

SHAPING AN ETHNIC LEADERSHIP:
TAKIE OKUMURA AND THE "AMERICANIZATION" OF
THE NISEI IN HAWAI'I
1919-1945

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

AMERICAN STUDIES

AUGUST 2004

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would never have been completed without the cooperation and support of many people. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of them. First and foremost, I am deeply grateful to the members of my doctoral committee, Professor Paul F. Hooper (Chair), Professor John J. Stephan, Professor Eileen H. Tamura, Professor Mark I. Helbling, and Professor Mari Yoshihara. I have been fortunate to receive many insightful suggestions and thoughtful comments from them. Their generosity and boundless patience helped me both academically and emotionally. I am also thankful to Professor Yuji Ichioka, Professor Dennis Ogawa, Professor George Oshiro, Professor Jonathan Okamura, Professor Ryo Yoshida, and Professor Teruyo Ueki, each of whom gave me useful advice on this project.

I am indebted to many people who assisted my research. They include Reverend Saku Kuroda, Frank Murakami, and the staff at the Ogoshi Memorial Archives, the Makiki Christian Church in Honolulu; Reverend Ronald Kent and George Mine at the Sokabe Church in Honouliuli; Kiyoshi Okubo at the Hawai'i Japanese Immigrant Museum in Hilo; and Professor Yasuhiro Motoi at the Doshisha University Archives in Kyoto, Japan. Other helpful individuals include Earl K. Nishimura, Berlyn Nishimura, Edward Kaneko, Gilbert Fukumitsu, Yash Deguchi, Yoshitaka Takashiba, Margaret Y. Oda, Waichi Ouye, Joseph Garcia, Masaichi Chinen, Kongo Kimura, Yoshiko Sato, and Steven G. Doi. I also thank the staff of Hamilton Library, the University of Hawai'i of Manoa, especially James F. Cartwright, Chieko Tachihata, and Tokiko Y. Bazzell.

Several institutions funded my education in the United States and research on this project. The Crown Prince Akihito Scholarship Foundation, the East-West Center, the Honolulu Branch of the Association of American University Women, the Center for Japanese Studies, and the University of Hawai'i Foundation all provided financial assistance that made this work possible. I would like to thank individuals in those organizations that helped make my student life meaningful in other ways: Ralph C. Honda, Howard Hamamoto, Earl Okawa, Robert K. Sakai, Sadie Sakai, Sharon A. Minichello, Larry E. Smith, Mendl Djunaidy, June Sakaba, and Valerie Wong.

Many friends gave me cheerful encouragement during this project, especially Cindy S. Maeda, Nuttha Kuanprasert, Karen Calcaterra, Minh-Hang Le, Jinzhao Li, Manako Ogawa, Naoko Ikenaga, Heather Diamond, Jenny Garmendia, Takashi Mita, Takashi Yamamoto, Kana Taniguchi, Makiko Yamada, Curtis Rigsby, and Decha Tangseefa. I would also like to thank Jaida Samudra, Vincent Pollard, and James Deshaw Rae for editing and proofreading my manuscript. I am especially grateful to Eiichiro Azuma, who was beside me throughout this project. He not only helped me with his academic expertise but also provided an emotional haven.

Finally, I thank my parents, Takeo and Masae Monobe, for their support and understanding throughout this endeavor. Their love and trust enabled their daughter to reach this distant goal.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the community-building efforts from the late 1910s to the early 1940s among a group of first-generation Japanese immigrant (Issei) leaders in Hawai'i represented by Takie Okumura. It focuses on their attempts to resolve the "Nisei Problem," a collective concern over various issues that the second-generation Japanese (Nisei) presumably faced growing up as minority Americans. Along with issues of education, occupation, and political participation, the problematization of these generational challenges was closely linked to a series of historical incidents during the early 1920s that intensified anti-Japanese sentiment and resulted in the marginalization of the Issei in U.S. society. Categorized as "aliens ineligible for citizenship," the Issei hoped for the success of their American-born children and endeavored to provide a better future for these youth. Believing that the Nisei should maintain ties to their ancestral land as a part of the diasporic Japanese race, immigrant parents concurrently expected them to become an integral component of U.S. society, bringing the Japanese in Hawai'i in harmony with white American residents—the bicultural state some Issei referred to as "being Americanized." As Hawai'i's Japanese focused their effort on rearing the next generation as "ideal" American citizens of Japanese ancestry, the Nisei Problem became a major theme of public discourse in their community.

This dissertation revolves around four themes. The first aspect concerns the measures a group of Issei leaders adopted to deal with the Nisei Problem, from establishing various institutions, organizations, and social functions to campaigning for more educational, employment, and political opportunities for the Nisei. The second

theme centers on the cooperative relationship among Issei leaders, Caucasian leaders in Hawai'i, Japanese officials, and elite Japanese in Tokyo to resolve the Nisei Problem. Though each party had different motivations to join in this effort, the four worked together for the shared goal of "Americanizing" the Nisei. The third line of inquiry analyzes how the Nisei became involved in the endeavors of their parental generation and began to formulate new leadership strategies. The final question explores the relationships of Japanese Americans with other racial/ethnic groups, especially native Hawaiians and Portuguese.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|------|--|
| AAA | Agricultural Adjustment Act |
| DPI | Department of Public Instruction, Territory of Hawai'i |
| FFA | Future Farmers of America |
| FFH | Future Farmers of Hawaii |
| FHH | Future Homemakers of Hawaii |
| FCA | Farm Credit Administration |
| FERA | Federal Emergency Relief Administration |
| FSA | Farm Security Administration |
| IPR | Institute of Pacific Relations |
| KAC | Kona Advancement Club |

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines community-building efforts among a group of Japanese immigrant (Issei) leaders in Hawai'i from the late 1910s to the early 1940s. It focuses on their attempts to resolve the "Nisei Problem" (*Dai Nisei Mondai*), a collective concern over various issues that Hawai'i-born Japanese (Nisei) presumably faced as they grew up as minority Americans. Including issues of education, occupation, political participation, and marriage, the problematization of these generational challenges mirrored the specific characteristics and position of Nisei in the islands: 1) they were the offspring of immigrants from Japan, a country that had a volatile, and increasingly thorny relationship to the United States; 2) they were numerically dominant in Hawai'i; and 3) many of them possessed dual citizenship due to the contradiction in the two national legal systems.

The emergence of the Nisei Problem as a community-wide agenda was linked with a series of historical incidents that transpired in the local, national, and international contexts during the early 1920s. The O'ahu sugar plantation strike (1920) and the Japanese language school controversy (1919-1927) intensified anti-Japanese sentiment in the islands; the Takao Ozawa naturalization test case (1922) and the termination of Japanese immigration (1924) resulted in marginalization of the Issei as "aliens ineligible for citizenship." While some Japanese immigrants gave up on America and left for Japan, many remained in Hawai'i, placing their hopes on their American-born children and endeavoring to provide a better future for the succeeding generation. Believing that the Nisei should bridge Japan and the United States in the international relations, the Issei

at the same time expected them to become an integral component of U.S. society, bringing Nikkei (people of Japanese ancestry) in harmony with white American residents. This immigrant outlook envisaged that their children would gain acceptance from white America while maintaining ties to their ancestral land as a part of the diasporic Japanese race. As Hawai'i's Japanese focused their effort on raising the next generation as "ideal" American citizens of Japanese ancestry, the Nisei Problem became a major theme of public discourse in the Japanese immigrant community by the mid-1920s.

This project revolves around four themes that shed new light on the lives and politics of the Nikkei in Hawai'i in the decades prior to the Pacific War. The first theme has to do with the measures that one group of Issei leaders—particularly Takie Okumura, Yasutaro Soga, Iga Mori, and Tasuku Harada—adopted to tackle the Nisei Problem. They diffused a particular vision of ideal Nisei and a future of the collectivity, established various institutions, and campaigned for more educational, employment, and political opportunities for the Nisei inside and outside the ethnic community.

The second theme centers on the cooperative efforts of Issei leaders, the Japanese elite, and Caucasian leaders as they worked to integrate the Nisei into American society. Many of Hawai'i's ruling whites shared the Issei's concerns about the Nisei Problem, albeit for different reasons, which included their skepticism about the loyalty of the Nisei citizens to the United States and their desire to keep an important labor force under control. In addition, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a strong interest in the Nisei Problem from a diplomatic standpoint. Tokyo's agents supported the Issei leaders' activities, since they considered it important to Americanize the Nisei in order to prevent the suspicions of white Americans from negatively influencing U.S.-Japan relations. The

Nisei problem hence formed an important meeting ground for a group of Issei leaders, white elite, and Japanese diplomats in spite of their different concerns and goals.

The third line of inquiry probes into how second-generation Japanese Americans also became involved in the endeavors of their parents and began to form their own leadership base according to the immigrant dream. Certain senior Nisei embraced the Issei ideas and adopted their programs and strategies of social alchemy for the construction of a hopeful future for the Japanese in Hawai'i. These Nisei leaders appropriated the immigrant projects, urging other younger Nisei to work towards the goal of "racial development."

Finally, this dissertation examines the interactions of Japanese Americans with other racial/ethnic groups, especially native Hawaiians and Portuguese, in the prewar years. These groups sometimes formed coalitions with elite whites and at other times with the Nikkei in their own struggle for ethnic survival and social ascent. For instance, Portuguese, then regarded as "second-rate whites," often occupied a "middleman" position between elite whites and Asians in the racial hierarchy of the territorial society. While they often supervised Japanese laborers on the plantation, many Portuguese homesteaders leased land to Issei farmers under a relatively lenient contracts—a practice that served the Issei's project of developing autonomous farming among Nisei. Some Portuguese and Japanese businessmen also cooperated to enter into the sugar business as mill operators and plantation owners, an attempt to break the economic domination of elite white sugar industrialists.

This dissertation especially focuses on the role of Christian minister and prominent Issei leader Takie Okumura (1865-1951), as well as the impact of his visions

and educational programs on the formation of an early Nisei leadership in Hawai'i's Japanese American community before World War II. In order to resolve the Nisei problem, Reverend Okumura took the initiative in organizing various community-wide campaigns and programs, including the back-to-the-farm movement, the Nisei's Japanese citizenship expatriation campaign, and most importantly, the New Americans Conference. Using Okumura as a window into this important but neglected aspect of Hawai'i Nikkei history is justified, not only because his views and projects found considerable support from various circles of Japanese residents throughout the islands, but also because his political style crystallized a practice of majority Issei leaders at that time. He further drew sympathies from senior Nisei, white elite, and even Japanese opinion leaders and officials, which allows our understanding of Nikkei history to extend beyond not only the confines of a single generation or a local ethnic community but also national boundaries.

Despite his pivotal role in local Japanese leadership, the endeavors of Okumura have been undervalued in the existing literature on Hawai'i Nikkei history. The established narratives of prewar Japanese Americans in Hawai'i usually revolve around two immigrant leaders, Okumura and newspaper publisher Fred Kinzaburo Makino, but according to the conventional understanding, Okumura simply represented pro-*haole* (white) accommodationists, and while Makino was a confrontational anti-racist. "While the *conservative* Reverend Okumura preached a spirit of conciliation and accommodation among the Japanese," Roland Kotani states in *The Japanese in Hawaii* (1985), "the *radical* Makino exhorted his fellow Nikkei to reject social and political injustice and

exercise their democratic rights” [emphasis mine].¹ Kotani’s book has been popular and widely accepted as an “official history” of the preceding generations in the local Japanese community.² Most scholarly works in this field published after the mid-1980s are under the influence of this study, usually adopting Kotani’s formulation of Okumura as collaborator with elite *haole*, who purportedly encouraged local Japanese to comply with the ruling class to the effect of preserving the status quo. Yet, the juxtaposition of the value-attached ideas, like “conservative” and “radical,” not only blinds us to the historical constraints under which Okumura (and Makino) operated in prewar Hawai‘i, but it also denies the complexities of these historical agents, who lived, thought, and acted beyond and across those binary categories that reflect our post-1960s political thinking and imagination more than their actual social practices. Indeed, a quick comparison of Okumura’s writings in English and Japanese reveal his strategic use of divergent—even conflicting—arguments depending on a given audience and for a particular goal. Okumura did often speak like an “accommodationist” to white *elite* when using English, but that did not capture the entirety of his public discourse as he frequently expressed quite “radical” visions when writing in Japanese. The thrust of his arguments also shifted according to changes in historical circumstances, which shows the elusiveness and complexity of this purportedly “conservative” man.

¹ Roland Kotani, *The Japanese in Hawaii: A Century of Struggle* (Honolulu: The Hawaii Hochi, Ltd., 1985), 55.

² *The Japanese in Hawaii* was written as an official booklet of the Oahu Kanyaku Imin Centennial Committee, and is widely used as a textbook for Japanese American history in Hawai‘i.

Okumura's "double talk" makes better sense when the framework of interpretation is enlarged to encompass not simply Hawai'i's race relations but also a "transnational" context. Like other immigrants whose mental world was drifting somewhere between the two national spaces, Okumura concurrently operated in the multiple spheres of social relations, thereby constantly addressing Hawai'i's leading whites and Japanese elite, as well as the Issei and the Nisei. For instance, in his Japanese-language messages directed at the Issei, the reverend often resorted to the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism. Similar to other Issei intellectuals, he regarded Hawai'i Nikkei as a part of the Japanese nation, believing that they were physically and spiritually united with their compatriots in Japan through blood ties. Importantly, in his idea, the Nikkei's ties to Japan were not political ones, but social, cultural, emotional, and especially racial ones. Though contending that the "Japanese race" were the "chosen people" and the Nikkei should be proud of their superior lineage, he did not consider that Japanese residents, especially the Nisei, should behave simply as imperial subjects for the benefit solely of Japan. With the focus on Okumura's transnationalism, this study complicates our understanding of prewar Japanese American history in Hawai'i.

Further, using Okumura as a window, this study explores the continuities between the experiences of Issei and Nisei generations. Rather than viewing the Issei as "foreigners" from the Old World and distinguishing them from the American-born Nisei, this study pays attention to ties between Issei and senior Nisei through their racial experiences as a minority in Hawai'i. Beyond generational differences based on place of birth, citizenship status, and cultural up-bringing, Japanese immigrants and their children often shared a similar vision, developed common interests, and envisioned the same

future under white hegemony in prewar Hawai‘i. Confined in the same racial situation, leading Issei and senior Nisei worked hand in hand to elevate the social, economic, and political standing of Hawai‘i’s Nikkei, albeit under constraints. To achieve this goal, they agreed that it was imperative not only to join forces in tackling the Nisei Problem but also to shape a strong leadership in the younger generation for a better collective future as a race.

Among a number of influential Issei leaders, Okumura stood out as a central figure in the process where the concerted reactions to the Nisei Problem and the formation of Nisei leadership were institutionalized as the core of post-1927 community projects. Through and through, Okumura was consistent in theory and practice in terms of his devotion to these agendas despite his “double talk” and frequent adjustments in tactics. Indeed, the trajectory of his sons and granddaughter appropriately accounted for the key areas of, and the measures to, the Nisei Problem in Hawai‘i. The first, second, and fourth sons embodied the images of Nisei political leaders that Okumura and his associates established in their minds.³ While Umetaro served as the translator and right-hand man in organizing Okumura’s “New Americans Conference,” Fuyuki took the lead in a so-called Nisei “Expatriation Movement” to resolve their dual nationality dilemma. Attorney Sueki Okumura worked for the benefit of the ethnic community with Masaji Marumoto, another Nisei lawyer who later became the first territorial Supreme Court justice of Japanese ancestry. In the economic realm, Fuyuki, the second son, served as an agricultural specialist to facilitate independent Japanese farming—an idea that motivated

³ Okumura had six sons, but two of them died from tuberculosis in their late teens. The four sons mentioned here were the survivors.

Okumura to start the “Back-to-the-Farm” movement among the Nisei in 1925. Mataki Okumura, the third son, studied at Kyoto Imperial University in Japan—a practice that was embraced by Issei and many Nisei in conjunction with a popular idea of the Nisei as the international bridge of understanding in the Pacific. Umetaro’s daughter Ruth Atsuko Okumura married a Caucasian Navy Officer—an interracial union that Reverend Okumura wholeheartedly endorsed in accordance with his own belief in interracial harmony and assimilation. The paths the Okumuras trod in their individual lives roughly form the chapters of this dissertation, the intersections of Okumura’s visions and practices and those of his allies.

Shaping an Ethnic Leadership

The first chapter delineates the development of the Japanese–white American cooperation in grappling with the so-called “Japanese problem” in the Territory of Hawai‘i during the early 1920s. At that juncture, in order to counter the anti-Japanese sentiment intensified by the 1920 O‘ahu Sugar Strike and the Japanese language school controversy of 1919-1927, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, elite Japanese in Tokyo, and Hawai‘i’s white and Japanese immigrant leaders formed a quadripartite partnership to promote two types of activities called “campaigns of education” that were designed to ultimately alleviate anti-Japanese sentiments among white Americans. One activity aimed at educating the general American public about Japan and Japanese immigrants in the hope of eliminating prejudice caused from ignorance. The second was intended to promote the adopting of American manners and customs among Japanese immigrants.

Working hand in hand, however, each of the four parties had a different reason to engage in this effort.

The second chapter discusses the emergence of the Nisei Problem and the establishment of Okumura's New Americans Conference. Utilizing the interracial and international partnership that had developed during the first half of the 1920s, Issei leaders made various institutionalized attempts to mitigate the Nisei Problem after the mid-1920s, and the annual New Americans Conference inaugurated by Okumura was one such endeavor. Interpreting the roles of the conference in this context, this chapter presents a picture of the New Americans Conference different from the conventional interpretations of the institution as the means put together by *haole* elites and Issei accommodationists to keep the young generation of Japanese Americans in line with the interests of the Big Five Oligarchy. My analysis probes the multifaceted roles of the conference, which had not only an aspect of social control but also that of ethnic empowerment. Moreover, this chapter expounds "overseas Japanese racial development," Okumura's key concept that defined what he considered an ideal future for the local Japanese community. In an attempt to inspire his fellow Nikkei to adopt American culture and successfully settle down in Hawai'i, he often resorted to this rhetoric of diasporic Japanese ethnic nationalism. This chapter also examines the "New American," Okumura's picture of an ideal Nisei, in contrast to the "marginal man," a perception of the Nisei generation conceived by contemporary liberal white intellectuals founded on their assimilation theory.

The third chapter delves into the "Back-to-the-Farm Movement," Okumura's effort to resolve Nisei unemployment, which previous studies regard as an attempt to co-

opt the younger generation into the plantation labor force. In fact, Okumura exhorted the second generation to become homesteaders, to engage in diversified agriculture, and eventually to enter the American middle class, believing that independent farming was the most desirable occupation for the majority Nisei to achieve economic autonomy in light of restrictions on Japanese involvement in the territorial industries. Supported by various segments of the society of Hawai'i as well as the Japanese government, it initially appeared that Okumura's idea of returning to the soil would take root amongst local Japanese. However, as the eventual results of the 1920 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and the Great Depression prevented local Nisei from obtaining land or continuing to run their small farming businesses, Okumura gradually had to compromise and alter the nature of the movement to, in essence, a "Back-to-the-Plantation Movement." This chapter thus delineates the emergence, development, and transformation of the movement over the two decades prior to the Pacific War, as well as its background, objectives, major actors, and interested parties, emphasizing the incidents on O'ahu.

To illustrate the regional diversity of local Japanese experiences, the fourth chapter looks into successful examples of Japanese American autonomy achieved in the agricultural industry on the island of Hawai'i. As early as the 1910s, a number of Nikkei resorted to "racial solidification" to develop a mutually-supporting system that enabled them to pursue profitable enterprises in a small niche of the elite-white-dominated territorial business. With special attention to intra-racial relationships within the local Japanese community, which were generally cooperative but at times exploitative, this chapter looks into the economic activities of Japanese independent farmers, mill operators, and plantation owners in the sugar and coffee industries on the island. Further,

in reference to the influence of Okumura's projects upon certain young leaders in the community, this chapter depicts how Nisei coffee farmers in Kona shaped a leadership through their endeavors to maintain a semi-independent farming style during the devastating economic crisis of the 1930s.

The fifth chapter examines the development of cohesive political power among Hawai'i-born Nisei during the interwar years. In addition to the occupational problem, the political participation of the younger generation was one of the most critical aspects of the Nisei Problem. This chapter elaborates on the ideology of racial mobilization and accommodation, first formulated by Okumura and his Issei sympathizers in the 1920s and then appropriated by many politically-minded Nisei in the ensuing decade. Under the overarching influence of this ideology and the guidance of Issei leaders, some senior Nisei sought to participate in community and mainstream politics from the late 1920s through the 1930s. The Nisei adoption of this ideology is exemplified by two representative Japanese American political organizations in prewar Hawai'i, the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry and the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, where local Japanese youth learned and practiced politics. Analyzing the notable activities of those organizations, it investigates how the second-generation leaders managed to protect and maximize the collective interests of the Nikkei in the midst of resurgent anti-Japanese sentiments.

CHAPTER 1

Invisible Thread: International/Interracial Cooperation and the “Campaign of Education” in Hawai‘i during the 1920s

On August 26, 1920, approximately two months after a major sugar plantation strike on O‘ahu, Frank Cooke Atherton, a distinguished business and civic leader in the Territory of Hawai‘i, wrote a letter to his friend Eiichi Shibusawa, a prominent entrepreneur in Japan.¹ An advocate of international friendship between the two countries, Atherton was the vice president of Castle and Cooke, one of the so-called Big Five business concerns that controlled the sugar industry, the pivot of the territorial economy.

My dear Baron Shibusawa:

I am very pleased to learn from the Reverend Okumura that he has arrived in Japan, and that he has had the pleasure of presenting to you and some of your friends his plans for bringing about a better understanding between the Americans and Japanese throughout these islands; and also his plans for the Americanization of the Japanese who are making their homes here. . . I am very heartily in accord with his ideas and the method which he proposes to follow—Particularly his plan to visit the various smaller towns throughout the islands and the plantations, and meet in groups with the older Japanese to explain to them the necessity of having their children educated in American ways and being brought up according to our American customs. . . . Since these young people have been born in American territory, they are eligible to American citizenship and if they plan to live here should rightly seek to imbibe our American ideals and customs and become loyal Americans. It therefore seems vital to many of us that their parents should now be awakened to this situation and should

¹ Shibusawa got acquainted with Atherton when he stopped over at Honolulu in October 1915 on the way to San Francisco to attend the Panama Memorial Exposition. When Atherton visited Tokyo in November 1917, Shibusawa held a dinner party for him at the Tokyo Bank Club. See Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo* (Tokyo: Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo Kankokai, 1960), vol. 33. 27-28, 476-478.

be urged to cooperate and assist their children in becoming Americans, and not try and educate them to be Japanese and loyal to Japan. If the younger Japanese growing up here cannot give evidence that they will become genuine American citizens, who can be depended upon in any emergency, it seems to me that the situation of the Japanese here will become more and more difficult, and the relations between the two countries become more strained.²

As his letter reveals, Atherton's main concern revolved around whether or not young Nisei, natural-born American citizens raised by their Issei parents, would become "American" enough, and most importantly, solely loyal to the United States. He referred to this matter as "one of the most serious problems that is confronting us here in the islands" and pointed out the urgent necessity of "Americanizing" the second generation.³

Eiichi Shibusawa, the addressee of Atherton's letter, had been the most influential figure on the Japanese economic and political scene for over sixty years. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, he played a crucial role in introducing Western social and economic systems and the latest industrial technology into Japan as the country experienced rapid transformation toward becoming a modern nation. By the time of his death in 1931 at age 91, Shibusawa had been involved in establishing more than five hundred key Japanese corporations and enterprises in industries such as paper manufacturing, textiles, transport, construction, mining, banking, and trading. Due to his economic interests, Shibusawa ardently supported international goodwill, believing that Japanese economic prosperity depended on a stable international trade which, in turn, was guaranteed by

² Ibid., 542-543.

³, Ibid., 542.

harmonious relations with other countries.⁴ He worked closely with the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, attempting to improve the estranged relationship between Japan and the United States as a result of the so-called “Japanese [immigration] problem”—American racial politics that led to the call for their exclusion.⁵ Shibusawa’s interest in peace in the Pacific later culminated in the formation of the Institute of Pacific Relations in cooperation with like-minded white Americans including Atherton.⁶

Similarly committed to the politics of international/racial friendship, albeit in a local context, Protestant minister Takie Okumura was one of the key Japanese in Hawai‘i, who founded the Makiki Christian Church in Honolulu. In 1865, he was born in Kochi as the eldest son of a *samurai* family, who lost their privileges as members of the warrior class after the fall of the Shogun regime and the 1868 Meiji Restoration. As a result, Okumura explored various business opportunities to support his family following his

⁴ Shibusawa served as the president of many international goodwill organizations in Japan, such as: the Armenian Sufferers Relief Committee; the Siberian Captives Relief Society; the Association for Consolation of the Sick and Wounded Soldiers of the Allied Nations; the France-Japanese Society; the Japanese Rumanian Commercial Relations Committee; the Japan-India Society; the League of Nations Association of Japan. See Kyugoro Obata, *An Interpretation of the Life of Viscount Shibusawa* (Tokyo: Tokyo Insatsu Kabushiki Kaisha, 1937), 169-235; Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vols. 34-40.

⁵ The “Japanese problem” refers to various potential problems implied by the presence of Japanese immigrants in the United States. For example, some white American propagandists alleged that the Japanese were an “unassimilable” race with a high birth rate, able to bear a low standard of living, and willing to work for low wages. Such propaganda gradually created a collective concern and fear that the Japanese would soon take over the jobs of American laborers and eventually numerically and economically dominate American society, which would then be under the control of Imperial Japan. For further details of the “Japanese problem,” see Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice: The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (New York: Atheneum, 1973).

⁶ Michio Yamaoka, “*Taiheiyo Mondai Chosakai*” *Kenkyu* (Tokyo: Ryukeisho-sha, 1997), 42; “*Taiheiyo Mondai Chosakai ni okeru Katsudo*,” in *Koeki no Tsuikyū-sha Shibusawa Eiichi*, ed. Shibusawa Kenkyū-kai (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1999), 196-208.

father's death, but these attempts failed. He then tried his hand as a political activist in the so-called Liberal Democratic Movement, but was ordered by the police to leave Tokyo upon the enactment of the Preservation of Public Peace Law of 1887. Subsequently, through the influence of his Christian friends, he was baptized and eventually decided to devote his life to missionary work. In 1894, after graduating from Doshisha Theological School in Kyoto, he came to Hawai'i to evangelize and improve the lives of Japanese immigrants and their children. His efforts varied from opening one of the earliest Japanese language schools for Hawai'i-born Nisei (1896) to initiating the establishment of the first Japanese hospital in the islands (1900). He also contributed to building the first interracial YMCA in the Territory (1918), by successfully raising the generous subscriptions from Japanese and white elites in his native land and host country, including Shibusawa and Atherton.⁷

Okumura was anxious about the effects of the massive 1920 strike, which seemed to have widened the existing gulf between Japanese and white Americans in the islands and which would affect bilateral relations negatively.⁸ Thus, he discussed his plan to alleviate this situation with Japanese Consul General Chonosuke Yada and then Atherton,

⁷ When Okumura went to Japan in 1917 to solicit donations for the construction of the YMCA, Shibusawa in sympathy with the minister's belief in maintaining harmonious international/interracial relations, initiated fund raising among the elite Japanese circles. See Nippu Jiji, *Hawai Doho Hatten Kaikoshi* (Honolulu: Nippu Jiji, 1921), 177; Takie Okumura, *Oncho Shichijyu Nen* (Kyoto: Naigai Shuppan, 1937), 41-47; Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol.42, 292-301; Rokuro Sugii, "Hainichi Yobo Keihatsu Undo," in *Hokubei Nihonjin Kirisutokyo Undo-shi* (Tokyo: PMC Shuppan, 1991), 100-102; Noriko Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi: Nichibei Kankei kara mita Hawai ni okeru Hainichi Yobo Keihatsu Undo," *Nihon Jyoshi Daigaku Kiyo*, 43 (1994): 9.

⁸ Takie Okumura, *Hawaii's American-Japanese Problems: A Campaign to Remove Causes of Friction Between the American People and Japanese* (Honolulu: n.p., 1921), 2-3.

both of whom were his acquaintances. Together with white leaders with similar views, Atherton supported Okumura's plan and thus, as his letter above indicates, sought approval and assistance from Shibusawa in Japan. A self-proclaimed "popular" diplomat, Shibusawa was interested in what Atherton and Okumura perceived as "one of the most serious problems" in Hawai'i.

This chapter demonstrates how one institution—the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs—and three groups—Japan's social elites (represented by Shibusawa), Hawai'i's white elites (represented by Atherton), and local Issei leaders (represented by Okumura)—became involved in a "campaign of education" [*keihatsu undo*] in the Territory of Hawai'i during the 1920s. In studies on Japanese Americans in Hawai'i, this "campaign of education" is generally regarded as part of the Americanization Movement that took place throughout the islands as well as on the continental United States. The Americanization Movement was a political project conducted by mainstream society intended to force new immigrants to conform to the dominant Anglo-American culture. The vestiges of ethnic cultures were expected to completely disappear. Earlier immigrants and their descendants, mostly of White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant ancestry, had attempted to create a 'national unity' based on their own culture as 'standard American culture.' Religious, educational, and other types of organizations conducted Americanization programs promoting everything from speaking English to learning white middle-class etiquette, wearing western clothing styles to adopting 'proper' sanitation standards. This movement first became conspicuous at the turn of the twentieth century, concurrent with the arrival of millions of immigrants—Catholics and Jews from southern

and eastern Europe and ‘Orientals’ from Asia. It gained momentum during World War I, a time of national emergency that engendered intense patriotism and nativist fear of anything foreign. After the war, the movement dwindled on the mainland United States, but a version targeting the Asian population remained prevalent in Hawai‘i until World War II.⁹

Expanding on previous studies that solely focused on the involvement of specific white and Issei leaders in Hawai‘i, this chapter examines the collaborative roles of the Japanese government and Japanese elite in the “Americanization effort” in Hawai‘i. It delineates why and how these groups strove to lead local Issei to adopt American values and customs and to raise the Nisei as loyal American citizens. Investigating the activities of Japanese officials and their allies, this chapter also explicates a counterpart to their “Americanization effort,” namely, an education campaign intended to inform mainstream Americans about Japan and Hawai‘i’s Japanese. This type of campaign presented the Japanese as assimilable into mainstream American society. By examining the intersection between these complementary activities, this chapter complicates the meaning of Americanization and assimilation for Japanese in Hawai‘i during the 1920s.

Moreover, building upon earlier investigations, this chapter strives to shed new light on the underlying motivations of Issei leaders and white elites in their involvement of the Americanization Movement in the islands. In previous studies on the Issei “Americanization effort” in Hawai‘i, there are two distinct interpretations of the activities

⁹ Eileen H. Tamura, “Americanization Fever,” in *The Japanese American Historical Experience in Hawai‘i*, ed. Jonathan Y. Okamura (Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 2001), 39-66; *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Honolulu, University of Hawai‘i Press, 1994), 52-69.

of Okumura, who has often been their main subject. One discourse accounts for his actions by claiming that he benefited from the alliance with white elites, the main force behind the Americanization Movement, by cooperating with them to mold local Japanese into pliable elements in the existing social, political, and economic structure. The contrary discourse asserts that this Christian minister chose to cooperate with white leaders not because he merely sought personal benefit in return for helping the privileged class maintain the existing structure, but because he deemed that such collaboration would counter anti-Japanese sentiment in American society to ultimately improve both U.S.-Japan relations and the future of the local Japanese community. While American scholars, such as Roland Kotani (1985) and Gary Okihiro (1991), in general support the former discourse,¹⁰ scholarship in Japan, as represented by the Doshisha University group (1991) and Noriko Shimada (1994), projects the latter argument.¹¹ The differences between the two interpretations seem to stem mainly from the source materials examined, namely, whether or not they are in English or Japanese. Documents, which indicate the motives and objectives of Issei leaders like Okumura, often exist more in Japanese than

¹⁰ While most American scholars depict Okumura as a propagandist for American assimilation and servile to white plantation owners, some of them, at the same time, seem to be aware of the importance of examining the complex nature of Okumura's activities. For example, in the preface to *Cane Fires*, Okihiro warns against portraying Okumura simplistically: "To see Okumura . . . as only serving the purposes of Hawaii's rulers are forms of [is a form of] reductivism. To be sure, the planters were composed of diverse individuals, and Okumura . . . [was] moved by complex motives, including the desire to fight against racism and injustice." See Gary Okihiro, *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), xiv.

¹¹ The Doshisha University group include the following: Rokuro Sugii, Kojiro Iida, Yasuhiro Motoi, Yukuji Okita, Mitsuhiro Sakaguchi, and Ryo Yoshida. In 1991, the group published a book titled *Hawai ni okeru Nihonjin shakai to kirisuto kyokai no hensen* (its English title is *Historical Study of the Japanese Community and Christianity in Hawaii*), a compilation of articles on Takie Okumura and the local Japanese community in the prewar years.

English. This chapter extensively relies on Japanese materials, including Japanese governmental documents, which to date have only received limited analysis in the studies of Hawai'i's Nikkei. Unearthing new information, it reexamines not only the accomplishments of Okumura but also those of his Issei allies—Tasuku Harada, Iga Mori, and Yasutaro Soga—whose involvement in campaigns of education deserves more scholarly attention.

Likewise, studies which fall into the “personal benefit” discourse tend to portray local white elites as uniformly “oppressive” and “confrontational.” However, certain members of the *haole* (Caucasian residents in Hawai'i) elite, such as Atherton, although they might have attempted to “Americanize” local Japanese in order to protect the economic and political interests of the privileged class, chose to seek amicable and conciliatory resolutions to problems by working in tandem with other agents on the local and international stages. Exploring the social, political, and economic context of the 1920s, this chapter reveals how the four groups mentioned above developed quadripartite cooperative relations in the course of working towards the common goal of “Americanizing” local Japanese, despite their different backgrounds and motivations.

The Emergence of Cooperative Relations: The 1920 Sugar Plantation Strike and the “Japanese Problem”

On July 1, 1920, approximately two months before the aforementioned letter was written, the O'ahu sugar plantation strike ended, which provided the background for international partnership, including Atherton, Shibusawa, and Okumura. This six-month

strike, which involved upwards of 8,300 Japanese, Filipino, and other laborers, not only exacerbated local race relations but also impacted U.S.-Japan relations negatively as it was often characterized as the “Japanese conspiracy.”¹² Although the main body of the strikers was multi-ethnic, only Japanese, who made up approximately two-thirds of the protesting group, were censured as the ringleaders. Influential white politicians and businessmen, along with major local English newspapers, contended that Japanese workers’ resistance against sugar plantation owners was an indication of the “subversive,” “unassimilable,” and “anti-American” nature of the entire local Japanese population in the islands. Partially because some Japanese strike leaders resorted to patriotic rhetoric to keep up the morale of the protesters, their solidarity during the walkout was perceived as an expression of hard-core Japanese nationalism, which allegedly conspired against the United States.¹³ This event not only propelled white elites to label local Japanese as a dangerous anti-social element but also aroused suspicion that the Japanese government

¹² Masayo Umezawa Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy: The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). For further information on the 1920 strike, see Ronald Takaki, *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii 1835-1920* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1983).

¹³ At the end of February 1920, there was a widely circulated rumor that Noboru (Takashi) Tsutsumi, Secretary of the Japanese Federation of Labor, said at a striker meeting that the Japanese Imperial training battleship *Yakumo*, which had stopped by the islands, had come to Hawai‘i to protect and rescue the Japanese strikers. The Consul General in Honolulu regarded this rumor as credible and immediately informed the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo of the story, warning that this kind of speech might give American society another reason to believe in the Japanese government’s involvement in the strike. See Acting Consul General Furuya’s letter to Uchida, dated March 1, 1920 in “Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawaii no bu,” the Japanese American Research Project (JARP) Collection, Reel 710, University of California Los Angeles Library; Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy*, 81-83; Shimada, “Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi,” 43. For further discussion on Japanese immigrant nationalism in Hawai‘i during the prewar years, see Chapters 2 and 3 of John J. Stephan, *Hawaii Under the Rising Sun: Japan’s Plans for Conquest After Pearl Harbor* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1984).

had manipulated the strikers behind the scenes so as to control Hawai'i's sugar industry.¹⁴ In the minds of many leading whites in the islands, the strike—essentially a matter of class conflict—turned into the question of race in general, and of national allegiance among the Japanese in Hawaii in particular.¹⁵

Having observed that the local economic strike had become a thorn in U.S.-Japan relations, Japanese Consul General Chonosuke Yada in Honolulu wrote a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yasuya Uchida in Tokyo, three months after the end of the strike.¹⁶ This letter stated that the 1920 strike greatly exacerbated white-Japanese tensions in Hawai'i. It also summarized some of the “most pro-Japanese” white leaders’ interpretations of the strike and their concerns regarding the local Japanese. First, unlike previous strikes by Issei laborers, the demonstration of adamant Japanese nationalism in the 1920 sugar strike was perceived as a “racial issue” rather than a labor/class issue. Secondly, white leaders alleged that the *Hongwanji* and other Buddhist temples, which ran numerous Japanese language schools, ardently supported the strike and were assisting the Japanese Federation of Labor, the nucleus of the strike. Thirdly, there was a widely prevailing concern that second-generation Japanese Americans, whose numbers were rapidly increasing, would control the politics of Hawai'i in the near future by resorting to

¹⁴ An article of January 27, 1920 in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* stated: “[W]hat we face now is an attempt on the part of an alien race to cripple our principal industry and to gain dominance of the American territory of Hawaii.” See also the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, January 30, 1920 and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 13, 1920.

¹⁵ Ryukichi Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjin Shi* (Tokyo: Bunseisha, 1935), 687, 691; Okihiro, *Cane Fires*, 78-81.

¹⁶ Yada to Uchida, October 13, 1920. *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawai ni okeru Gaikokugo Gakko*. Diplomatic Records Office, Tokyo.

bloc-voting based on their racial allegiance. To counter this eventuality, *haole* elites, according to the Japanese diplomat, thought that it would be necessary to close down all Japanese language schools in the islands and immerse future voters of Japanese ancestry in Americanism. Indeed, the three points delineated in Yada's letter reflected prevalent concerns and assumptions about the local Japanese by the society of Hawai'i at large—their solidarity, the “anti-American” dimension of Japanese language schools, and the possible future political influence of the second generation Japanese. All these issues essentially revolved around one question: namely, whether or not Hawai'i's Japanese were wholeheartedly loyal to the United States.

This apprehension over Japanese immigrant nationalism was not necessarily a direct product of the 1920 plantation strike; its genesis was traceable to the previous decade. As mentioned earlier, intense chauvinism swept U.S. society during World War I. Under the slogan of “one language under one flag,” the “Americanization fever” urged people of different ethnic origins to embrace White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant values as the “universal American” norm and to purge cultural and racial heterogeneity out of their communities and America at large.¹⁷

On the West Coast, this xenophobia was intensified by conflict between working-class whites and Asian laborers. White farmers, producers, and workers saw Asian immigrants as economic competitors, and spearheaded the political movement for

¹⁷ Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 45-69.

Japanese exclusion.¹⁸ Taking off from mass antagonism against Asians, certain white leaders on the West Coast such as the *Sacramento Bee* publisher Valentine S. McClatchy, Secretary of the California Federation of Labor Paul Scharrenberg, and California Governor Hiram Johnson deployed rhetoric about the “Japanese problem” to their political advantage. They asserted that it was necessary to protect America from an alien takeover. These whites played a central role in the enactment of the Alien Land Laws which banned land ownership or lease by “aliens ineligible for citizenship” in California, Washington, Oregon, and other states between the early 1910s and the 1920s.¹⁹ This was largely an attempt to reduce Japanese immigrant farmers to the economic status of migrant labor.

In contrast to those mainland whites, a number of influential *haole* (such as Frank C. Atherton, George P. Castle, Charles H. Cooke, John Waterhouse, and William D. Westervelt) many of whom were directly or indirectly involved in the dominant sugar industry tried to maintain amicable relations with the Japanese immigrants in Hawai‘i, although for some their ultimate goal was to keep the Japanese population in their place within the existing social/racial hierarchy. The agricultural system of the Territory, dependent on sugar and pineapple, lacked a sturdy white working class. Big capitalists were elite *haole* while the proletariat were dominantly Asians.²⁰ *Haole* capitalists

¹⁸ Edna Bonacich, “Asian Labor in the Development of California and Hawaii,” in *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States before World War II*, ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 157-178.

¹⁹ For further details about Asian exclusion on the West Coast, see Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*.

²⁰ Bonacich, “Asian Labor in the Development of California and Hawaii,” 178-182.

recognized they stood to benefit more from co-opting Asians quietly into the established system than politicizing their “menace” and excluding them. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the sugar industry relied heavily on Issei workers. Thousands of first-generation Japanese immigrants came to Hawai‘i as plantation laborers and eventually constituted an essential part of the entire work force in the sugar industry, not only in the fields but also in the mills. One year prior to the 1920 walkout, Japanese workers on sugar plantations in the Territory numbered 24,791, accounting for 55 percent of the 45,311 laborers in the industry.²¹ Even though their importance had diminished with the influx of Filipinos as an alternative labor force in the 1910s, they were still indispensable for operating the plantations. *Haole* planters were thus afraid that alienating the Japanese population, as was happening on the West Coast, would put the islands’ chief industry in jeopardy.

From the perspective of the white ruling class, the fear of the potential “racial menace” was rooted in the numerical dominance of Japanese in Hawai‘i, as well as their apparent “foreignness.” Not only on the sugar plantation, but also in the Territory in general, people of Japanese ancestry were the largest ethnic group, constituting 43 percent of the islands’ 255,912 residents in 1920.²² Most spoke only Japanese and retained the values and customs of their home country rather than adopting the culture of

²¹ In 1919, the second largest group of laborers on the sugar plantations in Hawai‘i was Filipinos (10,354), followed by Portuguese (2,905), and Chinese (1,908). Although Chinese were one of the earliest groups to migrate to Hawai‘i as plantation workers, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 had prohibited the Territory of Hawai‘i from contracting more laborers from China. See Nippu Jiji, *Hawai Doho Hatten Kaikoshi* (Honolulu: Nippu Jiji, 1921), 25.

²² Hawai Shimposha, *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan: Dai Jyukyu-kai* (Honolulu: Hawai Shimposha, 1925), 25.

the host society. This is not surprising because many of them came to Hawai'i as temporary sojourners, hoping to make a fortune and someday return to Japan. Also, the majority of the Issei were Buddhists. Temples sprang up throughout the islands with Japanese language schools for the Hawai'i-born generation.²³ Most Issei parents sent their children to Japanese language schools to facilitate inter-generational communication as well as to prepare them for the eventual return to Japan. Indeed, in 1920, 98 percent of the 20,651 Japanese students receiving compulsory public school education also studied at Japanese schools.²⁴ As noted in Yada's letter, these schools became a focus of white misgivings.

Furthermore, the 1920 strike also revived an argument over the potential voting power of the Nisei. During and after the event, anti-Japanese white leaders in Hawai'i,

²³ In 1920, about 39 percent of the 163 Japanese language schools were Buddhist-sponsored, most of them affiliated with the *Hongwanji* sect, the largest denomination in Hawai'i. See Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 155.

²⁴ Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 146. Most teachers at the Japanese schools in Hawai'i were Japanese nationals certified by educational institutions in the home country. These teachers taught young Nisei students not only the Japanese language but also Japanese values and ethics, using textbooks published by the Japanese Ministry of Education which were intended to raise children to be assets of Imperial Japan. At these language schools, Japanese holidays were also celebrated. In particular, on *tencho-setsu*, the Japanese emperor's birthday, a special ceremony was held at the language schools which was attended by Issei parents and their Nisei children, who skipped public school classes on that day. Many whites considered such emperor worship at the Japanese language schools to be an indication of Japanese immigrants' anti-American attitude. In addition, at the time of the 1920 strike, some Young Men's Buddhist Associations in the islands, most notably the Waialua branch, played a major role in disseminating the concept of the labor union and the higher-wage movement in the local Japanese community, and some members of the Japanese Federation of Labor were Japanese language teachers. It is no surprise, then, that the meetings of the strike supporters' association were held at the language schools. This situation gave many people more justification for identifying the language schools, Buddhist churches and the local Japanese community in general as subversive and threatening. See Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjin Shi*, 659-669, 689; Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi," 43.

such as Walter F. Dillingham and Harry A. Baldwin, publicly expressed their apprehension over Nisei ties to Japan.²⁵ Nisei possession of dual citizenship, American and Japanese, a result of the conflicting nationality laws of Japan and the United States, led mainstream society to doubt the second generation's loyalty to the United States. Even before the strike, some whites in Hawai'i and the continental United States shared the view that Hawai'i-born Nisei's rapidly increasing numbers due to a high birth rate would eventually influence the Hawai'i body politic and possibly lead to the take over and control of the islands for Imperial Japan. In the past, this fear of the Japanese racial menace had generated a discussion over the necessity of abolishing the self-rule of Hawai'i and surrendering the Territory to a commission form of government comprised of members appointed by the President of the United States, an idea which most of the privileged class in the islands strongly opposed.²⁶ The 1920 sugar strike rekindled these flames of skepticism about Nisei loyalties. Concerned about this situation, pro-Japanese white leaders like Atherton exchanged opinions with Issei leader Okumura and Consul General Yada. They then attempted to involve the Japanese social elite individuals, such as Shibusawa, to settle the exacerbated "Japanese problem" in Hawai'i. It was in this context that Atherton wrote to Shibusawa about Okumura's plans for "the Americanization of Japanese."

²⁵ *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* June 7, 1922; Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy*, 284.

²⁶ Ernest K. Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The Toyo Shoin, 1938), 361-364.

Japanese Response to Hawai'i's Racial Conflict

Two weeks after the 1920 plantation strike, Okumura left for Japan to seek advice from Shibusawa. During his stay in Tokyo, he was invited to a meeting of the Japanese American Relations Committee (*Nichibei Kankei Inukai*) headed by Shibusawa and composed of twenty-four prominent Japanese who strove to promote friendly relationships between Japan and the United States.²⁷ This organization held conferences with American business, political, and civic leaders visiting Japan to discuss current issues in U.S.-Japan relations as well as held convivial parties for them. After listening to Okumura's presentation, the committee members showed wholehearted approval of his plan for "a campaign of education" of Hawai'i's Japanese. Through Shibusawa, Okumura also met Foreign Minister Yasuya Uchida and Prime Minister Takashi Hara. They also endorsed his idea and encouraged him to continue his efforts.²⁸

²⁷ The Japanese American Relations Committee was inaugurated by Shibusawa in February of 1916 in the hope of "bring[ing] about a better understanding between the people of Japan and the people of the United States of America." See Obata, *An Interpretation of the Life of Viscount Shibusawa*, 208. This organization periodically held conferences with American business, political and civic leaders to discuss current issues in U.S.-Japan relations. It also held convivial parties intended to enhance mutual friendships between prominent citizens of the two countries. It was established as a counterpart to the Japanese Relations Committee of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce; its headquarters were located at the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce. For further details, see Obata, *An Interpretation of the Life of Viscount Shibusawa*, 207-212; Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 33, 453-640; vols. 34, 5-686; vol. 35, 5-244, and Nobuo Katagiri, "Shibusawa Eiichi to Kokumin Gaiko: Beikoku ni okeru Nihonjin Haiseki Mondai e no Taio wo Chushin to shite," *Shibusawa Kenkyu* 1 (1990): 4-24.

²⁸ Takie Okumura, *Hawai ni okeru Nichibei Mondai Kaiketsu Undo*, 6th ed. (Kyoto: Naigai Shuppan, 1937), 10-12, 88. From now on abbreviated as *Nichibei*. Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 33, 536; Sugii, "Hainichi Yobo Keihatsu Undo," 105-108; Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi," 47.

At first glance, it may appear odd that these leaders and governmental officials in Japan unanimously and enthusiastically supported Okumura's goal of "Americanizing" Japanese national Issei and dual-citizen Nisei in Hawai'i in spite of the fact that both were subjects of Imperial Japan. It is, however, not at all surprising if one considers that they wished to remove any conflict that would harm cordial relations between Japan and the United States, which were mutually dependent trading partners during the early decades of the twentieth century.²⁹ Japan's ongoing economic and industrial development, particularly in textile production, was indirectly supported by the United States. America provided Japan not only with raw cotton for its cotton manufacturing but also with a huge market for silk fabrics, Japan's main export.³⁰ Since 1880, Japan had imported more from America than from any other country, constituting a third of total imports after World War I. At the same time, Americans imported more commodities from Japan than any other country save Britain and Canada.³¹

For the sake of maintaining an amicable partnership with the United States and the Territory of Hawai'i, since the 1910s the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had secretly conducted two complementary types of activities called "*keihatsu undo*" (some officials coined a phrase "campaign of education" for an English equivalent), which were designed to alleviate anti-Japanese sentiments among mainstream whites in Hawai'i and on the continental United States. One activity aimed at educating the general American public

²⁹ Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi," 46, 49.

³⁰ Mikiso Hane, *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986), 142-143.

³¹ Asahi Shimbunsha, *Asahi Nenkan* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1925), 340.

about Japan and Japanese immigrants in the hope of eliminating prejudice caused from ignorance. The second was intended to promote the adoption of American manners and customs among Japanese immigrants.³²

In conducting these “campaigns of education,” the Foreign Ministry and the Japanese Consulate avoided the limelight so as to counter anti-Japanese propaganda that alleged a conspiratorial link between the Japanese government and the Nikkei community. Thus, both Issei and whites who were collaborating with the Ministry publicly carried out the work as if they were doing so on their own. These “campaigns of education” were initiated by Consul General Yasutaro Numano in San Francisco. To begin his project, Numano recruited Kiyoshi Kawakami and Toyokichi Iyenaga and let them run pro-Japan, English-language newspaper presses targeting the general public, the Pacific Press Bureau in San Francisco and the East & West News Bureau in New York respectively.³³

Japanese business elites, represented by Eiichi Shibusawa, also willingly accepted the Foreign Ministry’s mission to improve whites’ view of Japan. Shibusawa, who played a central role in the expanding cotton textile production in his country, was fully aware that trade with the United States was crucial for Japan’s economic and industrial

³² Eiichiro Azuma, *Interstitial Lives: Race, Community, and History among Japanese Immigrants Caught Between Japan and the United States, 1885-1941*, (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2000), 108-122.

³³ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 190-196; Azuma, *Interstitial Lives*, 113-115. According to a letter dated December 10, 1913 from the Foreign Minister Nobuaki Makino to Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Sutemi Chinda, Shibusawa was also interested in establishing a pro-Japanese English language newspaper press in the U.S. in the hope of correcting American people’s misconceptions about Japan. The Ministry, however, asked him to leave that project in the hands of officials. See Azuma, *Interstitial Lives*, 117.

expansion.³⁴ Therefore, his efforts to promote friendly feelings between the two countries and strengthen the basis for firm trade relations served both personal and national interests. As early as 1909, even before the Ministry requested him to cooperate for the education campaign, Shibusawa along with thirty-five Japanese leaders (the group was called the Honorary Commercial Commissioners of Japan) visited more than fifty cities in the United States over the course of three months to become acquainted with prominent figures in various spheres, including President William H. Taft, as well as to learn about the latest industrial technology.³⁵ During the ensuing years, believing in a diplomatic approach called “people-to-people diplomacy” [*kokumin Gaiko*], which was intended to “promote and preserve amicable United States-Japan relations” and “entailed direct, private contracts between the people of the two countries over and beyond formal diplomatic intercourse,”³⁶ Shibusawa and other Japanese businessmen strove to cultivate friendships with key American leaders such as California’s Wallace M. Alexander and Hawai‘i’s Frank C. Atherton. Calling upon these close personal relationships, they then attempted to discuss and resolve economic and political problems in the international

³⁴ Financially supported by elite circles, Shibusawa established the first private spinning mill in Japan in 1883; soon other industrialists followed Shibusawa’s steps into cotton manufacture. He also took the initiative in revising cotton tariffs. The Spinners’ Association led by Shibusawa succeeded in nullifying the import duties on raw cotton and the export duties on cotton yarn in 1896. See Hane, *Modern Japan*, 142-143.

³⁵ Suetō Iwaya, *Tobei Jitsugyodan shi* (Tokyo: Hakubunkan, 1910); Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 32, 5-490; Masao Kimura, “Minkan Keizai Gaiko Shidosha to shite no Shibusawa Eiichi (2),” *Shibusawa Kenkyu* 2 (1990): 3-23.

³⁶ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 131.

arena.³⁷ Shibusawa invited various American leaders, including a well-known anti-Japanese propagandist, Paul Scharrenberg, to his villa in Asukayama near Tokyo, and entertained them as part of this diplomatic mission.³⁸

While engaged in the campaign aimed at whites on the U.S. mainland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also worked with individuals and organizations to promote acculturation among Japanese immigrants on the continental United States. As part of this effort, Shibusawa and other Japanese leaders established a school for emigrants to the United States to learn English and American manners and customs before their departure. On the West Coast, many Issei leaders also strove to “reform” Japanese immigrants so that they could fit into the host society. For example, the Japanese Association of America comprised of influential Issei invited Kyoto’s Doshisha University former President Reverend Danjo Ebina from Japan to tour California to give lectures to Japanese immigrants on the importance of assimilation and permanent residency in the United States. Both the Japanese government and Shibusawa provided the Association with funds to support their efforts.³⁹

During the 1910s, the Foreign Ministry focused most of its education campaign on the continental United States. After the 1920 plantation strike, however, the Ministry

³⁷ For example, when Atherton came to Japan to attend the third Institute of Pacific Relations, an international conference held in Kyoto in 1929, he also visited Shibusawa’s villa in Asukayama to discuss Japanese immigration issues. See Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 35, 146-153; Katagiri, “Shibusawa Eiichi to Kokumin Gaiko.”

³⁸ For further information on the visits of American VIPs to Shibusawa’s villa, see Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vols. 33-35. For details of Scharrenberg’s visit, see *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo* vol. 39, 638-647.

³⁹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 176-196; Azuma, *Interstitial Lives*, 108-135.

became keenly aware of the necessity for similar campaigns in the Territory of Hawai‘i.⁴⁰ As on the U.S. mainland, the Ministry did not take direct action in these campaigns in order to avoid drawing public attention to its operations or being suspected of involvement in the local Japanese community. Instead, it sought cooperators among qualified Issei individuals with connections to the mainstream society of the Territory who could talk to influential whites personally and, in Consul General Yada’s words, “appeal to their emotions.”⁴¹

Among these Issei cooperators, University of Hawai‘i Professor Tasuku Harada was a key figure. A Yale graduate in theology and former President of Doshisha University, Harada was closely acquainted with and highly respected in elite social circles in both Japan and Hawai‘i. Initially, Shibusawa persuaded him to cooperate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in countering the anti-Japanese movement on the continental United States.⁴² Subsequently, he was asked to socialize with the ruling class of Hawai‘i

⁴⁰ I have not yet discovered any documentation that clearly indicates how the campaigns of education in Hawai‘i were related to those on the U.S. mainland. Though there are many apparent similarities between the two in terms of methods, movers and objectives (e. g. using English language newspapers to influence the general public; lecture tours for the Issei conducted by educated Japanese; and “people-to-people diplomacy” between Japanese and white leaders). Further investigation is needed to show whether the campaigns conducted in Hawai‘i were modeled after the ones on the mainland.

⁴¹ In a letter dated November 10, 1920, Consul General Yada wrote the Minister of Foreign Affairs Uchida as follows: “If local Japanese take action in groups in the public sphere, such as by promoting a political movement, it will provoke the antipathy of white leaders and aggravate the situation; instead it would be better for individuals to contact American leaders personally and appeal to their emotions.” See *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawai ni okeru Gaikokugo Gakko* (1919-).

