which he was “mindful of the fact that they [the Japanese immigrants and Japanese living in the United States] had not always received. . . justice.” He hoped for a time when more enlightened heads would prevail and “demagogues and trouble-makers will be obliged to step aside.” However, he also thought that in the many issues surrounding the Japanese on the West Coast, “there is also some blame upon the other side due also to misunderstandings of the true situation.”³⁶² Thus, a commission could be

³⁵⁹ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923, 47.

³⁶⁰ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923, 47.

³⁶¹ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 49.

³⁶² Charles Cheney to Shibusawa. Correspondence. October 16, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 75.

truly beneficial in helping to clear up misunderstandings and wrong conceptions on both sides of the Pacific.

Being a realist, Gulick thought that the proponents of improved relations between Japan and the United States should not “delay other steps. . .in the expectation that the Commission will handle them” as the commission could not be formed for another two or three years, if at all.³⁶³ Others felt that the JHC should be convened only after some “substantial informal agreement on vital points” on some historical points of contention and that the solutions should not be generated in a body such as the JHC.³⁶⁴

Wickersham strongly opposed the idea of the JHC because he thought that to “a great mass of Americans, American-Japanese problems have now been so satisfactorily settled that there is nothing further of serious importance, calculated to produce irritation, and that many people will be surprised to learn that there is anything for the JHC to do. The very idea of a joint high commission will have to be justified by pointing out the difficulties that Japanese leaders feel with regard to the present situation.”³⁶⁵

The JHC never came to fruition because the passage of the Immigration Act of 1924, the so-called “Asian Exclusion Act,” tabled this discussion. This legislation set restrictive quotas on all immigrants, The Immigration Act of 1924 contained the National Origins Act, which applied an across-the-board quota of two per cent of the existing population of a certain nationality within the United States, and applied this to all immigrants seeking to enter the country. The caveat, however, is that Congress used the 1890 census to determine base population of each nationality and set an allowance of 2% of this number. If this were a good-faith effort, the

³⁶³ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 7, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 49.

³⁶⁴ Robert Lynch to Shibusawa. Correspondence. August 21, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 94.

³⁶⁵ Gulick to Shibusawa. Correspondence. July 20, 1923. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryō*, vol. 34, 52.

legislators would have used the most recent census, that from 1920—which most accurately reflected the racial makeup of the country, but their true aim was to limit certain groups, most notably Asians.³⁶⁶ Chinese immigrants were already legally barred from immigration via the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, so the intent of this act was to complete Asian exclusion by prohibiting Japanese (and Koreans, who were at that time subjects of the Japanese Empire) from immigrating.

Conclusion

The emergence of the 20th century coincided with a series of conflicts which altered the power dynamic within strategic geopolitical cores. The acquisition of the Philippines in 1898 as a result of the Spanish-American War and the American initiative which created the Open-Door Policy in China the following year guaranteed the United States a voice in the regional affairs of Asia, thus bringing the country into closer relations with Japan. The acquisition of Hawaii (also in 1898) and the resulting transfer of many tens of thousands of Japanese residents into the American empire brought issues of migration and cultural assimilation to the fore of the Japanese-American relationship. Concurrent to this, Japan was demonstrating its newly created military and economic might to dramatic effect in the First Sino-Japanese War (1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1905). The result of these victories was a shift in the long-held strength and influence within Asia with Japan eclipsing China as the premier regional power. Japan's sudden increase in might and influence was thus set on a collision course with the United States, itself a very recent contender in Asian relations. The energies generated from this contest

³⁶⁶ Japanese immigrants began to arrive in the mainland United States in substantial numbers after 1890.

dispersed and came to influence seemingly-unrelated aspects of intercourse between the two nations.

One of the most visible of these consequences of the changes which transpired contemporaneous to the dawn of the new century was an influx of Japanese immigrants to the American mainland, often via Hawaii, and the myriad discriminatory reactions to this on the part of the municipal governments, state legislatures, and private citizens to the new immigrants. In general, these slights were answered by official protests lodged by the Japanese diplomats in the United States. For some issues, however, private groups composed of Japanese and American patriots embarked on even more bold campaigns to improve the situation of both individual Japanese in the United States and of bilateral relations between their respective nations.

The non-governmental activities considered in this chapter can be categorized as educational and mediating. The sundry guidebooks published in Japan were expressly educational and while offering copious practical advice, often tied this in with a nationalist message which celebrated early pioneers who subscribed to narrowly-defined ideals of achievement. These publications also besought readers to be mindful of their personal appearance and decorum in order to safeguard the image of the homeland. In a very similar fashion, the YWCAJ-run school for “picture brides” in Yokohama offered skill-based classes, such as courses on the English Language, yet the fact that an equal emphasis was placed on cultivating a proper Western appearance illustrates the importance that a collective national image held within this discourse.

Regardless of the sincerity with which some migrants may have embraced American life, or the earnestness with which organizations and prominent individuals promoted assimilation, the sheer volume of Japanese immigration to the West Coast continued to raise alarm within

sectors of the native population. It was to contend with this residual yellow peril sentiment and its various manifestations that Shibusawa Eiichi enlisted the assistance of his long-time associate Sidney Gulick in forming the JHC to examine aspects of the “Japanese question.” Though this proposed body was never formed, the earnestness with which Japan’s most celebrated private citizen sought to bring about its manifestation attests to the centrality of themes of cultural assimilation and international standing capture the zeitgeist of Japanese-American relations in the years of the 20th century.

When looking at the numbers involved in the ambassador doll campaign and the high-profile sending off and welcome receptions, it seemed like the effort was a success in that crowds turned out to view the dolls and at least several hundred children admired the dolls. True, the 1924 immigration legislation was not overturned, but the committees involved did not expect this to happen; they were simply planting seeds that they hoped would sprout in the children involved in this activity and that the next generation would have better relations as a result. A major tenant of soft power is cultivating relationships with young people. The WFC and the SKJSK planned activities around the doll ambassadors that would include various important segments of the population. School children of the two nations were the most obvious group recruited to support the effort, and they were the stated targets of the soft power campaign for it was this generation who, according to the plan, would grow up with more cosmopolitan and tolerant attitudes and be hesitant to make war as adults. The problems here were many.

First, the children were not old enough to have a say in the national dialog in the 1930s as Japan was becoming more militaristic and pursuing more aggressive policies against its neighbors and the United States in the early up until 1941. Moreover, the ambassador doll campaign more heavily involved, and was by nature aimed at, girls rather than boys. Though

American girls of the ambassador generation were granted suffrage upon turning 21, their Japanese counterparts would not be granted the right to vote until 1947. While boys of both nations were involved in the ambassador doll campaign, American boys had a more proactive role as they not only donated funds but also arranged for doll travel documents and helped in composing the peace messages.

Their Japanese counterparts could only donate money as the Japanese dolls were created and clothed by artisans and the MoE arranged for their travel. Also, while both boys and girls from each country admired the ambassador dolls, the American dolls usually were awarded to a female student or became the property of the school—only to be taken out of storage once a year, on hinamatsuri. Thus, it is safe to assume that Japanese boys were not as affected by the ambassador dolls campaign as their female counterparts, who could not vote in the 1930s when Japan became embroiled in fighting in the Pacific. Though Americans of the ambassador doll generation may have harbored good feelings about Japan as a result of the campaign, the tragedy of the attack on Pearl Harbor overshadowed this.

The parents and teachers of children involved in the ambassador doll campaign were other groups that the WFC and the SKJSK wished to educate. Both organizations facilitated educating those adults close to the participating children. The WFC sent brochures to schools explaining hinamatsuri and had an educational talk for parents and community members at the local ambassador doll send-offs. Likewise, the SKJSK representatives who accompanied the Japanese dolls to the United States gave regular talks on Japanese art and culture. There is no way to know how, or indeed even if, the ambassador doll campaign changed the perceptions of Japan and the United States that these adults harbored. However, if we are to accept the premise of the WFC and the SKJSK that the children were the key to a more peaceful world, the adults in

close contact with the participating children were, at best, secondary targets of this sophisticated soft power campaign; one that emphasized some of Japan's most "attractive" qualities in the Joseph Nye sense.

In both the United States and Japan, ambassador dolls were welcomed with high-profile ceremonies attended by social and political elites. This group, naturally, had more exposure to other cultures and a perhaps a better understanding of international relations. The members of WFC and SKJSK themselves belonged to the ranks of these social and political elites, so it is not surprising that galas organized by individuals of this stature, such as the various national send-offs and welcome receptions attracted such an impressive guest list. Though it might be tempting to assume that the presence of elites at these functions and the many speeches given by influential individuals would have translated into support for the ambassador doll campaign, for many it seems that the gala was little more than a social event. One indication is the fact that a directive from the Japanese Imperial Army encouraged people to destroy the American ambassador dolls during World War II (and all but 66 of the nearly 12,000 dolls were destroyed) despite the heavy attendance of the members of the imperial family in the official welcoming ceremony.³⁶⁷

As for the JHC, its' failure was not surprising considering that the organizers, especially Shibusawa Eiichi seemed genuinely confused about the interworking of American government and the application of checks and balances. Not fully understanding the how one's message is coming across render is one of the most significant problems that Nye discusses in his new any soft power one might have and the Japanese. Thus, soft power is not something that is easily wielded.

