

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: NISEI SAMURAI: CULTURE AND AGENCY IN
THREE JAPANESE AMERICAN LIVES

Toyoshi Kase, Doctor of Philosophy, 2005

Dissertation directed by: Professor Barbara Finkelstein
Education Policy and Leadership, College of Education

This dissertation, based upon interviews and representation, explores three lives of second generation Japanese Americans and reveals the existence of real cultural complexities among them as well as some of the diverse forms that cross-cultural adaptation might take. Their lives provide a window through which to explore processes of cross-cultural adaptation. These nisei were born and raised on U.S. soil, grew up in a deeply discriminatory society, lived through intractable war, and were deeply and simultaneously connected to Japanese traditions at home and the larger American society.

In their experiences, these three lives reveal the continuing interplay of dual cultures but, at the same time, reveal the variety of its forms. All three were invariably steeped in the past through issei parents, actively engaged in an assessment of the present, and inspiringly cast toward the future. In their

histories, they were plunged into formidable reality where they acted on the present now by transforming the past as meaningfully usable to their current concern for future imperatives.

Throughout this research I will employ one basic paradigm as I explore the interactive relationship between humans and society—human agents as actors and actresses over social demands and forces. The assumption of human agency does not lead to the conclusion that the history of Japanese Americans is a great success story in the face of adversity. It does not portray people as powerless victims of a harsh environment. Rather, this is a study of Japanese American development that pays close attention to the lived human experiences of these nisei samurai moving toward new opportunities and challenges.

The ultimate power to determine one's own meaning of being relies upon humans as agents, notwithstanding the power of unalterable circumstances. People are not mindless beings whose actions and reaction have no meaning or bearing on the capacity of renewal. I, then, draw on an anthropological notion of "bricolage" to re-visit their experiences. These nisei of bricolage read or used—or re-read and re-used—a debilitating cultural situation, assigning to it their own meaning and consuming it to their own sense-making.

NISEI SAMURAI:
CULTURE AND AGENCY IN THREE JAPANESE AMERICAN LIVES

by

Toyoshi Kase

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Barbara Finkelstein, Director
Professor John Caughey
Professor Gordon Kelly
Professor Jing Lin, Dean's Representative
Professor Myron Lounsbury

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INTRODUCTION

CROSS-CULTURAL AGENCY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the lives of three second generation Japanese Americans, or nisei, and reveal their cross-cultural adaptations as they were experienced and constructed. Their parents, or issei, emigrated from Japan and their families established permanent residence in the United States.¹ As the children of foreign nationals, the lives of these three nisei—Grace Yuri Kokura,² Joseph Ichiuji, and Mike Masaru Masaoka—provide a window through

¹For the background of well-established loan terms in English from Japanese, issei (the first generation) and nisei (the second generation), see Sylvia Junko Yanagisako *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship among Japanese Americans* (California: Stanford University Press, 1985). She traces these terms back to a semi-classic work by Dorothy Swaine Thomas, “Some Social Aspects of Japanese-American Demography,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 94, 1950. Yanagisako quotes Thomas as saying that “Japanese Americans are one of those rare populations in which, for historical reasons, generations defined in term of kinship coincide with cohorts defined in terms of birth date. The political history that shaped the character of Japanese immigration to the United States created relatively discrete, nonoverlapping generations” (Thomas, 1950) p. 5. Yanagisako points out that Japanese Americans themselves use these terms: “That Japanese Americans themselves label these generations—the first Issei, the second Nisei, the third Sansei—and attribute to them different cultural and social characters as well as historical experience explains the convention of generational comparisons that pervades studies of Japanese Americans...” (6). This way of counting generations designates as the first generation the immigrants, born in Japan, as opposed to their children, born in the United States. In *Issei and Nisei: The Internment Years* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967) Daisuke Kitagawa, a nisei author, notes that “In the normal American usage of the term, the Nisei is in reality the first-generation American of Japanese descent. The Japanese, however, looked at it from the standpoint of Japan and called the immigrants ‘first-generation Japanese’ and their children ‘second-generation’” (20).

²This narrator requested anonymity, thus this is not her real name.

which to explore processes of cross-cultural adaptation. Specifically, this study focuses on the ways in which three nisei negotiated Japanese and U.S. cultural forms at home, in school, in the community, and in society.³ Each of their parents, the issei, arrived in the United States during the Progressive era as part of a wave of immigration unique to that period of time.⁴ The second generation was born and raised on U.S. soil, and its members were deeply and simultaneously connected to Japanese traditions at home on the one hand and the larger American society on the other. They grew up in a deeply discriminatory society and lived through conditions of intractable war, which contributed immensely to forming in nisei distinctive selfhoods in their later lives. Through an inter- and cross-generational exploration of the ways in which nisei, an invariably bicultural generation, adapted to the forces of political, economic, educational, social, and cultural circumstances, it is possible to learn how this group of American-born ethnics managed the cross-pressures of being Americans of Japanese ancestry as well as the acculturative stress between Japanese culture at home and American culture around them.

Starting with the nisei's parental cultural specifics in Japan, brought with the issei to the U.S. as cultural values, in turn producing an enormous amount of

³As is easily imagined, nisei underwent two value orientations. Bill Hosokawa, a nisei author who writes autobiographically about his experiences, succinctly argues in *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965): "At home he [Hosokawa] learned the virtues of hard work, honesty, humility, obedience, loyalty, respect for parents and love of learning. . . . By the time he entered high school, the boy had developed a fierce love for the United States, its history and traditions and all it stood for" (xvi).

⁴See "Some Social Aspects of Japanese-American Demography," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 94, 1950, pp. 459-60.

cultural “habits of heart, mind, and association”⁵ among the successive nisei generation, this research highlights the whole array of ongoing second generation Japanese Americans’ cross-cultural conflicts and dilemmas, struggles and coalitions, as well as adaptations and transformations in America. Within this trajectory of Japanese American experiences, this paper raises three fundamental questions: What forms of Japanese culture did the nisei’s parents, the first generation, bring with them when they began to immigrate in the latter half of the 19th century? How did the American-born second generation grow under the influence of this parental culture and shape Japanese American consciousness through their responses to the traditional culture of their parents? What transformations, if any, of cultural thought and ideology were made over time and space in the Japanese American psyche?

The exploration of cross-cultural experiences in this paper focuses on the processes of cultural transmission and transformation. The first generation, the issei, began leaving Japan in the latter decades of the nineteenth century to seek opportunities mainly in California and almost all emigrated between 1868 and 1924.⁶ The nisei, or second generation, born in the United States, remained on

⁵In cross-cultural consideration Barbara Finkelstein not infrequently uses this trilogy of her own to denote invariable cultural forces working simultaneously in psychological, philosophical, and sociological dimensions. See, for example, Barbara Finkelstein, “Educating Strangers: A Comparison of Cultural Education Policies and Practices in Japan and the U.S.” (Osaka, Japan: Osaka University Study of Socialization and Multicultural Education Policies and Practices, 1996) p. 12.

⁶It is easy to understand why Japanese immigration took place during this particular period of the Meiji Era (1868-1912). In “The Japanese Immigration,” *L & C* (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003), Toyoshi Kase, building on the work of Frank Chuman, Bill Hosokawa, and Makoto Tsuruki, maintains, “It was not until the Meiji Era that Japan opened the country to the outside world. In fact, Meiji culture

the West Coast as U.S. citizens and, as might be expected, had to adapt Japanese American cultural norms to ever-evolving conditions—protectionist policies in the United States and increasingly draconian attempts to organize exclusion policies and segregate one race from another. During World War II, they experienced new forms of cultural assault as they were stripped of property without the due process of law and forced to enter concentration camps. By focusing on these challenging family experiences—especially on wartime experiences—as revealed through the eyes of three second generation Japanese Americans, this study traces Japanese traditional norms and values and explores the ways in which the Japanese cultural legacy might have affected the nisei generation and, in turn, might have

was born upon the demise of 250 years of isolation imposed by the feudal government [Shogunate], one of the foreign policies of which was to prevent Japanese from traveling abroad, to say nothing of emigration to foreign countries” (16). For the official termination of immigration, Kase discusses several provocative incidents of 1924. One was the responses of the Japanese and U.S. ambassadors to the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 (the Reed-Johnson Act) which included a racial ineligibility clause that prevented Japanese from immigrating to the U.S. He points up, “Yamato Ichihashi’s *Japanese in the United States* (California: Stanford University Press, 1932) also reveals what happened to Ambassador Hanihara: he resigned his ambassadorship and became an ordinary citizen. Ichihashi describes Hanihara’s absolute silence on the subject of the Immigration Act for the following six years—a traditional samurai characteristic of self-control, a common legacy of Meiji ethos. Ichihashi also tells of Hanihara’s American counterpart, Woods, the American Ambassador in Tokyo. Woods also resigned his ambassadorship. When he left Japan, he criticized the American government’s decision concerning the ineligibility clause. His belief was that “‘the Japanese government would be willing to agree to almost any form of restrictive treaty, but the exclusion provision in the immigration bill has struck a blow to their national pride’ (Ichihashi, 311), according to *The New York Times*, April 19, 1924...” (39). See Toyoshi Kase, “Japanese Immigration,” *L & C*, Vol. 1 (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003) pp. 37-43. See also Frank Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese Americans* (California: Publisher’s Inc., 1976); Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America: A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: Quill, 1982), and Makoto Tsuruki, *Nikkei Amerikajin* [Japanese Americans] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1976).

been transformed by the Japanese American experience.

CONTRIBUTION

This study parallels the field of American Studies—more deservedly called American Culture Studies—because the focus of my proposed research is on culture study and the pursuit of diversity in American culture. Cultural diversity is articulated all the more illuminatingly through the utilization of a cross-culturally comparative perspective. In addition, the paradigm I emphasize in this paper is the human agency model which requires effective ethnographic research. Ethnography in American Studies is increasingly used to interpret the diverse American society. In “The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theory and Methods for American Culture Studies,” John Caughey affirms the expanding growth of ethnographic fieldwork: “Furthermore, in American Studies, the fieldwork approach is gaining increasing acceptance as an important supplement to traditional historical and literary methods. This trend is exemplified by the current research of American scholars and by the presence of fieldwork courses within American Studies programs.”⁷

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the past decades an enormous amount of literature has been published on the subject of Japanese American culture and history. However, for the most part, the perspectives have been confined to either self-congratulatory success stories on

⁷John Caughey, “The Ethnography of Everyday Life: Theory and Methods for American Culture Studies,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 3, 1982, pp. 222-223.

the one hand, or tales of debilitating victimization on the other.⁸ A common deficiency of this literature resides in the reluctance of historians to explore the ongoing experience of people as they made sense and meaning out of what they were experiencing. The corpus of literature has relegated Japanese American lived experience to the backstage of history, rather than the foreground, assigning them a passive role in the construction of their own history. A few departments in American Studies in the U.S. include the history of immigration over the Pacific. Even fewer have focused on the human dimension of the Japanese American experience or properly integrated Japanese American voices into scholarship.⁹ Historians have, at best, attempted to reveal what happened outside and not inside the minds of Japanese Americans.

The literature review that follows explores the ways in which various scholars have integrated or failed to integrate Japanese American cultural perspectives into their research. My basic criterion for creating the literature review, then, revolves around the ways in which historians have portrayed “human as agent”¹⁰ as they

⁸For authorial positioning on these perspectives, see the book critiques later in this section.

⁹The section on Graduate Programs in *Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, 2003*, published annually by Peterson’s, a division of Thomson Learning, Inc., lists an extremely small number of faculty in American Studies pursuing this research.

¹⁰In her article “‘Revealing Human Agency’ in Writing Educational Biography,” *Explorations in Qualitative Research*, 1998, Barbara Finkelstein uses biography to “‘overhaul’ mythic construction: sense-making myths that reveal historical developments and processes of social change...while muting, distorting, oversimplifying and obscuring both human agency and historical processes” (58). She maintains that some of the myths “serve as the greatest nonsense makers, cultivating stereotypes, overstating the force of economic, political, psychological, and cultural circumstance, and detaching historical processes from human doing” (58). In another article, “Education Historians

formulated the history of Japanese Americans and whether or not these people are to be rightly understood as actors and actresses¹¹ in ongoing cross-cultural human encounters free of the author's pre-determined perspectives.¹²

The efficacy of this paradigmatic concept of "human agency," then, grows out of the understanding of Japanese American inner sensibility and sensitivity in the ongoing cross-cultural process of history. Because the literature only rarely focuses on human agency, the book critiques in this paper review how such a human arena is treated as related to the experience of real people seen in cross-cultural interactions in Japanese American history. The following is a brief literature review that examines how six scholars have succeeded or failed in

as Myth Makers," *Review of Research in Education*, 1992, she examines the perspectives of ethnic history within the framework of either success story myth or victimization myth in which minorities are shown "only as passive, helpless victims of society" (4) thereby blurring their roles "as active participants in a social process" (4). Additionally, in her earlier article "Re-imagining Educational Reform: Public Schools and the Nurture of Consciousness," *Educational Studies*, 1983, she criticizes "people-myopia" (104) in the corpus of scholarship of history writing, from which I gain insight into this paradigm of humans as agents. Along this line, Harold Silver in "Zeal as a Historical Process," *History of Education*, 1986, notes that "Finkelstein's work in general is an attack on aspects of historical silence" (302). For more details see the literature review by Toyoshi Kase on "Re-imagining Educational Reform" in "Human Agency in Comparative Studies of Language and Culture," *L & C* (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003) p. 46.

¹¹Gordon Kelly asserts man's active engagement to social processes when he says that "he is rightly understood to be the author of himself" in Gordon Kelly, "The Social Construction of Reality: Implications for Future Directions in American Studies," *Prospects*, Vol. 8, 1974, p. 53.

¹²In my case, because of my cultural, racial, and linguistic background as a native Japanese, my own perspective as a researcher might be different from that of a U.S. researcher. Presumably this background offers some methodological advantages in terms of accessibility and approachability to the Japanese American community. This dual membership role of mine assures intercultural participation and critical engagement, helping me to probe deeply into the cultural subtleties and complexities of Japanese American history.

exploring this paradigm of human concept in Japanese Americans.

The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans by Frank F. Chuman, 1976.

This book offers a comprehensive historical development of Japanese Americans beginning in 1869, when some of the earliest immigration took place, through 1965, the year the U.S. president eliminated race-related matters in immigration. This research is comprehensive in that it is not confined to legal issues, but rather deals mainly with the issei's and nisei's pre- and post-immigrant life and culture. Probably because of the author's own background as nisei, Chuman takes on the daunting task of describing a whole array of lives and experiences of his people beyond legal matters. In fact, he himself came to realize his research "was of a considerably larger magnitude than anticipated.... It was decided then that four separate basic accounts would be necessary: a 'definitive' history, a three-generation sociological history, an agricultural history, a legal history" (ix).

This overall and comprehensive interpretation of the diachronic development of Japanese American life and culture is inclined toward the great odyssey story played out in the two nations. As the title of the book implies, Chuman's writing is grounded in theoretical reductionism in which he pays considerable attention to the cultural property of resilience, symbolized by bamboo, in response to economic, political, and social pressures. The author's history of Japanese Americans assumes the power of cultural resilience in the face of hardship, a trait inherited from their Japanese ancestors, which produced the success stories of both

issei and nisei men and women. Similarly, a retired Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court wrote the preface to the book in which he endorses Chuman's background and position: "This is history that needed to be written. It is a book done from the perspective of a Japanese American, with his own observations, interpretations, and commentary upon the tragedy of racial discrimination and the dignity of those who endured it" (i).

Nisei: The Quiet Americans by Bill Hosokawa, 1969.

This is an autobiographic book focused exclusively on the nisei's life written by a nisei author, Bill Hosokawa, who defends the socialization process of how and why the nisei came to be called the quiet Americans. Reflecting on his own experience, Hosokawa contrasts the inescapable dual aspects of the nisei's inner life, stating:

The result [of the issei's life] for the Nisei was a world that was both secure and confining, comfortable and frustrating, challenging and stultifying, warm and hostile. In a word, although they rarely had either time or inclination to brood about it, theirs was a confusing life. They learned English in their classes and spoke Japanese at home.... They took peanut butter and jelly sandwiches to school for lunch and for supper shoveled rice into their mouths with chopsticks together with fish or vegetables flavored with soy sauce. (152)

The author defends nisei's "quietness" as originating from a process of struggling in pursuit of identity invariably shaped by others' definitions. Put differently, the dilemma between the identity aspired to from within, namely the

desire to be fully American, and the one attributed from the outside world, namely that they are different, contributed to the psyche of Japanese Americans who lived under a constant societal “gaze.” Hosokawa succeeds in analyzing the nisei’s somewhat distorted yet true inner value system in which quietness came to characterize the disposition of the second generation, a disposition which the author acknowledges he shares. He maintains:

Despite the differences between him [the nisei] and classmates he shared the American dream. And he came to feel, in a way that he seldom articulated, that to be a 100 percent red-blooded American like his heroes, he had to reject his Japanese background. That is not to say he resented his Japanese blood. He accepted that as fact, and with not a little pride while, simultaneously, he nursed a feeling that his ancestral heritage was inferior. (xvi)

Hosokawa continues the discussion by stating that “in class the Nisei youngsters were inclined to be quiet, attentive, seldom volunteered recitations although they did well when called on...” (162).

As shown in other similar quotes, Hosokawa is persistent in his analysis of the developmental formation of nisei’s character, albeit treating it as something unchangeable, something already established by society at large. He wants desperately to tell Americans how the quiet characters of the second generation Japanese Americans have been institutionally constructed through the inescapable negotiations between the Japanese American community and society at large. He wants to declare, if not deplore, the inevitable formation of the reserved and quiet nature of Japanese Americans.

Despite the author's success in exploring the inner psyche of second generation Japanese Americans, he pays little attention to the dynamic dimension of the nisei men and women as they actually lived. He fails to realize that the quietness of Japanese Americans may have been used as a successful strategy to cope with unfavorable circumstances, thus relegating the trajectory of the history of nisei to the backstage of human drama without dramatizing humans as on-going agents.

American in Disguise by Daniel Iwao Okimoto, 1971.

This is another self-identity seeking book based upon the self-reflections of the author. In fact, this is an exclusive pursuit of what was happening inside the minds of Japanese Americans from the perspective of nisei. As a Japanese American, Okimoto was constantly reminded that his racial background was inferior, as defined by the predominant culture, a definition that he found difficult to accept. Looking back on his experiences and his own ambivalent sense of identity, he discovers that his way of dealing with racial prejudice in mainstream American society reflected his "struggles with the conviction that I was an American in disguise, a creature part of, yet somehow detached from, the mainstream of American society" (5). Whenever confronted with situations in which he felt racially threatened, for instance when confronted by racial slurs such as Little Nip or Slant Eyes, his coping strategy was to laugh it off—a passive, if not repressive, tactic.

In his formative years he tried to be as American as possible, presumably like many other nisei, by consciously forgetting his racial background, although that

proved unsuccessful. His Americanization was “doomed to failure, for I [Okimoto] was not after all representative of the central figure of middle-class American mythology, the WASP in all his white-skinned, blue-eyed glory” (6).

Okimoto seems to explain away these attitudes and subsequent behaviors, largely in socio-psychological terms, by tracing them back to the culture of origin.

Okimoto states:

A Japanese was not only expected to personify the Confucian principles of obligation, duty, and respect for authority but he was supposed to practice “enryo” (reserve, restraint) and “gaman” (patience, perseverance). Enryo stresses the need to suppress self-will in the presence of others and often makes a Japanese seem humble and self-effacing. Gaman calls for patience in the face of provocations or crises.... Translated into daily behavior, the first means that a man will impose his will upon others or bother them with personal matters only with the greatest reluctance. The second is seen in the almost Promethean forbearance with which the Japanese suffer in silence rather than release pent-up emotions. (39)

However, his direct experience with the culture of his ancestors when he visited his parents’ family in Japan led him to rethink his culture of origin on its own terms. To the author, the happiness he felt at being anonymous in the racial mainstream of Japan contrasted sharply with his experiences of looking different in the U.S. He took pleasure in “the luxury of being inconspicuous” to the extent that he “forgot what it was like to look foreign” (173). At the same time he was not Japanese despite the physical resemblance. In fact, he denied his identity as a Japanese, and curiously his Americanness rose stronger in himself. He states,

“Although I [Okimoto] may have resembled any other person in Japan, internally I was not, and probably could never be, a Japanese national. The American in me was just too strong to permit any significant degree of personal identification” (173).

Then came, one easily notices, a new identity clash between himself as a Japanese American in the U.S. and himself as a Japanese American in Japan, as well as the old identity struggle in the U.S. between the Americanness of his aspirations and the socially assigned Japaneseness. But through tracing his parents’ history and the uncertainty of the age in which they lived, Okimoto came to affirm the meaning-making and meaning-fulfillment of his father’s choice. After several years in Japan, this new sensitivity resulted in new behavior and he was released from self-pity as well as self-shame. Okimoto was able to identify himself as Japanese American without any apologies for his background: “it was not until I accepted my ethnic heritage that I could reply without hesitation or uneasiness to the question ‘What are you?’—I am Japanese American, not someone in disguise” (188).

This book succeeds in exploring the most important inner dimensions of nisei, albeit through an exclusive focus on one person. It is a careful revelation of the psyche of human agency which the author arrived at after his own lived experiences in the country of his ancestors—his own ethnographic observation and participation. However, the author’s story is tinged with the celebration of his people. He lauds their accomplishments in the face of hardships and, in the end, holds the Japanese Americans up as a model of success over other immigrant minorities in the U.S. He concludes that “it [Japanese American satisfaction] is

based on hard facts, borne out repeatedly by scholarly investigation, and suggested by the proclamation of several sociologists that the history of America's Japanese is a dramatic tale of triumph over adversity, an 'unparalleled' success story in U.S. history" (143).

Masking Selves, Making Subjects: Japanese American Women, Identity, and the Body by Traise Yamamoto, 1999.

Written by a third generation Japanese American, this book examines the often discussed issues of identity and self among Japanese American women. Traise Yamamoto takes this a step further by reexamining identity issues on a subconscious level. Relying on multiple genre of such primary sources as autobiography, fiction, and haiku written by Japanese Americans, both issei and nisei, she has done a textured study of these materials.

By situating Japanese American women's works in the context of history of identity formation of their own and that of the society in which they lived, she attempts to articulate a true self otherwise hidden beneath cultural "masking." Indeed, the core of Yamamoto's book can be found in her chapter entitled "'That other, private self': Masking in Nisei Women's Autobiography." As both the book title and chapter title suggest, the author's main focus is the masking of real self amid the constant "gaze" of an often hostile dominant culture.

Yamamoto acknowledges the contributions of other writers to the concept of masking. She discusses Daniel Okimoto's *American in Disguise* previously reviewed in this paper, and criticizes his assessment of masking because it is perceived as something different by the larger culture. She quotes the following

passage from Okimoto's book:

The Japanese are masters at hiding their true feelings behind expressionless masks. Masks, significantly, are used in several art forms, such as Noh, and are common literary themes. Stoic expressions may be the reason Westerners complain of Oriental inscrutability; seeing only a frozen face it is difficult for one to know what is passing through a Japanese person's mind.... However, behind their masks the Japanese are highly emotional. While nodding and maintaining an impassive front, they may be seething with anger inside. (117)

Yamamoto's critique continues: "While this passage ultimately functions to reiterate and justify stereotypes about the impassive, mask-like and, hence, sneaky Japanese face, it nevertheless points up the necessary distinctions that need to be made between cultural practices and the ways in which those practices are misread and appropriated by dominant white culture" (117).

Yamamoto suggests that the need for masking is based on the dilemma of individualized identity and social identity. She writes:

Already aware of the disjunction between how she sees herself and how she is seen, the Japanese American autobiographer must also come to terms with the necessary disjunction between the "I" who writes and the "I" who is written about. These two selves continually negotiate between themselves across the generic limitations of the autobiographical form, a form traditionally neither defined by marginalized subjects nor defined with them in mind. (102-103)

The author's defining concept that follows is: "Implicit is the sense of a 'true self'

trapped beneath the mask of a Japanese face that continually undermines the subject's attempts to breach the disjunction between self consciousness (consciousness of one's self) and self-consciousness (consciousness of the self through the consciousness of another)" (116-117).

The author explores who decides the identity of Japanese Americans, society or the individual. Japanese Americans are, from the perspective of dominant American culture, cultural constructs in that they are subjected as racial others or exotic others to placement in an appropriate social order. Japanese Americans themselves keep low profiles, trying to protect themselves and avoid social pressures and prejudice against them. By her own acknowledgement, Yamamoto's social model is grounded in Said's representation paradigm: "I am here adopting Edward Said's notion of 'orientalization' as articulated in his much-referenced study *Orientalism*" (266). Looking back at U.S.-Japan related history, she states, "Japan has been consistently 'Japanized,'" (11) an assertion that forms her basic concept for the interpretation of culture and society.

While the nisei employed, for the purpose of self-protection, the traditional Japanese traits of modesty and moderation, one notices an inescapable double-bind: their inner monitoring self exhibiting these traits outwardly versus their real subjectivity deep within their psyche. This split persona was the sociocultural construct through which others saw them in an "exclusionist society," or "*haiseki*" as it is often termed by the second generation. In response to this exclusion, many nisei sought to deny anything Japanese, thereby creating a Japan-loathing among this generation. Yamamoto argues thus in her notes:

To resolve feelings of fragmentation, some Nisei dissociated

from Japanese culture and from any part of themselves they identified as Japanese. A saying within the Nikkei [Americans of Japanese descent] was that Japanese Americans had to become not 100 percent but 200 percent American...conversion being understood as going beyond simply emphasizing “American” and instead emphatically not being “Japanese.” (278)

In *Masking Selves, Making Subjects* Yamamoto contributes to the history of issei and nisei by revealing a deeper inner dimension of the Japanese American psyche. However, she fails to fully articulate her understanding of the mechanism and function of human agency in the Japanese American experience. She states, “Masking foregrounds the complex nature of agency and the careful way in which modes of agency should be understood,” (117) leaving the reader unsatisfied and craving further elaboration of that “complexity.”

Exile Within: The Schooling of Japanese Americans, 1942-1945 by Thomas James, 1987.

In his book Thomas James, a non-Japanese American scholar, describes an array of wartime education efforts done for the nisei, the Japanese American children. Unlike their parents, the children were American citizens under the principle of *jus soli*. Most of the nisei generation were high school students at the time and received in-camp education.

By making an important contribution to a long-neglected area of study of the nisei—the education policy and practice in detention camps—James joins the corps of scholarship on this unique part of second generation Japanese American history. Throughout his book he depicts the education of the Japanese American

children in the most un-educational type of setting. He maintains a detached position by reserving judgement on whether the government policy of relocation was due to wartime necessity and security or a sheer infringement of U.S. citizenship, whether it was a racial or political decision. He focuses, instead, on the education of young nisei as it was organized and as it proceeded in “a strange new community—segregated, excluded, concentrated, controlled” (7).

The problem increases as the nisei students encounter the mixed messages that were conveyed in the camps. James frequently points up the enormous discrepancy between “ideal” teaching and the “grim” reality in the camps, citing the visibility of prison walls from classrooms as an example.

[Teachers were required] to teach the fundamental freedoms upon which our democracy is based in a classroom from whose windows the guard towers were plainly visible. To teachers in the camps, no matter what their own views on Japanese Americans, this contradiction was unavoidable, a fact of life, fully present and imminent in every lesson. The barbed wire fence, the guards standing at attention with their rifles poised....
(52)

The author thus reveals a fundamental contradiction in education from within. The living realities may have influenced the students more forcefully than did the lessons of the community-oriented progressive teachers. The dual influence of democratic principles and prison conditions induced special forms of confusion in the minds of young nisei students. Despite the attempts of education to strip the students of any Japanese loyalty, one teacher recalled an incident when “one of the students had drawn a picture of the Statue of Liberty waving a Japanese Flag in its

hand” (101). The incarcerated nisei children responded to an array of daily discrepancies by making dual commitments to school culture on the one hand and parental culture at home on the other.

Even though James substantially explicates one incongruous element after another in educational institutions, there is one vital area which he leaves untouched: the psyche of the nisei students. The absence in his book of students’ in-depth perspectives blurs the true picture of their inner selves as they responded to the complex situation around them. This is not to say that the author does not take note of the responses of the nisei students to their environment. In fact, he includes materials that suggest the dilemmas that young nisei faced. When they had to decide whether to go to war for the U.S., for instance, a Japanese father pointed up the dual nature of his child’s identity: “[Y]ou are [a] Warrior inheriting Japanese blood.... You will work hard and serve this nation well” (110). The author notes that “Two of five died in battle on the European front” (110).

However, the crucial point is not to reason whether their courage in the face of death reflected a traditional Japanese cultural value or the fear of disapproval of the larger American society or even an attempt, through a conscious demonstration, to clear a misunderstood stigma unduly imposed. What really matters is how the young nisei struggled to reconcile the dual cross-cultural visions that were presented to them by teachers at school and parents at home. Here, the Western tradition of dichotomy prevents the author from appreciating the subtle complexity as to how and why the incarcerated nisei children took conflicting cross-cultural realities to a more understandable level.