⁴² For example, Harada made an inspection tour of the West Coast in 1920, where he conducted a survey among 230 eminent whites about their views of the “Japanese problem” in California. He analyzed their answers and compiled a volume titled *Beikoku Kashu Hainichi Mondai Chosa Hokoku* (1921). See Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 33, 583-602.

to improve their views of the Nikkei and Japan by discussing and explaining the “Japanese problem” in the islands and U.S.-Japan relations in general. “To assist his campaign of education,” the Foreign Ministry paid Harada \$1,200 annually beginning in 1923.⁴³

Another Issei engaged in this effort was Iga Mori, President of the United Japanese Association of Hawaii [*Hawai Nihonjin Rengo Kyokai*] and a prominent medical doctor. He dealt with a different segment of Hawai‘i’s white population. Unlike Harada, who was in charge of contacting upper-class whites, Mori targeted people in less exclusive but still influential positions. With expenses paid by the Honolulu Japanese Consulate, he held banquets at fancy hotels where he entertained top police officials and other authoritative whites with a view to cultivating close relationships. He adopted the same strategy for handling newspapermen from the two major local English papers—the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (renamed the *Honolulu Advertiser* in March 1921) and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*—in order to encourage favorable reporting about Japan and the local Japanese community.⁴⁴

⁴³ The Ministry agreed to pay Harada following negotiations with Shibusawa and Consul General Yamasaki. See the letter from the Honolulu Japanese Consulate to Foreign Minister Keishiro Matsui (June 28, 1923, November 4, 1923, December 18, 1923, December 24, 1923, April 4, 1924, and May 15, 1925) in JARP Reel 36, *Hainichi Zakken: Hawai no bu*.

⁴⁴ From August 1920 to January 1921, the Honolulu Japanese Consulate spent \$998 on inviting newspapermen of the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* to dinner at the Moana Hotel and paying them honorariums for writing pro-Japanese articles. In August 1921, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increased the allocation for expenses for “controlling English newspapermen” to \$4,000. See the financial report dated January 7, 1921 in *Senden Kankei Zakken/Honoruru/Manira* as well as *Senden Kankei Zakken*. Regarding the name change of the *Advertiser*, see George Chaplin, *Presstime in Paradise: The Life and Times of the Honolulu Advertiser, 1856-1995* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998), 158.

Still another noteworthy Issei ally was Yasutaro Soga, publisher and editor of the *Nippu Jiji*, which boasted the largest circulation among local Japanese newspapers. He cooperated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by educating American readers through the English-language articles in his paper. On August 6, 1920, Yada wrote to Uchida that he was considering providing financial aid to the *Nippu Jiji* in hopes of expanding its English section and thus better utilizing it to inform the society about Japan and local Japanese.⁴⁵ As the newspaper had won a considerable number of non-Japanese readers since establishing its English section in January 1919 and was often quoted in English newspapers in the islands, the Consul General's request was accepted and, a year later, the Foreign Ministry allocated \$4,800 as a "subsidy for the *Nippu Jiji*."⁴⁶

By early 1920, the *Nippu Jiji* had already begun playing the role of an "educator" for white Americans in Hawai'i. In January 1920, precisely when the O'ahu sugar strike started, the publishing company reprinted a highly pro-Japanese pamphlet written by Theodore Roosevelt entitled *What the Japanese Have Stood for in the World War*.⁴⁷ The former President stated that Japan was a trustworthy partner for the United States, as proved by its wholehearted participation in World War I, and concluded by saying, "Japan is playing a great part in the civilized world; a good understanding between her and the United States is essential to international progress." In his foreword to the

⁴⁵ The *Nippu Jiji* started publishing columns in English from January 1919 in the hope of "bring[ing] about mutual understanding between the Japanese and the Americans, and to maintain more amicable relation between them." See the *Nippu Jiji*, January 4, 1919.

⁴⁶ Yada to Uchida, August 6, 1920, *Senden Kankei Zakken: Honoruru/Manira* (August 1921).

⁴⁷ The article *What the Japanese Have Stood for in the World War* initially appeared in the *New York Times* on November 30, 1919, after the former President's death. It was reprinted by the *Nippu Jiji* courtesy of the *New York Times*.

pamphlet, Soga asserted, "The article is most timely at this precise moment when anti-Japanese agitators, basing their arguments on distorted facts, are unjustly fulminating against the Japanese." He said that his purpose in publishing the pamphlet was to "dispel the mist of misunderstanding which acts as barriers to the friendship between the Americans and Japanese".⁴⁸ While it is not certain that the Japanese Consulate requested publication of Roosevelt's article, by distributing a pamphlet written by one of America's most-respected leaders, Soga was clearly attempting to counter anti-Japanese sentiments brought about by the 1920 strike.

In addition to attempting to influence whites, the Foreign Ministry also promoted a campaign of education aimed at the acculturation of the Nikkei in the Territory, as it had done on the continental United States. In this so-called "Americanization Movement," Japanese governmental officials, together with Shibusawa and his elite circle, initially attempted to advocate "external assimilation" (*gaimenteki doka*) of the immigrants. This involved conforming their "external appearances" to mainstream American norms, namely by learning English and adopting American manners, clothing, housing, and sanitation standards so that they would not stand out in public or become the object of censure or contempt.

A letter written by Consul General Yada to Foreign Minister Uchida, manifesting the typical elitist Japanese view of immigrants, is interesting in this context. On August 6, 1920, approximately when Okumura met Shibusawa in Tokyo, Yada wrote Uchida

⁴⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, *What the Japanese Have Stood for in the World War* (Honolulu: Nippu Jiji, 1920).

regarding the “propaganda activities” of the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu. He noted that Japanese residents in Hawai‘i were predominantly “low-class laborers” and that they stuck to the customs of their home country. Their life style and behavior were regarded as unacceptable by mainstream American standards, certain to evoke anti-Japanese emotions in the larger island population. Yada insisted there was an urgent need for a well-educated and well-respected man to visit Hawai‘i and, through lectures and meetings, inspire the Japanese community to accept American manners and customs. In his letter, Yada also proposed establishing a “patrol” to watch over immigrant manners, behavior, and clothing and, with the cooperation with the police, give warnings to people who did not meet the appropriate standards.⁴⁹ As this letter reveals, officials in the Japanese government, as well as the people in Shibusawa’s circle, looked down on the immigrants and their adherence to Japanese customs as boorish and uncultured. Many Japanese elite considered Western values as universal standards for advanced nations and viewed Japanese adoption of Western culture as liberation from ignorance.⁵⁰ In this respect, their perception of Japanese immigrants matched those of the privileged *haole* segment in the Territory. They were therefore willing to cooperate with white leaders in encouraging Hawai‘i’s Japanese to conform to American norms.

⁴⁹ Yada to Uchida, August 6, 1920, *Senden Kankei Zakken: Honoruru/Manira*.

⁵⁰ For further discussion on Japanese officials’ elitist perceptions of Issei immigrants and their understanding of westernization and modernization, see Azuma, *Interstitial Lives*, 87-91.

Takeie Okumura and a Campaign of Education

To carry out the campaign of education among the Nikkei in the islands, the Honolulu Japanese Consulate needed a “man to visit the Japanese in different towns and inspire them to accept American manners and customs through lectures and meetings” as maintained in Yada’s letter of August 1920. Takeie Okumura stepped forward to perform this role. He began conducting extensive lectures throughout the islands in January 1921, only five months after Yada’s letter was written. Over the next six years, with the financial assistance of the Foreign Ministry, Shibusawa, and Atherton and other elite whites, he tirelessly canvassed Maui, Kaua‘i, Hawai‘i, and O‘ahu disseminating “Americanism” throughout the Japanese community.⁵¹

Based on the belief that maintaining harmonious interracial relations was indispensable for building their secure future community, Okumura directed his message at local Japanese, specifically stressing the following two points: 1) They must adopt American virtues and customs, think, and act according to the point of view of the American people, and contribute to the prosperity of Hawai‘i as long as they live under the protection of the United States; 2) In as much as their Nisei children were born in Hawai‘i and expected to live and work here permanently, they should educate and raise them as good loyal citizens of the United States.⁵² It is no coincidence that these two key points addressed the prevailing worries of the white mainstream in the post-1920 strike

⁵¹ Okumura, *Nichibei*. Also, see Sugii, “Hainichi Yobo Keihatsu Undo,” 69-147.

⁵² Okumura, *Nichibei*, 12.

period concerning Issei Japanese nationalism and Nisei loyalty to America.⁵³ He held more than sixty meetings per year, ranging from mass lectures to small informal talks. If he found sympathy and approval in an audience at the meetings, he obtained the signatures of supporters.⁵⁴ Through such person-to-person interaction, he appropriated the techniques of American grass-roots political organizing in reaching ordinary folks like plantation laborers.

During the early years of his campaign, Okumura directed his message at the Issei generation, asserting both the importance of the “Americanization” of the immigrant generation and its importance to the Hawai‘i-born generation. Though other Issei intellectuals in that period also discussed Nisei Americanization, Okumura most consistently and energetically spoke about the future of the second generation and directed the attention of the local Japanese masses to the subject. In the fourth year of his campaign, Okumura broadened his argument to include more concrete topics, such as occupational problems and political participation.⁵⁵ The end result was—no doubt much to the satisfaction of the Foreign Ministry, Shibusawa, and Atherton—that concern for the Americanization of the Nisei generation gradually came to be shared by Hawai‘i’s Japanese population.

Okumura also attempted to educate a segment of mainstream white society, much as Harada, Mori, and Soga had, but the people he targeted were plantation managers.

⁵³ For details of prevailing white concerns about local Japanese, see Consul General Yada’s letter of October 13, 1920. *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawaini okeru Gaikokugo Gakko*.

⁵⁴ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 13; Sugii, “Hainichi Yobo Keihatsu Undo,” 73, 108-134.

⁵⁵ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 42.

Whenever he went to a plantation to hold meetings with Japanese laborers, he met the manager first and told him about the importance of “Americanizing” local Japanese. To help them understand his activities, he also distributed English language pamphlets. Through such interaction, he built close ties with the managers and sometimes even mediated between them and Japanese plantation workers. With the help of his son, Umetaro, who served him as an interpreter and translator, he passed along requests to each side—especially laborers’ needs for better living conditions on camps. This helped both parties to understand each other and maintain good relations.⁵⁶ It also gained him influence over each side and made it possible for him to effectively carry out his “Americanization” project.

This intermediary role apparently developed gradually over the course of Okumura’s annual lecture trips. It was not until a year after his first tour that *haole* and Japanese leaders asked Shibusawa to request the Foreign Ministry to send “some third party who could act as a go-between to help overcome the differences that exists [sic] between the capitalists and labor element here in the Territory.”⁵⁷ As Atherton’s letter to

⁵⁶ According to Okumura, both plantation managers and Japanese laborers appreciated his efforts of mediation. See Okumura to Shibusawa, dated February 18, 1924, in Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 33, 545. In this letter, which reported on the progress of his education campaign and requested Shibusawa to continue financial support, Okumura wrote that the laborers were pleased with the improvement in their living conditions brought about by his negotiation with the manager and that they had held a party for him to express their appreciation. He also mentioned that, in recognition of the effectiveness of his negotiations, the HSPA (Hawaii Sugar Planters’ Association) offered to cover all expenses for his lecture trips. Okumura declined the offer, however, afraid that the laborers would then perceive him as a mouthpiece for the HSPA, which would hinder his education campaign. See *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 30, 545.

⁵⁷ For further details, see *Hompo imin kankei zakken: Hawaii no bu* (1922).

Shibusawa (February 24, 1922) reveals, Yada, Harada, Mori, John Waterhouse, Richard Cooke, and Atherton himself held a meeting the previous week in which they discussed the experiences of the 1920 strike and reached the following conclusion:

[I]t would be very advantageous if the new Consul could have as Vice-Consul a Japanese of recognized ability and standing who was thoroughly conversant with the English Language, and who could make trips to the other islands and to the plantations from time to time. On these trips he could confer with the laborers themselves . . . also with the plantation managers, and upon his return to Honolulu present to managers of the plantation agencies here in the city any misunderstanding or grievances of the laborers, and we all feel sure that the plantation managers . . . would be very glad and willing to confer with such an official in reference to all matters pertaining to the welfare of the laborers . . . Such a man could also . . . point out to the laborers the views of the management and the capitalists on all laborer matters, and explain to them their reasons for various actions⁵⁸

As this plan reveals, these *haole* and Japanese leaders in Honolulu were aware that it was necessary to have a qualified person serve as communication channel between Japanese laborers and white employers, two groups separated by race and class. Providing such a mediator would be another effective means of maintaining friendly relationships between the two parties, besides influencing peoples' minds through the government-guided campaigns of education. Their request for a new Vice-Consul, however, was turned down by officials in Tokyo who were concerned that if the Vice-Consul worked too closely with Japanese plantation laborers, anti-Japanese propagandists would revive the rumors about Issei nationalism and the Japanese government would again be suspected of

⁵⁸ This letter was forwarded from Shibusawa to the Foreign Ministry, and was included in File *Hompo imin kankei zakken: Hawaii no bu* (1922).

controlling and manipulating Issei immigrants in the islands.⁵⁹ After having their suggestion rejected, the leaders may also have considered Takie and Umetaro Okumura—who together had already started periodically taking trips to the islands—as the most suitable potential mediators and entrusted the task to them.

Throughout the years of his work on the education campaign, the Foreign Ministry, Shibusawa, and certain white elites sponsored Okumura.⁶⁰ In addition to travel expenses, the Ministry funded publication of Japanese and English language pamphlets for distribution among his listeners and prospective supporters.⁶¹ After Yada approved his trip to Japan in 1920, his partnership with the Honolulu Japanese Consulate began to develop. In 1933, the Foreign Ministry recommended him for an award in recognition of his services for the betterment of Hawai'i's Japanese and the promotion of friendly U.S.-

⁵⁹ See Foreign Ministry official Masanao Hanihara's letter dated June 13, 1922 to new Honolulu Consul General Yamasaki in *Hompo imin kankei zakken: Hawai no bu* (1922).

⁶⁰ For instance, when his lecture trips began in 1921, the Honolulu Japanese Consulate newly allocated \$6,000—more than for the activities of Harada, Mori and Soga in the same year—for “a campaign of education intended for the Japanese,” as indicated in *Senden Kankei Zakken*. It is highly probable that this money was meant to finance Okumura's lecture trips. Further donations were made by Shibusawa and the Atherton, Castle, Cooke and Westervelt families. For example, Okumura received \$478 (1,000 yen) from Shibusawa in 1922 and \$1,000 from George Castle in 1923. See Okumura to Shibusawa, dated August 7, 1922 and February 18, 1924, in Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumon Sha, ed., *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 33, 544-546.

⁶¹ In the report on his first year, Okumura stated: “Because Consul General Yada also recommended compiling the reports [of the first year of his campaign] and endowed the fund for publication, I published a thirty-two page *Hawaii ni okeru Nichibei Kaiketsu Undo: Daiichinen Hokoku* (the campaign for resolving U.S.-Japan problems: first year) and sent them to distinguished Americans like the President of the United States.” See Okumura, *Nichibei*, 57. Likewise, in August 1925, presumably funded by the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, he published another pamphlet titled *Hawaii ni okeru Nichibei Kaiketsu Undo* (the campaign for resolving U.S.-Japan problems), a compilation of his writings about his educational campaign over four years. According to its financial report, the Honolulu Japanese Consulate spent \$119 on “the publication of the campaign of education for local Japanese” in the approximately same month this pamphlet came out. See Aoki to Uchida, October 1925, in *Hojyo Dantai Shushi Keisansho Kankei Zakken*.

Japan relations.⁶² In this way, the “plan for the Americanization of the Japanese,” mentioned in Atherton’s letter to Shibusawa, became actualized and was sustained through the collaborative efforts of all his allies—the Foreign Ministry, Shibusawa, and the conciliatory *haole* leaders. Though this campaign appears to have been conducted solely by one tenacious Issei man, Okumura was in fact part of a transnational social mechanism that reached across the Pacific.

Okumura’s strategy of building amicable relations with whom he negotiated might have been shaped under the influence of “internationalism” that was popular among both elite Western-educated Japanese and liberal American intellectuals in the 1920s.⁶³ According to the idea advocated by internationalism, world peace could be attained by the friendly association of all nations on the basis of equality, and well meaning efforts at constructing cordial relations, like open negotiations, disarmament, and free trade, would promote national interests rather than undermining them. To achieve this goal, internationalists promoted a friendly and harmonious atmosphere between different cultures, particularly between East and West, and encouraged the fusion of certain dimensions of other cultures into one’s own. Atherton and Shibusawa were part of this cosmopolitan effort—a union of upper-class whites and Asians—particularly with respect to their roles in the formation of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), a private international conference and research organization which was created in 1925 and

⁶² Kenji Okuda to Uchida, July 29, 1933, *Hompo Hyosho Kankei Zakken*.

⁶³ “Internationalism” also refers to the politics of the “world proletariat” in overcoming national differences to build international working-class solidarity against capitalists, imperialists, and colonialists. In this study does not deal with this type of “internationalism.”

remained active until the late 1950s.⁶⁴ This organization was also supported by Harada, Soga, Mori, and Okumura's son Umetaro, all of whom served on its various committees.⁶⁵ Allied with these individuals to promote mutual understanding among people from diverse cultural backgrounds, Okumura naturally sought solutions to the "Japanese problem" in Hawai'i through conciliation and cooperation between Japanese and whites, and, more generally, between Japan and America.

Sharing the similar internationalist impulse, Soga also regarded "cooperation" as the key to the empowerment of Japanese residents in Hawai'i. In a *Nippu Jiji* editorial titled "Be Cooperative Anytime," the newspaperman stated as follows:

If people resort solely to laws and logic to resolve any problems between them, they would always quarrel with each other and live in an unpleasant atmosphere. This is applicable not only to relationships between family members but to those between people in society in general. . . To be cooperative anytime does not mean to sacrifice your principles or change your opinions. It means to avoid becoming confrontational when you hold your principles and opinions. . . It is time for our compatriots in Hawai'i to become aware [of harmful effects of bellicosity]. Why don't we become as cooperative as possible and peacefully resolve problems not only among the Japanese but also those between the Japanese and [white] Americans through friendly discussion?⁶⁶

⁶⁴ In the mid-1920s, the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR), was inaugurated in Hawai'i for the purpose of developing friendlier relations between different cultures through dialogues among eminent scholars and civic and business leaders from Asia, Oceania and the United States, concerning international affairs as well as the latest research on the Pacific region. For further details, see Paul F. Hooper, *Elusive Destiny: The Internationalist Movement in Modern Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1980); *Rediscovering the IPR: Proceedings of the First International Research Conference on the Institute of Pacific Relations* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

⁶⁵ Keiho (Yasutaro) Soga, *Gojunenkan no Hawaii Kaiko* (Honolulu: Gojunenkan no Hawaii Kaiko Kanko Kai, 1953), 388.

⁶⁶ "Nanigoto mo Kyochoteki ni yare," *Nippu Jiji*, October 27, 1926.

As this reveals, he believed that cooperation was not a sign of subjugation to others but a means of maximizing Nikkei interests. Even if compromise was necessary at times, intraracial and interracial partnership would ultimately contribute to the empowerment of the Japanese community in Hawai'i. This concept of cooperation indeed became the backbone of the activities of the Issei group represented by Soga and Okumura.

Considering this conciliatory stance that was shared by many like-minded Issei, it is not difficult to imagine why Okumura opposed the sugar plantation strike of 1920. Despite harsh criticism from strike supporters, he contended that the action would, in the long run, intensify conflict between local Japanese and whites, especially leaders of the sugar industry. In his criticism of the Japanese Federation of Labor (JFL), the controlling body behind the strike, the Christian minister called the massive walkout "a battle over self-interest" and refrained from showing sympathy with the struggle of workers.⁶⁷ In addition, he challenged the prevalent Issei idea that all of Hawai'i's Japanese were obliged to support the strike because it was Japanese led, claiming that such a belief in "racial" solidarity would justify and fuel strife between Japanese and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i.⁶⁸

Other Issei leaders, including Soga, Harada, and Mori, also contended that the laborers should restrict themselves to peaceful negotiations with the sugar plantation owners rather than engaging in work stoppage.⁶⁹ In February 1920, the distinguished

⁶⁷ *Rakuen Jiho*, June 1920.

⁶⁸ Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi," 44.

⁶⁹ Soga, *Gojunenkan no Hawaii Kaiko*, 316.

Christian minister, Robert Palmer, who viewed the strike as “a racial conflict,” and was concerned about the nationalistic solidarity of local Japanese, proposed a plan to both the JFL and the HSPA (Hawaii Sugar Planters’ Association) to end the strike. Mori, Soga, and Harada supported this plan. Mori was actually involved in negotiations with white sugar planters to end the strike peacefully. On February 5, 1920, Mori had a meeting with Acting Governor Curtis P. Iaukea, along with Goro Nakayama (Vice-President and Manager of the Sumitomo Bank of Honolulu) and Masao Kawahara (President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Honolulu) to discuss the strike. During the meeting, he mentioned to Iaukea that Mori and other Issei leaders had met with the president of the HSPA to negotiate for the increase of laborers’ wages as well as to offer mediation services for dealing with the difficulties between the strikers and plantation owners. Though objecting to work stoppage, he also revealed his sympathy towards the laborers by saying: “We felt that the laborers are actually in need. While 500 laborers who do not get the bonus may seem small among 20,000, yet those 500 laborers are actual men and women and they cannot live on the small wage they have earned.”⁷⁰ As President of the United Japanese Association, Mori thus attempted to protect the Issei immigrants while maintaining friendly relationships between whites and local Japanese. This conciliatory approach—some would say appeasement—was even more manifest during the controversy over Japanese language schools that occurred between 1919 and 1927.

⁷⁰ National Archives, Military Intelligence Department, Record Group 165, Box 552, File 1766-S-56.

The Second Stage of Cooperation: The Japanese Language School Problem 1919-1927

While the turmoil caused by the 1920 strike was raging in Hawai'i, another issue involving Japanese language schools arose to further complicate the "Japanese problem" in the islands. Unlike the strike, in which the issue of Issei "racial" solidarity was central, the locus of the language school controversy lay in the question of Nisei national identity: that is, whether they should be raised as solely American or partly Japanese.

By 1919 Japanese language schools had already become a target of criticism by some whites who claimed that attending the schools hindered the Americanization and English acquisition of the Nisei. In November 1920, the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce proposed that the Territorial legislature abolish the language schools. To preserve the institutions for teaching Japanese to the second generation, eighteen Nikkei leaders—including Soga, Mori, and Umetaro Okumura—quickly responded by drafting a more lenient bill in place of the original proposal. Their bill was approved by the legislature and enacted as Act 30 of 1920.⁷¹

Instead of banning Japanese language instructions, Act 30 required all Japanese language schools to obtain a permit from the Territorial government, limited the hours of instruction, and instituted rigid qualifications for the teachers.⁷² This law was essentially a compromise. For Japanese, regulating schools was far more acceptable than eradicating them. While for those whites who still wished to close the schools, it seemed a stepping-stone to their ultimate goal.

⁷¹ Gijyo Ozawa, *Hawai Nihongo Gakko Kyoiku-shi* (Honolulu: Hawai Kyoiku-kai, 1972), 121.

With an eye to impeding the future abolition of the schools, the Honolulu Japanese Consulate took action immediately after the enactment of Act 30. Consul General Yada consulted with Lorrin A. Thurston, president of the Advertiser Publishing Company, and was advised that the best way for local Japanese to ameliorate U.S.-Japan problems was to demonstrate a cooperative and conciliatory spirit. Thurston stated that he was willing to lend a hand in settling the Japanese language controversy and suggested forming an interracial alliance consisting of Mori, Yada, Thurston himself, and Vaughan MacCaughey, Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction.⁷³

Soon after Yada reported this conversation to the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, Thurston was commissioned by the Honolulu Consulate to write a pamphlet that explained the importance of the Japanese language schools. His thirty-page booklet, titled *The Language School Question*, was issued early in 1921. He forcefully argued for the necessity of Nisei children learning their parents' language. He also contended that white distrust of the Japanese—not the language schools—was the major hindrance to the Americanization of local Japanese. Without acknowledging the Ministry's involvement in subsidizing this publication, 1,500 copies were distributed throughout Hawai'i, especially to whites favoring the elimination of the schools.⁷⁴

⁷² Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 147-148.

⁷³ See Yada's letters dated November 20, 1920 and December 18, 1920 in *Hainichi Zakken*. Also, for another example of Thurston's mediation, see Yukuji Okita, *Hawai Nikkei Imin no Kyoikushi* (A history of education of Japanese immigrants in Hawai'i) (Kyoto: Minerva Shobo, 1997), 181.

⁷⁴ The Japanese Foreign Ministry allocated \$161 for publishing 1,500 copies of this pamphlet in November 1920. See *Senden Kankei Zakken* and *Hainichi Zakken*, JARP Reel 35.

After the enactment of Act 30, local whites and Japanese began to cooperate over running the language schools. In July 1921, with the help of sympathetic white scholars, eighteen Issei leaders, including Mori, Harada, Soga, and Okumura, organized the first lecture class designed to help Japanese language teachers prepare for certification examinations.⁷⁵ About the same time, a committee of six whites and fifteen Issei formed to compile new Japanese language school textbooks dealing with American ideals, culture, and history as well as Japanese counterparts.⁷⁶ In short, peaceable and cooperative measures for managing the controversy were developing.

The conciliatory Issei attitude, however, did not wipe out *haole* apprehension over the potential Japanese “racial menace.” To further regulate the language schools, allegedly the hotbed of Japanese nationalism, white members on the textbook committee proposed an even more restrictive legislative bill at a joint meeting with Issei members in mid-1922. The purpose of the bill was to reduce the number of Japanese schools. After a long, strenuous discussion, Issei members of the committee reluctantly agreed to accept the bill—afraid that the legislature would abolish the schools altogether if they did not.⁷⁷

Whereas the local Japanese leaders felt compelled to go along with this bill, whites regarded their concession as “voluntary” and “conciliatory.” A good example of the latter view is expressed in a July 1922 letter from Superintendent McCaughey to Mori which states: “We are all pleased to know that the deliberations of the Committee . . . have been

⁷⁵ Ozawa, *Hawai Nihongo Gakko Kyoiku-shi*, 123-124; Okita, *Hawai Nikkei Imin no Kyoikushi*, 184.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 187-190.

⁷⁷ See articles dated August 9-12, 1922 in the *Nippu Jiji*.

uniformly characterized by good feeling, the spirit of cooperation, and a genuine agreement to formulate progressive policies. Certainly Hawaii, in the activities of your Committee, is setting a shining example in matters of friendly inter-racial co-operation.”⁷⁸ Likewise, both the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* and the *Honolulu Advertiser* praised the Japanese attitude as a demonstration of “high civic courage of a high order” and “a long step in the right direction.”⁷⁹ Obviously, this compromise was perceived differently by the more powerful white elite and politically disadvantaged Japanese leaders. Though the dynamics of their relationship varied during this controversy, the Japanese were generally coerced to make greater sacrifices in order to reach a compromise.

The more restrictive bill was passed by the Territorial Legislature in November 1922. Its enactment engendered a stormy discussion over whether local Japanese should test in the courts the constitutionality of the Territorial regulations on the language schools. It eventually resulted in splitting Hawai‘i’s Japanese community into two factions. One faction was called “*hi-shiso-ha*” [anti-litigation] and was predictably represented by Soga, Mori, Harada, and Okumura. Supported by the Japanese Consul General, the four men opposed a lawsuit, claiming that it would put an immense strain on the relations between local Japanese and white Americans. The other faction was called “*shiso-ha*” [pro-litigation] and was led by Fred Kinzaburo Makino, the publisher of a local Japanese language newspaper called the *Hawaii Hochi*. Makino initiated a

⁷⁸ McCaughey to Mori, July 29, 1922, *Hainichi Zakken*, JARP. Reel 43.

⁷⁹ *Honolulu Advertiser*, July 30, 1922; *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, July 31, 1922.

constitutional challenge to Act 30 and the regulations imposed on the language schools.⁸⁰ Though he was one of the most popular community leaders among the Nikkei in the islands, unlike many of his counterparts, Makino did not belong to the elite Issei circles centered around the Consul General.⁸¹ Furthermore, contrary to so-called “moderates” like Okumura, he did not avoid either conflict or confrontation if they were necessary to achieve his agenda. Willing to sacrifice larger causes, like the maintenance of harmonious international and interethnic relations, Makino prioritized fighting for solutions that would improve the everyday life of the masses. His style was likely derived not only from idealism but also from pragmatic calculations. By designating himself as a “popular leader,” Makino attempted to make a grandstand play to gain influence with other local Issei leaders and to increase the circulation of his newspaper.

To counter Makino’s activities, the new Consul General Keiichi Yamasaki held a joint meeting with his Issei allies and representatives of the language school association at the Japanese Consulate on December 9, 1922. The diplomat, who had just arrived in Honolulu, hoped that leading Issei moderates would thus persuade parents to abandon the idea of filing suit. Under Yamasaki’s guidance, the fifteen Issei leaders—including

⁸⁰ Ozawa, *Hawai Nihongo Gakko Kyoiku-shi*, 126-140; Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 146-151.

⁸¹ From the perspective of the Honolulu Japanese Consulate, which adopted peace-making tactics, Makino appeared to be a “trouble-maker.” In several letters from Yamasaki to Tokyo, he was portrayed as “radical” and “inflammatory.” See Yamasaki’s letters dated August 21, 1922, October 8, 1922, and November 20, 1922, as well as the letter of acting Vice-Consul Eiichi Furuya of November 7, 1919. Further, according to his letter to Uchida, Yamasaki suspected that the parents of children going to the Palama School, the first Japanese-language school filing a suit, were in fact incited to litigate by bribes from Makino. For further details, see his letter dated December 28, 1922. All letters are in *Hainichi Zakken*, JARP Reel 43.

Okumura, Harada, Mori, and Soga—delivered an official statement that going to court over the language school issue would severely damage relations between local Japanese and Americans. After listening to the statement of the Issei leaders, the diplomat hoped, the parents would change their minds.⁸² Yamasaki's attempt, however, was unsuccessful. By the end of the month, Makino went to court, accompanied by representatives from four language schools. Eventually 88 of the 146 Japanese schools in the Territory backed the constitutional challenge.

In an attempt to avoid generating further friction between whites and local Japanese, Yamasaki tirelessly engaged in 'propaganda' activities after the lawsuit started. To give whites a full account of how Issei leaders strove to solve the language school problem peaceably and how "a few 'radical' Japanese" had initiated the litigation, the diplomat allocated \$500 for the publication of *A Brief Survey of the Foreign Language School Question* (1923). This brochure, written by his Issei partners, was widely distributed among influential *haole*, including legislators, educators, and members of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce.⁸³ To influence public opinion in the local Japanese community, he also frequently wrote for the *Nippu Jiji*.⁸⁴ In general, his articles reiterated that the language school litigation would undermine mainstream Americans' trust of local Japanese, and appealed to immigrant readers to reject the action. Soga and his loyal Issei allies also denounced the lawsuit in publications and public speeches.

⁸² Yamasaki to Uchida, December 24, 1922, *Hainichi Zakken*, JARP Reel 43.

⁸³ Commissioned by the Foreign Ministry, the Japanese Educational Association of Hawai'i compiled *A Brief Survey of the Foreign Language School Question* in March 1923. See Yamasaki's letter of March 3, 1923 in *Hainichi Zakken*, JARP Reel 43.

⁸⁴ For example, see the *Nippu Jiji*, July 13, 1923.

As the test case proceeded, this 'conciliatory' group continued to work on mainstream Americans. Their endeavor bore fruit in that more sympathizers emerged among influential whites. For example, in June 1922, when Territorial Delegate Harry A. Baldwin attacked Hawai'i-born Nisei and questioned their loyalty at hearings in Washington D.C.,⁸⁵ twenty-seven distinguished *haole* leaders in various fields sent an open letter to major local newspapers defending the Nisei that stated: "[W]e have been pleased to see you [the Nisei], . . . endeavoring at much trouble and expense to establish proof of your Hawaiian birth and preparing yourselves with the characteristic idealism and enthusiasm of youth, for the responsibilities of citizenship."⁸⁶ In this letter, these prominent members of society publicly expressed their trust in young Nisei whom they referred to as "the first generation of a new type of Americans." They strove to wipe out the ill feelings of both whites and local Japanese towards each other.⁸⁷ Likewise, when

⁸⁵ The article in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* of June, 7, 1922 states that at the hearings, "Baldwin pointed out that Japanese industrial control would be followed by political control, thus threatening the value of the islands . . . he pointed out that the Japanese were not assimilated by the American population, even those born in Hawaii maintaining their racial isolation."

⁸⁶ This letter appeared in the *Nippu Jiji*, June 30, 1922 and in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, July 1, 1922.

⁸⁷ The twenty-seven Caucasian leaders who signed this "Open Letter to Young People of Japanese Ancestry" include: Arthur L. Dean (University of Hawai'i president), Romanzo C. Adams (University of Hawai'i professor), K. C. Leebrick (University of Hawai'i professor), David L. Crawford (University of Hawai'i professor), Arthur L. Andrews (University of Hawai'i professor), Benjamin O. Wist (Territorial Normal School president), Frank E. Midkiff (Kamehameha School president), J. I. Hopwood (Mid-Pacific Institute president), P. F. Jernegan (McKinley High School principal), Vaughan MacCaughey (Department of Public Instruction superintendent), John P. Erdman (Christian minister), Frank S. Scudder (Christian minister), Royal G. Hall (Christian minister), Albert W. Palmer (Christian minister), Akaiko Akana, (Christian minister), Theodore C. Williams (Christian minister), S. L. Desha Sr. (Christian minister), Lloyd B. Killam (Honolulu Central YMCA secretary-general), Chas F. Loomis (Territorial YMCA secretary), John D. La Mothe (Episcopal Church superintendent), Henry Butler Schwartz (Methodist Church auditor), Walter F. Frear (former

some *haole* attempted to divest Hawai'i Nisei of their American citizenship in August 1923, the Honolulu Ad Club and the Rotary Club criticized this racist attempt and jointly offered resolutions to protect the rights of native-born Nisei.⁸⁸

In spite of the various efforts of the 'moderates,' however, the pro-litigation party attracted great enthusiasm from the local Japanese masses, and Makino gained enormous popularity which, among other things, led to a vast increase in the number of subscriptions to his newspaper.⁸⁹ Over the years of litigation, *shiso-ha* and *hi-shiso-ha* factions vigorously criticized and attacked one another's positions. Each publisher of one of the two leading local Japanese newspapers represented an opposing faction, Makino of the *Hawaii Hochi* and Soga of the *Nippu Jiji*, and thus both papers served as arenas for the stormy debate. This dispute also contributed to focusing the attention of the local Japanese community on the question of how to educate the Nisei and what they were supposed to become as Japanese born in Hawai'i. With this shift in the public interest,

territorial governor), H. E. Stafford (attorney), William D. Westervelt (social worker), Arthur C. Alexander (engineer), Clarence H. Cooke (Honolulu Chamber of Commerce president), and J. D. McInerny (McInerny & Co. assistant manager). See "Speaks Trust In Japanese Born In Hawaii: Open Letter of Confidence Follows Baldwin's Reported Disparagement," the *Honolulu Advertiser*, July 1, 1922.

⁸⁸ Yamasaki to Uchida, August 10, 1923 in *Hainichi Zakken Hawaii no bu: Gaikokugo Gakko Mondai*, JARP Reel 36.

⁸⁹ According to an editorial of August 15, 1925, the *Hawaii Hochi* suffered by losing subscriptions immediately after the 1920 strike because it "debunked" the "dissipated lives" of the JFL (the Japanese Federation of Labor) members, the nucleus of the walkout. In retaliation, the editorial says, the JFL incited Japanese plantation laborers, main readers of the *Hochi*, to boycott the paper. After the emergence of the Japanese-language school problem, this newspaper company, which fought for the rights of the local Japanese masses, gradually revived. Celebrating the victory in the litigation, the prosperous *Hochi* expanded its business and purchased adjacent buildings and the latest model of printing press. For details, see *Hawaii Hochi*, *Hawaii Hochi Sokan Shichiju-go shunen Kinenshi* (Honolulu: Hawaii Hochi, 1987), 265-268.

the so-called “Japanese problem” became synonymous with the “Nisei problem” in the minds of both Japanese and whites in Hawai‘i during the 1920s.

Nature of International/racial Cooperation

Okumura and his Issei allies, in cooperation with Shibusawa, Japanese diplomats, and local whites leaders, were involved in a “campaign of education” which followed a similar pattern to ones conducted on the continental United States several years earlier. In the process, they developed a close quadripartite relationship, working together toward the shared goal of “Americanizing” the Nikkei and promoting a pro-Japanese sentiment among whites in Hawai‘i. Each party appeared to work on its own, concealing both the Japanese government’s involvement in the campaign and the systematic interactions between the four from the general American public. Such secrecy was necessary if their activities were to avoid suspicion and their missions to succeed. Because of the confidentiality of the project, the partnership among the four parties has remained mostly unknown and thus been given little scholarly attention. Although mutually cooperative, each of the four parties had different reasons for taking part in this effort. Economic concerns largely drove the Foreign Ministry and Shibusawa to reduce strife between Americans and the subjects of Japan in order to encourage cordial U.S.-Japan relations. Likewise, self-interested *haole* elites collaborated with Foreign Ministry officials and Issei leaders in the hope of pacifying immigrant laborers’ militancy and confining the local Japanese masses to the lower end of society. They were attempting to protect the sugar industry and the existing social structure. Like elite Japanese and officials in Tokyo,

these white leaders' perceptions of Japanese/local Japanese were class-bound; they were willing to socialize with and cooperate with upper-class Japanese beyond the differences of race.

On the other hand, the main concern of Issei leaders—Okumura, Harada, Mori, and Soga—revolved around securing a better future for local Japanese. While caring about diplomatic relations between their homeland and the United States, they were primarily concerned about empowering the Nikkei in the islands. In particular, Okumura—though he himself belonged to the so-called “privileged class”—did not simply preach to the local Japanese masses to become Americanized, but instead strove to improve their lives by mediating between the elite and the working classes as well as between whites and Japanese. In this way, for these immigrant leaders, Japanese-white collaboration provided an arena for demonstrating their leadership and directing Hawai‘i’s Japanese community in the direction they had chosen.

For the Issei population, the 1920 strike, the language school controversy, and the resultant education campaign reveal a type of community formation conforming to the visions of Hawai‘i’s *haole* and Japanese elites. The four key Issei leaders took it upon themselves to construct an ethnic community based on a specific set of values and presumptions agreeable to their sponsors and allies in Hawai‘i’s Big Five corporations and Japan’s Foreign Ministry. Yet, this is not to say that these immigrant leaders simply submitted to the demands or the inducements of the white ruling class and the Japanese state. They had their own reasons and beliefs for doing what they did, and through their

cooperative effort, the four men projected their own ideal of a Japanese resident in Hawai'i, whether as an imperial subject or an American citizen.

Such a representation and construction of a collective identity was not, however, the only vision for the Japanese in Hawai'i. Indeed, as suggested by those who criticized Okumura, a counter image was modeled by Issei labor leaders and strikers who envisioned a radically different ethnic community which valued class ties in the local context over broader diplomatic or cultural issues. Whereas the four immigrant leaders opted for cooperation with white and Japanese elites in order to facilitate their version of community formation through reconciliation with the dominant society and the betterment of international relations, the Japanese Federation of Labor and its supporters posited a class-based community. They concentrated on economic advancement for the masses at the cost of more general white-Japanese relations. Similarly, Makino found it more important to protect the rights of the Issei to teach their native language to their children than to maintain conciliatory relations with mainstream society. This clash between competing notions of community as conceived by different groups of Nikkei leaders was clearly pronounced in the 1920 strike and the language school controversy.

Nonetheless, the end of the Japanese language school litigation did not conclude discussion of the "Nisei problem" nor did it terminate the activities of the "moderates." The community struggle among Issei leaders instead entered a new phase. In February of 1927, the United States Supreme Court held that regulating foreign language schools was unconstitutional. The plaintiff Makino and his supporters celebrated their victory over the Territorial legislature and their moderate rivals in the community. Only five months

after the Supreme Court decision, however, Okumura came to terms with his defeat by taking back the leadership role pertaining to the “Nisei problem.” In July 1927, he inaugurated the New Americans Conference, a soon-to-become annual conference solely intended for Hawai‘i-born Nisei. At the six-day conference, second-generation delegates, each selected from a different district of the Territory, discussed issues that concerned all Hawai‘i Nisei, including education, occupation, marriage, and political participation. The conference also provided the delegates with an opportunity to hear advice from prominent white American, local Japanese, and Japanese leaders in various fields—for example, statesmen, businessmen, and educators—and exchange opinions with them. This annual conference, held thanks to the united efforts of mostly familiar faces—Harada, Soga, Mori, Atherton, and the Japanese Consul General—was a further development of preexisting Japanese-white collaboration. Yet, it was becoming more systematized and more institutionalized. Although Okumura lost in the rivalry with Makino at the time of the language school controversy, he returned to the scene of community politics with this project as an authority on the “Nisei problem.” As such, his reputation enabled him to win the trust and support of white Americans, local Japanese, and Japanese officials. In the years to come, as numbers of Hawai‘i-born Nisei came to play an active role in society as full-fledged American citizens, the international/interracial cooperation uniting Japanese and white Americans was to reap a rich harvest.

CHAPTER 2

For the Future of the Next Generation: The Nisei Problem and the New Americans Conference

At the first New Americans Conference held in August 1927, Walter F. Frear, a former governor as well as a former Chief Justice of the Territory, addressed a group of Hawai'i-born Nisei delegates. This distinguished guest speaker explained why these young men and women had been selected from all over the islands and brought together under one roof:

You young men of the Japanese race of American citizenship have come here to find further light as far as possible on the so-called *second generation oriental problem* in Hawai'i, or the problem of the first Hawaiian born of oriental alien parents. This is by far *the most important problem confronting the territory now* with reference to the economic, social and political future. . . . I was exceedingly pleased when I learned of this conference, for one of the most hopeful signs is that you young men, other young men, and young women are thinking of these things seriously and manifesting very great interest in them—for after all the solution must rest very largely with you. You are the ones who must demonstrate that you are capable of being first class American citizens [emphasis mine].¹

As Frear summarized, the New Americans Conference was intended to provide Nisei representatives with an opportunity to discuss what he called the “second generation oriental problem,” more commonly known among Hawai'i's Japanese as the “Nisei Problem” (*Dai Nisei Mondai*). As the majority of Nisei reached adolescence and adulthood during the 1920s and the 1930s, a collective concern arose among Hawai'i's Japanese over how to solve various challenges confronting the Nisei as minority Americans. These included issues surrounding education, employment, marriage, and

¹ *First Annual Conference of New Americans*, August 1-6, 1927, 9. The same speech appears in *The New Americans*, 9:2 (April 1928), 1.

political participation. These problems were rooted in the specific characteristics of Nisei in the islands: 1) they were the offspring of immigrants from Japan, a country that had an uneasy relationship with the United States; 2) they were numerically dominant in Hawai'i; and 3) many of them had dual citizenship.

The Issei perceived the Nisei Problem as a community-wide issue, rather than as pertaining to individual Nisei. Knowing that the Nisei would eventually constitute a crucial component of the Hawai'i Nikkei community, the Issei believed that securing a prosperous future for the next generation would ensure stability for the entire ethnic community in the years to come. Their concerns translated into active discussions in the public arena. Before long, the Nisei Problem drew the attention of *haole* leaders and Japanese officials who joined in Issei efforts by supporting lectures, conferences, speech contests, and social functions in Hawai'i to spotlight this issue. In fact, the Nisei Problem was not merely a local Japanese issue, but a territorial and international dilemma.

In spite of its significance for Japanese American history, few scholars have examined the Nisei Problem as a collective concern or major theme of public discourse within the local Japanese community, though some studies have considered each issue separately under the umbrella of the Nisei Problem.² This chapter instead analyzes the Nisei Problem in its totality and investigates how it provided Hawai'i Nikkei with a

² Concerning the Nisei Problem on the continental United States, there are several previous investigations. Two notable works are: Yuji Ichioka, "Dai Nisei Mondai, 1902-1941," in Doshisha Daigaku Jinbun Kenkyu-sho, *Hokubei Nihonjin Kirisuto-kyo Undo-shi*, 731-784; Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 225-270. However, there is no scholarly work that deals specifically with the Nisei Problem in Hawai'i's Japanese community.

framework for discussion of their future and possibly influenced the direction the community took during the interwar years and beyond.

This chapter begins by describing why the Nisei Problem received such attention in the society of Hawai'i in the late 1920s. It shows how a series of crucial incidents involving the Nikkei in Hawai'i and on the continental United States in the early 1920s changed Japanese immigrant views of their children's future and led to a reformulation of the Nisei Problem as a collective concern. Several discrete problems, involving education, employment and so on, revolved around a single question, "what should Hawai'i-born Nisei become like?" To answer this question, the Issei held public forums intended to develop a common picture of the "ideal Hawai'i-born Nisei." This chapter elucidates the key concepts in this ideal type, including "a bridge of the Pacific," "*beika*" (literally 'Americanization' in Japanese), "*hatten*" ('expansion' or 'development'), and "*yoshi-ron*" ('adopted-son analogy') as well as Takie Okumura's notion of the "New Americans" and comparable ideas amongst white intellectuals of the period.

The latter part of this chapter focuses on the New Americans Conference inaugurated by Okumura in 1927 and held annually in Honolulu until 1941. The conference is an example of the united effort of different segments of the society of Hawai'i to resolve the Nisei Problem during the interwar years. Though each supported the project out of different motivations, senior Nisei, Issei leaders, *haole* leaders, and Japanese officials cooperated to achieve the primary goal of the conference, which was to provide Hawai'i-born Nisei with opportunities to examine and resolve the Nisei Problem.

A Growing Collective Concern over the Nisei

While Nikkei consciousness of the Nisei Problem began taking shape in the late 1910s as many second-generation Japanese American children reached school age, in 1927 a number of institutionalized efforts were made to spotlight issues concerning Hawai'i-born Nisei. The New Americans Conference was inaugurated, specifically tailored for the Nisei of the islands, while other conferences, speech contests, and social functions to explore the Nisei Problem were held in Hawai'i under the auspices of various Issei and Caucasian leaders. For example, in May 1927, the Chickasaw Cup English oratory contest for "English-speaking Japanese boys under the age of eighteen" was sponsored by the Nu'uuanu YMCA's Japanese department.³ Shunzo Sakamaki, a future Nisei civic leader, won first place with his speech titled "The Second Generation Problem." After explaining that Nisei might develop inferiority complexes because they were considered "neither true Japanese nor true Americans," Sakamaki contended that they should devote their lives to the "great mission of bringing understanding between the two countries, and of promoting mutual welfare and progress" by becoming "cultural interpreters" between Japan and the United States. The other winning speeches also examined the problems and mission of Hawai'i-born Nisei, even though a topic for the speeches had not been established by the contest committee beforehand.⁴ The contest

³ *Nippu Jiji*, April 13, 1927.

⁴ The second-place winner, Theodore Chinen, gave a speech titled "The Challenge of the Pacific Era." Shiku Ogura's "The Mission of America and Japan in the Pacific" received third place. See the *Nippu Jiji*, May 21, 1927.

thus served as an arena wherein young Nisei speakers and the Issei and senior Nisei contest organizers expressed their views on the Nisei Problem to the Japanese public.⁵

Meanwhile, Issei held their own public forums to discuss the Nisei Problem. For example, in October 1927, representatives of banking and merchant associations from all over the Territory held the first Japanese Commercial Conference under the sponsorship of the Honolulu Japanese Chamber of Commerce. One of the sessions at this three-day conference focused on “the education and occupation of the next generation of Hawaii Japanese,”⁶ where participants agreed on the necessity for Nisei to acquire Japanese language skills and receive a vocational education. At the same time, their interest in work should be cultivated from an early age and they should be guided by Issei in their selection of occupation.”⁷

The Nikkei were not the only people who perceived the Nisei Problem as an imminent dilemma and organized public forums to examine it. The second meeting of the Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR)—a biennial conference in which internationalist-minded leaders and intellectuals like Atherton and Shibusawa played an important role—was held in Honolulu in July 1927 that attracted 137 delegates from Asia, Oceania,

⁵ Shinji Maruyama, president of Chickasaw Guild, English editor-in-chief of the *Nippu Jiji*, and a graduate of Okumura Home, handed the Chickasaw Guild trophy to Sakamaki. Colbert N. Kurokawa, the Educational director of the Pan-Pacific Union, was one of the judges. *Nippu Jiji*, April 13, May 21, 1927.

⁶ *Nippu Jiji*, August 29, 1927; September 21, 1927; October 8, 1927; October 24.

⁷ *Nippu Jiji*, August 29, 1927; September 21, 1927; October 8, 1927; October 24, 1927; *Zaigai Hojin Shogyo (Shoko) Kaigisho Kankei Zakken: Honoruru Shoko Kaigisho*, (Miscellaneous documents about the overseas Japanese chamber of commerce: Honolulu Chamber of Commerce) January 1928, Diplomatic Records Office, Tokyo.

and the United States.⁸ At a roundtable session titled “Immigration and Emigration,” one of the eight questions discussed was “What problems specially arise in connection with the ‘second generation’?”⁹ Discussants from Hawai‘i included Frank C. Atherton, Iga Mori, former governor Walter F. Frear, University of Hawai‘i president David Crawford, and University of Hawai‘i sociology professor Romanzo C. Adams. Tasuku Harada and a young mainland-born Nisei leader Hidemichi Akagi attended as representatives of Japan.¹⁰ Eighteen articles were distributed for discussants to read, including Harada’s “The Social Status of the Japanese in Hawai‘i: Some of the Problems Confronting the Second Generation,”¹¹ Akagi’s “The Second Generation Problem: Some Suggestions toward Its Solution,”¹² and Adams’ “The Education and the Economic Outlook for the Boys of Hawaii: A Study in the Field of Race Relationships.”¹³ Another important work

⁸ For further details of the 1927 conference, see Michio Yamaoka, *Taiheiyo Mondai Chosakai-Kenkyu*, 63-65.

⁹ Three round tables were set up for the “Immigration and Emigration” session (July 26-27, 1927); all the tables were given the same eight questions. Institute of Pacific Relations, *Addresses and Papers: Second Session 1927*, 190-191.

¹⁰ Hidemich Akagi was General Secretary of the Japanese Student Christian Association of North America, New York.

¹¹ Tasuku Harada, “The Social status of the Japanese in Hawai‘i: Some of the Problems Confronting the Second Generation” (Honolulu, n. p.: 1927). Preliminary paper prepared for Second General Session, the Institute of Pacific Relations, July 15-29, 1927.

¹² Hidemichi Akagi, “The Second Generation Problem: Some Suggestions toward Its Solution” (Honolulu: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927). Preliminary paper prepared for Second General Session, the Institute of Pacific Relations, July 15-29, 1927. Akagi’s paper was originally issued by the Japanese Students’ Christian Association in North America in 1926.

¹³ Romanzo C. Adams, “The Education and the Economic Outlook for the Boys of Hawaii: A Study in the Field of Race Relationships” (Honolulu: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927). Preliminary paper prepared for Second General Session, the Institute of Pacific Relations, July 15-29, 1927. In June 1927, prior to the second IPR, Adams held a workshop with some fifty members of the IPR to discuss his paper. Earlier, in May 1926, he delivered a lecture on educational and occupational problems of second-generation Japanese Americans at the Young

on the Nisei Problem, "The Second Generation Oriental in America" by sociologist William C. Smith, was also distributed to the delegates.¹⁴

The Japanese government was also concerned by how the Nisei Problem might impact the U.S.-Japan relationship. In fact, Japanese Minister of Education Rentaro Mizuno proclaimed that Japanese politicians and civic leaders should cooperate with Issei and Americans to resolve the Nisei Problem. American-born Nisei would have an enormous impact on the bilateral relations because American views of Japan would be influenced by whether or not the Nisei were assimilated and gained a respectable social status in U.S. society. To maintain an amicable relationship between the two countries, Mizuno concluded, the Japanese should make a serious effort to help Nisei youths become good American citizens.¹⁵ Sharing this view, officials in the Japanese Foreign Ministry generally agreed that the Issei and Japanese consulates should seek support and cooperation from Americans to educate Nisei such that the youth would maintain the best attributes of the Japanese race while becoming commendable American citizens.¹⁶

Men's Buddhist Association Hall under the sponsorship of the Honolulu Japanese Association. From Arata Aoki to Kijuro Shidehara, May 8, 1926, *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawaii no bu*, JARP Collection, Reel 36.

¹⁴ William C. Smith, "The Second Generation Oriental in America" (Honolulu: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927). Preliminary paper prepared for Second General Session, the Institute of Pacific Relations, July 15-29, 1927. Both Adams and Smith were sociologists trained at the University of Chicago. Smith had been an assistant professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California, but joined the University of Hawai'i in 1927. Later he went back to USC. See Institute of Pacific Relations, *Problems of the Pacific* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 161.

¹⁵ *Nippu Jiji*, October 20, 1927.

¹⁶ Officials in the Japanese Foreign Ministry consequently wrestled with the Nisei Problem. At the Third Pacific Coast Consular Conference (*Taiheiyo Engan Ryoji Kaigi*), held in San Francisco in March 1928, Japanese consuls general residing on the Pacific Coast gathered to discuss problems common amongst the Japanese communities they were in charge of. The main agenda

As these examples show, the Nisei Problem was a collective interest amongst the Japanese community in Hawai'i and beyond. Several critical incidents triggered this concern. The 1920 O'ahu sugar plantation strike established a context for discussing the Nisei Problem. As previously noted, in the eyes of mainstream Caucasians, this strike represented the "anti-American" and "anti-assimilable" characteristics of Japanese immigrants. Major local English newspapers portrayed the strike as a "conspiracy" of Japanese "agitators" backed by the Japanese government, which supposedly intended to take over the sugar industry and eventually control the Territory of Hawai'i. The major press in Hawai'i blurred the distinction between Nisei who were American citizens and those who were Japanese from Japan, questioning Nisei loyalty to the United States. Because of this incident, many Caucasian and Issei leaders thought it urgent to "Americanize" the Nisei in Hawai'i. Caucasian leaders mostly adopted the views of the press, while immigrant leaders were concerned about how to change such perceptions in Hawai'i.

Another factor in the emergence of the Nisei Problem was the Japanese language school controversy. As discussed in Chapter I, during the years of litigation, two factions arose in Hawai'i's Japanese community, the pro-litigation faction, led by Kinzaburo Makino, and the anti-litigation faction, led by Yasutaro Soga, publisher of the *Nippu Jiji*. Since each function was headed by a leading newspaper publisher, their newspapers became arenas for stormy discussions over Japanese language school issues, Nisei

was the Nisei Problem, particularly, the aspect of education, as a large number of Nisei were reaching school age throughout the United States and Canada. They also discussed emerging occupational problems among older Nisei and marriage issues for Nisei women. See *Dai Sankai Taiheiyo Engan Ryoji Kaigi Gijiroku Gekan* (The Minutes of the Third Pacific Coast Consular Conference, v. 2), Chosho Zaigai 93, 1928, Diplomatic Records Office, Tokyo.

education in general, and how the second generation should be raised in Hawai'i. The *Nippu Jiji* carried articles such as "American-Born Japanese and Japanese Culture" (July 23, 1924), "Education of the Younger Generation" (April 18, 1925), "Responsibility of the New Generation" (September, 7, 1925) and "Improving Local Born Japanese" (October 30, 1926). The *Hawaii Hochi* included articles such as "Americans of Japanese Ancestry Should Be Proud in Learning the Japanese Language" (July 11, 1925) and "Absorbing Oriental Culture Won't Hinder Americanization" (August 13, 1925). As opinion leaders among the Nikkei, the papers not only raised local Japanese awareness about issues confronting the second generation but also established standards for the "ideal" Nisei.¹⁷

Various incidents impacting the legal status of the Issei also led them to reconsider the future of the Japanese in America. In 1922, a Supreme Court judgment denied Issei rights to naturalization. Hawai'i resident Takao Ozawa had appealed to the court asking whether he, a Japanese immigrant, would be eligible for naturalization. At the time, federal laws restricted the right of naturalization to aliens who were "free white" persons or of African descent.¹⁸ Ozawa had lived in Hawai'i and on the U.S. mainland

¹⁷ The *Hawaii Hochi* and especially the bilingual *Nippu Jiji* influenced both Issei and Nisei. Certain Nisei expected the editors of these newspapers to find solutions to the problems affecting them. One high school student wrote in her school paper: "This is an appropriate time for the local newspaper men and the social workers to lead the flock of the straying sheep to the right and better way. Apparently, their parents have no definite plan or ability to guide their children to the right path, and to solve the difficult situations for the youngsters." Chiyo Yanagida, "The Nippu Jiji and the Japanese Language School Issue in Hawai'i, 1919-1927," Master's Thesis, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1996, 139. Originally in William C. Smith Papers 1926-1927, Reel 14, McKinley High School, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Hamilton Library.