³⁶⁷ Kay Kateishi "Sent to Japan in '27: Dolls have been emissaries of peace, tools of war" *Chicago Tribune*. September 5, 1978.

CHAPTER 4 :
MEDIA WARS:
EFFORTS TO SALVAGE JAPAN'S IMAGE
DURING THE SECOND SINO-JAPANESE WAR

“Japan is not all black, China is not all white, and the United States is not all neutral” wrote former United States Ambassador William Castle in a 1937 letter to Prince Tokugawa Iyesato of the America-Japan Society (AJS). Castle, the son of the Hawaiian heir to one of the world’s most profitable sugar cane plantations understood the virtue of reserving judgment until one has seen all of the evidence. His family’s fortune was greatly enhanced by the labor of tens of thousands of Japanese immigrants, and in his lifetime, he had observed a significant change in how Japanese-Americans were viewed both in Hawaii and on the mainland.

This chapter examines connections between things that are seemingly incompatible, or unrelated—such as Japanese war hawks and Yankee culture enthusiasts, or Japanese-American children in Hawaii and American servicemen killed in China, and will demonstrate the interconnectedness of many of the topics explored in previous chapters. Some of the materials I use in this source are extremely well known, such as the periodical *Contemporary Japan*, but one of the many ways that I will evaluate this source is unique—through the lens of soft power. Other materials have not been the focus of scholarly writing, such as a group of letters received by the AJS in response to propaganda literature it had sent to contacts in the United States, or a few article stubs from a Japanese newspaper in Hawaii that gives only sparse information about a number of unsolicited donations it received. Taken together, these sources reveal a connectedness between the image of Japanese at home in Japan, and those living in China and the United States—specifically, Hawaii, at a time when these components appeared to be more divided than ever.

In 1937, Prince Tokugawa and several other prominent individuals were active in two organizations: the AJS and the *Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai*, (NGK, or Foreign Affairs Association of Japan). These groups came into being under very different circumstances and had quite dissimilar goals at their inception. Nevertheless, these two groups cooperated in efforts to salvage Japan's image abroad in the 1930s, when Japan's involvement in China threatened to undo the image that Japanese elites had carefully worked to construct by strategic partnerships with the West in the preceding decades.

The AJS was founded in 1917 in order to facilitate better relations between these two nations. Its early membership consisted of prominent Japanese businessmen and politicians, as well as prominent Americans residing in Japan. Early leaders of the organization were quite esteemed individuals—often members of the *kazoku*, or the Japanese peerage system. Its American counterparts were frequently also eminent community members. For instance, in 1937, at the height of the controversy over Japan's presence in China, the America-Japan Society arranged for a "Japanese Economic Mission" to the United States and Europe, comprised of prominent Japanese businessmen. Among their American partners in this endeavor was Henry Taft, brother of President Howard Taft, and a distinguished lawyer in New York City.³⁶⁸ The organization was, however, a strictly non-political and private group. Nevertheless, because of the stature of the leadership, the organization had close ties to government in Japan as well as the United States.

The NGK was founded in 1931, 14 years after the America-Japan Society was organized. Like the AJS, the NGK was begun by statesmen and intellectuals, rather than fostering friendship with the West, this organization sought to make Japan's foreign policy and practices better

³⁶⁸ Henry Taft to Takeda. Correspondence. May 17, 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

understood throughout the English-speaking world (their main publications were in English). In the first volume of their most widely read publication, *Contemporary Japan*, the association tells readers that it would operate much like quasi-governmental, international organizations already in existence in Western nations. Through its publications, it declared that it was striving to show the “real” aspects of Japan in order to present the country and its activities abroad as they really were. The editors stated that they were not “trying to make readers like Japan: [but were] seeking to show what Japan is like.”³⁶⁹ The reality at this time, though, was that the association was a propaganda-making outfit for the government.

The partnership between the NGK and the AJS developed due to a couple of primary factors: (1) both organizations were gravely concerned about Japan’s image abroad, and; (2) many of the key members of the AJS were founding members of the NGK. The primary joint activity between these two bodies, at least as far as it concerns the topic of this chapter, was the distribution of two English-language booklets which were marketed as Japan’s version of the conflict in China.

However, distributing nationalistic propaganda was not the only image-enhancing activity the AJS was involved with during this timeframe. It also assumed a leading role in organizing a national drive to collect funds to compensate the victims of the USS Panay, an American naval warship which was sunk by Japanese military personnel on the Yangtze River just outside of Nanking on the eve of the infamous massacre in that city by the Japanese Imperial Army. It is possible, of course, that the AJS engaged in fund raising efforts from purely altruistic motives, but the organization was fully aware that this could mitigate the damage done to the national image as a result of that event.

³⁶⁹ Foreign Affairs Association of Japan (FAAJ), “Editor’s note,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 1, 2.

During its empire-building period, Japan was cognizant of the need to build and maintain relationships with the West, even though these were its economic competitors in Asia. Thus, in 1902, Japan entered into the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to check Russian expansion in Asia.

Largely because of this alliance, Japan entered WWI on the side of Britain, Russia, and France. As an enemy of Germany, and a naval power in the region, Japan was able to take German territorial holdings in the South Pacific, including parts of Micronesia. Moreover, in 1921, Japan cooperated with Western powers and agreed to limit the size of its navy to assuage rising fears over Japan's might.

However, by 1931, the trend of militarism in Japan and Japanese expansion into Asia was prominent in the discourse of its involvement in northern China, and largely due to existing economic ties to the region, it was able to establish a puppet state in Manchuria under Pu-Yi, a former child-emperor of the Qing Dynasty. In 1933, hostility toward the empire led the Japanese delegation to pull out of the League of Nations, and three years later Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany. In 1937, Japanese operations expanded into Shanghai and in December of that year the Japanese Army took Nanking.

The USS Panay Incident

On December 12, 1937, the day before the "Nanjing Massacre," the Japanese Imperial Army attacked the USS Panay, an American gunboat anchored in the Yangtze River outside of Nanjing, as well as three other American vessels. This attack, which happened despite the ship being clearly marked with American flags, left three crew members dead and several wounded. There was no official mention of the Nanking Massacre by the America-Japan Society, but there

was a massive drive to collect funds for the victims of the attack on the American vessel and an official apology to President Franklin Roosevelt and Ambassador Joseph Grew.

The AJS expressed “deep regret and sincere sympathy” to those involved in the “accident” and at the initiative of the Kansai branch, resolved acting in “some adequate way to rightly express” the feelings of sadness and regret about the incident.³⁷⁰ The Tokyo branch suggested collecting “condolence money” from all of the members as well as “through other sympathizers” to present to American officials.³⁷¹ The fund-raising activity thus began in the Kansai area through partnerships with the Rotary Club, the International Women’s Culture Society of Osaka and Kobe, the M.I.T. and Harvard Associations of Kansai, and the University of Pennsylvania Alumni Association of Japan. The total amount raised through these efforts was ¥5,000. Considering that the average contribution was ¥1, the society reasoned that this amount represented the goodwill of about 5,000 people “from all walks of life” including a veteran diplomat, industrialists, merchants, nurses, “shop girls,” “factory girls giving a small amount from their scanty purses,” and even “children from their pocket money received from their parents.”³⁷² The movement that began in the Kansai area gained momentum and was already quite established by the time that funds began to be collected in the Tokyo area. The AJS’s Committee on Activities gained the partnership of over thirty other groups and solicited contributions from sympathetic individuals.³⁷³

In total, a national campaign spearheaded by the AJS in cooperation with 218 other organizations, collected ¥16,242.56 from 7,749 people. A check for this amount was presented

³⁷⁰ Undated memo. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02, 1.

³⁷¹ Undated memo. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02, 1.

³⁷² Undated memo. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02, 1–2.