The significant point is that the cross-cultural state of mind of the nisei

children was not based upon a confusing dilemma between “two warring cultures” (110) as James assumed in his writing, but rather on a reconciling coordination—a psychological state which the author should have probed. Without it one cannot fully understand such behavioral norms as “Go for Broke” in combat, or the “No!” response to the loyalty oath voiced by many of the “best students” (110) in the internment camps who, in fact, felt strong patriotism toward the U.S.

Exile Within would have been complete if the author had taken more time to document the processes by which young nisei tried to reconcile what would appear to be irreconcilable contradictions. The cultural thoughts and behaviors of the second generation need further cross-cultural scrutiny into the deeper level of psyche and its management in a way that portrays these nisei as human agents who acted out their perceived reality.

Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans (Updated and Revised Version) by Ronald Takaki, 1998.

In this book Ronald Takaki, a Japanese American writer, undertakes a history of all Asian Americans. This voluminous book (592 pages) reveals not only the racial struggles and tragedies of invisible hyphenated Americans—Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Asian Indians, and Philippine Americans—but also the gross nature of the rhetoric used to justify the discrimination. For example, the author exposes President Roosevelt’s opportunism: in the interest of politics, Roosevelt in one year denied Japanese Americans their rights of citizenship by signing the Presidential Executive Order that forced them into internment camps without due process of law, and in the next year called it their

responsibility as citizens to serve the nation. Takaki reveals the president's doublespeak when he writes: "On February 1, 1943, hypocritically ignoring the evacuation order he had signed a year earlier, Roosevelt wrote to Secretary of War, Stimson: 'No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of his citizenship, regardless of ancestry.... Americanism is not, and never was a matter of race or ancestry. Every loyal American citizen should be given the opportunity to serve this country...'" (397).

Takaki concludes that a coping mechanism and management of the desperate nisei finds expression in their response to the double messages, an analysis that echoes James' in *Exile Within*. Takaki quotes a nisei: "Because of my ancestry, run me out of town, and now they want me to volunteer for a suicide squad so I could get killed of this damn democracy. That's going some, for sheer brass!" (398) To the author such behavior—suicidal volunteerism—results from victimization. Both the lives and minds of nisei were thus exploited in such a politically maneuvered history.

Rather than stressing, as did Chuman in *Bamboo People*, how Asian Americans allegedly managed to succeed, Takaki exposes how they were relentlessly cast as victims of circumstance, awash in an array of exclusion treatment spurred by native policies as well as ethnocentric rhetoric. The success of his expose, however, lacks the analysis of the inner human dimension of actual people in cross-cultural responses to the coercion of American nativism. The author has chosen to reveal only what happened outside, rather than to elaborate on what happened inside the hearts and minds of the second generation of Japanese Americans. The author is more concerned with how blatantly they were

mistreated, positioning the history of American ethnic groups as a gross victim story. If he delves into their inner selves at all, the author uses the common Japanese metaphor of the carp to explain the positive thinking of Japanese Americans. Takaki defines immigrants in reference to the carp: “like the carp, which they admired for its inner strength and intrepid spirit, the immigrants had swum against the currents of adversity; still, struggling upstream and climbing waterfalls in America” (212). Takaki recognizes that this metaphor is appropriate for the nisei generation. He continues saying “‘You [The nisei] are American citizens,’ Issei reminded their children time and again as though repeating a litany. ‘You have an opportunity your parents never had. Go to school and study. Don’t miss that opportunity when it comes’” (213). But Takaki does not sufficiently explore how the nisei children manage to internalize parental values amid their conflicting educational experiences in American schools.

METHODOLOGY

Each of the six books reviewed here presents particular positions and vantage points. Taken together, they are useful for historians who seek to understand the forms that racial prejudice might have taken or the ways in which policies have evolved. They are, however, much less useful in the pursuit of understanding human agency. An emic view is necessarily difficult and problematic and presents a recurring methodological problem innate to human inquiry. To privilege one point of view over another is to leave other positions blurred, as John Spradley argues in *Participant Observation*, “with a sideward glance toward other

positions”¹³ (130). The more important point here is that a researcher’s perspective not only constitutes an unwitting “gaze,” but also pays less attention to the ongoing world of lived reality of actual people.

The relationship between an author and a narrator¹⁴ is an important feature of studies like this one that combines features of oral history, life history and biography, and draws on ethnographic fieldwork and interviews in order to reach an engaged understanding of the lived experience of the second generation Japanese Americans. It is certain that a “poly-vocality” can be most effectively explored in ethnographic life history where outreach embraces direct feelings and voices of people in the real, otherwise unexplored, world. Following Vicki Ruiz’s assumption that “History is the history of lived experience” in her article, “It’s the People Who Drive the Book,” in *American Quarterly*,¹⁵ I attempt to recover Japanese American experience as it is lived, trying to “offer a venue for exploring past expectations and for preserving a historical memory of attitudes and feelings.”¹⁶ In this direction, I rely upon ethnography and life history sources in this dissertation for an effective revelation of the voices of Japanese Americans.

¹³John Spradley, *Participant Observation* (Fort Worth: Rinehart and Winston, 1980) p. 130.

¹⁴For further discussion on methodology see “What Is Life History?” (including sections entitled Broad purposes; Philosophical/theoretical roots in various disciplines; Clarification of terms; and The role of context) and “Principles Guiding Life History Researching” (including sections entitled Relationality; Mutuality; Empathy; and Care, sensitivity, and respect) in Ardra L. Cole and J. Cary Knowles, *Lives in Context: The Art of Life History Research* (Walnut Creek, California: Altamira, 2001) pp. 9-43.

¹⁵Vicki L. Ruiz, “‘It’s the People Who Drive the Book’: A View from the West,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 45, 1993, p. 247.

¹⁶op. cit., p. 246.

Throughout this study I employ one basic paradigm as I explore the interactive relationship between humans and society—human agents as actors and actresses over social demands and forces. The basic assumption of human agency does not lead to the conclusion that the history of Japanese Americans is a great success story in the face of dire circumstances. It does not portray people as powerless victims of a harsh environment. Nor does it regard human dimension as something solely determined by the grand narratives of the seemingly legitimate history of Americanization. Neither is human agency to be regarded as something negotiated through cultural interplay with a larger society on the assumption that negotiations and resolutions on equal footing are possible.

Rather, this is a study of Japanese American development that pays close attention to the lived human experiences of a group of Japanese Americans moving toward new opportunities and challenges. I proceed on the assumption that human behavior in a particular time and place is not easily predictable in the sense that humans are not necessarily passive recipients of the particular culture. In other words, the ultimate power to determine one's own meaning of being relies upon humans as agents, notwithstanding the power of unalterable circumstances. People are not mindless and powerless beings whose actions and reactions have no meaning or bearing on the capacity for renewal.

In this sense, the anthropological notion of “bricolage”¹⁷ is helpful to revisit

¹⁷This loan term from French into English signifies one of the most significant elements of humans as agents by which to create optimum conditions for their existence. Claude Levi-Strauss uses this terminology in *La Pensee Sauvage*, 1962 (English Translation by George Weidenfield and Nicolson, Ltd., 1966) arguing: “There still exists among ourselves an activity which on the technical plane gives us quite a good understanding of what a science we prefer to call ‘prior’ (rather than ‘primitive’), could

Japanese American experiences. As “bricoleurs,” Japanese Americans mindfully adjust themselves to fit their own cultural conventions. Through appropriation, people create their own distinctive cultures by utilizing materials made available to them by surrounding cultures. Put otherwise, they read or use, and re-read and re-use even a debilitating cultural situation, assigning it with their meaning and even consuming it to their own cultural advantage. This is what Vicky Ruiz calls “cultural coalescence,” for which she argues, in her featured article in one of the special issues of multiculturalism in *American Quarterly* that “the immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms. People navigate across cultural boundaries as well as make conscious decisions in the production of culture.”¹⁸ This type of cultural appropriation or exploitation finds expression in rearranging one cultural attribute into another, by attaching to the given culture renewed meaning taken from the original intent. This transcoding

have been on the plane of speculation. This is what is commonly called ‘bricolage’ in French. In its old sense the verb ‘bricoler’ applied to ball games and billiards, to hunting, shooting and riding. It was however always used with reference to some extraneous movement: a ball rebounding, a dog straying or a horse swerving from its direct course to avoid an obstacle” (16-17).

In addition to the etymological development, what is more important is a kind of dexterous power over limited resources. In fact, Levi-Strauss pointed up an extended possibility of the semantic application: “The ‘bricoleur’ is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand,’ that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous...but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. The set of the ‘bricoleurs’ means cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project.... It is to be defined only by its potential use or, putting this another way and in the language of the ‘bricoleur’ himself, because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that ‘they may always come in handy’” (17-18).

¹⁸Vicki L. Ruiz, “‘It’s the People Who Drive the Book’: A View from the West,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 45, 1993, p. 246.

produces a kind of reality beyond reality, serving to decontextualize what is initially considered legitimate. The power of formative process by humans, *homo faber*, is all the more salient especially among people deprived of social acceptance and participation, for they try to stabilize these social frictions. On that score, Japanese American history has had a markedly “bricolage” experience in which the meaning-making process has unfolded throughout their long cross-cultural struggles.

In this study, my own relationship to those whom I studied about and learned from was one of the well-informed outsider. In positioning myself as an author, it is unlikely that I could gain full membership in a Japanese American community, but I am able to assume nearly complete cross-cultural membership. In addition, I do not feel it is possible for me to “go native Japanese American” by trying to live inside the head and heart of Japanese American culture and community. Therefore, my relational possibility in this regard is an outside insider, because Japanese Americans are not my own people in the strict sense of the word. However, I am culturally affiliated and I feel so because of our shared origin, which I regard as a vantage point for cross-cultural scrutiny.

Through my interviews with Japanese Americans over the past ten years, I have found myself on familiar ground when discussing various cultural scenes. Put another way, cultural meanings almost automatically fell into the category of being recognizable and understandable. But this left me less imaginative. What I observed was less foreign and less mysterious except when I occasionally found something familiar from Japanese culture that had been modified in American culture. In this sense, I was less likely to label my narrator’s meaning system

“mysterious,” for it was also my familiar meaning system that we shared. But what was most advantageous was a shared familiarity that readily created rapport. Especially, as members of a minority sharing the same cultural origin, we quickly got past the tension of the first interviews and soon came to share a cultural rapport. In this way, I think I got inside their heads on an emotional level. Additionally, as an Americanist from Japan viewing Japanese Americans in America, I have the potential, both theoretical and methodological, to provide a new lens through which to view and review the scholarship between and within the interfaces of the two cultures.

To achieve the goal of cultural entry into as many insider perspectives as possible, language plays an important role. When language is used as an ethnographic tool, ethnographers benefit in two ways. One is the possibility of powerful penetration into the narrator’s language habits embedded deep in the cultural meaning system. The other benefit is an easier access to native culture by producing a sense of communication community, which, in turn, creates the rapport mentioned previously. In fact, linguistic communication, as John Caughey notes in “On the anthropology of America,” is desirable to “play on social relationships more smoothly” (52).

Both English and Japanese, and probably the combination of the two, are effective tools for my research access and ethnography for in-depth penetration into local culture. Especially in ethnographic interview sessions, I draw on both English and Japanese, because Japanese Americans rely on both languages despite the fact that they are often stronger in one or the other. I do not believe in linguistic determinism, but, as James Spradley argues in *Ethnographic Interview*,

“language not only functions as means of communication, but it also functions to create and express a cultural reality.”¹⁹ However, what is not so beneficial about using language as an ethnographic tool is that, to some degree, the power of language has the ability to create a new social reality. But the point is, to use Ruth Behar’s words in *The Vulnerable Observer* when she refers to Clifford Geertz, “We lack the language to articulate what takes place when we are in fact at work. There seems a genre missing.”²⁰ For practical purposes in ethnographic interview, linguistic knowledge and competency might positively serve to illuminate culture as well as create rapport. In this sense, I draw on the beneficial functions of two languages to the fullest extent.

In this research I address my project to the following possible audiences: American Studies people both in the U.S. and in Japan including Japanese Immigration Studies Circles, the Japanese American community, and people associated with international relations between the U.S. and Japan. I believe that my field of study will be of interest to these audiences and I have observed an increased demand for cross-cultural initiatives among interdisciplinary research communities. Whatever the level of interdisciplinary endeavor, stereotyping is a pitfall to be avoided in cross-cultural and international exchanges. By virtue of an interdisciplinary pursuit such as this, cross-cultural sophistication serves as a powerful foil against cultural stereotyping, which reduces a complex cultural representation to one single element, assuring an overarching homogeneity inside

¹⁹James Spradley, *Ethnographic Interview* (Fort Worth: Reinhart and Winston, 1979) p. 20.

²⁰Ruth Behar, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) p. 9.

while stressing the inevitable difference outside.

CULTURAL NARRATORS

This research focuses on three nisei, or second generation Japanese Americans, who were born in California and then resettled in Maryland after the closing of World War II internment camps. The reasons for my choice of these particular three nisei are to reveal cross-cultural adaptation processes in their lives, address the diversity and complexity in their histories, and unearth the local value in their experiences.

As with all second generation of Japanese Americans, these three began their lives in the U.S. in possession of powerful Japanese cultural traditions, most especially traditions reflected in the concept of samurai. The use of the word “samurai” in the title of this paper is not meant to mystify or stereotype Japanese American life and history. On the contrary, in an attempt to present a challenging idea to English readers, I use the samurai concepts as a metaphor: duty to be loyal, a spirit of daring, stoic composure and self-control, rectitude and justice, consistency and civic honor, filial piety, respect for learning and frugality, and veracity or truthfulness. For cross-cultural clarity I drew on Inazo Nitobe’s classic and still readable work of his own writing in English, *Bushido*, or the Way of Samurai which was subtitled “The Soul of Japan” and “An Exposition of Japanese Thought.”²¹ It is important to note here that the moral, social, and

²¹Inazo Nitobe (his figure is on the 5,000 yen banknote) was an American-educated Japanese man of intelligence who studied at Johns Hopkins University from 1884-1887. His roommate was Shosuke Sato who was like a big brother and mentor for Nitobe and who helped him come to Baltimore. Both of these men were descendants of samurai

psychological and spiritual commitments of the way of the Samurai were as binding on women as they were on men, notwithstanding their non-warrior status.

The core second generation narrators, with some extensions to their family and other nisei when necessary, include: Mrs. Grace Yuri Kokura who was born in Oakland, California in 1908, and resettled in Maryland after the wartime internment. (She died in 2004 at the age of 95.) She was bicultural and bilingual and endeavored to transcend the national boundaries of each nation. She was acknowledged as a transcultural person. Mr. Joseph Ichiuji, now a

families from the northeastern part of the main island of Japan who fought in the last phase of war in coalition with the Aizu clan. See footnote 55 in Chapter 1. They studied at Sapporo Nogakko (Sapporo Agricultural College, currently Hokkaido University) where Sato studied under the strong Christian influence of Dr. William Smith Clark (the president of Massachusetts Agricultural College, currently University of Massachusetts). See John M. Maki, *A Yankee in Hokkaido: The Life of William Smith Clark* (New York: Lexington, 2002). Sato and Nitobe went to Johns Hopkins University in 1883 and 1884, respectively. Nitobe studied for an additional three years in Germany from 1887-1890, supported by Sato who became the president of Sapporo Agricultural College after earning his doctorate from Johns Hopkins University in 1886. Woodrow Wilson, their classmate, helped further the growth of Sapporo Agricultural College. Nitobe received his doctorate from Halle University in Germany. For further detail see Masahiko Sato, *Sato Shosuke to sono Jidai* [Shosuke Sato and the Age] (Tokyo: Genbunsha, 1948) and Masatake Oshima, *Kuraku Sensei to sono Deshitachi* [Dr. Clark and His Disciples] (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1937). In 1900 Nitobe compiled the principles of samurai under the title of *Bushido, The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought* (The Leeds and Biddle Co., 1900) in an attempt to achieve an effective cross-cultural communication between Japanese and Americans. In his writing in English, Nitobe wanted to explain things about Japan in a way that English readers could easily recognize in a cultural dimension. Readers, who were surprised at the fact that there was no articulate religion in Japan, challenged Nitobe with such questions as, “No religion? How did you impart moral education?” In Nitobe’s mind, moral code was instilled in childhood, and therefore was taken for granted. “It was Bushido that breathed them [moral notions] into my nostrils” (v). He affirmed that “it was Bushido, pure and simple, that urged us on for weal and woe” (115). Nitobe became the first president of Tokyo Woman’s Christian University in 1918 and a lower secretary general of the League of Nations in 1919. He made a number of lecture tours in the U.S., and was welcomed as a scholar from the land of Mikado. For the behavioral application of the samurai ethic, see footnote 73 in Chapter 2

resident of Maryland, was born in Los Angeles in 1919. During World War II, while he and his family were living in an internment camp, he volunteered for military duty to fight against Japan, Germany, and Italy. He is a survivor of the renowned 442nd Regimental Combat Team²² and has shown an enormous capacity to articulate his cross-cultural sentiments and experiences as a nisei before, during, and after wartime. The third narrator (now deceased), Mr. Mike Masaru Masaoka, was born in Fresno in 1915, grew up in Utah, and moved to Maryland after World War II. I base my analysis on his autobiography entitled *They Call Me Moses Masaoka*²³ as well as supporting interviews with his wife, Etsu. He was called Moses for his outstanding leadership in a career spent working for the welfare of nisei. He occupied a unique position during the war—as a liaison with Washington on Japanese American issues—and, because he grew up in Utah, not considered a militarily sensitive area, he was not interned. He was considered very articulate and, through his upbringing and career, he exhibited a markedly cross-cultural adaptation style.

The three nisei men and women in this paper are thus cross-cultural in the sense that they embraced both Japanese and American cultures, integrating aspects of both cultures into their ways of thinking and behaving. They enthusiastically adapted parental tradition to new culture in the course of their lives, in turn creating a particular “nisei-ness” in their own meaning-making as well as meaning-using. By relying on these abundant cultural experiences, I attempt to

²²American army unit made up of all nisei who saw extraordinary action especially in the European theater. For further details and discussion, see Chapters 2 and 3.

²³Mike Masaru Masaoka with Bill Hosokawa, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987).

reveal their cross-cultural adaptation processes, which will enable a deeper understanding of how they have helped to create Japanese American culture in America over time and space. Each of these three nisei, one still alive and two deceased, lived their own particular lives, albeit under the inevitable influence of both their parents' Japanese culture and the American culture in which they were raised.

Kokura, the first narrator, specifically aestheticized her traditional culture on U.S. soil; Ichiuji, the second, engagingly activated his particular nisei experience. For the larger world of nisei, Masaoka, the third narrator, marvelously dramatized the nisei community by designing one framework after another. These three nisei persons have demonstrated their own diverse voices and methods, affirming that cross-cultural adaptation is a complex interplay of dual cultural traditions, but serving as a springboard to develop a larger picture of the nisei world as well.

Because of its concentration on the lived experiences of local people gleaned by way of local familiarity and connections of the author, this paper is locally field dependent. Reasons for focusing on three narrators in the local area include accessibility, geographical proximity which has enabled us to build long-term, deep relationships in an attempt to achieve "thick description," and quality of the narrators. I attempt to relate the voices of these locally resident nisei to the larger Japanese American community.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

I have relied on an array of documentary and oral historical information including e.g. hundreds of hours of interviews, family-related material possessions

and other oral historical narratives, secondary accounts in newspapers, pamphlets and scholarly works. Resources in this research consist of primary sources, mediated primary sources, and secondary literature both in the U.S. and Japan (q.v.). The major primary sources are ethnographic interviews and life histories, narrated and autobiographic, of three second generation Japanese Americans. Whatever the mode of access to their lives, the approach in this dissertation aims to provide a powerful window through which to view dynamic experiences, past and present, with human agency exerted through the ongoing process of Japanese American cultural adaptation. My approaches to these three nisei were different.

Mrs. Grace Yuri Kokura (deceased in March, 2004): Note-taking (September, 2003 only), field-notes based on home-stays (summers, 1994-98), interviews (September and March, 1999-2003), plus *Lotus*²⁴ by Chieko Tahira (Kokura's "second heart and brain"). Almost all interviews were conducted in the Japanese language unless otherwise specified in Chapter 1. All translations from Japanese to English were by the author. (Every language has its own language-constructed world with its own artistic value. Culture-laden terms are given in the original Japanese with possible English translations. While I strove to be true to the spirit as well as the words of the original, I bear sole responsibility for the quality of the translations. In order to enhance understanding of her meaning, I have included detailed footnotes offering background information and explaining her cultural references. The selected representation of Japanese history and culture of origin is the author's based on general literature. These topics in Japanese cultural history, themselves, pose another interesting discussion, but this dissertation is

²⁴Chieko Tahira, *Lotus* (California: Pleasant Hill, 1996).

oriented toward revealing the narrator's world and focuses the topics in this direction.)

Mr. Joseph Ichiuji: Transcribed record of taped interviews with the help of written memos (October, 1999; September and March, 2001-2004) plus interviews with his relative in Shimane Prefecture, Japan where his parents were from. Interviews on the Japan side were conducted in Japanese and translated into English by the author. For issues of language translation, see the previous paragraph.

Mr. Mike Masaru Masaoka (deceased in June, 1991): Autobiography, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka* with supporting interviews with Mrs. Etsu Masaoka, his wife (March, April, and September, 2003-2004). Interviews with Etsu maintained a selective focus in an attempt to reveal Mike's character and behavior. Because I include her recollections, this chapter is longer than the others, but I feel that they contribute significantly to an understanding of the man.

Relying upon these direct sources as substantial evidence, I organize chapters in a way that Japanese Americans can be fully characterized as actors and actresses in their history drama. Whenever possible I include first-hand quotes from these records using their own words and phrases. To illustrate the ongoing lived lives of these nisei men and women, I attempt to reveal cross-cultural adaptation style and patterns by clarifying their meaning-making and meaning-using in the whole of their life experiences.

Because of my sharp focus on the lived experiences of three nisei, I use other voices of primary sources as important but supplementary. The same thing can be said of other mediated sources and secondary sources. I consulted them for a

general picture of the Japanese American experience and for other methods of inquiry into and theories of Japanese American history.

Other sources and methods for general consultation include mediated primary sources in the form of diaries, letters, memoirs, and newspapers, some of which are kept in archives and museums in the U.S. and Japan. These would include the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, the National Archives in Washington, D.C./Maryland and in Hiroshima/Tokyo, and regional historical resource center (q.v.). I also use resources in private hands, such as family albums kept by surviving relatives in Japan. For the original culture in Japan, this research concentrates on the Setouchi Inland Sea area and its vicinity, located in the southwestern part of Japan, because of the large number of immigrants who came from this region. The major secondary sources are readily available and held mainly in libraries, including facilities in the U.S. and Japan for official government documents.

The following are locations of the three categories of sources: (a) primary sources, (b) mediated primary sources, and (c) secondary sources. For a selected bibliography see the end of the dissertation.

[I] Primary Sources

- (1) Ethnographic Interviews in Maryland
- (2) Ethnographic Interviews in Japan (major immigration prefectures: Okayama, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Shimane, Ehime, and Kochi)
- (3) Japanese American Community (through Mrs. Grace Kokura and others)
- (4) Seabrook, New Jersey, Seabrook Food Processing Company (currently Bridgton Food Processing Company) (Rev. Takashi Uehara, minister now at the Washington Japanese Christian Church, Bethesda, Maryland)
- (5) Amerika Mura or American Villages in Japan which are so called in memory of

the large number of emigrants departing the locality

[II] Mediated Primary Sources

- (1) National Archives in Washington, D.C. and Maryland
- (2) Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles
- (3) University of Washington (Museum and Archives)
- (4) National Archives of Japan and National Diet Library; Gaiko Shiryokan [Center for Official Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan]
- (5) Nitobe Kinenkan [Nitobe Memorial Museum, Japan]
- (6) Uwajima Rekishi Shiryokan [Uwajima Historical Resource Center, Japan]
- (7) Basho O Kinenkan [Venerable Basho Memorial Center, Japan]

[III] Secondary Sources

- (1) Libraries at the University of Maryland and University of Washington
- (2) Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. and National Diet Library in Tokyo

Research of this kind is limited by the advancing age of the nisei narrators. Generational Japanese Americans were of a similar age because of the narrow window of immigration during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The issei immigrated during the same time, grew old at the same time, and have since died during the same time period with the result that issei have disappeared almost as a group from the Japanese American community. In addition to the loss of the first generation, the second generation at the heart of this research is very elderly—in their late 80s, 90s and older—which also severely limits ethnographic opportunities.

As we shall see, each of these three nisei made sense of their lives in the U.S. in different ways. Notwithstanding their differences, each had to accommodate traditional Japanese “habits of heart, mind, and association” and at the same time adjust to the pressures of U.S. cultural beliefs and social norms. This dissertation is about how they managed all of this.

CHAPTER 1

SAMURAI DAUGHTER: LIVING UP TO JAPANESE TRADITION (Grace Yuri Kokura)

In his article, “Reworking Reality” John Bodnar points up a vital element missing in history-writing by arguing:

The missing dimension of current immigration historiography lies in the realm not of economic detail but of cultural construction or the interpretation of reality. The predominant scholarly need today is not so much the generation of more social and economic data—although that is needed—but the penetration of the structures of meaning that immigrants gave to the economic and political systems in which they moved and lived.²⁵

This chapter will focus on the life of one Japanese American woman who, as we shall see, made sense of her experience in the U.S. with reference to Japanese norms and traditions inherited from her parents. Through her life-long endeavor to sustain Japanese traditions and aesthetics, her active engagement in history-telling makes her a narrative authority who has successfully revisited Japanese history and culture, producing cross-cultural values and enhancing the quality of her life. Mrs. Grace Yuri Kokura not only understood but justified her own world through the active interpretation of the cultural values transmitted from her parents, in turn endorsing a popular notion that the nisei world was best viewed

²⁵John Bodnar, “Reworking Reality: Oral Histories and the Meaning of the Polish Immigrant Experience,” *International Annual of Oral History*, 1990 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) p. 57.

from that of issei. With deep feeling, she constructed her personal as well as social world by making the best use of her Japanese legacy, producing something artistically evocative in the realm of Japanese culture and history. Less political than other nisei, she was more interested in culture than economics and in aesthetics than politics.

Born on October 4, 1908 in Oakland, California, Grace Yuri Kokura was a fourth child. Her parents came from Japan bringing with them the tradition in which they were brought up at home. When reminiscing, Grace was fond of recalling her parents. She chose to narrate first her father's life course and made known his background by saying, "My father was an eldest son and at the age of six came to America accompanied by my grandfather. According to my father's recollection, his father was once an affluent samurai²⁶ but came to political ruin, causing him to emigrate first to Hawaii, then to the West Coast." After disclosing her familial lineage with some trepidation, she became most enthusiastic, appreciating her father's cultural norms, values, feelings, and behaviors as follows:

In the time before his political ruin in Japan, he once found a woman carrying a pile of wood on her back. She was a widow who lived a very meager life by making charcoal with what little wood she could collect. The instant he saw the woman scraping out a living with this tremendous amount of wood piled on her back, he gave her a piece of a mountain he possessed. He did not talk much about that transaction. But in his actions,

²⁶The word 'samurai' is much more popular in English than in Japanese. The word '*bushi*' is used instead in the traditional Japanese language. But the word 'samurai' is occasionally re-imported from the West carrying with it the mythic nature constructed in popular culture. Contemporary Japanese people have become consumers of this re-imported word and have enjoyed the subtle difference between the two words.

my father and the widow communicated a deep-felt *kimochi*²⁷ [emotion and feeling]. I think this act was close to the idea of noble obligation in the Western tradition that I learned about at school in America. At that time such mutual *kimochi* was found often in society and was shared by many. Later in my life, for instance, I reaffirmed this beautiful sentiment among the issei, our parents' generation, when I was interned during World War II.

Grace Kokura further described her father's migration saying, "My father migrated then to California from Hawaii at the turn of the 20th century and worked near Sacramento." She continued unfolding the story of his new life which demanded hard work and in which he found only the food pleasurable. He gradually improved his economical condition. Of his work ethic, she observed:

He never, never whispered a word that was suggestive of his hard life, but I'm sure that his modest assessment of his life was quite different from other people in the larger society. By his account, the sole pleasure available to him was eating. I heard he ate a lot in Chinatown where he sometimes went after long days of backbreaking work. Soon he saved some money and lived a little better life than before.

Kokura acknowledged a cultural component in the recollection of her father. She said, "My father did a variety of things for he could not make himself understood well in English. But he carried a dictionary with him in his pocket." She continued talking about both his early work and avocation. "At one time he

²⁷*'Kimochi'* is a comprehensive term used often in everyday communication, especially in the interpersonal arena where people are interactively engaged.

was a houseboy and another time he did gardening for a lawyer in Alameda. As time passed, he was fortunate enough to own a small orchard. His hobby was photography and he took many pictures including valuable photos of San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake.”