¹⁸ Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice*, 97-98; Ichioka, *The Issei*, 210-226; Bill Ong Hing, *Making and Remaking Asian America Through Immigration Policy, 1850-1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 226-229.

for nearly thirty years, been educated at the University of California, worked for an American company, married an American-educated woman, and only spoke English with his children at home. He also had outstanding character references from his white friends and colleagues. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court judged that since he was of the 'Mongolian' race, he could not obtain citizenship. After the decision was passed down, Japanese immigrants realized they could never become American citizens no matter how long they lived in the United States or how 'Americanized' they became.¹⁹

The subsequent 1924 passage of the Immigration Act, which terminated legal Japanese immigration to the United States, further threw the Issei into despair. The act established an immigration quota system based upon national origin, and prohibited the admission of any alien ineligible for citizenship to immigrate, which automatically excluded all Asians except for Filipinos.²⁰ Anti-Japanese exclusionists in California vigorously pushed enactment of this law, claiming an urgent necessity to protect the U.S. from the "yellow peril." Since immigrants from nearly all other Asian countries were already restricted from entering the United States, passage of this act was seen by both the Issei in America and people in Japan as covertly targeting the Japanese. They

¹⁹ Some Japanese associations in California backed Ozawa's challenge, believing that this test case might be a breakthrough for Issei immigrants who were in a predicament because of the Alien Land Laws which prohibited "aliens ineligible for naturalization" to possess, purchase, transfer, or even lease land. Fewer Hawai'i Issei endorsed Ozawa's efforts, however. While Okumura and Soga were enthusiastic supporters, Makino's *Hawaii Hochi* expressed skepticism. After the court decision was made, the *Hochi* stated that Issei with better qualifications than Ozawa, such as Dr. Jokichi Takamine, should have appealed to court. *Hawaii Hochi Sokan Shichijunen Kinenshi*, 94-102.

²⁰ The 1924 Immigrant Act allowed Japanese to enter as "non-immigrants," including diplomats sailors, merchants, and sightseers. "Non-quota immigrants," such as teachers, students over fifteen years old, and priests of any religion, were also admitted to the country. Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjinshi*, 694-696.

therefore referred to the 1924 Immigration Act as *hainichi imin-ho*, meaning the 'Japanese immigrant exclusion act.'²¹

The Immigration Act caused humiliation, indignation, bitterness, and misgiving amongst the Japanese immigrants, and Nikkei views of their community in America changed rapidly. Since Japanese immigration was curtailed, the Issei population was destined to disappear. Their children, as natural-born American citizens, had a better possibility of fighting racial discrimination, gaining validity among the society of Hawai'i, and being accepted into American society. The Issei thereafter made it their first priority to defend the rights of the younger generation and secure their standing in society as much as possible. The Ozawa judgment combined with the Immigration Act thus rendered the first generation aware that the "Issei era" was coming to an end.²²

Nevertheless, legal efforts by anti-Japanese exclusionists also cast a dark shadow over the Nisei future in the United States. In 1920, Senator James D. Phelan of California proposed a constitutional amendment to strip American-born children whose parents were ineligible for naturalization of their U.S. citizenship. In the summer of 1923, a group of congressmen, including Albert Johnson, a representative figure of the anti-Japanese movement on the West Coast, came to Hawai'i to observe its racial situation. They claimed that there was a danger of Japanese American voters gaining control of territorial politics, and suggested that either the Constitution should be amended as Phelan proposed or that Hawai'i should adopt a commission form of

²¹ Congress had extended the Chinese Exclusion Act indefinitely in 1902 and had designated most of Asia in 1917 as barred from immigration. Ichioka, *The Issei*, 244.

²² *Ibid.*, 252-254.

government in place of the current system of self-government.²³ Though Phelan's proposal did not see the light of day, this political assault made Hawai'i's Japanese aware that not only were the Nisei still in a vulnerable position, but they were often viewed as a threat to American society in general, and Hawai'i in particular.²⁴

Constituting the "Nisei Problem"

Following the developments during the early to mid-1920s, the "Nisei Problem" became a major theme of public discourse in the Nikkei community in Hawai'i. The term referred to a generational crisis as well as to specific challenges faced by Nisei

²³ Keiichi Yamasaki to Hiroya Uchida, August 10, 1923, *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawai no bu*, JARP Reel 36; Okumura, *Nichibei*, 52-53; Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjinshi*, 699-700.

²⁴ In September 1922, Congress passed the Cable Act depriving American women of citizenship if they married aliens. This law meant that Nisei women who had married Issei men lost their citizenship. Although non-Asian women who married aliens and lost their American citizenship could regain it through naturalization upon the end of their marriage, Nisei women were not allowed to redeem theirs because of their Asian ancestry. A number of Nisei women in Hawai'i who lost their American citizenship on account of this law. The 1927 case of Yoshiko Hoshino drew much attention in the local Japanese community. Hawai'i-born Nisei Hoshino had divorced her Issei husband in 1925 and then asked the territorial court to return her American citizenship. The territorial court granted her citizenship in 1927, since she had been born in America. However, a United States district attorney, Sanford B. D. Wood, then residing in Honolulu, questioned her eligibility by referring to the Cable Act, appealed to the San Francisco circuit court, and even wrote to the federal government to challenge the validity of this judgment. The San Francisco circuit court turned down Prosecutor Wood's appeal in February 1928. According to a letter from Honolulu Consul General Kazue Kuwashima, however, Wood told Vice Consul Komaji Takeuchi that the Attorney General asked to him not to make a final appeal because more rigorous naturalization acts were being prepared for the next Congress, even though the Attorney General himself did not agree with the judgment of the territorial court. See letters from Kazue Kuwashima to Giichi Tanaka, November 27, 1927; February 15, 1928, *Nikkei Gaijin Kankei Zakken*, vol. 1, Diplomatic Records Office, Tokyo. Through a movement by the League of Women Voters and other women's groups, this law was amended in 1931 to allow women citizens to maintain their citizenship after marriage to an alien. In 1936 the Cable Act was repealed. See Hachiro Sishimoto, *Nikkei Shimin wo kataru* (Tokyo: Shokansha, 1934), 144-146, 166-167; Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 310-312.

growing up as minority Americans during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁵ These problems fell into five broad categories: education, occupation, political participation, marriage, and nationality (dual citizenship). Of these five categories, education was the most critical issue at the time a majority of the Nisei were still in their school age. Generally speaking, Japanese immigrant parents did not want their children to become poor imitations of either Caucasian Americans or Japanese nationals. Most Issei had initially migrated to Hawai'i as "sojourners," and attempted to raise their children as "imperial subjects" for the day they would return to Japan. A large number of these Issei eventually decided to settle down in the islands permanently, however. With this shift in their own status, they wished to raise the Nisei as American citizens endowed with a proud racial heritage.²⁶ Many Issei exhorted the Nisei to learn American ideals and history and acquire 'standard' English in order to prove to the rest of the society that they were full-fledged Americans.²⁷ At the same time, they sent their children to Japanese language

²⁵ The term 'the Nisei Problem' was later used among Nikkei on the continental United States to indicate a similar collective concern. It did not become popular there until the 1930s because the average age of Nisei on the U.S. mainland was lower than in Hawai'i. *Zaibei Nihonjinshi* (History of the Japanese in America) states that, "As the Nisei began to reach adulthood and get a start in life from approximately 1930, their "*shiso mondai*" ("thought problem" in Japanese; the problem regarding the Nisei world view) drew the attention of leaders in the Japanese community as a serious social problem because the leaders believed that Nisei attitudes towards family, occupation, marriage, life, religion, and politics would directly influence the future of the Japanese community." See Chapter One "*Dai Nisei no Shomondai*" (Various Problems of the Nisei) in Section Five "*Nikkei Beikoku Shimin (Nisei) Gaikan*" (The Overview of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry (Nisei)), *Zaibei Nihonjinkai, Zaibei Nihonjinshi*, (San Francisco: Zaibei Nihonjinkai, 1940), 1103-1111.

²⁶ This shift is exemplified by the textbooks used at the language schools in Hawai'i. In the earlier period, they were the same ones used in Japanese public schools, sent by the Japanese Ministry of Education. In the mid-1910s, the language schools adopted new textbooks written specifically for Hawai'i-born Nisei. *Hawaii Hochi Sokan Nanajugo Shunen Kinenshi*, 260.

²⁷ Some local Caucasian leaders commented that the Nisei should improve their English. For example, the President of the Normal School, Benjamin O. West, stated that Nisei students and

schools in hope that they would become familiar with Japanese culture.²⁸ The Issei not only wanted their children to be able to communicate with them but also thought that a command of the Japanese language would give them better job opportunities in the future, whether in Hawai'i, Japan, or the U.S. mainland.²⁹ During the 1920s and 1930s, discussion of Nisei education therefore revolved around which aspects of Japanese and American cultures should be taught to the youngsters in order to raise them into 'ideal' American citizens of Japanese ancestry.

As the Nisei reached adulthood, employment became a major concern of the Japanese community. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Hawai'i-born Nisei population roughly doubled each decade: from 19,889 in 1910, to 49,016 in 1920, to 87,748 in 1929.³⁰ By 1920, approximately 30,000 Hawai'i Nisei had reached voting age. They constituted nearly one quarter of the employed population in the islands.³¹ Many Issei leaders were concerned about how to accommodate this newly emerging workforce in light of the restricted economic opportunities they were permitted in *haole*-

Chinese students at the Normal School (a teacher's school) should make an effort to correct their pronunciation. According to him, poor pronunciation was the main reason that parents were critical of Japanese American teachers at public schools. Similarly, during a monthly meeting of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, Wade Warren Thayer, President of the International Building Loan Association, Ltd., commented that Nisei men and women tended to be poor in written English, particularly, business English. See *Nippu Jiji*, October 28, 1927; November 11, 1927. Also see "*Eigo mo mata Sandai wo yousu*" (Perfect English Needs Three Generations), *Nippu Jiji*, November 4, 1927.

²⁸ To achieve the same purpose, many teenage Nisei were later sent to schools in Japan for a higher education. See Soen Yamashita, *Nikkei Shimin no Ryugaku Jijo*, (Tokyo: Bunseido, 1935).

²⁹ *Nippu Jiji*, October 24, 1927.

³⁰ *Hawai Doho Hatten Kaikoshi*, 193; *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 18.

³¹ *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 19* (Honolulu: Hawai Shimposha, 1924), 23-24; Andrew W. Lind, *Hawaii's People* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1955), 68.

dominated Hawai‘i. Some of them encouraged the Nisei to seek job opportunities outside Hawai‘i, in Japan, Manchuria, the continental United States, or South America.³² Other Issei urged them to engage in agriculture, the key industry of the territory where they resided. Most Japanese American youth, particularly boys in urban areas, preferred white-collar jobs, although the availability of such jobs was limited. Foreseeing that unemployed Nisei would flock to the city looking for jobs, a number of immigrant leaders founded a study group to examine how to enhance the ethnic economy and create more job opportunities for the younger generation within Hawai‘i.³³

Marriage became another major issue as Hawai‘i-born Nisei matured, and local Japanese debated whom Nisei men and women should marry to maintain their “racial” community in the islands. These concerns were particular to Hawai‘i, since there were no anti-miscegenation laws in the Territory unlike California and many other states where Japanese immigrants lived. The majority of local Japanese insisted that Nisei marry within their ethnic group to perpetuate an “untainted” bloodline amongst Japanese Americans and make a “healthy” family built on the superior Japanese lineage in order to survive discrimination and restore the strength of the ethnic community that was thwarted by the racist assaults of the previous decade.³⁴ Indeed, the Japanese in the island tended

³² Seikan Higa, *Nanbei Hattensaku*, referred in Okumura’s *Nichibei*, 104-105.

³³ *Nippu Jiji*, May 29, 1928.

³⁴ In an article published in the *Journal of Heredity*, Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction Vaughan MacCaughey, an advocate of intermarriage, stated that the Japanese in the islands tended to marry strictly within the same ethnic group hoping to maintain a “pure” blood lineage and remain “distinctive” from other groups. According to him, there were only a few cases of intermarriage between Japanese and non-Japanese, while nearly half of Chinese men

to marry strictly within the same ethnic group during the interwar years. For instance, over the period between July 1, 1926 and June 30, 1927, only 3.6 percent of Nisei men and five percent of Nisei women intermarried in Hawai'i, while nearly half of Chinese men married non-Chinese women.³⁵ Looking at the Nikkei's tendency to exclude non-Japanese from their community, however, some Issei claimed that such ethnocentrism would give the mainstream society an excuse to call Japanese "unassimilable" and "anti-American," and encouraged the Nisei to intermarry.³⁶ Thus, the debate over marriage was fundamental to ideas of racial integration and acculturation.

Issei anxiety over being regarded as "anti-American" also originated from the fact that the majority of Nisei possessed dual citizenship. Because of conflicting laws in America and Japan, Nisei who were born in the United States before 1924 were deemed citizens of both countries.³⁷ Yet the mainstream society of Hawai'i was concerned whether or not the Nisei would be loyal Americans, because the Nisei already constituted such a large proportion of the population and had immense potential voting strength. Anti-Japanese exclusionists viewed Nisei with dual citizenship as likely agents of Japan

married non-Chinese women. See *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 18* (Honolulu: Hawaii Shimposha, 1922), 60-63.

³⁵ *Hawai Nenkan 1928*, 19.

³⁶ Okumura was one of the Issei leaders who encouraged intermarriage among the Nikkei to counter anti-Japanese exclusionists' statements that the Japanese were "unassimilable." In 1922, Okumura investigated how many Japanese had married non-Japanese in Hawai'i by sending a questionnaire to his acquaintances living in O'ahu, Hawai'i, Kaua'i, Maui, and Moloka'i. See *Zakkon Chosa*, Box 52/6, the Makiki Church Archives.

³⁷ The legal concept of *jus soli* (right of the soil) meant that anyone born in the United States automatically became a citizen of the country. The Japanese concept of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) automatically gave citizenship to the children of the country's male citizens no matter where they were born. See Eileen Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 85.

and asserted that they would be a threat to Hawai'i's body politic. Some Issei leaders and older Nisei therefore lobbied for change in the Japanese law so that the Nisei would not be automatically given Japanese citizenship in the early 1920s. Later, they also implemented the expatriation movement among the Nisei to renounce their Japanese nationality as will be discussed in Chapter Five.

Despite the popular anxiety that the Nisei would control Hawai'i, many Nisei did not show much interest in politics in the late 1910s and early 1920s. In 1920, only 25 percent of Nisei over the voting age were registered voters (658 out of 2,613). This was quite a small percentage compared with other racial groups, since 75 percent of Hawaiians (14,650 out of 19,638) and 45 percent of Portuguese (3,091 out of 6,881) were registered to vote.³⁸ During the territorial election of 1922, only 1,135 Japanese Americans (1,014 men and 121 women) registered and voted, although more than 3,000 were eligible to vote.³⁹ A *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* article of June 1922 commented, "There are many Japanese Americans . . . who have not registered either because of indifference or because they have not been reached with educative influence stimulating them to take an active part in local and territorial politics."⁴⁰ Wary of Nisei indifference towards voting, many Issei felt an urgent need to nurture interest in politics among the youth. Excluded from the Hawaiian legislature because they were ineligible for

³⁸ *Hawai Nenkan 1928*, 30-31.

³⁹ *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 18*, 58; Okumura, *Nichibei*, 57; *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 56-57; Wakukawa, *History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 360.

⁴⁰ "As to Japanese-American Voters," *The Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, June 27, 1922. See the letter from Sukeyuki Akamatsu to Kijuro Shidehara dated June 8, 1929 in *Kakkoku ni okeru Hainichi Kankei Zakken, Hawai no bu*, Diplomatic Records Office, Tokyo.

citizenship, the Issei were acutely aware of the importance of political participation in order to empower the local Japanese community. Since they could not elect representatives to fight for their interests, they did not have the means to repeal disadvantageous laws except by seeking assistance from sympathetic Caucasians. Therefore, they placed their hopes in their Hawai'i-born children. They also thought that if a large number of Nisei registered for voting, political candidates would strive to protect Nisei interests in society.

Like many other Issei leaders, Takie Okumura was apprehensive about the future of the Nisei given that they were being targeted by anti-Japanese exclusionists.⁴¹ In several essays referring to the incidents of the tumultuous early 1920s, he discussed the possibility of Congress stripping the Nisei of American citizenship.⁴² Reflecting his concern, in 1925 Okumura added two more items to the general education campaign he had started in 1921.⁴³ These two items were concrete suggestions for enabling the Nisei to become "an integral part of U.S. society," specifically in the economic and political arenas, by engaging in independent farming and by joining a political party and

⁴¹ In California, Kyutaro Abiko, a well-known Issei leader as well as the *Nichibei Shimbun* publisher, expressed similar concerns in the same time period. When Okumura visited the West Coast, he had a chance to meet Abiko and discuss the Nisei Problem. See "Zaifu Doho Shoshi e: Okumura Abiko Ryoshi Kaiken no ki," *Nippu Jiji*, October 12, 1927; October 13, 1927.

⁴² Okumura published a series of essays regarding the Immigration Act, including "Hainichi Imin-ho to Hawai no Taido" (The Japanese Exclusion Act and the Attitude of People of Hawai'i), "Korekara do suru" (What Shall We Do from Now on?), and "Hainichi-an Taio-saku" (Countermeasures for the Exclusion Act). He distributed copies of these essays among Nikkei throughout the Territory. "Hainichi Imin-ho to Hawai no Taido," 43-47; "Korekara do suru," 47-51; "Hainichi-an Taio-saku," 51-59. All the essays are included in *Nichibei*.

⁴³ At the start of his campaign, Okumura was already discussing the importance of Americanizing the Nisei. He encouraged the immigrant generation to adopt American culture and raise their children as good American citizens rather than imperial Japanese subjects.

exercising their right to vote. According to Okumura, both farming and political power would counter anti-Japanese propaganda.⁴⁴ He thought that combined economic and political activities would not only resolve part of the Nisei Problem but also turn the next generation into 'ideal' Hawai'i-born Nisei, or what he called "New Americans."

The Nisei as New Americans

During the interwar years, the term "New Americans" was widely used in Hawai'i to indicate second-generation Japanese Americans or children of immigrants in general. Okumura initiated and popularized calling Hawai'i-born Nisei "New Americans," defining them as: 1) the first generation of natural-born American citizens of Japanese ancestry; 2) "new" adult members of society as they entered their early twenties; and 3) "new elements" of U.S. society who could be expected to contribute to America thanks to their "preeminent qualities originating in their blood of the *Yamato* (Japanese) race."⁴⁵ Using his publications and the New Americans Conference as vehicles, Okumura strove to spread this definition of the "New Americans" among local Japanese and whites.

After Okumura and his son Umetaro changed the title of their monthly magazine for the Nisei from *The Boy* to *The New Americans* in January 1920 (when the O'ahu sugar strike broke out and anti-Japanese sentiment surged), the term often appeared in public speeches, books, journals, and newspapers published in the islands borrowing

⁴⁴ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 55-58.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 157; *The Seventh Annual New Americans Conference, June 19 to 24, 1933*, 3.

from Okumura's definitions.⁴⁶ A Nisei college student, Kensuke Kawachi, won the 1925 Berndt Oratorical Contest held at the University of Hawai'i by delivering a speech titled "The New American." He stated: "Who is this 'New American' . . . ? He is a son of the old world, son of the east, son of the Orient . . . the Hawaiian born child of Japanese ancestry."⁴⁷ Similarly, in *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii* (1938), Ernest K. Wakukawa interchangeably used the terms "new Americans" and "second-generation Japanese Americans."⁴⁸ Local Japanese-language papers including the *Nippu Jiji* also frequently used the term "New Americans" to refer specifically to the Nisei in the islands. Non-Japanese people in Hawai'i, too, embraced the concept, albeit often more broadly, to mean children of immigrants in general. For instance, the *Guidebook for Homemaking in Hawaii* (1938) written by Caroline W. Edwards had a chapter titled "Care for the Little New Americans," which told American-born daughters of immigrants how to take care of their younger siblings and their own children.⁴⁹ While it never became popular on the U.S. mainland where Asians were less conspicuous among an overwhelmingly white population, the term "New Americans" became widely used throughout the society of Hawai'i, in which people of Japanese ancestry were

⁴⁶ The first issue of *The Boy* came out in December 1916. It was "published for boys clubs among Hawaiian-Japanese." In addition to Umetaro, its editors were U. Muramaru, Bunzo Tokioka, and M. Watada. Its advisers included: Theodore Richards, F. S. Scudder, Takie Okumura, and M. Kakehi.

⁴⁷ The Japanese Students' Association of Hawaii, *Japanese Students Annual 1926* (Honolulu: Nippu Jiji, 1926), 22-24. Yamamoto Collection, National Diet Library, Tokyo.

⁴⁸ Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 355, 366.

⁴⁹ Caroline W. Edwards, *Guidebook for Homemaking in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The New Freedom Press, 1938), 537-561. She was Supervisor of Home Economics Education of the Territory of Hawai'i.

numerically dominant (40 percent of the 1927 territorial population) and their visibility caused apprehension among non-Asian residents.⁵⁰ Repeating the term to the rest of society, Okumura attempted to promote the view that the Nisei were loyal, trustworthy American citizens and assets to U.S. society despite their Asian physical features and familiarity with Japanese culture. The popularization of this term among people of Hawai'i was thus part of his education campaign to influence the formation of a general public consciousness about the Nisei.

Okumura also used the concept to convey a picture of ideal Nisei. He believed that Nisei should embody the "best of two worlds," America and Japan.⁵¹ While urging the Nisei to adopt American middle-class norms, abide by American laws, support American democracy, and be loyal to the United States, Okumura also hoped they would remain proud of their Japanese ancestry and maintain the 'unique' Japanese qualities of diligence, perseverance, self-control, and loyalty. Possessing these strengths, which he assumed came from having Japanese blood, he argued that second-generation Japanese Americans could become equal, if not superior to the "Old Americans," namely, people of European ancestry.⁵² By contending that a Japanese genealogy and cultural heritage actually qualified the Nisei to be good "Americans," he attempted to turn over the

⁵⁰ *Hawai Nenkan 1928*, 15.

⁵¹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 185; *Rakuen Jiho* January, 1931; Ryo Yoshida, "Okumura Takie to Nikkei Shimin Kaigi" (Takie Okumura and the New Americans Conference), in *Hawai ni okeru Nikkeijin Shakai to Kirisuto Kyokai no Hensen*, Doshisha Daigaku Jinbunkagaku Kenkyusho, ed. (Kyoto: Doshisha Daigaku Jinbunkagaku Kenkyusho, 1991), 66; Shimada, "Okumura Takie to Shibusawa Eiichi," 45.

⁵² Okumura, *Nichibei*, 141; Ryo Yoshida, "Kirisuto-kyo to Hawai Nihonjin no Amerika-ka: Okumura Takie to Nikkei Shimin Kaigi," *Shukyo Kenkyu*, 67, no.2 (September 1993): 91-93.

existing notion in U.S. society that the Nisei were second-rate American citizens on account of their race.

Okumura's notion of the ideal Nisei as an amalgamation of Japanese and American cultures closely resembled the concept of them as a "bridge of the Pacific," a view widely embraced by Issei intellectuals both in Hawai'i and on the continental United States from the late 1920s to the mid-1930s.⁵³ As this was a period of internationalism in which the appreciation of eclectic cultural values was promoted (See Chapter 1), many Issei expected the Nisei to become "cultural interpreters" between Japan and the United States who could explain the culture of each country to the people of the other.⁵⁴ For example, Soen Yamashita, a journalist, former Hawai'i Issei, and 'expert' on the Nisei Problem stated:

As New Americans, the Nisei, who inherit Japanese racial spirit and harmonize it with Americanism, contribute to creating a new culture and peace. They are destined to play the role of a bridge across the Pacific. . . . Through this bridge the two countries are united and promote amicable relations. With the help of this bridge, the Issei are now attempting to present a true picture of Japan to Americans. When this bridge becomes sturdier and securer, Japanese people will cross it to see the real America.⁵⁵

⁵³ Shishimoto, *Nikkei Shimin wo kataru*, 253-255; Yamashita, *Nikkei Shimin no Ryugaku Jijo*, 142-145, *Nichibei wo Tsunagu Mono* (Tokyo: Bunseisha, 1938), 65-68; Yuji Ichioka, "A Study in Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the Japanese American Courier, 1928-1942," *Amerasia Journal* 13, no.2 (1986/1987): 57-6.

⁵⁴ At the 1930 New Americans Conference, Okumura told the Nisei audience, "As leaders of huge masses, you are to interpret the good things of American life to the Japanese and the goods things of Japanese to the American people." *Fourth Annual Conference of New Americans, July 30 to August 5, 1930*, 6.

⁵⁵ Yamashita, *Nichibei wo Tsunagu Mono*, 66-67.

Yamashita claimed that the Nisei were “born internationalists” who had been given a mission to improve the American general public’s perception of Japan and promote international goodwill between the two nations. He maintained that these “New Americans” would diminish mainstream America’s prejudice against the Nikkei and resolve local conflicts between Japanese and Caucasians in Hawai‘i.

Behind the belief in the Nisei as “a bridge across the Pacific” there were other popular concepts concerning the “Pacific Era” and “Pacific Civilization.” The theory went that Western civilization, based around the Atlantic, had started declining after the First World War devastated Europe. The Pacific Civilization, possessing both Western “rationalism” and Eastern “spiritualism” was emerging in the middle of the Pacific, as a meeting point of two civilizations. It would enable the Pacific region to become the new center of the world’s cultural, intellectual, political, and economic arenas. Believing that the “two rising superpowers” of Japan and America were the pivot points of the new civilization, the Issei dreamed that the Nisei would play critical roles as mediators between the two countries. Consequently, many Issei encouraged the Nisei to become bilingual and gain a bicultural understanding of both Japan and America rather than staying within mainstream American culture.⁵⁶

In light of this Issei popular concept, it is small wonder that Okumura did not consider “Americanization” (*beika* in Japanese) in his education campaign as the

⁵⁶ Shishimoto, *Nikkei Shimin wo kataru*, 180-302; Yamashita, *Nichibei wo Tsunagu Mono*, 9-18; Takeo Kirishima, *Beikoku wo kataru* (Yokohama: Sato Insatsu, 1954), 17-44; Eiichiro Azuma, “Interstitial Lives,” 276-281, “‘The Pacific Era Has Arrived’: Transnational Education among Japanese Americans, 1932-1941,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 43, no.1 (Spring 2003): 41-40. Encouraged by the Issei, many Nisei accepted the values of the “best of the two worlds.” See Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 67-69.

adoption of superficial aspects of modern American social life or advocate the wholesale denial of a Japanese identity so as to blend into Anglo-America. Rather, he regarded *beika* as absorption of fundamental American ideals and values while retaining certain Japanese characteristics that meshed well with American culture. Based on the belief that Japanese and American identities could be compatible, he hoped that local Japanese, particularly, Hawai'i-born youth, would become an integral part of U.S. society through diligence, perseverance, and loyalty, qualities he saw as strengths of the "Japanese race." This "best of two worlds" argument constituted the core of Okumura's discussion of how to raise second-generation Japanese.

Okumura also viewed the Nikkei as vanguards of "Japanese racial expansion and development." Intellectuals in Japan contended that the Japanese, believed to be a hybrid of several races and to have inherited an "expansive character" from their ancestors of overseas origins, should emigrate to Mexico, South America, the South Pacific, and the rest of Asia, building new communities abroad rather than confining themselves to the small Japanese islands.⁵⁷ These multiple flows of emigration were characterized as the "overseas expansion and development of the Japanese race." Since all people of Japanese descent were seen as *doho* (compatriots) regardless of place of birth or residence, they could be scattered overseas to construct sturdy social, political, and economic foundations for the "race" all over the world.⁵⁸ Adopting this idea, Okumura

⁵⁷ This overseas expansion discourse promoted Japanese emigration to Mexico, South America, the South Pacific, and the rest of Asia. Further it justified the ongoing colonization of Asia by the Japanese Empire during the first half of the twentieth century.

⁵⁸ Masasuke Kobayashi, *Nihon Minzoku no Sekaiteki Bocho* (Tokyo: Keigansha, 1933) 3-29; Kenichi Shibata, *Nihon Minzoku Kaigai Hattenshi* (Tokyo: Koa Nihonsha, 1941) 3-10; Eiji Oguma, *Tan'itsu Minzoku Shinwa no Kigen* (Tokyo: Shinyo-sha, 1996), 73-79; Azuma,

called on the people of the local Japanese community as *doho*, which literally means ‘coming from the same womb.’ By doing so, he attempted to imbue a sense of unity based on imaginary kinship, and endeavored to lead them towards the same goal, namely, achieving Japanese racial development in Hawai‘i. In his writings, he frequently used two phrases, “*doho no hatten*” (development of our compatriots) and “*waga minzoku no hatten*” (expansion of our race), to raise the ethnic consciousness of his readers, mostly fellow Nikkei, and remind them of their collective responsibility to build a sturdy foundation for Hawai‘i’s Japanese community.

Further, based on the concept of racial development, Okumura compared Japanese immigrants to bamboo trees extending subterranean roots outward from Japan in all directions to send up new shoots in unknown lands:

Bamboo thickets will grow all over the islands of Hawai‘i. This is racial expansion in a true sense. If bamboo thickets emerge all over the world—not only in Hawai‘i but also on the Pacific Coast, in Canada, in Australia and in South America—it could be called the worldwide expansion and development of the *Yamato* (Japanese) race.⁵⁹

“Interstitial Lives,” 30-47. This discourse of Japanese racial development was also used to invent a heroic history of the Nikkei elevating their status in relation to people in Japan, who frequently referred to immigrants contemptuously as *kimin* [abandoned people]. For example, in a 1927 book, Californian Issei leader Shiro Fujioka lamented: “Our brethren in the homeland have wrongly perceived us as inferior beings, treated us as a group of ‘abandoned people’ (*kimin*), and thought of us as if we were a bunch of useless people.” See Azuma, “Interstitial Lives,” 196. Originally in Shiro Fujioka, *Minzoku Hatten no Senkusha* (Tokyo: Dobunsha, 1927), 3. The discourse of racial development enabled Issei intellectuals transform Japanese immigrants from “deserters of their homeland” to “experts in overseas expansion.” Since the Japanese government was promoting mass migration to Manchuria in northern part of China starting in the early 1930s, Issei contended that these “followers,” namely, other overseas Japanese, could learn from Nikkei experiences in the United States. By bravely stepping into a foreign land earlier than any other Japanese immigrants, these intellectuals stated that the Nikkei in America had contributed patriotically to their mother country. See Eiichiro Azuma, “Interstitial Lives,” 191-194; “The Politics of Transnational History Making: Japanese Immigrants on the Western ‘Frontier,’ 1927-1941,” *The Journal of American History* 89, no.4 (March 2003): 1412-1413.

⁵⁹ *Rakuen Jiho*, December 1926.

The Nikkei were seen as one bundle of bamboo shoots that was growing on American soil but remained connected to their parental roots in Japan and their brothers throughout the Pacific Rim via Japanese blood. As strong and resilient as bamboo trees, the Nikkei should endure hardship and thrive in the new land. Since Hawai'i Nikkei had been the first to emigrate from modern Japan, according to Okumura, Japanese of other countries were paying a great deal of attention to the progress of the Nikkei community in Hawai'i as a model for racial development.⁶⁰ Hawai'i's Japanese were thus expected to succeed in their settlement by all means.

Unlike other Issei intellectuals, however, Okumura went on to argue that for Japanese racial expansion to succeed in Hawai'i it was essential for the Nikkei to integrate into American society. For example, he criticized the Nikkei who stubbornly stuck to certain aspects of Japanese tradition:

Although we live in Hawai'i under the protection of America, we hardly put ourselves in the place of [white] Americans when we think and behave. . . . However, this is the primary cause preventing our overseas expansion/development in Hawai'i. . . . If we sympathize with America and adopt American ways, it will not only please Americans but also promote the expansion/development of our race.⁶¹

Many Issei selfishly broke the laws by bootlegging *sake* (alcohol), carelessly hoisted the rising-sun flag, and needlessly spent a fortune on their children's extravagant weddings. These Japanese customs often looked odd in the eyes of mainstream America, thus Okumura urged the Nikkei to be attentive to and respectful of an American lifestyle, customs, laws, and ideals. If they were regarded as maladjusted and undesirable, he

⁶⁰ *Rakuen Jiho*, January 1932.

⁶¹ *Rakuen Jiho*, March 1932.

stated, they would never establish a solid social, political, and economic basis in Hawai‘i. Accordingly, in his view, the acceptance of American culture—“Americanization”—was one phase in the process of successful Japanese racial expansion/development in Hawai‘i.⁶²

Since favoring overseas Japanese racial expansion went along with Okumura’s promotion of middle-class white American values among the local Japanese, he saw no contradiction in cooperating with the dominant Americanization Movement promoted by white Christian leaders in the society of Hawai‘i. In 1919, the Citizenship Education Committee, a *haole* organization advocating Americanization among immigrant groups,⁶³ published a pamphlet by Okumura in which he urged Japanese immigrants to adopt American culture and raise their children as loyal American citizens. He stated, “to actualize the successful development/expansion of our future compatriots in Hawai‘i, the essential condition is our Americanization (*beika*).”⁶⁴ His understanding of “*beika*” was not identical to elite whites’ definition of “Americanization,” however, since his ultimate goal was to build a strong “racial” community in Hawai‘i rather than protect the existing

⁶² *Rakuen Jiho*: January 1931, January 1932; Okumura, *Nichibei*, 185.

⁶³ The headquarters of the Citizenship Education Committee was located in the building of Nu‘uanu YMCA in Honolulu. Prominent *haole* leaders, including Walter F. Frear, John Waterhouse, Arthur L. Dean, and Wallace R. Farrington, were members of this organization. See Takie Okumura, *Hawai Zaiju Nihonjin Hatten ni kansuru Konpon Mondai* (The fundamental problem of Japanese development in Hawai‘i) (Honolulu: The Citizenship Education Committee, 1919).

⁶⁴ Okumura, *Hawai Zaiju Nihonjin Hatten ni kansuru Konpon Mondai*, 8. This was attached to a letter from Yada to Uchida, dated September 27, 1920, *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakken: Hawai no bu*, JARP Collection, Reel 35.

order for the privileged. Nevertheless, Okumura worked with influential *haole* in hope of appropriating their Americanization project for his own goals.

Okumura's exhortation for "partial" Americanization reflects the *Yoshi-ron* (adopted-son analogy) popular among Japanese immigrant leaders in the United States in the postwar years, as can be inferred from his words, "Our Nisei are children adopted into a family called America." *Yoshi-ron* originated from the custom of son-less *samurai* (warrior) families during the pre-modern period adopting boys from lower-ranking families to make them heirs. An adopted son was expected to make all possible effort to conform to his adopted family no matter how difficult the situation.⁶⁵ If his adopted family feuded with his parental family, the adopted son would devote his life to protecting his new family against his old one. The adoptive family would then respect the parental family for having produced such loyalty.⁶⁶ The Nikkei in America, especially the Nisei, were viewed as similar to adopted sons in a *samurai* family. As Okumura stated:

We Japanese gave the Nisei the fruits of our three-thousand-year tradition as gifts, but they should enjoy these gifts in American ways. For example, a strong sense of loyalty is one of our gifts to them, and the Nisei should be as loyal to the Stars and Stripes as Japanese are to the Emperor. An adopted son should devote himself not to the well-being of his parental home but to that of his adopted family.⁶⁷

He thought that if the Nisei proved to be of service to the United States like adopted sons, Americans would respect Japan as a country providing excellent human resources. A

⁶⁵ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 187.

⁶⁶ Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 350.

⁶⁷ *Rakuen Jiho*, January 1936.

more favorable view of Japan would make both U.S.-Japan relations and local Japanese-white relations more amicable. By comparing the Nikkei to adopted sons of *samurai*, the highest class in pre-modern Japanese society, Okumura attempted to imbue the idea that Americanization was not a betrayal of Japan but a sophisticated way of showing sincere devotion to the country.

Revealing his “diasporic” sense of identity, however, Okumura always stressed that their primary concern should be enhancing their own community in Hawai‘i rather than contributing to the interests of Japan. He criticized the local Japanese practice of sending annual remittances to Japan, contending that they should instead invest in Hawai‘i and secure the future of the younger Japanese generation. In 1924, he wrote:

So long as we have decided to live here permanently, we should stop sending our money back to Japan, and save it for our children. When the opportunity comes, we should help our children buy a homestead and strengthen their development foundation. Or else we should invest in profitable stocks in sugar companies and leave them for our children as inheritance. Such efforts will help the second generation become well-established American citizens who are an integral part of this country in the economic and political scenes.⁶⁸

According to Eiichiro Azuma, Japanese immigrants in the United States during the prewar years often “conflated state and ethnic dimensions in their nationalism, imagining a national identity with Japan, on the one hand, and inventing a localized racial identity, on the other.”⁶⁹ In other words, while maintaining a consciousness as Imperial Japanese subjects, the Issei also constructed a concept of the Japanese race as a local ethnic body and identified themselves as a “geographically defined community of members who

⁶⁸ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 66.

⁶⁹ Eiichiro Azuma, “Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity: Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 67 (May 1998), 166.

shared the same language, national origin, and racial destiny.”⁷⁰ Although Okumura possessed this two-fold nationalism, he urged his fellow Issei to prioritize ethnic nationalism over state nationalism, claiming that furthering the expansion of the *Yamato* race in Hawai‘i was more important than serving the state and people of Japan. He thus utilized the concepts of “precursors of racial expansion” and “adopted son” as the means to persuade fellow Nikkei to devote themselves to Hawai‘i.⁷¹

The Nikkei maintained this two-fold nationalism without contradiction as long as cordial U.S.-Japan relations allowed them to direct their affections to both countries. It was not rare for the Nikkei to visit Japan because they had relatives and often owned property or businesses there. The Issei, of course, had no choice but to remain Japanese nationals because they were ineligible for naturalization in America. As U.S.-Japan relations became strained throughout the 1930s, however, many Nikkei attempted to diminish their attachment to Japan and strengthen their ties to America. Concurrently, Okumura’s ideal Nisei picture changed from “a bridge of the Pacific” to “100 percent American,” as will be discussed later.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 166.

⁷¹ *Nippu Jiji* publisher Yasutaro Soga similarly maintained that the first priority of the Nisei was to build a better Nikkei community in the United States, even though they were a part of the Japanese race. He contended that the Nisei were not Japanese subjects but American citizens solely loyal to the United States. He emphasized that successful development (*hatten*) of an economic, social, and political bases in the United States should mean “not the expansion of the Japanese nation but the expansion of the Japanese race.” See “The Development of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry Is the Expansion of Our Race” in the *Nippu Jiji*, December 10, 1934.

The “Marginal Man” Concept of Second-Generation Japanese Americans

While Okumura and many other Issei perceived the Nisei as ‘bridges of the Pacific,’ a group of progressive white American intellectuals were developing a different view of Japanese American youth. For the time being, the Japanese and white ideas, albeit distinctive and often contradictory, co-existed in their cooperative efforts to tackle the Nisei Problem. The white understanding of the Nisei drew on the contemporary theory developed by sociologists associated with the University of Chicago, including Romanzo C. Adams. These scholars regarded the Nisei as perfect examples of the “Marginal Man” in their assimilation theory. Robert Park, the central figure of the intellectual current, originated this concept, on which Everett V. Stonequist later elaborated. Sociologist Milton M. Gordon, another product of the Chicago School, defined the “Marginal Man” as follows:

The marginal man is the person who stands on the borders or margins of two cultural worlds but is fully a member of neither. He may be the offspring of a racially mixed or interfaith marriage, or he may have ventured away from the security of the cultural group of his ancestors because of individual personality and experience factors which predisposed him to seek wider contacts and entry in social worlds which appeared more alluring. In the latter case, most frequently he is a member of a minority group attracted by the subsociety and subculture of the dominant or majority group in the national society of which he is a part.⁷²

In light of this view, the Nisei as “Marginal Men” were caught between the American mainstream and the Japanese immigrant community, neither of which they could fully participate in. When ethnic minorities immigrated to the United States, this theory asserts, the earlier generations experienced hardship and alienation, but later generations

⁷² Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 56-57.

were to become more assimilated and accepted into American society as a part of natural progressive process. Since the Nisei were only one generation apart from the immigrants, they would face a unique situation, seeking a place in the no-man's land between their parental culture and "American" culture.⁷³

At that time, this group of Chicago sociologists viewed Hawai'i as a "racial frontier" where various racial groups coexisted and often intermarried before being fully assimilated. Romanzo Adams and Andrew Lind came to join the Sociology Department at the University of Hawai'i in the 1920s with this perspective. In addition, Chicago-trained William C. Smith, a professor at the University of Southern California, visited Hawai'i for a year of research in 1927, and Robert Park frequently came to the islands.⁷⁴ It is not surprising that Hawai'i-born Nisei caught their attention, since the Nisei made up a quarter of Hawai'i's entire population. These scholars viewed the Nisei Problem as offering a rare test case to prove their theory of assimilation rather than as a sociopolitical construction that stemmed from the dynamics of Hawai'i's race relations.

As mentioned earlier, Adams and Smith distributed their papers on second-generation Asian Americans as discussion material at the 1927 IPR meeting. These papers took up the hypothesis that the Nisei were "Marginal Men." In the paper titled "The Second Generation Oriental in America," Smith discussed the identity formation of second-generation Asian Americans, closely examining personal life histories written by

⁷³ Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96-110.

⁷⁴ Ryo Yoshida, "Hawaiian Bodo ni yoru 1920 Nendai no Ijinshukan Koryu-kyoiku, Kurosurodo Kyokai no Setsuritsu" [An Educational Work of the Hawaiian Board to Asian Immigrant Youth in the 1920s: Establishment of the Interracial Church], *Kyoiku Bunka*, 6 (March 1997), 25-26.

Nisei high school and college students both in Hawai'i and on the continental United States, along with those of second-generation Americans of Chinese and Korean ancestries. This work addressed the generation gap between these young Asian Americans and their parents in the spheres of education, occupation, religion, and marriage. It also referred to their experiences of racial discrimination outside their ethnic communities and their despair from being shut out of the better opportunities enjoyed by white Americans at a comparable age. Adams' paper entitled "The Education and the Economic Outlook for the Boys of Hawai'i" discussed the occupational problems of young adult boys in different racial groups in Hawai'i.⁷⁵ In this study, he stated that Nisei occupational problems were mainly caused by the discrepancy between their ethnic values and the reality they faced in Hawai'i's job market.⁷⁶ According to Adams, Issei parents, embracing the principles of Confucianism, thought too highly of education, compelled their sons to study, and planted contempt for manual labor in the youths' minds. The underlying theme of these papers was that the second generation could not fully participate in either the culture and society of mainstream America or those of their own group.⁷⁷ Although Adams and Smith were exceptionally sympathetic and understanding towards Asian immigrants and their children, unlike many of their

⁷⁵ Adams, "The Education and the Economic Outlook for the Boys of Hawaii."

⁷⁶ Romanzo Adams was invited to the first New Americans Conference to deliver a speech on the Nisei occupational problem. After the speech, he mentioned the presence of racism in the society of Hawai'i and said that if Hawai'i-born Nisei hoped to fully demonstrate their capability in business and other fields, it would be better for them to seek jobs within their ethnic community rather than in Caucasian-owned companies, in order to avoid unfair treatment. See the *Nippu Jiji*, August 4, 1927.

⁷⁷ Smith, "The Second Generation Oriental in America."

contemporaries who considered Asians in white America unwelcome, these liberal scholars believed that people of Asian ancestry had to be completely assimilated in order to become full-fledged Americans.⁷⁸

In addition, both sociologists set the assimilation process solely within the realm of domestic America, or the “New World.” They perceived ethnic culture as “Old World baggage” which would be discarded from the lives of all ethnic Americans in the end. Their perception of American society can be illustrated by two concentric circles. The inner circle stands for mainstream America and the doughnut-shaped area outside of the smaller circle represents ethnic cultures and communities. The assimilation process is compared to moving from the circumference of the outer circle towards the center. In this model, the Nisei are still standing on the fringe of the outer circle (the Japanese community), enviously peering at mainstream Americans located in the center.⁷⁹

Contrary to white Chicago sociologists, Okumura looked at the second-generation from a more transnational perspective. He contended that Nisei biculturalism would

⁷⁸ Adams and Lind sent a number of their Asian American students from the University of Hawai‘i to the University of Chicago and other universities on the U.S. mainland as doctoral students as well as subjects/researchers of experiment on assimilation. See Yu, *Thinking Orientals*, 44-45, 82-83, 155-156, 208-209.

⁷⁹ Relying on the “American domestic model,” Chicago sociologists put Nisei subjects of their projects into a single category of the “marginal man” even after the youth came to view themselves as “bridges of the Pacific” under the influence of the popular Issei discourse. For example, one of the subjects, Kazuo Kawai, who was born in Japan but grew up in America and identified himself with Nisei, gradually changed his own perception from someone caught between the Old and New Worlds to an interpreter of the East to the West. By gaining a new realization of himself as a cultural ambassador, Kawai “no longer found himself ‘excluded from either side.’” Reading Kawai’s report, however, the sociologists collapsed “two separate moments in his narrative of self-understanding” and “embedded in a singular description of the traits of the marginal man.” Through obtaining this “enlightenment,” Kawai liberated himself from a “domestic American model” and no longer regarded himself as “marginalized.” Nonetheless, sociologists continued to look at him as a “marginal man,” perceiving him only as bridging mainstream Americans and the Japanese immigrant community. See *ibid.*, 106-110.

assist them in becoming equal to mainstream Americans, whereas Chicago sociologists thought Nisei biculturalism prevented them from becoming “fully American.”

Okumura’s transnational view could be delineated as two equal circles partially overlapping. The Nisei, “cultural interpreters,” stood within the overlap of Japan and America. In this way, Okumura acknowledged that Nisei biculturalism was not a drawback but as an asset, similar to the recent tendency to call people of mixed-heritage “double” instead of “half.” Yet Okumura was to some degree influenced by the modernist idea of unilinear “progress,” as he assumed that future generations of Nikkei would become assimilated into the American mainstream, English would become their only language, and much of Japanese culture would disappear from their lives.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, he emphasized that the Nikkei should make every effort to retain aspects of Japanese culture and hand them down to the younger generations, who should be proud of their Japanese blood or they might suffer from an inferiority complex.⁸¹

Okumura’s positive view of Nisei biculturalism was not completely radical if considering the ‘new wave’ of American intellectualism after the mid-1910s. Indeed, his ideas resembled those of progressive intellectuals who promoted “cultural pluralism,” a concept that emerged as a counter to wartime patriotism and the Americanization movement during the First World War. The originator of “cultural pluralism” was Horace

⁸⁰ The modernist idea of “progress” set an evolutionary framework widely adopted among westerners in the prewar years. In this framework, human civilizations evolve from a lower stage to a higher stage in a linear trajectory where western civilization is the most “advanced.”

⁸¹ *Rakuen Jiho*, December 1934. The *Nippu Jiji* presented a similar view of the future of Hawai‘i’s Japanese. See the *Nippu Jiji*, April 12, 1927.

M. Kallen, a Jewish American professor who first used the phrase in a 1924 book.⁸² Earlier, Kallen had published two articles under the title “Democracy Versus the Melting-Pot,” in which he criticized the popular concept of “the melting-pot” as “mythically optimistic.” He claimed that similar to Americanization and Anglo-conformity, the melting-pot notion was compelling ethnic Americans to blend themselves into the dominant culture rather than retaining their distinct cultures, and thus was against the spirit of democracy in America. Believing that the United States should be “a cooperation of cultural diversities,” he proposed the “orchestration of mankind” and the “symphony of civilization” as an alternative to “the melting-pot” model.⁸³

Similarly, in 1916, Randolph Bourne wrote an essay entitled “Trans-National America,” by which he meant “a new type of nation in which various national groups would preserve their identity and their cultures, uniting as a kind of ‘world federation in miniature.’”⁸⁴ His view of ethnic Americans resembles Okumura’s perception of the Nisei in the United States. Bourne considered parental and ancestral cultures an indispensable part of an ethnic American’s life, stating that ethnic culture makes “for the intelligence and the social values which mean an enhancement of life” and thus enables

⁸² Horace M. Kallen, *Culture and Democracy in the United States: Studies in the Group Psychology of the American Peoples* (New York: Boni and Liveright Publishers, 1924), 11; Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 144.

⁸³ “As every type (of instrument) has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society, each ethnic group may be the natural instrument, its temper and culture may be its theme and melody and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all may make the symphony of civilization.” *Ibid.*, 124-125.

⁸⁴ Randolph S. Bourne, “Trans-National America,” edit. by Van Wyck Brooks, *History of A Literary Radical and Other Essays* (New York: B. W. Huebsch Inc., 1920), 278; Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 140. About his life, see James R. Vitelli’s *Randolph Bourne* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981).

him or her to “be a better citizen of the American community.”⁸⁵ If ethnic Americans—whom Bourne often called “new Americans”—were deprived of their distinctive cultures, they would become “men and women without a spiritual country, cultural outlaws without taste, without standards but those of the mob.”⁸⁶ In his discussion of ethnic Americans, Bourne adopted a “transnational” perspective, as he stated that there was nothing wrong with maintaining strong ties with their ancestral lands and going back and forth between America and their countries of origin. Though his discussion was limited to non-Anglo Caucasians, such as Greeks, Germans, and Scandinavians, his concept of ethnic Americans revolved around cultural pluralism and internationalism, in common with Okumura’s ideals.⁸⁷

In the face of the more essentialist ideas embraced by mainstream Americans, these concepts had to wait a few decades for acceptance as a model of diverse society. Struggling against such Anglo-centric ideas, Okumura developed these ideas as early as the 1920s. Like Bourne, he transformed the images of the children of Japanese immigrants from “second-rate Americans” to “New Americans,” equal to Americans of old European stock. Using such transnational thinking, Okumura turned Nisei marginality into Nisei centrality in the national space.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 281.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Bourne contended that immigrants contributed to building the American nation as follows: “They are no longer masses of aliens, waiting to be ‘assimilated,’ waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-Saxonism. They are rather threads of living and potent cultures, blindly striving to wave themselves into a novel international nation, the first the world has seen.” See Bourne, “Trans-National America,” 295. In addition, he adopted a transnational perspective in discussing ethnic Americans that was even more radical than Okumura’s. For example, he defended the possession of dual citizenship, which Okumura never did.

The New Americans Conference: Its Origin, Organization, and Objectives

With his unique vision, Okumura inaugurated the first annual New Americans Conference in August 1927 in order to mold the industrial and political minds of the Nisei generation. Convened at the YWCA on Richards Street in Honolulu, the first conference had only fourteen Nisei men. Already recognized as young leaders in the local Japanese community, they included Clifton H. Yamamoto and Tasuke Yamagata, founding members of the newly established Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, as well as Noboru Miyake, who only three years later became one of the first Nisei elected officials in Hawai'i. This six-day-long conference was intended to provide Hawai'i-born Nisei leaders with an opportunity to meet their counterparts from all over the islands and discuss various issues relevant to the Nisei Problem, such as their employment prospects, responsibility as American citizens, and relations with other ethnic groups.⁸⁸ Nisei delegates also had a chance to hear from prominent American, Japanese, and Issei leaders, including statesmen, businessmen, military men, government officials, and educators.

The New Americans Conference continued to expand steadily. Between 1928 and 1941, delegates increased from twenty-nine to eighty-eight, and 106 Nisei attended at the peak year of 1939. Since the forum was opened to women at the second conference, the number of female delegates also grew, rising to nearly one-third at the last conference.

⁸⁸ The primary purpose of the New Americans Conference was to provide selected Hawai'i-born Nisei with opportunities to discuss the Nisei Problem as noted in the *Nippu Jiji*, "Various important problems affecting the future of the second generation Japanese will be freely discussed under proper leadership." *Nippu Jiji*, August 4, 1927.

Altogether, fifteen annual conferences were held and 934 Nisei delegates attended (686 men and 248 women).⁸⁹ Okumura not only took care to ensure gender equity, he also strove for religious plurality. Although he was a Christian minister, he always invited Buddhist Nisei youth to the conference.⁹⁰ Conference delegates were selected based on the following criteria: a delegate had to be an American citizen and registered voter; must be gainfully employed; must have completed at least eighth grade; and must possess leadership potential or have acted as a leader among the Nisei.⁹¹ One of Okumura's objectives was to produce leaders among educated Nisei who had a solid economic foundation and a sense of civic obligation.⁹² Okumura stated that "to nurture wise and influential leaders" who had "sound judgment, foresight, and moral courage" among the next generation was most important to the future of Nikkei in Hawai'i.⁹³ Based on his idea, a leader was also a person who could "set a good pattern and attract all men to

⁸⁹ A few of them, such as Okumura's son, Fuyuki, were selected as delegates twice. Thus, the actual number of Nisei delegates was slightly less than 934. See Jisoo Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference from 1927 to 1938*, 7; Ed., Masuo Ogoshi, *The Thirteenth New Americans Conference July 17 to 23, 1939*, 106; *The Fourteenth New Americans Conference, July 15 to 21, 1940*, 109; *The New Americans Conference, July 15 to 21, 1941*, 75.

⁹⁰ The secular New Americans Conference contrasted the more religious Pan-Pacific Young Men's Buddhist Association Conference (YMBA Conference), held biennially in Hawai'i since 1927 under the sponsorship of the Homba Hongwanji Temple. All the delegates at this conference were members of the YMBA and the discussion topics initially concerned Buddhist teachings, religious life for the youth, and enhancement of YMBA activities. During the 1930s, however, the Nisei Problem became the main agenda at this conference. *Nippu Jiji*, June 24-29, 1927, July 2, 1927; *Report of the Eighth Territorial Y. B. A. Convention Held at Wailuku Y. B. A. Auditorium, August 19-23, 1937*, Box 295, JARP Collection, UCLA.

⁹¹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 193; Jisoo Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference from 1927 to 1938*, 7.

⁹² Okumura, *Nichibei*, 159-160.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 158-159.

follow in his footsteps” and intelligently lead the Japanese American masses to become “useful citizens” contributing to the economy of Hawai‘i, “powerful citizens,” striving to build a healthy government, and “good citizens” maintaining high standards of morality.⁹⁴

By allowing qualified youths from different Japanese communities to seek solutions to the Nisei Problem through discussion, Okumura attempted to build a network of Nisei leaders throughout the Territory. While a quarter of the delegates were from Honolulu, the rest originated from various parts of the six islands that made up the Territory of Hawai‘i. Over fifteen years, regional delegates from seventy-nine communities attended the conference: of these, twenty-six hailed from the island of Hawai‘i, seventeen from O‘ahu and Kauai, respectively, sixteen from Maui, two from

⁹⁴ According to Okumura, leaders should lead “100,000 Hawaiian-born Japanese” to become models for the rest of society in the following three ways:

First, we must lead them to become useful citizens. Hawai‘i is an agricultural country. The majority of our American citizens of Japanese ancestry would become truly useful and indispensable citizens of this community when they contribute their endeavors in the production of foodstuffs and in the operation of the plantations.

Secondly, we must lead them to become powerful citizens. By powerful citizens, I mean cultured and intelligent citizens; citizens who are law-abiding, and how strive earnestly to build us a good government. They must be undulated in their loyalty to their country, and for their country the must be willing to sacrifice everything.