³⁷³ Committee on Activities of the America-Japan Society (AJS). “Substance of the Japanese Announcement.” Memo. (undated). America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

by the president of the AJS, Prince Tokugawa Iyesato, to the American Ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, in order to convey the “wide spread of sincere sympathy and regret in the hearts of the Japanese people over the unfortunate incident.”³⁷⁴

Other contributors asserted that they were speaking for “the entire Japanese people” and indicated that they would be “most happy” if the ambassador could convey “this simple and sincere expression of our thought and feelings” to President Roosevelt and the American populace. In a nod to the negative publicity the incident had been prompting in the American press and the subsequent outrage on the part of the American public, the society expressed the hope that “this incident challenges us on to greater endeavors for perpetuating our mutual friendly relations.”³⁷⁵ The gift of condolence money was given freely with the American representatives able to determine exactly how it should be distributed.³⁷⁶ The survivors and relatives of the deceased decided to use the money to establish a trust to be known as the “Japan-America Trust,” and would exist as a symbol of friendship between the two nations.³⁷⁷ Tokugawa said about the formation of the trust that “it [was] gratifying to me that the spirit which prompted the Japanese contributions is understood” by the Americans.³⁷⁸

It is also revealing that contributions to the Panay Condolence Fund also came from Japanese-Americans in Hawaii. The Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu sent a check for ¥16.92 from the local Japanese-American community who wished to express their sincere regret over the occurrence. to the AJS for the Panay fund.³⁷⁹ Additionally, the office of the *Nippu Jiji*

³⁷⁴ Iyesato Tokugawa to Joseph Grew. Correspondence. February 12, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁷⁵ Hidejirō Nagata and Countess N. Uesugi to Grew. Correspondence. December 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁷⁶ Grew to Iyesato Tokugawa. Correspondence. February 14, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁷⁷ Grew to the America-Japan Society. Correspondence. April 20, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁷⁸ Iyesato Tokugawa to Grew. Correspondence. May 9, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁷⁹ Takeda to E.H. Dooman. Correspondence. March 17, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

newspaper in Honolulu sent a check for ¥201.60 from 35 individuals.³⁸⁰ What is more impressive is the fact that there were no organized collection efforts through the offices of the newspaper; the donations began to come in spontaneously. The newspaper had been covering developments of Japan's activities in China in tremendous detail and once the Panay incident occurred, the paper did not publish an issue that did not have at least one prominently-located article that discussed some aspect of the event (and often there were several articles) until the matter was considered officially closed by both governments on December 27, 1937.³⁸¹ The newspaper also reported on the extensive fundraising activities in Japan for a USS Panay fund, and apparently reading about the fund raising activities in Japan and being "inspired by the manifestations of sincere regret of the Japanese nation," some Japanese-Americans also donated.

In total, eleven Japanese-Americans donated money during the last week of December of 1937 to the USS Panay fund that was managed by the AJS. Of those eleven individuals, ten were minors. The first two donations reported on by the paper were from a pair of adolescent sisters who gave up the Christmas spending money their parents had given them.³⁸² The sole recorded USS Panay donation to the offices of the *Nippu Jiji* that was given by an adult was from a local Buddhist priest.³⁸³

Thus, it is apparent that Japanese both in Japan and Japanese-Americans in the United States were painfully aware of how the conflict in China, and the USS Panay incident in particular, had soured the American opinion of Japan. It is also clear that Japanese-Americans felt compelled to give because they understood that the society at large associated them with the

³⁸⁰ Takeda to Dooman. Correspondence. February 22, 1938. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

³⁸¹ "Panay Incident Closed." *The Nippu Jiji*, December 27, 1937, P.2.

³⁸² The total of the two girls' donation was \$5, worth \$86.23 in 2017. By comparison, the priest gave \$2, equivalent to \$34.49 today. Subsequent donations, all by adolescents, ranged from \$1 to \$5.

³⁸³ "Three Give to Panay Victims through Nippu." *The Nippu Jiji*, December 22, 1937, P.1.

Japanese perpetrators. However, the vast majority of the donations came from children, and though children are perhaps able to perceive social situations far better than adults realize, this was a complicated matter of international diplomacy and national identity politics—considerably more difficult for a child to tease out than, say, observing a Thanksgiving dinner and being able to identify which relatives secretly hate one another.

Based on the size of the donations and brief descriptions of each child's parents, these were all the offspring of middle-class professionals, so they were children who would have more potential for social mobility than the children of plantation laborers. Perhaps this accounts for the desire to publicly atone for the misdeeds of Japan, or to publicly disassociate with Japan. Still, this comes back to the question, why children? Moreover, it is curious that the children of nine different families all in the span of one week have this same spontaneous urge to donate their spending money for a righteous cause. And what of the lone adult? The Buddhist priest? Of the entire Japanese-American community in Honolulu, he was probably regarded as one of the more “foreign” elements—especially if he were walking the streets in his robe and beads. Yet through his giving he makes a clear statement that he sympathizes with the American victims and their families. Moreover, the stories about the spontaneous donations only appeared in the comparatively small English language section of the newspaper which might beg the question of who was the intended audience of this information.

The editorial staff at the *Nippu Jiji* approved of the way that people in Japan had dealt with the USS Panay crisis. Shortly before the incident was officially settled, the *Nippu Jiji* carried a story on the front page and the title was in font four times the size of the font for the other articles, which read “The Matter of the Bombing of the USS Panay Peacefully Settled.” The article claimed that because of the proactivity and overwhelming sincerity of the Japanese

people in the “whole-heartedness the Japanese demonstrated” in regard to the USS Panay case. United States Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, is quoted as saying that the United States desired to settle the matter peacefully and, in fact, never had any intention of resorting to military action—either alone or with other nations. This reasonable and cooperative sentiment the paper said, because Japan handled the situation appropriately.³⁸⁴

In another article, titled “Public Opinion in the United States Has Cooled,” the paper does a comparison of four mainstream newspapers in order to surmise the mood of the country with regard to the USS Panay incident. The papers it selected were the *Daily News*, *Idaho Statesman*, *Phoenix* (Arizona) and *Chronicle* (San Francisco). Three of these papers (as well as many others) covered the event in the immediate aftermath, but soon stopped reporting on it because, the paper argues, immediately after the event prominent figures in Japan took action and began organizing relief funds for the victims and their families.

It is because the newspapers reported these two news stories—the bombing and also fund-raising efforts in Japan—that the news of the initial attack did not seem as sensational, so the editors had refrained from saying that the United States should enter into a conflict with Japan about this. In other words, Japan was able to frame the story in such a way as to allow for Japan’s reputation to be salvaged though this was a most grave situation. The fourth newspaper that the editorial staff at the *Nippu Jiji* consulted was the *Chronicle* of San Francisco, and this newspaper claimed that Japan’s efforts to apologize were not sufficient.³⁸⁵ However, this is completely unsurprising as the owner of the *Chronicle* was Valentino Stuart McClatchy, one of the most outspoken and tenacious anti-Japanese agitators in the State of California.

³⁸⁴ “*Pane-Bakuhaiken Heiwateki Kaiketsu.*” *The Nippu Jiji*, December 15, 1937, P.1.

³⁸⁵ “*Beikoku Yoron Reisei-Ka.*” *The Nippu Jiji*, December 14, 1937, P.1.

The *Nippu Jiji* was a major newspaper for Japanese-American communities in Honolulu that was established in 1895. It was primarily in Japanese but eventually began to carry a few pages of English reporting in each issue. It is probably not surprising that it had a pro-Japan take—at least when reporting on the conflict in China. For instance, one common theme was to emphasize human interest stories that portrayed Japanese demonstrating admired qualities. One story from December 20, 1937, that seems specious at best to a modern reader, claims that scores of Japanese Army medical staff were treating injured Chinese soldiers left in field hospitals in and near Nanking after Chinese forces quit the city. In numerous other articles, Chinese are made out to be the perpetrators by looting a Japanese warehouse, executing alleged spies, and attacking Japanese troops sniper-style, etc.³⁸⁶

Broad Arguments of the NGK

As previously mentioned, the NGK was founded in October of 1931 just weeks after the Manchurian incident by “Japanese politicians and intellectuals seeking to promote awareness in foreign countries about Japanese affairs.”³⁸⁷ It was associated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, served as its propaganda wing, and disseminated several publications during Japan’s involvement in China in the 1930s. Among these titles were two magazines: *Contemporary Japan*, a quarterly review of Japanese affairs, and the *Tokyo Gazette*, a monthly newsletter published under the supervision of the Commission of Information. Books included *Japan and World Resources*, *Japan’s Advance Southward*, *Agrarian Problems in Japan*, *Our Social Welfare Work*, *Labour Movements in Japan*, *Education in Japan*, *Japan’s Woman Question*, *The North China Incident, 1937*, *What Happened at Tungchow?*, *How the North China Affair Arose*,

³⁸⁶ *The Nippu Jiji*, 1937.

³⁸⁷ NGK. *Contemporary Japan*, June 1932, P.1.

and *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*. In this section, I will offer an analysis of the organization's most ubiquitous publication, *Contemporary Japan*, for the purpose of evaluating it along with two books published by the organization in 1937 as instruments of propaganda.