Grace Kokura learned her lessons about life less from anything her father said and more from his own life experiences. She willingly internalized the ethical concepts embodied in his life history. For example, she acknowledged being influenced by the concept of *risshin shusse*²⁸ [success by rising in the world], a value of advancement and success promoted in the Meiji²⁹ era. She held in awe the act of her father’s friend:

One time I was astonished to learn of one man who came back to meet my father for the first time in twenty years. An ethical code required of men was that they were warned not to come back until they had made something of themselves. We were such Japanese as practiced these social ethics originating in Meiji Japan.

²⁸Strongly influenced by the national policy of the Meiji government, subjects were encouraged to be entrepreneurial to improve their lot.

²⁹The Meiji Restoration (1868) achieved the unification of the country in the modern sense of a national polity following the demise of the more than 250-year shogunate reign (1603-1868). One of the most conspicuous features was the ‘Five Charter Oath’ which read: (1) All steps shall be decided in public debates, by establishing a large assembly. (2) All people, great and small, with one heart, shall actively participate in the government. (3) It is essential that officials and soldiers, on down to the people [all] fulfill their wishes and attain their full blossoming. (4) Bad traditional customs shall be abolished and just universal principles be taken as a basis. (5) Imperial work shall be greatly advanced by calling on the knowledge of the whole world. See Paul Akamatsu, *Meiji 1868: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Japan* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1972). Under this national initiative, people, both “great and small” were expected to show a high sense of fulfillment of wishes.

This concept of being unable to return until you became somebody was so ingrained in Mrs. Kokura that she, herself, felt unable to return to visit her parents' hometown in Japan because she had lost everything in World War II.

A more important reminiscence to Grace was what her issei parents expected of their children. They had low expectations for their own lives because they knew the limitations of being immigrants in a new land, but they had high expectations of their children, given that they were citizens, they had a native command of English, and they had the opportunity for education. Kokura recounted her parents' cultural values, acknowledging and appreciating not only something educational but something self-sacrificial on their part.

Issei had big dreams for their children. They would tell us, "This is your important future." In order to make the dream come true they instilled in us the importance and desirability of education. There was always the concept of *Kodomo no tame ni*³⁰ [which connotes the willingness of parents to sacrifice their own pursuit of happiness for the sake of their children]. I internalized within myself consistency, stability, and stoicism that I learned from my parents.

Kokura affirmed that she was attempting to live in accordance with her father's value system. Her stoic and determined mindset, undoubtedly shaped by her father, was all the more strengthened by the hostile conditions through which she lived. Kokura incorporated these of her father's traits and more into her own

³⁰This idea was often heard from issei parents—as well as the cohort generation of Japanese in Japan—not for the sake of vicarious experience, but for the social value of mobility, reflecting forward-looking *kimochi* [attitudinal sentiment (in this context)]. To achieve this, parents did not mind paying any cost, however inconceivable.

sense of aesthetics, upon which she based her whole life. But her father's disposition and demeanor in the story she so enthusiastically told should not be attributed solely to her father's personal behavioral norms. The ethos of the Meiji era persuasively influenced its populace and shaped their ethical behaviors. The traditions Grace's father brought with him were products of that particular age, if not a sheer collective determinant. But it is fair to say that something agentic in her father's norms had been bolstered by Meiji zeitgeist.

It was Grace's mother, however, who was even more influential in the formation of Grace's daily lifeways, especially the subtleties of her attitudes and behaviors. In fact, Grace strongly attached herself to her mother when she accounted for the fundamental core of her basic thinking and doing. She gently but firmly recalled her mother as her mentor for the formation of her character. Of note was her mother's pursuit of her family's lineage through the turmoil of the transition from feudalism to modernity in the 1860s, thus unveiling her samurai origin:

Some of my mother's family fled to the U.S. after the defeat of the samurai coalition in which her family sided with the Satsuma clan [in present-day Kagoshima Prefecture] in their failed uprising against the newly organized Meiji government. They witnessed the whole array of skirmishes termed the Boshin War³¹ and Seinan War.³² Under these names there

³¹Another name for the Boshin War (1868-1869) is the Boshin Civil War, in the sense that it was fought to determine which side would rule the nation. This was a war between the last Shogunate (Yoshinobu Tokugawa) aided by samurai groups and the new Meiji government led by the Satsuma and Choshu clans (currently Kagoshima and Yamaguchi Prefectures, respectively). The bloodless surrender of Edo castle (currently Tokyo), the center of control, took place between the delegates (Takamori Saigo for the government and Kaishu Katsu for the old samurai coalition), having taken into

continued fierce battles between the remnants of the samurai class and the new government's officials following the demise of more than 250 years of feudalism (1603-1868).

Within such a social milieu Grace's mother grew up, amidst true samurai ethics. But Grace Kokura was relieved of a rigid upbringing, for her mother was reluctant to discipline Grace. Her mother knew better in educating her siblings, due in part to the caliber of her socialization with influential celebrities in the past, through which she extended her thinking to a more American style of education.

consideration the design of foreign powers if not united. The northern clans, especially the Aizu, (whose political émigré fled to El Dorado, California in the very earliest stages of Japanese immigration to the U.S.) continued fighting but were soon subdued by the government army. The last tough international samurai, Takeaki Enomoto, fled to Hokkaido in northern Japan echoing "the North was right in the civil war. This was for friendship's sake, just as in the American Civil War." The last phase of this war was also kept under the control of the new government. In 1877, the Satsuma clan, which had originally fought to establish the new government, became disillusioned by a modernization policy that prohibited the wearing of swords and meant economic losses for the former samurai and instigated a rebellion that was rapidly quelled (see footnote 32 in this chapter). All of these wars including other battles and skirmishes, were historical scenes from which came the last samurai stories, mythic or real. The author's paraphrased text by Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998). It was the failure of this uprising that caused Grace's family to flee to the U.S. For the first immigrants to the United States from Japan, see Toyoshi Kase, "The Japanese Immigration," *L & C*, Vol. 1 (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003). For a discussion of friendship's sake in the American Civil War, see Takeaki Noguchi, "Hokugun no Yoshimi" [Friendship's Sake of the North in the Civil War in the U.S.] *Shukan Shincho*, November 13, 2003, p. 76-77.

³²Seinan War literally means Southwestern War because the central figure was, again, Takamori Saigo from the southwestern part of Japan only this time he was leading a revolt against the government. Aided by remnants of dissident samurai, he fought a losing war for eight months in 1877. This last true samurai committed suicide, *hara-kiri*, to protest the new powerful conscripted army of the government. This war was the war to end all wars against the newly established Meiji government. The author's paraphrased text by Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998).

Thanks to the fact that her mother had been given the opportunity to come to the U.S., Grace was thus given reconciled education:

She was educated with strict samurai discipline, which was very Spartan, and therefore practiced great thrift. Her frugality was the result of the family's moral education through Confucianism. My mother internalized a series of precepts and rescripts³³ by fully digesting what was taught, for her parents imparted Confucian doctrine only when they thought the ears of my mother were "free and open." Before and during this political turmoil my mother's family had had close relationships with such later political celebrities as Shigenobu Okuma,³⁴ Hirobumi Ito,³⁵ and Takeaki Enomoto.³⁶ Probably through some

³³One of the most significant documents given in the form of "rescript" was the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890) which strengthened the bonds of every human relationship based upon ethical virtues and a code of conduct. This Rescript was the most widely disseminated because certified copies were bestowed upon every school for ceremonial reading at every school event. The main tenet was social unity, the ethical aspect of which read in part: "Be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious; as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all, pursue learning and cultivate arts and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interest; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws." W.G. Beasley, *The Meiji Restoration* (California: Stanford University Press, 1972) p. 361; Alan Campbell, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993).

³⁴Shigenobu Okuma (1838-1922), the founder of the current Waseda University in Tokyo once served as Minister of Finance. He was dismissed by Hirobumi Ito because he opposed Ito's gradualism in building the diet system. Later he became Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Prime Minister. Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998); Alan Campbell, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993).

³⁵Hirobumi Ito (1841-1909) was the first Prime Minister of modern Japan, founding the Constitution of the Emperor of Japan, 1889. He dismissed Shigenobu Okuma. Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998); Alan Campbell, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993).

connection, her migration to the States could have been made possible. But a more concrete occasion was made for her when her uncle came back from America to bring some young men with him. He offered my mother the opportunity to join them, and she wanted to see the world by embarking on a new adventure. She came to the States in 1906.

Kokura portrayed her mother as one who engaged in cross-cultural consideration and then was able to adapt to her new environment. Through her mother's intuitiveness, Grace most likely endorsed the cross-cultural idea that the only things acceptable were transcending values shareable regardless of difference. Seen in the present, Grace's assessment of her mother's observation was an insightful critique especially after due consideration paid to the pursuit of one difference after another in our contemporary society. As a matter of fact, Grace incessantly pursued things beautiful, admirable, and noble, a sensibility that reflected that of her mother. In reference to her mother's evaluation she applauded the eternal value of such transcendence. In all her eagerness Grace recounted:

My mother did not know American manners and etiquette, but she knew that these were fundamentally the same as Japanese. Only the language was different. I realized that these people had high morality even though they did not have much education. Indeed, they had instilled the learning manner of

³⁶Takeaki Enomoto (1836-1908) was a naval officer. He attempted to establish "an independent republic" in present-day Hokkaido against the Meiji government. Alan Campbell, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993). See Boshin Civil War (footnote 31). Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998).

Michizane Sugawara.³⁷ My mother came to San Francisco to familiarize herself with the American way of manners. She met a group of excellent people there and thus came to notice a universal nature in societal manners regardless of country. At that time we knew that many Americans and Japanese alike were magnificent in their demeanor. Not a few *hakujin*³⁸ [whites] adopted Japanese who grew to be true ladies and gentlemen equipped with superb manners. Directly and indirectly my mother was very quick to absorb something admirable. The only thing she was afraid of was the large blue eyes of *hakujin* for they looked like those of pigs. But my mother was greatly pleased to know that a group of *hakujin* set a good example for her life.

Grace Kokura furthered her reference to her mother with the idea of integration of both Japanese tradition and American, strengthening the amalgamation of cultures, albeit with conventional relationships. For example, in the Japan of her mother's time, parents usually did not offer their children choices, but Grace appreciated the fact that her mother preferred the American way of

³⁷Michizane Sugawara (845-903) was the most scholarly professor of literature at court, maintaining influence over the political arena, especially when he was named Minister of the Right. He was falsely accused of a plot against the throne and was incarcerated in the government headquarters in Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese main islands. During that period, he wrote a tremendous number of poems, bemoaning his fate and protesting his innocence. After his death, when "a number of misfortunes at court were ascribed to his angry spirit, Michizane was posthumously pardoned and promoted to one of the highest ranks in order to placate his ghost." He was and is respected as a popular deity of learning and is held up by parents as a model to which children should aspire. Alan Campbell, et al., eds. *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993) pp. 1464-1465.

³⁸'*Hakujin*' literally means 'white person' without any racial sentiment attached, applying to the European and American Caucasoid stock. This neutral language is neither an acrolect nor baselect, and used to refer loosely to white men and women in general, as contrasted to people of Japanese descent. This term has been very widely used by the nisei generation.

offering choices so that Grace could choose. On the part of her parents, both mother and father showed the value of education by pursuing it themselves. Her mother continued writing the life of her family. Grace talked about her daily life and felt quite satisfied, enumerating:

All in all, my mother incorporated Japanese ethics into fine American protocol. As a matter of fact, I never heard her complain of her husband, or of having to be obedient to him. She sometimes commented on, but never criticized, him. Kikuo, my youngest son, had such a quality. "In all situations my mother expected us to believe in US and believed in me." (spoken in English) I remember my mother asking, "What's your plan today?" "What did you do today?" She continued studying English as my father did, while at the same time she was appreciative of both Japanese and American cultures.

Through all of the parental cultural tradition of which Grace Kokura availed herself, she developed within her a powerful moral strength. Grace's basic code of conduct as well as perceptual orientation was thus cultivated through her father's consistency and her mother's elaborateness. Based upon her parental cultural legacy and American sense of ladies and gentlemen, she not only internalized parental influences by carefully observing them, but also she was more willing to apply the essence of cultural principle she had thus inherited. In her deed and word, she cultivated the deep love of beauty embedded in traditional culture in Japan. She was fond of cultural elaboration with a deep feeling of living her American life as related to Japanese history and culture. She not only grew up with parental values and norms, which she thought important and desirable, but also learned Japanese culture and history at a Japanese language

school after coming home from American school.

In her early life, Kokura grew up completely bilingual and used both Japanese and English, accent-free, interchangeably both at home and school. Most probably among siblings at home they came to express themselves more in English. In recollecting her predominant language, she said, “I spoke in English in the public school near my house in Oakland, but at home I spoke Japanese with my parents except when I talked with my brothers and sisters.”

She recollected with fondness the fact that language communication was culturally incorporated into daily behavior. Through her father’s confident and dignified demeanor she discovered the cultural value that achievement was better than language. She particularly learned cultural behavior from her father through her ‘meta-language’ analysis at their dinner table, serving to cultivate in her the strength of silence, for she remembered and somewhat admired the way her father had instilled cultural discipline in his children. These codes of conduct are suggestive of samurai tacit posture and composure needed at times of crisis, which Kokura came to esteem particularly in her later life. She recounted her memories of her childhood dinner table:

Oh, at meal-time it was all Japanese, very Japanesey, where we children were encouraged to remain completely quiet, concentrating on the meal before us. I remember once when I giggled at mealtime, he stared at me sternly without saying anything admonishing. Nothing more than this happened. We were encouraged to stay alert through silence not to be idling time talking nonsense. In fact, father himself was very silent and calm but looked stately and esteemed. In this way we immersed ourselves in Japanese culture even when at table.

Plunged into societal life through daily encounters, Grace Kokura came to realize what it meant to be Japanese American in American society. As they grew, these nisei children came to cope with the imposition of a societally designated position by assuming self-effacing behaviors. These came to shape a collective Japanese American behavioral norm, while they redirected themselves toward presumably more achievable arenas by working very hard. Her acquired value that “achievement through perseverance is admirable” was her justification for the unfriendly society around her. She told of her own experience:

When I was 15 or 16, I went to a shop to buy a piece of cloth for a sewing class. There were other customers and I waited for them to be served. I waited for another customer who came in after me to be served. I waited until every other customer was finished and stood all the while without saying anything and without wearing an angry face. Finally they turned to me and said, “This lady has been waiting for a long time” (spoken in English). Then they served me, treating me as if I were an important person.

After studying in San Francisco for two years, Grace Kokura met her husband, Kikujiro, there in 1931 and moved to Salinas, California where they lived and had three sons. She recounted unhappy moments her sons faced on two occasions:

When Nobuo, my eldest son was three, I encountered two clerks who ignored our presence in a hat shop in downtown Oakland. Since it could not be helped, we went to a Scandinavian shop where we were served so kindly. We only wished everybody could be that way.

Another time, when three of my sons were on a bus, two of my boys started chattering aloud. No sooner had my eldest son noticed this, than he admonished his brothers, saying knowingly, “Be quiet! Our face is bad enough.” My boys not only became very sensitive to, but also internalized, inferior sentiments in such a discriminatory society. Because of one experience after another they not only created, but also carried with them, a self-effacing behavior long after. Without making any fuss in *hakujin* society we worked very hard and our children worked hard too.

To Kokura, such socially perceived reality was an opportunity not for tacit acceptance but for silent honor, to be culturally cultivated through behavioral discipline. In fact, Kokura did not manage hostility with stoicism but with sociable discourse through the power of language in the form of euphemism, if not irony. She narrated her experiences of social exclusion with linguistic justification, thus creating the inner psyche of second generation Japanese Americans in this society:

What I learned in Japan-U.S. relations was that we were guests, albeit unwelcome ones.... Well, a guest is a person who is supposed to act upon the rule of host and hostess rather than his or her own and a guest won't do anything that won't meet with approval. We do *gaman*³⁹ [persevere and endure]. By fostering “guestship,” I came not to question but rather obey such rules as “No Japanese Allowed.” “I don't try to fight it”

³⁹This word is one of the most important cultural concepts in Japanese American society. Kokura's philosophy to *gaman* revolved around the behavioral dimension where she highlighted stoical strength for its social relational value. To her, this was a positive attribute, denoting self-command. For the general socio-cultural semantic domain, see *American in Disguise* by Daniel Iwao Okimoto in the Literature Review of the Introduction.

(spoken in English). I opted for something else because every life chance had its own silver lining. I never bulldozed it in this country.

After Pearl Harbor, Mrs. Kokura's family was incarcerated in Poston, Arizona, a desert area far inland, for about two years. Mrs. Kokura seemed to have had numerous stories to tell, but she focused, instead, on matters of cross-cultural values in her accounts of the internment life of Japanese Americans. With the least emotion, yet with a firm stance, she began her story by drawing a parallel between her hopeless situation and that of a famous writer of haiku in Japanese literature. This artistic adaptation of finding analogies between her unspeakable experiences and classic Japanese high literature was voiced as follows:

At the outbreak of the Pacific War we were housed in the stable of a race-track, then called an assembly center, until the real relocation center could be built. Oh, it was an unspeakable situation, both physically and mentally. While we could try not to see such a deplorable setting by closing our eyes, we could not escape the smell of urine and manure from the horses that had been kept there until only a few days before. "*Kuso te, Kuso te*" ["Shit-smelly and shit-smelly"] like Basho.⁴⁰ He

⁴⁰Basho, one of the most celebrated haiku poets who was assumed to disguise himself as the Shogunate's secret agent, created a whole array of epigrammatic literature. He was born in the mysterious town of Iga Ueno in Mie Prefecture, the birthplace of one of the two major schools of ninja samurai. An esoterically political maneuver prevailed with its central idea epitomizing the way of "stealth." Today, the local ninja castle museum holds a sort of paradoxical truth which says, "Stealth is the shadow accompanying light at the back of the front. The brighter the light, the darker the shadow, and the stronger the backing support, the more powerful front. Stealth has a history of profound wisdom and action. However, the art of stealth has been confused in the world of mystery and imagination without notice by ordinary people." Taking into consideration the local background, a telling reality reveals more in the outward everyday world as if nothing eventful has happened. The haiku quoted here is one of the most

spent the night in a desolate hut, actually a smelly stable, on his haiku pilgrimage to the rugged Far North of the main island of Japan. On that occasion he composed the haiku, “*Nomi shirami uma no shito suru makuramoto*” [Tormented by fleas and lice as well as occasional stale in our stable for a night]. Our saving grace was highly artistic references to Basho in a humble stable hut and to Jesus who was born in a stable. Our saga began with an unavoidable parallel with these historic men of caliber, giving us solace through analogy. But it really was that smelly.

Tossed about by a wartime measure aimed only at persons of Japanese ancestry, the Kokuras were forced to relocate to the inland continent without knowing what would happen next: “*Yama ni suterareru.*”⁴¹ [Dumped deep in the mountains]. Without resistance, they were rounded up from their residences and fed by ration. “Jammed in the train, its shades drawn, we were relocated again to the desert in sun-torrid Poston, Arizona. Everybody was speechless, for instance, at the stale sandwiches, which were hardly edible,” she said, whispering “Did the traditional value of silence hold for this predicament?”

Kokura vividly recollected the first ration of food her family was given after

appreciated verses among school children in the Japanese education system as well as persons of literature and the general public, because it successfully reveals a harsh reality by telling it like it is, albeit cloaked in a humorous tone. Basho, an ardent eremite for aesthetic ideal, pursued the art of haiku while traveling into a desolate area, the Deep North, an experience somewhat parallel to Japanese American experiences in a forlorn place. Basho’s experiences later crystallized into his literary masterpiece, *Oku no Hosomichi* [The Narrow Road to the Deep North]. Harao Imamura, *Master, Basho: Haiku Poet, the Greatest* (Mie, Japan: Basho Exhibit Center, 1990).

⁴¹Kokura’s comment recalls the half-legendary, half-true practice of abandoning the elderly (the unwanted) in the mountains of Nagano Prefecture, the most mountainous place in Japan. “*Yama ni suterareru*” was the cry of agony from the deep human psyche of the aged who tried to internalize the economic necessity. This was also the agony of the Japanese Americans who felt unwanted and abandoned in a desolate place.

standing in a long line: “I remember lining up in the mess hall in the morning, and soon lining up again for lunch and supper. What is very clear in my mind is the first meal at the Poston mess hall: one slice of Spam and several green peas.”

She added another atrocity committed against people uprooted, stripped of property and then deprived of basic needs, saying, “Gradually we had non-canned food, but strangely we were given a gradually decreasing amount of food.

Rumor had it that some *hakujin* administrators enjoyed trading on the black market. In fact, some witnessed the whole truck turning around and going in the opposite direction.”

As was true for every mother regardless of racial background, Kokura as a mother did not want to articulate her own misery but on one occasion she found herself in a double bind, both “biological” and cultural. Part of her wanted to curse the strong aestheticism which she firmly clung to in her heart. Out of cultural semi-betrayal she recounted her dilemma:

One day at the usual meager supper-time, each person was given two small pieces of fish. Kikuo, my youngest son dropped one fish on the floor by accident. The poor boy cried for his loss and between sobs asked, “Can I pick it up, Mom?” Caught in a difficult choice between nutrition for him and my own aesthetic value, I could not stop him from retrieving it. I found my neighbors deeply engaged in eating their own food as if nothing had happened. Deep in my heart my cultural aesthetic norm was echoing high, “It is only an animal that eats something off the floor.” “*Bushi wa kuwanedo takayoji*”⁴² [A noble samurai opts for hunger over humiliation]. This was my

⁴²This is still a popular saying in Japan, primarily among the middle-aged when commenting on the materialism of today’s youth. In Kokura’s time, this idea was held in highest esteem.

cultural asset only available in my cultural aestheticism within which I was elaborately raised by my parents.

As can be imagined, another concern of mother Kokura was the malnutrition of her son, Kikuo. “He was a considerate boy, always thinking of what others thought, giving great weight to the importance of human interrelationship, but had been delicate and sensitive.” Kokura always said of him, “He was a man of tender heart.” He might have fulfilled his potential for success in life, given congenial or confabulatory circumstances which wartime could not afford. “He was that kind of person” was Kokura’s comment throughout his whole life. Camp life was catastrophic for him and the effects of internment continued to plague him in his later life. While in camp, he came to avoid any contact with camp administrators and staff, mostly *hakujin*. He developed a yearning for some arena where he could be free from a social as well as racial gaze, free from being treated as an “other.” Unlike his mother’s attachment to Japanese culture, his adaptation was more physical. Later in life he found an occasion and opportunity for racial anonymity and he frequently visited Japan well into his 50s where he found racial solace in an unusual way. Kokura outlived her son by one year. Her story about her loving son was as follows:

Within two months Kikuo had broken his teeth and used to catch colds almost every two weeks. I felt at once a consuming anxiety for my sons’ future and lament for my ill-fated life, whispering with a deep sigh, “What will our future be?” And poor Kikuo became *hakujin*-phobic in the camp. He recently said the happiest moment for him was the experience of being packed into a crowded Tokyo subway because nobody paid attention to the color of his skin. He used

to go to Tokyo, despite being physically delicate and suffering from a spell of diabetes. He died two years ago in the airplane bound for Dulles from Tokyo.

But urban Tokyo was too overwhelming for Kikuo when in front of the subway map in a subway station he asked a passer-by which line he should take to get where he wanted to go. The man said bluntly, “*Baka yome!*” [Read, stupid!] This was the story Kokura told about her son’s unexpected response, this time because of racial visibility.

A spell of harsh life in the internment camp recalled Kokura’s life in pre-war times. She reminisced about her economic condition, education, and marriage as if seeing each through a mental kaleidoscope, “We were not that prosperous but we bought land, paid the rent, and finally we could start a reasonable sized business. In fact, I married Kikujiro Kokura in 1931 and lived in Salinas.” As a cultural historian Kokura referred to cultural significance with fondness, because this was her inner reasoning for the advocacy of cultural legacy. Through her husband’s life she also legitimized her culture of origin.

My husband was a pharmacist, with two drugstores, garages, and some land. He was a business-oriented entrepreneur, working very hard without articulating negative things about a society hostile to Japanese Americans.

Although we were not accepted in the *hakujin* community, we could get along economically, buying, for instance, a new car every three years. We led a rather satisfactory life in a modest way by trying not to make waves in the *hakujin* community.

Having survived two years in exile, Mrs. Kokura used to say “*shin ga tsuyoi*”⁴³ [Strong is the core], probably identifying herself as such, to the effect that Japanese Americans might look fragile but were not vulnerable, for they had strong foundations and inner strengths. Her cultural reliance was demonstrated particularly in her belief that “*Rekishi wa nikai tamesareta*” [Our history survived two havocs]. To paraphrase, Kokura meant that, even before the internment, a generation of Japanese Americans had already lived through social turmoil and upheaval during the period of the demise of the shogunate and the establishment of a new government. “Tested by fire,” she would say, Japanese Americans had become strong. In her own family, the previous generation had come to America as a result of the political clash of the samurai against the new Meiji government, and now her own generation was experiencing yet another political clash in the U.S., which prompted her to reflect, “I had nowhere to go except the land of the desert.” But at the same time she was realistic enough to recognize the opposite effect of the internment. She never forgot to add mention of the few for whom the experience in concentration camps corrupted their lives.

After being housed in a tar barrack in the Arizona desert in Poston, the Kokura family was released with 25 dollars each in their pockets. They did not return to the West Coast, instead following a job opportunity to the East. She recalled their reentry to normal citizen life, albeit with the lapse of daily routine

⁴³This idea was and is a social value said especially of women. It discourages immediate aggressiveness in favor of inner strength, which will understandably be felt sooner or later. For a more comprehensive treatment of this behavior management, see Lauren Kessler, *Stubborn Twig: Three Generations in the Life of a Japanese American Family* (New York: Random House, 1993).

which is usually perpetuated in ordinary life by ordinary people. She said, “When we were released, Nobuo was 9 years of age, Tomio, 6, and Kikuo, 3 and a half. We completely forgot the traffic rules and we ignored green, yellow, and red.”

But the released internees became more concerned with the social gaze still upon them: “We felt ashamed when they saw us. Yes, we were completely skin and bones.” After one cultural elaboration after another as her justification, she had a keen insight into the ethnocentric position of society outside. In addition to her reference to the privilege of being white as an innate endowment, she further penetrated the power of language embedded in social relations. She felt that Japanese Americans invariably internalized their social positions defined always by others. She said:

Once again we felt shy and bashful, thinking, at the same time, that if we were *hakujin*, we would feel a strong anger in our hearts and would voice that. We Japanese Americans didn’t have confidently articulated ‘I’ and ‘me.’ We were concerned with how we were seen and heard which, in turn, created a sense of shame and then ended up eliminating social confrontation and deviation. In the then American society these cultural mores eventuated in coping tacitly with social predicaments, without a well-versed managing strategy of any kind.

But normalcy was normalcy, and the Kokuras returned to citizen life just as they had before. This was the beginning of life in Maryland. She said, “Because of a job opportunity, we lived in Riverdale and move to nearby Queens Chapel.” The Kokuras tried to hush up uncomfortable knowledge of the past for

a while. In any case, they had to live without digging up past experience. Through the eyes of her son, Nobuo, Kokura had to concentrate on normal life. She continued, “For a while we lived our lives as if nothing eventful had happened around us. Once when Nobuo was going through our neighborhood, he found another Japanese American family living near us. He found the exact blankets used in the internment camp hanging on the line but we didn’t make any fuss about it because we led our lives as we did.”

Grace Yuri Kokura did not articulate political issues much. But one time on an August day she talked about the force of tragic circumstance of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, with which she probably tried to reconcile by attaching to it some humane initiative toward the war-stricken people of Hiroshima by Japanese Americans settled in New Jersey. Carefully she started talking about both locales always noting complexity. Of the interrelationship among Pearl Harbor, incarceration, and Hiroshima, she stated, “Kase-san, two of the heavy histories are Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. Pearl Harbor was too shocking to talk about, changing our social lives completely.” But she delved into the inner and outer dimension of Japanese Americans as collective. Her cultural thinking entered into the Japanese American disposition and demeanor, reducing the complexity to a recurring sentiment of “*shikata ga nai*”⁴⁴ [It cannot be helped for

⁴⁴The literal meaning of *shikata ga nai* is that there is no method available. It signals resignation, functioning as an overused form of cultural management in the face of difficulty or impossibility. The rationale is grounded in the fact that this is something inevitable, albeit with a few positive alternatives. Historically, this idea was frequently used for an enormous amount of meaning-making and meaning-using. As Tracy Hirose states, “Japanese Americans have always been quick to respond to difficulty when there is something that can be done.” Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1993) p. 311.

it's uncontrollable]. She sighed heavily, reasoning, "If our Japanese American community had been positive enough politically to blame the Japanese government, we might positively have resisted another wrong of the American government done to us. '*Shikata ga nakatta*' [It could not be helped]. We might have been politically too immature to do either of them."