Thirdly, they must be led to become good citizens. Let us remember this, and encourage our citizens of Japanese ancestry to maintain high standards of morality, and be counted among the best elements of this community.

See Okumura’s summary of the Ninth Annual Conference, August 1935 in LSC 39/5 KAI.C. General Correspondence–1935, HSPA Archives, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai‘i at Manoa.

Molokai, and one from Lanai.⁹⁵ Many delegates came from communities that Takie and Umetaro Okumura had visited during their educational campaign tours. Umetaro annually solicited names of potential Nisei delegates from influential Issei and Caucasians with whom he had become acquainted during his trips.⁹⁶ In plantation communities, *haole* managers or their assistants generally chose representatives. Former delegates also recommended appropriate persons living in the same regions. Furthermore, as Japanese American civic associations started to spring up throughout the Territory in the 1930s, the conference committee began to select delegates from their ranks.⁹⁷

Okumura crafted the occupational composition of the attendees in accord with what he and other like-minded Issei envisioned in tackling the Nisei Problem. Okumura was not interested in simply dealing with white-collar professionals or producing a small circle of selected elites as the future leaders of the Japanese community in Hawai'i. According to him, "New American" leaders should encompass various talents and skills as a part of a democratic society. He also believed that Nisei leaders should be developed from every sector of society if the second generation was to have a chance to succeed in Hawai'i.⁹⁸ The New Americans Conference therefore recruited Nisei of diverse

⁹⁵ Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 20-23.

⁹⁶ For example, see letters from Umetaro to Danford dated April 14, 1930 in KSC 23/13. (Correspondence 1930-1933) and from Umetaro to Naquin dated June 13, 1939 in HSC 25/16 (HSPA General Correspondence 01-12/1939) in HSPA archives.

⁹⁷ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 193; Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 17.

⁹⁸ *The Ninth Annual New Americans Conference, July 15 to 20, 1935*, 6-7.

backgrounds and occupations, including office workers, teachers, farmers, semi-skilled workers, and plantation workers.

Nevertheless, analysis of the occupational backgrounds of conference attendees reveals the restricted lives of the Nisei in Hawai'i. Unlike white individuals, who theoretically had open access to all sectors of the mainstream economy, the Japanese—both Issei and Nisei—faced racial discrimination, which distorted the patterns of their involvement in occupational categories. Japanese professionals and skilled workers usually remained within the ethnic economy, instead of being integrated into the larger economy and society.⁹⁹ Even if one found 'white-collar' employment in the mainstream economy, he or she tended to be a public school teacher rather than a corporate employee, for instance.¹⁰⁰ The vast majority of adult Nisei outside the ethnic economy worked in niche farming and non-managerial jobs on sugar plantations, whether they were skilled or unskilled.¹⁰¹ Thus, many Issei agreed that small-scale independent farming and plantation work (especially after the Depression greatly diminished the former) offered the most promise for the ascent of the Nisei. These occupational sectors attracted special attention from Okumura. In fact, there was a marked concentration in these categories amongst conference attendees, especially in the mid-1930s. For example, the number of plantation employees jumped from twelve in 1934 to thirty in

⁹⁹ Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 223-226.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 228-232.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 217-218.

1936 and then to fifty-one five years later. By consequence, their percentage out of each year's total delegates rose from 19 percent to 42 percent to 58 percent, respectively.¹⁰²

Although Okumura had taken the initiative in organizing this conference, it drew enthusiastic support from many of his associates and allies amongst the *haole* elite, Japanese consulate, Issei leaders, and a handful of senior Nisei. The conference was administered by two committees: the executive and the associate. Composed of Takie Okumura, Tasuku Harada, Iga Mori, Yasutaro Soga, and John P. Erdman (Superintendent of the Japanese Department of the Hawaiian Board of Missions), the executive committee provided the basic guidelines, general frameworks, and overall directions of the conference.¹⁰³

The associate committee was charged with the responsibility for setting up topics of discussion and actual programs on the Nisei Problem at the conference. Initiated by three of Okumura's trusted Nisei followers—Umetaro, Shinji Maruyama (*Nippu Jiji* English editor-in-chief), and Tadao Kunitomo (Christian minister)—the members of the associate committee changed and expanded over the next fifteen years, but many of them were of a privileged group of educated Nisei, who did not have to contend themselves with being “restricted” in the ethnic economy. Members included Clifton H. Yamamoto (insurance manager at National Mortgage and Finance Co.), Jisoo Sanjume (public

¹⁰² *The Eighth Annual New Americans Conference, June 18 to 23, 1934, 53-54; The Tenth Annual New Americans Conference, July 13 to 18, 1936, 66-67; The New Americans Conference, July 15 to 21, 1941, 75.*

¹⁰³ When Tasuku Harada returned to Japan in 1929, his place was filled by Wade Warren Thayer, attorney-at-law and president of the National Finance and Mortgage Company. Walter F. Dillingham, John Waterhouse, and Emil A. Berndt, all distinguished *haole* business leaders, also belonged to the executive committee for a period.

school principal), Masuo Ogoshi (secretary-treasurer of Mellon Associates, Ltd.), Clarence Y. Shimamura (district magistrate), and Earl K. Nishimura (Hawaii Agricultural Extension Service agent). Soga's son Shigeo (reporter at the *Nippu Jiji*) and two other of Okumura's sons, Fuyuki (Extension Service assistant agent) and Mataki (eye-ear-nose-throat doctor) also served on the committee at various times.¹⁰⁴ They met several times before each conference to choose agendas, facilitators, luncheon chairmen and speakers, as well as to plan social functions and supervise conference activities during the session. Meantime, the executive committee played an advisory role, meeting with the associate committee before each conference to examine their preliminary plans.¹⁰⁵

Many Caucasian leaders from business, politics, education, the military, and other fields were involved in the New Americans Conference project. Long-time supporters of Okumura's educational campaign, Clarence H. Cooke, George P. Castle, W. D. Westervelt, and Frank C. Atherton financially and emotionally backed the New Americans Conference. Other prominent *haole*, including Walter F. Frear, Joseph R. Farrington (a Senator from O'ahu), Romanzo C. Adams, David L. Crawford (University of Hawai'i President), and Charles D. Herron (Commander in the United States Army in Hawai'i), served as luncheon speakers and discussion facilitators. *Haole* sympathizers also sponsored afternoon and evening receptions, dinners, and excursions, where young

¹⁰⁴ Others included Masatoshi Katagiri (sales manager at Waiialua Garage Company), Jack K. Wakayama (Honolulu Motors), Toshiharu Yama (head payroll clerk of the Lihue Plantation in east Kaua'i), and Henry T. Ishimura (a Christian minister in east Maui).

¹⁰⁵ Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 16.

Nisei delegates mingled with the white elites.¹⁰⁶ These social functions were designed to enhance Nisei sociability and self-confidence and help them interact with white Americans without feeling inferior or timid—one of Okumura’s objectives in holding the conference.¹⁰⁷ In addition, in the hope of nurturing friendship between future leaders of the two races, starting in 1936 approximately ten young men and women from distinguished *haole* families were annually invited to the conference.¹⁰⁸ According to Okumura, Nisei leaders should obtain support and respect beyond their own ethnic community and develop partnership with other Americans.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ One reception for the 1930 conference was held at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Walter F. Frear. More than three hundred prominent local residents were invited to meet the Nisei delegates. *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁰⁷ Okumura recognized that most Japanese living on plantations viewed white Americans as having a higher social rank. They were unable to establish relationships with them and tended to depreciate themselves in encounters with whites. He stated, “One of my motives in establishing the conference was to get rid of this complex from the minds of Hawai‘i-born compatriots . . . Having opportunities to interact and exchange opinions with prominent white Americans would make leading Nisei aware that they were equal to those governors, mayors, businessmen and educators in terms of the fact that they were all American citizens. This would immensely boost their self-confidence.” He also mentioned how his effort produced satisfactory results regarding this matter: “When I went to Maui the other day, I met a young man who attended the conference two years ago. He said, ‘I used to feel nervous and my voice trembled when talking to white Americans. After interacting with many prominent Americans at the conference, I came to be able to talk with whites without feeling timid or self-conscious.’ His candid words convinced me that the conference project is successfully under way.” See Okumura, *Nichibei*, 110, 138.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 181. Interestingly, a few native Hawaiian men and women seemed to have participated in the third New Americans Conference as they are in a photo of Nisei delegates at the banquet table. Their luxurious attire reveals that they were from the upper-middle class. This suggests that Okumura hoped future Nisei leaders would get acquainted with the Hawaiian elite as well. See Box 62/7, Ogoshi Memorial Archives, the Makiki Christian Church.

¹⁰⁹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 110.

Members of the Honolulu Japanese consulate who took part in the conference also supported the Nisei's future role, specifically in U.S.-Japan relations.¹¹⁰ Following the precedent set by Kazuye Kuwashima, an ardent supporter of Okumura's educational campaign in the early 1920s, successive consuls general residing in Honolulu delivered speeches at the luncheon sessions of the conference every year. They uniformly discussed what the Nisei should bear in mind as "New Americans" and how their becoming good American citizens would contribute to amicable bilateral relations.¹¹¹

Many influential Issei leaders enlisted their support for the conference. Distinguished businessmen, including Daizo Sumida (president of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce), Koichi Iida (president of the Honolulu Japanese Merchants' Association), and Ichiro Nakano (manager of the Yokohama Specie Bank), and educators and civic leaders such as Genshin Tatsutani (principal of Japanese language school) and Tokue Takahashi (physician) gave luncheon talks.¹¹² Prominent Japanese visitors like social worker Toyohiko Kagawa also appeared as guest speakers. Often contending that the Nisei would carry the future of the Nikkei community upon their shoulders, Issei and

¹¹⁰ Honolulu Japanese consulate almost annually invited delegates to the consulate and held a reception for them. Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 45-48.

¹¹¹ Nearly all the speeches by Japanese consuls encouraged the Nisei to become a "bridge of the Pacific." For example, Acting Consul General K. Takeuchi said, "You, as American citizens, should stand at all times ready and willing to serve America . . . America will respect and say to the country of your parents: 'You have given us good adopted boys and girls for our household.' You can thus become a connecting link between Japan and America and contribute your share to the country that knocked at the doors of Japan many years ago to give her introduction to the world at large." See *Second Annual Conference of New Americans. August 1st to 7th, 1928*, 1.

¹¹² The 1931 conference featured a tea party given jointly by the Sumitomo, Pacific, and Yokohama Specie banks and the local branch of the *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* (Japan Liner Company) at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. See Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 43.

Japanese speakers encouraged the audience to work as hard as their parental generation and expand the economic foundation built by Japanese immigrants.¹¹³

Two major local newspapers, the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* and the *Nippu Jiji*, acted as organs of the conference, giving detailed coverage of the proceedings every year. These newspapers had a large circulation in the mainstream white community and the Japanese community, respectively. As a result, the reports of the conference reached beyond the circles of friends and families of Nisei delegates.¹¹⁴ In this way, the conference could exert an influence as more than an institution of one man's dream throughout the ethnic community and mainstream society.

Indeed, the New Americans Conference was another form of Okumura's educational campaign targeting both Nisei and white Americans. He encouraged the delegates to spread the knowledge they obtained at the conference among other Japanese American youth after returning to their own communities, via formal presentations and personal conversations.¹¹⁵ Through the conference, Okumura also wished to "provide the Nisei with opportunities to show their spirit and explain their positions to Americans."¹¹⁶ He was concerned that a majority of the American public still did not distinguish the Nisei as American citizens from Japanese nationals, including their 'alien' parents.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ *Third Annual Conference of New Americans, July 29 to August 3, 1929*, 16.

¹¹⁴ Both the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* and the *Nippu Jiji* sponsored the New American Conference every year.

¹¹⁵ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 193.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

The conference committees therefore published detailed proceedings of each conference and distributed hundreds of copies to influential Caucasians in Hawai'i and on the U.S. mainland, including the President and Vice President of the United States, senators, congressmen, and newspapermen. The 1931 conference proceedings began: "Will American citizens born of alien parentage become good citizens of the Republic? Read what they say concerning education, crime, politics, customs and manners, employment and dual citizenship. Read what leaders of Hawaii told these New Americans."¹¹⁸ The proceedings not only urged Nisei readers to understand the importance of "Americanization" but also told non-Japanese readers that the Nisei were respectable American citizens and assets to U.S. society. Because Okumura believed that "Americanization" (*beika*) and acceptance into mainstream America were essential to "Japanese racial development," he attempted to use the conference project as a springboard to actualize the Nikkei's ultimate goal.

There were, however, specific challenges that "New Americans" of Japanese ancestry had to confront before achieving "racial development." Year after year, the conference dwelled on almost identical topics from the standpoint of the familiar "Nisei Problem," which elucidated notable agreement among a wide variety of the participants. There were two major subjects of discussion on which they spent considerable time; taken together, they constituted the primary matters of interest that occupied the minds of Issei leaders, *haole* sympathizers, the Japanese elite, and older Nisei during the 1930s. Reflecting the nature of Hawai'i's economy and the Japanese position in it, the first was the involvement of the second generation in agriculture (the sugar industry, the pineapple

¹¹⁸ *5th Annual Conference of New Americans: July 13 to 18, 1931*, 1.

industry, and diversified agriculture). Secondly, with the rapid increase of adult Nisei amongst the local Japanese population, the conference participants concentrated on the question of political involvement in Hawai'i.¹¹⁹

To bring about ideal conditions for Nisei farming in Hawai'i and their participation in local politics as full-fledged Americans, Okumura and his sympathizers joined hands in implementing various programs in addition to the New Americans Conference. As important as it was, the annual conference could only allow the American-born to familiarize themselves with Issei expectations once a year. Other programs, by contrast, offered the Nisei further opportunities to become "New Americans" in their home communities. The following chapters will look at Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement, the promotion of Nisei independent farming in Kona, and finally, the emergence of Nisei as political leaders not only in their own ethnic community but also in the society of Hawai'i at large.

¹¹⁹ Another topic frequently discussed was what Japanese customs and manners the New Americans should retain and what they should discard. The problem of crime, prevention and law enforcement was also a popular topic, as well as relations with other Americans, vocational education, and occupational opportunities in fishing and clothing manufacture. See Sanjume, *An Analysis of the New Americans Conference*, 27-31, 34.

CHAPTER 3

Achieving “Japanese Racial Development”: The Back-to-the-Farm Movement and the Nikkei in Hawai‘i during the Interwar Years

The Society for the Study of Industrial Problems of Hawaii

In the afternoon of May 28, 1928, thirty leading members of Hawai‘i’s Nikkei community, both Issei and senior Nisei—encompassing a wide range of occupations from journalist to teacher, banker to food manufacturer¹—gathered at the Honolulu Japanese Consulate to discuss how to expand the existing industries which involved local Japanese and launch new industries which could boost the economy of Hawai‘i.² Following active

¹ The people who attended the meeting at the Honolulu Japanese consulate on May 28, 1928 were Daizo Sumida (President of Sumida Co. and Vice President of Pacific Bank), Tsuneo Fukuchi (manager at Yokohama Shokin Bank), Seiichi Harada (Second Vice President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, ex-Manager of Sumitomo Bank of Hawaii), Tasuke Yamagata (employee of Bank of Hawaii), Arataro Yamamoto (dried bonito manufacturer), Tokuchichi Tsuji (President of Sunrise Soda Company), Kanekichi Iida (President of America-Hawaii Shoyu Company), Yaraku Saeki (owner of a poultry farm), Danji Sugita (owner of Hawaii Cotton Mill), Kotaro Tanaka (owner of K. Tanaka Co. and President of the Japanese Union of Commerce), Koichi Iida (owner of Iida Sumisan-do, a Japanese merchandise import company, later President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce), Kichitaro Sekiya (owner of Sekiya Co. and Managing Director of Pacific Bank), Ushisuke Taira (President of the Hawaii Industrial Company, real estate agent), Ryoichi Tanaka (owner of the Tanaka Brother’s Co.), Matsutaro Yamashiro (owner of Yamashiro Hotel), Yakichi Kutsunai (agriculturalist), Yasutaro Soga (publisher of *Nippu Jiji*), Sadasuke Terasaki (editor-in-chief of *Hawaii Hochi*), Masao Sogawa (newspaper reporter of *Nippu Jiji*, later publisher of *Hawaii Shimpō*), Seiichi Tsuchiya (publisher of *Shogyo Jiho*), Tetsuo Toyama (publisher of *Jitsugyo no Hawaii*), Tasuku Harada (University of Hawai‘i professor), Junzo Nakayama (President of Chuo Gakuen, a Japanese language school), Kenzo Kai (Japanese language teacher), Iga Mori (medical doctor and President of the United Japanese Association of Hawaii), Takie Okumura (Christian minister), Wilfred Chomatsu Tsukiyama (attorney, trustee of the Pan-Pacific Lions Club, later Chief Justice), Colbert Naoya Kurokawa (Secretary of the Pan-Pacific Lions Club, President of the Japanese University Club), Kazuye Kuwashima (Consul General), Komaji Takeuchi (Vice-Consul), and Takeo Kashimura (Vice-Consul). See *Nippu Jiji*, May 29, 1928.

² Three weeks earlier, on May 5th, 1928, Consul General Kuwashima had invited Iga Mori, Kanekichi Iida, Koichi Iida, Seiichi Harada, Yakichi Kutsunai, Chomatsu Tsukiyama, Takie

discussion and at the suggestion of Consul General Kazuye Kuwashima, these prominent leaders and businessmen decided to establish the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems of Hawaii (*Hawai Sangyo Kenkyu Kai*).³ According to a *Nippu Jiji* editorial dated May 31, 1928, the objective of this organization was to “conduct research into Hawai‘i’s industrial possibilities” and share information among the Nikkei leaders at monthly meetings and annual conferences. Another mission was to promote small farming among the Nisei generation “as a ‘consultative body’ for Japanese American farmers engaged in small farming and as a medium of interactions among them.”⁴ Founding this institute was an attempt not only to stabilize the economic basis for local Japanese businesses but also to create more job opportunities in Issei commerce so as to provide the rapidly increasing adult Hawai‘i-born Japanese population with full employment in the islands.

On the same day, five board members were elected to run the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems. The elected were: Iga Mori, medical doctor and the President of the United Japanese Association of Hawaii (*Hawai Nihonjin Rengo Kyokai*); Kanekichi Iida, distinguished businessman and the President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce; another well-known businessman Koichi Iida, who later became the President of the Junior Chamber of Commerce; Yakichi Kutsunai, an agriculturalist of the HSPA Experimental Station; and Protestant Minister Takie Okumura. Of the five board

Okumura, and representatives of *Nippu Jiji* and *Hawaii Hochi* to the consulate for a preliminary meeting on the formation of such a group. See *Nippu Jiji*, May 29, 1928.

³ *Nippu Jiji*: May 29, 1928; May 30, 1928; and May 31, 1928

⁴ *Nippu Jiji*, May 31, 1928.

members, Reverend Okumura, whose profession apparently had little bearing on commerce or industry, won fifteen votes, the third largest number next to Iga Mori and Kanekichi Iida.⁵ At first glance the election of this Christian minister by thirty economic, political, and civic leaders of the prewar local Japanese community appears odd, but it is not surprising considering his long-standing concern with Nisei employment issues in the Territory of Hawai‘i.

From 1924, as part of his educational campaign, Okumura began to advocate farming as a lifetime profession for the majority of Hawai‘i-born Nisei.⁶ He claimed that a future in agriculture showed high promise, given that the isolated islands were importing so much food from the continental United States. Through lectures on O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, and Maui, as well as numerous publications in both English and Japanese, he strove to disseminate his message to local Japanese and prospective white backers in the Territory. Okumura called it the ‘Back-to-the-Farm Movement’ (*kino undo*), and it eventually came to draw many supporters.

This chapter explores Takie Okumura’s endeavor to promote the Back-to-the-Farm Movement during the 1920s and 1930s. It first explains Okumura’s reasons for starting the movement, that is, why he came to regard small farming as a promising occupation for most Hawai‘i-born Nisei. Next, it examines his contention that successful

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Although advocating the Back-to-the-Farm Movement among the Nisei, Okumura did not mean to nip talent in the bud by imposing farming on each and every youth. He recognized that some Nisei excelled in scholastic or other fields and should be encouraged but considered such people exceptional. He wrote that Nisei with special talents were “only one or two among one hundred.” Therefore, the great majority of Hawai‘i Nisei have to be engaged in agriculture to make living.” Okumura, *Nichibei*, 102.

engagement in agriculture would not only enable Nisei to advance economically in society but also contribute to “Japanese racial development” in Hawai‘i. This chapter also argues that Okumura promoted the Back-to-the-Farm Movement in tandem with three other parties—namely, other Issei leaders, some *haole* leaders, and the Japanese consulate in Honolulu. While Okumura was one of the first leading Issei to emphasize the importance of agriculture in Hawai‘i, these three other parties also began promoting the agricultural industry for their own purposes. Supported by these segments of the society as well as the Japanese government, the tide initially seemed in favor of Okumura’s Back-to-the-Farm Movement. However, combined with the economic difficulties of the late 1920s, legal restrictions called for by some segments of Hawai‘i elite effectively prevented local Nisei from obtaining land or continuing to run their own small farms. Okumura readjusted to the new politico-economic situation and reached a compromise by altering the “Back-to-the-Farm” to a “Back-to-the-Plantation” Movement. He nevertheless hoped the Nisei would eventually win some degree of independence by working on plantations not as simple field laborers but as tenants under long-term contracts. This chapter thus delineates the emergence, development, and transformation of the movement over the two decades prior to the Pacific War, mostly focusing on incidents in O‘ahu.

Okumura and the Back-to-the-Farm Movement

Okumura’s objective for the Back-to-the-Farm Movement, which started in 1924, was to produce self-supporting Nisei farmers engaged in diversified agriculture in the islands. In several essays, he stated, “When we speak about agriculture, we do not

simply mean the sugar cane or pineapple industries. The cultivation of corn and potatoes, raising of hogs and chickens, bees and honey, and any products that are obtained from the soil are included . . . The best possible way for the Hawaiian-born Japanese is to become an independent farmer.”⁷ He deemed independent farming an opportunity for the Nisei to stand on their own, and believed that by “cultivating the soil with their own hands, and eating their own farm products, they can be more free and independent.”⁸ Independent farming would allow the Nisei to make fortunes based on diligence and self-reliance, while eliminating acceptance of inferior wages and social subordination. In addition, pointing out that the Nisei, unlike their alien parents, were natural-born citizens with the right to purchase government land, Okumura encouraged the Nisei to obtain homesteads, which would enable them to start farming without much capital. He said, “Whenever large tracts of land are opened for homesteading, young people should obtain even a small homestead of five or six acres.” Well-read in American history, he associated the ideal of the Nisei farmer with the popular images of pioneers in the American west and yeoman farmers in the Jeffersonian agrarian tradition. Referring to successful examples of local Nisei farmers—mostly former students of Okumura Home,

⁷ For example, see Takie Okumura, “Jissai Mondai”(Actual problem) (1926), 102; “Futatabi ‘Jissai Mondai’ ni tsuite” (Reexamination on ‘actual problem’) (1926), 104, “Dai Niki Undo no Dai Sannen” (The third year of the second campaign) (1928), 113, all in Okumura, *Nichibei*; Takie Okumura, *Hawai umare no Seinen no Zento: Shokugyo Mondai Kaiketsuan* (Kyoto: Naigai Shuppan, 1928). Also, see *Hawaii’s American-Japanese Problem: Report of the Campaign January 1920 to January 1927* (1927), 30; *Future of Hawaiian-Born Youths* (n.d.), “Japanese Problem in Hawaii: A Solution,” *The New Americans*, May 1929, 1.

⁸ Okumura, “Japanese Problem in Hawai‘i,” 1.

the boarding school run by his family—the Christian minister urged Hawai‘i-born Nisei to follow in the footsteps of these Japanese American ‘pioneers.’⁹

In the United States, homesteading and independent farming had traditionally been considered symbols of freedom, equality, and independence, American ideals which were the foundations of democracy. In Hawai‘i, homesteading and independent farming were even more closely associated with Americanism because of the specific situation of the islands. Since its annexation to America in 1898, Hawai‘i was often criticized by white Americans, particularly those who opposed statehood, for being different from the rest of the United States in having only a small proportion of Euro-Americans in its population and for the absence of a farming middle class. Anxious about the presence of thousands of Asian migrants, these people contended that if Hawai‘i were to become fully Americanized, it necessitated transplanting to the islands a large number of Caucasian Americans from the U.S. mainland or immigrants from Europe.¹⁰ At the same time, considering that the islands’ economy was mostly controlled by sugar and pineapple plantation ‘tycoons’ who possessed or leased vast agricultural lands in Hawai‘i, they argued that it was necessary to advocate homesteading and build up a sturdy farm yeomanry in the Territory in order to become “democratized.”¹¹ New settlers to the

⁹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 102.

¹⁰ Ralph S. Kuykendall and A. Grove Day, *Hawaii: A History from Polynesian Kingdom to American Statehood* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 203.

¹¹ The Homesteading Act was introduced to Hawai‘i in 1884. Sanford B. Dole, who later became the President of the Republic of Hawai‘i, initiated enactment of the law. In 1895, upon his recommendation, the legislature enacted the more comprehensive Land Act to provide several new homestead plans for the sale or lease of government lands. Kuykendall, *Hawaii*, 206.

islands would become an effective instrument for Americanizing Hawai'i, assuming that they were Caucasian and would acquire homesteads to enlarge the middle-class farming group.¹²

By exhorting the Nisei to become independent farmers, Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement challenged the prevalent perception that only whites could contribute to the Americanization and democratization of the Territory. Despite their Asian ancestry, as natural-born American citizens, the Nisei would make ideal independent farmers, augmenting a desirable occupational group and social class in the society of Hawai'i. "If Hawai'i's agriculture industry were managed largely by our second-generation compatriots," wrote Okumura, "they would become an indispensable part of the society of Hawai'i and surely be respected as valuable citizens."¹³ This idea of Okumura might have been influenced by an "Issei pioneer thesis" conceived by contemporary Issei intellectuals on the west coast who wrote books on the history of the Japanese in the United States. In the late 1920s, some Issei historians designated the Nikkei as "pioneers" in the contexts of both American and Japanese national expansion. Such intellectuals compared Japanese immigrants, particularly farmers, with settlers of European origin on the American frontier in the early days, claiming that the Nikkei similarly developed uncultivated land and contributed to a prosperous United States. By placing the Nikkei within American national history and making them agents of Manifest Destiny, Issei intellectuals attempted to elevate their ethnic community to equal with

¹² Ibid., 203.

¹³ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 56-57.

white society.¹⁴ Similar to this idea, Okumura argued, as farmers, the Nisei could demonstrate an ingrained Americanism as well as prove the worthiness of their Japanese blood.

In addition to running independent farms, Okumura advocated a form of sharecropping for members of the younger generation who had difficulty obtaining sufficient capital to purchase land. Under his proposed “profit-sharing system,” one that Okumura appeared to have adopted from an example of the Ewa plantation in O‘ahu, farmers would lease ten to fifteen acres for a long period to work the field on their own, and be provided with a loan for living expenses, assistance for cultivation, water for crops, and transportation to ship the harvest to the market.¹⁵ After the harvest, farmers would give the landowners some proportion of their crops, as contracted, and keep the rest for themselves. Thus, the greater their yield, the more the farmers’ income would increase. Furthermore, profit-sharing tenants would possess a leasehold contract, which would stipulate that landowners could not sell or lend the land to others for the duration of the contract.¹⁶ This would not only secure the status of tenants as employees over many years but also endow them with stronger bargaining positions than those of regular field workers in relation to their employers. Believing that the profit-sharing system, along with homesteading and land purchase, would assure Nisei farmers independence, a stable footing, and a sizable income, Okumura attempted to spread the idea not only

¹⁴ Azuma, “Interstitial Lives,” 181-209; “The Politics of Transnational History Making,” 1401-1412.

¹⁵ *The Planters’ Monthly* 16 (March 1897): 122-123. I am indebted to Paul F. Hooper for sharing this article with me.

¹⁶ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 56.

among local Japanese but also among his white supporters, including sugar plantation managers, in hope that the system would actually be adopted on some plantations.

Okumura advocated going “back to the soil” during his biannual education campaign trips. He also published a pamphlet titled *Hawai umare no Seinen no Zento* (Future of Hawai‘i-born youths) (1928), which inspired Nisei readers to seek their future in agriculture. In addition, since its inauguration in 1927, the New Americans Conference served as a platform from which he could convey his ideas to young second-generation Japanese Americans. As mentioned in Chapter 2, occupational problems among Hawai‘i-born Nisei were repeatedly discussed and the potential of farming as a Nisei occupation was examined throughout the fifteen annual conferences. In particular, at the second conference of 1928, supervised by Iga Mori and Yasutaro Soga, Nisei delegates held a roundtable discussion on the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems to examine the importance of industrial education in connection to the Back-to-the-Farm Movement, along with what industries should be developed in Hawai‘i and which ones were open or closed to the Nisei in the islands. While some delegates questioned whether “going back to the soil” would be a practical and profitable solution for younger generation, those who were themselves small farmers passionately stood up for the idea.¹⁷

The general Japanese immigrant populace did not necessarily support Okumura’s Back-to-the-Farm Movement, however. As he himself acknowledged in his writings, for example, Okumura initially met vehement oppositions and considerable resistance from some segments of Issei parents, who hoped their children would move “up” from the

¹⁷ *Second Annual Conference of New Americans*, 1928, 17.

plantation lifestyles into white-collar jobs. Throughout the 1920s, not only urban dwellers but also those on the plantations appeared to have viewed farming as a form of manual labor and hence encouraged their children to seek other, more respectable, types of employment.¹⁸ Similarly, some Issei intellectuals, as well as contributors to the local vernacular press, mocked Okumura's idea of "returning to the soil" and criticized him for inhibiting the younger generation from advancing in Hawai'i's society. As some laboring parents lambasted, "we came as farmers from Japan and thus are content with working as such for the rest of our lives, but we dare not to let our children live like us."¹⁹

Despite these oppositions, the ultimate goal of Okumura's advocacy ironically was not irreconcilable with what many Issei parents wished for their children's future. By extolling the importance of farm life, the Christian minister did not mean to confine the Nisei to the lower social status where most Issei had been stuck as a result of racial hierarchization; instead, Okumura, too, envisioned the second generation elevating their standing in the society of Hawai'i. The issue of contention revolved around how it should be achieved in the face of the particular socioeconomic circumstances in which the Nikkei were destined to live and work in the islands. Often referring to Abraham Lincoln, who started out as a farmer and became President of the United States, Okumura advised the second generation to expand their scope of activities beyond agriculture to embark on entrepreneurship or enter the public life after they secured a sound economic base through farming endeavors—a main path toward social ascent for the Nikkei in

¹⁸ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 191.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Okumura's mind.²⁰ Along the same line, he advocated higher education in agriculture for Nisei farmers. Mentioning a University of Hawai'i professor's experiment that had yielded a record-breaking amount of sugarcane per acre, Okumura contended that if Nisei farmers acquired the latest scientific knowledge in agriculture and put it to practical use, they would make larger incomes with less physical work. In this way, they would minimize the backbreaking manual labor their parents associated with "work on a farm." For this purpose, he encouraged Issei parents to nurture their children's interest in soil from an early age rather than distancing them from it, urged them to go to vocational schools, and, if appropriate, to pursue college degrees in agriculture.²¹

What was the basis for Okumura's belief that farming was the best occupation for the next generation? Prior to World War II, agriculture was the largest and most promising industry in the Territory, capable of supplying full employment for the population. According to a study conducted by the sociologist and University of Hawai'i professor Andrew Lind, among the 111,882 gainfully employed in the Territory of Hawai'i of 1920, agriculture accounted for 50.3 percent of employment; in 1930, it was still 40.1 percent. That is, from the early 1920s to the early 1930s, the period when most Nisei were reaching adulthood, the farming population, including plantation laborers, constituted the largest portion of the employed population of Hawai'i. The percent of the farming population in the Territory was approximately twice as high as on the

²⁰ Okumura owned several biographies of Lincoln in his personal collection and regarded him as a role model for the Nisei. See his essay "Rincorun to nare" (Become Lincoln!) in *Rakuen Jiho*, January 1926.

²¹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 65-66.

continental United States, while the proportion of manufacturing, transportation, and trade jobs was only half.²²

Further, while the industrial structure of the Territory was hardly changing, the working population of the Nisei was continuing to increase. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Hawai'i-born Nisei population doubled each decade: from 19,889 in 1910, to 49,016 in 1920, to 87,748 in 1929.²³ In 1920, approximately 30,000 Hawai'i Nisei were over voting age; they constituted nearly one quarter of the employed population in the islands.²⁴ Okumura believed that none of the other existing industries in Hawai'i were likely to accommodate this emerging work force, and thus the second-generation Japanese would eventually face a serious job shortage if they avoided agricultural work, the largest sector of the Territory's economy.

Diversified farming in the early 1920s drew quite a few advocates. J. M. Westgate, Director of the Hawai'i Agricultural Experiment Station, contended that Hawai'i should make more of an effort to produce foodstuffs in case of emergency, rather than depending on food imported from the continental United States and elsewhere. Achieving food self-sufficiency through the expansion of local farming was also discussed in territorial Governor Charles J. McCarthy's 1920 report to the Secretary of the Interior.²⁵ Some federal and territorial officials also considered it important to develop

²² Andrew W. Lind, *Hawaii's People* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1955), 67-68.

²³ Nippu Jiji, *Hawai Doho Hatten Kaikoshi*, 193; *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 18.

²⁴ *Hawai Nihonjin Nekan Dai Jyukyukai*, 23-24; Lind, *Hawaii's People*, 68.

²⁵ "It appears to be necessary to plan for the production of foodstuffs which in normal times can be exported, thus providing money crops for the producers, but which in event of emergencies could be diverted to feed the local population until the restoration of normal

the diversified agricultural industries in the islands to support the economy if calamity befell the sugar and pineapple industries.²⁶ In light of these factors and circumstances, it was quite logical that Okumura concluded that most Nisei should pursue careers in farming.

Many successful Issei entrepreneurs also viewed agriculture as a promising field for developing business opportunities. One such businessman was Kotaro Tanaka, an importer and owner of Tanaka Stores (Tanaka shoten) located in Honolulu and Kahuku. Tanaka came from Hiroshima to Hawai'i in 1894 at the age of twenty-two in order to work on a sugar plantation. With funds he saved from his seven years of plantation labor, he opened a store that carried Japanese and American food, clothes, and other general goods. He soon opened another one. After succeeding remarkably as a retail dealer, Tanaka launched an agricultural business. In 1912, he established the Kahana Agricultural Company in Kahuku, which made considerable profit from a 47-acre sugar cane field. He also demonstrated leadership as president of the Japanese Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, and vice president of the Japanese Credit Association, trustee of the Japanese Charity Society, and in many other organizations. When the *Nippu Jiji* published its commemorative 25th issue titled *The Memoir of the Development of Japanese Compatriots in Hawai'i* in 1920, Tanaka was featured as the "hero of a great success story."²⁷ Tanaka was a model for what Okumura expected the Nisei to achieve in the Back-to-the-Farm

conditions." Quoted in Fred E. Armstrong, "A Survey of Small Farming in Hawaii," University of Hawai'i Research Publications, No.14. (1937): 9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Nippu Jiji, Hawai Doho Hatten Kaikoshi*, 72.

Movement, starting with field work and then, through talent and diligence, advancing economically and politically.²⁸

Similar to Tanaka, a number of Hawai'i's Japanese used farming as a means to elevate themselves from a laboring class to relative economic "independence" during the 1910s and the 1920s. While this trend continued ubiquitously throughout the decades, the massive 1920 strike served as a catalyst to the decrease of the working population, for it resulted in the discharge and termination by the plantation of Japanese workers, many of whom did not return to their old jobs even after the end of the showdown. Their number fell from 24,696 in 1917 to 19,474 in 1920, to 16,367 in 1923, and to 11,899 in 1926.²⁹ Furthermore, especially around 1920, the system of special annual bonuses—the add-on income to the workers when the sugar prices were on the rise—enabled many who stayed on the plantations to save money to start new business ventures, as merchants and building contractors in towns and cities, and as truck farmers and coffee and pineapple growers in rural areas.³⁰

²⁸ Another advocate of small farming was Kichitaro Sekiya from Fukuoka. Based on his experience working for the Caucasian-owned California Pineapple Company for more than a decade, he started a private agricultural enterprise with an Issei partner to produce pineapple, along with sugarcane and banana, and eventually achieved immense success. Like Tanaka, he was one of the thirty local Japanese Issei leaders who established the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems. *Ibid*, 256-257.

²⁹ *Hawai Nenkan 1934-35*, 87-88.

³⁰ The plantation workers benefited from the bonus system particularly in 1920—the year in which the unprecedented multiethnic strike engulfed the sugar industry. The average sugar price per pound (in cents), which was used as a means of calculating the amount of the bonuses paid, went as indicated in Table 1 (p.267). Masayto Duus explains the impact of the bonus system on the Nikkei workers in this way. “[W]hat supported the [1920 Oahu sugar plantation] strike for nearly half a year was the unprecedented rise in the price of sugar. The economy was enjoying such a boom that the English-language newspapers coined the term ‘bonus millionaire workers.’ Consul General Yada reported to his government that ‘these are the best conditions since Japanese have come to Hawaii.’ Ordinary people were indulging in

Unlike their counterparts in western states on the continental United States, where Alien Land Laws prohibited the ownership and lease of land by “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” Japanese immigrants in Hawai‘i were legally allowed to purchase and possess land. Many eagerly sought opportunities to gain agricultural land, or attempted to obtain stocks in agricultural companies, sometimes even acquiring a company itself. Some Issei formed new companies for the purpose of purchasing vast areas suitable for pineapple growing on the islands of Maui, Hawai‘i, and Molokai. For instance, Ushisuke Taira from Okinawa established *Hawai Sangyo Kabushiki Gaisha* (Hawaiian Industrial Company Ltd.), an agricultural, insurance, and trust company in Honolulu in 1917.³¹ He served as a board member on the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and was also one of the successful Issei businessmen who founded the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems in 1928. The attorney who represented Taira gave evidence “of an insistent desire to acquire the property” when six acres of land adjoining the mill site on the plantation were put up at auction at the beginning price of \$8,921.80. After competing with the attorney, the plantation’s representative was obliged to bid \$35,000 for the six acres, judging it imperative to get the land back.³² Taira was not the only local Japanese who showed “an insistent desire to acquire property” during the 1920s. The U.S.

‘a spirit of luxury,’ and mutual loan associations had become popular. Not only were more and more immigrants taking trips back to their homeland, a growing number of plantation workers left the plantations to open businesses in towns with money they had earned.” See Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy*, 135; and also Headquarters Hawaiian Department, “Attitude of Japanese towards Agriculture,” circa 1921, National Archives, Military Intelligence Department (MID) General Correspondence 1917-1941, Record Group 165, Box 552, 22-23.

³¹ Masao Sogawa, *Hawai Nihonjin Meikan* (Tokyo:Meiji Hosan Kai Insatsu,1927), 147.

³² Headquarters Hawaiian Department, Weekly Report Summary No. 37, Record Group 165, Box 324, October 2-9, 1920, 1-2.

Military Intelligence Department frequently reported similar incidents in the early 1920s. A local Japanese man raised the final sale price to \$36,500 by bidding at a public auction for land whose appraised value was only \$14,000. The Issei businessmen who attempted to purchase the Ola‘a Sugar Company on the island of Hawai‘i also offered exceptionally high prices.³³ As these examples indicate, by the early 1920s quite a few Japanese immigrants had started building a solid economic foundation in Hawai‘i, using agriculture as the core of their business activities.³⁴ Considering Issei success in the agricultural sector, Okumura’s Back-to-the-Farm Movement was not a mere product of a fantasy; its emergence was timely and reasonable.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the ‘Nisei Problem’ became a focus of collective concern in the local Japanese community in the mid-1920s. Consequently, a number of local Japanese leaders demonstrated sympathy with Okumura’s Back-to-the-Farm Movement, which would effectively resolve a future job shortage many Nisei might face. One of the most ardent supporters was Yasutaro Soga, publisher of the *Nippu Jiji*, which

³³ Headquarters Hawaiian Department, “Attitude of Japanese towards Agriculture,” 22-23.

³⁴ By the beginning of 1921, local Japanese had started vigorously investing in Hawai‘i under the guidance of both Japanese officials and Issei leaders, as another military intelligence report further delineates: “Increasing interest is shown by Japanese capital in investments in this territory. It has been said above that activity in the formation of thrift and investment associations has been shown. In connection with the general campaign of propaganda now being carried on by the Japanese press under the direction of the Japanese Consul and the officials of the Hawaii Laborers’ Association, the Japanese people are urged to look to Hawaii to invest their money. The Japanese banks have been urged to invest their earnings in Hawaii rather than in Japan as has heretofore been the custom. The Japanese are buying numerous tracts of pineapple land in various parts of the territory. They have always shown interest in these lands, and a disposition to operate them independently. It is known that the Japanese are showing marked interest in the purchase of real estate holdings in the city of Honolulu. In certain cases they show a willingness to pay exceptionally high prices, for land the value of which from an industrial point of view is difficult to understand.” Headquarters

repeatedly carried articles and editorials that explained the importance of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement for the future of young local Japanese. For example, an editorial entitled “American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry and Independent Farming,” published November 7, 1927, exhorted Hawai‘i-born Nisei to become homesteaders rather than seek the limited number of white-collar jobs.³⁵ Similarly, in an article in the September 1926 issue of the *Jitsugyo-no-Hawaii* (Hawai‘i Business), Wasuke Motohige, owner of various successful companies as well as former President of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce, maintained that most local Nisei should be engaged in agriculture, which had always been the key industry in the islands, but they should become skilled workers rather than continue as fieldhands.³⁶ In this way, within a few years after starting the movement, Okumura’s vision gradually came to be shared by other Issei leaders.

Some of the local Issei supporters may have had different reasons than Okumura for assisting the Back-to-the-Farm Movement: they saw the younger generation as a workforce for their own agricultural endeavors. Many Issei independent farmers and landowners usually hired fellow Japanese as employees almost exclusively. Because of the language issue, they preferred their compatriots to the workers of other ethnicities, and often pulled Japanese away from Caucasian-owned sugar plantations to the extent

Hawaiian Department, “The Economic Situation in Hawaii as Relating to Japanese Activity,” MID, Record Group 165, Box 552, February 10, 1921, 5.

³⁵ See also “There’s No Cause for Pessimism” (September 16, 1927), “Farming Is Full of Promise” (November 13, 1927), “The Way Next-Generation Compatriots Should Follow”(November 14, 1927).

³⁶ *Jitsugyo no Hawaii*, vol.15, No. 9, 1926, 93-94.

that some planters became concerned about the matter of labor supply.³⁷ The struggle over the available work force intensified, when U.S. Congress terminated labor migration from Japan in 1924.³⁸ Although the former plantation workers who left en masse in the early 1920s provided a new source of labor supply for the expanding Issei farming to a limited degree, the dearth of new immigrant labor from Japan caused an acute labor shortage. It is therefore not surprising that local Japanese farm owners turned an eye to the American-born generation as potential employees. As a result, they, along with civic leaders, were prone to work together with Okumura for the shared goal of returning (or keeping) the youth on the soil, which they also saw as an effective measure to the anticipated occupational problem of Hawai'i-born Nisei.

Okumura and the Rhetoric of Japanese Nationalism

In his attempt to advocate farming for the Nikkei in Hawai'i, Okumura directed his message not only at the Nisei but also at their parents. He was concerned that Issei were inculcating in the minds of the youth a contempt for farming and a corresponding yearning for white-collar jobs.³⁹ To gain the first generation's support for the Back-to-the-Farm Movement, Okumura adopted the same strategy he used in his education campaign, appeal to their pride in Japanese ancestry. In his numerous Japanese-language

³⁷ Yada to Uchida, November 20, 1920, *Hainichi ZakkenHawai nobu*, JARP Reel 35.

³⁸ After the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1924, smuggling of Japanese laborers continued via Canada, Mexico, and even in U.S. West Coast ports. Legal Japanese immigration continued in the form of "non-quota immigrants" and between 1924 and 1940 over 6,000 Japanese in this category came to the United States.

³⁹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 101.

essays on the movement, he mixed the rhetoric of Japanese ethnic nationalism with exhortations to return to the soil.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Okumura maintained the concept of “overseas Japanese racial development” and often referred to it in his messages directed at local Japanese. He employed this concept to explain the goal of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement. For instance, in his essay “*Waga Doho wa Izukoni Hatten subekika*” (Whither should our compatriots expand?) (1924), he states:

So long as we have decided to live here permanently, we should stop sending our money back to Japan, and save it for our children. When the opportunity comes, we should help our children buy a homestead and strengthen their development foundation. . . . Such efforts will help the second generation become well-established American citizens who are an integral part of this country . . . We should awaken and strive for our stable development here in Hawai‘i.⁴⁰

As this quotation reveals, he believed that farming would lead the Nikkei to achieve Japanese racial development, namely, the construction of a sturdy social, political, and economic basis in Hawai‘i. He also stated repeatedly that their success in agriculture would not only make Hawai‘i’s Japanese proud but also be honored by their compatriots in Japan and the rest of the world, all of whom were connected by Japanese blood. According to him, their prosperity would elevate Hawai‘i’s Nikkei to a paragon of Japanese racial expansion in the eyes of their countrymen/women.

In his Japanese nationalistic exhortation, Okumura also emphasized that the Nikkei should contribute to the racial development by utilizing their “superior” qualities

⁴⁰ Okumura, “*Waga Doho wa Izukoni Hatten subekika*” (1924), included in *Nichibei*, 66.

as the “Japanese race.”⁴¹ He asserted that Japanese were born-farmers, that their aptitude for agriculture was a major strength of the Japanese “race,” traditionally considered an agrarian people.⁴² To highlight the excellence of the Japanese, he often compared them to Filipino field workers on the plantation, quoting plantation managers who had stated that Japanese farmers could complete the same work more efficiently and productively than their Filipino counterparts. Maintaining that fifteen-year-old Japanese farmers were as capable as adult Filipino farmers, he contended that the Nisei, endowed with such a “racial gift,” should choose the profession in which they promised to succeed.⁴³ His passion for the Back-to-the-Farm Movement was thus rooted in a belief in the “superiority” of the Japanese; he expected Hawai‘i-born Nisei to prove the “preeminence” of their blood.

Okumura’s Japanese nationalistic rhetoric barely made its way into the English versions of his works, however. Umetaro, his son, interpreter and translator, deliberately eliminated Japanese patriotic expressions from English translations of his father’s essays. For example, in “Waga Doho wa Izukoni Hatten subekika” (1924), Okumura stated: “We should really wake up and strive for *our stable expansion here in Hawai‘i*” [translation

⁴¹ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 185.

⁴² Okumura’s ideas echoed a Japanese intellectual tradition in which rice, the staple food of the Japanese people, was associated with Japanese deities and rice agriculture was elevated into a symbol of Japanese spiritual life. See Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, “A Conceptual Model for the Historical Relationship Between the Self and the Internal and External Others: The Agrarian Japanese, the Ainu, and the Special Status People,” edit. by Dru C. Gladney, *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 31-51.

⁴³ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 197.

and italics mine].⁴⁴ In the English version of this essay included in *Hawaii's American-Japanese Problem: Report of the Campaign, January 1920 to January 1927*, however, this sentence became "We should really wake up and *work for the real development of the islands*" [italics mine].⁴⁵ By replacing "*our stable expansion here in Hawai'i*" with "*the real development of the islands*," Umetaro obliterated the Japanese nationalistic sentiment in the original, and transformed it into the agreeable message that Japanese were not a menace to the existing order in Hawai'i but contributors to the system. Similarly in another Japanese essay, "We encouraged the Japanese to induce their children *to remain permanently in Hawai'i* and to make farming a life-profession" [translation and italics mine]⁴⁶ was changed to "We encouraged the Japanese to induce their children *to remain permanently on the plantation* and to make farming a life-profession" [italics mine] in the English version.⁴⁷ The original essay suggested Hawai'i-born Nisei could stake their future in Brazil, Mexico, Manchuria, or Southeast Asia, but it concluded that the best choice was "to remain permanently in Hawai'i."⁴⁸ The English version seems more intended to please sugar plantation owners by assuring them of a continued supply of plantation laborers in the future.

The English versions of the essays on the Back-to-the-Farm Movement often seem to sugarcoat the argument so that mainstream readers would not feel threatened by

⁴⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁵ Okumura, *Hawaii's American-Japanese Problem*, 21.

⁴⁶ Okumura, "Undo no Dai Yonen" (1924), included in *Nichibei*, 42.

⁴⁷ Okumura, *Hawaii's American-Japanese Problem*, 21.

⁴⁸ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 60-66.

Hawai'i's Japanese as economic competitors. To cite one instance, in *Undo no Dai Yonen* (The fourth year of my campaign) (1924), Okumura urged the Issei to invest their savings in Hawai'i's agriculture industry rather than sending it to Japan. Okumura described what they could achieve through investment, such as becoming stockholders or even owning one or two sugar companies. In the English version, however, such concrete examples are all omitted; it simply notes that their investment would contribute to Hawai'i's economy.⁴⁹ Whether these manipulations were done by Umetaro alone or at his father's request, such a strategy promoted a 'harmless' image of Hawai'i's Japanese. It may have been helpful in winning cooperation and understanding of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement from white planters, the main readers of the English pamphlets. Umetaro's English 'translations' were thus often different from the originals written by his father for Japanese-speaking readers, but mirrored Okumura's attempt to keep both Japanese and white audiences engaged in his project, while maintaining a precarious harmony between 'Americanism' and Japanese nationalism.

Considering the social conditions in Hawai'i of the period, such manipulation of rhetoric was understandably inevitable for Takie and Umetaro Okumura. Many of the English versions came out between 1920 and 1927, coinciding with certain incidents that

⁴⁹ Sometimes, such 'censorship' led to incoherence and contradiction. As noted earlier, the English version of *Undo no Dai Yonen* proclaims that the Nisei should "remain permanently on the plantation" at the beginning, but towards the end, encourages the Nisei to acquire homesteads. In order to make homesteading acceptable to white readers, the translator then made a notable change in his argument: unlike the Japanese original, the essay in English suggests that Nisei farmers attain homesteads *only* for growing sugarcane on their own, which would ultimately be more profitable for sugar companies than having them remain field laborers. By doing so, Umetaro, and presumably Okumura, strove to blur the line between working on a homestead and laboring on a plantation.

had led to deterioration in mainstream perceptions of local Japanese. Japanese workers' resistance against sugar plantation owners, leading to the 1920 Oahu plantation strike, was regarded as an indication that local Japanese were "anti-American" and "anti-assimilable." Particularly, the solidarity they showed during the strike was viewed by mainstream society as an expression of hard-core Japanese nationalism, labeling local Japanese as potentially dangerous elements in society. In addition, the Japanese language school litigation between 1922 and 1927 further worsened the anti-Japanese sentiment amongst dominant Americans.

Okumura devoted himself to alleviating friction by convincing mainstream Caucasians, particularly civic and political leaders, that the Japanese could become full-fledged Americans solely loyal to the United States. In seeking sympathizers for his campaign, he found it necessary to reframe his words for prospective Caucasian supporters, even while resorting to Japanese ethnic nationalistic rhetoric to appeal to Japanese-speaking individuals.

The Japanese Consul General and the Back-to-the-Farm Movement

During the 1920s, local Japanese were not the only supporters of Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement. In fact, officials at the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, in particular, Consul General Kazuye Kuwashima, enthusiastically approved of his campaign. Agreeing that agriculture was the most promising foundation for a solid economy, Kuwashima promoted further involvement in farming amongst both Issei and Nisei. For example, when Kuwashima went on inspection tours of Kauai, Maui, and

Hawai'i, he made it a priority to visit farms and homesteads run by local Japanese and hold meetings with members of Japanese tenant farmer federations in different districts. He also gave talks to immigrant Japanese to inspire them to continue developing agricultural businesses in tandem with the second and third generations.⁵⁰

Considering his strong interest in agriculture as a means of improving the livelihood of Japanese residents, it is small wonder that Kuwashima ardently supported for Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement. At a conference of Japanese consuls in 1928, the diplomat reported that his office was engaged in dealing with the so-called 'Nisei Problem' in cooperation with sympathetic Issei leaders, singling out Okumura's program as one that would provide a useful solution to the vocation issue.⁵¹ As mentioned earlier, in order to promote agriculture among local Japanese, the Consul also initiated establishment of the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems, whose leadership included Okumura. Two months after the inauguration of the society, Okumura published another pamphlet on the Back-to-the-Farm Movement which included the society's main proposal, namely, industrial study and its adoption, Kuwashima, as he had often done before, probably funded publication of the pamphlet.⁵²

⁵⁰ At a talk near Papa'ikou on the island of Hawai'i on August 17th, 1927, Kuwashima said, "I am pleased with seeing the development of the work of you Japanese tenants and wish that you will continue to proceed on the same way. Next time I come here, hopefully, I will find that your economic basis has been even more stabilized with the help of the second and third generations." For similar examples, see *Nippu Jiji*, dated August 5, 1927; August 19, 1927; and August 26, 1927.

⁵¹ *Dai Sankai Taiheiyo Engan Ryoji Kaigi Gijiroku Gekan* (The Minutes of the Third Pacific Coast Consular Conference, Volume 2), Chosho Zaigai 93, Diplomatic Record Office, Tokyo, 1928, 123-125.

⁵² Okumura, *Hawai umare no Seinen no Zento*, 12-13.

Unlike Okumura, whose focus was on the local context, Kuwashima's primary concern was how the Back-to-the-Farm Movement would benefit Japan. In fact, the establishment of the Society for the Study of Industrial Problems corresponded with a key policy of his home government, to guide industrial development amongst Japanese overseas settlements. In November 1927, the Giichi Tanaka Cabinet formed the administrative research commission for the purpose of founding the Ministry of Colonial Affairs (*Takumu sho*). In June 1929, the Japanese government officially inaugurated the ministry, with some of its principal functions to administrate Japanese emigrants abroad, promote their welfare, and assist expansion of their businesses. While emigrants to the United States remained under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the new ministry became in charge of overseas Japanese in other places, such as Korea, Taiwan, Karafuto (southern Sakhalin), and South America.⁵³ According to its 1930 handbook (*Takumu yoran*), the mission of Colonial Affairs was to support Japanese engaged in agricultural enterprises, and encourage them to produce not only food but also raw materials such as crude rubber. If the products were exported to Japan, they would alleviate the food shortage and further promote industrial development in Japan, a country of limited land and scarce natural resources. Moreover, the government designated overseas Japanese businesses as go-betweens uniting Japan and host countries.

⁵³ Through the establishment of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, the Japanese government centralized the work which several different ministries had separately dealt with, and attempted to increase efficiency in the process of providing Japanese emigrants with necessary protection, guidance, and funds to settle and prosper in new places. See *Takumu Yoran Showa Gonen ban* (Tokyo: Takumu daijin kanbo bunshoka; 1931), 1-7, 620-625; Toraji Iriye, *Hojin Kaigai Hattenshi*, vol. 2, (Tokyo: Hara Shobo, 1981) [original 1942], 543-546; and the editorial in *Nippu Jiji*, November 7, 1927, titled "Department of Colonization."

Therefore, it is not surprising that the handbook proudly stated that one of the primary missions of the Ministry was “to promote international peace.” Just as some elite Japanese leaders advocated “internationalism,” this lofty aim was based on the practical necessity to obtain a stable supply from foreign countries. Rupture of relations with exporters would cut the lifeline for Japan.

Along this line of thought, the Japanese government had already provided direct financial support and dispatched specialists and other personnel to places like Brazil, Manchuria, and Southeast Asia, but due to diplomatic concerns, direct involvement in the local affairs of North America was consciously avoided.⁵⁴ In other words, although the Foreign Ministry came to play a larger and more active role in assisting the economic and cultural activities of Japanese residents in Hawai‘i and the continental U.S., as well as Canada, it preferred indirect engagement. That is, it supported, both morally and financially, the programs put into effect by “like-minded” Issei leaders rather than carried out such programs itself. Kuwashima’s backing for the Society and Okumura’s project emerged from this general context, in which diplomats and Issei mutually sought support from each other for their own agendas and interests.