Contemporary Japan was available widely via subscription in the Western world and the two booklets, while also for sale, were distributed to contacts throughout the English-speaking world from Australia to Canada by the AJS and possibly other groups as well.³⁸⁸

Disseminating Booklets

Starting in 1937, the AJS decided to try to mitigate a severe blow to Japan's national image in the United States through a targeted public relations campaign. It disseminated two booklets, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai* and *How the North China Affair Arose*, respectively. These publications were mailed to hundreds of influential people in the United States who had ties in one way or another to Japan. Additionally, most of these individuals received multiple copies of the booklets, potentially multiplying their effect. These individuals included the leadership and key members of the Japan societies of several American cities, chambers of commerce, delegates to an educational conference that had been held in Tokyo in 1927, past participants in the America-Japan Student Conference sponsored by the AJS, members of the Pacific Rim Goodwill and Discussion Tour (also sponsored by the AJS), social organizations such as garden societies as well as a host of Americans known to be residing in Japan.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ The copies I read were both housed Illinois. The first was at the University of Chicago, a gift from the Consulate of Japan in 1940; the other was at the University of Illinois, also acquired in 1940, although the sender is not known.

³⁸⁹ Lists of recipients. America-Japan Society archives, Box A1-01.

The periodical *Contemporary Japan* seems like it would have been considerably effective at producing soft power. It was presented as a general reader on modern Japan covering arts and culture, society, economy, politics, and international relations. It featured contributions from a variety of notable individuals who were all experts in their field, including journalists, art critics, diplomats, scholars (including a few Westerners), bureaucrats, military elites, and industry leaders. The majority of the contributions were well-reasoned and perhaps even seemed credible to a non-expert reader of the time who, of course, did not have the benefit of hindsight available to subsequent readers. Moreover, the individual style and tone of each author, and the occasional dissension on fine points of the same topic give the publication the feel of one that is void of content-based editing.

NGK Publications as Propaganda

Contemporary Japan did, on occasion, include articles that are readily identifiable as propaganda pieces. The central argument of one, for example, was that the glowing reports of life and progress in Manchukuo appearing in the Japanese press were trustworthy because the domestic press had earned a reputation for being critical of the government during the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate. This article did not comment on the contemporaneous state of Japanese journalism, and certainly not to the infamous Peace Preservation Law of 1925, which seriously limited free speech and political activity throughout Japanese society.³⁹⁰ Another dubious article claimed that there was an affinity between Japanese the people of northern China. Evidence for this sweeping claim included a pre-colonial anecdote of three Japanese who became attached to a local Chinese warlord and allowed themselves to be martyred by the central

³⁹⁰ *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 1, 73.

government rather than to give up information about their mentor.³⁹¹ In early editions, attempts to reassure American, British, Australian, and Canadian readers of a moderate Japanese position sometimes took the form of deriding Nazi Germany a “fascist” state. However, once Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany references to fascism disappeared and the publication began to sport pieces explaining this agreement and also referencing Adolf Hitler’s crusade against global communism while omitting the activities in which his regime was actually engaged.³⁹²

How the North China Affair Arose was published on August 20, 1937, and makes a case for the Japanese involvement in Manchuria. As a work of persuasion aimed at a Western audience, it has many hallmarks of propaganda. For instance, the nomenclature of events is revealing. Engagements where the Japanese could arguably be held culpable are referred to as “incidents,” and there is no mention of Chinese casualties in the exchanges, yet the readers are told the exact numbers of Japanese killed, and these are called “murder.” Perhaps most significant given the intended readership are the frequent reference to Western powers, citizens, and institutions when discussing events. One element of propaganda in *How the North China Affair Arose* is a prominently-placed table which makes explicit Japan’s relative burden in northern China in terms of the military presence of the respective foreign powers in the area along with an assertion that despite the fact that Japan’s force was considerably smaller than those of the other nations, Japan had considerably more financial assets, in the form of corporations, in the area that needed to be protected.³⁹³ The message was that Japan’s forces were legitimate, yet insufficient to fully protect its economic interests. Since Japan had fewer

³⁹¹ *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 4, 256.

³⁹² *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 1, 185 and vol. 5, 216, 519.

³⁹³ NGK, *How the North China Affair Arose* (Tokyo: The Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, 1937), 3.

troops and more at stake in terms of investments, Japan could be seen as holding back, thus, no power had grounds to question its presence (or actions) in the area. As the Japanese involvement in China deepened and spread from its tenuous base in Manchuria to other parts of the country, Japan had a more difficult time defending its presence. The Battle of Shanghai was the first major conflict of the hostilities that would come to be known as the Second Sino-Japanese War, and so it was an episode that the Japanese government very much wished to put into a flattering context for a Western audience.

The book *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*, published on September 29, 1937, takes up this challenge. Unlike *Contemporary Japan* and *How the North China Affair Arose*, this book contained a treasure trove of visuals. In fact, in consummate propaganda form, the first several pages contain apparently self-explanatory photographs that set the tone of the work. The first photo shows destruction of the international concessions as a result of Chinese bombing. Next shows a thick mass of people crowding onto a bridge and spilling out into the street. The caption explains that “almost all of Shanghai took to its feet when bombs were thrown on August 17 by Chinese warplanes.”³⁹⁴

This is followed by a photograph of three grinning Japanese soldiers posing with a Chinese peasant family. The parents are smiling and looking on as their three sons play with the soldiers. One boy shakes the hand of a soldier, and his brother stands at attention next to him as another soldier lopsidedly places a too-large helmet on his head. The youngest boy, perhaps around age four, is balanced on the hip of a third soldier who gazes at the child adoringly. The caption reads, “This picture apparently does not speak of war, yet it is a scene observed near Shanghai during the present hostilities. The Japanese soldiers are very fond of little ones and are

³⁹⁴ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai* (Tokyo: The Foreign Affairs Association of Japan, 1937), not numbered.

making the hearts of Chinese children glad with such little devices as the circumstances allow.”³⁹⁵

The next photograph is of an oil tanker belonging to the Asiatic Petroleum Company which exploded when it was hit by Chinese bombs. After this is a photograph of a Japanese military camp where soldiers are boiling rice in rows of massive steel pots for the evening meal; perhaps seeing soldiers engaged in cooking is supposed to make them seem more personable. After this is a photograph which shows a wharf in Shanghai. People are tightly packed onto the dock in the foreground of the entire frame with two steam ships in the back. The caption tells readers that these are Japanese residents of Shanghai who are waiting to board the ships back to Japan as the city has become too dangerous for them. The final picture is of a Chinese tank that was captured by the Japanese. The caption indicated that “wherein were found, besides machine guns, hand grenades, bottles of whiskey, perfumery, other ladies’ toilet articles, and ladies shoes.”³⁹⁶ The implication, presumably, was that the Chinese soldiers who had operated this tank were morally corrupt and wanted to become intoxicated and had illicit encounters with local women either through seduction, force, or purchase.

Following this as a prologue is a passage from the imperial message to the seventy-second session of the Diet (Sept. 4 , 1937):

It is with constant and profound solitude that We have looked toward the insurance of the stability of East Asia and the realization of common prosperity for Japan and China through the co-operation and collaboration of the two countries. However much to Our regret, China fails to understand fully our intentions, and her repeated acts of provocation have finally led to the present affair. Now Our armed forces are fighting loyally and valiantly in defiance of untold difficulties. And all of this has no other purpose in view than that of prompting China’s reconsideration and securing swiftly the peace of East Asia. It is Our hope that all the subjects of the Empire will, in view of the current

³⁹⁵ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

³⁹⁶ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

situation, serve the State with loyalty and devotion, and that they will unite themselves and assist with one heart in the achievement of the desired end.³⁹⁷

Thus, each of the publications examined here contain hallmark elements of attempts to acquire soft power. One of these elements is employing a recognized authority to promote the agenda of the wielder of soft power. In the case of *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*, this authority was technological. The photographs in the front of the book and the descriptive captions primed the reader for the intended message of the publication: that the Chinese government had mismanaged the situation on the ground, resulting in chaos and it was this undesirable situation that Japan wished to rectify using the only tool appropriate for such a situation—invasion. A more typical use of a recognized authority to advance one's message is to have recognized experts make one's case on their behalf. In the case of the other two works, the propagandists compiled the work in such a way that authorities such as academics and journalists, even a political and cultural icon like Sun Yat-Sen, seemed in favor of part of the Japanese agenda. Another tactic employed in the NGK's publications was to persuade readers to adopt their account of the conflict by showcasing areas of agreement between Japan and the West. These publications largely failed to achieve their objective perhaps because they were overt pieces of propaganda, or because the stream of news stories and eye witness accounts had gathered a momentum that was difficult to stop. Perhaps it was a combination of these, but one thing is clear: that the West remained unconvinced of the need for solidarity between itself and Japan.

Thus, Nye's maxim on propaganda holds in this case—if a work can be identified as propaganda, it will not be successful. The fact that these attempts at propaganda failed notwithstanding, the publications have historical value and are relevant to this study because they

³⁹⁷ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

highlight a narrative that the *Nihon Gaiji Kyōkai*, (NGK, or Foreign Affairs Association of Japan), the AJS, and likely many other organizations wished to promote abroad.