An irony in Japanese American history weighing heavily on her was the inexplicable coincidence of Hiroshima for Japanese Americans, producing another form of coincidence under cooperation. Let Kokura speak in her own words:

An irony of the immigration history of Japan is Hiroshima, from which one of the highest numbers of people immigrated. I know many issei from there. It was Japanese Americans after the war who sent Hiroshima lots of clothes, shoes and canned food, oh, Spam, our first food in internment. You know those people were among the lucky few to get a job opportunity and to be welcomed to the Seabrook Cannery area in New Jersey after the closing of the camps. Kase-san, you have the file⁴⁵ of

⁴⁵Sonoko Matsuzaka, ed., *Thank You Letter, Hiroshima City* (Hiroshima: Hiroshima City Hall, 1948). The file of thank you letters was carefully preserved by Rev. Takashi Uehara who had ministered in Seabrook and is now pastor of the Washington Japanese Christian Church in Bethesda, Maryland. The file was donated for my research purposes in the first year of 21st century. In her letter, Matsuzaka wrote of her thanks, declaring mixed emotions of joy and agony after the bombing, but reaffirming the eternal human value of world peace based upon mutual affection and forgetting the nightmare of the past. She became very determined to restore Hiroshima to more than it was before through their perseverance and endeavors, while greatly appreciating the material blessing the Americans and emigrated Japanese and their children bestowed on them. She wrote of how, although they had been baptized by the atomic bomb, the cicadas were chirping again and the nightingale had also started singing over the mountains and the dales and that happiness resides exclusively in the kingdom of peace. She lamented that, while they were taught to pay respects to their parents and show loyalty to the nation, now after the war, civic morality and social justice had become endangered in the face of corruption and smuggling. However, they felt all the more strongly the desire to reconstruct the

original thank you letters from citizens of Hiroshima. And thank you for showing the heart-felt letters sent to our community from Hiroshima 50 years ago.

But Kokura did not forget to add another reality, casting a pall on the human race:

Despite any of the humane actions, it's tragic for the human species to keep competing in a devastating power game. Countries that hold equal atomic bombs—as the United States—would have balance, you know, they all want balance of power, and they all want trade. Whatever in life, whether it is painting or whether it's engineering or mathematics, it is power competing in the name of balance. And so China isn't going to listen, North Korea isn't going to listen, Iraq isn't going to listen.

Yuri Kokura is not only fluent in the telling of culture but also in the enacting of it. Kokura once complained of an incident that occurred when she was making preparations for a party at her home in wooded Queens Chapel. On the day before that social gathering, she was getting her garden ready for the party when her neighbor admonished her for being on a high stepladder trimming trees at her age. An octogenarian, the frustrated Grace climbed down the stepladder that day, only to start the job again the following day before five o'clock. Without arguing with her caring neighbor, she persisted in doing it her own way in lieu of direct confrontation. She said to me, "*toshi wa kankei nai ne* [It has nothing to do with age], Kase-san."

In her garden, complete with nicely trimmed trees, she enjoyed the gathering.

country anew, encouraged by the warmth and kindness of human hearts.

As it was with her, she liked inviting people to her home, a custom she learned from American society. She was modest as modest could be, letting her guests enjoy each other's company and not monopolizing conversation. But more often than not the conversation tended toward the Japanese American outlook as to how they behaved especially when they were cornered. At this gathering, Kokura told of a nisei man of business. She spoke of his cross-cultural accommodating style combining American frankness with Japanese honesty. Encouraging him to talk about one of the toughest tests of the Japanese American community and introducing this man, Jack Hirose, to me she said, "Kase-san, this is Hirose-san, who is frank, a very frank man wherever he was. His frankness overrode anything else. Because of this, he was trusted by everybody in any situation. You replied 'no-no' to the two loyalty tests, but you were not sent to the segregation camp like other no-no boys.⁴⁶ Hirose-san, you should explain why you were treated as still loyal and were qualified to enlist." She knew what had happened to him. Her urging of his retelling of the story was an opportunity for the re-imagining of Meiji men and women fully equipped with outgoing and

⁴⁶In the Japanese American community, "No-No" meant two negative answers to the two loyalty questions posed by the U.S. government. In almost all cases, a negative response was treated as an indication of disloyalty to the United States and the 'trouble-makers' were sent to a segregation center in northern California. As can be imagined, families discussed their options and the excruciating consequences of their decisions. Many families were physically separated or emotionally torn apart based upon their choices. But Jack Hirose's frank attitude caused the authorities to marvel that he was too unblamingly logical. Although he answered "No-No," they made an exception for him and did not send him to the segregated camp, thus demonstrating something of an American big heart. All three narrators in this study raised the issue of the 'no-no boys' in their experiences. For a discussion of the loyalty questions and the issue of the 'No-No boys,' see the Introduction, the remaining Chapters, and the Conclusion in this dissertation.

forward-thinking spirits, by which Hirose received his reward after all. In response to her request, Hirose told of this exchange:

Well, I told the officer who was the captain, I said, “Look, captain. If you were of German descent and got stuck in this camp, would you just say thank you and just sit here?”

He said, “Well, you’ve got a point there. If we take you out, you might go in the service.”

I said, “You’ll take me out first.”

“We’ll find out,” said he.

In addition to the two big issues of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima, the “no-no boys” were a grave internal issue for those who were incarcerated. As is usual of her, Kokura, with a critical insight into history, noted, “I suspect the no-no boy issue has something to do with some manipulation of our history.” She, as a voracious reader, might have known of such manipulation, reminiscent of the JACL’s⁴⁷ (Japanese American Citizen League) designs.

In all of her cultural discussions, Grace Kokura came finally to reveal how her cultural background and foundation had thus been shaped. As imagined in

⁴⁷The Japanese American Citizens League, commonly known as JACL, started as a nisei group by the name of the American Loyalty League in the 1920s and evolved into the current organization with emphasis on loyalty, patriotism, and citizenship. Because of their wartime links to Washington, D.C., the leadership of JACL was a hot issue historically. The Japanese American community was divided in their support of JACL and their initiatives carried out within the framework of their accommodationist and assimilationist stance. Mike Masaoka was one of the most powerful leaders of this organization and was well-known in the Japanese American community. For a substantial discussion, see Chapter 3.

her cultural showdown, she held dear or admired traditions that her parents carried with them from Japan. Kokura might hate the use of the word “use,” but for the sake of communication this popular parlance is used in this paper. Kokura used those cultural values and norms enhancing or often purifying them to the level of aesthetic significance. She reinvigorated parental legacy by re-imagining what her parents said as well as how they thought. In fact, she liked talking of her parents and other related persons, especially her mother whom she gratefully acknowledged for her own fundamental character formation. Through life stories about these people narrated in her voice, one could see the on-going process as well as the mechanism of her own thinking. Her careful elaboration was thus grounded in her parental legacy crystallizing into such cultural forms as values, yearnings, and aestheticism throughout her whole life course.

Time and again she was reluctant to spell out the whole of her own life, especially her personal life, revealing “missing links” in such life matters as her education and marriage. It is most likely that this disposition reflects the samurai legacy of not showing pride in success in romance and achievement. Only on two occasions did such information slip out. On one occasion, Grace Kokura said, “After my husband’s death, 15 years ago, I became awfully busy doing all of the paperwork. I had been dependent on my husband. I think I was spoiled,” suggesting the sweet life she had had. The details of her educational background she did not reveal in her lifetime. According to a brief introduction in her memorial service in the spring of 2004, she attended the University of California, Berkeley for two years before her marriage. She might have told me if I had asked her specifically.

Kokura was an extraordinary “oral historian” in Japanese, given her initiative to narrate her story on her own terms, in her own right, and on her own occasions without direct imposition from outside. In all of these glorious matters samurai are expected to stay calm. Her belief system was based upon the quality of cultural values overarching the whole path of life. Her belief as well as ethic was embedded in silent honor. Her fluency, then, was in the focus on cultural matters through which to make vociferous, if not clamorous, voices on matters of her own selection. As a matter of fact, she frequently viewed her “noisiness” as something archetypical in light of values grounded in Japanese history and culture. This was her cultural representation. Her cultural hermeneutics, therefore, had a stronger bearing on life reflection rather than on life itself. As a cultural representer, she reflected on a wide range of life.

Whenever she had company, she did not take the initiative in conversation but at the end of the gathering she never failed to make editorial remarks as to how the beauty of Japanese culture could be incorporated into the central tenor of American culture. The following was her important cross-cultural consideration for the legitimatization of her thinking and doing.

With a greater composure towards racial relations, Grace Kokura showed a productive familiarity with Japanese classics. A word should be said about “process.” Her talk is not the means to achieve something, but this talking process itself is cultural living. By pondering quietly in Queens Chapel one autumn afternoon, she paid preponderant attention to culture aestheticized, saying:

Well, the war changed people. As a matter of fact, we came back to a normal life feeling much smaller towards a larger

society. Living here in Maryland, we found nice *hakujin* for we were not as numerous as in California before the Pacific war. Here on the East Coast it was hard to find *hakujin* staring at us as we so uncomfortably experienced on the West Coast.

Going beyond our social identity for a larger context, the pursuit of something unchanging and unchanged became my aspiration, the craving for beauty, which was not spoiled by any catastrophe such as the war. Kase-san, the root of beauty is best found in high arts like Murasaki Shikibu,⁴⁸ for the way of her thinking was beautiful, which is still true today among Japan's art. Another example I really like was Hiroshige Ando⁴⁹ [Utagawa] whose view of life was characterized as humane love toward both people and nature. Especially beautiful was fostering feeling toward children, expecting with a tender heart their growth. This is a beautiful design in the fabric of life, the product of beautiful thought. You know we do not simply buy the idea of sanitation as the result of taking shoes off inside the house. But rather the moment of doing so, itself, is a beatitude to be essentially valued.

⁴⁸Murasaki Shikibu was a woman of literature in the pre-Middle ages [794-1185]. She is best known internationally for her masterpiece *Genji Monogatari* [The Tale of Genji]. Historically, almost nothing is known about her life, but she is said to have learned a great deal from her father who cultivated her talent for writing. Admonished by him to keep a low profile demeanor as a real heroine of excellence, she tried not to flaunt her artistic talent. Her lyrical style was best developed through an array of characters, rather than on the wide use of rhetorical devices, thus showing "her interest in the complexities of the human spirit...conveying her message through the mediation of character rather than through simile and metaphor." Alan Campbell, et al., eds., *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, Kodansha, 1993) p. 1015.

⁴⁹Hiroshige Ando [1797-1855], or Utagawa after the Utagawa School with which he was once affiliated, is one of the best known artists in Japan and in the West for his *ukiyo*e woodblock prints. He was born of a low class of samurai who engaged in firefighting. His world of brush painting is the everyday world, full of human life, sentiment, and sympathy successfully incorporated into the surrounding nature. For a more artistic combination of human life and human emotion, see S. Miyake, *Hiroshige: The Fifty-Three Stages of the Tokaido* (Nagoya, Japan: The Tokai Bank Foundation, 1984).

Grace Kokura unfolded her cultural thinking particularly on such vulnerability as “pride that falls” for no harmony accompanied it. In the long course of history, Japanese culture faced a great amount of vicissitude of life thus producing the ability to endure the incarceration. As Grace learned from her father, the basic tenet to live out the hardship was not by verbal assurance but inner strength in the face of asperity, thus returning to the issue of silent power. She elaborately interpreted her life course by focusing on one particular event after another, thus constructing an aesthetic world of her own. She reflected:

The era in which I was raised was a period where life was elegant. A beautiful combination of Buddhism and Confucianism was socially prevalent and I gave greatest weight to that morality. This ethic was not something to be discarded as merely life in the past. This was an unchanging Japanese tradition since the Haniwa Era.⁵⁰ In this sense Japanese have not changed for 1800 years. Because of this we could survive the exclusion and internment. We looked physically weak but were strong inside. Inner strength was another name of value, if not pride. Once you feel proud of the fact that you have great tradition or legacy, you might fall. We find a lot of arrogance based on pride in our human history. What was most important was the affection people feel and hold, creating in us elegance. You might phrase it as *kimochi* [emotion and feeling]. But true *kimochi* transcends language. In fact, it was *kimochi* that counts in society yesterday and today. As long as we hold on to such human sensitivity, we can make it. Taking into consideration no time for idling away in the concentration camp, we Americans of Japanese extraction were culturally endowed with this inner hard core, producing and

⁵⁰The term ‘*haniwa*’ refers to the unglazed earthenware that was buried with the deceased elite at the end of the third century. What is amazing is the time period for Kokura’s reference, which was semi-archeological.

probably functioning as a collectively consistent orientation even in too challenging a world. This holds true even if we have become *hakujin*-like as many did. Everybody became speechless in the face of something sublime. We didn't need language which bound our capacity.

In a tone full of spirit, Grace Kokura acknowledged a universal human psyche in her admiration of the ways of Native Americans and of her own mother. Doing something from the bottom of the heart is a beautiful way, albeit often sullied by political force. Grace had a deep conviction for the final victory of humanity in the midst of life's hardships, characterizing this stance as far more important than bemoaning the world around her. In addition to her deep love of beauty she celebrated this principle and practice by actually re-visiting and re-imagining what she directly heard and experienced. Her deep feeling toward these experiences will illustrate her non-verbal value system:

In Japanese tradition, Japanese do have something elaborately refined in them. Whether they get involved in textiles or whether they are engaged in *okesho* [cosmetics] or bonsai, they have some fine points, creating subtleties of life. Whether it's painting or even cars, even one's dying words, still what can be found is some fine, refined, or even, oh, our language cannot capture its delicacy.... All of those things they understood for centuries and centuries. They approached it by understanding, by experiencing, and by knowledge. It was not through studies at school. It's just something that they are able to connect with nature.

Kokura's aesthetics crystallized when she talked about swordsmanship, the symbol of which is a legendary sword and its relationship with the sword-smith.

Grace Yuri Kokura, born of samurai parents, did not disclose her family background until late in our interviews when I noticed a picture of a sword on her bookshelf. This long silence itself was her mental composure symbolizing her stoicism free from anything sordid. In other words, her cultural value is not, and should not be defined within the confines of materialism. With all of her family finally disclosed, Grace Yuri Kokura had a due right to articulate her mental constitution and spirituality. This time by referring to the sword of the highest quality she equated her sense of aesthetics with the beauty with which the master sword-smith throws his heart and soul into his sword-making. As a samurai granddaughter, to be specific, she put what she thought about her foundation of life into the swordsmanship, the most significant symbol of samurai. Kokura most enthusiastically decoded the unfettered essence, the *raison d'être* of her being, saying:

Even the greatest sword person had knowledge of the sword by experience and intuition. This was long before science. And Masamune,⁵¹ the greatest sword-smith of Japan knew exactly when to heat it by fire and when to cool it with water. That was the secret that he had, and by his craftsmanship, he knew how to achieve a fine edge at just the right moment. Not only that it had the prettiest designs on it, the most beautiful designs that finish up; when the smith cooled it, it worked just fine. It's so beautiful that when I look at swords, I'm not afraid. The beauty with the soul of the smith is there, spiritually. I'm not

⁵¹Masamune Okazaki forged a very limited number of swords of exceptionally high quality. Masamune was esteemed for his craftsmanship and is considered a virtuoso, comparable to none, past and present. Today Masamune swords are legendary and only nineteen genuine swords remain as national treasures. For more general information, see Keiji Nagahara, ed., *Iwanami Nihonshi Jiten* [Dictionary of Iwanami Japanese History] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000).

afraid. I sit up straight. My mind then clears and I can think straight. That's the world we can reach out to. When we use the knives that we use, we find them finer. I don't know how they grind it but they understand, understand so thoroughly what they react to.

From the perspective of the aestheticism of Grace Kokura, she constructed her world around her despite her circumstances. Her aesthetically situated meaning-making is genuineness and sincerity, which she also found in the daily life of farming:

In the camp I saw some of the farmers in between the barracks—15 feet, it was all virgin soil. No one had planted anything. One day I saw some farmers earnestly discussing how to test the soil in which they planned to plant *daikon* [radish] and corn. I heard them saying by looking at the space and the soil, “this soil is deficient in such-and-such, and it's better to mix in such-and-such.” They understood, just by looking, what the soil needed. This was the desert soil in Arizona—far different from Salinas. The farmers understood the soil. Traditional minds share the same minds those farmers had. I mean it's a heritage that the nisei inherited from their parents. They had the way of understanding of both living and dead things. Amazingly the nisei inherited those, so that they produced vegetables, although there was nothing there, nothing when we got there.

Kokura did not stop her applied aestheticist thinking, emphasizing the beauty of consistence and integration that follows in Native American history in pursuit of the harmony of man with nature:

Native Americans increasingly feel proud of their history, once denigrated by the majority American culture. Indeed there have been struggles, but basically they were removed to desolate areas with their lands taken away. But they lived with nature by making the best of the lands around them. They steadfastly adhered to their principles without making any unnecessary compromises. At a party the other day I heard from a white in the Midwest who told me they learned in white school outside, but inside the home they have lived up to the old teachings of glorious tribes of Native Americans. Native Americans in this country were tested by fire, as Japanese Americans were. Brave hearts are another beauty in the material world where people keep pursuing lucre, I think. A true heart is a brave heart, in pursuit of consistent principle even when it doesn't seem to pay.

To Grace Kokura what mattered was an attached feeling toward material things, regardless of the amount one has. As long as she had such affection toward a thing, its value increased. What she learned from her mother was the sense of frugality to satisfy and enjoy even what little things she had, producing good relationships with others, creating respect for other people, and thinking highly of others. She recollected her mother's ethical value of frugality which was not confined to necessity but understood as pleasure. To her, true heroes and heroines were those who were of caliber enough to make sacrifices willingly for the sake of others, fully suggestive of self-chosen sacrifice for the sake of children. She thus admired the sincerity of her mother in daily matters, by referring to cuisine matters:

A parallel thing is said of heroes and heroines who sacrificed their material gains. My mother used to cook with very limited

materials by spending a tremendous amount of time before a party, thinking how the guests would be pleased with the enhanced taste when she made such elaborate preparations. I could see the caring heart within the culture I was raised. And this was not a cost my mother paid but was her pleasure. The sentiment I did share with my mother was this cultural *kimochi* [emotion and feeling] or affective feeling in this sense, getting along with other people, thinking of others as more important than myself.

Reflecting upon her strong focus on her parental culture, she voiced her opinions subsuming all of her experience under transcultural values. In short, this was her meaning-making, meaning-sustenance, and meaning-disseminating. Locally she was an active participant in the discussion group in her local library in Prince Georges County, Maryland, to which contributions at her funeral in 2004 were accepted.⁵² She also liked discussion on a larger scale about Japan-related American culture as related to her most unforgettable history. Out of conflictual history she opted for purified values. To her this was beauty, as she explained in her euphemistic excuse about aging:

In the up-and-down world everybody and everything is awful regardless of the country, U.S. or Japan, and especially in a tumult among soldiers in both countries. Wars are just too much for me so I won't watch war-movies at all. If one lives

⁵²According to the reverse side of the memorial program for Grace dated April 16, 2004: "In memory of Grace Yuri Kokura, contributions may be sent to the Hyattsville Public Library.... The gifts will be dedicated to acquire a Japanese art, architecture, landscaping, and culture collection and inside each acquisition a special memorial bookplate will be affixed with her name." David R. McNeilly, *In Loving Memory: Grace Yuri Kokura, October 4, 1908–March 7, 2004* (University Park, Maryland: Riverdale Presbyterian Church, 2004).

long, the most important thing of all is to try to focus on a beautiful thing, promoting human heart and affection without demonstratively showing one's self to other people.

Kokura made allowances for the wartime exclusion order against Japanese Americans in the cultural framework of acquiescence. To her this was far from a roundabout way, but rather this was a sure way in the long run to make things happen non-confrontationally, which she saw as more Japanese American, producing something natural and harmonious. She discussed:

When I accepted the exclusion treatment by whites, I did not fight against them simply because this was one of those things. I grew up as socially Japanese. I cherished Buddhist ideas as interpreted by Bill Hosokawa,⁵³ which says we flow with the current as it keeps flowing down naturally by evading rocks in front of the flow, not by plunging into a ruinous attempt. Rather our way was to attempt to get closer to a goal through modesty. We often prefer reticence, hoping to work things out without direct confrontation. But remember this was not a coping strategy, but generating harmony with nature. In other words, our way was oneness with nature.

Kokura furthered this idea by recollecting her camp life, saying, "This was analogous to the soil around us. It was like the mother earth nursing us, for soil was our mother. The soil indeed includes something dirty, but soil was essential,

⁵³Kokura referred to the metaphor she liked best from Bill Hosokawa's book. He wrote, "The Japanese themselves like to compare it to a small stream. Like a stream they have followed the contours of the land, followed the lines of least resistance, avoided direct confrontation and developed at their own pace, always shaped by the external realities of the larger society." Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1969) pp. 2-3.

producing beautiful flowers. I know a lot of Japanese Americans brought with them a variety of seeds to the internment camps to make an untillable soil friendly—*kimochi* or sentiment to nurture the hardest.”

Out of Kokura’s reasoning of Japanese history as cultural exemplar, she summarized her cultural awareness grounded in her historic association. Time and again her aestheticism demanded as a backdrop something negative, so that the beauty stood loftier in spite of, or perhaps because of this. Whether good will is rewarded after all or not, what mattered to Grace was the greatness of heart, mind, and spirit, which was the Japanese tradition she inherited, also suggestive of chivalry or knighthood in Western tradition. She continued:

Hiroshige’s prints reflected this idea: You might appreciate his art better if you take into consideration the time of his production—Japan’s *sakoku*,⁵⁴ or the period of more than 200 years when Japan was isolated from the rest of the world. It’s ironic to find that no other period ever produced better art than this awfully difficult time. Beyond hardship people see a clearer future by virtue of that hardship. Oh, we entrusted our future to something better even at the time of evacuation. We watered vegetables by getting up early so that we avoided being trouble to others. We hated seeing thirsty tomatoes. This was a Japanese cultural asset in which I was raised. I think this was a great heart and mind in the tradition I inherited.

Kokura did not merely adore aestheticism for its own sake, but strongly

⁵⁴The Tokugawa Shogunate established *sakoku*, or the national seclusion policy (1635-1854). While strengthening the social order as well as legitimizing their control, they shunned all foreign contact, including foreign travel, trade, and Christianity, with the exception of commerce which was limited to the southern part of Japan. Because of this isolation, this period saw the flourishing of such domestic culture as arts, drama, and schooling especially among the common populace.

acknowledged and respected the country where one was born and raised. Her concerns extended to the future of children growing in this natural vein, but she preferred to contextualize it within the fabric of aesthetic value where making excuses is not considered beautiful.

The positive advice we might give to our children is to serve the country in which you grew up, and that beautifully. At school we obeyed teachers. We obeyed American law, rule, and the U.S. government without taking a shot at it. We followed that formidable President's Order for evacuation quietly. Some thought it was wrong, but that was in hindsight.

But the demands of Kokura's sense of justice should override an attachment to the country of her upbringing. In fact, Kokura raised the issue of fairness by taking up her son as the case for fairness. This may be reasonable, but this complexity developed into a sense of honor in him. Kokura once again explored the heart of the no-no boys or *kibei*⁵⁵ who responded in the negative to the loyalty test given in the internment camps. These boys disregarded the American government measure out of a sense of honor grounded in fairness, responding sarcastically to the unfair code of conduct coercively imposed, "if they call me a Jap, I dare to be more Jap." Kokura, as an active discussant in her local library, did not fail to topicalize the beginning of the no-no boy issue. Kokura looked back on her son Nobuo's reaction, saying:

⁵⁵*Kibei* were the nisei generation who came back to the United States after their early education in Japan. See footnote 124 in the Conclusion. As we have seen, there was a long-standing issue in the Japanese American community. See footnote 46 in this chapter.

My seven-year old Nobuo, my eldest son, was relieved at school to learn that we were citizens. But a few months later he realized that the President ordered the evacuation of both citizens and non-citizens alike. He said, "If that is President Roosevelt, treating us like this, we should fight in favor of Japan." He believes in justice and fairness. Kase-san, his sense of honor is analogous to the no-no boy sentiment.

Kokura's value system worked in pursuit of a sense of justice, not the idea that anything goes, energizing her traditional willpower to survive the impossible. Kokura then enhanced her experience, categorizing it in higher value for humanity. Her review of the past continued as such:

Because of a strong trust in the American government, ordinary people in the Japanese American community got angry, truly angry at the President's Executive Order. Well, it's only natural for anyone to make efforts for the country in which he or she was raised. Even in such a concentration camp as ours, we tried extremely hard to endure for the country in which we resided. But we had a strong core which was handed down from generation to generation. We had a strong will to make it. I knew quite a few friends of iron will whose knowledge was not so academic. What really mattered in the camp was not something learned by sitting, but acting it out to accomplish something positive. True humanity was known by deeds not by words. They learned a better fertilizer by trying it out, by energizing wills, activating hands and feet, and using minds. The knowledge thus acquired was something like our children because we came to know it naturally.

Grace Kokura enlarged what she believed to be potent by promoting the value of intuition and insight. It is through this value that truth can be obtained. She

posited herself as an empiricist raising the example of the cloth-dyeing business in Kyoto. Her thinking persistently concerned the way in which truth can be “done.” From her mother she learned the focus on something good and enhancement for something higher, with the assumption that culture can be transmittable. She acknowledged that she owed her mother a great deal, albeit within the classic concepts of gender roles within a patriarchy. She continued:

In Europe they advanced logic by words, only producing recurring gaps between man and nature. True knowledge is advanced according to people’s experiences. In the case of the dyeing of classic cloth, real professionals sensed this was the best river for this traditional business in Kyoto. True masters learned the best things from every quarter and adjusted the ideas they learned to fit into a larger world. In this fashion, my mother used to talk with me while I was growing up about the best parts of Japanese traditions, directing my attention to that which was admirable. Japanese mothers taught important aspects deep inside culture, discouraging mere talking, to say nothing of chattering. Thanks to my parents’ discipline, I came to realize the better parts of whatever society. Because of such parental guidance since childhood, we had no memory of being scolded. Usually in Japanese tradition, the business of the mother was discipline for the girls while the proper business of the father was education for the sons.

A year before her death Kokura gave me a book as if it were her self, and told me that, by reading it, I would more fully understand her world, especially the world that she was reluctant to disclose. This was her way of revealing what she was unwilling to talk about.

Kase-san, the *kimochi* [emotion and feeling] in my long history is best reflected in my friend's book, *Lotus*⁵⁶ an autobiography of her own publishing. Both of us strongly agree on the life-ways for actual life, on life for the basis of our thinking, as well as on behavioral norms. We share our ideals in this book. Tahira-san was my other self, as you can see in her dedication to me. When you think I did not tell you my personal history so much, please refer to the story we shared in this book. You will understand my inner self reflected in this book. It shows how she felt toward new environments and how she negotiated with the world around her, and how she made adjustments for higher objectives. But remember this book was not a psychology book, for this reflected true feelings not the complicated phases of mindsets. Events were seen in frank and honest fashion, free from psychological theories which often deceived our daily feeling in our lives. We did *enryo*⁵⁷ [reserve and restraint] when *hakujin* challenged or threatened, which was a tenet of this life history, without engaging in sophisticated thinking and behavior or using analytical terms. To me and to her, the great book of society was Western culture which was characterized in Japanese artistic beauty.

As her reflection of the whole of cultural history, Grace Kokura thus urged me to read and review *Lotus*, for her real life echoed Chieko's world. Chieko, delayed by the circuitous journey of incarceration and her aging as well, grew to

⁵⁶Chieko Tahira, *Lotus* (California: Pleasant Hill, 1996).

⁵⁷*Enryo* was one of the key concepts to understand the behavioral norms of Japanese Americans. In formal situations, they were expected to hold back and be modest without showing their own desire. They showed consideration for others by not imposing their self-will or self-need. Nisei used this social code of conduct for polite refusal and unobtrusive behavior. Abstinence, reserve, and resignation for the sake of other people are representations of this social value in their daily lives. For the origin and application of the word see Daniel Iwao Okimoto, *American in Disguise* (New York: Walker/Weatherhill, 1971) in the Literature Review of the Introduction.

be reluctant to write her history. But a birthday occasion renewed her decision to complete the book and she wrote in her acknowledgement, “My 80th birthday at Jack Nakashima’s became the springboard for completing my writing.” The foundation of Chieko’s cultural thought and feeling was the persistent parental admonition, “sleep, work, study and *gaman* [patience and perseverance]” (38) with no mention of play at all. Altruism prevailed in her experiences:

To do and act as requested at first, or demanded later was one of the Golden Rules in our family life. The welfare, happiness and harmony in the family life as a unit meant more than the selfish desires and wants of the individual. Individualism with its ‘I love me’ first was secondary in this family system which was quite contrary to the American way of life. (50)

Reflecting her rule of frugality for herself but lavishness toward others, Grace Kokura opened her home to Caucasians as well as non-Caucasians. As the program for her memorial service in 2004⁵⁸ noted, “For over 50 years she nurtured an extended family which included countless numbers of individuals including visitors from different nations and new immigrants....”

One significant experience that was shared by Grace and Chieko was the forced removal deep inland because of suspicions of disloyalty. In the midst of wartime turmoil against the perceived disloyalty of Japanese Americans, they had no means to clear their name, no way to voice their patriotism. This created an enormous feeling of mortification about their place in society and chagrin toward the false accusations against their selfhood, which they had cultivated so honestly.

⁵⁸See footnote 52 in this chapter.