⁵⁴ Significantly, even after the establishment of the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, Japanese immigrants in North America and Hawai‘i remained under the charge of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. While the Ministry of Colonial Affairs loaned capital and sent agricultural experts and Japanese language school teachers to support Japanese immigrants in South America, the Foreign Ministry did not offer similar support to Hawai‘i’s Japanese because it wished to avoid being perceived as controlling Japanese immigrants and thereby stimulating anti-Japanese sentiment in the society of Hawai‘i.

Agricultural Extension Service and Vocational Education

As in the previous cases of interracial cooperation detailed in Chapters 1 and 2, some of Hawai'i's *haole* leaders had reasons to sympathize with Okumura. David L. Crawford, President of the University of Hawai'i and a professor of entomology, contended that farming was the most promising occupation for the majority of the youth in the islands since agriculture was the key industry in the Territory. He made frequent appearances at Okumura's New Americans Conference as a guest speaker and urged the Nisei audience to engage in farming.⁵⁵ For example, at the first conference in 1927, he stated, "It is obvious that a great number of our young people must go into the agricultural industry—sugar, pineapples, coffee and general farming. If they are to be successful they should go into an established line and they must be satisfied with what they can get at first and hope to work up. . . . Begin wherever you can get a toehold or a handhold and fight your way up to the top."⁵⁶ Like Okumura, he hoped that the Nisei would utilize farming as a means of rising in the world rather than despising it as physical work and longing for white-collar jobs.⁵⁷

To promote farming in Hawai'i, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Crawford established the Agricultural Extension Service in 1928, which sent men college-trained in agriculture to farmers in each county to teach them the latest

⁵⁵ David Crawford attended the New Americans Conferences held in 1927, 1930, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935, 1936, and 1937.

⁵⁶ *First Annual Conference of New Americans, 1927, 6-7.*

⁵⁷ Concerned that Hawai'i's economy depended too much on sugarcane and pineapple, Crawford strongly advocated growing more diversified products, such as vegetables and fruits, for consumers in urban areas.

scientific agricultural techniques and give them advice regarding farm problems.⁵⁸ County agents lived in the heart of rural districts, frequently visited individual farms and homes in the area, and held various workshops at fairs and community meetings.⁵⁹ To reach communities throughout the Territory, seven branch offices of the Agricultural Extension were established, one each on O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui, Moloka'i, East-Hawai'i, North Hawai'i, and West Hawai'i (Kona); the headquarters were located on the campus of the University of Hawai'i in Honolulu,⁶⁰ which started as an agricultural college in 1907.⁶¹ As an affiliate of the University of Hawai'i as well as a part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Hawai'i Agricultural Extension Service developed rapidly under the guidance of Director Frederick G. Krauss, a professor in agriculture and earnest supporter of Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement.⁶² He contributed articles to the *New Americans* Nisei newsletter edited by Umetaro Okumura to encourage the Nisei to take

⁵⁸ Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii 1928-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1938), 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 26. Along with demonstrations, the Agricultural Extension Service also put out regular publications, such as the monthly *Extension Letter*, the *Weekly Market Letter*, the *Crop Estimate*, and the *Agricultural Economics*. A weekly radio program informed listeners to economic news in the market and the latest research in agriculture. In addition, during the late 1930s, the Extension Service broadcasted another weekly territory-wide program which offered timely news of value to farmers as well as topics of general interest. Various members of the Extension Service staff broadcast this program, which occasionally featured visiting scientists or government workers.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-5. The organization remained relatively small. Even in 1938, ten years after its inauguration, there were only twenty-eight county agents and assistant agents, fifteen technical workers, seventeen stenographers, clerks, and two part-time crop reporters. Their energetic work, however, involved many members of the farm communities. For example, 2,786 agricultural demonstrations drew a total attendance of 38,439 people in Hawai'i in 1937.

⁶¹ Robert M. Kamins and Robert E. Potter, *Mālamalama: A History of the University of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 4-6.

⁶² Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii 1928-1938*, 2.

on farming, and gave a talk on diversified farming at the New Americans Conference during the mid-1930s.⁶³

Besides visiting farmers individually, the Extension Service staff held various club activities intended for members of different ages and genders in the community in hope of promoting farmers' economic status, raising their standard of living, and encouraging them to perceive themselves as good rural American citizens. 4-H clubs were organized for children 10-16 years old, as each member of the club worked on a single subject for a year under the guidance of Extension Service staff and volunteer club leaders. Subjects were chosen based on socially prescribed gender roles; for example, boys learned to raise chickens and grow coffee, while girls sewed and cooked American dishes; gardening and yard beautification were co-ed subjects.⁶⁴ Similarly, the Junior Farm Demonstrators groups and the Young Farmer's Clubs were founded to conduct projects covering horticulture, agronomy, poultry, and animal husbandry amongst farmers 16 to 30 years old.⁶⁵ The Junior Home Demonstrators groups were set up to train adult women in

⁶³ Frederick G. Krauss, "How Young Men May Succeed at Farming And in Leadership in Hawaii," *The New Americans*, Vol.XIII No. 1, January 1933, 1-2; Krauss, "The Challenge of the Land," Vol.XIII No.5, May 1933, 2-3. Also, see *The Ninth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1935, 22.

⁶⁴ The 4-H Clubs also provided the youth with social programs, such as 4-H Rally Day, territorial conferences, county achievement camp, and 4-H officer training school. These social programs were usually comprised of a variety of activities, including team demonstrations, exhibitions, workshops, sports, sightseeing, and singing contests, providing the members with recreation and opportunities to learn new skills and acquainted with one other. See Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii*, 17-18; Clarence B. Smith, *Agricultural Extension System of the United States* (New York: J. Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1930), 70-87.

⁶⁵ Most of member of the Junior Farm Demonstrators Clubs had left school and were helping their fathers on a farm. The Farm Demonstration Clubs included interpreters to assist first-

various aspects of home economics, such as nutrition, dressmaking, childcare, and home improvement so that they could build healthy farm families.⁶⁶ These clubs eventually involved a large segment of the community, to the extent that in 1938, there were 133 clubs for boys and men, with 1,957 members, and 173 clubs for girls and women, with 2,687 members, in the Territory.⁶⁷

Of the county agents of the Hawai'i Agricultural Extension Service, there were two Nisei deeply involved in the New Americans Conference who contributed immeasurably to spreading and actualizing Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement. One was Earl Kazuo Nishimura, the county agent for the Kona branch. He became an influential figure in the local Japanese community on the west coast of the island of Hawai'i and a leader and supporter of various social, political, and economic activities of young Nisei farmers in the district. He participated in the 1933 conference as a delegate and joined the associate committee of the conference the next year. The other key person was Okumura's son, Fuyuki, who served on the associate committee from 1933 on, after attending the conference twice as a delegate. Fuyuki, a Yale graduate, listed his occupation proudly in the program of the New Americans Conference as "farmer."⁶⁸ As a county agent, he devoted his life to improving the lives of farmers in rural areas of O'ahu, and later Kauai.

generation Japanese farmers. See Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii*, 17; Wiley, *The Agricultural Extension System of the United States*, 70-87.

⁶⁶ Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii*, 18; Wiley, *The Agricultural Extension System of the United States*, 59-64.

⁶⁷ Agricultural Extension Service, *Agricultural Extension Service Hawaii*, 2.

⁶⁸ *The Eighth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1934, 54.

Crawford's Agricultural Extension project was in line with earlier endeavors by *haole* educators. During the 1910s, the need for vocational education for the masses was a much discussed topic among educators and policy-makers in America. After the Smith-Hughes Act (the Vocational Educational Act) of 1917 was established on the continental United States, progressive educators such as Vaughan MacCaughey strove to introduce agricultural vocational training to the Hawai'i public school curriculum.⁶⁹ MacCaughey, Superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), the public school system in the Territory, from 1919 to 1923, viewed Hawai'i as primarily rural, and contended that the majority of Hawai'i's population should "be trained to live successfully and happily in the country; to earn their living through agriculture; and to develop a self-respecting citizenry." He believed that in farming one "can earn a comfortable living and live a self-respecting life; it is not so much a matter of actual wage as of self-respect and social position." Knowing that many young adults on the continental United States went

⁶⁹ In 1917, the Smith-Hughes Act was passed to authorize federal subsidy for teaching vocational skills to students who could not attend college. Vocational training focused on agriculture, trades, industries, and home economics. The purpose of the Smith-Hughes Act was clearly expressed in the Report of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education: "While many different kinds and grades of vocational education will always be required, the kind most urgently demanded at the present time is that which will prepare workers for the more common occupations in which the great mass of our people find useful employment. . . . [Vocational education is intended] to promote a more productive and prosperous agriculture . . . to prevent the waste of human labor . . . to increase the wage-earning power of our productive workers . . . [and] to meet the increasing demand for trained workmen . . . Vocational education is needed as a wise business investment for this Nation." As this statement reveals, this Act was primarily intended to stimulate industry and boost the U.S. economy, in addition to giving common laborers more job opportunities and better economic strength. President Hoover enthusiastically supported this Act, claiming that vocational training for the commoner wage-earning pursuits and skilled trades were all as essential as training professionals. He contended that vocational education would open the door to better opportunities in life, by helping youths acquire specialized knowledge and necessary skills for future occupations. See G. A. Schmidt, *Vocational Education in Agriculture in Federally-Aided Secondary Schools: A Study of Its Instructional and Training Phases* (New York: Columbia University, 1932), 3-4.

to cities to look for white-collar jobs, but ended up unemployed or doing menial work, he made every effort to prevent a similar situation developing in Hawai'i.⁷⁰ In two biennial reports to the governor, written in 1920 and in 1922, he repeatedly emphasized the necessity for industrial and agricultural education at public schools.⁷¹ MacCaughey, who cooperated with Issei leaders to alleviate the Japanese language school controversy (described in Chapter 1), was also concerned about the emerging "Nisei Problem." He appeared to see farming as a solution. His request to introduce vocational education to Hawai'i was accepted after Congress extended provisions of the Smith-Hughes Act to the Territory of Hawai'i in 1924. In the following year, the first full-scale, federally-unded vocational school was established in Honolulu, offering a two-year program in agriculture.⁷² By 1928, nineteen schools had opened vocational agriculture programs in the Territory.

⁷⁰ Quoted from Cecil K. Dotts and Mildred Sikkema, *Challenging the Status Quo: Public Education in Hawaii 1840-1980* (Honolulu: Hawaii Education Association, 1994), 77.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 87, 91.

⁷² Some local Japanese leaders allegedly contributed to the establishment of vocational schools behind the scenes. At the Third Pacific Coast Consular Conference of 1928, Consul General Kuwashima reported that small-scale vocational training programs had been set up within several public schools to teach agriculture, handicrafts, etc. Before founding these schools, according to the diplomat, certain local Japanese leaders conferred with sugar planters and appealed to the Department of Public Instruction to support the plan. Kuwashima did not reveal the names of those leaders, but Okumura might have been one of them. Interestingly, three years before the establishment of these vocational schools in Hawai'i, Okumura had already discussed a plan for introducing vocational agriculture to public schools. In "Waga Doho wa Izukoni Hatten subekika" (1924), Okumura stated: "A certain prominent educator in Honolulu is now working on a plan of establishing an agricultural school, along with the regular public school. . . . The aim of the proposed plan is to turn out farmers with knowledge of scientific farming. He has obtained the endorsement of the school authorities and many sugar planters. It is very likely that legislation establishing such schools may be introduced in the coming session of the territorial legislature, and if approved, such schools would be immediately established. I hope that large number of our children would be

As vocational education expanded, the Future Farmers of Hawaii (FFH) was inaugurated as the Hawai'i branch of the Future Farmers of America (FFA). Like the national organization, the FFH was intended to assist high school boys taking courses in vocational agriculture, and its mission was to enhance student interest and skills in farming.⁷³ The FFH was also dedicated to forming good character in its members through various social and recreational activities, such as fairs, camps, and banquets. Under the guidance of William W. Beers, supervisor of agriculture in the vocational division of the DPI, the FFH rapidly expanded. During the 1930s, the enrolled membership increased from 271 in 1929 to 1,605 in 1938.⁷⁴

Among all the branches of the FFA, the Future Farmers of Hawaii was a relatively small one in terms of enrolled membership, but it was regarded as a very active and unique organization. For example, in 1934, the Hawai'i branch was chosen as the FFA State

enrolled in these schools." See *Dai Sankai Taihiyo Engan Ryhoji Kaigi*, 1928, 118-119; Okumura *Nichibei*, 65-66.

⁷³ Between 1923 and 1928, a number of state-wide organizations for students in vocational agriculture were formed in Virginia, Tennessee, Oklahoma, and California. In the summer of 1928, the Future Farmers of America (FFA) was founded under the auspices of the Agricultural Education Service of the Federal Board for Vocational Education. Within a decade, the FFA developed into an association with a membership of 206,995 in forty-seven states and two Territories, Hawai'i and Puerto Rico. Similar to 4-H Clubs, the FFA was meant to supplement vocational agricultural education. Each chapter held meetings, fairs, camps, banquets, fundraising campaigns, and special events on holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. FFA fairs, to which the whole community was invited, educational exhibits and crops/live stock judging contests were held to demonstrate the members' agricultural skills. For more details, see A. Webster Tenney: *Programs for Future Farmer Chapter Meetings* (Danville: Interstate Printing Co., 1938); *Practical Activities for Future Farmer Chapters* (Danville: Interstate Printing Co., 1941); William Arthur Ross, *Forward F.F.A.: A Few Thoughts for Members of the Future Farmers of America and Their Advisers* (Baltimore: The French-Bray Printing Co., 1939); Laurell L. Scranton, *Fun and Work for Future Farmers, F.F.A.: A Collection of Games, Programs, and Community Activities with Practical Ideas and Suggestions for Social and Recreational Programs for Rural Boys' Organizations* (Danville: Interstate Printing Co., 1934).

⁷⁴ Tenney, *Practical Activities for Future Farmer Chapters*, 305.

Association Winner for distinguished accomplishment. At annual FFA national contests in public speaking, contestants from the Hawai'i branch, David Inciong, Seisuke Akamine, and Hoosaku Furumoto, were prizewinners in 1937 (DI), 1939 (SA), and 1940 (HF).⁷⁵ As the names of these winners indicate, the multi-ethnic component of the membership, including Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Spanish, made the FFH distinct from its mostly Caucasian mainland counterparts. Reflecting their numerical predominance in membership, Japanese Americans were often elected as the FFH's President, Vice-President, or Secretary. The President, often a Nisei boy, was sent to the annual national convention on the continental United States as a representative of the FFH. In this way, the FFH provided vocational agricultural students of varied ethnic backgrounds with opportunities to demonstrate their talents, abilities, and leadership.⁷⁶

Vocational Education and the Sugar Industry

Haole leaders who supported vocational education in agriculture ranged from educators to politicians, administrators to sugar plantation owners. Some of them, such as Crawford and MacCaughey, regarded vocational education as a means of securing a positive economic future for the children of immigrants, as well as a way to transform them into independent, "self-respecting" members of Hawai'i's society from the standpoint of "Americanizing" them. Their ideas tended to correspond squarely with

⁷⁵ Ibid., 313-316.

what Okumura and his associates had in their minds. On the contrary, many leaders in the sugar industry had other motives in supporting the offering of vocational education to the local-born youth. First, many sugar plantation owners and executives wished to expand vocational agricultural programs at public schools in hopes that students would eventually provide necessary labor and skills that would match the changing technology and scientific methods in the industry. Another reason for their support had to do with the labor vacuum created by the enactment of the 1924 Immigration Act, which not only terminated labor migration from Japan but also shifted the destination of Filipino immigration from Hawai'i chiefly to California. The dwindling inflow of Filipino labor and the aging of the existing Issei labor force in the islands, combined with the continuing militancy of Filipino fieldhands, induced the *haole* business elite to seek from the local-born population, especially the Nisei, a new source of workers—those who were equipped not only with skills but also with the right mindset and expectations. In other words, the business elite found an ideological function in a new scheme of state-sponsored vocational education programs, which they saw as an alternative to the existing public education system that had allegedly produced the youth unfit for the sugar industry.

In the mid-1920s, sugar planters openly attacked Hawai'i's public education. At the annual meeting of the Hawai'i Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA), the president contended that public school graduates usually showed "no inclination of returning to the

⁷⁶ Wilbert Choi, *Five Thousand Miles With A Future Farmer* (Honolulu, Department of Public Instruction, 1931).

soil” and seldom met the demands of the agricultural industries in the Territory.⁷⁷ Some educators and administrators appeared to be in agreement with the sugar planters in this matter. In 1928, the DPI’s Superintendent, Will C. Crawford, assured members of the HSPA that he and his staff were reforming vocational programs to furnish more workers for the plantations.⁷⁸ In the following year, Governor Lawrence M. Judd commissioned an advisory committee to review the educational system in the same spirit. The consultants on the committee advised him to limit expenditures for secondary education and decrease high school enrollment while expanding programs in vocational agriculture, a proposal that was vigorously opposed by educators.⁷⁹ In this way, with the help of the territorial government, sugar plantation owners found—and capitalized on—the utilities of vocational education in turning the younger generation into plantation laborers in their attempt to protect their economic interests and the existing order.

Preceding their call for vocational agriculture, leaders of the sugar industry set other measures in motion to achieve their goal of keeping Hawai‘i’s Japanese in their place as plantation laborers. At that time, since the industrial structure of the islands centered on agriculture, control over property was the fastest and surest way to achieve upward social mobility. It was therefore seen as crucial to deter Japanese land ownership and independent farming. In order to do this, the elite *haole* turned to the law for help,

⁷⁷ Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985), 242.

⁷⁸ Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 243; Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 127; Dotts, *Challenging the Status Quo*, 82, 109.

⁷⁹ Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 243-244; Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 132-133.

and as early as in 1921, the Hawaiian Homes Rehabilitation Act was put in place which effectively deprived many Nikkei—as well as other non-Hawaiians in the islands—of a way to elevate themselves to landowning farmers by providing the privilege of homesteading almost exclusively to native Hawaiians. Moreover, combined with this institutionalized exclusion of the Japanese from land ownership, the devastating effect of the Great Depression forced many Japanese to seek jobs on the plantations during the economic slump of the 1930s. This compelled Okumura to shift the main tenet of the ‘Back-to-the-Farm’ campaign from independent farming to labor. After the mid-1930s, when Okumura called for the Nisei to “return to the soil,” it meant working as employees in the plantation system rather than as self-supporting farmers. The following sections describe the legal discrimination and economic hardships of this period in greater detail.

The Hawaiian Homes Rehabilitation Act and the Exclusion of Japanese Americans from Homesteading

On September 14, 1920, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* carried an editorial on homesteading in Hawai‘i. The article sharply criticized local homesteaders—mostly of Southern European descent—who relied on Asian laborers to run their farms, calling this practice “insincere homesteading”:

In all too many cases, the homesteaders do not take up the land with any intention of farming it by their own labor and figure on obtaining title and having work done by *Oriental*s. . . . Government officials and members of Congress who have visited Hawaii, have frequently expressed the opinion that homesteading in this Territory is not real; that the extent of the law is circumvented and that homesteading ought either to be abolished or radically reformed. It is this state of affairs of which the territorial sugar expert complains that is to a considerable extent responsible for the favor

with which Congress views the so-called *Hawaiian Rehabilitation Bill*.
[Italics mine].⁸⁰

This editorial was written in response to “an open letter” written by Albert Horner that specifically took issue with what could be termed the ‘Oriental problem’ with regard to the question of homesteading. According to Horner, who was known as a “territorial sugar expert,” “alien” tenants on homestead lands received a large bonus on top of “exorbitant wages.” Such “abnormally” high wages, the concerned writer continued, were “brought about by the homesteaders bidding against one another for the laborers” who “held back and helped the movement along, and forcing the homesteaders to . . . pay any wage they might demand.” To end this situation, he urged that the landowners stop paying higher wages than the plantations and do more of the work on their homesteads themselves, rather than entering into contracts with “aliens.” Otherwise he suggested that the Hawaiian Rehabilitation Bill, which would nullify the current homesteading laws, should be passed.⁸¹ Enthusiastically supporting Horner’s argument, Governor Charles J. McCarthy publicly denounced landowners who employed “Orientals” and the existing system of land distribution that made it possible, and stated, “We shall see the end of homesteading.”⁸² As these accounts illustrate, the enactment of the 1921 Hawaiian Homes Commission Act (a.k.a. Rehabilitation Act), revolved around sometimes

⁸⁰ *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 14, 1920; also included in “Report on the Labor Problems” written by L. E. Sheppard *et. al.* dated January 1923, MID General Correspondence, Record Group 165, Box 553, National Archives.

⁸¹ “An Open Letter To Homesteaders,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 9, 1920.

⁸² “Officials Condemn Practice of Leasing Homestead Lands: Governor McCarthy Says Settlers Are Not Fulfilling Spirit of the Law,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, September 9, 1920.

contradictory problems of access to land, money, and, most importantly, race, the forces that dictated social relations in Hawai'i.

The early 1920s ushered in a crisis in the existing pattern of land holding and a re-configuration of power relations, albeit not to the extent that it automatically threatened the *haole* oligarchy. Homesteading provided a background for this change. By the late 1910s, many individual citizens of Portuguese, Spanish, Hawaiian and Anglo ancestry had risen to the position of landholding farmers, cracking the monopoly of the Big Five. In 1919, among the 2,938 homesteaders in Hawai'i, there were 1,113 Hawaiians (31,673 acres in total), 938 Portuguese/Spanish (48,554 acres), and 524 Anglo-Saxons (36,420 acres), compared to only 164 homesteaders of Japanese descent (4,513 acres) and 70 of Chinese origin (1,877 acres). Many of these farms were cultivated by people other than the actual landowners. In 1917, out of the aggregate 45,568-acre-homestead land, only 9,787 were under the cultivation of the owners themselves; the rest were under the control of hired farmhands or tenant farmers. Of these 'proxy homesteaders,' Japanese constituted the largest segment, holding 14,430 acres, more than 30 percent of the total; the Chinese, the second largest Asian tenant group, worked on only 111 homestead acres.⁸³ The "Oriental aliens" Horner wrote about were the Issei. Hence, they were an integral part of the struggle surrounding the passage and enforcement of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act.

Enacted in 1921, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act ostensibly sought to empower native Hawaiians by giving them priority as homesteaders. Since the mid-19th

⁸³ All statistics on homesteads from Hawai Shimposha, *Hawai Nihonjin Nenekan 1924*, 115.

century, the indigenous people had been pushed to the social margins of Hawai'i, deprived of their land, way of life, and means of self-support. The so-called Great Mahele (Great Division) of 1848 installed the Anglo-American system of private property, allowing a small number of white immigrants to gain control over land.⁸⁴ The next several decades saw a near monopoly of Hawai'i's most fertile land under the big sugar plantation concerns, later known as the Big Five. The influx of Asian and other contract laborers further alienated the original inhabitants from their land and livelihood. Meanwhile, the population of pure-blooded Hawaiians dramatically decreased from 79,000 in 1849 to 24,000 in 1920.⁸⁵ Purportedly, Anglo and native leaders together devised the Hawaiian Homes Commission bill in order to 'rescue' the displaced native Hawaiians from their predicament and enable them to support themselves again as a proud people following the Jeffersonian ideal of independent farming.⁸⁶ Jonah Kuhio Kalaniana'ole, a descendant of the Hawaiian royal family and Hawai'i's delegate to the U.S. Congress since 1902, initiated the effort. After a number of hearings at the Territorial Legislative Commission in Washington D.C., the act was adopted by Congress and signed by President Harding in July 1921. According to the law, people with at least

⁸⁴ Gavan Daws, *Shoal of Time: A History of the Hawaiian Islands* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968), 128.

⁸⁵ Tom Dinell, Robert H. Horowitz, Herman S. Doi, Michael A. Meriwether, and Allan A. Spitz, *The Hawaiian Homes Program: 1920-1963*, Legislative Reference Bureau (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1964), 1-2.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

50 percent native blood were eligible to apply for a 99-year lease on small agricultural or pastoral lots.⁸⁷ All others were ineligible.

The effect of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was mixed. On the one hand, the law failed miserably in redistributing land to the native population. After 1920, fewer Hawaiians gained homestead land than they had in previous years.⁸⁸ In 1918, 106 Hawaiians became homesteaders and 165 in 1919, but the number dropped dramatically to 84, 57, and 27 over the next three years.⁸⁹ This paradoxical situation resulted from a clause inserted into the law by the lobbying of Hawai'i's plantation owners. Hitherto, when sugar plantation leases on government land expired, the land was customarily disposed of as homesteads for independent farmers. The Hawaiian Homes Commission

⁸⁷ According to the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, "native Hawaiian" means any descendant of not less than one-half part of the blood of the races inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands previous to 1778." Also, the Act says: "The lessee shall be a native Hawaiian . . . The lessee shall not in any manner transfer to, or mortgage, pledge, or otherwise hold for the benefit of, any other person, except a native Hawaiian, and then only upon the approval of the commission, or agree so to transfer, mortgage, pledge, or otherwise hold, his interest in the tract." "Available lands" for homesteading are defined as "all public lands of the description and acreage, as follows, excluding (a) all lands within any forest reservation, (b) all cultivated sugar-cane lands, and (c) all public lands held under a certificate of occupation, homestead lease, right of purchase lease, or special homestead agreement, are hereby designated, and hereinafter referred to, as 'available land.'" For further details, see Chapter 41, Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, in Territory of Hawaii, *Revised Laws of Hawaii 1925* (Honolulu, T. H: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Ltd., 1925), vol. 1, 313-323.

⁸⁸ *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 1924*, 116.

⁸⁹ The decline of the population of homesteaders in Hawai'i from 1920 on paralleled the decrease of homestead tracts opened by the territorial government. In 1919, 8,877 acres were allotted to 552 homesteads, but in 1920, only 2,724 acres became available to 168 applicants. In 1922, only 43 units, totaling 2,147 acres, were disposed of, and in 1923, 33 units of 1,095 acres were set aside for homesteads. This diminishing of available homestead tracts was an inevitable result of the inserted provision excluding all land already being used for sugar cultivation from the acreage allotted for homesteading. Acknowledging this, the Report of the Commissioner of Public Lands for the two-year period ending June 30, 1930 states, "No new Homestead tracts were opened . . . by the withdrawal of the remaining Government cane lands from homesteading [and] by the passage of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the demand for opening of new Homestead Tracts practically ceased." See *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 1924*, 116; Dinell, *Hawaiian Homes Program*, 48.

Act allowed the plantations to have the first priority in leasing the same land back before it went onto the 'homestead' market. This provision was particularly crucial for the planters, because they had grappled with the problem of massive turn over in leased land in recent years. Between 1917 and 1921, for example, some twelve major leases (22,000 acres) were scheduled to expire; in 1917 and 1918 alone, a total of 12,933 acres actually slipped through their fingers due to previous homestead regulations.⁹⁰ The 1921 law 'rescued' the planters from losing their leased properties, but reduced the land available to native Hawaiians to barren and unproductive units that skirted mountains and had been forsaken by planters and other enterprising farmers.⁹¹

On the other hand, this law effectively prevented exactly what 'the territorial sugar expert' and government official had found so irritating; that is, homesteaders who hired Asians for field work and paid them "higher wages than the plantations." Under the Organic Act of 1900, which made U.S. laws applicable in the islands, 25 or more American citizens of any race could ask the commissioner to create a homestead tract on

⁹⁰ According to three biennial reports from Hawai'i's Commissioner of Public Lands for the two-year periods ending December 31, 1918, December 31, 1920, and December 31, 1922, some twelve major leases expired during this period, including those held by such plantations as the Waiakea Mill Co., Onomea Sugar Co., Hawaii Mill Co., Hawaiian Sugar Co., Honomu Sugar Co., Honolulu Plantation Co., Lihue Plantation Co., Waimanalo Sugar Co., Makee Sugar Co., and the Kekaha Sugar Co. Short-term "Planting and Harvesting Agreements" were entered into by the companies with the Territory under the terms of the Presidential Proclamation of June 24, 1918. These agreements made it possible for the plantations "to cultivate and harvest until homesteaded, paying to the Territory after marketing 5 per cent of gross proceeds less marketing expense." See Dinell, *The Hawaiian Homes Program*, 7,85; Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 297-298.

⁹¹ The Report of the Commissioner of Public Lands for the period ending June 30, 1930 says: "These [available homestead lots], however, [were] far from being choice lots, being most[ly] lots on the outskirts of the tracts, or lots not easily accessible by road, or lots which could not be profitably worked without much labor and capital, being wooded and gulchy." Dinell, *The Hawaiian Homes Program*, 47-48.

government land that was no longer being leased.⁹² The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, however, restricted the right to apply for homesteading to native Hawaiians, which made it virtually impossible for other people to obtain public land. Accordingly, the number of non-Hawaiian homestead acquisitions had steadily increased during the late 1910s, until it diminished considerably following the passage of the law. For example, 19 Anglo residents obtained homesteads in 1918 and 47 in 1919, but ten in 1920, and only one in 1923. Similarly, homesteaders of Portuguese ancestry decreased from 40 in 1920 to 15 in 1921, and only six two years later.⁹³ In this way, to the satisfaction of sugar plantation owners, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act effectively eliminated Caucasian Americans, who ran or hoped to run independent farms, from competition for land and labor.⁹⁴

The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act also provided the solution to the “Oriental” problem, another outstanding challenge from the standpoint of plantation owners, by undermining the economic strength of local Japanese, who came to have access to land and money. Previously, there had been no law in the Territory of Hawai‘i prohibiting Asian nationals from owning land, except government land, and thus it was not surprising that there were many Japanese landowners and lease holders in Hawai‘i in

⁹² David L. Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii: An Examination of Industry And Education And the Paradox They Present* (Boston: The Stratford Company, 1933), 172; *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 1924*, 110-114.

⁹³ *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 1924*, 116.

⁹⁴ One decade after the enactment of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, 85 percent of the cultivated area was occupied by plantations more than 1000 acres in size, and only 10 percent of the total area by farms of less than 50 acres each (mostly 3-10 acre lots). Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii*, 116-117.

the late 1910s. As noted earlier, after 1920, when the sugar price was the highest in history and laborers were given extra bonuses, many Japanese immigrants opted to leave the plantations to engage in small farming businesses on their own. A U.S. Military Intelligence Department report commented: "With the capital provided by the bonuses paid in 1920 . . . the Japanese have ceased to appreciate the opportunities given them as individuals and now aim collectively at the control of the agricultural industries of the Territory"⁹⁵ This perception of Japanese in Hawai'i was shared by people in the sugar industry. In their eyes, the emerging Asian farmers appeared a formidable threat to their enterprise. Such anxiety was enhanced by the fact that numbers of Hawai'i-born children of Japanese immigrants were reaching the age of 18 and beginning to homestead government land. Along with citizens of Chinese descent, Japanese Americans vigorously competed with white bidders over auctioned homestead land. In December 1919, a number of government leases, amounting to approximately 300 acres in total, were sold at auction. Of a total of some 100 lots, two were secured by whites, three by Hawaiians, and the rest were taken by Asian bidders.⁹⁶ At another auction for homestead land, a *Honolulu Star Bulletin* article notes, approximately 25 percent of the successful winners were Japanese Nisei.⁹⁷

It was not until after some Japanese and Chinese had launched independent farms around 1920 that sugar companies began to have real difficulty acquiring agricultural lands

⁹⁵ Headquarters Hawaiian Department, "Attitude of Japanese towards Agriculture," 22-23.

⁹⁶ Military Intelligence Department, Record Group 165, Box 552, 1766-S-82.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

in Hawai'i. A report by the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, included in the *Hawaiian-Japanese Annual 1924*, reveals the monopolistic position of sugar companies in auctions for government land around the mid-1910s. When sugar companies returned some of their leased land to the Territorial government upon expiration of lease contracts, the land was allotted to 25 homestead units. There were no applicants for 7 units of uncultivated land, but 16 of the 18 units, which had been already cultivated, were purchased by the representatives of the sugar industry.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, as many local Japanese embarked upon farming, in particular pineapple production, they came to acquire land by lease or purchase; sugar companies could no longer dominate the auctions. The Military Intelligence Department reported:

The planters in an endeavor to obtain control of the highly cultivated lands soon to be opened up . . . have lost sight of a very important fact, and that is, that under our present law, the leases must be put up at auction and sold to the highest bidder. . . . it is very liable to result in it (land) going, not to the planters as it is intended, but to an oriental organization . . . As more and more of the younger generation of territorial-born Japanese who are American citizens by birth reach their majority, there is a real danger that there may arise in Hawaii just such a question of land ownership as now vexes California and other western states.⁹⁹

To curtail the business activities of local Japanese and other Asians, some *haole* planters had attempted to have the 1920 territorial legislature pass a bill similar to the alien land laws on the continental United States. In a letter to Tokyo dated November 10 of that year, Japanese Consul General Chonosuke Yada in Honolulu wrote that the Hawai'i American Legion chapter was planning to introduce a bill at the territorial

⁹⁸ *Hawai Nihonjin Nenkan 1924*, 114.

⁹⁹ Headquarters Hawaiian Department, "Attitude of Japanese towards Agriculture," 22-23.

legislature through a Republican senator. This bill, like its California equivalent, was intended to prohibit “aliens ineligible for naturalization” from owning, transferring, and leasing land in the Territory. The Japanese Consul observed that sugar plantation owners were likely to support this bill with open arms because they were concerned about the rapid accumulation of capital by the Japanese and their accelerated entry into independent, albeit small-scale, farming and businesses. According to the diplomat, they sought an alien land law in order to stop Japanese land purchase or tenancy, because it challenged the basic structure of the local sugar economy. The bill, however, was criticized as “un-democratic” and “racist,” and it was subsequently voted down at the territorial legislature.¹⁰⁰ With a benign nickname “rehabilitation act” ostensibly for the benefit of the native population, the landed interests introduced another bill, this time, to United States Congress, where the anti-Japanese pundits enjoyed more and more clouts.¹⁰¹ Approved overwhelmingly in July 1921, the bill became the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, which came with a different method of Japanese exclusion than the previous alien land bill.

Indeed, despite its focus on the well-being of native Hawaiians, one can argue that the new law was enacted mainly to prevent the Japanese from homesteading in Hawai‘i.

¹⁰⁰ Yada to Uchida, dated November 10, 1920, JARP, Reel 35, *Hainichi Zakken Hawaii no bu*.

¹⁰¹ Opponents of the bill claimed that it would “eventually be declared unconstitutional as to the part providing for the setting apart of second class public lands for Hawaiians only, and that the part repealing the section of the present land laws which compels the throwing open of public lands to American citizens, irrespective of racial descent, will stand.” See Page 5 of Weekly Report for November 20-27, 1920, by the War Department, Headquarters Hawaiian Department, Honolulu, National Archives, Military Intelligence Record, Record Group 165, Box 324.

It was more than a coincidence that *haole* leaders came to support the bill immediately after the 1920 sugar plantation strike, in spite of initial indifference when the original bill was proposed by several Hawaiian politicians in the late 1910s. Following a seven-month strike, which ended in July 1920 and caused whites to fear a “Japanese conspiracy,” a discussion over the bill gained momentum. In November 1920, a fundraising campaign started to send representatives to lobby Congress in support of the bill, and succeeded only eight months later.¹⁰² As noted earlier, since around 1920, many Nisei, who were increasingly reaching adulthood, entered the homestead market and aggressively competed for government lands at auction, which caused serious anxiety among white entrepreneurs. Combined with the marked Japanese entry into small businesses and farming in the years of the sugar boom, the development struck the nerve of many leading whites on the islands.

What the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act aimed to achieve in light of such transformation was to re-solidify and even extend the line of racial containment for the Japanese by encompassing American *citizens* of Japanese ancestry. The Act terminated homestead auctions and a purchase lease program, which formerly allowed adult American citizens of any race to acquire homesteads. An exception was made for persons who possessed a “Certificate of Occupation,” which entitled the holder to a 999-year

¹⁰² When some Hawaiian politicians initially proposed it earlier, this bill did not draw enthusiastic support. From late 1920, however, it suddenly became spotlighted in Hawai‘i. In November 1920, a rigorous fundraising campaign was promoted in Hawai‘i for sending Rev. Akaiko Akano and Territorial Senator John H. Wise to Washington to lobby for the passage of the bill. On July 9th of the next year, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was approved at Congress. *Ibid.*, 5-6.

lease after six years of fulfilling certain conditions prior to 1921.¹⁰³ Though the Act also hindered non-Japanese, such as Spanish and Portuguese, from acquiring new homestead properties, many of them, who had engaged in homesteading long before the Nisei reached adulthood, already possessed the certificates, and thus they were less adversely affected by the law than the Nisei. Unlike the alien land laws of western states and elsewhere that had few Japanese American citizens, Hawai'i's legislation adopted 'race' instead of 'citizenship' as a fundamental criterion by which to determine who would and would not have access to government land in order to deal with a uniquely 'Hawai'i question.' Under the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the Nisei's American citizenship became almost meaningless in terms of land acquisition since the group was prevented from homesteading—the main path to becoming a landowner in Hawai'i.

In the Territory, law and economic power were intertwined in determining the position a racial group occupied under the *haole* hegemony. That the Japanese often suffered from legal discrimination pointed to the relative fluidity of their position within

¹⁰³ Before the enactment of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, there were three types of homestead programs authorized by the Land Act of 1895 in Hawai'i: 1) the Cash Freehold; 2) the Right of Purchase Lease; and 3) the Homestead Lease. 1) The Cash Freehold program made lots available at public auction for twenty-five percent down and the balance in three annual payments. If the payments were made and the conditions fulfilled, the homesteader was given a fee simple land patent. 2) A Right of Purchase Lease homestead was for a term of twenty-one years with annual rental based on a percentage of the appraised value. After three years of meeting the conditions and cultivating at least twenty-five percent of the land, the lessee was also granted the right to purchase the fee simple by paying the appraised value set forth in the lease. 3) The Homestead Lease program allowed applicants to obtain Certificates of Occupation which entitled the holder to a 999 year lease after six years of successfully fulfilling the conditions, such as building a home and cultivating at least 10 percent of the leasehold acreage. After the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was passed, only the Homestead Lease program continued for persons who obtained Certificates of Occupation and homestead leases before 1921. See Territory of Hawaii, *Revised Laws of Hawaii 1925*, vol. 1, 298-311; and John H. Bay and Jane vanSchaick, "Analysis of the 999 Year Homestead Lease Program Current Problems and Possible Solutions, Honolulu: 1994,

the rigidly stratified society of Hawai'i. Considering that they were facing a serious challenge from the Nikkei, *haole* elite in the early 1920s attempted to fight Japanese entry into farming and other 'independent' ventures to prevent their economic empowerment through the legislative and police power of the United States. The Hawaiian Homes Commission Act was thus intended to cement the lines that divided racially-constituted power relations, as it dampened the Japanese quest for land ownership and economic autonomy, while barely helping native Hawaiians get out of their predicament.

While advocating homesteading among the Nisei throughout the 1920s, Okumura appears to have been unaware of the eligibility requirements for homesteads in the Territory. Yet, he gradually realized that Nisei homestead acquisition was unrealistic, contrary to what he initially thought. He stated in the late 1920s: "It is impossible for every Nisei to obtain a homestead" in Hawai'i, where "most arable land has already been taken by sugar and pineapple plantations."¹⁰⁴ He then began to encourage the Nisei to obtain land through purchase or lease rather than by homesteading and started recommending administering smaller-sized farms, though he continued to promote independent farming during the 1920s.

The early 1930s saw Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement undergo a considerable shift. In addition to the effect of the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act, the devastating effects of the Great Depression made it considerably more difficult, if not impossible, for the people of Hawai'i, including the Nikkei, to pursue independent

9-15. Prepared for the Seventeenth Legislature for the State of Hawai'i and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs.

¹⁰⁴ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 105; 133.

farming. In accordance with this socioeconomic change, Okumura began to downplay the importance of independent farming and instead started discussing the possibility of working on the plantations as tenant farmers.

The Depression Era and the New Americans Conference

The Great Depression, which started on the continental United States in 1929, gradually reached the Territory of Hawai'i, severely curtailing the development of its economy. People in the agricultural business were drastically affected. First the pineapple market fell in 1931, then the price of sugar in 1932, and finally coffee prices in 1933.¹⁰⁵ The plight of these key industries created serious unemployment in the islands; the number of those who were jobless in Honolulu reached 10,087 between June 1932 and January 1933 alone.¹⁰⁶

During the depression of the 1930s, there was a definite shift in the focus of the talks, roundtable discussions, and choice of delegates at the New Americans Conference, and much of it had to do with the sugar industry. In 1932, a year marked by an unprecedentedly low price for sugar, Frank C. Atherton, President of Castle and Cooke Company, delivered a speech on the distressed condition of the sugar industry, mentioning that 21 out of the 38 plantations operating in Hawai'i had gone into the red in the previous year.¹⁰⁷ As a long-time supporter of Okumura's various campaigns,

¹⁰⁵ *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 90, 97, 100; *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 104-105.

¹⁰⁶ *Nippu Jiji*, "The Crowd of Jobless," March 23, 1933.

¹⁰⁷ *The Sixth Annual Conference of New Americans*, 1932, 33. According to *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935* (p. 85), in 1932, 10 out of 21 sugar companies in the islands went into the red.

Atherton had often been a guest speaker at the New Americans Conference, but this was the first time he gave a talk that focused solely on the sugar industry rather than on the Nisei Problem. He eloquently defended the position of sugar plantation owners, stating that they were not “a set of hard-boiled people trying to get all [they could] as cheaply as possible,” but that their tight financial situations inadvertently made them appear to be driven by commercialism.¹⁰⁸ Further, by identifying the prosperity of the sugar industry with the prosperity of the islands, he solicited Nisei sympathy and cooperation for the industry as well as justified the sugar planters’ pursuit of profit.¹⁰⁹

At the seventh annual conference in 1933, a roundtable discussion titled “Citizen Labor and the Sugar Plantation” with a similar focus was held. The discussion leader, Ernest W. Green, the manager of Waipahu Plantation, strongly encouraged the Nisei to pursue work on the sugar plantations, specifically physical labor. He told the delegates, “Plantation executives sincerely hope that citizen workers will steadily increase in numbers as time goes on,” and then went on to note that the current workforce was dominantly aging non-citizens. He said, “The great majority of openings for those newly entering plantation work are therefore in the field.” The next day, another roundtable discussion examined the lives of plantation workers. Its discussion leader, Donald

¹⁰⁸ *The Sixth Annual Conference of New Americans*, 31-33.

¹⁰⁹ At the roundtable discussion titled “Occupational Opportunities,” held during the 1932 conference, employment on sugar plantations was the only subject matter Nisei delegates examined. Under the supervision of discussion leaders, they talked over various topics related to work on the plantation, including working conditions, opportunities for advancement, and recreational facilities. They also explored Okumura’s ‘profit-sharing system,’ which would enable contract farmers to work independently on a section of the plantations. In the past, the sugar industry had often been touched upon in discussing the occupational problem, but it was examined along with other industries, such as fisheries and coffee. See *ibid.*, 20-21.

Bowman, a core member of the HSPA, presented a bucolic and democratic image of the plantation community that was meant to promote further recruitment of new field laborers.¹¹⁰ Both Green and Bowman might have been rather sympathetic towards the Nisei generation, who were facing employment problems during the Depression, but what they regarded as giving the Nisei opportunities and helping them enter a larger world, was to place the youth in a lower echelon of the existing social structure.

Following his predecessors of the past two years, at the eighth New Americans Conference of 1934, John H. Midkiff, manager of Waiialua Agricultural Company, appeared as a discussion leader and strove to pave the road to the sugar plantation for more Nisei workers. His round-table discussion was entitled "What New Americans Can Contribute to the Economic and Social Success of the Sugar Industry." The purpose of the session was not how to improve the Nisei employment situation but how to protect sugar profits by designating Japanese American youth as 'servers' for the industry. The original objective of the conference, namely examining solutions to the Nisei Problem, was thus diverted. Backed by two delegates who worked on his plantation, Midkiff told the Nisei that they should put their "best efforts in various lines of duty to assure the survival of the sugar industry" and work "faithfully for its development in economic, social, and political fields," because "the sugar interests are your interests."¹¹¹

Arguably, Midkiff's concern over "the survival of the sugar industry" and his solicitation of Nisei cooperation were generated from the enactment of the 1934 Jones-

¹¹⁰ *The Seventh Annual New Americans Conference*, 1933, 13-15; 22-23.

¹¹¹ *The Eighth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1934, 15-16.

Costigan Act, which severely curtailed Hawai'i's sugar industry. As part of the New Deal, the act established a quota system that limited the amount of sugar production in Hawai'i, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Cuba, in order to protect sugar growers on the continental United States. Due to this act, sugar production in the Territory during 1934 was reduced by 100,000 tons, 10 percent of the previous year's total amount of production. Consequently, each of the 39 sugar plantations on O'ahu, Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i were allocated a portion of the sugar quota.¹¹² Many sugar plantation owners felt anxious about the future of the industry, as well as indignant at this legal decision. Some HSPA members, such as Richard Cooke and John Waterhouse, publicly stated that Hawai'i should be given the same consideration as the states, rather than classifying it with Cuba or insular possessions, because it contributed more to the U.S. Treasury than many states.¹¹³ What was worse, they claimed, Cuba, a foreign country, was given an annual quota of 1,900,000 tons, while Hawai'i was allowed only 910,000 tons.¹¹⁴ In protest to this unfair treatment, they filed suit in court to test the constitutionality of the Jones-Costigan Act.¹¹⁵

The sugar industry inevitably became the center of general concern during the first half of the 1930s, but ironically, the crisis also contributed to criticism of the structure of

¹¹² *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 82-83; *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 84-85.

¹¹³ *Nippu Jiji*, April 21, 1934; December 4, 1934.

¹¹⁴ James R. Garfield, *Why Hawaii Contests Discriminations of the Sugar Act* (Honolulu: Star-Bulletin, Ltd. 1934), 10-12; *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 82-83.

¹¹⁵ Garfield, *Why Hawaii Contests Discriminations of the Sugar Act*, 14; *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 83.

the territorial economy and led to reevaluation of diversified farming in the islands. After 1932, the year the sugar price dropped, some people urged a transformation of Hawai'i's agriculture from single-crop farming to diversified farming, so that even if the market for certain crops plunged, other crops could sustain Hawai'i's economy.¹¹⁶ Extension Service Director Frederick G. Krauss, a long-time advocate of independent farming, seemed to consider the difficulties of the sugar industry as potentially brightening the future for diversified farming because some plantation managers began to allow their fallow land to be used to raise other crops.¹¹⁷ From 1933 to 1935, Krauss came to the New Americans Conference to give talks on diversified farming as well as lead discussions on the subject. At the ninth New Americans Conference of 1935, he referred to the fact that several plantations had started growing Irish potatoes on their surplus land in 1934, and said optimistically, "The outlook for diversified agriculture in Hawaii is better today than ever before . . . There have been many concrete, definite happenings during the last year to stimulate diversified agriculture. . . . The same people who formerly held to the theory of single crop agriculture most strenuously are now talking and working in terms of diversified agriculture."¹¹⁸ For years, the sugar industry had dominated Hawai'i politically and economically, but the depression could lead to a favorable turn towards diversified agriculture, eventually improving the lives of local independent farmers.

¹¹⁶ The resurgence of interest in small farming in Hawai'i could also be related to the newly inaugurated Democrat administration, headed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, which promoted populism.

¹¹⁷ Krauss, "How Young Men May Succeed at Farming," *The New Americans; Tamura, Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 143.

¹¹⁸ *The Ninth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1935, 22.

Contrary to Krauss's optimism, the 6,000 small farmers, mostly Japanese, who were already growing various crops, experienced enormous hardship during the Depression.¹¹⁹ Truck farmers shipping their products to the cities were no exception. The initial reason for this distress was a decline in the market prices of farm products caused by an overproduction of vegetables. In addition to large yields of vegetables in the islands in general, New Deal farm policies resulted in an excess of agricultural products by encouraging jobless people and their families to cultivate vegetables on land adjacent to their own homes or in rural districts (the so-called 'relief gardens').¹²⁰ For example, the oversupply of tomatoes in April 1934 amounted to 14 tons. Truckloads of tomatoes were disposed of to avoid a drop in price, but to no avail. The market price for tomatoes went down to a half, then to a third of the regular price even before the crop reached the summer peak.¹²¹ Small farmers met with the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) administrator Harold E. Mountain in May 1934 to complain of their plight.¹²² The following month, FERA prohibited the sale of farm products from relief gardens, in an attempt to protect the market price of vegetables.¹²³

¹¹⁹ According to the 1930 national census, more than 70 percent of local small farmers were of Japanese ancestry. Of the remaining thirty, 10 were Caucasians, ten Hawaiian and ten Chinese and other ethnic groups. Nearly 80 percent of the Nikkei small farmers were cultivating lands as tenants. Meanwhile, only 20 percent of Caucasian farmers and less than 40 percent of Native Hawaiian farmers, the two racial groups constituting 10 percent each of small farmers, were tenants. See Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii*, 155; 158; 166.

¹²⁰ *Nippu Jiji*, May 18, 1934.

¹²¹ *Nippu Jiji*, April 28, 1934.

¹²² *Nippu Jiji*, May 29, 1934.

¹²³ *Nippu Jiji*, June 13, 1934.

Similarly, people involved in pineapple production despaired because overproduction led to low market prices. In 1920, the price of pineapple was at a peak of \$42.60 per ton. It stayed around \$30 per ton throughout the 1920s, but in 1931 dropped to \$21.71, and the following year to \$14.77. While large plantations survived, independent pineapple growers, constituting 12 percent of the local small farmers, barely made a profit, and many went into bankruptcy.¹²⁴ Even Kichitaro Sekiya, onetime Japanese pineapple tycoon, was not able to escape this fate. An Issei from Fukuoka, he was a prominent businessman who had started out working for a Caucasian-owned pineapple company before he and an Issei partner obtained land to grow pineapple and sugarcane. He was also the owner of Sekiya Store, a landlord for more than forty houses in Wahiawa, and the president of soda water and garage companies. As the price of pineapple fell, his business collapsed. By 1936, his vast pineapple field was deserted, his houses were sold, and Sekiya narrowly managed to maintain his store.¹²⁵ Many other Japanese pineapple growers accumulated debt in the early 1930s, and some were dispossessed of their lands, forcing them back to the sugar plantations to work as laborers.¹²⁶

Independent farmers who grew sugarcane and sold the crop to the plantation mills also fell into dire straits during the Depression. Independent cane growers generally got 50-60 percent of the market price. When sugar prices went down, there was not much

¹²⁴ *Hawaii Nenkan 1934-1935*, 97-98.

¹²⁵ *Nippu Jiji, Hatten Kaikoshi*, 256-257; Shugoro Fujii, *Nippu Jiho* (Osaka: Bijyutsu Nippon-sha, 1936), 85.

¹²⁶ *The Seventh Annual New Americans Conference*, 1933, 14-15.

left over after paying all cultivation and harvesting costs, land taxes, and other charges. The Jones-Costigan Act also had a devastating effect. Though this cutback had a considerable impact on the entire sugar industry in the islands, independent sugar cane growers, who constituted 27 percent of local small farmers suffered most.¹²⁷ Sugar plantations, while leaving some of their own land fallow, also decreased the quantity of the cane crops purchased from small farmers, to adjust the total amount of raw sugar they shipped to the U.S. mainland. There were approximately 1,600 independent and 1,500 tenant farmers engaged in sugarcane cultivation in Hawai'i in the early 1930s, contributing approximately 10 percent of the entire sugar production in the Territory. Nearly all of these farmers were of Japanese ancestry and 96 percent of them resided on the island of Hawai'i.¹²⁸ Although many of these farmers met with relative success in the 1920s, they were in the most vulnerable position during the Depression because, dependent upon the mills for processing, they were merely subcontractors, situated at the lower strata of the sugar industry.

The predicament of local small farmers during the Depression was so severe as to become of serious concern to the territorial government. To alleviate their financial difficulty, in November 1934, FERA and the University of Hawai'i jointly established the Hawaii Rural Rehabilitation Corporation, Inc. whose executives were such people as Governor Joseph B. Poindexter, FERA administrator Mountain, and Extension Service director Krauss. The Hawaii Rural Rehabilitation Corporation's mission was to support

¹²⁷ Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii*, 157; 175-176.

¹²⁸ *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 83; *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 84-85.

local small farmers by loaning them capital and giving farming advice.¹²⁹ Nikkei farmers had long awaited this sort of organization. Soon after its establishment, the Three-Island United Agricultural Association, constituted by Japanese farmers on Maui, Hawai'i, and O'ahu, requested a loan of \$6,500.¹³⁰ Similarly, the Farm Credit Administration (FCA) also founded a Hawai'i branch in 1935 to provide funds for small local farms to "enable small farmers to pay off their debts."¹³¹ Nonetheless, while the territorial and federal governments made these efforts to assist local farmers in maintaining their operations, only selected applicants judged capable of becoming successful self-supporting farmers in the future, were eligible for the loan.¹³² Unqualified farmers reached a dead end.

In January 1936, the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), which regulated agricultural production to control market prices as a part of the New Deal, was judged unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court. The Jones-Costigan Act was not immediately nullified, but the allotment for Hawai'i was increased to 1,059,294 tons, more than the largest amount of annual sugar production in the entire history of the islands.¹³³ The sugar industry was enlivened, and plantation owners started seeking additional labor in order to increase the acreage under sugar production.

In light of the recovery of the sugar industry, it was no coincidence that in 1936, Kamehameha School principal Frank E. Midkiff, brother of Waialua Plantation manager

¹²⁹ *Nippu Jiji*, November 13, 17, 18, 1934.

¹³⁰ *Nippu Jiji*, December 14, 1934.

¹³¹ *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 86.

¹³² *Nippu Jiji*, November 17, 1934.

¹³³ *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 85-86; *Hawai Nenkan 1936-1937*, 89-90.

John H. Midkiff, attended the New Americans Conference to exhort the Nisei audience to work on the plantations. In his speech on "How Agriculture Can Be Diversified," he said to the Nisei audience, "Homestead subsistence-cash crop farming is hard and full of risks . . . The plantations provide steady employment and comparatively satisfactory living conditions." Though starting out by discussing agriculture in general, Midkiff deliberately switched to the plantations to explain how they had improved working conditions to satisfy Nisei employees, and ended with praise for his brother's sugar plantation as an excellent "example of the progress being made in the rural districts."¹³⁴

From this year on, the New American Conference placed much less emphasis on diversified farming than in the previous three years. The round-table discussions on diversified agriculture disappeared from the program, and Frederick Krauss and other experts in this field no longer appeared after 1935.¹³⁵ In 1936, there was a discussion session concerning the islands' agricultural industries in general, but this session, supervised by Frank Midkiff, ended in addressing only those issues related to the sugar industry, even though another round-table discussion focused on the sugar industry was planned for two days later.¹³⁶ It was perhaps inevitable that the sugar industry became the focal point of discussion, since a considerable number of the delegates were part of it.

¹³⁴ *The Tenth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1936, 26-27.

¹³⁵ An exception was David L. Crawford, the President of the University of Hawai'i and a professor in the Department of Agriculture. However, whenever he appeared as guest speaker at the conference after the mid-1930s, he talked only about the obligations and responsibilities of the Nisei as American citizens.

¹³⁶ Except for a brief discussion of coffee production. A round-table discussion titled "Citizens and the Sugar Industry" was held two days later. *The Tenth Annual New Americans Conference*, 1936, 23-28.