The articles in *Contemporary Japan* and the information contained in the two booklets examined in this chapter can be organized around two basic themes: security in China and the purported unfairness with which the other powers were treating Japan in regard to its stated interests in China. The argument held that China was a dangerous, unruly, and unpredictable place and that Japan was the nation best able to keep the peace, but Japan's goal of peace was being hindered by interference from the Chinese government, Chinese rebels, and Western powers. The two booklets in particular sought to justify Japan's presence in China as well as its expansion and employed the need to achieve a better security in that unstable country as a justification for an aggressive agenda. In the following section, the three publications so far discussed will be further examined in terms of these major themes which are common to each.

Security: Japan is the Power Best Able to Keep the Peace

Security was of paramount importance according to the NGK because China was politically and socially unstable. These security threats came in many forms. For instance, a major tenet of keeping the peace in northern China was to subdue local bandits and warlords, which was something that the association insisted the Chinese government was unable to do.³⁹⁸ An article in *Contemporary Japan* asked readers to remember the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and advanced the argument that the still-relevant threat of an anti-foreign uprising by Chinese citizens justified a heavy military presence by various nations in order to protect their respective interests. It conceded that the existence of foreign forces within the borders of a "friendly state

³⁹⁸ "Thoughts on the Manchurian Crisis." *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 2, 49.

[was] abnormal,” but asserted that these nations (including Japan) had yet to find a way to “relinquish this only effective way” of providing security.³⁹⁹

Moreover, *How the North China Affair Arose* also carefully stirred Western fears of a new kind of threat, and one that would be especially damaging to the system of the open door—a Communist takeover. The book forged a connection between Russia and Communist forces in China and insinuated cooperation between the Communists and the “blue shirts.” Since this latter alliance came into existence, it claimed that the sense of order which had existed was no more and “the fruitful and harmonious co-operation between Chinese and Japanese [has been] destroyed.” This resentment, it goes on to say, “fanned into flame” until the occurrence of the Marco Polo Bridge incident.⁴⁰⁰ By writing of these security threats in such a grave way, the association was attempting to do two things: justify Japan’s military presence in China and work to build common ground by informing readers that their goals were identical to those of Western powers—a secure China where the ideals of the Open Door were protected, and trade was possible for all. The instability of China and the assertion that Japan was indispensable to the security of the area, perhaps even the only state able to keep the peace, is a classic example of Nye’s concept of agenda setting by making other options seem unviable.

Japan’s concern about security was not only to serve economic or political ends, but also to protect their nationals living and working in China. The Tungchow massacre, which was the killing of approximately 300 Japanese subjects—both civilians and military personal—by the East Hopei Army on July 29, 1937, was given as another reason the Japanese needed to have a military presence in China. These troops had been trained by the Japanese Kwantung Army, but in a bid for autonomy they broke away and formed this new army. Due to their prior association

³⁹⁹ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴⁰⁰ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

with the Japanese, this event is alternately called the “Tungchow mutiny.” However, “Tungchow massacre” is what it is referred to in *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*. As previously mentioned, these publications were in English and it is probably safe to assume that not many among the readership had been following the complicated state of affairs in China with regards to which army was active where, and would naturally see this massacre as evidence that China really was a lawless place, or that the Chinese simply wanted to kill Japanese. Both of these conclusions were not far from suggestions made in the association’s publications. Regardless of the nuance of the situation, the Tungchow incident was, indeed, a massacre, and the book was certain to let readers know this. Though disturbing, a verbatim passage from the book will illuminate the tone used in the publication.

[A]ll the Japanese homes not only had been ransacked, but also their occupants tortured and killed. Panic-stricken children were seized and brutally killed by having their heads twisted off or being beaten or hurled to the ground. All the women who met death were shot while offering desperate resistance, and their bodies were mutilated and mangled with swords. An official report states that the maid servants of the *Kinsuiro* were strung together by wire pierced through their noses or throats and taken to be shot; after being subjected to unspeakable outrages, their bodies were thrown into a lotus pond near the East Gate The toll of civilian men, women and children tortured and killed exceeded 200.⁴⁰¹

The next section of the same book outlines the hardships that Japanese in the area faced, including various hindrances in conducting business, and “extreme inconveniences” in their daily lives, “these anti-Japanese activities finally culminated in a disruption of food and water to Japanese nationals” and even Japanese women and children became targets of Chinese violence. The Japanese government advised its nationals to evacuate nearly a dozen areas along the upper Yangtze valley and these residents were escorted to Shanghai by Japanese gunboats. This is why, it asserted, Japanese ships were in the area even though this point had been so utterly

⁴⁰¹ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

misunderstood by the Chinese and other nationalities who saw it as an aggressive show of force. The memory of the Tungchow massacre was invoked again, and the author resolved that a tragedy like this would never be allowed to befall Japanese subjects again.⁴⁰²

Thus, the publication asserted that Japan was fulfilling an important duty to the international community by sacrificing Japanese lives and resources for the security of northern China. The problems the Japanese encountered, according to these publications, were caused by anti-Japanese sentiment which were encouraged by the Chinese government, and the ineffective decision-making, slow reaction time, and general poor governance by that body. The hardships of Japanese colonists in China were intended to be further proof that Japan needed the support of the international community in its security endeavors in China.

The Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere

Works of the association attempted to showcase the spirit of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, and Japan's place at its head. The purpose of Japan's activity in China, it argued, was to ensure "a new era of lasting peace" through the eradication of "anti-Japanism" and the establishment of bilateral cooperation.⁴⁰³ This work prophesied that the Japanese were "destined" to expand their dealings in Asia because it was not realistic to limit their "surplus energy" (likely meaning people in this context) here to the homeland with a very limited amount of resources—including space—that had by this time already been exhausted."⁴⁰⁴ As for the apparently inevitable conflicts that this outward expansion of Japanese would bring, the author explained that it was the task of the diplomats to discover ways to navigate the many difficulties

⁴⁰² NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴⁰³ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴⁰⁴ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

so that mutually beneficial situations could transpire.⁴⁰⁵ The author reasoned that this was attractive to China, or at least it should have been, because “[i]n accepting Japan’s offer of co-operation in exploiting the undeveloped natural resources,” China would benefit tremendously in terms of improved infrastructure, but cooperation would also “avert the necessity of a resort to extreme and drastic measures.”⁴⁰⁶ Presumably he is referring to the difficulty that China would have developing a modern infrastructure without the aid of other nations, such as Japan. The main point the association desired to express was that Japan’s involvement in China was not entirely driven by self-interest.

The same publication quoted then Prime Minister, Prince Konoye Fumimaro, and his assertion that “Japan wants China’s co-operation, not her territory.” In general, the Japanese presence in northern China was justified, it argued, because of political instability in the area. As a major player in the region, and a country with a proven track record of cooperating with Western powers in international affairs, Japan made the case that it was trustworthy. Its sole aim, according to the piece, was to ensure stability in China for the benefit of all who were concerned, including Western powers. The language of this argument is charged. For instance, the passage, “[i]n the beginning,[of the conflict] lawless elements had overrun the country and Japanese troops had been actively co-operating with the Peace Prevention Corps . . .” The clear assertions made here are that China was not able to control the security of its own territory and that Japan was both able and willing to do so. Thus, while Japan certainly stood to benefit from its involvement in China, the publication would have readers believe that Japan was also committed to peace and economic development for the benefit of all-including China and the West.

⁴⁰⁵ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴⁰⁶ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

Regime Change is Not Unusual in China

Another contributor in *Contemporary Japan* argued that a “lack of unity” had been characteristic in China since ancient times due to a belief that the people have the right to rise up against governments (he was likely referring to the concept of the mandate of heaven—the idea that the legitimacy of the ruler ship was based on a prosperous empire and a major catastrophe meant that heaven was displeased with the regime and so if the government were overthrown, the people would generally embrace the new leadership). When presented in this context, he argued that the creation of Manchukuo was a “perfectly normal proceeding which should occasion no surprise or anxiety.”⁴⁰⁷ What should concern Western powers interested in China, he asserted, was the communist threat from Russia in the north. He went as far as suggesting that the integrity of China as a political unit could only continue to exist if the political powers active in the nation came to an agreement—and if Japan was able to check Russian power to the north, for it was Japan that “has constantly stood between China and the Russian expansionist policy.”⁴⁰⁸

The book found the Chinese national government in Nanking as culpable for escalating the tensions because it was incapable of reacting to the situations on the ground in an effective and decisive manner. The naming of chapter and section headings reflect this assignment to blame on Nanking. For example, chapter two is titled “The Second Phase: China Precipitates the Crisis,” and a section within the subsequent chapter is “Nanking’s Efforts to Upset the Northern Status.” The latter-named section accuses the Chinese government of intentionally destabilizing the region. One major complaint the association had with the Chinese government was its refusal to treat incidents involving the Japanese as local, isolated events but rather considered these to be

⁴⁰⁷ NGK, “China’s Inherent Disunity,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 67.

⁴⁰⁸ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 65-7.

on a national level. For example, *How the North China Affair Arose* was critical of the Chinese government for bypassing local arbitration and “insisting on a solution of arms.”