Referring to the cries of ‘disloyal Japs,’ Chieko raised her own voice: “We had no money or funds or experience to compete for our side, to tell the TRUTH. The truth was we didn’t do anything wrong, we didn’t conceal anything for we had nothing to hide. We were innocent” (105). Her transcendency over humanity in this ‘Catch 22’ was “Those are times in human hearts when right is so wrong and wrong so right!” (118)

Following the President’s removal order, the issei and nisei left the West Coast quietly. Chieko portrayed the drama of their lives: “Act I Scene 1 so far has been carried out without disorder, bloodshed or riot. Yes, we were defeated people, but law abiding. Everyone sat erect and met humiliation with pride and with great dignity. Everybody...looked straight ahead, expressionless, too proud to cry” (135). They tried to be calm and not disrupt their stoic composure. They went so far as to tend to the plants they were leaving behind, caring for them with an enormous amount of *kimochi* [sentiment and emotion], reminiscent of the elaborate care of the farmers that Grace referred to in her narrative. Chieko wrote of tomato plants and their unknown future. At the same time she gave full credit to the tomatoes’ ability to grow without being disturbed by human events.

Chieko wrote:

The plants knew not what struggles were going on in human hearts and souls. The tomatoes grew and bed after bed had to be transplanted and watered. As we transplanted them, I spoke to each and every one of the plants: “I hope you will get into good hands and grow into healthy plants and produce lots and lots of tomatoes.” (101)

After all was said and done, Chieko Tahira felt grateful for the common culture she and a Caucasian friend shared. She included in *Lotus* the entire letter she received from her former neighbor, which read in part:

I have thought much of the Evacuation. Bad as it was, there were many things to remember with pride and pleasure. I was so proud of you I nearly burst. You looked so calm and orderly and intelligent.... Your little children showed no fear—proving that their parents had been very wise in the handling of those little loves who absorb fear so readily from their Elders.

The Army boys looked a little silly with their guns, but they were kind and courteous and behaved the way we like to have American men behave. I felt Democracy was working on both sides.

....I have many reminders of you—the covers for my bureau, the plants, and the willow tree, to mention only a few. I may even eat a tomato in your honor! (160-161)

In this way, Grace Kokura disclosed her cultural values by entrusting me with her world in the form of her friend's writing. It might be Grace's way of doing her duty by transmitting her culture to the next generation. This same sentiment was echoed in Chieko's dedication to Grace: "Review yesteryears and relate to your Sansei offspring, the life and tribulation of yesteryears. Wishing you a long life with many good memories."

Grace Yuri Kokura thus aestheticized each process of her whole life, through which to give meaning, and furthermore place specific life events in traditional historical context. In so doing, she became more appreciative of each stage of her life. She also attempted to disseminate the cultural dialogue between the particular moment of her life and that of the past and the future by using what she

had internalized through parental guidance. She might have attempted to transcend what was situated in front of her in common cultural context, working on the assumption that the local reality thus accomplished not only gave order and stability but also become intelligible in a larger society. This was her transcultural competency over a social structure imposed upon her life and this was her intellectual construction of the cultural meaning of her life in the complicated tapestry of history in which she as agent had so engagingly lived.

CHAPTER 2

YANKEE SAMURAI: LIVING UP TO LOYALTY TO AMERICA (Joseph Ichiuji)

“Statement of United States Citizenship of Japanese Ancestry” (Selective Service Form 304A)

No. 27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty wherever ordered? (for males) // If the opportunity presents itself and you are found qualified, would you be willing to volunteer for the Army Nurse Corps or the WAAC [Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps]? (for females)

No. 28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government, power or organization? (for male nisei) // Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese Emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization? (for female nisei) // Will you swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States?⁵⁹ (for issei)

This chapter will address the unusual character of one nisei man in his cultural struggle to develop an identity of aspiration, albeit deeply grounded in the identity imposed upon him by the coercive society around him. Through one second generation Japanese American life prior to, during, and after World War II, one might witness the on-going interaction between the agentic capacity for the

⁵⁹These were the loyalty tests prepared by the War Department and administered by the War Relocation Authority (WRA) in 1943. Later they provided revisions (see the questions after the slashes) made especially for issei, the non-citizen Japanese Americans who might become stateless if they answered “yes.” Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

personal construction of identity and the societal forces at work on identity. In an attempt to achieve a desirable identity of his own choosing, given the unpredictable social reality, this American-born combat man made unique sacrifices under unique circumstances, while at the same time one of his relatives was a kamikaze⁶⁰ pilot in the Japanese Air Force. Young Joe Ichiuji swore his allegiance to the U.S. government and offered himself as an artilleryman to show that Japanese Americans were truly loyal citizens. Joe Ichiuji, this brave service man characterized by a “Go for Broke”⁶¹ mentality, sought to fight the stigma of alleged disloyalty as well as accomplish true citizenship in the highly racially exclusive society of the day. This was his adaptation process as he struggled for acceptance and recognition as a loyal American.

After first disclosing that his father’s youngest brother, Konosuke, was a kamikaze pilot who died on a suicide mission in the Pacific theater, Joe talked about his parents’ background, paying close attention to his father’s life as an immigrant:

⁶⁰The literal meaning of the word *kamikaze* is “divine winds” referring to the winds that blew in 1274 and again in 1279 to repel an invading Mongolian Army in the Japan Sea. Because of these typhoons that blew at the right time, the myth arose that Japan was protected by divine winds that blew at necessary times. During World War II, the divine winds did not blow, but young pilots assumed the responsibility of the divine winds to attack U.S. vessels in the Pacific Ocean. Konosuke Ichiuji was one such kamikaze pilot who died on his mission of duty. Konosuke was Joe Ichiuji’s father’s younger brother in Shimane, Japan where Joe’s parents were originally from. For Mongol invasions of Japan, 1274 and 1279 see Alan Campbell, et al., eds., *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993); Humihiko Gomi, *Shosetsu Nihonshi Kenkyu* [A Detailed Study of Japanese History] (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1998).

⁶¹“Go for Broke” was the motto of the 422nd Regimental Combat Team. The motto comes from a Hawaii crap shooter’s expression meaning to shoot the works or to put everything on the line, according to Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

Both of my parents came from Shimane-ken, which is due west of Hiroshima, on the southwestern coast of Japan. My father came first to the U.S. to work as a farm laborer to make a fast fortune and return to Japan. But it didn't work that way. He came to the U.S. via Hawaii and then to San Francisco. He got a job as a houseboy and went to night school to learn the English language. After he completed the course in English, he moved to Oakland to join his sister and her husband (the Katos) working in a floral nursery.

Back in Japan, arranged marriages were a common practice. Go-betweens negotiated the marriages of young men and women living in nearby villages, based on a good fit of their family backgrounds, and in consultation with their parents and relatives. In Ichiuji's parents' case, the only difference was that it was arranged internationally rather than domestically. Because the bridegroom was physically unavailable in Japan, their marriage was done by proxy. Relying on this modified fashion of marriage, Joe's father summoned his mother to meet him in Seattle for a new life, probably without knowing how this "picture bride"⁶²

⁶²Although this practice was an accepted marriage tradition in Japan, it was not an acceptable concept of marriage in the United States. These marriages were "attacked by the exclusionists as proof of Japanese immorality and barbarism and were subsequently banned by the Japanese government as a result.... At the time picture marriages were stopped [in 1920] some 24,000 single issei men remained on the mainland alone, for most, the end of picture marriages meant the end of their hope of ever marrying." Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993) pp. 283-284.

Uji Ichioka discusses social factors regarding picture brides, "Two factors limited the number of bachelors who returned to Japan to seek brides. Few could afford the time and expense of such a trip, which included the heavy outlays for marriage required by Japanese social custom. Some returnees faced the possibility of being inducted into the military. All Japanese men living abroad enjoyed deferments, but lost their deferred status if they returned for more than thirty days. The time spent in finding an appropriate bride, in entering into a formal engagement, and in getting married often exceeded a

arrangement was viewed by whites. As a matter of fact, in Japan at that time, if two people married without the benefit of an appropriate go-between, theirs was considered an affair of love, one that yielded easily to momentary passion and which, in turn, brought disgrace to the family name. In the U.S., however, the idea of picture brides was next to impossible. Joe Ichiuji simply stated, “After an exchange of pictures, my father asked my mother to join him and they agreed to be married. He went to Seattle to meet her and married her before returning to Oakland.”

After work in both fishery and agriculture, Ichiuji’s father eventually chose shoe-making as his profession. His parents had six children, including Joe, the second son or *jinan*, who had none of the privileges but also none of the obligations of the eldest son. This allowed him more freedom to do what he wanted, a circumstance frequently observed in Japanese tradition.

After their return to Oakland, they heard about Monterey and its growing fish industry and demands for fishermen. So my parents and the Katos moved to Monterey. Many Japanese families had settled there and established a Japanese community. My father worked in a fish market but did not like it, so he decided to go back to farming. Their first son, Mickey, was born in Monterey.

My family moved to Salinas and started a truck farm, raising onions. He made a mistake by over-fertilizing the onions and lost everything. Another difficulty was that the United States never allowed them to become American citizens.

month. Thus many bachelors resorted to the so-called picture-bride practice....” For further details see the section, “The Japanese Immigrant Family”: Uji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988) pp. 164-175.

This bar grew to limit landownership. I, their second son, was born on February 14, 1919.

My father decided to take up the shoe repairing business. He knew Mr. Iwashige, who owned a shoe repair shop in Salinas. He offered to teach my father the business. After my father learned the business, my father and his family moved back to the Monterey area and opened his own shoe repair shop in Pacific Grove, which is 2.5 miles from Monterey. Soon my father became very successful in his new business and settled in Pacific Grove and raised six of us—five boys and one girl—namely Mickey (deceased), Joseph, Jimmie, Kazumae, Paul, and Harry. We had another sister, Lucy, who passed away when she was a baby.

Joe Ichiuji proceeded to tell about his boyhood life where he intermingled mostly with white children because of where his father had chosen to live, unlike other Japanese American families who usually lived close to one another. Joe said, “In the early days before the war, we grew up with Caucasian friends, because there were very few Japanese families living in Pacific Grove.” It was during this period that he internalized his parents’ cultural values, especially their ethics system, and that he shaped his own social world, while at the same time becoming aware of different treatment within Caucasian circles. This led him to extend his social life and he became a young man with whom it was easy to get along. This was a cross-cultural occasion for him to recognize otherness in himself, albeit seeking alternatives without inviting direct confrontation with the unwelcoming society around him. His positive thinking helped him seek options that he thought would work without having to suppress bitterness or resentment in his heart. Japanese Christian church also provided an ideal opportunity for Joe for in-group socialization.

At school teachers and classmates were friendly and treated us equally. However, when it came to social activities, we were not invited. In later years, we attended the Japanese Presbyterian Church in Monterey with our folks and associated with Japanese American friends.

At home Joe learned discipline from his parents, thus shaping his ethical norms and conduct, while he directed most of his attention to studying. He agreed with his parents' behavioral code, thinking that this was instilled in him through his parents' positive guidance and acknowledging that this was very important for his social ascendancy in the future. He recollected the tough discipline and noted the patriarchic family order at home. A sense of filial piety underlay the daily routine. Highlighting his moxa experience, Joe recounted the disciplinary instruction he received:

My parents, as with most Japanese parents, not only told us to be obedient to them but also motivated us to study hard. They said that in order to succeed, one must study harder than others. Actually I thought I must study twice as hard. So we studied hard and made good grades. My mother once cauterized the skin with moxa as a chastisement. Having five boys and one girl, you know, she knew that worked. She told us we had to respect our parents and older people. We had to show our respect. My father was the big boss in the family.

Joe Ichiuji indeed worked hard, complying with his parental cultural tradition and legacy. With his parents' encouragement, he regularly attended Japanese language school after he came back from American public school in his

community. But, half in apology and half in justification, he confessed that he was not always enthusiastic about this additional education, thus creating one of his supreme wartime ironies, sweet and bitter, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Joe gave an account of how he engaged himself in the Japanese language:

We attended Japanese language school in Monterey for a couple hours every week after our regular classes. I remember it was kind of a long day for us. You know how you learned letters and sounds. Once you quit, it's hard to remember because you don't use it very much. The Japanese we use is limited and broken, because my folks speak in English. At home I spoke in English with my father but to my mother in Japanese.

For Ichiuji, nothing was as effective as fairy tales and legends for developing childhood fantasy and imagination, in turn shaping culture and what is referred to as habits of association. Related by his parents with fondness, they anchored deep within a latent domain where they might become useful for meaning-making in his later life. In the case of the Ichiujis, the bedtime stories told to Joe were classics about cultural heroes and heroines in Japanese children's literature. Joe remembered such stories saying, "At home my parents often told us bedtime stories like *Momotaro* and *Benkei*."⁶³ These stories describe the enormous

⁶³There were, as elsewhere, a number of children's legendary stories and in fact Ichiuji's parents told many. Joe remembered the theme of the human relationship between the good master and loyal retainers in the feudal age. *Momotaro*, born from *momo*, a peach, was solicited by suffering villagers to destroy an ogre kingdom. He succeeded with the ardent support of loyal retainers in the form of personified animals. This story exemplified total loyalty in response to superb leadership and was told from generation to generation.

In *Benkei*, loyalty took the form of self-sacrifice. Benkei was a legendary sumurai

amount of loyalty to be paid to feudal lords, who are always endowed with virtue and who, in return for such loyalty, extend unusual favor, and this served to form in young Joe a mindset unlikely to be extinguished. Kinue Ichiuji, Joe's cousin's daughter in Shimane, Japan once said, "Joe-san [-san being a familiar suffix that can be attached to Japanese names, first or last, and usually to English last names, but as in this case, also to an English first name probably in an attempt to underscore the familial relationship] had a picture scroll of Benkei in his study probably because of Benkei's ardent spirit of loyalty to his master. Joe was very samurai-like." Ichiuji said in retrospect, "Now we thank them for their encouragement of our culture learning."

However, when he spoke of transmitting of his parents' culture to successive generations, he noted, "But, you know, we don't pass that to our children. They were more and more Americanized." Even so, Ichiuji's current home is nicely decorated with these figures in the form of pictures and dolls, probably offering a visual reminder of Japanese tradition to his offspring. In the strictest sense, these artifacts are not articulated and, as such, there is no positive transmission of their cultural significance, allowing them to remain symbolic in the minds of successive generations. They did not influence later generations on some deep, latent level where they could constantly rely on and refer to them for their ethical and behavior norms and conduct in their daily life.

Growing up thus in language and culture values at home and encouraged

monk, the perfect combination of martial arts and enlightenment, who died defending his master. His body, shot through with so many arrows, blocked the advancing enemy, thus giving his master, Yoshitsune Minamoto, time to commit suicide, an honorable, self-chosen death in his last battle against his brother, Yoritomo Minamoto, who had betrayed him. Benkei's loyalty is popularly dramatized in Kabuki plays.

toward social mobility, Joe Ichiuji came to know the grim reality of social limits, visible and invisible. Rather than enroll in college in such an unfavorable social milieu, he made up his mind to join the army, thinking, or to be specific, hoping that serving his country had nothing to do with matters related to racial background. He recounted:

Japanese American students excelled in school, however, many who attended colleges, were not able to use their college education and join the professional ranks. There was no equal opportunity for employment for us at that time.

After graduating from high school, I worked in the fish cannery to help my family, until I was drafted into the army. I made good grades in high school, but did not attend college. When they finished college, they couldn't get jobs except manual work. There was that kind of discrimination, and hopefully there was no such thing in the army.

Young as he was, as Joe recollects, he felt he found his real self in his experiences in the army. "My first tour of military service began on September 11, 1941, when I was drafted and inducted into the U.S. Army and sent to Camp Roberts in California for basic training in Field Artillery. My assignment to Field Artillery was one of the most significant events of my life. It established me as an artillery man in the U.S. Army and it helped my chances for survival later in combat," he said in his most earnest tone of voice.

In less than three months came the attack on Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor stories abound in the Japanese American community. Many issei and nisei became bewildered and speechless. Some felt an inarticulate anger at the shock; still others felt it was most unwanted politically and socially. Here let Ichiuji

speak on his own terms in the first person, because everyone has his own voice in the telling of formidable events of history. Given the compelling state of affairs, each voice has its own right and merit and can be appreciated on its own for language construction. Otherwise it is mere mouthing by others in a secondary source. Joe Ichiuji described the events of December 7, 1941 as such:

On December 7, 1941 I had just finished my basic training and was on furlough when Pearl Harbor was attacked. I was in San Francisco with my family to see my cousin, who was drafted and scheduled to leave for the Philippines. We saw the newspaper boy selling papers with the large headline, "JAPS BOMB PEARL HARBOR." That is when we first learned about the bombing. We all felt bad, since my parents came from Japan. The radio was buzzing with bombing news. I didn't want it to have happened. You know I was born here and Americanized. I felt even though I was not treated fully as American, I went to American school and all my association was with *hakujin*⁶⁴[whites]. So I felt like an American. Americans were mad about it. So, I was kind of worried about how my friends were going to treat me. Just like I feel like Americans see us today. It also ordered all GI's to report back to their base immediately. I was apprehensive about how my GI buddies would talk to me. Back at the base I was relieved to find that they were very sympathetic and understanding, saying, "It's not your fault. You were born here."

Soon after Pearl Harbor, Joe Ichiuji received unexpected news: he was being discharged from the service because of his ancestry. He was reclassified as an enemy alien. He recalled his struggles for acceptance in the larger American

⁶⁴See footnote 38 in Chapter 1.

society, and his belief in and expectation of acceptance in the army fell apart. This reaffirmed for him that this was a different land for those of Japanese ancestry. Because Ichiuji had higher expectations of the American army, this exclusion was most unwelcome for him. He told of how this removal action was not taken against him personally but rather in a larger context. In fact, all of the 5,000 nisei drafted in the Army before World War II were defined as ineligible and discharged as enemy alien, despite their U.S. citizenship. This is how he told of the termination of his military service:

My buddies and I were then sent to Ft. Lewis, Washington and assigned to the 188th FAB of the 41st Division. I noticed that I was the only Japanese American in my unit. After 45 days of maneuvers, my first Sergeant called me in and said, "Joe, I have some bad news for you. You're being discharged." "Why? What did I do?" The U.S. government that had drafted me decided that I was no longer fit for service because of my Japanese ancestry. This was one of the lowest points of my life.

The U.S. Army ordered the removal of 5,000 Japanese American soldiers who were stationed in the West Coast. 3,000 were transferred to posts in the Midwest, and 2,000, including me, were reclassified as 4C, an enemy alien ineligible for service. This ended my first tour of military service as a draftee. After I was discharged I said goodbye to my friends. They saw me off when I left.

About ten months after Pearl Harbor, then-President Roosevelt ordered the removal of all Japanese Americans, aliens and non-aliens, from the West Coast to be relocated to the interior of the continent. Joe first questioned why one particular racial/ethnic group was singled out for massive evacuation. Joe

wondered why such a large-scale measure was targeted only to those of Japanese ancestry and not to other war-related minorities. This was an official order to uproot all Japanese Americans, citizens and non-citizens, from the West Coast. On this important question about citizenship, Ichiuji’s fundamental yet profound cry was “What is American citizenship to be? Am I an American? Are the nisei identified by where our issei parents were from?” In short, racial ancestry collectively became a crime. Joe described the evacuation order like this:

This was February 19, 1942, when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066,⁶⁵ which authorized the evacuation of 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast and placed them in 10 relocation camps⁶⁶

⁶⁵On February 19, 1942 this order was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, authorizing the War Department to designate the military zone from which all persons of Japanese ancestry were to be removed. The instructions read in part: “Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 19, this Headquarters, dated April 24, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o’clock noon, P.W.T., Friday, May 1, 1942. No Japanese person living in the above area will be permitted to change residence after 12 o’clock, P.W.T., Friday, April 24, 1942, without obtaining special permission from the representative of the Commanding General.... (taken from the replica poster issued by J. L. DeWitt, Lieutenant General, U.S. Army Commanding) For a detailed discussion of this order, see Chapter 3.

⁶⁶The name, location, and capacity (in persons) of the relocation centers were:

Central Utah (Topaz)	West-central Utah	10,000
Colorado River (Poston)	Western Arizona	20,000
Gila River (Rivers)	Central Arizona	23,000
Granada (Amache)	Southeastern Colorado	8,000
Heart Mountain	Northwestern Wyoming	12,000
Jerome (Denson)	Southeastern Arkansas	10,000
Manzanar	East-central California	10,000
Minidoka (Hunt)	South-central Idaho	10,000
Rohwer	Southeastern Arkansas	10,000
Tule Lake (Newell)	North-central California	16,000

located throughout the U.S. This was done to Japanese Americans not to those of German or Italian descent. Approximately 70,000 were U.S. citizens like me.

As a kind of extrapolation of his life experience, Joe became eloquent, trying to reveal a subtext hidden under the veneer of wartime imminent threat. The point at issue was that Japanese Americans, disloyal by nature, would rise up when the Japanese army came to the West Coast. Because of this, these disloyal Japanese Americans should be expelled deep into the inland continent. Presumably, Joe could have borne anything but being called disloyal. What he wanted to defend, at any cost, was the idea that they were truly loyal to America. He could not bear this social stigma.

Offering views contrary to popular notions, Joe narrated his historical analysis in a most earnest fashion. His insight reminds us that history is a construct, which can be unraveled by the down-to-earth process of reasoning in pursuit of an agenda that really matters. By actually living a turbulent life in the West Coast, Joe Ichiuji was led to believe and became convinced that this political measure of removing all Japanese Americans from the West Coast was deeply embedded in economic and political reality. His empiricist thinking led to the belief that social reality was created by Californians, although it was impossible for non-citizen issei or young nisei to articulate politically. Joe knew very well that his generation of Japanese Americans was politically voiceless. This anti-Japanese measure stemmed from regional issues within, not something

Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982) p. 157.

external. In short, this order originated from the resentment of the economic advancement of Japanese immigrants, which created a sense of bitterness and fear among the West Coast whites.

The ouster of unwanted Japanese Americans was the result of jealousy and political manipulation, a long-awaited chance to act in the interests of the West Coast. Therefore, the military necessity was a pretext alleging the disloyalty of Japanese Americans and should be read in eco-political context. Joe Ichiuji's life experience drove him to disprove, by any means, the false public suspicion. He felt the falsehood strongly, to the extent that he felt it was his duty to clear his name⁶⁷ in whatever ordeal awaited him. Of the military necessity in the interest of national security, Joe noted:

I did not think this exclusion from the West Coast was a military necessity,⁶⁸ but had economic reasons behind it. Let me give you some background. You know before the War, issei came to the United States. They were not treated equal. Most of them worked on farms (but my father was an exception). They worked for *hakujin* [whites]. As time went on, issei brought their wives over and married them. And they raised families. As time went on, they bought the lowest quality lands not used

⁶⁷For a comprehensive analysis see footnote 120 in the Conclusion.

⁶⁸The term "military necessity" was used discursively throughout official documents for administration and education and in handbooks. See, for example, J. L. DeWitt, *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast, 1942*, p. vi. The military necessity for removal and detention of Japanese Americans was the hardest rationale to disprove. Like Ichiuji, Japanese Americans believed otherwise but did not know how to handle the specious claim. Much later, this was disproved by the discovery of the concealment of official documents. For a substantial discussion of the socio-political process, see Chapter 3. For a brief description of the process of political manipulation see Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

by *hakujin*. Japanese bought these lands using their son's or daughter's name. What they did was they cultivated their lands to make them productive lands. They did it utilizing knowledge and techniques they had. They became very successful farmers. And because of that, *hakujin* got very jealous and they wanted to get Japanese out of there. *Hakujin* saw this, they said, "Japs took our best land!" When the war broke out, some *hakujin* took advantage of it out of the jealousy harbored in them so long. They wanted Japanese out of there. And they influenced the government here. That's why the Executive Order 9066 by F. D. Roosevelt began in 1942, forcing approximately 110,000 issei and nisei alike to relocate to desolate places.

Joe Ichiuji returned to civilian life after being classified as ineligible for military service, essentially an enemy alien. He narrated, "After I was discharged, I returned to Pacific Grove as a civilian to help my family prepare for evacuation. My parents had already 'evacuated' voluntarily to our friend's home in Dinuba, California, which was not considered a restricted zone at that time." Under the rationale of "military necessity," the coastal area was divided into two zones according to the supposed impending danger. Joe spoke of his family's migration, made necessary by the new defense zones, "The West Coast was divided into Zone A and Zone B. So we evacuated from Zone A, which is close to the coast. My parents found a large farmhouse near Reedley, California. It was shared with two other families. When the time came to evacuate our home, I drove our car with my two younger brothers and two of their friends to Reedley." The defense authorities worked under the assumption that they could handle all of these Japanese as well as Americans of Japanese ancestry.

Whatever geographic, strategic, or political reasons behind the President's

Order, Japanese Americans were eventually expelled from California, regardless of the initial evacuation some families like the Ichiujis had already undertaken. For the Ichiujis, it was a time of great confusion intensified by the time constraints and they were forced to do “*atoshimatsu*,” or clearance for an unknown journey. In fact, remembered Ichiuji, “My older brother still stayed there for he wanted to turn over the shoe business to *hakujin*” [whites]. With “the ten Relocation Centers” not completed, they were herded into temporary housing called assembly centers: “Many in the Monterey Peninsula area were placed in the Salinas Assembly Center until the construction of relocation camps was completed.”

During this time Japanese Americans were treated worse than before. While Joe and one of his brothers made cursory preparations for evacuation, they faced greatly intensified hatred and hostility. But in suffering without confrontation, Joe and his brother hoped against hope that their non-resistance might, in time, prove their loyalty to America. Due in part to their collective guilt over Pearl Harbor and in part to the social position larger America assigned them, they acquiesced to their fate without losing their faith in America. Not through the practice of seniority, but rather in the stability the issei parents had shown, the nisei had a model to which they related in time of need. The nisei lauded the stoic composure of the issei under pressure. Ichiuji noted:

As we approached Fresno, my brother suggested getting ice cream because it was extremely hot. We found an ice cream parlor and we all went inside. There was only one person waiting on customers, and she looked at us and ignored us. A white customer came and she immediately served him. So I questioned her why she did not serve us. She said, “We don’t serve Japs!” So we walked out furious with this hate treatment.

But we didn't fight it. We showed that we were good Americans and loyal Americans. Although there was discrimination, Japanese issei were very good models for us who did *gaman*⁶⁹ [patience and perseverance].

Most nisei were actually loyal Americans and they wanted to be thought of as such. Under suspicion to the contrary, Joe desperately felt that he had to show it at all cost. He would persevere at anything if it contributed to proving his loyalty as a nisei. The American-born second generation was indeed Americanized, but at the same time such thinking as Ichiuji's was observably Japanese. Put in Western reasoning, his logical consequence was *onus probandi*, in which one is obliged to assume the burden of proof. Or in a more traditional cultural context in Japan, one is duty-bound to clear the false accusation cast on one's loyalty at the sacrifice of personal rights and benefits.

But in proving loyalty, Joe as nisei understood the complexity of race relations. Joe contrasted his generation's position with that of the successive generation. His critical observation went as such: for young Joe, once in service, his accommodation style was highly strategic in the American sense but notably ethical in his parents' tradition, namely trying to do *gaman* [patience and perseverance]. Without making unnecessary waves in Uncle Sam's domain, Joe wanted to carry out his goal the way he thought most desirable. He therefore opted for non-confrontation, a position understandably agreeable to the general populace of the white majority. Such cross-cultural consideration thus

⁶⁹Joe admired the *gaman* spirit of issei parents who showed an enormous amount of strength in the face of adversity. For *gaman* by nisei, see the Literature Review in the Introduction and Kokura's elaboration in Chapter 1.

illuminated in him a peculiar combination of American practical reasoning and Japanese ethical considerations. However, the nisei's passivity later became an object of harsh criticism from the sansei, the successive third generation of Japanese Americans.

If all the people were against your resistance, you are adding to the fire. And the army was also looking at us. Younger generations were different. It's young people, the sansei, who stand for the right, right here and right now.

Under the Executive Order issued by then-President Franklin D. Roosevelt, about 110,000 Japanese Americans were forced to move deep into inland deserts and mountains, uprooted from their homes, denied their liberty, and deprived of their daily pursuit of happiness. Without trial, but with the sole accusation of racial background, they were ordered to relocate to unknown places with only the belongings they could carry with them. This was a complete evacuation program done on short notice. The Ichiuji family was not an exception. The rule was strict, applying also to those, like the Ichiujis, who had already undergone voluntary evacuation inland from the seaboard area.

Detaching himself from the array of emotion involved, Joe Ichiuji narrated the story of his family's migration. This suggests that evacuees for the most part swallowed their frustrations, endured inconveniences, and accepted their fate. Joe related, "In August 1942, we were ordered to re-evacuate from Reedley, where it became a restricted area. I helped my family pack up their livelihoods and lives to be relocated. We ended up being shipped to Poston Relocation Camp in Arizona on few days notice and only with what we could carry with us."