After 1936, Nisei who worked on the sugar plantations, from sugar technologists to field workers, came to constitute nearly a half the delegates; many of them were enthusiastic about discussing the various issues related to their workplace.¹³⁷

In the following year, sugar plantations were given even greater attention at the New Americans Conference. A field trip to John Midkiff's Waialua Plantation was included in the conference program to provide Nisei delegates with an opportunity to learn about the latest plantation system. On the top of that, Midkiff gave a talk at the conference on the various benefits of employment on the sugar plantations: "One of the main advantages of the plantations today is economic security . . . You take a job in the sugar industry and you are sure of that job for life, unless you lose it through a fault of your own." In addition to the alluring phrase "economic security," regulated working hours (8-hour day) and better facilities on the plantation, such as a gymnasium, swimming pool, hospital, free school, free housing, and various recreational clubs, would have made independent farming seem less lucrative and undesirable to the young Nisei.¹³⁸ In fact, both working conditions and living standards on the sugar plantations considerably improved in the late 1930s through the introduction of mechanization and the construction of new facilities. Realizing the enhancement of employee's welfare was the

¹³⁷ Among 71 delegates of the 1936 conference (57 men and 14 women), 30 people worked on the sugar plantations as plumbers, carpenters, cane planters, cane weighers, and plantation store clerks. The previous year, only 6 out of 69 delegates, had been employed by sugar plantations. See *The Ninth Annual New Americans Conference*, 53-54; *The Tenth Annual New Americans Conference*, 66-67.

¹³⁸ *Proceedings of the Eleventh New Americans Conference*, 19-26; 38-40.

key to the successful recruitment of the younger generation, many sugar plantation owners made various improvements in the camps.

However, despite a great deal of involvement by sugar businessmen, the New Americans Conference was never reduced to being a mere mouthpiece for plantation owners, but remained a place for Nisei delegates to express candid views and exchange opinions with their fellow Nisei and white dignitaries. In 1932, one delegate stated: "I am a plantation hater . . . The plantations are not square shooters. They want ignorant laborers."¹³⁹ "His talk caused considerable discussion," according to the proceedings of that year.¹⁴⁰ At the 1941 conference, several Nisei severely criticized the conditions at the sugar plantations and asked the HSPA assistant secretary, who attended their discussion, to establish solid wage and pension systems for plantation employees and hire supervisors sympathetic to Asians. Hearing about this criticism through the assistant secretary, John Midkiff corresponded with one of the delegates to further investigate the problems. He ended the last letter saying, "I think that the free and open discussions that you have at the New Americans Conferences are very good. It never hurts to throw a little light on any subject."¹⁴¹ As such episodes reveal, the New Americans Conference served as a communication channel between young Nisei and the high-ranking men of the sugar industry during the 1930s and after, reflecting the spirit of

¹³⁹ *The Sixth Annual Conference of New Americans*, 21.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *The New Americans Conference*, July 15 to 21, 1941, 28; 59.

Okumura, who had become a mediator between sugar plantation managers and Issei laborers on his lecture trips in the early 1920s.¹⁴²

The Pahala Project

As the increasing participation of people in the sugar industry in the New Americans Conference suggests, Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement, which initially advocated independent farming among the Nisei, changed its direction in recommending plantation employment. For example, he wrote in 1937: "To give full play to their aptitude for agriculture, finding a secure job on the plantation should be the Nisei's first step."¹⁴³ The reality of the established local industrial structure, tightly controlled by a *haole* oligarchy, combined with the miserable experiences of small farmers during the Depression, compelled him to adopt a more immediate practical solution to the Nisei occupational problem. Instead of urging them to pursue complete autonomy, he began to encourage the second-generation to obtain limited independence within the system.

A new plantation employment system that was put into effect in the early 1930s on the island of Hawai'i resembled Okumura's modified profit-sharing scheme—one that met an enthusiastic approval from many regional Nisei. According to a March 1933

¹⁴² Though Okumura took fewer educational campaign trips after starting the New Americans Conference, he still strove to convey the voice of Japanese workers to plantation managers. For example, in December 1940, he sent questionnaires to his seventeen Japanese supporters on the sugar plantations on Hawai'i, Kauai, and Maui Islands, and requested them to ask Nikkei workers the following questions: 1) Is there any trouble or restlessness on your plantation? On neighboring plantations?; 2) Is there any complaint or request on the part of the men?; 3) How about young men—are they beginning to work more on the plantation? See University of Hawai'i's Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Archives Collection, KSC 32/4 Laborers, Japanese-1941 (in English), and the Makiki Christian Archives, Manuscripts, Box 52 (in Japanese).

Nippu Jiji article, James Campsie, Territorial Senator and manager of the Hawaiian Agricultural Company in Pahala on the island of Hawai‘i, announced that his plantation would gradually introduce what he called a ‘cropping contract system,’ a variation of profit sharing.¹⁴⁴ Campsie claimed that the Nisei could not give full play to their ‘natural’ aptitude for agriculture when they worked under the supervision of *lunas* in a daily wage system, as in their parents’ generation. The cropping contract system would give workers relative freedom and independence to develop their gifts. He called his trial of the system the ‘Pahala project,’ and it was enthusiastically supported by the Department of Agriculture at the University of Hawai‘i, not to mention the Hilo Chamber of Commerce, which was striving to provide relief for unemployed youth.¹⁴⁵

To give prospective Nisei employees a better idea about the project, Jushin (Shigenobu) Kaneshiro, an Extension Service staff member, held a talk at the Hilo Chamber of Commerce. He explained that to become contractors under the cropping contract system, applicants should form groups from five to fifteen or so, and then be provided with fertile cultivated land, at least ten acres per person, as well as food, fertilizers, and other necessities. In addition to receiving regular salaries, they could also make an additional profit at the time of harvest according to the amount of production. On top of that, if they initially ended up in the red because of inexperience in sugar cane cultivation, the plantation would cover the loss. He added that a group of fifteen

¹⁴³ Okumura, *Nichibei*, 197.

¹⁴⁴ I have not yet found any documentation that indicates whether or not Okumura influenced his acquaintance Campsie to adopt this ‘cropping contract system,’ which was so similar to his ‘profit sharing system.’

¹⁴⁵ *Nippu Jiji*, March 24, 1933.

Japanese Americans from Kona had recently become contractors in this system, and that their project was so far going very satisfactorily. The project appealed to the Nisei, particularly those who were unemployed; five Nisei men signed up immediately after Kaneshiro finished speaking.¹⁴⁶

The Pahala project was designed not only to furnish unemployed Nisei men with jobs in the middle of the Depression but also to alleviate the concern of plantation owners over lack of manpower due to the aging of Issei laborers. In a *Nippu Jiji* article titled “Sugar Cane Contract Plan Evolved to Aid Jobless Citizens,” Larry Henry, Secretary at the Hilo Chamber of Commerce, commented: “The proposition is an experiment of a kind, in a way with the plantation endeavoring to supplant the present non-citizen labor supply with one of our own numbers.”¹⁴⁷ How to incorporate the enthusiasm, intelligence, and spirit of independence of the Nisei into the plantation system had long been the largest problem for executives in the sugar industry in their attempts to secure more Hawai‘i-born Japanese workers. This cropping contract system, which bore much likeness to Okumura’s profit sharing, was basically a compromise between plantation managers and Nisei workers. Yet, through mutual concessions, both sides achieved their primary goals: managers secured replacements for old laborers and the Nisei obtained some autonomy at work.

Paralleling the transformation of Okumura’s Back-to-the-Farm Movement, many Issei leaders came to look favorably on Nisei ‘returning’ to plantation work. Daizo

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ *Nippu Jiji*, March 28, 1933.

Sumida, the President of the Japanese Association, though he supported diversified farming during the 1920s, maintained in 1941, "If conditions in the plantations today are as they were some years ago, I would not encourage the second generation Japanese to return to the soil. However, with all the modern conveniences set before them, I do not hesitate encouraging them to return to the farm. Rather than go to the cities and experience discouragement, the youth should remain in the peaceful atmosphere of the farm and earn a livelihood there."¹⁴⁸ In like manner, Yasutaro Soga, publisher of the *Nippu Jiji*, exhorted the Nisei to take jobs on the plantations. Since the late 1920s, he had expressed sympathy with Okumura's profit sharing system, but he even more ardently supported the idea after sugar plantations started adopting it in various forms.¹⁴⁹ His *Nippu Jiji* also promoted positive images of the plantations during the 1930s, featuring plantations that gave responsible positions to competent Nisei employees.¹⁵⁰

Similarly, but surprisingly, the *Hawaii Hochi*, owned by Fred Kinzaburo Makino began to support a "return-to-the-plantation." During the 1920s, the *Hochi* severely criticized not only Okumura's Back-to-the-Farm Movement, but also the territorial government's expansion of agricultural vocational programs at public schools; a decade later, it vigorously exhorted the Nisei to become engaged in agriculture, in particular, on

¹⁴⁸ *Hawaii Plantation Chronicle*, May 15, 1941.

¹⁴⁹ Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 143.

¹⁵⁰ See the article entitled "Men of ability are selected for important positions on the Kahuku Plantation, well-treated Japanese American citizens" in *Nippu Jiji's Kanyaku Nihonimin Hawaii Tokou Gojyu-nen Kinenshi* (Honolulu: Nippu Jiji, 1935), 140.

the plantation.¹⁵¹ In 1940, the Hawaii Hochi Company even published *Hawaii Nihonjin Jitsugyo Shokai-go* (with the English title, *The Hawaii-Japanese Farm & Industry*), a book that primarily featured agriculture in Hawai'i, focusing on the sugar and pineapple industries. The cover of the volume bore an image of a masculine young farmer, with a Grecian profile, plowing a pineapple field. In the far distance of the Arcadian setting, a number of workers' houses stand harmoniously alongside a manager's house. This idealized picture of plantation life indeed epitomized the contents of this book that consistently rang the praises of the plantations owned by the Big Five. It carried such articles as "Destiny of Our Youth Linked to the Soil," "Sugar and Opportunity for Our Youth," and "How Do College Boys Fare On Plantations,"¹⁵² which recounted the importance of agricultural corporations in the islands and the validity of Nisei seeking plantation employment.¹⁵³ The articles were coupled with numerous photographs of the plantations furnished by the HSPA and sugar companies. Such articles as "Mechanizing Our Plantations" and "Model Homes And Recreation Facilities"¹⁵⁴ contended that

¹⁵¹ Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 142-143.

¹⁵² Hawaii Hochi, *Hawai Nihonjin Jitsugyo Shokai-go*, (Honolulu: Hawaii Hochi, 1940), 9, 14-15, 30.

¹⁵³ In a letter to Briant H. Wells dated July 19, 1939, Advertising Manager of the *Hawaii Hochi* Eugene T. Ichinose requested that the HSPA lend photos of recent sugar plantation activities for the publication in the book. Ichinose wrote: "We feel that the ambitions of our young citizens must be diverted to our soil, that they must be made to realize that their economic security lies in the development of our local resources. It is a primary aim of our "HAWAII JAPANESE FARM ANNUAL" to focus the attention of our Japanese people to our farms, to our plantations . . . with the portrayal of model farms now in existence, we should be able to impress upon the minds of our people that a profitable livelihood can be obtained from our soil." See the letter dated July 19, 1939 from Eugene T. Ichinose to Briant H. Wells, HSC 25/16, HSPA General Correspondence 1939 (01-12/1939), HSPA Archives, the University of Hawai'i.

¹⁵⁴ Hawaii Hochi, *Jitsugyo Shokai-go*, 22, 28-29.

modern sugar plantations were desirable workplaces for the Nisei, and virtually served as advertisements for prospective employees.¹⁵⁵ By the eve of World War II, the *Hochi* and the *Nippu Jiji*, the two most influential but historically contentious Japanese-language newspapers in Hawai'i, were advocating Nisei plantation employment in unison. 'Returning to the plantation' gradually became commonly expected for the younger Japanese generation. The fact that this change occurred during the Depression era reveals how incidents in that particular period had a crucial impact on the thoughts and values concerning the Nisei future.

Nevertheless, certain individuals were reluctant to accept these changing expectations. One of these was Dr. Suteichi Wakabayashi, a staff member of the Agricultural Extension Service at the University of Hawai'i. Wakabayashi was an Issei educated on the West Coast who, at the request of the Extension Service, came to Hawai'i in April 1933 to share the latest information about agriculture with small farmers in the islands. His "mission" was, according to his words, to "relieve the difficult situations of Japanese small farmers," whom he regarded as "admiring Mother Earth and loving her fruits more than any other race."¹⁵⁶ In the year he came to the islands, Wakabayashi was invited to the New Americans Conference as a guest speaker, along with Krauss, to discuss the importance of diversified farming. In order to achieve his goal, he made many trips to villages and towns all over the Hawaiian Islands to assist Japanese farmers, but in

¹⁵⁵ Umetaro Okumura wrote an English article on recreational facilities on O'ahu plantations in this book. See pp. 16-17.

¹⁵⁶ *Hawai Nenkan 1936-1937*, 2. Also, see the *Nippu Jiji* articles dated April 27, 1933; June 2, 1933; and June 5, 1933.

1939 he left for Manchuria with his family. His article in the *Rafu Shimpō* (Los Angeles daily news) dated January 12, 1940, explained why he decided to start a new life on an unknown continent: "I found more meaning in living primitive life with hope rather than living civilized life with despair." Telling how his eighth-grade son had commented that his Asian ancestry would prevent him from ever becoming a chemist at the Agricultural Experiment Station, Wakabayashi said: "Listening to him, I felt my heart was wrung. Even young people are not free from the anguish of racial discrimination in Hawai'i."¹⁵⁷ Wakabayashi's perception mirrored the fact that most Hawai'i-born Nisei in the period struggled in obtaining desirable jobs while a small number of Nisei went to prestigious schools and started their careers as they wished. Disillusioned by the economic, social, and political dominance of the *haole* elite in Hawai'i, the agriculturist placed his hope in Manchuria, a colony of Imperial Japan, which many Nikkei viewed as a utopia in the making where Japanese not only could obtain vast lands but also were positioned at the top of the racial hierarchy.¹⁵⁸

Wakabayashi's departure symbolizes the despair of many local Japanese who lost a dream of achieving autonomy through success in agriculture during the 1930s. Together with the restrictions on land acquisition, the devastating results of the Depression had greatly diminished the hopes and ambitions of Hawai'i's Japanese. As Table 2 shows (see p.268), the number of Japanese plantation workers, especially Nisei, increased in the

¹⁵⁷ The *Rafu Shimpō*, January 12, 1940. There were many Japanese Americans who sought better opportunities in Manchuria in this time period. For further details, see John J. Stephan, "Hijacked by Utopia: American Nikkei in Manchuria," *Amerasia Journal*, vol.23, no. 3 (winter 1997-1998): 1-42.

late 1930s, whereas the total labor population revealed a marked decrease. In light of such a dismal economic outlook, some refused to compromise and left the islands, mainly for part of the Japanese empire; others who chose to stay in Hawai'i had to adjust to reality as Okumura did. In certain parts of the Territory, specifically on the island of Hawai'i, however, some small farmers managed to enjoy a degree of autonomy thanks to the unique system of tenant farming, albeit under the constraints of the agricultural system set up in Hawai'i.

¹⁵⁸ Suteichi Wakabayashi, "Beikoku Nogyo no Hiai to Zairyu Doho" (The misery of agriculture in the U.S. and overseas compatriots), *Tairiku Kaitaku* ed. by Kaitaku Kenkyusho, vol. 2 (March 1941): 55-62.

CHAPTER 4

Far from O'ahu: Local Japanese Autonomy and the Back-to-the-Farm Movement on the Island of Hawai'i

In the mid-1920s, Takie Okumura, an advocate of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement, contended that Hawai'i's Japanese, in particular the second generation, should pursue careers in agriculture. Since this was the most promising industry in the Territory, he argued, it would enable the Japanese to enter the middle class and become an integral part of the society of Hawai'i. In his exhortation to "return to the soil" he also attached the idea of "autonomy," encouraging the Nisei to become land-owning independent farmers rather than field laborers on the plantation. As the previous chapter delineated, many local Japanese had shared similar ideas with Okumura about independent farming as a means for self (group)-elevation, therefore supporting Okumura's advocacy after 1925. For the most part, the ambition of running small farms faded away over time because the Big Five maintained tight control over arable land and territorial agricultural business in general.

On the island of Hawai'i, however, many local Japanese did achieve a degree of "autonomy" in agriculture. Some engaged in semi-independent farming and some even owned mills for processing their agricultural products—mainly sugar and coffee. In the eastern part of Hawai'i Island, a few Issei owned small sugar companies and operated them successfully with the help of Japanese tenants and independent farmers. In the Kona district, in the western part of the island, semi-independent Japanese farmers constituted the backbone of coffee production. They also set up organizations and

promoted movements to strengthen their footing as a racial minority. Their endeavors, though, not directly a result of Okumura's advocacy, reflected the degree to which many other Issei, especially those in rural areas, held corresponding visions and when the situation was suitable, they were prone to pursue the route of independent farming.

Examining cases of local Japanese involved in these two agricultural industries, this chapter explores how a large number of Nikkei had been aware of the importance of "autonomy" in the farming economy since as early as the 1910s, long before Okumura's campaign took off. They resorted to "racial solidification" to develop a self-supporting system which enabled them to launch profitable enterprises in a society dominated by the *haole* elite. Focusing specifically on incidents in Kona, this chapter also investigates how Hawai'i's Japanese embraced an idea resembling Okumura's original tenets of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement and how they strove to maintain a semi-independent farming style even during the economic crisis of the 1930s.

Japanese-Owned Sugar Companies in Hawai'i

The first Japanese-owned sugar company was the Kona Development Company (*Kona Kaitaku Gaisha*), a sugar interest acquired by Issei businessman Tomekichi Konno for \$750,000 in 1915. The company's sugar mill was located in Holualoa, but the cane fields were spread throughout south Kona.¹ Instead of the standard plantation system, in which field laborers worked in a group under the supervision of *lunas* (overseers), the Kona Development Company adopted a tenant system. The company leased land to

¹ The Kona Development Company owned 5,260 acres, but the actual sugar land included only 1,050 acres in Kainaliu and 500 acres in Holualoa; the rest of the land remained uncultivated. Sakae Morita, *Hawai Gojunen-shi* (Waipahu, Hawai'i, Shinei-kan, 1919), 647-649.

farmers, advanced them half of their field laborers' salaries, and provided them with horses, food, fertilizer, and other necessities. The tenant farmers, who could be termed "semi-independent farmers," were all Japanese, most held ten acres only, though some farmed on 20 to 30 acres, and a few over 50 acres. Approximately 270 laborers, hired to help the tenant farmers, were also Japanese, except for a small number of Filipinos.²

From the start, Konno's endeavor struggled, since Kona's dry climate was unsuitable for sugarcane cultivation and lacked the facilities to transport his product outside Kona. The hardened lava underlying the soil also made it difficult to build irrigation canals.³ Despite the hardship, Konno strove to keep his company going as a symbol of Japanese national and ethnic pride, and a proof that the Japanese were equal to whites.⁴ He often received financial support from Eiichi Shibusawa and other Japanese business leaders who understood the meaning of the company in a similar way during the late 1910s.⁵ Even after Konno's death in 1925, Shibusawa negotiated with the Foreign Ministry, Nihon Kogyo Bank, and Issei leaders in Honolulu to find a Japanese buyer, so that the important ethnic enterprise, a hope of Hawai'i's Japanese would carry on. Iga Mori, for one, seriously considered purchasing the company, studying cotton and coffee

² Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i at Manoa, 1981), 271, 278-279, 825-826.

³ Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjin-shi*, 202-204; Soga, *Gojunenkan no Hawai Kaiko*, 273-274; Zenichi Kawazoe, *Yahu Shou: Imin Hyakunen no Nenrin* (Honolulu: Imin Hyakunen no Nenrin Kankokai, 1968), 275-276; Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 271, 278-279, 342-344, 631-633, 825-826.

⁴ Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumonsha, ed. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 55, 630-632.

⁵ Morita, *Hawai Gojunen-shi*, 627-629; Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumonsha, ed. *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 55, 636-640.

growing in case these crops would be better suited to the land in Kona. In 1926, Mori went to Japan to discuss his plans personally with Shibusawa, other influential business leaders, and Foreign Ministry officials, hoping to obtain financial and emotional support for the project. The officials and business leaders were nonetheless reluctant to provide him with the necessary capital to purchase the company, since it had never showed a promise of business success.⁶ Local Japanese thus learned the bitter lesson that operating a full-scale sugar plantation was extremely difficult, especially in competition with existing *haole*-owned sugar companies that controlled the best land for cane cultivation and possessed better facilities for production and transportation as well as a well-established market.

Nonetheless, two relatively successful cases of Japanese-owned sugar companies emerged during the years between the two world wars. The Wailea Milling Company was founded in Hakalau near Hilo in 1919 by Tatsuji Kawachi, an Issei from Hiroshima. Kawachi came to the island of Hawai'i sixteen years earlier to work on the Honomu Plantation, but quit after a few months due to resentment towards the harsh treatment of the *lunas*. He first raised sugarcane as a contractor, expanding his canefields annually. Having seen many local Japanese cane growers go bankrupt in 1905, during the world-wide sugar market crash, Kawachi took the initiative in organizing a Japanese tenant farmers' union to prevent sugar milling companies from stranding Issei cane growers when sugar prices were low. Thus, *Kansho Kosaku Domeikai* (tenant sugarcane farmers'

⁶ *Nippu Jiji*, September 9, 1926; Akira Nakashima, *Kona Nihonjin Jitsujō Annai*, (Tokyo: Seishin-sha, 1934), 281-282; Soga, *Gojunenkan no Hawaii Kaiko*, 273-274; Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumonsha, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryo*, vol. 55, 630-640; Kawazoe, *Yahu Shou*, 275-276.

associations) were founded on both the Honomu and Hakalau plantations, which helped Japanese farmers make mutually beneficial contracts with sugar mills. He then established the Wailea Milling Company in hopes of expanding the profit of all Japanese farmers.⁷ Kawachi eventually went back to Hiroshima, while his Japanese-born son, Satoru Kurisu, became the president of the company. Upon taking over the company, Kurisu asked Portuguese American August Souza Costa and his brothers to join Wailea Milling. “Because he held alien citizenship,” according to his daughter, Kurisu requested the former deputy Internal Revenue Collector Costa to serve as the manager.⁸ This alliance with the Portuguese, who held a lower social and economic position than Anglo-Caucasians under Hawai‘i’s racial hierarchy, enabled Kurisu to find a way to the Territory’s largest industry, historically dominated by *haole* elite.

The Wailea Milling Company succeeded between the cracks of existing sugar businesses. The mill stood near the slope of a valley other sugar businessmen had overlooked as a location for a sugar company. The place initially lacked transportation facilities, so Kurisu built a train tunnel. Since the company did not hold much land, it depended on a supply of crops from independent and tenant Japanese farmers who raised sugarcane in Wailea as well as in the mountainous Umauma and Ninole areas. The railroad connected these distant farmlands to the mill and the port. Though it was a small

⁷ Masao Sogawa, *Hawai Nihonjin Meikan* (Honolulu: Hawai Nihonjin Meikan Kanko-kai, 1927), 107.

⁸ Margaret Y. Oda (a daughter of Satoru Kurisu) interview, Honolulu, Hawai‘i, February 11, 2002.

sugar mill, the Wailea Milling Company produced nearly 6,000 tons of raw sugar annually during its golden era.⁹

Aside from the limited involvement of the Costa family, local Japanese played a central role in the Wailea Milling Company. The contract farmers and mill workers were dominantly Issei and Nisei, and many of them were also the shareholders of the company. Kurisu often held meetings to discuss business matters with his contractors, so that they could maximize profit in a collaborative fashion. In this way, thanks to the support of local Japanese, Kurisu was able to run Wailea Milling. At the same time, he provided his Nikkei cooperators with a stronger stake in his company than they ever could have enjoyed in the Big Five sugar companies.¹⁰

However, even as Kurisu was respected as the owner and president of the Wailea Milling Company in the Hakalau community, he was rarely acknowledged by the larger society of Hawai'i, even among the Nikkei. Japanese-language almanacs, directories, and Who's-Whos published in Honolulu during the interwar years do not mention him as the owner or president of a sugar company, but simply as a sugarcane growers' coordinator (*ukeoi-gyo*).¹¹ In addition, in Japanese-language publications in Hawai'i, the Wailea Milling Company was not recognized as a Japanese-owned company, unlike Konno's Kona Development Company, which was hailed as a symbol of "Japanese

⁹ Yasushi "Scotch" Kurisu, *Sugar Town: Hawaii Plantation Days Remembered* (Honolulu: Watermark Publishing, 1995), 4-5; *Hawai Nenkan 1940*, 99.

¹⁰ Kurisu, *Sugar Town*, 4-5; Waichi Ouye interview, Hakalau, Hawai'i, June 26, 28, 2000; Joseph Garcia interview, Hakalau, Hawai'i, June 27, 2000, Masaichi Chinen, Hakalau, Hawai'i, June 27, 2000; Margaret Oda, February 11, 2002.

¹¹ *Hawai Nenkan, 1930-1931*, 446.

pride” even years after its bankruptcy. The *Nippu Jiji’s Hawaii Nenkan*, the most popular local Japanese almanac of the interwar years, only lists Wailea Milling as one of some forty sugar companies in the Territory with August Costa as Manager.¹² Kurisu’s name was also left out of Wailea Milling’s own annual reports sent out to shareholders by the Costa Brothers.¹³ The curious absence of Kurisu, a Japanese national, from the public eye was possibly a strategy for running the company without stirring up anti-Japanese sentiment among his *haole* competitors.

As time passed, Kurisu’s authority waned—another factor that might explain the lack of attention on his presence. By the early 1930s, August Costa (Manager) and Antone Costa (Cashier) became more and more involved in the company’s management and financial transactions, taking over the Japanese interest and overshadowing Kurisu’s leadership.¹⁴ Being Portuguese, the Costas had the privilege of citizenship, which put them in a favorable position in business. The company, which Kurisu’s father founded to actualize Nikkei “autonomy” in the agricultural economy, was gradually taken over by

¹² *Ibid.*, 84-85.

¹³ *Annual Report of the Manager & Cashier of the Wailea Milling Company, Ltd.* (Hilo, Hawai‘i: Lee Publishing Co.), 1925-1941; Kurisu, *Sugar Town*, 4-5; Margaret Oda interview.

¹⁴ A 1941 *Who’s Who* published by the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* says, August Costa “helped to organize Wailea Milling Co., president and manager since 1919,” though, in fact, he was hired only as a manager. See George F. M. Nellist, ed. *Pan-Pacific Who’s Who: An International Reference Work* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Ltd. 1941), 142. This glorified picture of Costa makes an interesting contrast to a portrayal of Kurisu in a newspaper article about his retirement from the Hakalau Milling Company, where he worked after the closing of his own mill. The article only says shortly, “Satoru Kurisu of Hakalau Sugar Co. has retired after nearly 51 years with the Hawai‘i sugar industry. He was planters’ coordinator for the plantation at the time of his retirement.” It does not mention that he had been the owner and president of the Wailea Milling Company, which had merged with Hakalau Milling fifteen years earlier. *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 15, 1959; Kurisu, *Sugar Town*, 4-5; Waichi Ouye interview; Margaret Oda interview.

the Portuguese, who enjoyed a higher position in the racial strata of the society of Hawai'i than the Japanese. Even so, the Costas continued to depend on Nikkei farmers for a supply of sugarcane and maintained close ties with local Japanese. Antone Costa even studied the Japanese language and gave a speech in Japanese where he referred to a friendly relationship between Japanese and Portuguese in the medieval ages, at a Hilo ceremony of the Japanese Immigrant Golden Jubilee Celebrations in 1935 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Japanese immigration to Hawai'i.¹⁵

During the late 1930s, as sugar companies began to mechanize their plantations, the Wailea Milling Company, without large, contiguous sugar fields, fell into financial straits. The company had relied on tenant and independent farmers to grow sugarcane, but it was costly and inefficient to cultivate their interspersed farms with machines. In 1944, the company merged into the Hakalau Milling Company owned by C. Brewer, one of the Big Five.¹⁶

Another noteworthy Japanese-owned sugar company was the Pacific Development Plantation Company (*Taiheiyo Kaitaku Kochi Gaisha*), run by Isaku Kudo in Pahoā, in east Hawai'i.¹⁷ Kudo was from Kumamoto, and like Kawachi, he started his career as a field laborer on the sugar plantations in 1902. After two years, he became an independent sugarcane grower, and began gradually accumulating land. Within eighteen

¹⁵ Hawai Zaiju Gojunensai Kinen Shukugakai Chiho Iinkai, *Hawai Zaiju Gojunensai Kinen-shi* (Hilo, Hawai'i: n.p., 1935), 7.

¹⁶ Kurisu, *Sugar Town*, 4-5.

¹⁷ By the late 1910s, sugarcane production through tenant farming had become popular in Pahoā. Among approximately 3,500 acres under sugarcane cultivation, only 700 were directly run by the Ola'a Sugar Plantation; the rest were leased to Japanese tenant farmers. Morita, *Hawai Gojunenshi*, 195-196.

years, he held 120 acres. In 1922, he became the president of a Japanese sugarcane growers' association and remained in that position for nearly twenty years. In 1927, he purchased the Pacific Development Plantation Company, originally a natural rubber plantation, from Caucasian owners, and established a sugar corporation.¹⁸

Unlike the Wailea Milling Company, Kudo's Pacific Development Company did not possess a mill. The business was devoted solely to sugarcane cultivation on a vast plantation. It sold its harvest to the Ola'a Sugar Company, the largest sugar company in east Hawai'i at that time. All the tenant farmers were local Japanese, and all the executives, headed by president and manager Kudo, were Issei men. The company did not make an enormous profit, but it survived until World War II.¹⁹

The relative "success" of the Wailea Milling Company and the Pacific Development Company had to do with their strategies to carve out a niche in Hawai'i's sugar industry and the racial structure dominated by *haole* elite. Both the Wailea Milling Company and the Pacific Development Company carried on only limited aspects of sugar production, instead of getting involved in the entire process, as full-scale plantations did. One focused on milling sugarcane, and the other chose to only grow crops. Such a strategy enabled them to coexist with large plantation companies, rather than being considered a threat to existing *haole*-owned businesses. In addition, both companies relied on "intra-racial cooperation" as well as "interracial harmony." The Issei owners were mindful of working with *haole* plantation owners or Portuguese businessmen, who

¹⁸ *Hawai Zairyu Kumamoto Kenjin Ryakureki Shashin-cho*, (Honolulu: Hawai Benri-sha, 1927), n. p.

¹⁹ *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 85, 87; Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjin-shi*, 204.

would benefit, rather than suffer, from the operation of the Japanese enterprises. While maintaining amicable relations with those in higher, more powerful places in society, Kurisu and Kudo sought local Japanese support and involvement as cane growers, mill workers, and shareholders. At the same time, they provided independent and tenant Japanese farmers with secure outlets for their crops. Generally speaking, independent and tenant sugarcane growers had a subordinate position in relation to most sugar companies. They often had to accept unfair deals when selling their crops, even though they enjoyed greater autonomy in work and stronger rights to the land they cultivated than regular plantation laborers. Unlike many white-owned sugar companies, the Issei-owned Wailea Milling and Pacific Development companies treated their Japanese contract farmers as members of a team, rather than as a replaceable work force. Contracting with these Japanese companies enabled Nikkei sugarcane growers to continue independent or tenant farming without much risk and secured their economic status even during the Depression, when many other Japanese farmers lost their farms.

Despite their successful business strategies, these independent Japanese sugar companies form exceptions, with few followers among the Nikkei in the Territory of Hawai'i during the interwar years. It was very difficult for "newcomers" to get into the sugar industry, not to mention break its consolidated power structure. In the western part of Hawai'i Island, however, a large number of Japanese coffee farmers were able to achieve a degree of autonomy in the agricultural economy by turning their eyes to a different type of farming—one less controlled by the *haole* interest.

Japanese Coffee Farmers in Kona

In the 1929 *Annual Narrative Report* to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Yasuo Baron Goto, an Agricultural Extension Service county agent for the newly established West Hawai'i branch, made the following comment: "The District of Kona affords the most ideal condition for extension work. Very little scientific aid has been given to the farmers [in Kona] during the last half century, and they are all anxious to learn advanced methods of coffee cultivation. They are all independent and are not under obligation to sugar plantation managers, or other bosses."²⁰ This favorable remark on Kona contrasted strikingly with his comments on other districts in West Hawai'i, such as Kohala and Ka'u. There, the sugar plantation owners maintained tight control over local agricultural activities, so sugarcane growers in these communities were reluctant to ask for assistance from the Extension Service.²¹ Goto, himself raised in Kona, viewed Kona farmers as exceptionally independent, eager to gain new knowledge, and enthusiastic to adopt new farming practices, unlike their counterparts bound to the rules and dictates of

²⁰ Yasuo Baron Goto, *Annual Narrative Report for the Period Between November 1, 1928 and November 30, 1929*. Agricultural Extension Service, West Hawai'i County, Territory of Hawai'i, 5.

²¹ For example, Goto commented on Kohala, "Practically no [Extension Service] work has been done in North Kohala. . . . There are several communities in this district, but the majority of them are under the sugar plantations and it is doubtful whether extension work in these communities would be successful." Similarly, discussing Kau, he wrote: "Since the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association maintains its own sugar experts to teach the planters, the county extension agent has not interfered with the sugar-cane farmers. . . . It appears that it would be wise for all extension agents, unless requested by the managements of the sugar plantations, to keep away from the sugar planters." See *ibid.*, 4-5. Sugar plantations in East Hawai'i were also reluctant to work closely with the Extension Service. The only exception was the Wailea Milling Company. August Costa cooperated with the Extension Service to conduct a poison spray experiment in 1930 and 1931 to examine whether the new method would lower the cost of cultivation and increase yield. See Goto, *Annual Narrative Report*, East Hawai'i County, November 1, 1930-October 31, 1931, 26-27.

the plantations. Perhaps Kona farmers' character Goto delineated may have been formed under the influence of the district's farming pattern distinct from other areas in Hawai'i. Kona, whose economy centered on the coffee industry, was not a part of the traditional plantation system of the Territory, for coffee production in the area was on the shoulders of semi-independent farmers of Japanese ancestry.

Coffee production became prevalent in the Hawaiian Islands after 1842, when the Hawaiian government adopted a policy of allowing land taxes to be paid in coffee and imposed a duty on all imported coffee as an incentive to developing coffee plantations. White settlers immediately began coffee cultivation in several districts, including Kona, but their businesses failed.²² Then in the 1890s, a sudden world-wide coffee boom revived the coffee industry in Hawai'i and drew numbers of low-wage laborers to Kona.²³ Recent Japanese immigrants, as well as those who had already completed their labor contracts on sugar plantations, came to Kona as field laborers to pick coffee berries during the boom. Soon they became the dominant segment of local labor.

From approximately 1892, some Issei launched coffee farms by leasing between five to fifteen acres each from Native Hawaiians, who still owned most of the property in Kona. The Japanese usually took over barren land, because Anglo, Portuguese, and Chinese plantation owners and farmers had taken the best land, having started coffee

²² Yasuo Baron Goto, "Ethnic Groups and the Coffee Industry in Hawaii," *Social Science Association*, 1979, 3-6.

²³ Other factors in the revival of coffee production were the high price of coffee on the global market and disposition of Crown Lands subsequent to the dethronement of Queen Lili'uokalani's regime. See *ibid.*, 7-8.

production earlier.²⁴ Yet, as the old plantation system was replaced by the sharecropping system in the district at the turn of the century, Japanese immigrants were able to take over almost all the coffee cultivation in Kona. Around 1900, the world coffee market crashed because of over-supply, while sugar prices went up. This led many capitalists to switch their business from coffee production to sugar production. Anglo-American planters, as well as Chinese and Portuguese growers, abandoned their coffee to raise sugarcane.²⁵ Before long, the coffee farms had been consolidated into the hands of a few white landowners. One American planter named W. W. Brunner began entering into sharecropping contracts with the Japanese at this critical time. Brunner furnished housing and supplied food and farm necessities, in return for one-third of the crop as rent. This arrangement benefited both the landowner and the growers. Since Brunner provided them with the necessities, his Japanese tenants required little capital to start farming. As their own bosses, the farmers paid special attention to their farms and made their best effort to harvest as much as possible, which increased their productivity and ultimately brought a larger profit to Brunner. Through this tenant system, Brunner gradually revived his coffee operation, which had been on the verge of collapse.²⁶

The use of Japanese tenant farmers soon became a standard practice in coffee production in Kona. By 1905, Brunner sold all his interests to the Captain Cook Coffee Mill, owned by the Hind family in Napo‘opo‘o in South Kona. The company followed

²⁴ Hayashi, *Hawai Jitsugyo Annai*, 27; Baron Goto, "Ethnic Groups and the Coffee Industry in Hawaii," 9-15.

²⁵ Sakae Morita, *Hawai Nihonjin Hatten-shi* (Waipahu, Hawai'i: Shinei-kan, 1915), 184-185.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the system that Brunner had developed. In addition to the 350-acre coffee farm that had belonged to Brunner, the company leased other tracts in South Kona from individual landowners such as Arthur L. Greenwell. These were then subdivided, usually into five-acre lots, for Japanese growers.²⁷ The Captain Cook Coffee Mill lent money to its tenants and supplied them with food and farm necessities; in return, the tenants were obliged to sell all their crops to the company.²⁸ In North Kona, Hackfeld & Co., renamed American Factors during World War I, adopted this sub-lease system. By the mid-1910s, these two Big Five companies had approximately 70 percent of the total Japanese acreage under their control.²⁹

Both the Captain Cook Coffee Mill and American Factors maintained control over tenant farmers by keeping them in debt.³⁰ Through their own grocery stores and affiliated Japanese stores, the companies advanced implements, fertilizers, and provisions to their tenant farmers at high prices and interest rates. At the end of the year, the stores took each farmer's entire crop in place of cash and sent it on to their parent companies. Generally lacking capital and access to other areas, Japanese growers had no choice but to patronize such stores. This system enabled American Factors and the Captain Cook

²⁷ Ibid., 185; Eiichiro Azuma, "Japanese Coffee Growers in Kona: 1890-1941," unpublished paper, 1992, 3-4. This was written as a script for an exhibition held at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

²⁸ Morita, *Hawai Nihonjin Hatten-shi*, 184-185; Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 270.

²⁹ Morita, *Hawai Nihonjin Hatten-shi*, 186; Azuma, "Japanese Coffee Growers in Kona," 4.

³⁰ In the late 1910s, in North Kona where American Factors was influential, Japanese residents borrowed money and got necessities in advance mostly from Japanese stores; their counterparts were mostly supplied by white-owned stores in South Kona where the Captain Cook Coffee Mill operated. Morita, *Hawai Gojunen-shi*, 590.

Coffee Mill not only to make a large profit at their outlet stores but also to secure a stable source of coffee beans.³¹

Although bound by contract and debt to the coffee companies, the Japanese farmers in Kona lived in a semi-self-contained community that solidified and empowered them as a racial group.³² The 4,845 Japanese constituted 51.5 percent of the total residents, and more than 80 percent of the entire farming population in the district in 1930. This numerical dominance allowed the Nikkei of Kona to develop a unique system of mutual support and cooperation known as *kumi* or *kumiai*.³³ Though it was common among Japanese immigrants in Hawai'i and the continental United States to form such organizations, they were usually based on prefectural origins in Japan rather than on geographical contiguity, as in Kona. In Kona, there were approximately fifty *kumi* in the prewar years. Each *Kumi* usually included fifteen to twenty-five neighborhood households and was headed by a *kumi-cho* (head of *kumi*) elected on a biennial rotation basis. Members of each *kumi* helped one another on social occasions, such as funerals, weddings, and housebuilding, as if they were a large extended family. In times of urgent need, the *kumi* also facilitated labor exchange among farmers, especially at fertilizing time. When problems such as illness or quarrels among *kumi* members arose, other members offered their assistance and mediation. *Kumi* were grouped into *mura*, or villages, which had Japanese names and were each headed by a *son-cho* (head of a

³¹ Morita, *Hawai Nihonjin Hatten-shi*, 185-186; Azuma, "Japanese Coffee Growers in Kona," 4.

³² John F. Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii* (New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969), 25. Originally published in *American Anthropologist* 43, no. 4 (1941).

³³ *Ibid.*, 21, 25.

village). Residents of each *mura* also cooperated as one entity to promote common welfare.³⁴ Through the *kumi* and *mura* system, the Japanese of Kona formed a tightly knit and exclusive community.

Japanese farmers in contiguous *kumi* often established coffee growers' associations to further guard their rights and interests. The most influential Japanese farming organizations were the *Naka Kona Kyowa-kai* (Central Kona Cooperative Association), the *Kita Kona Jigyo-dan* (North Kona Coffee Growers Association), and the *Minami Kona Jigyo-dan* (the South Kona Coffee Growers Association).³⁵ The *Naka-Kona Kyowa-kai*, which included nine *kumi* having a total membership of 170 households, was particularly active in aiding farmers in negotiating land deals. It was founded in 1928 partly to protect farmers from losing their leases when their contracts were up for renewal, since merchants and other wealthier people sometimes attempted to take over their land once it was cultivated by offering to pay higher rent to the landowners. Whenever Japanese farmers made contracts related to land ownership and leasing, the *Kyowa-kai* got involved and approved the contracts so that farmers would not be cheated. In one case, the society even hired a lawyer and won in court on behalf of a member.³⁶ Through organizing themselves into growers' guilds, the Japanese coffee farmers obtained a more secure footing in relation to their opponents higher up in the socioeconomic hierarchy of the times.

³⁴ Ibid., 33-53; Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, lx-lxii, 309-314, 453-456.

³⁵ Nakashima, *Kona Nihonjin Jitsujō Annai*, 235-236; Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 89.

³⁶ Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 89.

Japanese storekeepers in the area also founded merchants' associations to protect their interests. Though an integral part of the Japanese community in Kona, storekeepers had conflicting interests. Under the company store system, they were "middlemen" situated between the large coffee mills and the farmers; they made profit in the margins. The farmers' losses were reflected in their own diminished profits, but they also relied on keeping farmers dependent in order to stay in business.³⁷ For instance, Yosoto Egami, a Nisei coffee farmer, began ordering merchandise directly from wholesalers in Honolulu so that he and his neighbors could obtain special food for the New Year celebration at cheaper prices. He was "forced to give up," however, because Kona merchants warned they would boycott the wholesalers if they continued to deal directly with the farmers in Kona.³⁸ In addition, Japanese merchants loaned money to Issei farmers at high interest rates in the neighborhood of thirteen percent, and some storekeepers attempted to prevent farmers from taking the four-percent government loans.³⁹

To challenge this system, which allowed companies and stores to exploit farmers, some local Japanese sought a greater autonomy in coffee processing and marketing. As early as 1898, a group of Issei, including Saburo Hayashi and Hanzo Okubo, met to discuss the possibility of "processing coffee and marketing it at better prices on their own" and a "method of providing themselves with foodstuff as reasonable and

³⁷ Nakashima, *Kona Nihonjin Jitsujō Annai*, 236; Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 89.

³⁸ Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 306.

³⁹ Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 89.

convenient as possible.”⁴⁰ After the meeting, they formed the Kona Japanese Coffee Producers Association and resolved to establish their own coffee mill. The next year, the first Japanese mill, the Kona Japanese Coffee Mill, was built in Kailua. Competing with the Captain Cook Coffee Mill and American Factors, the mill initially experienced financial difficulties because it lacked a stable supply of coffee berries and a good market for processed coffee. The virtual monopoly of the Big Five companies prevented the Japanese mill from attaining commercial success. When the Kona coffee industry entered another boom around World War I, however, the financial situation of the Japanese mill finally improved.⁴¹

During the late 1910s—market prices stayed as high as \$20 per 100 pounds, exceeding even \$25 from time to time—many Japanese coffee growers accumulated enough capital to establish new mills.⁴² By the mid-1920s, a dozen or more coffee mills had emerged in Kona; ten were Japanese-owned.⁴³ These Japanese mill owners bought

⁴⁰ Saburo Hayashi, *Hawai Jitsugyo Annai* (Kona, Hawai‘i: Kona Hankyo-sha, 1909), 171.

⁴¹ To obtain necessary capital, a few representatives went to Honolulu to see the Japanese Consul-General, Miki Saito. They successfully pressed him to release the unclaimed savings of *Kanyaku Imin* (government-contract immigrants). In receipt of \$10,000 from the Consulate, Issei coffee growers built the Kona Japanese Coffee Mill in Kailua in October 1899. See Morita, *Hawai Nihonjin-shi*, 216-217; Jiro Nakano, *Kona Echo: A Biography of Dr. Harvey Saburo Hayashi* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1990), 3-30, 42-44, 63-70.

⁴² *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 98-99.

⁴³ The ten Japanese mills were the Japanese Kona Coffee Mill (Minoru Nakamoto/Kiichi Onaka), the Hawai‘i Coffee Mill (Wing Hing/Minoru Tanoue), the Kamigaki Mill (Tamakichi Kamigaki), the Kirihara Mill (Yoshiji Kirihara), the Pacific Coffee Mill (Yoshio Noguchi), the Hakoda Mill (Shinjiro Hakoda), the Kubo Mill (Hidesuke Kubo), the Kudo Mill (Takumi Kudo), the Matsuoka Mill, and the Nakamoto Mill (Minoru Nakamoto). See *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 100-101; Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 657. In the mid-1930s, there were still nine Japanese-run mills in Kona: the Japanese Kona Coffee Mill, the Hawai‘i Coffee Mill, the Kamigaki Coffee Mill, the Kirihara Coffee Mill, the Pacific Coffee Mill (Noguchi Coffee Mill), the Coffee Growers’ Association Mill, the Hawai‘i Kona Coffee Mill, the Kyodo Coffee Mill,

crops from independent farmers as well as cultivated coffee themselves. Japanese farmers under contract with white-owned companies also often smuggled part of their crops to the mills during the night in return for higher payment than they received from white-owned companies, a practice called “midnight coffee”.⁴⁴ These smaller mills competed with one another to obtain coffee during another boom starting in 1924, but in late 1929, when coffee prices plummeted, the representatives of Japanese coffee mills in South Kona and North Kona (including one co-owned by Chinese), gathered to establish the Kona Coffee Milling Company Association (*Kona Kohi Jigyo Seisei Kumiai*). The members of the association were all Issei. They held regular meetings to discuss how “to promote communication and cooperation among coffee mills” in the hope that they could together survive.⁴⁵

In their active involvement in coffee production, as semi-independent farmers and as mill owners, the Nikkei constituted an essential part of the Kona community. Because of their numerical dominance, a unique support system, and semi-independent farming style, the Kona community became a symbol of Japanese autonomy among the Nikkei in Hawai‘i. Kona became known as a refuge for Japanese runaways from the sugar plantations in other districts.⁴⁶ In this way, though in a limited degree, the Japanese

and the Saeki Coffee Mill (Shigemi Saeki). See Nakashima, *Kona Nihonjin Jitsujo Annai*, 261-263.

⁴⁴ Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*; Akemi Kikumura, Eiichiro Azuma, and Darcie C. Iki, *The Kona Coffee Story: Along the Hawai‘i Belt Road* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1995), 20; Azuma, “Japanese Coffee Growers in Kona,” 6.

⁴⁵ *Hawai Nenkan 1930-1931*, 100-101.

⁴⁶ Akemi Kikumura *et al.* *The Kona Coffee Story*, 17.

community in Kona before World War II presented one possible example for what Okumura and other Issei leaders called “Japanese racial development (*hatten*),” despite the general structural, economic, and racial constraints that all the people in Hawai‘i lived under.

The Back-to-the-Farm Movement and the Nikkei in Kona

The socio-economic context particular to Kona, which was free of the sugar plantation system, understandably influenced the mind-set of the Japanese living there. Unlike many people in the rest of the Territory, Japanese residents in Kona considered “autonomous” farming a desirable occupation. In 1929, Baron Goto, the Extension Service County Agent quoted earlier and a community leader in Kona, stated in his report to the U.S. Department of Agriculture:

No nation can survive unless it has a sound agricultural population. Offspring of immigrant farmer-laborers in Hawaii have been leaving the rural communities, seeking white-collared jobs. . . . Unfortunately in the Territory, as elsewhere, white-collared jobs are limited. Hence, unless society attempts to turn back this “white-collar attitude” and start a “back-to-[the]farm” movement, there will be a distressing future in store for the Territory.⁴⁷

This document virtually reiterates the core concept of the Back-to-the-Farm Movement that Okumura vigorously promoted through his educational campaign during the 1920s. It suggests that Goto, neither a Christian nor related to the New Americans Conference project, sympathized with Okumura’s advocacy of farming for local Nisei.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Goto, “Plan of Work for West Hawaii County,” *Annual Narrative Report* November 1, 1932-November 1, 1933, 21.

⁴⁸ Baron Goto himself chose to “return to the soil” as a County Agent. His initial plan had been to become a medical doctor, but he was persuaded otherwise by University of Hawai‘i President

This favorable perception of farming was also prevalent among the Issei in Kona, a majority of whom were independent or semi-independent farmers. Unlike Issei parents living in urban areas or on the sugar plantations, who wanted their sons to get white-collar jobs, many Issei in Kona viewed farming positively and often found pride and satisfaction in their occupation.⁴⁹ For example, as quoted in a 1928 study done by University of Hawai'i professor Romanzo Adams, one of the Issei reflected on why he preferred the independent life style of a coffee farmer in Kona:

Nothing is so disagreeable as being driven by a *luna* who keeps crying, "Go ahead, go ahead," at our back. Even if we are given a good house (on a plantation), we can not do anything with it. We want to live and to feel a home in our own house even if it be a small one. We can not make money here, but we do not worry about time and the *luna*. If we oversleep in the morning ten minutes, we do not have to lose a day. If we take a day's rest, we regain it by working twice as hard next day.⁵⁰

Though many Japanese coffee farmers were bound to American Factors and the Captain Cook Coffee Mill by contract, they were still spiritually and emotionally fulfilled because they were their own "boss" on their own farms and lived in their own houses. As Adams

David L. Crawford, who told him, "We need leaders among your group to teach the farmers, and if all the young people go into professional fields there will be no person left to do that work." To build a "sound agricultural population" in Kona, Goto strove to improve the lives of Kona farmers, teaching them bookkeeping skills and how to protect coffee trees from rats. He was also involved in Junior Farm Club activities to nurture Nisei interest in agriculture, and later joined the administration at the Extension Service headquarters in Honolulu as a 4-H specialist. His belief in farming as an appropriate profession for the Nisei never wavered, and his extension work continued for nearly thirty years. In 1962, he became the vice-president of the newly established East-West Center in Honolulu and also served as the head of the Department of Technical-interchange, training people in the Pacific Basin in medical, educational, and agricultural skills. See *Nippu Jiji*, March 15, 1959; *Honolulu Advertiser*, November 16, 19, 1985.

⁴⁹ Romanzo Adams and Dan Kane-zo Kai, *The Education of the Boys of Hawaii and Their Economic Outlook: A Study in the Field of Race Relationship* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1928), 26-32.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

astutely noted in the same work, “[I]n this remote, small rural community [in Kona] there was an atmosphere of freedom and happiness, although the incomes were small.”⁵¹

People in Kona appeared to find it more meaningful to gain self-respect and independence through working for themselves than to be in a subordinate social position even if they could earn more.⁵²

It is not therefore surprising that many Japanese coffee farmers thought that their children should engage in agriculture in the future, provided it was with some autonomy. Issei parents often told the Nisei about the harsh life on the sugar plantations which they had experienced or heard of, and thus from an early age many Kona-born Nisei developed an eagerness for socio-economic ‘independence.’ They condemned sugar plantation work and felt a sense of privilege in living in Kona.⁵³ The Issei encouraged their sons to study agriculture at school, expecting that many would seek a career in farming. In fact, a large number of boys majored in vocational agriculture at Konawaena High School, the only high school in the Kona district, during the 1920s and 1930s. Again according to the 1928 study done by Adams, “[N]early one-third of the boys in the Konawaena High School and more than a sixth of those in the grammar grades of the

⁵¹ Ibid., 50-51.

⁵² University of Hawai‘i President David L. Crawford made a similar observation: “The significant thing in all this is that in spite of their being only tenants on leased land and notwithstanding the fact that their homes are poorer and their incomes less than they would be on the plantations, thousands have gone to Kona and on the whole seem to be happy about it. The reason for the movement, since it cannot be found in the economics of the situation, must be psychological. Perhaps it is because they are individuals in Kona, and not mere units in a composite human machine. A man and his family can see the fruit of their own efforts and . . . they are happy because they have acquired something else that is intangible but nevertheless valuable, a sort of satisfaction which human nature seems to crave. It is not the sense of possession, but of individuality that counts.” David L. Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii*, 153.

⁵³ Adams and Kai, *The Education of the Boys of Hawaii*, 46-52.

same school chose farming—a very high ratio as compared with most of the other schools.”⁵⁴ While some high school students were sent to Honolulu, the continental United States, or even Japan by their ambitious parents,⁵⁵ most Kona-born Nisei went to Konawaena High School. Upon graduation, quite a few of them, particularly first sons, took over their fathers’ coffee farms.⁵⁶ Although some Nisei did not consider coffee farming their first career choice, it seems they all regarded it as preferable to working on the sugar plantations as laborers.⁵⁷

To meet the demands of students and their parents, the vast majority Japanese, Konawaena High School emphasized vocational training; its curriculum was intended to teach practical skills and prepare Kona-born Nisei for rural life. One of the earliest schools to introduce the Smith-Hughes (Vocational Act) program in the Territory, Konawaena established a department of vocational agriculture in 1925 and vocational homemaking the following year.⁵⁸ Extracurricular activities also constituted vocational

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29.

⁵⁵ In those days, “[A] graduate from the local high school [was] not as much respected as a graduate from a high school in Honolulu.” See *ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁶ Gilbert Fukumitsu interview, June 21, 2000.

⁵⁷ When Hajime Imada, for example, was a junior at Konawaena High School, he dreamed of becoming a mechanical engineer and planned to enter a university on the U.S. mainland. Unfortunately, his family home accidentally caught fire. He wrote, “In less than two hours time the fire had left the place in ashes. The loss was so great that I had to give up my plans and remained at my father’s plantation [coffee farms] and make up for the loss.” Imada was not the only Kona-born Nisei who had to become a coffee farmer for family reasons. Unlike their counterparts living in other areas, however, up until the mid-1930s, Kona-born Nisei rarely chose to work on the sugar plantations to get out of financial difficulty. Even when other opportunities were closed, they always had the option of working on their fathers’ land. See Hajime Imada, “Autobiography,” December 17, 1929, MSS 8, Konawaena High School Essays 1928-1930, SC29 Box 3. The Kona Historical Society, Kealahou, Hawai‘i.

⁵⁸ Associated Students Konawaena High School, *Ka Wena O Kona 1936*, 18.

training. Konawaena had the first and largest chapter of the Future Farmers of Hawaii (FFH) in the Territory, with sixty to ninety members annually throughout the 1930s. Many male students of the school enrolled in the club regardless of their majors.⁵⁹ For example, in 1934, only sixteen male students graduated from Konawaena, but fifteen out of these sixteen boys—dominantly Nisei—had belonged to the FFH at least for a year during three to five years of their enrollment in Konawaena.⁶⁰

The school was also the birthplace of the Future Homemakers of Hawaii (FHH). The FHH grew out of the suggestion of a female student in home economics who hoped to have a girls' organization equivalent to boys' FFH. Similar to the FFH, the FHH was sponsored by the Territorial Department of Public Instruction and intended to enhance student interest and skills in her field of study outside classrooms. The organization had its own officers, programs, and annual conferences, and provided young girls opportunities to develop ideals and personal character as well as demonstrate leadership. Upon joining the FHH, a member was required to memorize the Homemakers' Creed, including such words as: "the beauty of a wholesome family life"; the "home as the natural career for every woman"; and "work in the home and with little children as the most inspiring and satisfying life." The FHH gained enthusiastic support from teenage

⁵⁹ Associated Students Konawena High School, *Ka Wena O Kona 1931-1941*.

⁶⁰ Associated Students Konawena High School, *Ka Wena O Kona 1934*, 22-27, 67-69.

girls mainly in rural areas. In 1936, only five years after its establishment, the FHH had fifty chapters with an enrollment of 3,435.⁶¹

Among the branches throughout Hawai'i, the Konawaena chapter was one of the most active ones, and won the first prize in the Star Chapter Contest at the first annual territorial conference in 1932.⁶² In 1934, out of 16 female graduates—again mostly Nisei—nine majored in homemaking/home economics, and all of them enrolled in the FHH which had a total membership of sixty-seven, including an intermediary student section.⁶³ While the FFH was intended for future farmers, the FHH was for future farmers' wives. The two clubs contributed to reproducing farming families in the rural community. Konawaena thus placed much emphasis on agricultural and homemaking education, which reflected Kona's residents' liking of family-based farming as well as the district's particular economic, social, and historical conditions revolving around the coffee industry.