Setting the responses to the Marco Polo Bridge Incident into a strict binary of either accepting local arbitration or “insisting on a solution of arms,” the author asserts that by refusing to allow the incident to be treated as an isolated matter, China was responsible for the escalation.

Furthermore, the reasons that the government opted to not settle the issue locally was nationalism, or as the book puts it, “unification” (quotation marks original). It also criticized the Chinese government for not allowing a host of joint economic projects proposed by the Japanese—specifically mentioned is a “anti-land sales act” which was directed at the Japanese and worked to stall development. The author asserts that Japan had indulged Chinese officials in allowing them to overestimate the strength of their country because of a Japanese “sympathy” toward the Chinese, and also calls in Tokyo for a more fixed China policy. Problematically, however, the Chinese were led to believe that they really were capable of managing the area on their own and “this led to the over-estimation of her own strength,” and the current problems.⁴⁰⁹ The book also suggests that while Japan was upholding order in China in accordance with the desire of the major powers, the Chinese government was actively undermining the stability of its own territory in an attempt to self-strengthening and repel foreigners. It asserts that in Manchuria, where Japan had vital interests that it protected by waging two wars (against China in 1895 and then Russia in 1905).

Nippon’s diplomats, pursuing the policy which had prompted the Western agreements, made to help China to her feet, exerted utmost forbearance and amenity [while] . . . the Kuomintang pursued its “revolutionary” policy—the unilateral abrogation of unpleasant

⁴⁰⁹ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

agreements and the forceful capture of legitimate interests. It was in this toxic environment, it claimed, that Japan was forced to act.⁴¹⁰

The tone of the piece thus established, the author(s) insists that Japan was pushed into the role of being an enforcer of international diplomatic standards only because the actions of the Chinese government left it no other viable course of action in the country. More importantly, Japan was deeply committed to ensuring the peace and stability of the region. For instance, the first section of the book, titled “Co-operation, Not Territory,” accuses the Chinese of “advocat[ing]” for a military clash and moreover, having “even planned and prepared” for such an occurrence.⁴¹¹ Another example is the report’s suggestion that the Chinese had been abusing the Peace Preservation Corps (formed immediately subsequent to the Sino-Japanese Truce Agreement of 1932) by disguising regular army troops as members of the Peace Preservation Corps in order to have access to places otherwise off limits to the Chinese military per the agreement.⁴¹² Thus, Japan’s “patient and persistent efforts” to forgo armed conflict and “her desire to reconcile. . .through. . .diplomatic negotiation” came to nothing.⁴¹³ The book asserted that Japan’s “immediate objectives” were to eliminate the various “organizations and activities” in the country which were hostile to the Japanese presence, and in doing so, it would also “secure East Asia from the menace of Communism.”⁴¹⁴ In this way, the author stakes a claim for the Japanese as protectors of capitalism and democracy in their sphere of influence.

Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai contains a chapter called “Japan Never Intended to Fight,” which begins by challenging the assertion that Japan was seeking territorial gain in

⁴¹⁰ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹¹ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹² NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹³ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹⁴ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

Shanghai. The logic employed was simple: the bulk of the Japanese holdings were in Manchuria, so “the issue, if any,” it quipped, was in northern China where “Japanese interests [were] incalculably great.”⁴¹⁵ Following this logic, it would be unwise for Japan to provoke a conflict in Shanghai, which was arguably the most cosmopolitan city in China with a great many foreign powers having bases there.⁴¹⁶ The pamphlet then accused China of intentionally bombing the property of other foreign powers in the Foreign Settlement in order to induce them to intervene in the conflict with Japan. According to this theory, the killing of two Japanese military personnel was the first act in the Chinese “scheme . . . to make Shanghai a theater of armed conflict.”⁴¹⁷

The publication claimed legitimacy of the Japanese presence by appealing to international norms in a different way. This was the assertion that “[w]hether or not [Japan’s] sentiment is justified or not is beside the question,” as the Chinese were not abiding by generally-accepted standards because, it argued, “[w]illful excitation against any country certainly is not in the interests of humanity”—the book asserted that the Chinese had been agitating its people against the Japanese; much to the detriment of the Japanese mission.⁴¹⁸

Discrediting the Chinese Leadership, or Alternately, the Citizenry

Unsurprisingly, the association’s publications painted the Chinese government and its citizens in an unfavorable light. In these publications, the association often portrayed the Chinese government as breaching international law and its citizens as alternately conceited and pretentious or humble and hard-working. Perhaps this was an attempt to gain much-needed moral

⁴¹⁵ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹⁶ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹⁷ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

⁴¹⁸ NGK, *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*.

authority within the international community and re-direct attention away claims of Japanese violations of international law. An industrialist with business investments in Manchuria complained in *Contemporary Japan* that various institutions in China, including the Nationalist Party “trespass upon Japanese vested rights and interests,” through propaganda campaigns which instilled anti-Japanese sentiment into the minds of citizens, including school children.⁴¹⁹ Also it claimed that the forum through which the Chinese nationalist government handled “state” matters, namely through a committee system which, in the words of one contributor, encouraged a “mob psychology” capable of influencing the outcome of the decisions.⁴²⁰ In such an environment, he continued, each individual having less of a sense of “personal responsibility . . . tempted as he is to set forth views as strong as possible lest his colleagues make light of him as a coward.”⁴²¹

Members of the association were not inclined to look favorably on Chinese elites as well. Another contributor claimed that educated Chinese in northern China were protected by the Japanese and so their criticism was that akin to a “philosopher who was enjoying despising them” while at the same time benefiting from Japan’s presence. He also felt that the upper and middle-class Chinese were fond of Western things just for the sake of owning novelties, and a dearth of real character made them “soft” compared to Japanese of the same social class. Another author wrote that the middle and upper classes of Chinese society “lack[ed] true patriotism and moral courage” because they allowed Europeans to gain treaty port areas, waiting for a “chivalrous country” to come to their aid to realize racial independence in their own land.⁴²² Since the Chinese had not taken it on themselves to realize racial equality vis-a-vis Europeans, it

⁴¹⁹ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 1, 86.

⁴²⁰ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 5, 356.

⁴²¹ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 5, 359.

⁴²² NGK, “Whither North China?,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 4, 546.

was left to Japan to take up the mantle of Asian racial equality and to demonstrate to the world that Asians were equally capable of operating a modern, democratic society.⁴²³ As for the common people, such as farmers, they were too engrossed in subsistence to be concerned about politics, but, it asserted, Japan had improved their situation too by suppressing bandits.⁴²⁴

How the North China Affair Arose cited a general hostility toward the Japanese on the part of rank-and-file Chinese soldiers among the key reasons for the escalation of hostilities in northern China. One of the most notorious was the anti-Japanese sentiment of the Chinese 29th Army (a body whose officers were reportedly hostile to the Japanese). Another was the Peace Preservation Corps, which, the book insisted had become infiltrated by Chinese soldiers, who were often resentful of the Japanese presence. The anti-Japanese feelings of individual Chinese soldiers and the proclivity of those same soldiers to attack numerically inferior forces, was problematic to be sure, but according to the association, this hostility on the part of individual soldiers, though unfortunate, paled in comparison to the vitriol coming from the government.⁴²⁵ The author asserts that the Kuomintang “unit[ed] the people in a common hatred of the ‘foreign imperialists’.”⁴²⁶ This, it seemed, was the root of many of the problems the Japanese faced in China.

Artificially Forged Connections with the West

One way in which the authors attempt to build common ground with readers was to, whenever possible, make reference to the West, Western powers, or Westerners, when explaining Japan’s position in China. The propensity to reference Western experts or authorities

⁴²³ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 324.

⁴²⁴ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 240.

⁴²⁵ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 31.

⁴²⁶ NGK, *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 3, 37.

that a Western audience would respect is a major theme present in all three publications. For instance, writing for *Contemporary Japan*, Viscount Kaneko Kentarō recalled a weekend in 1905 when was a guest of the president Theodore Roosevelt and the Roosevelt family. He wrote about a conversation he had that weekend in which the president outlined his vision of peace for East Asia; one with Japan as the leader in a regional order governed by what he called the “Japanese Monroe Doctrine.” Kaneko says that the president asked him not to mention the contents of that conversation until he had an opportunity to discuss it publicly first. He notes with regret that Roosevelt died before he was able to present his vision to the public but Kaneko felt that the occasion of Japan’s new colonial acquisition in Manchuria warranted sharing the president’s hopes for order in East Asia.⁴²⁷ This article seemed to suggest that powerful and influential Westerners—in this case a former American president—condoned the idea of a co-prosperity sphere in Asia headed by Japan, just like the father of the Chinese republic, Sun Yat-Sen, purportedly supported an Asian block led by Japan.