The newly arrived evacuees started a new chapter of life in the Arizona desert, not the least part of which was their daily encounter with inclement weather. The Ichiujis were housed in a living space too small for the family's size, without any partitions. But with wisdom the newcomers soon started using blankets as drapes, creating some privacy in the one-room house. On their first day there, they were forced to start from scratch, making their own beds from mattress covers and hay. Food received from the relocation administrators was far from commendable. Gradually foods, albeit provided by ration, fell into the hands of evacuees. They learned how to improve things, for this was very important to their daily routine. Learning by doing and doing by learning were yet another facet of the experiential school curriculum in the Progressive era. Ichiuji portrayed his relocated life in the mile-square internment camp:

Immediately after we got there, we were given mattress covers and hay to make beds for the night. You know there were eight of us, so there were not enough rooms for us. It was 20 by 24. The room had no partitions, so we hung blankets between the walls. Outside it was very hot and dry, and once a month it became terrible because the rain was cold. The food rations were not so good. In fact, the first time they served very bad fish we couldn't eat it. They didn't know how to cook, for they were volunteers. But eventually people got tired of this amateur cooking so the professionals came in to cook.

Daily routine was the name of the game for stability. Inmates believed that even the camps were part of God's world where the inmates' common thread of life and fate must produce something progressive. In fact, community service functioned within the camp where internees could contribute to community efforts

by pursuing small professional dreams. The pursuit of the American dream would be fine for self-sufficiency, independence, and probably a little confidence, thus creating no dependent populace in their own community. And this alone may be enough to explain the case. However a deeper dimension of control came to the fore, on the part of camp management authorities who tried to avert the possibility of the detained evacuees exploding in frustration. But on the part of the evacuees, living out the internment and waiting out the war were more immediate needs for their day-to-day lives. Joe talked about his new life:

As time went on, people got used to being in the camp. They never broke anything. When someone fell ill, they cooperated. Anyway they worked hard. People in charge of nursing or whatever turned in the time by each employee. We recorded it by name, unlike our assigned classification to our block 308. We had a payroll. We got \$12 to \$19. Chiefs got \$19. Schoolteachers got \$19.

Joe Ichiuji attempted in good faith to enhance the situated reality of incarcerated life by tying it to his past experience in the army, even though he had been kicked out not long before. For better meaning-making, the analogy for him was psychological relief in order to mitigate the harsh reality. What was going on in his mind was probably unwittingly high consideration, managing to reproduce the present meaning by selectively combining the past in a kind of phenomenological vein. His deep psyche was the reflection of his desire to demonstrate his loyalty to America, albeit pursuing some palliative care to ease the harshness of life in encampment. Joe made this comparison between the internment camp and army camp:

Even though I had never been to Arizona before, the interment camp at Poston was familiar because it reminded me in many ways of life in the army—everybody lived in barracks, went to mess hall and ate the same food, and when you used the bathroom it was the community thing like the army.

But his analogy failed in one grim fact of life in camp: “The major difference was that the guards pointed their guns in at us, not out.” The surveillance and control was far from the alleged custody in the interests of the Japanese Americans, as the general public was led to believe.

Here, again, Joe persisted in thinking positively, with cultural recourse to Japanese tradition by justifying for a while the passivity of tacit acceptance of fate. He briefly recollected one complexity after another in camp life, saying in a low voice, “But we made the best of it. We had no other choice: *shikataganai*⁷⁰ [It can’t be helped for it’s uncontrollable]. But some committed suicide.”

While Joe appreciated the unexpected socialization, he engaged in the “community” by engaging in the upkeep of rules and regulations, feeling a reasonable sense of “legitimacy” of the American system. His father resumed his old profession, probably feeling that the system still worked admirably, allowing his return to “normalcy.” Joe recounted:

One benefit was that young people were exposed to many Japanese Americans of the same age bracket than before their internment. During my internment, I was employed as a

⁷⁰This is an expression to refer to something inevitable. In this context, Joe showed strength to accept what was hard to do, perhaps suggestive of a brighter dimension in the future. Refer to footnote 44 in Chapter 1.

timekeeper. I also helped my father set up a shoe repair business in camp. My father managed the business and taught many internees how to repair shoes.

In 1942, the interned Japanese Americans, citizens and non-citizens alike, faced a third shock—dreadful events that followed the shameful bombing of Pearl Harbor and the bewildering removal that followed. The internees were questioned about their loyalty, and the way they responded to the infamous Questions No. 27 and No. 28 had the potential of separating families (for the complete questions see the preface to this chapter). Indeed these questions on loyalty generated shock wave after shock wave through the population of internees. As Joe briefly noted, “there were resentments, you know, within the camp.” Internees asked, “Why would they ask such questions?” at this time of loyal nisei like Joe. “We are Americans and this is a test that makes sure that you are not Japanese.”

In addition to the sorrow of these nisei, the loyalty of whom was still doubted by the U.S. government, it is not difficult to imagine the recurring turmoil created in family solidarity. Family bonds likely loosened given the decreased authority of the father as bread winner in the ration system, but the loyalty questions produced further poignancy as families faced being torn apart and segregated based on their answers.

The first of the two loyalty questions was aimed at the nisei and asked about their willingness to serve in combat. The second question was directed to both the issei and nisei and asked if they would swear allegiance to the U.S. government and forswear allegiance to the Japanese government. However, in

the case of issei, the second question was modified to ask if they would “swear to abide by the laws of the United States and to take no action which would in any way interfere with the war effort of the United States.”⁷¹ The purpose of this modified question was to prevent issei from becoming stateless. They had been denied American citizenship and answering “No” to the original wording of the question would have broken their only available ties to any country. The answers to these questions led to the separation of families because those who said “No” were segregated at Tule Lake, another internment camp. The idea was *divide et impera*. There was a long spell of turmoil among issei and nisei about the future of the family.

Joe acknowledged the intentions of the boys who said “No” and “No” to the two questions. He discerned the true hearts of these No-No boys,⁷² saying, “You have to start with language. But as you learn language, you learn culture behind it.” The text of these loyalty questions spoke volumes, the language of which was so socially sensitive, implying a horrible reality that would follow. This was a problematic inquiry. No-No boys expressed their anger in their choice of answers, anger toward the thoughtlessness behind such a superficial examination. This was their only available opportunity to express their resentment, and so they answered “No” and “No.” To these honest boys, “no-no” was their communication style, albeit resulting in cross-purposes, but done in the belief that it would save their honor.

Joe, however, questioned their reasoning, wondering whether they achieved

⁷¹For the complete question, see the text in the beginning of this chapter.

⁷²See the other Chapters, the Introduction, and the Conclusion in this dissertation.

personal psychological satisfaction at the expense of communication with the larger American society. He said flatly, “Americans outside the camp saw it differently.” There is still a recurring cross-purpose found in cross-cultural settings as to how reality is recognized. Joe regarded the communication style of the No-No boys as a practical estimation of a power relation and saw their response as uncommunicative. Joe knew that a deeper understanding of the psychology of No-No boys came later with the publication at the turn of the century of literature on the No-No boys’ tortuous mentality. The literature has come to deal revealingly with the deep inner thoughts of the No-No boys, going beyond the mere surface of their words.

The “No-No boys” who responded no to question 27 and another no to question 28, were, I think, you know, they were entirely aware of the Constitutional rights and practice. “No! Get me out of the camp first and then we’ll talk.” They were honest. But I thought it actually wrong because all of the *hakujin* [whites] outside the camp were wondering why these boys were saying it in a hateful way.

There could be no doubt that Joe would show his loyalty by responding “yes-yes” to the questions. As a matter of fact, Joe was one of the first from the camps to volunteer for military duty. He believed that, unlike the No-No boys who expressed their beliefs without good grace, he showed his true loyalty to America in good faith. He also hoped that his actions would facilitate the termination of internment and help him later in life. He remembered:

When the recruiters came to my camp, I was among the first to

volunteer, because I wanted to prove that I was a loyal American and get family and friends out of the camp. My brother told me you've got work harder, because you know in the West Coast, you've got show that we were loyal citizens by acting out hard. That's why I volunteered. I did just the opposite of the No-No boys even though they had a right in an American sense.

The Army was made easy for me, you know. This second chance "opened doors for me" for veteran's benefits and a new life after the war. A past long sense of frustration of my hope came to make sense.

Joe's parents understood his enlistment, with some apprehension from his mother but encouragement from his father. An old Japanese adage is similar to "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," which applies to someone who has moved to another place or changed jobs and especially to a bride who marries into her husband's family. It is quite natural that Joe's father encouraged him, thinking that America was the country to which he had chosen to come and that America was the country of his son's birth.

I talked my mother first. She said, "*Doshite mata iku no?*" [Why are you going again?] I told mom, "This is how I can get the people out of the camp. By doing this, people will say we are just Americans." That's the way I can get my family from the camp. But she was concerned about my life. Any other mothers were concerned about their boys. My father said, "Yes. You were born here. This is your country. This is your good dream. You should fight." Even though he was not able to become an American citizen, he spent most of his life in the States. So he thought that way.

Joe recalled the final admonition from his father as he prepared to depart for the

front. His father continued telling him, “Go and fight. Don’t shame our family name!” reminiscent, once again, of the values in Nitobe’s *Bushido*⁷³ [The Way of the Samurai]. People often attribute Japanese tradition to the ways of the samurai, and this certainly serves as an effective concept to explain what is hard to communicate to people in the Western world. As a matter of fact, *bushido* has come into prominence again especially to define something hard to define in the latent psyche and subsequent behavior. One witnesses so many variants of the samurai world, whether they are reality, myth, or symbol, to say nothing of “The Seven Samurai” or “The Last Samurai” in popular culture.

Put differently, what issei brought to America with them was a more historic ethical code or moral precepts subsumed in this broader notion of the Way of the Samurai. It is misleading to think that every immigrant was of a samurai family. But those who emigrated from Japan in the Meiji era had widely entertained at least the ethical aspects of the samurai code of conduct since the time of the previous shogun by virtue of the nationwide distribution of knowledge as a result of *sankinkotai*.⁷⁴ Joe’s parents were from farming families, but they observed the

⁷³Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido, The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought* (Philadelphia: The Leeds and Biddle Co., 1900). Nitobe asserts a wider applicability of “samuraihood” into the inner dimension of cultural behavior. He consistently maintains its relevancy and potency, stating, “Deep-rooted and powerful as is still the effect of Bushido, I [Nitobe] have said that it is an unconscious and mute influence.... By arousing the sentiments nurtured by Bushido, moral renovation of great magnitude can be accomplished.” (118-119). For the discussion on linguistic implementality, see footnote 21 in the Introduction.

⁷⁴*Sankinkotai* was the political system contrived by the ruling shogun as a way to control provincial lords who might otherwise grow more powerful politically and economically. “To avoid the possibility of insurgency among the provincial lords, the Tokugawa Shogunate obliged each individual lord to leave his home domain every second year and to travel to and reside at the capital in Edo,” according to the Introduction by S. Miyake, Chair of the Tokai Bank Foundation. (There were some

ethical way of the samurai, for instance calling Joe, as he left for combat, “Yankee Samurai.” Within a samurai discourse, issei and nisei alike made effective use of the way of the samurai for their meaning-making as well as their explanation and justification of significant life events. The powerful ethical thinking of Joe’s father can be better understood with a quote from *Bushido, The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought*⁷⁵:

A good name being assumed as a matter of course, any infringement upon its integrity was felt as shame, and the sense of shame was one of the earliest to be cherished in juvenile education. “You will be laughed at,” “It will disgrace you,” “Are you not ashamed?” were the last appeal to correct behavior on the part of a youthful delinquent. Such recourse to his honor touched the most sensitive spot in the child’s heart, as though it had been nursed on honor while it was in its mother’s womb.

Shame, to Joe, was a blot on his good name in the form of loyalty to America. As a result, his duty and privilege was to prove his loyalty, regardless of the risk to his own life. He was pleased when his friends came to see him off, for this farewell bolstered the validity of his decision. He noted the questions he got and the answers he gave:

exceptions to the frequency of this obligation based on political influence.) Every feudal lord was required to travel to the capital and the road they took from Kyoto to Edo (now Tokyo), called the Tokaido, inspired Hiroshige to make his now famous wood block prints. S. Miyake, ed., *Hiroshige: The Fifty-Three Stages of the Tokaido* (Nagoya, Japan: The Tokai Bank Foundation, 1984).

⁷⁵Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido, The Soul of Japan: An Exposition of Japanese Thought* (Philadelphia: The Leeds & Biddle, 1900) p. 45.

A lot of people asked me, “Why did you volunteer for the army that kicked you out?” “Why did you want to go again?” I always thought of it as a way to prove to the people outside the camp that we were loyal Americans. They gave me a chance and I joined. That’s why I did it. In the end, they were supportive of me. They all came to say good-bye, so there was support for me.

At this point Joe told of an event that would have changed forever his military career. He recalled, “They asked for volunteers. They gave me a Japanese language test, but I failed it.” If he had passed the test, he might have been sent to the Pacific theater as part of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS)⁷⁶ and might have encountered none other than his young uncle, Konosuke, the kamikaze pilot, who pursued his own self-sacrificial effort on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. Flunking the test saved him from an irony of history. Without knowing any of this, Kinue,⁷⁷ his cousin’s daughter in Japan, said in a sense of remorse toward war in general, “*Joe-san mo Konosuke san mo taihen na tatakai datta desho* [Both

⁷⁶This service was created in the process of war development, utilizing nisei’s language skills in the Pacific. They were dispatched to the Pacific theater after they had been trained in the MIS language school in translation, interpretation, and interrogation. Contrary to expectations, most nisei were found linguistically unusable. “...only 3 percent were found to have reached ‘plenary level,’ another 4 percent were ‘proficient,’ and another 3 percent were deemed usable ‘only after a prolonged period of training’” according to the evaluation of competency in Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993) p. 231. But this was what language was like. The most usable were the “*kibei*” nisei, Japanese Americans who had been educated in Japan and then returned to the United States. Some *kibei* wrote leaflets that were aimed at civilians and were dropped from airplanes during the end of the war to encourage surrender. They subtly used Japanese legends or myths as metaphors for the wrongs of the Japanese military government in an attempt to persuade civilians into thinking that the militarism should be replaced to save the nation.

⁷⁷Kinue Ichiuji is Joe’s cousin’s daughter in Shimane, Japan.

Joe and Konosuke fought a hard fight for an ironic war]. She said, “I hear Joe-san swore loyalty to America from within the concentration facility and went to Europe thinking he wouldn’t come back alive.” Referring to the Japanese Oath for Servicemen, *Gunjin Chokuyu*,⁷⁸ she said Konosuke was “patriotic to his government and died in the attack action. So *ecce homo*, Joe and Konosuke, for everybody should fight hard because of the war.” She further narrated stories of the family emigrating abroad from her native village.

Joe outlined his experiences inside and outside the camp by highlighting the 422nd Combat Team,⁷⁹ which was finally authorized by the U.S. government, although, at the time, he either did not know or was not concerned with that process. Given his enthusiastic postwar commitment to educating the young, Joe came to understand the arguments, negotiations, and manipulation which converged in the formation of a single unit of all nisei men.

⁷⁸*Gunjin Chokuyu*, or Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors, is brief, consisting five virtues: loyalty, etiquette, valor, trust, and frugality. Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

⁷⁹This U.S. regiment unit was a combination of the 422 Regimental Combat Team with the 100th Infantry Battalion from Hawaii, announced by President Roosevelt on February 1, 1943 and finally ordered to action in March, 1944. It was a single unit consisting of all nisei men from both the mainland and Hawaii. Their prowess was legendary but the formation, action, and public relations provided issues both positive and negative. But it is indisputable that this nisei unit’s war efforts served to enhance the image of Japanese Americans in the eyes of general American public. Ichiuji wrote an engaging leaflet from the perspective of a participant in the combat about the array of actions described in this paper. For the general history of the unit and its purpose and contribution see Ichiuji’s leaflet: The 422nd Archives and Learning Center (Honolulu: The 422nd Legacy Foundation and The Sons & Daughters of the 422nd RCT). For how the unit was formed and publicized, see Mike Masaoka’s commitment in Chapter 3. For a brief criticism of the politics involved in the creation of the unit, see Literature Review (Ronald Takaki) in Introduction.

But in 1943 all he needed was an opportunity to prove by his actions his sincere loyalty to the U.S. Joe summarized his story by saying, “I stayed in the camp from August, 1942 to April 1943. About eight months, I guess. In January, 1943, you know, we formed the 442nd. The U.S. Army Department authorized the establishment of the 442nd Combat Team.”

Joe thus served two tours of duty in the U.S. army, first as a draftee, although he was discharged immediately after Pearl Harbor for the political convenience of the U.S. government, and second as a member of the artillery battalion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT). It is little wonder that he thought his second enlistment was the more significant event in his life. Given one opportunity to demonstrate his loyalty to America, he persisted in his mission.

In response to questions about his background, which were often asked, Joe would talk about this unusual service in detail. On one occasion for him to tell this history, Joe narrated how he was released from the camp and began his tour of service. Memo in hand, he spoke of the bare facts:

On May 12, 1943, I was inducted into the U.S. Army for the second time and sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for my basic training. Because of my prior training in field artillery, I was assigned to Battery A, 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, of the 422nd Regimental Combat Team.

To give some background as to how this tour of duty came about, on January 1943, after much petitioning by the Japanese American soldiers we were reclassified as eligible for service. A call went out to all Japanese Americans in Hawaii and the mainland for volunteers. In Hawaii, 10,000 responded to the call, of which 2,700 were used, whereas only 2,500 volunteered from the ten relocations camps, of which 1,500 were used.

Joe recalled meeting the Japanese Americans from Hawaii and noting their language differences. What was important for him was to realize that diversity existed even within minorities, for while he routinely experienced societal racial positioning, it had always been as opposed to the dominant white society. The way he handled the Hawaiians' Pidgin English revealed his own stereotypes of others as an undifferentiated mass. But he learned, and in all likelihood gladly so, that the difference was not a barrier to group harmony, given his own past suffering because of difference and given his probable aspirations for future harmony in diversity. Unity in variety, "out of many, one," *e pluribus unum*, would still be sweet.

The Hawaiians didn't speak English very well. They had a Pidgin language. For the language difficulty they didn't like us when they came to us. They started fighting. Oh they cut their language short. Such as "I don't want to go" was "I don't go." "I don't know" was actually "I don't no." We sometimes called them nicknames. But once we learned the difference we became good friends.

Departing from his participant observation and speculation, Joe Ichiuji then plunged into matters of life and death in the field. He recounted his experiences in the reality of war.

We landed in Italy and were assembled north of Naples, Italy. There the 100th Infantry Battalion joined the 442nd Regimental Team. In June 1944, we, the 422nd RCT, entered combat (baptism by fire) north of Rome, attached to the 34th Division.

I remember we had completed digging our first gun emplacement and putting up the camouflage net, when a German fighter plane flew by us flying very low. It scared us to death, not knowing what to expect!! It was a frightening and embarrassing moment—our baptism by fire.

We fought three months pushing the Germans north of the Arno River. We also liberated the towns of Pisa and Leghorn. In September 1944, we were pulled from the front lines for rest and replacements for 1,100 casualties.

Joe told of how his team from Hawaii coined the motto “Go for Broke” to which he referred with nostalgia, without which their war efforts would have sunk into oblivion. Their war efforts became all the more salient against the backdrop of camp pressure they had long endured. They fought resoundingly, setting aside as premature the joy of possible achievements. They were something to be talked about afterward, although they came and went through Joe’s mind.

Joe and his brothers in combat fought the bloodiest battles, killing or being killed. He most enthusiastically disclosed one of the most memorable rescue missions he had ever undertaken. This was what he said about the rescue of the Texas “Lost Battalion” of the 36th Division, a story that is repeatedly retold, if not legendary, in the Japanese American community. Their actions were without equal. With excitement in his voice, he portrayed the whole array of field activities:

One of the most memorable campaigns embarked on by the 422nd RCT, including the 522nd FAB, was the rescue of the Lost Battalion. After fighting in Italy, we, the 422nd RCT, were assigned to the 522nd Division for combat duty in France.

In October 1944, we entered combat in the heavily

defended Vosges Mountains in France. After days of bitter fighting, we liberated the towns of Bruyeres and Biffontaine and the 422nd infantry men were ordered back to the front lines by General Dahlquist, the 36th Division Commander, to rescue his Lost Battalion, which was surrounded by the Germans after his rescue attempt failed. After several days of intensive fighting, 442nd infantrymen broke the German lines and rescued 211 men at the cost of 800 casualties.

The 522nd FAB provided support to the 442nd infantrymen with howitzer barrages knocking out essential enemy targets. They were thus aided in their rescue efforts.

Luckily Joe Ichiuji was still alive and survived the operations of this suicidal squad. Very frankly he admitted of his good fortune in being an artillery specialist. “I was lucky to get into artillery, to tell you the truth. We were always about 1,000 yards behind the front lines. Thank God for that! I had some buddies in the infantry, they told me they shivered with fear the whole time.... We were shelled by the Germans but, you know, it wasn’t too bad” he said in an article in *The Washington Post*.⁸⁰ Like every other man of service, they fought their hardest combat in the field.

The Washington Post article ran a caption that read “Details from the cover of a book about the unit and its World War II exploits.” But those heroic exploits could be viewed as echoing the exploits of young and later teenage kamikaze pilots on the other side of the Pacific. The self-sacrificial, “Go for Broke” efforts of the nisei men made great stories that were told from generation to generation in Japanese American history. But they were scapegoats destined to be killed for

⁸⁰Phil McCombs, “Oh Man! The Real Right Stuff: GI Joe of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1996.

some political visibility. “Hidden persuaders” exploited the minds of these nisei who were driven to do more than could be expected of any human. The formation of a single unit of nisei, a suicide design which used their stoic heroism for political purposes, might be paralleled with the use of the kamikaze pilot by Japanese militarism. Both servicemen were touchingly loyal to their own governments, despite great differences in government policy. The hard fact might be that the deeper political and social implications were largely ignored at this point, which will be argued in the next chapter.

History is said to be a construct, if not complete bunk, fraught with rhetoric and politics as well as manipulation and exploitation, with the potential of being deconstructed and/or reconstructed from yet another perspective. One basic question haunts the minds of contemporary nisei, “Does loyalty demand the proof of blood? Is such a grim reality the wisdom of hindsight—was it good only because it turned out good?” Joe and his combat brothers embarked on those impossible missions in a deadly attempt to prove their American-ness. More to the point was the circumstantial social reality demanding that these American citizens shed blood in order to clear the social stigma that had overshadowed them for so long. In clearing public suspicion, Joe Ichiuji indeed did just that and did so at the sacrifice of unimaginable numbers of his comrades, wounded and killed. Later, Ichiuji’s Division Commander saw the result of their “Go for Broke” actions:

At a special ceremony to honor the 442nd RCT and seeing only a few hundred men, the Division Commander asked why the whole regiment was not present. The 442nd RCT Commander replied, “Sir—this is the entire regiment.”

While Ichiuji talked about this as the most serious engagement of his duty, he also described a scene that delivered the most irony. While it sounds like a story that might be discussed in some seminar in Text Analysis in literature, it was, in fact, lived history and Ichiuji risked his life for this specific purpose. Ichiuji continued:

After this campaign, we, the 442nd RCT were sent south to Southern France to hold the line along the border of Italy and France and wait for replacements. This period was referred to as “The Champagne Campaign.”

In March 1945, with the arrival of replacements, the 522nd FAB was detached from the 442nd RCT and was sent to northern France for the invasion of Germany. The 442nd RCT returned to Italy for the final push in the Po Valley Campaign. The 522nd FAB entered Germany near Klienbittersdorf attached the 21st Corps for the final 45 days of the war in Europe. We were the only Japanese Americans to fight in Germany.

“Oh, Man! The Real Right Stuff” said Joe Ichiuji in the article in *The Washington Post*,⁸¹ when recalling his family in the internment camp. He continued, “When I saw the barbed wire fences it reminded me of the Poston camp and my family incarcerated in Arizona and I wondered when they were going to free my family.” This was the supreme irony Joe encountered when he first saw the Jewish concentration camp in Dachau. According to *The Jerusalem Post*,⁸² another newspaper to which Joe referred, one nisei soldier echoed Joe’s mind

⁸¹*The Washington Post*, op. cit.

⁸²“The Victims Who Liberated Jews,” *The Jerusalem Post*, July 26, 1999.

when he said, “The irony was you had people from a concentration camp liberating another.... It was very much of a spiritual connection.” But in the true sense of the word this irony was tragic, because these men fought and died to protect liberty which had been denied to the internees.

Joe “detailed less what they did than what he saw,” according to the same newspaper, *The Jerusalem Post*. In fact, a stunned Joe witnessed the horrifying, sub-human conditions of the concentration camp. With some hesitation but with deep emotion he recounted:

Most significantly the 522nd FAB was among the first Allied forces to liberate the Jews from the sub-camp or Dachau in late April 1945. As I was in the middle of the convoy heading south from Augsburg, and by the time we reached the camp area, the gate of the camp had already been opened by our 522nd FAB’s advance scouts. I saw the Jews streaming out of the camp. They all wore black and gray striped uniforms. It is ironic that many of us who came from the camps would come across the German concentration camps and its Jewish victims.

He recalled the scene, saying, “As men of good would have done, we gave them whatever food they could stomach and some guys gave them blankets.”

There was snow on the ground and the weather was very cold. We bivouacked along the side of the camp and built bonfires to warm us. While we were warming ourselves, Jews came to us for food, and we gave them our C and K rations. A young guy with gray hair suffered from hunger. They were hungry, suffering from malnutrition. I said, “Come on this way.” All of these Jews came to us. Someone gave them dried fruit. We learned later that many became seriously ill because they

could not absorb the rations. These inmates were hungry and suffering from malnutrition; they literally were skin and bone. Some of them were hacking away strips of meat from the carcass of a dead horse for nourishment that was lying on the edge of the road. When you think about it, it makes you almost cry.

Dachau prisoners endured the worst of the world's atrocity, while American internment inflicted on Ichiuji's people humiliation by their own government. He felt this was done to mankind, angrily denouncing, "Here we had the concentration camp housing us, but oh boy, of course this was so terrible. It was a sight that I would never forget." Joe was awed by humanity in the face of inhumanity. Joe told of what he and his comrades found there:

We saw lots of skulls at the door in that area. I didn't go into the camp but my buddies went inside the shed there and they told me later they opened the door and it was all stacked up with skeletons. I never forgot the atrocity of the Nazi death camp.

Language is considered the highest form of human invention and the highest form of human expression. Indeed language is a great reality-maker. But considered in the arena of human dignity and values, human language is still a low-level entity. What limited human language cannot convey to the fullest is man-made atrocity: genocide, pogroms, and the holocaust. This was a picture beyond description. It was not something to be explained away in any endeavor of language. What Joe saw was the worst human atrocity ever committed against humans by other humans. What degenerated to this level was what baffled all description, which is what prevented Joe from going down to the shed to see what

was inside.

Joe made a comparison of two wartime camps, American and German, and discussed the differences in their basic nature, which is quite understandable. Nothing compared with the inhumane acts perpetrated against the Jews in the death camps, although some wondered what might have happened if the Japanese army had attacked the West Coast of the U.S. Without due process of law Japanese Americans were singled out as collectively undesirable, their only guilt being that they were from Japan. They were free from criminal acts, with only their socially imposed racial identity against them. This was the sole reason why Joe and other nisei tried to show their loyalty and aspired all the more to it through their actions.

At the outbreak of the war, Joe did not know anything of the report⁸³ confirming that no sabotage or fifth-column activity had ever occurred. According to the FBI, after they had arrested leaders active in the community, no additional measures were necessary. But Joe was as sure as he could be, given his own life experiences, reaffirming later his sense of discernment. His sense was that Japanese Americans were unquestionably loyal. The corollary was to

⁸³The significant report was the Munson Report, which concluded that the Japanese American community did not pose a threat to the security of the United States. A very limited number of the community were suspicious and were identified and watched. As nisei were too young and the issei leaders were already arrested on Pearl Harbor day, the rest were cherishing attachment to Japan non-politically. According to *Japanese American History*, “the combination of their [issei] old age and their decision to make America their home and their children’s home led Munson to conclude that the ‘traditional Japanese ethic, when faithfully adhered to, would not only justify, but more positively demand, his [the issei]’ taking the side of the United States.” Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993) p. 242. For the background of Curtis B. Munson, secret government intelligence, and political consideration to ignore the report as well as other parallel official reports, see the textured discussion in Chapter 3.

show and prove. Whether this was a sacrificed heritage from his parents or this was filial piety to be shown to the older generation, his sense of duty to prove undying loyalty, even if it meant risking his life, was extraordinary. Joe had to try to clear anything resembling dishonor to his name as an American-born citizen, albeit one whose family background was Japanese.

This Yankee Samurai, directed by American potency and urged by Japanese sensitivity, wanted to clear the social stigma, created by and contextualized in race relations, of being undesirable aliens, citizens and non-citizens alike. Disloyalty was a racial accusation made only against a non-white group. Joe maintained:

The scope and purpose of the American and German camps were markedly different. We Japanese Americans were rounded up for the duration of the war, while the Jews were rounded up for their extermination. Nothing can compare with the horrors of the Nazi death camps.

However, the reason behind both was the same; it was racial discrimination. While we were at war with Germany, Italy, and Japan, only persons of Japanese ancestry in the West Coast were singled out for mass incarceration. If we can be proud of ourselves, we were law-abiding people in the place we were in. And more than anything we were loyal Americans.