The Great Depression and Emerging Nisei Leadership in Kona

In the early 1930s, the Great Depression cast a dark shadow on the economy of Kona. Between 1932 and 1934, the coffee price fell to around \$10 per 100 pounds, less

⁶¹ Sidney L. Gulick, *Mixing the Races in Hawaii: A Study of the Coming Neo-Hawaiian American Race* (Honolulu: The Hawaiian Board Book Rooms, 1937; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1978), 64-65.

⁶² Associated Students Konawena High School, *Ka Wena O Kona 1936*, 19.

⁶³ Associated Students Konawena High School, *Ka Wena O Kona 1934*, 22-27, 70-71.

than half the average price during the late 1920s.⁶⁴ Production costs thus quickly surpassed earnings; a coffee grower reportedly lost \$73 per acre annually on average during these years of economic hardship.⁶⁵ Discouraged by their vulnerability to fluctuating coffee prices, many Nisei left the coffee farms. According to 1937 statistics, only seventy-eight Nisei residents of Kona worked as full-time or part-time coffee farmers, while 331 Nisei stayed away from coffee farming; among these 331 youth, 178 had left Kona since 1934.⁶⁶ In other words, only one-fifth of the Kona-born Nisei remained on the coffee farms after the mid-1930s.

Nonetheless, some Issei and Nisei in Kona, including non-farmers, retained an unwavering faith in the future of independent coffee farming; they formed a substantial voice in their community. For example, in November 1934, Takeo (a.k.a. Seigai) Shinjo, the *Nippu Jiji*'s Kona correspondent, wrote an article titled "*Nikkei Shimin ni Nozomu Kotoba*" (Words for Americans of Japanese ancestry) regarding the recent Nisei tendency to abandon the coffee farms. Mentioning that the Issei had been the driving force in the development of the coffee industry in Kona, and that now other "races" such as Filipinos and Koreans were gradually taking over coffee production, the writer contended that the Nisei had the responsibility for protecting their legacy. Using the rhetoric of Japanese nationalism, he urged the Nisei to endeavor to defend the Japanese dominance in coffee farming: "The world entered the age of depression. Land-owning independent farming is not only the best solution for economic stagnation and unemployment but also a forefront

⁶⁴ Coffee prices peaked at \$27 per 100 pounds in 1925 and in 1926. *Hawai Nenkan 1940*, 110-111.

⁶⁵ *Hawai Nenkan 1935-1936*, 104.

⁶⁶ Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 148-149.

in our battle for further racial development in Hawai‘i. The younger generation should be aware that farming is an impregnable fortress in our economic development, and should resolve to contribute to it.”⁶⁷

Shinjo’s juxtaposition of “independent farming” with “racial development” again closely resembles Okumura’s earlier idea relative to the Back-to-the-Farm Movement in the mid-1920s. As noted in the previous chapter, Okumura changed the thrust of his argument to something like a “back-to-the-plantation” movement in the early 1930s, however. Yet, in the same period, a considerable number of Japanese in Kona still embraced their traditional farm life as their ideal. Rather than laboring on the sugar plantations for stable wages, they hoped to maintain what the Japanese had built in Kona. This choice may have seemed inevitable since they had already enjoyed a degree of autonomy in agriculture, unlike farmers on O‘ahu and other islands. Their accomplishments over the years were too precious to be lost. Because of the favorable socioeconomic conditions, the idea Okumura had disseminated had become deeply rooted in Kona—far away from O‘ahu, the center of Okumura’s movement.

Indeed, many Kona Japanese continued to hold the idea of back-to-the-farm as the “norm” for their community even during the Depression, regardless of their occupation, generation, and gender. For example, a 1932 award-winning high school essay “The Spirit of Greater Kona,” authored by Konawaena student Helen Kimura clearly manifested this value. It says:

In this present age of depression and unemployment, the children of Kona should stick to the farms instead of crowding the cities and aspiring to

⁶⁷ *Nippu Jiji*, November 27, 1934.

white collar jobs. . . Since Kona is a large and fertile district, we can raise an abundance of the best products. The environment is healthful for both grown-ups and children, and best of all, farmers are free. As one farmer expressed it, “When I want to take a day off and go fishing, I do not have to take my hat off and walk on my knees, and say ‘please’ to a boss.”⁶⁸

This model essay, crafted by a female homemaking major who was unlikely to choose farming for her own profession, epitomizes the community values that had developed in Kona over the previous three decades—the values shared and advocated by the leaders like Okumura. Kimura, a Nisei, appropriated the Issei concept of going “back-to-the-farm” and extolled it as a guiding principle for her generation. And this value was practiced by a substantial number of Kona-born Nisei who decided to stay on the coffee farms. Their faith and pride in independent farming was not extinguished by the Depression, but became a driving force behind reviving the coffee industry in the late 1930s.

Some of the Nisei who remained in Kona worked together to improve the economic conditions of local coffee farmers. As early as September 1935, a group of leading Nisei in the Central Kona Young Men’s Association set up a research committee to examine how to boost the economy of Kona. They explored various possibilities such as raising different commercial crops on the side, and studied the market conditions for Kona products. After rigorous investigation, the committee concluded that organizing a federal credit union would fit Kona’s circumstances.⁶⁹ In October 1936, forty-three Nisei coffee farmers from the Central Kona Young Men’s Association and Kona Junior Farm Demonstration clubs founded the Kona Farmers’ Federal Credit Union, a cooperative

⁶⁸ Helen Kimura, “The Spirit of Greater Kona,” *Ka Wena o Kona 1932*, 100.

⁶⁹ Paul K. Shimizu, ed. *Silver Jubilee Commemoration of the Central Kona Young Men’s Association* (Kealahou, Hawai‘i: Central Kona Young Men’s Association, 1940), 93.

savings and loan organization, in partnership with the Extension Service and the Farm Credit Administration of the U.S. government (FCA). The Farmers' Federal Credit Union was the first small farmer's credit union to be established in the Territory; and the first credit union composed entirely of citizens of Japanese descent in the United States. It was also unique in that it was managed by Nisei without any influence from the Issei.⁷⁰ In other words, this organization was one of the earliest fruits of emerging Nisei leadership in Kona.

Before this credit union was formed, most Japanese coffee farmers rarely had the means to obtain enough capital to purchase land. American banks refused to finance them in most cases. It was extremely difficult for them to accumulate capital, for even in good years, the profit from surplus harvest ended up in the pockets of American Factors and the Captain Cook Coffee Mill. Most farmers had to sell their entire crop to these companies at the prices the companies decided upon. In addition, since the companies determined how much the crops weighed, farmers often received less payment than they deserved.⁷¹ Furthermore, as noted earlier, the stores affiliated with these companies sold farmers commodities on credit at high interest rates.⁷² Therefore, most coffee farmers hoped to end unfair lease contracts by purchasing their own land. Before the credit union was established, the only sources of loans were the companies or the storeowners, who either refused to make large loans or charged such exorbitant interest rates which only put

⁷⁰ Ibid., 93; Earl Kazuo Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report for West Hawaii County*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 35-36.

⁷¹ Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 256.

⁷² Crawford, *Paradox in Hawaii*, 152-153; Soga, *Gojunenkan no Hawaii Kaiko*, 507.

the farmers more heavily in debt. The Farmers' Credit Union enabled the Japanese coffee growers to escape this circular trap of indebtedness. In 1939, the credit union (renamed the Kona Community Federal Credit Union) also began to offer membership to non-farmers and non-Japanese, thereby expanding its financial capacity.

The new County Agent of West Hawai'i, Earl Kazuo Nishimura, contributed to the emergence of leadership among the younger generation.⁷³ While engaging in regular duties taken over from Baron Goto, Nishimura assigned himself an additional mission to nurture community leaders among the Nisei farmers in Kona. In November 1937, he organized the Kona Advancement Club (KAC), including twelve Nisei coffee farmers who were also the chief members of the Farmers' Credit Union.⁷⁴ The KAC was designated a "Nisei political and social organization."⁷⁵ At monthly meetings, lectures, and community activities, its members learned to form and implement plans, solve

⁷³ Upon graduating from the University of Hawai'i in agriculture in 1929, Nishimura found a research position at the Hawaiian Pineapple Company (later renamed Dole) through the recommendation of Dr. Fredrick Krauss, his mentor at the university. In 1932, he became an assistant agronomist at the Agricultural Extension Service, where Krauss was director. He then worked as a county agent at large. From 1936 to 1941, he served as the county agent of West Hawai'i (Kona, Kahuku, Ka'u, Kohala) succeeding Barron Goto. In 1941, he quit the Extension Service job to go to law school at the University of Michigan, where he became an attorney.

⁷⁴ The members included: Haruyoshi Akamatsu, Albert M. Shimizu, Yosoto Egami, Yoshio Fukumitsu, G. Harada, Albert Omori, Lawrence Y. Murata, Shigeru Shiraishi, Peter Hirata, Torao Morimoto, Takaji Kittaka, and Walter Tanaka. These twelve Nisei were either active Junior Farm Demonstration members or district leaders of young peoples' groups. Later the membership increased to eighteen. See Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1939-June 30, 1940, 5; Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 90; *The Kona Echo*: "Kona Kaizen Kurabu," March 16, 1938; "Advancement Club Holds Dinner Meeting," March 16, 1938.

⁷⁵ *The Kona Echo*, March 16, 1938.

problems, and communicate effectively.⁷⁶ Since commendable Nisei leaders were also expected to be good American citizens, the club also intended to “foster Americanization” of its members. The members read of the club selected books, studied American democracy, and regularly discussed national and local politics. The club provided its members with opportunities to practice American etiquette and speak standard English. Guests were often invited to the club. For example, in February 1938, it sponsored a lecture on the European war situation by a well-known world traveler and lecturer, and held a debate session with the University of Hawai‘i Debating Team to examine the question of Hawai‘i’s statehood. To expand their horizons, some of the members of the KAC, such as Yosoto Egami and Albert Shimizu, were sent to Okumura’s New Americans Conference as representatives from Central Kona, at the recommendation of Nishimura. Considering that Nishimura was on the associate committee of the New Americans Conference, it is not surprising that the activities of the KAC appear to be local versions of the programs of the conference.

The KAC also aimed to create a better farm management program for the coffee industry, translate the program into action, and ultimately improve the Kona economy during the Depression.⁷⁷ The KAC’s involvement in the farm tenant purchase program greatly helped coffee growers obtain land.⁷⁸ The program was one of the federal Farm Security Administration (FSA) projects. With the help of the Extension Service, the

⁷⁶ Earl K. Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1939-June 30, 1940, West Hawai‘i County, Territory of Hawai‘i.

⁷⁷ Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 26.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

Nisei men successfully requested the Territorial Farm Security Advisory Committee to allocate the entire FSA loan for the Territory for the fiscal year 1937-1938 solely to the island of Hawai'i.⁷⁹ In March 1938, the director of the FSA and the assistant director of its tenant purchase division visited Kona to meet up with members of the KAC and representatives of the coffee growers' associations. The officials told them that \$87,000 would be available for purchase of family size farms.⁸⁰ Forty-one farmers in Kona applied to the program. Three farmers, two Japanese and one Hawaiian, were approved for loans with a 3 percent interest and a forty-year term. Haruyoshi Akamatsu of the KAC was on the FSA county committee and participated in selecting who would receive the loan. From that year forward, the farm tenant purchase program continued to help small farmers on the island of Hawai'i, including Japanese coffee growers in Kona, obtain land through this loan.⁸¹

The KAC also contributed to the lives of Kona coffee farmers by promoting the debt adjustment movement of 1938.⁸² After the coffee price plummeted in the early 1930s, coffee companies lowered their purchase prices. Their subordinate position forced farmers to accept disappointing deals with the companies, incurring greater debt.

⁷⁹ *The Kona Echo*, March 23, 1938.

⁸⁰ These officials also met with the Japanese merchant associations, some of whose members were reluctant to allow farmers to obtain government loans at far lower interest rates than the merchants offered. See Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 36-37.

⁸¹ In the following fiscal year, nine applicants were able to obtain loans. Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1938-June 30, 1939, 30. Gilbert Fukumitsu, a Nisei coffee farmer, also obtained land through the farm tenant purchase program. He owned a thirty-acre coffee farm for a period of time, though now he has just five acres. Gilbert Fukumitsu interview, June 29, 2000; Earl Nishimura interview, November 17, 2000.

⁸² Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 29.

By the mid-1930s, their snowballing debts grew so huge that many farmers were on the verge of bankruptcy. In February 1938, the total indebtedness of Kona coffee farmers reached \$1,150,000; the average debt was \$1,777 per farm.⁸³ This common financial plight, however, united Japanese coffee farmers and led them to take action to protect their future in Kona under the Nisei leadership of the KAC.

Learning from Nishimura that debt adjustment was a part of the Farm Security Act and a New Deal policy, the KAC had a meeting with major farmers' associations to discuss how to apply the act to their case. To negotiate with American Factors, the Captain Cook Coffee Mill, and Chinese-owned Hawai'i Coffee Company (a.k.a. Wing Hing Coffee), the club members drafted explanations of why debt adjustment was so critical not only to their tenants but also to the entire coffee industry in Kona. In their resolution, they argued:

- a. We believe that debt adjustment is the deciding factor [on] whether or not the young farmers should remain in Kona.
- b. It would take a lifetime to pay off if the present indebtedness is not adjusted. This destroys any desire on the part of the younger farmers to remain on the farm.
- c. We believe that the abandonment of farmers is not a good solution to the problems in Kona from the business standpoint.⁸⁴

Their platform also expressed their anger toward the domineering attitude of the companies and their outlet stores. It included statements such as: "We recommend that American Factors should not stand in the way of the coffee farmers in availing themselves for government loans," and "If there can be no satisfactory agreement

⁸³ Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 148.

⁸⁴ Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 38-39.

between the farmers and local merchants, the adjustment would have to be negotiated directly with the American Factors, Limited.”⁸⁵ The debt adjustment movement thus tried to stand up against those that had long oppressed farmers, while saving farming from economic ruin.

As the KAC’s platform suggests, Issei merchants, particularly the ones running outlet stores, initially opposed to debt adjustment and made efforts to protect the profit of the companies with whom they were affiliated. Soon, however, they realized that their own businesses would fail unless they cooperated to help the farmers get out of their financial plight.⁸⁶ They were also afraid that their role as “middlemen” would be diminished and their power undermined if farmers started negotiating directly with the companies. Consequently, Japanese merchants joined the meetings to study and discuss debt adjustment. As Nishimura stated in his *Annual Narrative Report*, “This is the first time that Japanese farmers and merchants have gotten together to discuss this delicate matter.”⁸⁷

A Japanese coalition group, including members of the KAC, various coffee growers’ associations, and merchants’ associations, held several meetings in March 1938 to determine whether there was any possibility for declaring a moratorium on debt and establishing a refinancing plan between debtors and creditors. The group also discussed

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Earl Nishimura interviews, June 16, 2000; November 17, 2000; Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 89.

⁸⁷ Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 38; Nishimura interview, November 17, 2000.

debt adjustment with Extension Service Director H. H. Warner and assistant director Edwin R. Henson of the FSA, and asked them to request the federal government to effectuate Title II of the Farm Security Act, pertaining to debt adjustment, in Kona coffee.⁸⁸ In April, eleven delegates (four from the KAC, three from coffee growers' associations, and four from merchants' associations) went to Honolulu to negotiate with the officials of American Factors, the Captain Cook Coffee Company, and the Hawai'i Coffee Company. The delegates requested that the mills forgive much of the debts since 1934, as well as the outlet stores' debts to the companies resulting from having advanced commodities to farmers.⁸⁹ The Board of Directors of American Factors, the largest creditor, decided to write off an average of 90 percent of the debts, though each case was to be studied individually and the amount of the adjustment would vary. Similarly, the executives of the Captain Cook Coffee Company and the Hawai'i Coffee Company also agreed with canceling 90 percent of the debts of Kona farmers.⁹⁰ The solidarity of the Kona Japanese enabled them to achieve their central goal of debt adjustment.

After the negotiation with the companies ended successfully, the movement, originally started by young Nisei farmers, was taken over by Issei merchants. Once the merchants got involved in the movement, they took more initiative at debtors' meetings

⁸⁸ Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 37-38.

⁸⁹ The delegates were: 1) from the Kona Advancement Club: Haruyoshi Akamatsu, Torao Morimoto, Albert Shimizu, and Takaji Kittaka; 2) from the coffee growers' associations: Sogoro Sakata, Rakuzo Okinaga, and Yoheji Tsukamoto; 3) from the merchants' associations: Nobujiro Hakoda, Heiji Yamagata, Yoshio Takahata, and Usaku Morihara. *Ibid.*, 38-39; *The Kona Echo*, March 30, 1938; April 27, 1938; Paul Shimizu, ed. *Silver Jubilee Commemoration of the Central Kona Young Men's Association*, 49.

⁹⁰ Nishimura, *Annual Narrative Report*, July 1, 1937-June 30, 1938, 39; July 1, 1938-July 30, 1939, 30.

in Kona and in negotiating with the creditors in Honolulu. Kazo Tanima, an Issei coffee farmer and former president of a coffee growers' association, recounted how his suggestion for adjustment was rejected by a merchant at a local Japanese meeting:

At that time, when I went to the meeting, some people were proposing that the debts be reduced by 5 percent, but I said that it wouldn't amount to a solution unless they reduced debts over \$5,000 by 15 percent. . . . I attended as the president of the Keauhou *Jigyodan* and presented my reform proposals for 15 percent reduction. So then *Morihara-san, the storekeeper, said that it was a problem that should be left up to the store and the businessmen* [italics mine].⁹¹

Usaku Morihara was owner of some very successful stores and a coffee mill.⁹² Though joining the debt adjustment movement as a middleman, he came to play a central role in the negotiation with American Factors. On behalf of the Japanese, he requested the company to reduce farmers' debts, explaining how this would offer farmers hope and enable the coffee industry to survive. Perceiving him as the head of the negotiating group, American Factor's executives chose him to convey the company's final decision to the farmers. Later, Morihara was given a certificate of recognition for his efforts in the debt adjustment movement by the University of Hawai'i, which indicates that the Kona community came to consider him the person who carried through the movement.⁹³ In this way, the debt adjustment movement gradually transformed from a farmers' protest to an issue hijacked by and "left up to the store and the businessmen." Existing intra-ethnic power relations between farmers and merchants in the Kona Japanese community were thus transplanted into the movement.

⁹¹ Ethnic Studies Program, *A Social History of Kona*, 772.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 867, 874-877.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 877-878.

Such power relations—some may call them an exploitive relationship—between farmers and merchants remained in the Kona Nikkei community after the successful conclusion of the debt adjustment movement. Japanese coffee farmers continued to purchase commodities at high prices from Japanese stores, which made profits out of a large margin. This relationship was maintained until American Factors, Captain Cook, and Hawai'i Coffee withdrew from the coffee business in Kona after World War II. Some local Japanese questioned this economic system and protested tacitly. For example, Kazo Tanima, a coffee farmer, recalled that after the debt adjustment movement was over,

What I became aware of instead was that buying food to eat from the store was our biggest mistake. This was because they would add interest on. It was the silliest thing, finally the thought occurred to me that we had to pay off the debts and be free and clear on our own no matter what, even if it meant eating poor food. So we worked as hard as we could.⁹⁴

Possessing his own land, Tanima had the choice to become less dependent on the stores, but many people who leased land from coffee companies did not. Many farmers might have felt like Tanima and individually protested, but little organized effort to challenge the stores was made in the community for the sake of preserving the ethnic ties that carried them through the difficult time.

In hope of remaining in Kona and maintaining a semi-independent farming pattern, Japanese coffee growers joined hands with Issei merchants in the debt adjustment movement. It was necessary for them to resort to “racial solidarity” in order to negotiate favorable terms with the corporate giants. Though their attempt succeeded, the strategy submitted Japanese farmers to continuing exploitation by a small number of powerful

⁹⁴ Ibid., 783.

Issei merchants. This was not the only case in which local Japanese prioritized interracial struggles over intra-ethnic struggles in order to achieve what Issei leaders called “Japanese autonomy” and “racial development.” For the purpose of benefiting the Nikkei as a collective, local Japanese often had to support their more socially, politically, and economically advanced members in the same ethnic community, even if these leaders took advantage of those in a more subordinate position. This attitude, in a way, embodied a core value of what Okumura and his associates presented as the ultimate goal of “racial development.” One thing that distinguished Kona Japanese from the Honolulu Issei leaders was that the former saw the defense of their embedded interest in coffee farming as the priority in achieving ethnic survival and collective development, because coffee, instead of their ties to local white elite, provided the basis of their daily living. In a larger Hawai‘i context, on the other hand, Okumura and others often found it less essential to persist on the importance of independent farming than to preserve interracial harmony with elite *haole*, who had a sway over the livelihood of most Nikkei just in the same way that coffee did in Kona. The difference lay in the unique socioeconomic circumstances under which Kona Japanese lived relative to others in the islands.

In other situation, however, racial solidarity often served as one of the few effective strategies for most local Japanese to make their own way in Hawai‘i, just as it has for other racial minorities in the United States. Politics provided an area where solidarity was pursued as something indispensable for the general goal of “racial development,” Okumura, his Issei allies, and senior Nisei leaders worked together on the basis of this notion to integrate the second generation Japanese into local politics as full-fledged Americans.

CHAPTER 5

As Full-fledged American Citizens: Nisei Political Participation in Hawai‘i during the Interwar Years

In the proceedings of the first New Americans Conference in 1927, Honolulu Nisei delegate Kengi Hamada discussed “how the American citizens of Japanese ancestry may best equip themselves in order to participate in the life of the Territory . . . to their own individual advantage as well as that of Hawai‘i as a whole.” He stated:

All those possessing the proper training in agriculture along technical lines and those possessing no training at all or no promise of developing into anything better, should direct and be encouraged to direct their energies toward agriculture. This field may not take care of all, but it will certainly take care of a great majority. . . . Having established one’s self economically, the next problem is how one may live as a peaceful, law-abiding, loyal and useful citizen of the United States. The greatest danger facing the United States today is political indifference. Every loyal citizens [sic] carry with their privileges of American citizenship the obligation to help in the maintenance of a sound and progressive government. The New Americans have their share to perform and the medium is the ballot.¹

Hamada asserted that resolving the occupational problem was not enough to create a desirable future for Hawai‘i-born Nisei and that they also had to develop political leadership and promote political participation. Indeed, in addition to the issue of farming, another important agenda discussed at each meeting of the New Americans Conference was Nisei involvement in politics. Not only did Okumura and his allies use the conference as a forum to discuss such matters, but they also encouraged older Nisei men and women—including conference participants like Hamada—to foster political skills

¹ *First Annual Conference of New Americans, August 1st to 6th, 1927, 24.*

and play greater roles in local politics and community affairs with an eye to achieving “Japanese development” as a part of America’s national community.

This chapter looks into the political ideology of racial accommodation and development, first formulated by Okumura and his Issei sympathizers in the 1920s and then appropriated by many older Nisei in the ensuing decade. These Issei had a two-dimensional vision of the Nisei political future: one was concerned with the formation of Nisei leadership within the Nikkei community; another had to do with their involvement in the politics of the Territory of Hawai‘i as full-fledged citizens, or “New Americans.” As the result of the *U.S. v. Ozawa* ruling in 1922, the Issei were ineligible for American citizenship and hence disenfranchised. They subsequently placed their hopes upon their children, who, as native-born citizens, could fight against institutionalized discrimination through participating in the formal political process as voters and even elected officials. It would, however, first and foremost require the Nisei to be able to marshal their collective strength as a cohesive political group. At the same time, many Issei also believed that the making of Nisei leadership within the ethnic community had to go hand in hand with the construction of an interracial partnership with Hawai‘i’s ruling elite of *haole*. In the opinions of Okumura and likeminded immigrants, cooperation with the white mainstream was essential for the Nisei to achieve the ultimate goal of racial development in Hawai‘i. In other words, they expected the Nisei to act collectively as a partner of the dominant white group instead of trying to overpower it or upsetting the status quo. Racial mobilization within and racial conciliation without were the twin goals of the Issei’s political project relative to the Nisei Problem.

The political ideology that Japanese immigrants like Okumura strove to instill in the Nisei was articulated well by James Takaichi Hamada, English editor of Yasutaro Soga's *Nippu Jiji*. Published in 1932, his novel, *Don't Give Up the Ship*, served in a way as a political manifesto elucidating the core concepts of Issei political ideology, which was embraced by many Nisei, including his own brother, Kengi Hamada. Under the general influence of this ideology and the guidance of Issei leaders, a number of Nisei sought to take part in community politics, as well as in the mainstream politics of the Territory, from the late 1920s through the 1930s. After delineating the Nisei's political ideology, the second half of this chapter explores notable aspects of activities which reveal how the American-born youths generally viewed race relations and their collective future in the islands prior to the Pacific War.

The Political Manifesto of James Hamada as a Nisei Appropriation of Issei Ideology

During the prewar years, Issei leaders such as Okumura and Soga adopted the dual strategy of "racial mobilization" and "interracial conciliation" to deal with critical issues involving the Nikkei and the rest of society. To solidify the Nikkei community, they often resorted to Japanese nationalistic rhetoric, as typified by the phrase "Japanese racial expansion." At the same time, they cooperated with and strove to win support from elite *haole* in hope of benefiting the Nikkei. It is, therefore, no surprise that Okumura and likeminded Issei contended that building Nisei leadership should go hand in hand with constructing an interracial partnership with the *haole* elite. Cooperation with the white mainstream was seen as an essential component of developing the socioeconomic position of Japanese in Hawai'i.

Some older Nisei embraced this Issei ideology and began to implement its goals. Among these was James Takaichi Hamada (1898-1962), the first Japanese American to run for elective office. He was born in Kekaha, Kaua'i, and came to Honolulu in 1913 to attend McKinley High School. After a stint as a journalist at the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, he returned to Kaua'i to seek a Republican seat in the Territorial House of Representatives in 1922, though his endeavor ended unsuccessfully.² Four years later, he joined the English editorial office of the *Nippu Jiji*, where over the next thirty years he worked as the editor-in-chief. Born earlier than most other second-generation offspring in Hawai'i, Hamada shared with Issei leaders such as his employer Yasutaro Soga many of the same concerns regarding the Nisei Problem, including how to reinforce *beika* (Americanization) and improve interracial relations. He wrote myriad articles and editorials exhorting the Nisei to be loyal, law-abiding American citizens, adopt American middle-class norms, and support American democracy, while taking pride in their Japanese ancestry. His English articles also encouraged Nisei readers to develop amicable relationships with non-Japanese to help develop a harmonious interracial society in Hawai'i.

Hamada's belief in Americanism and an interracial partnership was even more clearly manifest in his *Don't Give Up the Ship: A Novel of the Hawaiian Islands* (1933), published by the Meador Publishing Company in Boston. It is considered the first English-language "novel" by a Japanese American author. *Don't Give Up the Ship*, set on the island of O'ahu and in the Pacific Ocean of the 1930s, recounts the adventures of Bill Kane, a young "white" man. This so-called "wharf rat" hangs around the beach and

² There were one Democratic and ten Republican candidates on the island of Kaua'i in the primary elections held in October 1922.

dives for coins thrown by tourists from incoming ships. Once a respectable office worker, he was framed for embezzlement by his boss, Captain Joe Blake, and served an unjust sentence. Although disillusioned, he still cherishes a dream of becoming a shipping magnate someday. His current lower-class circumstances reach a turning point when Stanley Ross, President of the Pacific-Hawaiian Steamship Company, hires him to join the search for the *Makee*, an oil tanker which has mysteriously disappeared in the middle of the Pacific. Ross' son, Steve, is on the lost *Makee*; its captain is Bill's former boss, Joe Blake. Encouraged by Ross' daughter Eva, with whom Bill is secretly in love, he goes on a mission to rescue Steve. Bill's native Hawaiian pals, Hilo, Maui, and Pirate-Killer, the three wharf rats who call him "captain," accompany him. The crew of the rescue ship *Haupu* eventually discover that Captain Blake conspired with a gang of pirates to hijack the *Makee*. After Hilo, Maui, and Pirate-Killer sacrifice their lives, Steve is finally saved from Blake and the pirates. The story concludes with a happy ending as Ross announces that Bill is to be engaged to his daughter Eva, suggesting that Bill will become an essential part of his shipping company in the future.³

While ostensibly a sea adventure novel, *Don't Give Up the Ship* crystallizes a set of values espoused by many Issei and Nisei in Hawai'i during the interwar years concerning how second-generation Japanese should be raised as an integral part of American society. At first glance, none of the main characters in this novel is Japanese American, yet author Hamada deliberately attaches covert racial meanings to some of the characters so that they can, at times, speak for and act as Japanese Americans. For

³ James Takaichi Hamada, *Don't Give Up the Ship: A Novel of the Hawaiian Islands* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1933).

instance, while stating, “Bill Kane is a white man,” the author portrays him as physically resembling Japanese. He also repeatedly juxtaposes Bill with local working-class Japanese, emphasizing their similarities in terms of their socioeconomic status. Endowed with dual racial characteristics, the protagonist expounds the norms for Nisei men, becoming a role model for Hawai‘i-born Nisei readers.⁴

In broader terms, Hamada attempted to project a picture of idealized race relations in the Hawaiian Islands. As the author noted in a *Nippu Jiji* article, *Don’t Give Up the Ship* was meant to counter the deterioration in race relations following the infamous Massie case of 1931-1932 (a.k.a. the Kahahawai Incident or the Ala Moana Case).⁵ In September 1931, Thalia Massie, wife of a Navy Lieutenant, accused five local youths—two Hawaiians, two Japanese, and one Hawaiian-Chinese—of raping her.

⁴ For example, while stating that “Bill Kane is a white man,” author Hamada describes his olive skin and coarse, dark hair, so that he physically resembles the Japanese. Bill’s last name “Kane” could mean “money” and “gold” in the Japanese language (if pronounced as “ka-ne”), indicating his aspiration for wealth as well as his Japaneseness. In addition, Bill, Kauai, Maui, and Pirate-Killer live like a family in Pahala, a low-income residential area of the period. Hamada portrays how amicably Japanese and native Hawaiians cohabited in that area and juxtaposes the relations between the residents of the two races with those between Bill and his Hawaiian pals. The author also describes the scene in which Bill and the three Hawaiians were attacked by and scuffled with Steve, the shipping magnate son, and a number of the crewmembers on his ship. This appears to be an allusion to the incidents of the Massie case, in which Navy Lieutenant Thomas Massie and his subordinates lynched the Japanese and Hawaiian men who allegedly assaulted Massie’s wife. As these examples suggest, in several critical scenes that depict race relations in Hawai‘i, Bill is placed in the position of a Japanese American. For further analysis of Bill’s “dual racial mask,” see Hiromi Monobe’s “The Embedded Messages in James T. Hamada’s *Don’t Give Up the Ship*, the First Japanese American Novel in English,” *Asian American Literature Association Journal* 6 (2000): 96-97.

⁵ “Hawai‘i Stigmatized by the Kahahawai Incident: Hamada Wrote to Clear Her Name,” *Nippu Jiji*, June 4, 1933. According to this article, Hamada first wrote Bill’s story as a movie scenario and sent it to both Paramount and First National Movie Companies, but he was recommended to re-form it to a novel. Hamada dedicated this work to Director Frank R. Capra. Also, see “Hamada’s Novel Is Received Here: Book By Nippu Jiji English Editor Is Romance of Local Waterfront,” *Nippu Jiji*, June 4, 1933.

Because of insufficient and contradictory evidence, the jury, comprised of multiethnic local residents, brought in a verdict of not guilty and the five defendants were released on bail. One of the Nisei defendants, Horace Ida, was later lynched by a group of unknown Navy vigilantes. Thalia Massie's mother, husband, and several white sailors then kidnapped and killed Joseph Kahahawai, one of the Hawaiian defendants. His murderers were arrested and sentenced, but following severe criticism from whites on the continental United States and *malihini* (newcomer) *haole* in Hawai'i, Territorial Governor Lawrence Judd commuted their sentences from ten years in prison to one hour in his office.⁶ The Japanese felt bitter towards white Americans because those convicted whites had received such reduced sentences after having lynched a Japanese man and murdered a Hawaiian one. By writing *Don't Give Up the Ship*, Hamada intended to restore a favorable image of a "multiracial Hawai'i," despite the tensions following the Massie case.⁷

Don't Give Up the Ship is also imbued with the idea that loyalty is the key to success in American society for the socially and economically marginalized. Bill's motto of "Don't give up the ship!" was adopted from the famous command given by Captain-James, an actual American naval hero. In the story, Bill likens himself and America to

⁶ Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 319-327; Kotani, *The Japanese in Hawaii*, 71-78; John P. Rosa, "Local Story: The Massie Case Narrative and the Cultural Production of Local Identity in Hawai'i," *Amerasia Journal* 26, no.2 (2000): 95-96; Franklin Odo, *No Sword to Bury: Japanese Americans in Hawai'i during World War II* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 69.

⁷ For example, local Nisei Ralph Yempuku explains how he felt about the case as follows: "They [the newspapers] were all against Kahahawai or whatever his name was and, as far as the Massie case is concerned, you get a feeling that they were justified in lynching the Hawaiian guy. And the governor did a great thing commuting their sentence. . . Yeah. That's how you feel. Because, I think to read the papers during that period, that's how the stories were given." See Odo, *No Sword to Bury*, 73.

the 'ship', repeating this patriotic phrase whenever he faces difficulty. When Bill converses with Stanley Ross, a self-made millionaire and embodiment of the American Dream, Ross tells Bill the secret of climbing the social ladder by pointing to the Stars and Stripes fluttering on a destroyer in the harbor. Ross asks, "Do you know what it stands for?" Bill answers, "It stands for the protection of our country." Then Ross replies, "You see, America is a land of opportunity . . . A man may climb from the bottom to the utmost heights, provided he works and works hard. But opportunity carries a corresponding degree of responsibility. When Old Glory calls, he responds, whether in war time or peace time."⁸ Ross thus indicates that it is essential for the underprivileged to demonstrate not only tireless diligence but also unyielding patriotism in order to make their way in America. This emphasis on American patriotism, coupled with "rugged individualism," contrasted with the lived experience of most Japanese American Nisei, whose loyalty was being called into question by mainstream society. By contrast, typical mainland stories portraying the American Dream, such as the works of Horatio Alger, never discussed the need for patriotism as part of the pursuit of personal success.⁹

'Loyalty' in this novel stands for more than loyalty to the state; it also connotes acquiescence to the existing order. In other words, the success projected in *Don't Give Up the Ship* depends on entering the established system and obtaining higher positions within it, rather than challenging it and constructing a new order. Bill, a metaphorical

⁸ Hamada, *Don't Give Up the Ship*, 83-84.

⁹ In the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth century, Horatio Alger (1834-1899) produced a number of success stories such as *Ragged Dick*, in which a poor boy rises in the world through his own efforts combined with a little bit of luck. Because of the popularity of his stories, the name "Horatio Alger" eventually became a synonym of a standard "American Dream" story.

Hawai'i-born Japanese American, is accepted into the Ross family, a paragon of mainstream white society, only after he demonstrates courage, capability, and loyalty. Generally speaking, this coincides with the common local Japanese expectation that Nisei who remained loyal to the establishment would advance within the system. Though it might be difficult for the Nisei to obtain complete equality with whites, they could at least become junior partners of the privileged and achieve social, economic, and political ascendancy in Hawai'i second only to whites. Although reaching this goal demanded compromise at times, conciliatory relations with whites did not mean being servile. As long as the Nikkei could maintain ethnic solidarity and relative autonomy within their ethnic community, cooperation with whites was seen as a positive strategy.¹⁰

Hamada's belief in American patriotism, interracial partnership, and loyalty to the established system was shared by many other Nisei. It was the backbone of Japanese American activities during the interwar years, especially in the political arena. Many Nisei leaders in newly emerging Japanese American political organizations applied these beliefs in launching projects such as the expatriation movement and supporting Hawai'i's statehood. Starting in 1919, a number of civic associations intended for and administrated by Nisei were founded in the major islands of Hawai'i. By the late 1930s, there were eleven such organizations: the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association of Honolulu and the Honouliuli, Waipahu, and Waialua Civic Clubs in O'ahu; the Hilo, Pahoa, and Kona Civic Clubs in Hawai'i; the Maui Civic Club; and the West Kauai, East

¹⁰ Azuma, "Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity."

Kauai, and Central Kauai Civic Clubs.¹¹ These organizations conducted various activities intended to nurture Nisei interest in politics and protect them from racist attack. The following sections examine how the first Nisei political organization in the Territory of Hawai'i, the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry and its successor, the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, emerged out of the political ideology expounded by Hamada's 'manifesto.'

The Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry

The Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry was established in Hilo on the island of Hawai'i in spring 1919, just as the Americanization Movement surged nationwide and vigorous anti-Japanese campaigns were launched on the west coast. Nearly all the founding members (including Tameichi Sakakibara, who was later elected to the Territorial House of Representatives) were young Nisei leaders in the local Japanese community. Christian minister and Japanese expert Sidney Gulick, who promoted U.S.-Japan friendship and had long defended the Nikkei from exclusionists, helped organize the club in the hope that it would assist in Americanizing the second generation.¹²

¹¹ Wakukawa, *History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 401; *Hawai Nenkan 1934-1935*, 193-203; "Joint-Conference of Three Kauai Civic Clubs," *Nippu Jiji*, April 23, 1934; Embree, *Acculturation among the Japanese of Kona, Hawaii*, 94. The Pu'unene Civic Club was established in Maui in June 1927, but it appears that the club was later renamed to the Maui Civic Club. See *Nippu Jiji*, June 2, 1927.

¹² "The Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry," *Beikoku ni okeru Hainichi Mondai Zakkei, Hawai no bu*, JARP Reel 35.

The same year, under the auspices of the American Legion, Nisei men and women in O'ahu set up the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry of Honolulu.¹³ While a few Issei leaders took part in the executive committee of this branch, they left the club in the hands of the Nisei after the initial year.¹⁴ Although the Hilo branch suffered from indifference on the part of the small Nisei community,¹⁵ the Honolulu branch enlisted as many as 150 members, mostly of "the better class of young Japanese" men and women in the Territory.¹⁶ The Society gradually gained sympathizers from larger segments of the Japanese community throughout the Territory. Branches were established in Wailuku on Maui, Lihue on Kaua'i, and Kona and Kohala on the island of Hawai'i during the early years of the 1920s.

The Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry called itself a patriotic organization, strongly influenced by the concurrent Americanization movement. As prescribed in its constitution, the main object of the club was:

[T]o encourage its members in becoming 100% Americans, bearing allegiance to America and to no other country than America; to foster

¹³ This organization was initially called the Japanese-American Citizens Association of Hawai'i, but soon renamed the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry of Honolulu.

¹⁴ The officers from 1919 to 1920 included Tomizo Katsunuma (President), Harry Ichiki Kurisaki (Vice President), Seiichi Tsuchiya (Secretary), and T. Murakami (Treasurer).

¹⁵ Membership at Hilo barely increased during the first year. When Vaughan MacCaughey, the superintendent of Public Instruction, delivered a talk at the club, there was such small attendance, which embarrassed the officers of the club. See "President's Report to the Members of the Japanese American citizens' Association of Hilo," *The New Americans*, vol.IV (May 1920): 3-4. Included in National Archives, Military Intelligence Report, Record Group 165, Box 557.

¹⁶ "American-Japanese Citizen's Association and their Petition to President Wilson," Intelligence Officer to Commandant (Lt. Col. Gregory), December 12, 1919, Military Intelligence Department, Record Group 165 Box 552, 1766-S-45. The same information was sent to the Office of Naval Intelligence of the Navy Department in Washington D.C. through a letter dated January 2, 1920.

among them a spirit of support of the loyalty to the American flag and Constitution of the United States; to maintain law and order and a respect for established institutions and customs of America; to promote the use of the English language . . . ¹⁷

New members were required to declare their “undivided and whole-hearted allegiance” to the United States, renounce allegiance to Japan, and swear to become “100 percent American.”¹⁸ By proclaiming undiluted American patriotism and a strong commitment to civic duty, the members of the Society attempted to win validation for Japanese Americans from the rest of the American public.

In light of these objectives, it is small wonder that the most successful effort of the Society was convincing the Japanese government to amend its nationality law in order to free the Nisei from the dilemma of dual citizenship. During the late 1910s and the early 1920s, the majority of Hawai‘i-born Nisei held dual citizenship because Imperial Japan automatically endowed the children of its male subjects with Japanese citizenship, regardless of place of birth. At the same time, the United States gave citizenship to any children born on territorial soil. Dual citizenship was especially troublesome for Nisei, since anti-Japanese exclusionists used it as a central point of contention in their propaganda.¹⁹ For instance, exclusionist leader V. S. McClatchy stated that “the citizenship of these American-born Japanese would be used, not for the benefit of this country, but for the purpose of Japan. That course will be demanded by Japan,

¹⁷ Summary of Data on Factors Bearing on the Japanese Situation in Relation to Our Military Problem, circa 1923, Record Group 165, Box 553, 1766-S-131, 42-43.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The legal concept of *jus soli* (right of soil) made anyone born in the United States a citizen of the country. The Japanese concept of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) gave citizenship to the children of male Japanese citizens, no matter where they were born.

who claims them as her citizens and is in position to enforce that claim through her system of organization in this country.”²⁰

Dual citizenship made Nisei appear perfidious to the general public because Japanese citizenship rendered males between ages 20 and 37 subject to military service in Japan. While the Imperial government did not compel them to serve in the Japanese army unless they stayed in Japanese territory for more than one month, Nisei men with dual citizenship in the above-mentioned age group had to submit a request for annual deferment to the Japanese consulate in order to remain exempt from military duty; otherwise the Japanese government regarded them as in violation of law. A 1916 amendment to Japan’s nationality law, made in response to lobbying by a Japanese immigrant association on the Pacific coast, allowed Nisei under 17 years old to renounce Japanese citizenship and be released from conscription. Nisei men over 17 years old remained liable for military obligations, however.²¹ Their regular submission of exemption petitions aroused suspicion among white Americans about the relationship between Nisei men and Imperial Japan. In the eyes of many, even following this bureaucratic procedure registered as Nisei compliance with the Japanese government. Consequently, some Nikkei leaders in Hawai‘i expressed concerns that continued compliance with military registration would lend support to the allegations that the Nisei were agents of Imperial Japan.

²⁰ V. S. McClatchy, *Assimilation of Japanese: Can They Be Moulded Into American Citizens*, 13. These remarks were made by McClatchy at the luncheon of the Honolulu Rotary Club on October 27, 1921.

²¹ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 204.

The Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry responded to this dilemma by pressing the Japanese government to relinquish its claims over the Nisei in the United States once and for all. In December 1919, the Society requested the Japanese Consul at Honolulu to forward its petition to the Japanese government, asking it to amend its nationality law so that Nisei could renounce Japanese citizenship regardless of age.²² They separately sent a petition to President Woodrow Wilson asking him to bring Tokyo's attention to the desire of Nisei to be liberated from dual citizenship.²³ In September 1920, when the Congressional party stopped in Honolulu en route on a visit to Asia, representatives of the Society also handed over a petition signed by 800 members requesting legislation by the U.S. Congress to insulate the Nisei against control by the Japanese government.²⁴

Concurrently, the Society's Honolulu and Hilo branches urged Nisei males to stop sending in exemption forms to the Japanese consulate. The officers of the branches contended that the Nisei should disregard the regulations of the Imperial government and stand firm solely on their American citizenship.²⁵ Members of the Hilo branch also

²² "American-Japanese Citizen's Association and their Petition to President Wilson," Intelligence Officer to Commandant (Lt. Col. Gregory), December 12, 1919, Military Intelligence Department, Record Group 165, Box 552, 1766-S-45. The same information was sent to the Office of Naval Intelligence of the Navy Department in Washington D.C. in a letter dated January 2, 1920.

²³ "American-Japanese Citizen's Association and their Petition to President Wilson," Intelligence Officer to Commandant (Lt. Col. Gregory), December 12, 1919, Military Intelligence Department, Record Group 165, Box 552, 1766-S-45.

²⁴ War Department, Headquarters Hawaiian Department, Honolulu, T. H., For Week October 16th to October 23rd, 1920, 5.

²⁵ War Department, Headquarters Hawaiian Department, Honolulu, T.H. For Week October 30th to November 6th, 1920, 2-3.

refused to cooperate with the consulate when it attempted to take a census of the Japanese population in Hawai'i. As Secretary Nakamoto stated, "How many citizens of Japanese ancestry are in these islands is a matter upon which the United States government alone is to be informed. We of Japanese ancestry, who were born and brought up in Hawai'i, have steadfastly refused to concur in the Japanese view that we were obliged to go back to Japan for military training in the Japanese forces."²⁶ Sympathizing with their cause, Issei leaders such as Takie Okumura and Yasutaro Soga enthusiastically supported Nisei requests for the Japanese government to abolish dual citizenship.²⁷

Along with a similar demand from Issei leaders on the west coast, these efforts led to the amendment of the Japanese Nationality Act in December 1924. To Nisei satisfaction, this amendment enabled retroactive renunciation of Japanese citizenship without age limit or precondition. It also ended the automatic endowment of Japanese nationality on children of male Japanese subjects. If parents hoped to obtain Japanese citizenship for their newborns, they had to register their children's names at the Japanese consulate within two weeks after their birth.²⁸

To homogenize Nisei citizenship status according to the policy of "100% Americanism," the Society then began to promote expatriation among local Japanese American residents.²⁹ For instance, in December 1924, the Society held a joint meeting

²⁶ War Department, Headquarters Hawaiian Department, Honolulu, T. H., For Week October 16th to October 23rd, 1920, 1.

²⁷ "The Conscription Law and the Japanese on Foreign Soil," *Nippu Jiji*, January 17, 1921.

²⁸ Ichioka, *The Issei*, 206.

²⁹ Soga's *Nippu Jiji* regularly reported the number of Nisei who newly expatriated in hope of encouraging its readers to follow a similar path.

with the Japanese Students' Association of Hawaii "to commemorate the revision of the Nationality Law of Japan and the abolishment of dual citizenship of Americans of Japanese ancestry."³⁰ Among invited speakers were two University of Hawai'i professors, Tasuku Harada and Karl C. Leebrick, both of whom passionately exhorted the Nisei audience to renounce dual citizenship.³¹ As noted earlier, Harada was Okumura's ally, as well as one of the cooperators of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's education campaign. Leebrick, an educator and internationalist, was interested in the future of Hawai'i-born Nisei and sympathized with the vision extolled in Okumura's campaign.

Although professing undivided loyalty to America, members of the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry did not necessarily sever their cultural and social ties to Japan. In the summer of 1926, five officers of the club visited Japan to express their "gratitude" to the Imperial Japanese Diet and civic and business leaders such as Eiichi Shibusawa for resolving the dual citizenship problem.³² In a letter to Shibusawa, they called themselves "bridges of the Pacific," pledging to promote amicable U.S.-Japan relations, albeit as Americans.³³ This suggests that they differentiated their legal ties to

³⁰ The Japanese Students' Association of Hawaii, *Students' Annual 1925* (Honolulu: n.p., 1925), 7.

³¹ Harada Tasuku, "Dual Citizenship"; Karl C. Leebrick, "Dual Citizenship and Expatriation," *Ibid.*, 20-22.

³² Those five members were president Harry Ichiki Kurisaki, vice president Wilfred Chomatsu Tsukiyama, Yeiichi C. Yamashiro, Isamu Nishikawa, and Shinji Maruyama. See Shibusawa Seien Kinen Zaidan Ryumonsha, *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryoshu*, Vol. 37, 420-429.

³³ Prior to his departure, Shinji Maruyama, one of the delegates, wrote to Shibusawa: "While in Japan the party desires to see the real factors that go to make Great Japan, . . . and to study and know Japan as much as possible, so that they might better serve in promoting Japanese-American understanding. All Japanese born in the United States, especially in Hawaii, realize that their one

Japan from social, cultural, and emotional connections. Renouncing Japanese citizenship was not necessarily accompanied by an effacement of their Japanese racial identity. These senior Nisei possessed a transnational perspective of their identity, as did Okumura and other Issei intellectuals.

While making way for Nisei expatriation, the Society focused on raising Nisei interest in politics. In September 1926, a group of Nisei headed by Wilfred C. Tsukiyama and Clifton H. Yamamoto staged a political rally at Aala Park for the purpose of encouraging fellow Nisei to “register and vote intelligently.”³⁴ Governor Wallace R. Farrington, Mayor John H. Wilson, representatives of both the Republican and Democratic parties, and other prominent white leaders appeared as guest speakers to discuss the privileges and responsibilities of voters. Approximately 3,000 young people attended this gathering.³⁵ A voter’s registration desk for Nisei was opened at the City and County Clerk’s office prior to the 1926 election.³⁶ In collaboration with the Society’s efforts, the *Nippu Jiji* listed all the Nisei men and women in Honolulu who had reached voting age, urging them to register there.³⁷ Working in tandem with Issei and white leaders, the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry remained active as the

important mission is to foster better and closer relations between the country of their ancestors and America.” *Shibusawa Eiichi Denki Shiryoshu*, vol. 37, 423.

³⁴ “Political Rally of Japanese Electors Attracts Big Crowd,” *Nippu Jiji*, September 3, 1926.

³⁵ *Nippu Jiji*, August 31, 1926; September 2, 1926; September 3, 1926.

³⁶ “Citizens Urged to Register for Election,” *Nippu Jiji*, October 6, 1926.

³⁷ “These Persons Are Asked to Appear at City Clerk Office for Registration,” *Nippu Jiji*, August 28, 1926.

political voice and driving force for the Nisei until it was absorbed into the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association in the late 1920s.³⁸

The Hawaiian-Japanese Civic Association

In June 1927, approximately fifty Nisei got together to establish the Hawaiian-Japanese Civic Association at the Pan-Pacific Union clubhouse in Honolulu. Clifton Yamamoto was elected president. A high school agriculture teacher, he had chaired the 1926 registration campaign of the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry. He later became one of the most active associate committee members of the New Americans Conference.³⁹ The two vice presidents were both pioneer Nisei attorneys: Wilfred Tsukiyama and Robert K. Murakami.⁴⁰ The secretary was Shinji Maruyama, a *Nippu Jiji* editor, Okumura Home graduate, and soon-to-become founding member of the New Americans Conference. Other officers of the association included treasurer Kengi Hamada, auditor Tasuke Yamagata, and directors Joji C. Moriyama, Robert S. Komenaka, and George K. Nakagawa. Many of these officers had formerly served on the executive committee of the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry.⁴¹ During the interwar years, the Association steadily expanded. Within its first year, its membership

³⁸ Hawaii Hochi, *Hawaii Hochi Sokan Nanajyu-go shunen Kinenshi*, 122.

³⁹ Yamamoto became Manager of the Insurance Department at National Mortgage and Finance Company in Honolulu in the 1930s.

⁴⁰ Tsukiyama became a city and county attorney in the 1930s and was appointed chief justice of Hawai'i in the 1950s.

⁴¹ *Hawai Nenkan* 1927,155.

increased from 200 to 300. Seven years later, the club had 900 members.⁴² Branches were set up in various parts of the Territory; by 1935 the total membership had reached 2,000.

The bylaws of the Hawaiian-Japanese Civic Association were drafted and officially approved at the second meeting in June 1927.⁴³ The organization was intended for young men of Japanese ancestry, both American citizens and non-citizens, but membership was also open to non-Japanese recommended by the board of directors. It was considered a male-only club although there was no regulation in the bylaws precluding women from joining.

According to the bylaws, the association was defined as a “non-political” organization. It did not endorse political candidates and forbade “political discussions” among its members during meetings. It also eschewed religious discussions and

⁴² *Nippu Jiji*, June 15, 1928, Wakukawa, *History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 401.

⁴³ Other objectives of the organization included:

1) To bring together the residents and visitors of Honolulu for social intercourse and increase in their hearts love and pride in the city of Honolulu, assisting in any cause or project that will bring merit to the city.

2) To cooperate with organizations engaged in laudable efforts for the public welfare.

3) To be mindful of the oath: “We will never bring disgrace to this, our city, by any act of dishonesty or cowardice, nor ever desert our suffering comrades in the ranks. We will fight for our ideals [and] any sacred things of the city, both alone and with many; we will revere and obey the city’s laws and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those above us who are prone to annul or set them a naught; we will strive unceasingly to quicken the public’s sense of civic duty. Thus in all things we transmit to this city not only, not less, but greater, better and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us. See “New Civic Club Adopts By-laws Elects Officers,” *Nippu Jiji*, June 16, 1927.

activities.⁴⁴ Instead, this “civic, educational, charitable” organization aimed to “bring together from time to time in friendly conference leaders in all lines of thought and action that they may become better acquainted to assist them in their cooperative efforts for the advancement of those interests that are common to all residents of Honolulu.”⁴⁵ Serving the local Japanese community was one of the most important missions of the club. It distributed goodwill baskets to needy families and promoted fundraising drives for charities. The club also conducted activities that specifically concerned the second-generation Japanese in Hawai‘i, such as taking a survey of local Nisei occupations and establishing loans and scholarships for promising Nisei university students.⁴⁶

The Association also served Nisei as a social club, somewhat similar to a Lions club. It nurtured friendship within the ethnic group and enhanced both American and Japanese pride. Functions combined American and Japanese cultural activities. Each July, a western-style banquet and dance party was held at a prominent hotel following Association elections. It also sponsored an annual *kimono*-ball (a dance party in traditional Japanese costumes), Japanese movie nights, and concerts performed by Japanese bands touring Hawai‘i.⁴⁷ It also held social gatherings with Issei leaders of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of discussing “some of the peculiar

⁴⁴ “This Association shall not endorse any political candidates or tolerate any political or religious discussion among its members at any meeting of the association.” See *Nippu Jiji*, June 16, 1927.

⁴⁵ *Pan-Pacific*, January-March, 1940. 29.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁷ *Nippu Jiji*, February 13, 1934.

problems confronting the two generations” and “fostering closer contact with the older group.”⁴⁸

Another important activity was to provide opportunities for Nisei members to nurture interracial friendships. For instance, in October 1927, the Association sponsored a dinner with the Chinese Civic Club at the YWCA auditorium.⁴⁹ At the beginning of the dinner, President Yamamoto remarked, “I am proud of the close relationship between Japanese and Chinese on the playgrounds, in schools and everywhere . . . May we hope to further cultivate this friendship!”⁵⁰ That evening was highlighted by a “very interesting inter-racial program” including artists and entertainers from “the Japanese, Chinese and Caucasian communities.”⁵¹ While the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry strove to unify the Nisei generation, the Civic Association conducted activities beyond the realm of its ethnic community by endeavoring to strengthen ties to non-Japanese in Hawai‘i—an ideal espoused by the likes of Okumura and Hamada.

The social, fraternal, and interracial nature of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association developed partly from the initial involvement of internationalist Alexander Hume Ford, the founder and director of the Pan-Pacific Union. The Union strove to promote mutual understanding and harmonious relationships amongst different

⁴⁸ “First and Second Generation Japanese Here Get Together To Discuss Their Trouble,” *Nippu Jiji*, September 9, 1927; “Old and Young Meet at Social: Many Attend Chamber-Civic Club Gathering at Nakao’s Place,” *Nippu Jiji*, November 21, 1927.

⁴⁹ “Civic Clubs Plan Elaborate Affair Chinese-Japanese Gathering Schedule for Tomorrow Night,” *Nippu Jiji*, October 12, 1927; “Japanese and Chinese Civic Bodies Sponsor Fist Joint Gathering,” *Nippu Jiji*, October 14, 1927.