Similarly, the journal also ostensibly provided evidence that prominent and respected East Asians also supported Japan’s position in China. There could perhaps not be a better figure to persuade the readership of the fact of endorsement among elite Chinese than the universally embraced but deceased former leader Sun Yat-Sen. A veteran reporter submitted an article to the September, 1935 edition, in which he recounts a conversation several years’ prior with Chinese revolutionary Sun Yat-Sen. In this piece, the author asserts that Dr. Sun declared that as far as he was concerned, the Japanese could control Manchuria, but his great desire was for Japan to supply his forces so that he could take Beijing. After this, he intimated that he would enter into an alliance with Japan and “proclaim the principle of ‘Asia for the Asiatics,’” or in diplomatic

⁴²⁷ NGK, “A ‘Japanese Monroe Doctrine’ and Manchuria,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 1, 175–184.

parlance, the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.⁴²⁸ In the same issue that contained the journalist's recollections of Dr. Sun's vision of Asia, a French scholar contributed an article titled, "A French Light on Manchukuo." In this essay, the author categorically refutes the findings of the League of Nations' Lytton Committee which had concluded in 1931 that Japan's occupation of the area was illegal.⁴²⁹ In terms of soft power, this showcasing of thinkers appealing to Westerners, can be seen as an attempt at building common ground—a basic prerequisite in cultivating soft power.

Other Powers in China not Treating Japan Well

The authors also tended to categorize actions by other power entities which challenged or restricted Japanese operations in China, including the League of Nations, Western countries, and the national Chinese government, as unfair. The next general themes that emerges from the pages of *Contemporary Japan* is a tendency to call attention to situations which, the authors argue, that other powers are not being fair to Japan. In the March 1935, issue, a retired naval captain gave his thoughts on the London Naval Conference. In general, he maintained that Japan did not gain from those meetings, but his most poignant observation was that his country was chided by the others for not wishing to discuss its involvement in China and continually re-directing attention to the particulars of ships and ratios—an action that the captain considered quite reasonable and appropriate as it was in an attempt to simply deal with the primary business of the conference.

Several authors expressed concern over the influence that China had within the League of Nations. As one individual put it, "[the League's] attention has hitherto been almost exclusively directed towards checking the aggressive action of stronger Powers against the weaker, so that

⁴²⁸ NGK, "Sun Yat-Sen's Greater Asia Doctrine," *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 4, 243.

⁴²⁹ NGK, "A French Light on Manchukuo," *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 4, 159–173.

the right of self-defense is now generally regarded as little more than the right of weaker states to fight against stronger Powers.”⁴³⁰ Another author, in responding to the claim that Japan’s use of force in China was in violation of the Nine Power Agreement and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, by retorting that it was Chinese actions against the Japanese installations in the area—thus being the first to break the agreements. As for the position of the League in censoring Japan, that attitude, he asserted, “deludes China into the surmise that international pledges can wantonly be deluded by the adoption of similar tactics.”⁴³¹ Another author was more explicit. He asserted that “It [the League] encouraged the Chinese to believe that the League’s specific machinery could be successfully invoked on their behalf to avert the usual consequences of a persistent policy of provocation, xenophobia, and bad faith in their international relations.”⁴³² The force with which the articles in *Contemporary Japan* accuse other powers of foul play seems like it is intended to lessen the targets ability to claim moral superiority—a critical element in generating soft power.

Responses to the Propaganda-By-Mail Campaign

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the primary form of cooperation between the NGK and the AJS in this timeframe was in regard to the AJS mailing copies of two booklets authored by the NGK, *How the North China Affair Arose* and *Why Japan Had to Fight in Shanghai*, to American contacts in order to more widely distribute and publicize Japan’s narrative of the situation in China. In this section, I will discuss the variety of responses that the AJS received from the recipients of these books.

The responses ranged from polite acknowledgements of receipt of the articles and disengaged assertions of Japan’s legal right to engage in war with China to unequivocal

⁴³⁰ NGK, “The League and the Chinese Problem,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol.1, 9.

⁴³¹ NGK, “Our Case Against the League,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol.1, 215.

⁴³² NGK, “Thoughts on the Manchurian Crisis,” *Contemporary Japan*, vol. 2, 43.

expressions of support or condemnation. Nearly all of the letters that venture beyond a polite and cursory acknowledgement of the articles comment on the poor state of Japan's image in the court of American public opinion. As former American ambassador to Japan, William Castle, phrased it, the popular conception was that "the punishment [leveled on China] [was] greater than the crime."⁴³³ Businessman and former AJS member, H.L. Sommer, suggested that in his personal conversations with fellow Americans, he was able to demonstrate to his counterparts that the situation had "two sides" and commented that if presented with Japan's case, the public might warm to that position—with the caveat that attacks on civilians are generally considered unjustifiable.⁴³⁴ Aside from the fighting in China, however, the letters reveal the unease that many Americans felt about Japan's international relations with fascist countries, specifically the Anti-Comintern Pact signed with Nazi Germany, and the agreement to acknowledge Franco's authority in Spain in exchange for Spanish recognition of Manchukuo.⁴³⁵ In this sense, we can see tension between the conception of Japan's role in China as laid out in the two books, and the reality on the ground. In terms of wielding soft power, such an obvious disconnect makes this a hard sell.

At least a few of these letters indicated that supporters felt that Japan was not framing the situation very well on the world stage and really could do much better than they were. This, they indicated, allowed the "pro-China propaganda" continued to feed an anti-Japan bias. For instance, an attorney from Los Angeles found it unfortunate that the representatives for Japan in the United States, continually tried to justify invading China with an argument on the concept of precedent which was "far too technical" to appeal to the average citizen. Rather, he suggested

⁴³³ W.R. Castle to Takeda. Correspondence. November 30, 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

⁴³⁴ H.L. Sommer to Takeda. Correspondence. November 30, 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

⁴³⁵ Sommer to Takeda. Correspondence. November 30, 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02.

utilizing “arguments that appeal to sentiment and emotions,” as those tended to be more effective, and might be a viable means to publicly engage with the question of military action in China.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁶ Roger Pfaff to Takeda. Correspondence. November 26, 1937. America-Japan Society, Box A1-02

CONCLUSION

Japan in the early decades of the 20th century was marked by dramatic change, expansive ambition, and feelings of insecurity vis-à-vis its position on the geopolitical stage and its image in the minds of other nations. As Japan was trying to find a place for itself among the powers of the world, many embarrassing situations occurred which forced the Japanese to take a firm stand in order to maintain the image they wished to project. An early instance of this was the “Maria Luz incident” of 1872. This event occurred when a Portuguese ship carrying Chinese laborers docked in Yokohama for repairs and one of the Chinese indentured laborers swam to shore and petitioned the Japanese to help him and his fellow captives. After much debate, the Japanese government finally took an unequivocal stance on the side of the Chinese laborers, called their condition akin to slavery and then publicly denounced slavery, and returned these laborers to China. The captain of the Maria Luz, however, countered by calling Japan hypocritical and pointed out that thousands of girls and women were “sold” into prostitution in Japan and called this a form of slavery. Acutely chagrined, the Japanese government hastily issued a decree “freeing” all indentured peoples, including prostitutes, apprentices, and members of hereditary outcaste groups. The fact that this law was not enforced confirms that the government had acted to free prostitutes solely to protect its image in the eyes of the world.

A few decades later, the issue of emigrants from Japan living on the American West Coast was a topic of much consternation for the Japanese government. On the one hand, officials and prominent Japanese felt that the onus to resolve the situation fell on individual migrants who could improve the situation by better assimilating into mainstream society. But on the other hand, the Japanese government strongly protested some of the mistreatment and insults that its citizens and their descendants experienced, such as the proposed segregation of Japanese school

children in 1906. Japanese government involvement led to the negotiation of a settlement, the 1907 “Gentlemen’s Agreement.” The Gentlemen’s Agreement encouraged an entirely different kind of emigration: picture brides. However, Japanese officials and other interested parties desired that the women receive some kind of training before going abroad so as to not stand out too much and exacerbate anti-Japanese sentiment. When the Gentlemen’s Agreement was made void with the passage of the 1924 Immigration Reform Act and the political atmosphere became too volatile to push to amend or repeal the law, private citizens, both Japanese and American, executed paradiplomatic missions to strengthen the extremely strained relations between the United States and Japan. The organizers felt that cultural sharing would make the two nations feel some affinity toward one another and provide a respite from the stress of arguing over intractable issues. Thus, this dissertation has taken two different approaches to arrive at how and why a transPacific cohort of elites endeavored to shape the image of Japanese-Americans and Japan.

Japan had already begun to amass influence by following the established customs of the day: industrialization and colonization. These allowed Japan to be recognized as a power in East Asia, and an up-and-coming power on the global scene. Japan was willing, and in fact eager, to observe the global order so long as it identified a path by which it could move toward parity with the Western powers. As Japan saw it, an integral component of achieving this equality was maintaining a positive national image, one that inspired confidence and commanded respect from other nations.