Joe then talked about military decorations, very modestly as every hero did, although the sheer number of decorations they received was unprecedented in U.S. military history. The Japanese American community was fond of noting these citations⁸⁴ and of quoting Harry S Truman when he said, “You fought not only the

⁸⁴Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

enemy, but you fought prejudice, and you won.” While Joe made a reference to “just rewards” in the brochure of the 442nd Legacy Foundation,⁸⁵ he maintains an unassertive and unassuming manner, as is usual with him. Phil McCombs, the *Washington Post* reporter, commenting on Joe’s demeanor when Joe referred to Truman’s address, said, “Joe remains typically modest about all this, as real heroes tend to do.”⁸⁶ Indeed, a real man of caliber keeps a low profile especially when someone else lauds him. For all of this, Joe was truly modest, talking about his accomplishments in the least obtrusive or showy fashion.

This being contextualized in a cross-cultural consideration, his norm and behavior were long tested in a racially hostile situation, creating then a personable and understandable persona in him. Sometimes nisei are said to be introverted, often self-reflective and self-effacing, if not self-erasing. But most of the time nisei like Joe knew better cross-culturally, acknowledging the traditional cultural value of “reservation otherwise arrogance,” appreciating the cultural penchant to fit in with others, and thus showing a popular Japanese American outlook to the world outside. Modesty stemming from reservation was Joe’s daily norm and behavior in communicating with others. Carrying with him such cross-cultural baggage, Joe equated decorated combat valor and prowess with the decorations on a Christmas tree. In his demeanor, Joe told of “the unimaginable casualties, suffering a high rate of nearly 57 percent or 18,000 killed or wounded.” He said:

⁸⁵The 422nd Archives and Learning Center (Honolulu: The 422nd Legacy Foundation and The Sons & Daughters of the 422nd RCT).

⁸⁶Phil McCombs, “Oh Man! The Real Right Stuff: GI Joe of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team,” *The Washington Post*, October 31, 1996.

Although we Japanese Americans were treated as enemy aliens, over 33,000 of us from Hawaii and the mainland served in the U.S. Army to show our loyalty and patriotism. 6,000 of them served in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) essentially for the Pacific theater and later the occupation of Japan. The MIS recently was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation for their contribution in defeating Japan.

In the European theater, the 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team became the most decorated unit for its size and length of service in U.S. military history. They received 7 Presidential Unit Citations and approximately 18,000 individual awards. To name a few, 21 Medals of Honor, 48 Distinguished Service Crosses, 560 Silver Stars, 4,000 Bronze Stars, and 9,486 Purple Hearts.

Joe Ichiuji carved out his place in life by engaging himself in his mission through sheer force of will and self-determination during an intractable war. He took his chance at life, not knowing whether or not he would survive the war, albeit convinced that he was loyally serving the country of his birth. As other nisei men and women felt, what was most unbearable was the incorrect assumptions made about them. To nisei, the only thing they had to fear was being branded what they were not: disloyal. The enormous capacity, engine, and energy to fulfill the war purpose were supported by something close to Japanese tradition, which Joe learned from his parents. Loyalty with inner consistency is one of the high virtues in his parents' culture, driving the nisei to "work twice as hard as the rest of Americans," as Joe recalled his father admonishing. Actually, he needed it.

However, he once confessed a vulnerability in his character. He said frankly:

I remember that my parents were very concerned about me, because I was often nervous. They told me to take it easy, but not to come back in the war. In fact, I was nervous. I started smoking in the army. I used to attend church—I never drank or smoke, but in the army you always see, here are your free cigarettes, free beer, so I started smoking and drinking. I smoked heavy. I started smoking at the age of 25 and quit at 35. Because my father had cancer, so I quit.

As can be imagined, among the nisei, one of the biggest reasons to be nervous was job instability. Given jobs, they were often temporary, at best socially created to fill a gap to meet societal needs. Jobs had ceilings, beyond their own initiatives. They were not self-made enterprises. But Joe recalled some favorable situations through the evacuees' local contacts and experiences that turned out to be longer-term working occasions, serving to disperse the Japanese American population:

Before the war, nisei went to college but they never used their education. But they were given work in defense factories showing a shortage of people in the Midwest and East Coast. Actually 40,000 evacuees, who left camp early to fill labor shortages in these areas, remained in their new jobs and settled there. It dispersed the prewar Japanese community, which was concentrated in the West Coast, to various parts of the U.S.

After the interment camps were cleared out, Joe acknowledged the role of the War Relocation Authority (WRA)⁸⁷ in helping to make the transition to normal

⁸⁷This was the governmental organization that implemented the wartime executive order and administered the ten relocation/concentration camps. After the first director resigned, Dillon S. Myer became the director famed as a benevolent figure who tried to

life. Joe commented on the wide geographical dispersal of the formerly incarcerated people. But the freed evacuees still felt anxiety in a largely white and hostile society. It is little wonder that their sentiments toward race grew stronger because of the whole experience of enforced evacuation, relocation, and incarceration. But, in any case, they had to improve their chances after the closing of the internment camps. Joe portrayed yet another migration of his people:

After the war, the evacuees returned to their homes in the West Coast, and reconstruction of their lives was not easy. Many were able to find places to stay and employment with the help of the War Relocation Authority. But some moved to the East Coast or the Midwest, without coming back to the West Coast. Actually they didn't want to come back to the West Coast for the bad reputation—they were once treated badly. Instead they tried to find jobs in the East Coast. That's how Japanese Americans spread all over the States, which was good after all.

Joe spoke of his new life after the war by enumerating his three greatest opportunities: education, job, and marriage. He began his resettlement by first heading back to California. Thanks to his military career, he made the best use of the GI Bill. He moved to the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, with the help

make the camps more bearable, although he was criticized for his assimilation policy that treated *kibei* as troublemakers. After his leadership experience he published a book, *Uprooted Americans: The Japanese Americans and the War Relocation Authority during World War II* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1970). For a realist's treatment of WRA issues, see the book that was awarded the Anisfield-Wolf Award in Race Relations in 1976 by judges Oscar Handlin and other. For the updated edition; Michi Nishimura Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996).

of a sister living there already, to attend college on the GI Bill. There he met his wife, Susie, who had moved there from the Midwest to take a job, and they were married in 1947. Joe spoke thus:

I went home to Pacific Grove in the West Coast and helped my father in his shoe business after I was discharged in January, 1946. When the GI Bill of Rights was passed for veterans, I decided to take advantage of it and moved to Washington, D.C. to attend college and to seek employment with the federal government in May, 1946.

Just before the war broke, Susie took an examination and passed it. She got a job here. So when I came here from the West, I met Susie at the weekly USO dances held at the YWCA in 1946. Susie was one of the hostesses and was a good dancer. We enjoyed dancing together and started dating. We became engaged and got married on June 28, 1947. During the wartime her family was not interned because they lived in Wyoming working for the railroad. But they had a hard time finding a home because of the discrimination against them.

Joe was pleased to find out that, in his case, education and employment were not disconnected, reaffirming the fact that the American system still worked after all. In addition, he also felt quite satisfied to do a war-related job in the peaceful context of worldwide war recovery, rather than in the destruction of combat duty. He described the work he found after completing his higher education:

After graduating and receiving my Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in Business Administration from Benjamin Franklin University, I accepted a stateside job as an accountant with the European Cooperation Administration. It provided economic assistance to European countries for post-war recovery. This

assistance was expanded to developing countries worldwide under the successor agencies and the current Agency for International Development.

Joe never forgot the socially important decision that this country made half a century after the issei emigrated here from Japan. Commenting on a long-awaited immigration law, he said with deep emotion, “In 1952, Congress passed legislation allowing our parents to become naturalized U.S. citizens for the first time.”

In his postwar life a diligent Joe Ichiuji worked strenuously, and his job took him around the globe. Without a doubt this socially rewarding work gave him confidence and a larger vision of the significance of world peace. Soon he received awards for his exemplary commitment and contribution. When it came time to retire, he completed his official duties, but continued in a temporary capacity. He narrated his work thus:

I was awarded several outstanding performance ratings in the financial management positions. I also went on several overseas assignments to Korea, Taiwan, Guatemala, and Barbados. In 1979, I retired as a Deputy Division Chief, Financial Management, after 37 years of service. Then I was given a TDY-based job, which was temporary duty.

In 1995 something unexpected yet pleasant took place. Joe attended a banquet in Europe on the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Jewish camp. One of the liberated Dachau prisoners attended:

I took a picture of him, and I also have his number that was

assigned to him in Dachau. It was something to see him.... He hugged me, embraced me, he was so happy to see us. He was Jewish.... He thanked us very much. When you think about it, it makes you almost cry.

Joe Ichiuji and his wife have enjoyed a variety of organizational commitments, staying both physically and mentally fit. They are central figures in the nisei community, playing also the role of hub with helping hands for needy nisei. Sometimes he is a guest speaker for young people as well as various organizations, to say nothing of veterans groups. He has been active locally, nationally, and internationally:

After our retirement, we were both active with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and National Japanese American Memorial Foundation (NJAMF). Susie is a charter member of our local JACL Chapter and served on the Board and Eastern District Council. I have also been active with Go For Broke National Veterans Association (GFBNVA), Japanese American Veterans Association (JAVA), National Japanese American Veterans Council (NJAVC) and the Agency for International Development (AID) Alumni Association. I am currently Vice President of GFBNVA and serve on the Board of Directors of NJAVC.

Joe currently lives in Grosvenor, Maryland, and is invited by local schools to speak to children. "The public in America recently became suspicious of those who have a particular background, just as we were seen and treated with suspicion. They are Americans. But now, as a whole, government supports Americans. This is a big change," he said when he was given an opportunity to make an

official speech at one of the government agencies. He is particularly interested in the young generation for ethnic diversity in the United States. He recalled talking about tolerance for differences when he was invited to talk at his granddaughter's high school. He is concerned about the perpetuation of institutional racism in his daily encounters, articulating:

I also participated in the JACL Speaker's Bureau recently and spoke about my internment and WWII experiences to middle and high schools in Montgomery County, various federal government agencies, and other organizations. You know there is still discrimination even in the veteran's organization I worked for. Yeah, discrimination against Japanese Americans. So I will tell the story to high school students about how people treated other people differently.

Joe Ichiuji narrated his life history in a straightforward manner, by departing remarkably both from the self-pity of victimization and from self-righteous passion against racism. Without plunging himself into overt confrontation with societal complexity, he tried, instead, to develop himself as a decent American citizen of Japanese descent, hoping that his commitment would create a better understanding of American diversity. It was in this vein that he elaborated his life through the trajectory of his life experience.

Joe Ichiuji was one of those nisei who, in good faith and grace, believed in the American progressive potential for better, albeit attached to Japanese refined sensitivity he learned from his parents. In fact, he would trust good intention and practical action, enjoying the self-assigned duty in a way free of a socio-political form of radicalism, whether his agenda is related to the Japanese American

community or the American government. His meaning-making mechanism functioned as a kind of delayed gratification stemming from gradualism. This was his rationale of his choices throughout his life course. He often spoke of Japanese cultural values stemming from *enryo*⁸⁸ [reserve and restraint], saying, “We know modesty.” His cross-cultural way was thus grounded in a particular history where he elaborated his best workable choice, considering the social milieu within which he posited himself at that time.

⁸⁸See footnote 57 in Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3

MOSES MASAOKA: LIVING UP TO FUTURE FULL AMERICANS (Mike Masaru Masaoka)

*Hana mo arashi mo fumikoete, iku ga otoko no ikiru michi,
naite kureru na horo-horo dori yo, tsuki no hiei wo hitori yuku.*

Tabi no Yokaze

[Weep not for me, horo-horo dori birds; Life-course for a man is the way
through adversity and over glory, tracking alone in the moonlit Hiei path]
Journey over Night Wind⁸⁹

Based on the autobiography⁹⁰ of Mike Masaru Masaoka, this chapter concerns itself with his life chances and life ways as he lived and voiced his pursuit of the Japanese American dream. The whole array of his dramatic declarations in this paper reflects his growing construct of reality throughout his life course in which he made an articulated attempt to achieve the long-range goal of Americanization: the full-citizenship status of Japanese Americans, especially

⁸⁹*Horo horo dori* is a guinea fowl that is recognized to cry in a forlorn manner producing a kind of onomatopoeic sound, “horo horo” to Japanese ears. *Hiei* is the name of one of the most famous mountains in Kyoto where a high Buddhist priest founded his teachings known for silent beauty and strict discipline. The very name of this mountain suggests absolute wisdom attained only with strong conviction by pursuing true life in a straightforward way. *Tabi no Yokaze* [Journey over Night Wind] was one of the biggest hit songs of the 1930s in Japan and was widely sung among people embarking on a hard journey without any opportunity of looking back. Bill Hosokawa noticed that this song was often sung among Japanese Americans, especially in their difficult quest for success. See *JACL: In Quest of Justice* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1982) p. 171.

⁹⁰Mike Masaoka with Bill Hosokawa, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987). This autobiography was written by Mike Masaoka with editorial help from his friend Bill Hosokawa, once a newspaper correspondent and editor of *The Denver Post*. The book jacket offers more description: “The dramatic story of a Japanese American devoted to the welfare of his people in this country and in the land of his ancestry.”

that of the nisei, American-born citizens of Japanese descent whose social identity was nothing but what they were coercively assigned by the dominant social group. In fulfilling Americanization, his principle was to proceed gradually but steadily, one that developed concurrently with the politics of one particular organization, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL),⁹¹ where he served indefatigably as leader.

This was the main reason people called him Moses, leading his people metaphorically to a promised land, if not a land flowing with “milk and honey.” Masaoka was indeed a great leader, but at the same time he was arguably outstanding. Out of suffering within and struggles without, he pursued what he had been ordained to do by letting his people go. On this score, Mike’s autobiography invariably reflects the vicissitudes of his life through which one can view and review what he thought important politically as well as culturally.

A good place to start is with his parents’ background, but their history is not completely known. Mike began with his father: “Eijiro Masaoka was born in Aki-gun, Hiroshima Prefecture, January 10, 1878” (24). Because of the practice of primogeniture he “as a younger son” (24) thought he should seek opportunities of his own. In 1903, at the age of twenty-five, he came to Seattle “searching for economic success” (24). Mike noted, probably with some euphemism given the largely hostile society, “That search was made peculiarly elusive for Japanese immigrants by cultural and language differences” (24). Mike then became blunt: “Yet he was confident enough about his future to marry Haruye Goto, among the few unattached Japanese women in the United States at that period of history”

⁹¹See footnote 47 in Chapter 1.

(24).

Mike told of his mother, “Haruye had been born February 11, 1889, in Shimomashiki-gun, Kumamoto Prefecture, in southern Japan” (24). Her father was a “labor contractor...and his work apparently took him back and forth across the Pacific” (24). Because of family reasons, Haruye came to San Francisco and met Eijiro there. Mike wrote about the vague details of their marriage:

Haruye was a girl of sixteen when she landed in San Francisco with her parents on November 3, 1905. I never learned how she met her husband-to-be, or what attracted them to each other. Probably the introduction was through the good offices of a family friend of the Gotos, a Christian minister, the Reverend Kengo Tajima, who married the couple in Riverside, California, on July 3, 1908. (24)

Mike Masaru Masaoka was born on October 15, 1915 in Fresno, the fourth son of Eijiro and Haruye. When Mike was one, his father moved the family to Utah where he had spent all his fortune to buy land. But the Masaokas were victims of a fraudulent land broker. He wrote:

But Masaoka [Mike’s father] thought he had bought land waiting to be broken by the plow, land he hoped to coax into production by sweat and love and timely rainfall. He saw only the lapping waves of briny lake. For a long time he stared in silence at the desolation, and then in anguish he uttered one bitter word in Japanese: “*Yarareta!*” [“We’ve been had!”] (20)

Unable to find other options in life, they continued to live in Utah and that was where Mike grew up.

Mike Masaoka recalled the difficult time his parents had supporting eight children. Out of economic necessity, his father worked two janitorial jobs, but before long he found a better job as an entrepreneur. He started his own business catering to the ever-increasing population of Japanese Americans and opened a fruit and vegetable stand at the edge of Japantown. He was good at knowing what customers wanted, a business management practice that is strong in Japan today. Masaoka recalled, “Eijiro added a fresh fish department and called the store Mutual Produce in anticipation of happy relations with his customers” (25). More concretely, Eijiro saw a need and sought to fill it by providing fish for out-of-town customers since Japantown already had a fish market. Here Mike put his loud voice to work for his father’s business:

With an assortment of fish loaded on a newly acquired half-ton Model T Ford truck, he [Mike’s father] would call one day a week on Japanese farmers north of Salt Lake City, bringing back seasonal produce to sell in the store. Another day he would head for Japanese farms south of the city. And Sundays, when the Japanese smelter workers had a day off, he would drive to Murray, Magna, and Garfield. I accompanied him on these trips before enrolling in school, and after I began classes I would go with him on his Sunday rounds. I would make myself useful by running up to the farmhouses, bunkhouses, and shacks in the smelter towns to invite inspection of our merchandise. Apparently I had a loud voice excellent for peddling fish. As we drove through the mill town I would shout, “*Sakana, sakana*”—“Fish, fish”⁹² —at the top of my

⁹²The author notes that Mike’s loud call parallels today’s popular business phenomenon of using recorded songs at the fish counter of every supermarket in Japan. The songs repeat noisily, “*Sakana, sakana* good for your health as well as your mind.” Instinctively, Mike recognized the efficacy of this rhymed phrase and the impression

lungs (25).

Through his business efforts, the Masaokas improved their lot. As Mike recounted, they improved their living conditions, but Mike's circle of friends was limited to those of Japanese descent. He stated:

When the fish and produce business began to make a little money, the family moved into some rooms above an auto-repair shop just a block from the store and almost in the shadow of the Mormon Temple. We had more room than in the flat where we had been living, but facilities were still primitive. Since there was no bathtub, we bathed in a galvanized-iron tub with water heated on the coal-burning kitchen range. The toilet was on the ground floor in the garage, and we shared it with the customers and mechanics. In the previous place I had slept three in a bed with Joe Grant and Ben. Now Ike and I shared a bed, and that was a big improvement.

There was an empty lot alongside the repair shop, and it became our baseball field. Because of the field, and because there were so many of us Masaoka kids, other youngsters in the neighborhood made our place their hangout, and we had many noisy, exciting ball games. All our friends were Nisei—American-born children of Japanese immigrants. (26)

Economically the Masaokas were not much better off, if not living hand to mouth. In his boyhood, he took his living conditions for granted without realizing his conditions were worse than other families around him. He had

created by the repetition. What he did so naturally eighty years ago is today a well-established commercial song. The only difference is that the popularity of today's song reflects the individualized value of getting healthier and smarter. To the Masaokas at that time, fish was simply for making a bare living. Mike spoke of his loud voice on his deathbed, noting that the same loud voice that had helped him peddle fish had helped him throughout his whole profession in oral communication.

clothes to wear, although they were second- or third-hand, as a kind of primogeniture was a matter of course in his family. He had things to eat and probably ate above the poverty line, eating leftover food, which was not so unusual in those days. Mike wrote comfortably about a happy home life and family solidarity. They respected their father not only as the head of the family, but also as the center of home education, instilling proper discipline in the children.

The family witnessed no major disruptions thanks to the stable family order that was maintained. The Masaokas were indeed a big family by today's standard, and, as a result, there were plenty of opportunities for in-house socialization. Although raised in a patriarchy, he never failed to appreciate his mother's role. He internalized his mother's everyday demeanor. She gave affection and offered emotional stability like many other mothers. More than anything, he felt her dignity as a person, which was not something carefully created for demonstration, but rather something uncalculated to be recognized only in the eyes of the discerning. Mike saw unbending strength hidden beneath her physically small stature. Mike offered details of his daily life:

The Masaokas certainly were the poorest of the lot, but we didn't know it. We just assumed that every kid but the eldest in a family wore hand-me-down clothes. There was always enough to eat if we weren't picky, and were taught not to be. Often our meals consisted of unsold fish and vegetables from the store; turnips every night for a week could prove a bit tiresome. Nonetheless, our evening meals were happy affairs, preceded not infrequently by everyone joining in a hymn.... I remember Father as a tall man, unusually tall for a Japanese, robust and jolly but a strict disciplinarian at home. He had to be, with a house full of children, and we learned to respect him.

Mother, by contrast, was tiny and self-effacing, and always seemed to be working at something or other. She exuded a quiet dignity. (27)

Mike Masaoka recalled his father's attitude toward Christianity. His father was not Christian, but followed some Christian practices, such as saying grace before a meal, in an attempt to strengthen family bonds. Mike remembered, "Father seldom went to services, but it was his habit to rise and give the blessing before our family supper when we didn't sing a hymn" (27). On such occasions Mike may have viewed his father as being like Moses when he rose to bless his people. On the part of Mike's father, maintaining the patriarchal aura of an authority figure might have been a reflection of his secularized religion. To young Mike, his father was seen as authoritative, and, indeed, he was authoritarian. But neither the father nor the sons had the opportunity of seeing how this authoritarianism would have manifested itself in wartime incarceration, when all aspects of life were rationed and determined by others.

At the age of nine, family tragedy struck Mike; his father died in a traffic accident. No one knew exactly how it happened, except that authorities said it may have been a hit and run. This placed a tremendous burden on Mike's mother. For the sake of family solidarity, she made up her mind that she would take care of her big family. Mike as a nine-year old boy did not know what to do, but he recognized a strong agentic capacity within her in the form of determinism. It may be that her strong will and determination was formed when she crossed the Pacific with little knowledge of the fate that awaited her as an immigrant. This experience suggests a potent metamorphosis of a woman into an unfaltering

determinism. In Japanese tradition, this was *kodomo no tame ni* [for the sake of the children],⁹³ in pursuit of her children's happiness at the sacrifice of her own pursuit of happiness. She lived the American dream vicariously, through her children. Mike wrote:

Despite all his hard work, Father had been able to leave his wife only a very modest business, debts from the ill-fated land-buying venture that had brought us to Utah, and the responsibility of rearing eight young children. He had never been able to afford life insurance. And Social Security assistance for widows and orphans was still decades in the future. Some friends wanted Mother to let the boys be adopted, or to live temporarily with other families. But she was adamant, she would keep the family together. And she did. In a sense, then, I was the product of a broken home, a family shattered by a tragic accident but mended and held together by a mother's love and courage and the loyalty and selflessness of eight siblings. (28-29)

Even though the fatherless Masaokas did not rely on the help of others, Mike came to develop close relationships in Mormon circles. Not only did Mormon believers support his family, but also Mormon Scouts accepted him as an insider, if not a Latter Day Saint. They gave him a familiar American name so that they could include him on a first name basis. (In this paper the author has used the name "Mike" for all parts of his life, but, in fact, up until that time, he was known

⁹³This idea was often heard from issei parents. In this context Mike's mother had most presumably high expectations for the fulfillment of larger dream for the Masaoka family as a unit. To achieve this, parents did not mind paying any cost, however inconceivable. See also footnote 30 in Chapter 1.

by another name.) One Mormon leader especially, a white man who acted as a godfather, was a mentor for him. What Mike learned from him served to extend his Japanese American community life to the much larger society in general. In retrospect, Mike acknowledged the family-like assistance that he was afforded:

Judge Wolfe, who went on to become chief justice of the Utah Supreme Court, took a personal interest in our welfare. In the best Mormon tradition of looking out for one's neighbors he dropped in frequently to see how we were getting along. Almost like a surrogate father he encouraged the boys to join Boy Scout Troop 46 sponsored by the Mormon 14th Ward. He watched in great satisfaction as, working together, sacrificing for each other, the Masaoka family learned to make ends meet. It was in the Scouts that I acquired the name Mike. Until then I was known by my Japanese name, Masaru, which meant "victory" in Japanese, but which the other Scouts found difficult to pronounce. They called me Mississippi, Missouri, even Rosey, and I didn't like it much.... When I went to college I had my named [sic] legalized, not to Michael, but to Mike Masaru Masaoka. (29)

Mike was fond of telling about Judge Wolfe, sharing joy and pride. What really made an impression on Mike was that Wolfe not only treated the Masaokas without racial bias, but he also considered them as family members. His generosity took the form of hospitality and he invited the Masaokas to his home, giving Mike unforgettable experiences. Mike and his family had socialized with Caucasians only in token terms, but with Wolfe it became more meaningful, especially given the unfavorable climate of the period to Japanese as well as Japanese Americans. Wolfe's actions were brave, facing, as he did, possible

negative comments from other Caucasians. He was likely helped by his Mormon faith in brotherhood. On the part of the Masaokas, they invited him to their home, in turn showing him the true picture of their daily life. Although theirs was a limited world, mutuality was in the normal sense. Credit was also due to Mike's family who overcame possible reluctance to have him at their humble lodgings. Furthermore, Mike was grateful to Wolfe for teaching him things that he didn't learn at school, such as table manners, for this gave him appropriate knowledge of social expectations and helped him along his path toward full-fledged citizenship. Mike wrote of their expanded horizons:

On special occasions, such as when one of us did particularly well at school, Judge Wolfe would bring us a cake or some similar luxury to celebrate. As I remember, Judge Wolfe was the first Caucasian to come into our home, and his was the first non-Japanese home we visited. By comparison to our crowded quarters, his home was spacious and luxurious. When we ate at his home he corrected our table manners as though we were his own grandchildren. Thanks to the judge we Masaokas began to learn what life was like outside Japantown. (29)

Gradually Mike became more committed to Mormonism and he was baptized into the Mormon faith. Curiously, the Mormon Church, or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, had a particular interest in Japan, believing "the Japanese were among the lost tribes of Israel and were privileged to sit at God's right hand side" (30). While their authenticity might be dubious, stories⁹⁴—for

⁹⁴For further discussions see Arimasa Kubo, Ken Joseph, and Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, *Nihon, Yudaya: Fuin no Kodaishi; The Jews, the Eastern Christians and Buddhism* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 2000). See also Kazuhiko Kawaguchi, *Keikyo*:

example, that the Ark of the Covenant is hidden in Japan—abound, especially in the southwestern part of Japan, from which large numbers of immigrants came to the U.S. In fact, the Mormons enthusiastically sent missionaries to Japan until 1924 when the anti-Immigration law (the Reed-Johnson Act)⁹⁵ was enacted, which banned all immigration from Japan.

However, Mormons in Utah could not always cope with the climate of the time. Mike commented, “Not even Mormon good works could overcome the implied insult of an American law that said the Japanese were unworthy of being allowed into the United States as immigrants” (30). In his autobiography, Masaoka envisioned a way Japanese Americans could cope with the societal sense of exclusion and resultant discriminatory treatment. By referring to his personal experience as well as his friend’s, he maintained the relationship of the Japanese American inner psyche to the larger society. Masaoka stated:

Despite the official position of the Mormon Church, discrimination against Japanese existed in Utah, and I began to become aware of it. I knew, for example, that on the rare occasions we went to the movies we Nisei were shunted up to the topmost seats in the balcony—then known as nigger heaven—along with the blacks. One day Judge Wolfe invited me to have lunch at the exclusive social club to which he belonged, but even his prestige was unavailing. We were stopped at the door and he was told that his guest could not enter. This sort of treatment, I learned after reaching adulthood, was not uncommon throughout the West. (30)

Shiruku Rodo wo Higashi ni Mukatta Kirisutokyo [Nestorian Eastern Christianity: Christianity Bound in the East across the Silk Road] (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 2002).

⁹⁵For details see the latter half of footnote 6 in the Introduction.

Young Mike grew to learn racial relationships by encountering scenes both inside and outside his family circle. At this time Mike had a conversation with his mother in which he wondered how she bore a major family misfortune calmly and philosophically. To cope with the circumstances of how they came to live in Utah, his mother had instilled in him traditional stoicism. Indeed, he wondered with amazement how his mother was able to keep a low profile with such a positive outlook, knowing on his part that this was one of those things that demanded the acceptance of fate. But this young boy, American educated, could not bear that his family had been cheated, and he regarded his mother's tacit rationale as problematic, for they were unduly silenced by social subordination. He challenged not only the fraud but also all of the static demeanors he observed in his parents' generation. This incident became symbolic of Mike's long-lasting policy, practice and leadership in his later career. He had somewhat internalized his parents' cultural style, but he became all the more socially sensitive in pursuit of the justice and fairness that he had learned about in his American education. The interactive process of his conversation with his mother reflected the core of his cross-cultural adaptation pattern.

Psychological reductionism attributing adulthood qualities to childhood experience was not always adequate, although there is a powerful truth if the relationship is significantly linked between the two stages of life. This is especially true when childhood experience becomes a springboard, shaping later experiences in adulthood. To Mike this was a crucial occasion that shaped his basic thoughts and feelings toward the larger society. His leadership potential was thus characterized and then expanded to the larger society.

My mother, Harue, happened to tell me the story of the land fraud one day after I had reached adulthood. She related it without bitterness, recounting it only as just another incident in a long life buffeted by the winds of adversity and misfortune.

“That man was a crook,” I exclaimed in belated outrage. “Couldn’t you do anything about it?”

She shrugged.

“Why didn’t you go to the authorities?” I demanded.

“You must understand what it was like to be a Japanese immigrant in those days,” she replied. “People like your father and me had no rights. They called America democracy, but its benefits were not for those who were not white. Our testimony would have had no weight. We would have been laughed out of court had we dared to complain. So we swallowed our anger and persevered.”