⁵⁰ “Japanese and Chinese Civic Bodies Sponsor Fist Joint Gathering,” *Nippu Jiji*, October 14, 1927.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

racial/ethnic groups living in the Pacific Basin.⁵² Ford, Governor Farrington (president of the Pan-Pacific Union), and representatives of Chinese and Hawaiian Civic Clubs affiliated with Ford's organization were all present at the Association's second meeting, when its by-laws were approved. According to a *Nippu Jiji* article, Ford was "keenly interested in the new organization." He expected the Nisei's club to work jointly with the other ethnic-based organizations under the umbrella of the Pan-Pacific Union, ultimately promoting interracial partnership in Hawai'i at large.⁵³

Although the Association was established as a non-partisan organization, many Nisei hoped to use it to promote Japanese American involvement in politics. Some Nisei delegates expressed these expectations during a session on the Nisei and politics at the 1929 New Americans Conference. One delegate noted that "quite a number of civic clubs had been organized on Oahu recently, and suggested that it might be a good thing if the clubs would take up the matter of promoting political interest among their members."⁵⁴ In fact, the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association held a series of open forums on pressing political questions of the time.⁵⁵ For example, only two months after its inception, it held a debate on statehood for Hawai'i, a highly controversial issue

⁵² For further information on the Pan-Pacific Union, see Paul F. Hooper, *Elusive Destiny*, 79-104. In 1923, Ford established the Good Relations Clubs, constituted by Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and Caucasian subsections. According to Hooper, "when little of consequence occurred during the first few years, they [the Good Relations Clubs] drifted into inactivity." Considering the fact that the Chinese and Japanese established their own civic clubs under the auspice of Ford in 1925 and in 1927, respectively, the Good Relations Clubs might be the predecessors of the two ethnic civic associations. See Hooper, *Elusive Destiny*, 97.

⁵³ Japanese Young Men Form Club: 'Japanese Hawaiian Civic Club' Is Tentative Name Selected," *Nippu Jiji*, May 26, 1927.

⁵⁴ *Third Annual Conference of New Americans, July 29 to August 3, 1929*, 15.

⁵⁵ *Nippu Jiji*, June 16, 1927.

among the residents.⁵⁶ Guest speakers such as Deputy Attorney General Charles B. Dwight and University of Hawai'i professor Leebrick represented pro and con arguments. Japanese Consul General Kazuye Kuwashima also gave a talk. An open discussion with the audience followed, moderated by discussion leaders holding opposing views to ensure a fair presentation of both positions.⁵⁷

In addition, the Association often invited local politicians to deliver talks to its members, even though it did not endorse specific political candidates. For instance, at a joint gathering with the Hawaii Chinese Civic Association, Senator Lawrence M. Judd (later the Territorial Governor) appeared as a guest and gave a talk that resembled a campaign speech. After stating that he considered the children of Asian immigrants full-fledged Americans, able to "contribute, more than you have any idea of, to the safety and prosperity of this country," he took up the main topic of his speech, the public school system in Hawai'i, which was a central theme of his platform.⁵⁸

As these examples suggest, some activities of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association had political connotations even though the club designated itself "non-political." Why was there such a gap between the organization's actual practices and its

⁵⁶ "'Statehood' is Debate Subject: Japanese Civic Association Sponsors Open Forum Discussion," *Nippu Jiji*, August 9, 1927.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ At the beginning of the speech, Senator Judd stated, "I have no sympathy for those who call you Japanese or Chinese. I consider you all American citizens. I know of no place in the world where there is more wonderful understanding among the various races than in Honolulu. I have many friends among all races in Hawai'i where East and West are free to develop. It is a great task for you, and you can contribute, more than you have any idea of, to the safety and prosperity of this country." "Lawrence M. Judd Believes Orientals Can Do Big Things," *Nippu Jiji*, October 14, 1927.

presentation to the public via its by-laws? Walter Mihata, director of the Civic Association from 1930 to 1931, hinted at an answer to this question in a discussion about Nisei civic organizations at the New Americans Conference. He stated, "The civic clubs are all right, but the minute they [Nisei] begin to play politics, the Americans are going to jump on us."⁵⁹ The Association organizers, recognizing this, attempted to make the club appear innocuous and unthreatening to assuage the fear of the 'Japanese problem' among the general American public. Nisei were afraid of ruining relationships with the elite whites that controlled the Territory and were jumpy at any thought of a concerted political challenge by the numerical Japanese majority. They did not want to give any impression that second-generation Japanese were subversive elements waiting for a chance to usurp political power in Hawai'i. Perhaps for this reason, the Association leaders often involved pro-Japanese whites such as Dr. Leebrick and Senator Judd in what they called "non-political" activities so that these elite whites could assure the rest of society that the Nisei in the club were not conspiring against the existing order but simply interested in ongoing political questions as dutiful citizens. These white allies tacitly accepted the Association's "non-political" stance as long as its actual political activities did not threaten the established system. This strategy of ambiguity allowed Nisei to conduct political activities that empowered their generation without arousing the suspicions of the white mainstream.

⁵⁹ *Fourth Annual Conference of New Americans, July 30 to August 5, 1930, 19.*

The Expatriation Movement

One of the best-known political activities of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association was the so-called "Expatriation Movement" during the 1930s. Just as the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry had done, the Association urged Nisei to renounce Japanese citizenship so that they could claim full membership in the American national community. Many Hawai'i-born Nisei nonetheless continued to hold Japanese citizenship, either because they did not understand its political implications, they intended to study in Japan, or they wanted to secure ownership of their parents' property in Japan. Most Nisei born before the 1924 amendment of the Japanese Nationality Law were reluctant to go to the trouble of renouncing Japanese citizenship.⁶⁰ For instance, in 1930, only 218 men and eighteen women applied for expatriation at the Japanese consulate in Hawai'i.⁶¹ Only nine out of the twenty-nine delegates to the Fourth New Americans Conference had become expatriated, even though the conference was supposed to be attended by "model" Nisei.⁶² From the mid-1920s, Okumura campaigned to convince the second generation to hold single American citizenship, but his efforts fell short. After 1932, however, the number of the Nisei who renounced Japanese citizenship sharply increased, jumping from 290 in 1931, to 1,248 in 1932, to 1,527 in 1933.⁶³ From

⁶⁰ For most Nisei in Hawai'i, renouncing Japanese citizenship was not just an act of clarifying loyalty to America but it also meant cultural, familial, and social rejection of their ancestral land and their 'alien' parents. See Odo, *No Sword to Bury*, 95-97.

⁶¹ *Hawai Nenkan 1931-1932*, 22.

⁶² *Fourth Annual Conference of New Americans, July 30 to August 5, 1930*, 19.

⁶³ "Hawai ni okeru Nikkei Beikoku Shimin ni Kansuru Chosa: Zai Honoruru Soryojikan," *Nikkei Gaijin Kankei Zakken*, Diplomatic Record Office, March 1935, Vol.2, 6; "Comments on Current Events-No.6, February 5, 1941-March 15, 1941," Headquarters Hawaiian Department Office of

that year forward, expatriation was expected of the Nisei. Even the *Hawaii Hochi*, which had previously objected to eliminating dual citizenship, shifted its position, printing an article titled “Pressing Need to Renounce Japanese Citizenship: Become Full-Fledged American Citizens Promptly” in July 1932.⁶⁴

During the 1930s, there were several local, national, and international incidents that negatively impacted the relations between local Japanese, *kama'aina* (longtime resident) *haole*, *malihini* (newcomer) *haole*, and whites on the continental United States. The Association's expatriation campaigns were partly intended to defuse interracial tension. Their first community-wide campaign started in March 1933, immediately following the infamous Massie Case of 1931-1932. As noted earlier, this alleged rape case provoked heated controversy. The rape charges were widely reported on the continental United States, planting the seeds of prejudice against Hawai'i and its residents in the minds of the mainland white American public. They began to perceive Hawai'i as full of “darker skinned races” that threatened the chastity of white women.

In 1932, while the public furor over the incident was still raging, Admiral Yates Stirling, a U.S. Navy commandant of the 14th Naval District at Pearl Harbor, submitted a report to a federal commission on “Law Enforcement in the Hawaiian Islands,” warning against the Japanese in Hawai'i. Seeing the Hawaiian Islands as a defensive outpost in the event of war in the Pacific, this highest-ranking Naval officer in Hawai'i argued that:

the Department Commander Fort Shafter, Territory of Hawai'i, Military Intelligence Record, Record Group 165, Box 3720.

⁶⁴ *Hawaii Hochi*, “Nihon Kokuseki ridatsu no Kyumu: Sumiyaka ni Kanzen naru Beikoku Shimin to nare,” July 1, 1932.

If these islands were populated, as are the States of our Union, by American citizens, comprised in large measure of the Caucasian race, their allegiance and loyalty to the welfare of the whole Nation might not be questioned. . . . The large number of aliens in the Hawaiian Islands is a matter of grave concern to our National Government, and years of study by civilian, military, and naval authorities, of the probable attitude of certain of the island-born orientals has led to the conclusion that but doubtful reliance can be placed upon their loyalty to the United States in the event of war with an oriental power.⁶⁵

To prevent “island-born orientals” from abusing their citizenship rights and taking control of territorial politics, Stirling suggested that the current system of self-governance should be replaced by a “commission form of government.” This would place the Territory directly under the control of a commission of military and naval officers appointed by the U.S. President. Like most military officers in Hawai‘i, Stirling came from the continental United States. When dealing with interracial relations, he appears to have applied racial perceptions obtained from outside the Territory. As historian Lawrence Fuchs states, many of the *malihini haole* who came from the American South and West “were more actively anti-Oriental than the *kama‘aina* elite, and racial tension increased in Honolulu, where a middle-class was emerging during the 1920s and 30s owing to the rise of the Orientals in town and migrations of *haoles* from the mainland.”⁶⁶ His hard-line approach to the “Japanese Problem” contrasts strikingly with the more conciliatory approach adopted by *kama‘aina haole* leaders such as Frank C. Atherton and Richard Cooke.

⁶⁵ Wakukawa, *History of Japanese People in Hawaii*, 362-364.

⁶⁶ Lawrence Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 66.

Conflicting interests between Japan and the United States in China in the early 1930s further stimulated his distrust. In September 1931, the Manchurian Incident broke out with the invasion of the Japanese Imperial Army in China. In 1932, puppet Manchukuo, a multiracial state under Japanese military control, was established in northeastern China. Facing severe criticism from the western world, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations in 1933. The United States morally condemned Japanese military advancement in China while at the same time trying to keep a share of the Chinese market in competition with other world powers. Indignation over Japanese military expansion in China increased anti-Japanese sentiment in Hawai'i and on the continental United States. Thus, both local and international events coincided to regenerate the worst fears of the Japanese.

To counter this growing anti-Japanese sentiment, the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association conducted a community-wide expatriation campaign in March 1933. For three weeks, it assisted Nisei in completing the necessary paperwork for expatriation. From 6:30pm to 9:30pm every evening except Sundays, members were available for help in the Association's office at the Hakubundo Bookstore. Those who were not able to come to the office during these hours were allowed to call either Tasuke Yamagata, the president of the association, or Fuyuki, Okumura's son. Their services were intended to reduce the trouble of applying for expatriation, which required a copy of the applicant's birth certificate, a statement of approval (*doisho*), a report to the Japanese Minister of Interior renouncing citizenship (*kokuseki ridatsu todoke*), a report to the Consul General on the loss of citizenship (*kokuseki soshitsu todoke*), and a copy of the family register in Japan (*koseki*). Assembling these forms was daunting to many Nisei, who were not

confident in their command of the Japanese language. The civic association explained the entire procedure to applicants and helped them fill in the forms. These services were free, though applicants had to pay for the documents and notary public fees. The West Kauai Japanese Civic Association provided Nisei in the community similar services.⁶⁷ The total number of expatriated Nisei in 1933 alone reached 1,527, the highest number since the Japanese Nationality Act was amended in 1924.⁶⁸

As a part of the expatriation campaign, the *New Americans*, the official organ of the New Americans Conference, issued a special number publicizing the Civic Association's services. It also featured essays written by Takie Okumura, Japanese Vice-Consul Ichitaro Shibata, and Governor Lawrence Judd exhorting Nisei readers to expatriate. In the 1930s, many of the editors of the *New Americans* were officers of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association as well as associate committee members of the New Americans Conference.⁶⁹ As the overlap of membership between the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association and the New Americans Conference reveals, both

⁶⁷ *New Americans*, March 1933, 7.

⁶⁸ "Hawai ni okeru Nikkei Beikoku Shimin ni Kansuru Chosa: Zai Honoruru Soryojikan," *Nikkei Gaijin Kankei Zakken*, Diplomatic Record Office, March 1935, Vol.2, 6; "Comments on Current Events-No.6, February 5, 1941-March 15, 1941," Headquarters Hawaiian Department Office of the Department Commander Fort Shafter, Territory of Hawai'i, Military Intelligence Record, Record Group 165, Box 3720. Behind this rapid increase of expatriated Nisei, there was the influence of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association. For example, in 1934 Hawai'i-born Nisei Barney Ono decided to expatriate partly in response to an appeal by the Association. See Odo, *No Sword to Bury*, 97.

⁶⁹ The editors of the *New Americans* were: Umetaro Okumura, Fuyuki Okumura, Masuo Ogoshi, Jisoo Sanjume, Shigeo Soga, and Clifton Yamamoto, Masatoshi Katagiri, Walter Mihata, and Shunzo Sakamaki. All these editors except Okumuras, Ogoshi, and Sanjume were officers of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association. Also, all but Sakamaki served on the associate committee of the New Americans Conference.

organizations held the same stance towards Nisei dual citizenship and worked in tandem to promote expatriation throughout the 1930s.⁷⁰

The Association's second expatriation campaign was conducted on a larger scale between 1937 and 1938, while the statehood controversy was raging. Since 1903, numbers of political leaders in Hawai'i had attempted to achieve statehood. Because of their territorial status, the people of Hawai'i were taxed without representation. They had no voice in making the federal laws which would affect them because their delegate to Congress were not allowed to vote. In addition, they could not participate in electing the president of the United States. Therefore, many residents in the islands enthusiastically supported statehood.

Moreover, a growing concern over the possible introduction of a commission form of government increased the desire for statehood. Admiral Stirling's recommendation to the congressional committee that the federal government take direct control of Hawai'i was gaining support among *malihini haole* and whites on the U.S. mainland. In May 1933, the Rankin Bill was proposed in Congress to amend the Organic Act of 1900 to permit the appointment of non-residents to the governorship. It led to fervent opposition among the territorial legislature, the Democratic Territorial Central Committee, and the Chamber of Commerce of Honolulu. In the current system, the people of Hawai'i did not possess the right to elect their territorial governor, but at least the governor was appointed from among local residents.⁷¹ Passage of this bill would further deprive them of autonomy and degrade Hawai'i's status relative to the states.

⁷⁰ *New Americans*, March 1933.

⁷¹ Under the Organic Act, residents in Hawai'i were also allowed to elect their own legislature.

Although the bill was halted in the Senate in the end, its introduction set fire to the controversy over statehood.

The statehood controversy was further inflamed by the enactment of the Jones-Costigan Act of 1934 and congressional statehood hearings in Hawai'i in 1935 and 1937. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Jones-Costigan Act was enacted to impose a quota upon territorial sugar production mainly for the purpose of protecting sugar interests on the continental United States. Compelled to reduce the amount of its production, the sugar industry in the islands greatly suffered. Elite *haole* business leaders such as Richard Cooke and John Waterhouse claimed that Hawai'i should be given the same consideration as the states, rather than being classified the same as Cuba or other insular possessions, because it contributed more to the United States Treasury than many states.⁷² To end what they considered the unfair treatment, most *kama'aina haole* vigorously pushed statehood for Hawai'i.

Local Japanese supported statehood for two reasons. First, like the *haole* elite, they regarded the sugar industry as pivotal to the islands' economy. Even though supporting business leaders to protect the industry meant reinforcing the white oligarchy, they recognized that the sugar industry at least provided them with secure jobs in the middle of the Depression. The sugar industry also single-handedly supported territorial revenue. Its collapse would severely hit the lives of all the people in the islands.

Second, local Japanese were afraid that Congress might amend the Constitution or enact new laws in an attempt to deprive them of their rights on account of their race. For example, at the Fourteenth New Americans Conference, expressing concern over a

⁷² *Nippu Jiji*, April 21, 1934; December 4, 1934.

possible enactment of an anti-miscegenation law in the islands, a Nisei delegate stated, “It was felt that should Hawai‘i not be admitted to statehood, there may be a possibility that the legislature may pass discriminating laws.”⁷³ As the Jones-Costigan Act passed despite the opposition of the people of Hawai‘i, disadvantageous laws to Asians in the islands could be enacted by a simple majority vote of Congress. The worst possible scenario would be an amendment to the Organic Act stripping American citizenship from Hawai‘i-born children of immigrants ineligible for naturalization.⁷⁴ To defend themselves from such racist attacks, many local Japanese chose to cooperate with *kama‘aina haole* leaders who were generally more lenient and understanding towards Asians than *malihini haole* and white mainlanders.

Samuel W. King, Hawai‘i’s Delegate to Congress in the mid-1930s, helped set up a congressional sub-committee in the House of Representatives in 1935 to discuss statehood. In October, the committee came to Hawai‘i and conducted public hearings on major islands for two weeks. One hundred and five local residents, including prominent Japanese American citizens, gave testimony at the hearings, ninety of them favoring

⁷³ *The Fourteenth New Americans Conference July 15 o 21, 1940, 70.*

⁷⁴ In an October 1935 newspaper article, David Crawford stated, “Statehood will make better citizens of our Oriental young people, for it will remove the threat of commission government which they consider merely as a means of disfranchising them from their normal rights as American citizens.” As Crawford’s comment reveals, Asian Americans in Hawai‘i, particularly Japanese Americans, identified the introduction of the commission form of government with deprivation of their natural-born rights. “U. of H. President Explains Benefits Statehood Offers,” the Honolulu Advertiser, attached to the letter from Honolulu Japanese Consul Sadajiro Tamura to Portland Japanese Consul Ken Tsurumi, dated November 5, 1935, *Beikoku Naisei Kankei Zakken Hawai Kankei*, Diplomatic Record Office.

statehood.⁷⁵ The committee nevertheless rejected the plea for statehood in February 1936. A new congressional committee then held hearings on the islands of O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, and Molokai in October 1937. This time, more witnesses opposed statehood. This was related to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in that year, which further aggravated U.S.-Japan relations. During the two-week-hearings, the committee spent a considerable time investigating Nisei dual citizenship, their possibility of bloc voting, and above all, their loyalty to the United States. Though the committee was sympathetic to local proponents of statehood, they concluded that granting statehood to Hawai‘i should be deferred in light of the international situation.⁷⁶

Concern over the perception of “divided allegiance” among the Nisei led the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association to send a statement to the committee at the end of the hearings. Representing ten Nisei civic clubs in the Territory, it proclaimed:

In analyzing the questions and testimonies given during the public hearings, the questions of ‘dual citizenship’ and ‘loyalty’ were the two major problems that were held against the citizens of Japanese ancestry. . . . We citizens of Japanese ancestry wish to go on record as pledging our undivided allegiance and loyalty to the Stars and Stripes. We are confident that, in case of emergency, the citizens of Japanese ancestry will be the first to take up arms in defense of the United States.⁷⁷

As this statement shows, Nisei demonstrated hyper-patriotism to counter mounting suspicion. The poignancy of their statement, however, lies in their readiness to sacrifice

⁷⁵ The Japanese Americans witnesses were including, House of Representatives Tameichi Sakakibara, Kaua‘i County Board of Supervisors Noboru Miyake, and district magistrate Tomekichi Okino. *Nippu Jiji*, October 12, 1935; October 14, 1935.

⁷⁶ Roger Bell, *Last Among Equals: Hawaiian Statehood and American Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1984), 65.

⁷⁷ Wakukawa, *History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 402.

their lives to prove their loyalty to their country of birth, a promise that became reality merely several years later.

The vigorous territory-wide expatriation drive by the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association in the early spring of 1938 was also meant as proof of their whole-hearted commitment to America. Core members of the club, including George Sakamaki, Clifton Yamamoto, Wilfred Tsukiyama, Masaji Marumoto, and Dr. Masaru Uyeda, set up a special committee. They then held a conference with representatives of other Japanese American civic associations on O'ahu to gain their support of the campaign. They canvassed other regions of the islands, holding meetings and distributing pamphlets in hope of encouraging more Nisei to renounce Japanese citizenship. With the help of several Japanese language schoolteachers, they conducted the drive first at the office of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and then at Dr. Ueda's clinic and the Nuuanu YMCA.⁷⁸ The Hawai'i Congress of Parents and Teachers, Japanese consulate officials in Honolulu, and American and Japanese newspapers and periodicals all rendered substantial assistance, making the drive a success.⁷⁹ Other civic associations started similar campaigns in various regions, though the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association processed most of the applicants from O'ahu and the other islands of Kaua'i, Maui, and Hawai'i.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Hawai Nenkan 1939*, 10-11.

⁷⁹ Wakukawa, *History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 322.

⁸⁰ Clarence Shimamura, "Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association," *Pan-Pacific*, January-March, 1940, 31.

From 1938 forward, the Association conducted an annual expatriation campaign.⁸¹ Combined with the fact that the territorial government and many local white-owned companies only employed Nisei with singular American citizenship, whispers of a possible war between Japan and the United States accelerated Nisei renunciation of Japanese citizenship. Indeed, applications for expatriation increased from less than 400 in 1937 to more than 3,600 in 1941.⁸² In 1924, most Nisei had been indifferent to expatriation, despite Okumura's exhortations. A decade later, a considerable number of Nisei regarded expatriation as an urgent matter and felt that it offered them a chance to demonstrate their undivided allegiance to America. The expatriation campaign enabled many Nisei to use American patriotism both to unite their own ethnic group and to alleviate the tension with the white population.

Nisei Women and Politics

The Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, despite its promotion of singular, equitable American citizenship among the Nisei, operated in a gendered fashion to the detriment of Japanese American women's political role and status. When asked by a female delegate if women were allowed in the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, core member Walter Mihata stated at the New Americans Conference: "We are not opposed to having women members. But judging from what had happened to the Hawaiian and Chinese civic clubs, we are afraid that it will turn into a social organization, holding tea

⁸¹ Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of America: A Political History of Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2003), 68.

⁸² Ibid.

parties instead of business meetings.”⁸³ As his remark insinuates, unlike its predecessor the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association did not treat women as equals. Men were believed better able to deal with serious political issues.⁸⁴ In the Society, female members were elected as officers and chosen as representatives to congressional delegates visiting Hawai‘i. Women were absent from the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, however, except for special functions such as dinners and dance parties. In other words, the transformation from the Society to the Association reduced women from comrades working for the same political cause to companions adding grace to parties.

Some women who had formerly belonged to the Society set up their own clubs because of this exclusion.⁸⁵ The most notable is the Japanese Junior Service League organized in Honolulu in June 1934. In common with the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association, this club designated itself as a social, charitable, and educational organization. Its primary purpose was to “render volunteer service in community welfare work,” a job assumed suitable for women, given their supposed attributes of “nurturing and caring” for others. The League trained its members at various social service agencies, such as hospitals, the Social Service Bureau, the Girl Scouts of Oahu, the

⁸³ *Third Annual Conference of New Americans, July 29 to August 3, 1929*, 15.

⁸⁴ Few women went into politics in those days—during the 1930s, there were only one or two women among ninety-three elected officials in territorial public offices.

⁸⁵ During the 1930s, many other Japanese civic associations also became male-only clubs. Some civic clubs, such as the Hilo Japanese Civic Club set up a women’s division (*fujin-bu*) to compartmentalize female members. In these clubs, women conducted activities to boost American pride and demonstrate their patriotism to the United States. For example, every February the women’s division of the Hilo Japanese Civic Club held the Washington Festival, an annual banquet celebrating George Washington’s birthday. See *Nippu Jiji*, February 13, 1934.

YWCA, the International Institute, the Free Kindergarten Association, and the Hawaiian Humane Society. Its some thirty members were predominantly the wives of prominent Nisei leaders such as Kengi Hamada and Ralph C. Honda, both officers of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association.⁸⁶ Five out of the seven officers were married, and their husbands were all engaged in admirable white-collar occupations. Two were married to dentists, another two to employees of top-ranking companies, and one was the wife of a medical doctor. The *Honolulu Advertiser* article included portraits of each officer in evening dress and a pearl necklace, visually manifesting their privileged socioeconomic status. Since the membership of the League remained small over the ensuing years, it appears to have been an exclusive social club intended for the spouses of politically-minded elite Nisei.

The League also served as an intersection between upper-/upper-middle-class white and Japanese women in Honolulu. For instance, when the club held its first meeting at the home of its president, twenty-one elite women were invited, irrespective of race, nationality, and generation. Among these guests were wives of distinguished *haole* leaders, including Mrs. Frank C. Atherton and Mrs. Richard Cooke, prominent Issei leaders, including Mrs. Yastutaro Soga and Mrs. Daizo Sumida, and Japanese diplomats.⁸⁷ In the League, Nisei women cultivated a female version of a quadripartite

⁸⁶ The officers of the League were “Mrs. Mitsuharu Hoshino (doctor), president; Mrs. Kengi Hamada, first vice president; Mrs. Dwight H. Uyeno (dentist), second vice-president; Miss Carla Mirikitani, secretary; Mrs. Takeo Kishida (dentist), treasurer; Mrs. Ralph C. Honda, Miss Carol Tokiko. See the *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 10, 1934, and “*Hawai ni okeru Nikkei Beikoku Shimin ni Kansuru Chosa: Zai Honoruru Soryojikan*,” *Nikkei Gaijin Kankei Zakken*, Diplomatic Record Office, March 1935, Vol.2, 37.

⁸⁷ Other guests invited to the first meeting were: Mrs. Arthur L. Andrews, Mrs. George B. Isenberg, Mrs. Sam Damon, Mrs. James Russell, Mrs. Henry Gotschalk, Mrs. Clorinda Low

partnership in pursuit of amicable international, interracial, and inter-generational relationships. Much as Nisei men pledged to serve the American state, this club also enabled Nisei women to demonstrate that they were ideal *female* citizens through their involvement in welfare work and fulfillment of domestic responsibilities.

Hawai'i Nikkei and the Vote

The vision of Nisei citizenship shared by both Okumura and his American-born followers in the 1930s entailed more than maintaining a single nationality and functioning as a useful member of society. What mattered most after all was whether or not the Nisei could practice their political rights and duties as no less, if not better, citizens than other Americans. In this sense, the fact that both Issei leaders and the Nisei members of the Civic Association vigorously promoted the active participation of the American-born Japanese in territorial politics should pose no surprise. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, during the 1930s, Okumura exhorted Nisei men and women to exercise their voting rights to the fullest. Yet, while urging them to register, vote, and affiliate with a political party, he also emphasized that the Nisei should eschew racial bloc voting. Referring to some anti-Japanese propagandists' claim that numerically dominant Japanese Americans were conspiring to take over Hawai'i's body politic, Okumura contended that Nisei should be wary of stirring up mainstream suspicion. Though not discouraging the Nisei to vote for a Japanese American candidate, he stated

Lucas, Mrs. Miss Mary Catton, Miss Nell Findley, Miss Edna Reese, Miss Frances Lawrence, Miss Amy Mac Owen, Miss Constance Barnes, Miss Mabel Smythe, as well as Tusu Kishimoto, the director of Okumura girls home, Nisei girls' dormitory run by Takie Okumura. See the *Honolulu Advertiser*, June 10, 1934.

that they should avoid voting for a candidate *merely* on the basis of Japanese ancestry or to suit narrow Japanese interests if the candidate was likely to neglect the overall welfare of society. He also urged the Nisei to participate actively in the existing political parties. In his vision, the Nisei should enter the established political system and gradually claim prominent positions while maintaining amicable relations with white Americans who already possessed political power—an idea that James Hamada placed at the core of his novel/political manifesto for his fellow Nisei.

The full appreciation of the political ideology, espoused by the likes of Okumura and advanced by Hamada, requires an examination of its historical context. As early as 1887, the “Japanese suffrage” question had emerged in the Hawaiian monarchy. Protected by a bilateral treaty with Japan, Japanese suffrage, including the rights to vote and stand for Parliament, was guaranteed in the monarchy until proclamation of the “Bayonet Constitution” of 1887, a symbol of the whites’ determination to control Hawai‘i’s political and economic processes. Influenced by anti-Chinese agitation on the U.S. mainland during the decade, fear of the “Yellow Peril” arose among the *haole* elite, leading to insertion of a clause in the Bayonet Constitution which disqualified Asian residents in the islands from suffrage.⁸⁸ While it was initially designed to maximize *haole* influence and minimize that of native peoples by setting up wealth-based qualifications for voting, the law was also intended to keep the Japanese at bay, since they were regarded as a possible threat to elite white control due to their increasing

⁸⁸ Kihara, *Hawai Nihonjinshi*, 443; Daws, *Shoal of Time*, 252.

population and economic power allegedly backed by their native country.⁸⁹ In other words, the promulgation of the 1887 constitution had a dual result: to native Hawaiians, it signaled the beginning of the end of their monarchy and, hence, autonomy, while to Japanese immigrants it meant exclusion from the formal political process and citizenship.

Indignant about this unfair treatment, more than 450 Issei in Hilo and Honolulu formed a Japanese association and submitted a petition to Tokyo in 1893 requesting the home government to protest denial of their suffrage rights, which the Japanese Foreign Minister turned down flatly. Successive ministers only made lukewarm negotiations with the Hawai'i government and soon discontinued any effort to reverse the law.⁹⁰ Upon subsequent annexation to the United States in 1898, Hawai'i adopted U.S. federal laws which denied naturalization of Asian immigrants. While a small number of Issei, primarily those who served in the U.S. army during World War I, obtained citizenship, nearly all Japanese immigrants remained disenfranchised aliens.⁹¹

Excluded from Hawaiian legislature, the Issei increasingly placed their hopes on their Hawai'i-born children. As American citizens, they could fight against institutionalized discrimination against the Japanese in the 1920s. The Nisei were expected to take full advantage of their suffrage to empower the local Japanese community through legislative activities. Some Issei leaders also claimed that if a large

⁸⁹ Under the constitution of 1887, only Native Hawaiians and 'residents' of American or European parentage who had an income of six hundred dollars a year or taxable property worth three thousand dollars were allowed to vote. *Ibid*, 251-252.

⁹⁰ Kihara, 442-448.

⁹¹ Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 82.

number of Nisei registered to vote, non-Japanese political candidates would act in favor of Japanese American interests in return for electoral support. Therefore, many Issei regarded Nisei participation in the formal political process as key to elevating local Japanese socioeconomic status.

To meet Issei expectations, some senior Nisei began to participate in territorial politics during the 1920s. In 1922, James Hamada was in fact the first Japanese American candidate to run for office. Although his effort failed, the Nisei leader obtained 267 out of a total 2,050 votes cast on Kaua'i, where he sought a Republican seat in the Territorial House of Representatives. His chances of winning had been remote, since his name was not put on either the chief or oppositional slate. Quite a few Japanese Americans voted for him anyway, however, because he was the first Hawai'i-born Nisei to run for office. They wanted to see how a Japanese American would conduct himself as a territorial legislator. Other Japanese voters did not support him, labeling him an "outsider," because Honolulu-educated Hamada had not stayed in Kaua'i during the past ten years before the election.⁹²

Importantly, a significant number of non-Japanese lodged electoral support. The votes Hamada obtained surpassed 204, the number of all registered Japanese American voters on Kaua'i. In the three most populated precincts on the island, Lihue, Kapa'a, and Waimea, 197 votes were cast for Hamada. Of these, 91 (46 percent) were from non-Japanese voters.⁹³ A Military Intelligence Report suggests a reason why his popularity

⁹² *Factors Bearing on the Japanese Situation in Relation to Our Military Problem*, ca. 1923, Record Group 165, Box 553, 1766-S-131, 26-27.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

went beyond the bounds of his race: "Hamada worked hard in his efforts to be elected, *spoke quite well and from an American standpoint*, and a number of people were favorably impressed by his speeches [emphasis mine]."⁹⁴ Rather than resorting to provincialism or Japanese nationalism, he strove to reach a larger society using "Americanism" as a common ground for relating to non-Japanese.⁹⁵ Like Okumura, he thought that a Nisei politician should gain support and sympathy from both Japanese and non-Japanese and become a leader of the society of Hawai'i as a whole.⁹⁶

The first political "success" of Nisei came in 1930 with the election of three Japanese candidates. Noboru Miyake (the County Board of Supervisors of Kaua'i) and Andy Masayoshi Yamashiro of O'ahu and Tasaku Oka of Hawai'i (the Territorial House of Representatives) became the first Japanese Americans to win elected office in the United States. In 1932, twelve Nisei candidates ran; four were elected to the Territorial House and one to the County Board of Maui. Two years later, six out of nineteen Nisei candidates were elected. In 1936, nine out of twenty-four Nisei were successful candidates. In 1938, nine out of twenty-two Nisei candidates won elections, including three in the Territorial House and six in the Boards. In 1940, out of twenty-five Nisei candidates, thirteen were elected. Six candidates were elected to the Territorial House, and another six were to the Boards. In this election, Sanji Abe (Hawai'i) became the first

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Gary Gerstle, *Working-class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 1-15.

⁹⁶ Following Hamada, Thomas Tameichi Sakakibara from the island of Hawai'i stood for a seat in the Territorial House of Representatives in 1926 and 1928; he also failed on both occasions. In 1928, three other Nisei candidates, Leslie S. Nakashima from Kaua'i, Harry Ichiki Kurisaki, and T. Moriyama from O'ahu ran for office, though again each failed to obtain a seat.

Nisei to win a seat on the Territorial Senate, even though it consisted of only fifteen seats in contrast to the thirty seats of the Territorial House. Also, the six Nisei men on the County Boards were all reelected. Nisei now accounted for 14 percent of all elected officials in the Territory, a remarkable jump from 3.2 percent in 1930. Throughout these years, most of the successful candidates were from rural areas, and all but three were Republicans (See Table 3 and Table 4 on pp.269-270).

The Nisei's rapid political advance occurred along with demographic change. The Japanese American population increased from 49,016 in 1920 to 87,7748 in 1929 to 116,584 in 1938. The number of actual Japanese American voters who registered and voted nearly doubled in each territorial election: 1,135 in 1922, 3,092 in 1926, 7,017 in 1930, 13,630 in 1934, and 21,194 in 1938.⁹⁷ Though there were still many Nisei who were not registered to vote throughout the interwar years, the percentage of Japanese Americans among territorial voters increased from 3.5 percent in 1922 to 15.3 percent in 1930 to 26 percent in 1938.

What was nonetheless more significant than a simple change in Nisei demography was the political strategy adopted by most of Nisei politicians. It mitigated the prevailing white fear of a "racial bloc voting" despite the numerical increase of the Japanese. Just as James Hamada advocated and practiced in his pursuit of political integration into U.S. society, these Nisei held racial accommodation as their core platform in affiliating themselves with or getting support from the Republican Party—the party of the *haole*

⁹⁷ *Hawai Nenkan*, 194, 164-68.

Oligarchy in the language of Hawaiian politics at that time.⁹⁸ The majority of the successful Nisei politicians originated from rural areas and understandably relied on the enfranchised populations of plantation communities, where sugar planters held considerable sway over the minds and behavior of the residents, especially those who took the trouble of registering to vote. Like Bill Kane in Hamada's novel, politically-minded Nisei—the kind who enjoyed the blessings of elite whites—had the best chance of getting elected through “accommodation” to the established order. This is precisely what Okumura set up as model behavior for the ideal Nisei citizen who would contribute to constructing peaceful interracial and international relations in Hawai‘i and the Pacific. Based on this ideology, Nisei voting for a Japanese-American candidate was not

⁹⁸ The dual strategy of racial mobilization and interracial conciliation demonstrated by Nisei leaders in Hawai‘i was also adopted by their counterparts on the continental United States. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) has been severely criticized for its “accommodationist” political style, based on its their compliance to the authorities during Japanese Americans evacuations from the west coast during World War II. In *Nisei/Sansei*, Jere Takahashi contended that JACL leaders' approach was pragmatic considering the limits imposed upon them by the racial structure of prewar United States. He stated,

[The ideals of senior Nisei leaders in JACL] reflected much of the dominant ideology espoused by American political, business, and intellectual elites in the pre-World War II period. Mutual cooperation, conciliation, harmony, and economic interdependence, as well as economic progress, gradualism, and optimism for future social relations were central to the Nisei “establishment.” In a correlative sense, these Nisei embraced the prevailing racial and economic order in America and believed that racial advancement would become possible as increased communication and understanding were forged between the races. Given the hegemony of the American cultural order at that time and the limited political and economic resources within the Japanese American community, it is understandable that the more privileged and middle-class-oriented leadership of the Old Guard would adopt this conservative style.

See Takahashi, 82. Several years prior, Hawai‘i-born Nisei leaders had developed this conciliatory approach as a strategy for maximizing the interests of the Japanese in the islands under their particular social, economic, and political circumstances. Beneath their seeming compliance, they fought for racial equality by involving as many local Japanese and white supporters as possible in their projects.

necessarily considered “racial bloc voting,” insofar as it posed no real threat to the socioeconomic stability of Hawai‘i. Although the political behavior of Hawai‘i’s Nisei community was more heterogeneous than the racial accommodation model suggests, it seems to have offered them convenient and surefire access to the formal political process before the 1950s. In the context of restricted minority lives, racial development meant a relentless search for an interstitial “space” where the Nikkei could achieve limited ascent, while leaving white social, political, and economic supremacy intact. This approach was acceptable to the establishment in the name of racial harmony.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation probes the inner activities and actual practices of a segment of Japanese immigrant leaders in Hawai'i as represented by Takie Okumura, Yasutaro Soga, Iga Mori, and Tasuku Harada during the interwar years. These leaders attempted to solve the Nisei Problem, that is, the difficulties purportedly encountered by second-generation Japanese growing up as minority Americans. A series of crucial incidents involving the Nikkei in Hawai'i and on the continental United States in the early 1920s changed Japanese immigrant views of their children's future and led to collective concern over the Nisei Problem.

Several discrete issues involving education, employment, political participation, and marriage were involved in the Nisei Problem, but the overall question was "What should Hawai'i-born Nisei become?" Many Issei believed that the Nisei should bridge Japan and the United States to promote amicable bilateral relations while at the same time becoming an integral part of U.S. society. They envisioned that their children would be accepted as full-fledged American citizens living harmoniously with white Americans, yet maintaining ties to their ancestral land as a part of the diasporic Japanese race. Their focus on raising "ideal" Japanese Americans led to the Nisei Problem becoming a major theme of public discourse among the Nikkei in Hawai'i between the 1920s and the outbreak of the Pacific War.

Okumura, Soga, Mori, and Harada were considered "moderate" in their approach to the Nisei Problem. They established various institutions and programs to address the community concern and led education campaigns assisted by white leaders such as

Atherton, elite Japanese such as Shibusawa, and officials in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. These cooperative Japanese–white American relationships were initially developed to resolve the so-called “Japanese [immigrant] problem” in the Territory of Hawai‘i during the early 1920s. Japanese officials, elite Japanese, elite whites, and Issei leaders built a quadripartite network intended to counter anti-Japanese sentiment intensified by the O‘ahu Sugar Strike and the Japanese language school controversy. They worked together to integrate the Nikkei the American national community although each of the four parties had different reasons for taking part in this effort. Unlike the other three, Issei leaders were mainly concerned about securing a better future for Nikkei as well as maintaining diplomatic relations between their homeland and host country.

Drawing on this interracial and international partnership, Issei leaders went on to institutionalize methods for countering the generational problem. The New Americans Conference spearheaded by Okumura was one such endeavor. At this annual meeting, Okumura spread his vision of ideal Hawai‘i-born Japanese, what he called “New Americans,” to the Nisei. These “New Americans” were expected to possess “the best of Japanese and American characteristics.” To become New Americans, he contended, the Nisei had to be “Americanized” by adopting American ideals, values, manners, and customs, while maintaining some aspects of Japanese culture. Okumura regarded “Americanization” as an amalgamation of the mainstream and ethnic cultures. This differed from the usual meaning of the term amongst white Americans, who expected immigrants to conform completely to the dominant culture until the last vestiges of ethnic culture had disappeared.

Okumura believed that “Americanization” on his terms would enable Nikkei to achieve “overseas Japanese racial development” by establishing a solid economic, social, and political foundation in Hawai‘i. In order to construct a sturdy economic foundation, improving employment opportunities for Nisei was deemed essential. To this end, Okumura propounded the Back-to-the-Farm Movement in the 1920s and 1930s. He believed that small farming was a promising line of work for most Hawai‘i-born Nisei and contended that successful involvement in agricultural enterprises would not only enable Nisei to advance economically in society but also contribute to “Japanese racial development.” In tandem with other Issei leaders, some *haole* leaders, and the Japanese consulate in Honolulu, Okumura saw a degree of success in promoting this program. However, the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 effectively prevented local Nisei from obtaining land or continuing to run their own small farms. Worsening economic conditions in the late 1920s further compelled Okumura to adjust his approach. By the mid-1930s, he had turned from advocating “Back-to-the-Farm” (in which Japanese would work for themselves) to “Back-to-the-Plantation” (continuing to work for the white plantation owners). He nevertheless hoped that the Nisei would eventually win some degree of independence by working on plantations not as simple field laborers but as tenants or subcontractors growing sugarcane on their own.

Many local Japanese did achieve limited “autonomy” by pursuing agricultural employment on the island of Hawai‘i, in congruence with Okumura’s original vision. Some engaged in semi-independent farming and some even owned mills for processing agricultural products, mainly sugar and coffee. They also set up organizations to strengthen their footing in local society. Their endeavors reflected the extent to which

many Issei, especially those in rural areas, held a vision similar to Okumura's. They resorted to "racial solidification" to develop a support system which enabled them to launch profitable enterprises in a society dominated by elite *haole*.

Political participation was another crucial aspect of Nikkei social engineering. The Issei were disenfranchised as "aliens ineligible for citizenship" by the 1922 *Ozawa v. US* decision. They placed their hope on their children who, as native-born citizens, could theoretically fight against institutionalized discrimination by participating in the formal political process. Many "moderate" Issei urged the Nisei to become a cohesive political group which would effectively cooperate with leading *haoles*. Many Issei believed that developing Nisei leadership went hand in hand with constructing an interracial partnership. In the opinion of Issei such as Okumura, working with the white mainstream, rather than trying to overpower it, was key to achieving the ultimate goal of racial development in Hawai'i. During the 1930s, many senior Nisei leaders appropriated this political ideology of simultaneous racial mobilization and accommodation, as formulated by Okumura and like-minded Issei in the previous decade.

After Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, racial accommodation became an even more effective strategy. The Nikkei had to survive anti-Japanese sentiment and have their Japanese American identity accepted by mainstream white society.¹ In February 1942, core members of the Hawaiian Japanese Civic Association of

¹ Immediately after the war broke out, rumor had it that the Nikkei were secretly collaborating with Imperial Japan. Identified with the enemy, the Nikkei population became subject to intense suspicion, wild accusations, and discriminatory treatment during the ensuing months. Nonetheless, Hawai'i's 156,000 Japanese did not go through the mass incarceration as was the case for their counterparts on the west coast. The only targets of prolonged detention were 1,875 individuals that the authorities considered especially dangerous. These included Issei community leaders, Japanese language teachers, and Buddhist priests. The majority of them were sent to

Honolulu established the Emergency Service Committee (ESC) of O‘ahu to serve as an intermediary between the military and the Nikkei community under martial law.² To improve white perceptions of the Nikkei, the ESC encouraged civilian members of the ethnic community to buy war bonds and hold blood drives. Men also volunteered for the all-Nisei 442nd Regimental Combat Team as well as the 100th Infantry Battalion. Their military exploits in the European theater led to the 442nd being acclaimed “the most decorated unit” of its size and length of service in U.S. military history.³ Just like Bill

special Justice Department internment camps on the U.S. mainland. Jonathan Y. Okamura, “Race Relations in Hawai‘i during World War II: The Non-internment of Japanese Americans,” *Amerasia Journal* 26, no.2 (2000): 117.

² Similar organizations were also established on the islands of Kaua‘i, Maui, Lana‘i, and Hawai‘i. See Tom Coffman, *The Island Edge of America: A Political History of Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003), 69.

³ Other activities also helped assuage suspicion about the Nikkei. In February 1942, male Nisei students at the University of Hawai‘i formed the 34th Combat Engineers Auxiliary, commonly known as the Varsity Victory Volunteers (VVV). They provided labor for war-time programs, including digging ditches, building warehouses, and constructing roads. Later, in the fall of the same year, thousands of Nisei men volunteered when the U.S. military decided to recruit them and set up the 100th Infantry Battalion. Local Nisei men later served in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team with mainland Nisei. The 100th Battalion then merged with the 442nd RCT. Hawai‘i-born Nisei also worked for the Military Intelligence Service as interpreters and translators. Their “sacrifices” were seen as a manifestation of “undivided loyalty,” and won Japanese Americans more validity in the eyes of the rest of U.S. society. For further details of the VVV, see Odo, *No Sword to Bury*. Regarding Nisei soldiers during World War II, see Hawaii Nikkei History Editorial Board, *Japanese Eyes American Heart: Personal Reflections of Hawaii’s World War II Nisei Soldiers* (Honolulu: Tendai Educational Foundation, 1998); Masayo Duus, *Unlikely Liberators: The Men of the 100th and the 442nd* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1987); Chester Tanaka, *Go for Broke: A Pictorial History of the Japanese American 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team* (Richmond, Calif.: Go for Broke, Inc., 1981); Thomas D. Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms: The Story of Hawaii’s 100th Battalion* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1954). Also, some scholars contend that the U.S. government used Nisei soldiers’ heroism for publicizing “racial equality in America” in order to counter Imperial Japan’s claim that America was a racist country as represented by the Nikkei’s mass internment. See Murphy, *Ambassadors in Arms*; T. Fujitani, “Go for Broke, the Movie: Japanese American Soldiers in U.S. National, Military, and Racial Discourses,” ed. by T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama, *Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s)* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 239-266.

Kane in James T. Hamada's *Don't Give Up the Ship*, the Nisei thus proved their patriotic dedication to the United States, which led to their social, economic, and political ascendancy in postwar Hawai'i.⁴

Okumura was delighted by the Nisei demonstration of American patriotism during the war. He believed that his continuous effort to "Americanize" local Japanese had born fruit. Immediately after the war broke out, nearly eighty-year-old Okumura had begun another "educational campaign," paying house calls throughout the Honolulu Nikkei community in an attempt to "convince the Japanese of the importance of throwing their whole lot with America and helping her win the war against Japan."⁵ He appealed to influential whites to support his contention that the Nikkei were not a potential enemy but harmless elements in U.S. society. On May 1, 1944 he wrote to General Delos C. Emmons, the Hawaiian Department Commander, stressing that the Nikkei should be culturally subjugated entirely to mainstream America in order to wipe out any and all suspicion on them. It reads:

Japanese must show that they are assimilable. . . . We must change thoroughly from within, and show such unconscious change in our ways

⁴ Many Nisei emerged as major players in the postwar political scene. Taking advantage of the G.I. Bill of Rights, many Nisei veterans obtained higher education at prestigious universities and graduate schools on the U.S. mainland. Returning to Hawai'i, some of them joined hands with John A. Burns, a former police chief and leading Democrat, to pose a serious threat to the Republican oligarchy. One of these Nisei was future U.S. senator Spark M. Matsunaga, a graduate of the Okumura Home. In the so-called Revolution of 1954, the Democrats won a majority of the seats in the Territorial legislature; the Nisei filled half these seats. Five years later, Hawai'i was granted statehood under the leadership of Burns and Nisei politicians. For further details of Nisei political advancement in the postwar years, see Coffman, *The Island Edge of America*; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961), 316-317.

⁵ Takie Okumura, "Memo on Campaign among Japanese," May 1, 1944, Makiki Christian Church Archives, Box 39/3. Also, see a letter sent from Major Truman R. Young to Okumura on behalf of Emmons, May 15, 1944, Makiki Christian Church Archives, Box 39/3.

of thinking and acting. We must understand the life and spirit of America, and not only respect but obey them, absolutely and sincerely, and be willing and ready to sacrifice all things that conflict with them.⁶

This promotion of intense Americanism combined with the willingness to suppress the Japanese racial identity was an inevitable consequence of the war. Many Nikkei dissociated themselves from Japan during this time. Although Okumura emphasized American culture and nationalism to such a degree, however, he had not become a pure “Americanizer.” On the contrary, throughout the war years, he held on to a transnational discourse about the Japanese race in his Japanese language essays. For example, in the Fall 1945 issue of *Rakuen Ochiba*, a Japanese-language newsletter distributed to his church members, Okumura referred to a diasporic racial identity:

Following a peaceful surrender, the Japanese nation is experiencing the second restoration and reconstruction. We overseas compatriots, however, should stay where are [rather than going back to Japan] and work to achieve overseas Japanese racial development. . . . To be assimilated into America and contribute to that nation is essential to the worldwide expansion of the Japanese race.⁷

As this indicates, he retained a transnational belief in Japanese racial development despite the war. The Japanese American public, mostly Nisei, no longer appreciated this bicultural discourse, however. Nisei actively shifted from the transnational sphere to the domestic American sphere in the attempt to claim an identity as “100% Americans.” As his transnational idea lost support from the local Japanese community, his influence waned and his public role as a producer of ethnic leadership ended with the conclusion of the war.

⁶ Okumura, “Memo on Campaign among Japanese.”

⁷ Takie Okumura, *Rakuen Ochiba*, Vol. 6, 1945, 10. This issue came out sometime between August 1945 and October 1945.

Because Okumura over-emphasized “Americanization” as a discursive strategy in his English writings, he has been considered an “accommodationist” by ensuing generations of Japanese Americans unaware of the “double talk” found in his Japanese works. Okumura and his fellow “moderate” Issei deserve greater understanding. Their dilemmas, ambiguities, and struggles should be appreciated in the context of the times. Issei leaders adopted racial mobilization and accommodation as the most pragmatic approach to empowering Hawai‘i’s Nikkei community and, in their words, achieving “Japanese racial development.” Post-1960s forms of protest and resistance could hardly have been imagined in earlier decades. Okumura and his associates sought cooperation with white elites not out of subservience or blind compliance, but because they believed it would maximize local Japanese interests within the constraints faced in Hawai‘i. To fully understand the multi-layered reality of Nikkei history in Hawai‘i, it is crucial to look at the thinking and practices of historical actors within the limitations of the social structures and political and economic contexts of the time. This study has provided a more transnational and balanced perspective in shedding light on the complexities of local Japanese history through the examples of Okumura, his Issei associates, and Nisei allies.

TABLE 1.
Average Sugar Price Per Year 1918-1937 (Cents/Pound)

| | | | | | | |
|-------|--------|--------|----------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Year | 1918 | 1919 | 1920 | 1921 | 1922 | 1923 |
| Price | 6.0647 | 7.2800 | 13.1796 | 4.7643 | 4.6482 | 7.0231 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1924 | 1925 | 1926 | 1927 | 1928 | 1929 | 1930 |
| 5.9301 | 4.3278 | 4.3311 | 4.7185 | 4.2065 | 3.7637 | 3.3661 |

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 |
| 3.3338 | 2.9307 | 3.2210 | 2.9957 | 3.2329 | 3.5976 | 3.4493 |

Source: *Hawaii Nenkan* 1939, 106-107.

TABLE 2.
Nisei Workers (NW) on the Sugar Plantations in Hawai'i 1929-1938

| Year | 1929 | 1930 | 1931 | 1932 | 1933 | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Workers | 49,579 | 49,532 | 49,134 | 49,947 | 48,072 | 46,255 | 43,502 | 42,267 | 40,626 | 39,766 |
| Nisei Workers | 9,191 | 8,956 | 9,062 | 9,396 | 10,217 | 10,717 | 10,770 | 10,832 | 11,435 | 11,245 |
| Percent of NW | 19 % | 18 % | 18% | 19% | 21% | 23% | 25% | 26% | 28% | 28% |

Source: Hawai Nenkan 1940, 103-104.

TABLE 3.
Japanese Americans (JA) in Territorial Elections 1922-1940

| Year | Candidates | Elected | Percent of JA Elective Officials a | Percent of JA Registered Voters | Officers: B.S.b | Officers: H.R.c | Officers of S.d | Parties: Republican | Parties: Democrat |
|------|------------|---------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1922 | 1 | - | - | 3.5 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| 1924 | - | - | - | 4.9 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 1926 | 1 | - | - | 7.7 | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| 1928 | 4 | - | - | 10.5 | - | - | - | 4 | - |
| 1930 | 5 | 3 | 3.2 | 15.3 | 1 | 2 | - | 2 | 1 |
| 1932 | 11 | 5 | 5.3 | 17.7 | 1 | 2 | - | 4 | 1 |
| 1934 | 19 | 6 | 6.5 | 21.5 | 4 | 2 | - | 6 | - |
| 1936 | 24 | 9 | 9.7 | 24.9 | 6 | 3 | - | 7 | 2 |
| 1938 | 22 | 9 | 9.7 | 26.3 | 6 | 3 | - | 7 | 2 |
| 1940 | 25 | 13 | 14.0 | 31.0 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 11 | 2 |

Source: Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 368; *Hawai Nenkan 1939*, 60-61; *Hawai Nenkan 1940*, 73-74; *Hawai Nenkan 1941*, 65; Andrew Lind, *Hawaii's People*, 93.

a. There were ninety-three elective officials in the Territory of Hawai'i, including the Delegate to Congress, during the 1930s.

b. Board of Supervisors

c. House of Representatives

d. Senate

TABLE 4.
Elected Japanese American Officials in the Territory of Hawai'i 1930-1940

| Year | House of Representatives | Board of Supervisors |
|------|--|--|
| 1930 | Tasaku Oka (R: Hawai'i) Andy Masayoshi Yamashiro (D: Oahu) | Noboru Miyake (R: Kauai) |
| 1932 | Thomas Tomoichi Ouye (R: Kauai) Thomas Tameichi Sakakibara (R: Hawai'i) Shunzo Ushiroda (R: Hawai'i) Andy Masayoshi Yamashiro (D: Oahu) | Harry Kan'ichi Tatekawa (R: Maui) |
| 1934 | Juichi Doi (R: Hawai'i) Thomas Tameichi Sakakibara (R: Hawai'i) | Toshio Ando (R: Maui) Sakae Kamei (R: Kauai) Noboru Miyake (R: Kauai) Masaru Tashiro (R: Kauai) |
| 1936 | George Mamoru Eguchi (R: Oahu) Thomas Tomoichi Ouye (R: Kauai) Thomas Tameichi Sakakibara (R: Hawai'i) | Toshio Anzai (R: Maui) Juichi Doi (R: Hawai'i) Yutaka Hamamoto (R: Kauai) Noboru Miyake (R: Kauai) Sakuichi Sakai (D: Hawai'i) George K. Watase (D: Kauai) |
| 1938 | George Mamoru Eguchi (R: Oahu) Albert Kazuo Kimura (R: Hawai'i) Thomas Tomoichi Ouye (R: Kauai) | Toshio Anzai (R: Maui) Yutaka Hamamoto (R: Kauai) Noboru Miyake (R: Kauai) Sakuichi Sakai (D: Hawai'i) Takeshi Ishii (R: Hawai'i) George K. Watase (D: Kauai) |
| 1940 | Sanji Abe (R: Hawai'i) Juichi Doi (R: Hawai'i) George Mamoru Eguchi (R: Oahu) Tetsuo Kuramoto (R: Hawai'i) Yuichi Otomo (R: Kauai) Yukichi Otsuka (R: Kauai) Thomas Tameichi Sakakibara (R: Hawai'i) | Toshio Anzai (R: Maui) Yutaka Hamamoto (R: Kauai) Noboru Miyake (R: Kauai) Sakuichi Sakai (D: Hawai'i) Takeshi Ishii (R: Hawai'i) George K. Watase (D: Kauai) |

Source: Wakukawa, *A History of the Japanese People in Hawaii*, 368; *Hawai Nenkan 1939*, 60-61; *Hawai Nenkan 1940*, 73-74; *Hawai Nenkan 1941*, 65.

(R) Republican
(D) Democratic

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