The Japanese-Americans were not the only ethnic group to utilize such campaigns. Prior to World War II, Italian immigrants to the United States had faced discrimination and even

violence at the hands of hostile locals.⁴³⁷ However, although the perceived racial differences of Italians impacted their lives in significant ways, such differences were even more significant for immigrants from Japan. Moreover, unlike the case of the Italians, Japanese immigrants were barred from gaining citizenship, and so were unable to elect government officials to champion their causes, which is why their acceptance by and integration into American society was much slower and more precarious than that of Italian-Americans.

Italians in the immediate postwar period, like the Japanese in the era of the Gentlemen's Agreement, were able to immigrate to the United States based on occupation, and immediate family members were also able to immigrate. The Italian government established programs to train emigrants to the United States in practical skills in order to prepare them to find stable employment after settling in their new home. These government-led efforts had several goals: to encourage migration in order to relieve pressure on Italy's fragile economy, to increase monetary flow into the Italian economy by way of remittances from emigrants, and to improve the images of Italy, Italians, and Italian-Americans in mainstream American society—groups which, in the collective American imagination, usually appeared as mobsters, fascists, or Communists, rather than attractive or appropriate groups to be welcomed into the United States.⁴³⁸ Unlike the Japanese-American campaigns, these Italian efforts had the intended effect: the American perception of Italian-Americans shifted far more rapidly than that of the Japanese.

Nor was the use of guidebooks unique to the Japanese experience in America. In 1936, Victor H. Green published the first edition of a series of travel guides for African-Americans,

⁴³⁷ For a more nuanced discussion of racial politics in early 20th century America and who was considered “white,” see: Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁴³⁸ Laura Cuppone, *Get Skilled and Get Out: Post-WWII Italian Emigrants and Transnational Training* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Michigan State University, 2014), 15.

The Negro Motorist Green Book.⁴³⁹ In many cases African-Americans in the United States were the descendants of enslaved individuals who had been brought to the United States over one hundred years prior, and in this respect very different from Japanese-Americans. But guidebooks were utilized to supply this community with information to allow them to travel safely and (as) comfortably (as possible) throughout the United States. The *Green Book* primarily gave advice regarding services and places that were friendly to African-American travelers. This included information on businesses that welcomed African-American patrons, such as restaurants and hotels where Black customers could be sure of finding food and shelter, as well as warned against so-called “sundown towns” where they were likely to encounter physical violence or expulsion, so that travelers could plan accordingly. Though much of the content of guides for Japanese-Americans was dedicated to promoting a favorable image of Japan and the immigrant community, they did also contain information regarding personal safety and convenience, and advice on behavior to help them in interactions with business operators and service providers.

There were instances when Japanese and Japanese-American concern for a certain segment of the population warranted more than publishing guidebooks. One such instance was with training picture brides. The legacy of the Young Women’s Christian Association of Japan (YWCAJ) Yokohama school for picture brides lived on for decades; its template proved to be valued, and therefore enduring. In the immediate post-WWII era, a group called the Christian Women’s Association of Tokyo (CWAT) opened a special school for Japanese women who had married American soldiers and would soon relocate to the United States. The school for these so-called “war brides,” taught the women how to live and behave like middle-class American housewives. They learned how to operate the appliances they would encounter in the kitchens of

⁴³⁹ Victor H. Green, *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (New York: Victor H. Green & Co., 1936).

their new homes, how to cook American food, and how to dress in Western fashions. In some cases, they also received instruction about Christianity, as it was the dominant religion in the land for which they were bound.

As the number of Japanese war brides continued to increase, more training schools were opened across Japan by the American Red Cross. Some of these schools were in districts that were quite rural. The curricula of these later schools kept the same format that had been used in the YWCAJ school and that of the initial CWAT school. It seems ironic that the template for a school designed by Japanese reformers in hopes that picture brides would be accepted in the United States was eventually adopted by American activists with the same goal in mind.

In the era of the Gentlemen's Agreement, the sartorial choices decorum and Western housekeeping practices of the picture brides (along with the other efforts of the Japanese-American community) did not prevent the passing of a ban on Japanese immigration; and, there is only anecdotal evidence that these Westernized women made a positive impression on White America. In the climate of the early 20th-century United States, racism was a formidable and compelling dimension of the issue and it is likely that no amount of Western socialization would have prevented the so-called "Asian Exclusion Act" of 1924. What was different in the immediate post-WWII era was the attitude of high-ranking American officials toward the Japanese. The United States military even became involved in these war bride training schools and supported them in various ways. With the Cold War rapidly escalating, American officials recognized that they needed Japan as an ally especially considering that its geographic location gave the United States a foothold next to Communist China and struggling Korea.

Thus, some Americans in positions of power (notably the War Relocation Authority which had recruited the Japanese American Citizens' League to assist in making the evacuation

and internment of Japanese-Americans and the United States military) began to think of Japanese as strategic partners in the most pressing conflict of the century because of the political expedience of a close partnership with Japan. The utility of closeness to Japan and Japanese became even more important after the Soviets created embarrassing propaganda that highlighted America's "race issue."⁴⁴⁰

Historian Ellen Wu, in her groundbreaking work on the origins of the "model minority" myth, argues that the creation of the Japanese-American "model minority" myth stemmed from partnerships between elite Nisei⁴⁴¹ and various American powerbrokers, including in some instances, the United States government. Hers is a meticulously well-sourced work with expert analysis on this highly significant social phenomenon, but the scope is limited to happenings within the United States. My study reveals continuity between elite Issei⁴⁴² and Nisei modes of image management as well as transPacific activity that is relevant when considering the formation of the Japanese-American "model minority" myth.

As this dissertation has also shown, paradiplomatic missions worked in tandem with personal reform campaigns to shape the early image of Japanese-Americans, and by extension, Japan in the first half of the 20th century. However, as was the case with issuing guidebooks and campaigns to equip individual emigrants with knowledge they would need in the new country, paradiplomatic missions neither began nor ended with the Japanese and American counterparts.

But, this examination highlighted one important characteristic of paradiplomatic missions: that those planning and executing the missions are experts in the field, and are perhaps

⁴⁴⁰ The issue of how the Soviet Union and the United States both engaged in propaganda in attempts to debase the other is wonderfully explained in: Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴⁴¹ Literally meaning "second generation," this term is used to describe the children of immigrants, i.e., the first generation born in the new country of residence.

⁴⁴² Literally meaning "first generation," this term is used to describe immigrants born in Japan.

better qualified to make decisions on a matter than those who wield actual power. Regrettably, however, these experts' suggestions are often ignored, possibly because of other political considerations.

In April of 1955, Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. of New York traveled to Indonesia as an unofficial American delegate to the Bandung Conference. He had been financially sponsored by two popular magazines with a predominantly African-American readership, *Ebony* and *Jet*.⁴⁴³ The United States had been wavering in regard to the non-aligned movement of the early Cold War period and thus, Powell thought, had missed a capital opportunity to amass goodwill in much of the so-called "Third World" that could (in Joseph Nye's terms) translate into soft power; a very cheap alternative to hard power which was the main currency in a bipolar world.

Just as Shibusawa Eiichi and Sydney Gulick were experts on United States-Japan relations of their day, Powell was very well informed on the politics of the Third World and the non-aligned movement in Asia and Africa, due to an intense personal interest. Many senior State Department officials were slow to realize or accept the centrality of race within the anti-colonial and non-aligned movements, though Powell and others tried to explain this. In a letter to State Department officials, Powell alluded to the seriousness of this issue, and also suggested that his visit could be a step toward mending America's compromised image. He hoped that his "presence [at Bandung] as an American negro [would] do much to counteract any propaganda... concerning the United States and its minority problem."⁴⁴⁴ Powell's urgings fell on deaf ears as did the ill-fated Joint High Commission proposed a year before the United States Congress

⁴⁴³ Jason C. Parker, "Small Victory, Missed Chance," IN Kathryn Statler and Andrew Johns, Eds., *The Eisenhower Administration, the Third World, and the Globalization of the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 162.

⁴⁴⁴ Parker, 163.

passed the Immigration and Reform Act of 1924. Leading historians of Japanese diplomacy, including Hirobe Izumi, view the 1924 legislation as the final act that convinced Japan to focus on building up an order in Asia because it would never be accepted as an equal within the Western order.

Thus, attempts by elite Japanese and Japanese-Americans and their partners to shape the image of the Japanese-Americans and Japan in the first half of the 20th century have (sometimes surprising) parallels with the struggles of other minority groups to establish safe and socially-accepted communities. Moreover, these efforts sometimes can be traced to the activities of elites in the country of origin, including paradiplomatic missions to demonstrate goodwill abroad or the richness of a culture underappreciated in the United States. When a group is described in terms of a hyphenated or compound American ethnicity, as in the case of Japanese-Americans, the nature of the relationship between the United States and the country of origin will impact the lived experiences of the minority ethnic group, but the ethnic group is not powerless in this scenario—its actions can create or inform national discourses that force the collective to examine and more clearly define what it means to be an American.

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