The Japanese have a word for that, *gaman*⁹⁶ [patience and perseverance]. It means to hang tough, endure, stick it out. That is what my parents did, and by example that is what they taught their family, which ultimately included six sons and two daughters. Our parents were good teachers, but I learned more than the virtue of enduring. I learned to fight for my rights. That was the American part of my heritage. (21)

Mike experienced a series of discriminatory practices and later raised them as social issues with which he got heavily involved. Out of one friend’s case, he analyzed a Japanese American coping mechanism that was peculiarly Japanese American. Young nisei could be very vocal about unfair treatment, although they were usually calmed down by their parents who cautioned them about coercive social power and race relations. The parents always fell back on social definition and the resultant designation. Mike raised one incident and its countermeasure:

⁹⁶See footnote 39 in Chapter 1.

Sen Nishiyama⁹⁷ told us of his encounter with racial discrimination in junior high school. The pupils were told they could choose any sports activity they wished, and Sen signed up for swimming. When the class went to the municipal pool Sen was told he couldn't go in because he was Japanese. "But I'm American, just like the rest of the guys," Sen protested. "Yeah?" the gatekeeper said. "Show me your citizenship papers." Sen didn't know what the man was talking about. He went home nearly in tears....

Sen's father reacted to this incident in a curious manner. As Sen related it to us, his father said: "Sen, this trouble is all your fault."

When Sen protested that he had done nothing wrong, his father replied: "You had no business trying to get into that pool. You should have known they would not admit you, and you should not have tried to break custom. You know very well how the Japanese are treated in this country." (30-31)

Mike Masaoka extended the managing mechanism that developed to counter this negative treatment. He said they were getting wiser for not confronting all of the prejudice. Instead, Mike's rationale for something non-committal was a psychological and historical construct, giving priority to socially situated meaning, by which he carefully withdrew the sense of social justice in favor of dealing with the injustice at a more appropriate time, thinking that delayed gratification was a

⁹⁷Sen Nishiyama was a celebrity for his excellent simultaneous interpreting business from English to Japanese for the Apollo astronauts in Japan. He helped to promote a new area for simultaneous interpreters in international conferences. Sen Nishiyama, *Eigo no Dekobokomichi: Watashi no Adobaizu* [The Rough Road of English: What to Do with an Impossible Language] (Tokyo: The Simul Press, 1977); *Gokai to Rikai: Nihonjin to Amerikajin* [Understanding, Misunderstanding: The Japanese-American Communication Gap] (Tokyo: The Simul Press, 1972).

surer and more efficient way eventually to achieve the desired outcome. This future-oriented approach was grounded in self-restraint that was justified as an expression of inner strength, avoiding immediate catastrophe. This cross-cultural demeanor had developed into a sense of social self-control that prevented Japanese Americans from imposing, demanding, or challenging, to say nothing of being socially aggressive. But this stoicism was the seed of quiet Americanism, which a wise Mike felt keenly. His management style in daily routines was “not now,” envisioning a future imperative. In the meanwhile, he sought alternatives in lieu of negative confrontation. In recollecting his choice, Mike reasoned:

We were learning. Young as I was, this incident gave me an insight into Japanese immigrant psychology, which was to avoid trouble by keeping a low profile. That’s how they were able to survive in a hostile environment. I could understand the necessity, but I didn’t like it. Eventually I would be able to do something about it. Just then, however, I could only listen and think. Perhaps partly because of Sen’s experience I never learned to swim. But a larger reason was that I was beginning to develop other interests. (31)

In order to please his mother, Mike diligently pursued school activities. He became involved in the school newspaper and yearbook and, positive thinker that he was, sought to achieve as much as he could, regardless of, or probably forgetting, his racial background. He also plunged into public speaking, laying a firm foundation for his later career as a leader in the JACL and lobbyist on Capitol Hill. Especially important were his encounters with two excellent teachers in high school, which he entered in 1929. One of them was Mrs. Van Winkle, a

debate teacher who graduated from Cornell University, and the other was Joseph Curtis, a political science teacher who Mike thought was a very free thinker, challenging well-established traditions. Masaoka recalled his unforgettable experiences in the American education system:

She [Mrs. Van Winkle] taught me the rudiments of team debating, always emphasizing the importance of being better prepared than one's opponent. She also taught me that a speaker who made his presentation without notes was more likely to impress the judges than one who kept referring to them. These were lessons that stood me in good stead in four years of debating in college, and later in pushing for various causes in Congressional hearings. It was also at West High that I met Joseph Curtis, a political science teacher who introduced me to the exciting world of liberal ideas. He was a free thinker and he dared the ire of Mormon Conservatives by throwing his classes open to freewheeling discussions of political and social issues. As much as anyone, he helped lay the foundations of a political philosophy, based on a liberal interpretation of traditional values that was to guide my career. (32)

One can notice Mike's exceptional amount of relational skill with the assumption that something really important existed in everyday life, as in his routine family business in support of the household's needs. Reality is embedded in daily communication related to everyday life, producing higher value and gratification later on. The insightful perceive value in the moment and, as a result, create something rewarding and gratifying. This was Masaoka's meaning-making under very tension-filled circumstances in the larger society.

To Mike Masaoka, his commitment entailed the cultivation of persuasiveness,

the better to pursue the work of Moses that he was called to do. Again, one can trace the development of his life through prosopographic focus, albeit in a somewhat self-justifiable tone in his presentation. But, in any case, this was his way. Also, for Moses Masaoka, this was his important meaning-making, meaning-sustenance, and meaning-using. At this point in time, his agentic orientation was the social mobility he elaborately constructed. One of the experiences Mike Moses Masaoka wrote about was helping in the family business, where he learned about human relationships. Out of his daily routine, he extracted a successful business sense by which he further extended his business dealings. On top of that, he became skilled at how to gain the attention of an audience and how to direct it to where he intended, helping enormously to enhance his verbal skills in negotiation. Here it is worth citing at length to capture the lively interaction.

At the produce stand I wasn't content simply to bag what the customers asked for. I sold. I developed an ability to move merchandise we were trying to get rid of, perhaps to avoid having to eat the stuff. Kidding nice old ladies who came to shop, I could get them to buy two heads of lettuce when they had intended to take only one, a dozen oranges rather than six, the celery that I convinced them wasn't really as badly wilted as it seemed. It took a certain amount of brass to do this, and I had it.

Wearing a little happi coat, which always embarrassed me, I would tease and cajole customers into buying three balls for a dime to toss into numbered holes. I would tug at the sleeves of young fellows out with their girls and shout something like this: "Hey, hey, hey, how about spending a dime to win a kewpie doll for your girlfriend? What's the matter? Scared you'll lose? Too cheap to spend a dime? Come on, come on, three balls for

a dime, nine for a quarter, the more you buy the better your chance to take home this grand prize dinnerware set.... I learned a lot about motivating people. (33)

The entrepreneurial skills Masaoka developed served him well in his future career, but a more practical springboard for his future leadership was his actual engagement in state hearings to defend the rights of a Japanese American in his community. He was successful and felt keenly the sense of American fairness and the realization of American justice for all, which was elaborately constructed in Western logical tradition. He was thankful for the debate skills he had developed in his school days and put them to full use to solve a challenging situation. While he felt that the American system was great, he became convinced that he should familiarize himself with how legislation worked and equip himself with expertise. His enthusiastic story hints at his future potential in the legal field:

While still in high school I got an unexpected opportunity to practice my persuasiveness in an arena that counted. Henry Kasai, well known in the community as an insurance agent, liked to fish but was denied a license because he was an alien. He had persuaded an attorney to draft a bill ending the discrimination and asked me to help him get it through the legislature. It was my first experience as a citizen pleading for the rights of alien parents.... We were received cordially at a committee hearing and assured that the state law denying game licenses to “aliens ineligible to citizenship,” which meant the Japanese, was not so much racial discrimination as a conservation measure.... I argued that only a handful of them had the time to fish and none was interested in hunting, and certainly they weren’t going to endanger the game population.

We got the law changed.

I came away from the experience feeling good about the American system and brimming with confidence that justice always triumphs. That confidence was to be sorely tested, but it was a great introduction to the way legislation was shaped. (33-34)

After graduating from West High School in 1932, Mike Masaoka dreamt of studying law and working in the political world. He had established a strong attachment to local religious culture and acquaintances and had a strong affiliation with the place in which he had grown up. Consequently, he might have been considering possible matriculation to the University of Utah and the tuition and fees he would soon need. As a matter of fact, Joe, a brother six years older than Mike, had dropped out of the University due to lack of money and subsequently had to concentrate on supporting the family.

Mike Masaoka was then very surprised to learn of an offer of a scholarship to attend Harvard University proposed by Mrs. Burton W. Musser, a Mormon benefactress and wife of rich oilman. Here, the reader finds two salient cultural behaviors of Mike and his mother in response to this offer of financial assistance. He solicited advice from his mother to make the decision, recalling that “In great elation I went to discuss the offer with Mother” (35). Not surprisingly his mother said no, falling back on Japanese cultural ethics and aestheticism. Her behavior was consistent with her tradition, and she discouraged Mike from accepting the offer because it would dishonor Japanese tradition. The fact that he did decline the offer reflected the still powerful influence of cultural norms of behavior. To her, it was a matter of dignity. Monetary reliance would bring disgrace to the

name of the Masaoka family. Through no easy but very honest communication both in English and Japanese, Mike revisited his mother's culture and tradition, in which she had been raising her children under difficult times. He stated:

Finally, Mother shook her head. To accept Mrs. Musser's generosity, she said, would put not only me but the entire family under too much of an obligation. There was no reason for her to extend such generosity, she said, and therefore no reason that I should accept it. Involved in Mother's decision was an intense Japanese sense of independence that I could understand, plus pride in her ability to take care of her own without accepting help. The family was the center of her life, and its honor and integrity were paramount in her thinking. "Do nothing that would bring shame to yourself or dishonor to your family," she would tell her children. "To bring dishonor to your family is to damage all Japanese." (35-36)

Stuck between past tradition and future possibility, Mike deliberated on his dilemma wondering why and how his mother consistently lived up to her traditional culture within which she independently raised so many children. Her high sense of honor was grounded in a strong will, which sustained her from succumbing to something ungracious. To his mother, the loss of such dignity was equivalent to the loss of human integrity. The issue was not whether she understood what Harvard meant or not. In the end, her rigid culture urged Mike to work for a year to make the money needed to attend the local university. He worked hard and did enroll in the University of Utah. Mike described it as follows:

Did Mother understand the value of a Harvard education? I

doubt it. Perhaps I had been unable to explain it clearly. Even I was not fully aware of what a degree from Harvard could mean. But I believe that even had she understood, she would have made the same decision, and I did not question it. Without further argument it was decided that I would thank Mrs. Musser, live at home, and attend the University of Utah. But there was one other condition. Mother said I was too young and immature to benefit fully from college. She suggested that I work a year, save some money, and then enroll at Utah. And that is what I did. (36)

In his college life, Mike became even more enthusiastic about debate, forensics, and oratorical programs. But this freshman came to feel a certain deficiency in his ability to make full-fledged speeches. At the University, he met an excellent debate coach, C. Laverne Bane, who taught him the importance of full expertise in the subject of his interest. He learned to focus on the content area rather than the oratorical aspect of language organization and delivery. Bane taught Mike an essential lesson that the text mattered more than technical matters, to which he had been giving greater weight. For instance, Bane made him aware of the historical background of what he and his family had long experienced. Mike was particularly appreciative of his instruction and advice for diachronically developing subjects to best understand the society at large. Mike also learned from him a shrewd perspective with which to view social relations at present and beyond. Referring to Bane, Mike wrote:

He provided me with material for study about the racially discriminatory immigration law Congress had passed in 1924

and the California alien land laws,⁹⁸ which I realized for the first time had been responsible for my father's move to Utah. It sounds strange, but Laverne Bane was the first person to explain to me how a Japanese American ought to feel about racial discrimination, and why I ought to feel that way. And he went further. He helped me to realize that if the Nisei could make the nation understand the injustice of racial discrimination, we would be helping all Americans. (38-39)

Another quality he acquired through his active participation in debates was the ability to respond quickly and critically examine the opponent's statement, especially in the case of a rebuttal. In this way, Masaoka gained some verbal skills in reasoning and speaking with and without text.

While he enjoyed his college life, the Masaokas like other Americans faced major financial problems: the Great Depression forced many small-scale, mom-and-pop family businesses to close. Mike's family again faced poverty, as they had so many years before. But his mother's cultural heritage was consistent. She was hesitant to acknowledge the negative position they were in and shunned the declaration of bankruptcy. Masaoka explained her cultural orientation:

We got caught in a down and not only lost the original investment but owed the brokers for the margin purchases.

⁹⁸These were laws enacted mainly in California in 1913 and 1921 which banned land ownership of Japanese immigrants, "aliens ineligible to citizenship." The issei got around the restrictions of the stricter 1921 law by registering land in the name of their children who were born in the U.S. and were citizens. But in 1924 this practice became illegal, effectively barring anyone of Japanese ancestry from owning land. Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, (New York: Facts On File, 1993). For a discussion see Toyoshi Kase, "Japanese Immigration," *L & C* (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003) pp. 33-38. For legal matters in agricultural history see Frank F. Chuman, *The Bamboo People: The Law and Japanese-Americans* (California: Publisher's Inc., 1976) pp. 38-51, 72-89.

Before we knew what was happening the family was just as broke as when we had arrived in Utah nearly twenty years earlier. But Mother refused to declare bankruptcy. It took many years, decades in fact, but she insisted on paying our debts, a few dollars at a time, to the brokers as well as to the people who had lent my father the money to move to Utah. These were debts of honor that she could not forget until they were completely wiped out. (39)

The cultural expectations of Mike's mother could not outlast the harsh economic reality and the family retraced their steps westward, like the Dust Bowl migration. They returned to California and began a little fruit and vegetable stand on Wilshire Boulevard in downtown Los Angeles. Thankfully, it was not that complicated to start this type of business and keep it running, as long as they could fill the immediate needs of local customers and nearby residents. It was with some adjustments that they did meet the changing and evolving needs and requests of their customers. The vendor business was a small-scale operation but handy and convenient for residents who lived nearby.

Mike remained in Utah to finish out his two remaining years at the University, meaning he had the difficult task of supporting himself. He got a night job as a waiter at a noodle shop, working from 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. to meet his living expenses. He had to work extra to compensate for when he was out of town with the debate squad, but that was the school activity he liked best. After changes in his lifestyle, he managed at any rate to live on his own in Utah. After graduating from college, he wanted to go on to law school but he had no more money. He looked for a job while continuing to work nights at the noodle shop.

One time he joined an agricultural venture with other nisei men, farming

lettuce in the hope of making enough money to go to law school. This ended in dismal failure, leaving them no money to buy food except, of course, “what was most accessible—lettuce. Fresh lettuce, lettuce fried with bacon, boiled lettuce, salted lettuce, lettuce three meals a day until I was sick of it” (45).

Around this period Masaoka had some contact with the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), although this ended in failure because Tamotsu Murayama, the first JACL person with whom Mike had contact, could not make himself understood at all. Flatly, as was usual with him, Masaoka “told Murayama that he had not given us any incentive for joining his movement because he hadn’t been able to demonstrate how we would benefit by becoming members” (44). Soon afterward, Masaoka forgot about the JACL organization almost completely.

Contrary to a general belief in his great commitment to JACL, Masaoka’s second contact with JACL was also far from positive, mainly because of insufficient leadership within the organization. But he did find a few good leaders. Unlike the previous Murayama, Walter Tsukamoto, a personable attorney from Sacramento and JACL’s unpaid executive secretary, impressed Mike so much that he accepted a role in an upcoming convention. Masaoka said, “His [Tsukamoto’s] fervor and idealism intrigued me” (46). But, without mincing words, he noted that “the convention proved to be as dull as I feared it would be” (46). He was critical of the petty and insignificant matters that occupied them, such as “whether serving refreshments would result in better attendance at meetings.” Irritated, he proposed a broader vision for the future of the Japanese American community, suggesting that JACL win support from “a wide cross

section of political figures like mayors, state legislators, governors, and members of Congress when it went out in search of support for its objectives” (46). This bombshell pronouncement upset JACL representatives in the convention, who wondered what in the world could have driven him to say this. As one notices in any area, he found a handful of capable members in the mass of mediocrity. Indeed, Mike was attracted to the small number of persons of caliber as well as vision, including the next president of JACL, Saburo Kido, with whom Mike became close.

On the part of Masaoka, however, he didn't mind the reactions of the people present at the convention. He made one bold statement after another and began to consider seriously the role of the organization in the future. Briefly and determinedly, Masaoka recalled his estimation of this organization and the decision he came to, independently of JACL itself. He said, “I knew right then that JACL had great potential value, that it needed a lot of help, and that I wanted to be part of its future” (47).

Earlier on he had followed his mother's advice of “not rocking the boat” but in this case he, as an aggressive American boy, did not concern himself with the responses and reactions of those around him. Once he had made the decision to support JACL's goal, what concerned him was the perceived sense of something ineffective, producing nothing. His realistic assessment was as follows:

There are two versions about how I exploded onto the JACL scene. The popular version is that I, a brash young outsider at my first convention, became so disgusted with the proceedings that I jumped up, demanded the floor, and then in forceful tones told the members what was wrong with their organization.

This perception is understandable, because Nisei of that time were not accustomed either to hearing or delivering blunt talk. But I cannot believe that I, a guest, would have been so ill-mannered as to direct harsh criticism at my host, although some of my older friends say I am perfectly capable of such behavior. (46)

This was the curious way Masaoka plunged into JACL. In short, he made comments that insiders—or even true leaders—make, even before he had fully committed to the organization. Having a clear vision about the nisei’s future, he had long harbored a clear statement and this became his opportunity to reveal it to others.

In the midst of unfavorable days for Japanese Americans, Mike Masaoka thus came to the fore at this JACL convention in Salt Lake City, showing his initiative and capacity for later leadership. As a young nisei making his debut not with trepidation but with self-confidence, Mike Masaoka wrote a statement that documented Japanese Americans. He said, “That convention inadvertently gave me the opportunity to compose a document that gained more attention than anything I have ever written....” What Mike came up with in one writing session was a creed, the statement about how he felt about America and what America meant for Japanese Americans. He wrote “furiously” his Japanese American credo, “a statement from the heart that told what Americanism meant to a Japanese American” (50). Such a manifesto can appear “maudlin” (49) but, for those at the conference, “deep love of country was taken seriously” (49). The credo reveals the rationale behind his passionate commitment to constituting the full status of the Japanese American community. This was what Mike Masaoka

wrote in his manifesto of 1940, cited here in its entirety:

I am proud that I am an American citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and tradition; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future. She has granted me liberties and opportunities such as no individual enjoys in this world today. She has given me an education befitting kings. She has entrusted me with the responsibilities of the franchise. She has permitted me to build a home, to earn livelihood, to worship, think, speak, and act as I please—as a free man equal to every other man.

Although some individuals may discriminate against me, I shall never become bitter or lose faith, for I know that such persons are not representative of the majority of the American people. True, I shall do all in my power to discourage such practices, but I shall do it in the American way: aboveboard, in the open, through courts of law, by education, by proving myself worthy of equal treatment and consideration. I am firm in my belief that American sportsmanship and attitude of fair play will judge citizenship and patriotism on the basis of action and achievement, and not on the basis of physical characteristics.

Because I believe in America, and I trust she believes in me, and because I have received innumerable benefits from her, I pledge myself to do honor to her at all times and in all places: to support her Constitution; to obey her laws; to respect her flag; to defend her against all enemies, foreign or domestic; to actively assume my duties and obligation as a citizen, cheerfully and without reservation whatsoever, in the hope that I may become a better American in a greater America. (50)

The major concepts in his credo include: pride both in American citizenship and ancestral background, a deep belief in the American system, social action in the

American way of fair play, patriotism through action and achievement, and firm support of the Constitution. This was Mike's statement, but he hoped to shape the minds of all Japanese Americans in this direction, a goal he might be able to work toward if he committed to JACL. His document served to shape public opinion and, while not conflict-free, at least it helped to create a common sentiment as a kind of collective Japanese American identity on which Masaoka wanted to build.

In the beginning of the 1940s, not only U.S.-Japanese government relations but also the Japanese American community had been overshadowed by imminent war between the two countries. Mike Masaoka had a firm belief that Japanese Americans were largely loyal to the U.S. government and he acted upon this premise. He believed in Americanization through the American education system, inarguably the process of Americanization for most Japanese Americans. His basic assurance was grounded in his belief in the American educational system where powerful Americanization was already in progress. With the goal of Americanization, nisei children were encouraged to deny and reject anything Japanese. With some reservations on racial matters, Mike pointed up the necessity of enculturation, of merging with American culture through the sure process of education. He referred to the historical development of Japanese Americans using a Western kind of either/or thinking:

The Nisei of our generation were the products of an educational system that promoted Americanism by rejecting one's ancestral heritage. Youngsters were told in grade school to speak English, to forget the alien tongue. The popular reasoning of the times was that if the old-country culture was so good, why

had immigrants left it to come to the United States? In America, it was important to reject the past and embrace the present. The thrust of this kind of schooling resulted in rapid cultural if not racial assimilation. (66)

However, his bent to assimilate with larger America was so practical that he made a blunt avowal to denigrate differences in favor of similarities. He did situational meaning-making on the spot, suggestive of JACL's flexibility in their later policies, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Was this his attempt to achieve JACL's long-range objectives at any price, or political expediency assuming a protean management, or even Mike's personal propensity? In the end, Mike defended his position, placing Japanese Americans in what he thought was an appropriate place in the power relation of the time:

So long as American society considered racial differences a problem, so long as it hadn't gotten around to recognizing the reality of a multiracial and multicultural society, it was wiser for us to focus on the similarities rather than the difference between us and the Caucasian majority. (66)

Whether this stance was a social construct or political correctness, it endorsed the patriotic initiatives of JACL, claiming that "JACL had been founded on the principle of militant Americanism, and that's the way it would continue, war or no war" (67).

Along this line, Mike Masaoka was straightforward in his defense against the criticism of some Japanese Americans outside the circle of JACL that his

government contacts were a betrayal of his people, that he was an *inu*⁹⁹ [dog]. He wrote, “I do not hesitate to say that I cooperated with the FBI to the best of my ability; the FBI was the federal agency entrusted with internal security, and it was the patriotic duty of all citizens to cooperate.... But we were never informers in the sense that we ran to the FBI with information in hopes of currying favor” (73).

In the meantime, Mike Masaoka received a phone call from a man from Washington, D.C. who wanted to meet Masaoka and Kido somewhat in secret. His name was Curtis B. Munson, a man with government credentials. To Masaoka’s surprise, this man “made it clear that the federal officials feared war with Japan was imminent,” (63) and he perceived problems relating to Japanese Americans that would arise from the war. Mike later understood the significance of his secret mission, disclosing, “He, it turned out, was a well-to-do Chicago businessman who had been recruited into what might be described as President Roosevelt’s personal intelligence network” (65). His urgent task was to report to Roosevelt on the possible problems Japanese Americans would have in the event of war. After alluding to issues of confidentiality, Masaoka cited one of the sections of report, commonly called the Munson Report¹⁰⁰:

Nisei...are universally estimated from 90 to 98 percent loyal to the United States.... The Nisei are pathetically eager to show this loyalty.... The loyal Nisei hardly knows where to turn.

⁹⁹*Inu* means “dog,” the paramount function of which is to serve his/her master loyally, barking at whatever is going on in the interest of the master, regardless of the situation. Therefore *inu* is an narrato to the authorities, in return receiving rewards for the information. Traditionally it was a derogatory term, referring to the police and the spy.

¹⁰⁰See footnote 83 in Chapter 2.

Some gesture of protection or wholehearted acceptance of this group would go a long way to swinging them away from any last romantic hankering after old Japan. They are not oriental or mysterious, they are very American.

For the most part the local Japanese are loyal to the United States or, at worst, hope that by remaining quiet they can avoid concentration camps or irresponsible mobs. (65)

In another section, Mike included Munson's clear-cut statement, "Munson said flatly: 'There is no Japanese problem on the Coast'" (65). Credit was due to Mike Masaoka who could have such access to a secret agent before the war, although he exerted no influence on the decision-making process.

What Mike wanted emphatically to argue was that one significant report after another was left unknown, buried by political interest groups who succumbed to bureaucratic concerns, pressure groups, and/or personal interests. In such a political milieu his meaning-making was nothing but some future expectation. Masaoka lived long enough eventually to see them disclosed, noting that "they remained buried in the archives until postwar scholars dug them out." Among these reports, the one that he felt most strongly should have been disclosed was the document by Naval Intelligence. The deliberate neglect of this document was political manipulation of the socio-racial relations of Japanese Americans for their massive removal and detention under the guise of military necessity. With chagrin Mike stated:

Unknown to us in San Francisco, although he was well known to some JACL leaders in Southern California, Lieutenant Commander Kenneth D. Ringle of Naval Intelligence was on a similar intelligence assignment and making the same kind of

report attesting to the loyalty of Japanese Americans if war should come. Tragically, these reports apparently were given scant attention in Washington while the decision was made to oust Japanese Americans from their homes “as a matter of military necessity.”¹⁰¹ (65-66)

On this matter, Mike Masaoka was vague in discussing his alleged cooperation with Washington. His avowal was made in the subjunctive past perfect tense as follows: “What would JACL have done about resisting evacuation, which resulted in the *arbitrary suspension* [italics mine] of constitutional rights and the imprisonment of 115,000 Japanese Americans on the basis of race, if we had been aware of Munson’s and Ringle’s reports?” (66) This secrecy deserved discussion as Mike himself desperately wanted to allow room for it. But it is and was a mystery as to what was reported and how the reports were reviewed and processed. It was just as much a mystery to Mike at the time.

As usual, Mike Masaoka was busy moving around the United States. In an attempt to solidify JACL as an institution, Masaoka did a lot of business travel. He felt that JACL was “a relatively loose confederation of local chapters” (63) and that it should be nationwide. Although he was not looking for love, as Hollywood reminds us, romance can be found even in the most difficult times. It was in his travels that he met the Mineta family in San Jose. He did not articulate why he fell in love with Miss Etsu Mineta at first sight. He simply stated, “For many reasons she attracted me in a way that no other girl had” (62). He continued: “She was well-read and could discuss national or world affairs. She obviously was from a cultured and well-educated family” (62). This was Mike’s

¹⁰¹See footnote 68 in Chapter 2.

initial contact with her and he wanted to meet her often. But fate intervened in the form of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Although Mike did not write about it in his autobiography, Etsu Mineta recollected that she met Mike Masaoka in San Francisco, but she showed little interest because of the wartime. Nor did she show much interest in the letters he sent. Etsu Mineta said:

Oh, I saw him in San Francisco. Because of the war, you know, I'll never see this guy again. So, goodbye, nice meeting you. I was interned in the camp, he was somebody to me. Once into the army, oh, well, I'll never see him again. I kept a lot of cut sections of his letters for a while, but I threw them out because, you know, I had so many other friends' to save.

Under the turmoil directed against Japanese Americans, Saburo Kido had to deal with the issue of the nisei's citizenship. He asserted their rights and demanded that, as American citizens, they be protected under the law from "vigilantes and hoodlums." He declared that it was "the governor's responsibility to provide us with protection and make it safe for law-abiding Japanese Americans to remain in their homes," (82) but to no avail. The result was the treatment of all Japanese Americans as an undifferentiated mass. All were categorized as enemy aliens, regardless of citizenship. "Jap" was a comprehensive term enveloping all generations of Japanese origin. Mike talked about the semantics of this derogatory terminology:

Where the demand had been for the removal of Japanese aliens, the difference between citizens and noncitizens became blurred.

We, Issei, Nisei, and Sansei (third-generation Japanese Americans) alike, were simply “Japs” no different from the people of the enemy nation. Japanese Americans were referred to as “Japs” in newspaper headings.... So Japs we remained, day after day, locked with the hated enemy in a divesting semantic trap. (82)

After Pearl Harbor, one of the biggest decisions Masaoka ever had to make was over the issue of cooperating with the U.S. government on evacuation. Politically, he placed a positive priority on cooperation for the mass removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast. The unfavorable timing was that the official removal program had already been approved by the President. Mike said with regret, “What we had no way of knowing was that on February 11, eight days before the President signed the Executive Order 9066, Secretary of War Henry Stimson had received Roosevelt’s approval.... That same day General DeWitt was officially nominated, making preparation to get the job done” (86). It follows that the official decision was already made before the Tolan hearings on February 21. Masaoka’s plea was for justice free from “political opportunism or economic greed,” (87) and his expectation, like Kido’s, was for the “removal of persons, primarily aliens, from militarily sensitive areas” (88). He was willing to cooperate, albeit with reservations, because of his deep belief in the American system. He summarized his position for the Tolan Committee¹⁰² as it became

¹⁰²John H. Tolan, a Democratic congressman from Oakland, California announced the formation the House Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration in the House of Representatives, 77th Congress, Second Session, for justifying the internment of about 120,000 persons of Japanese descent. For details see Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied*. (Washington, D.C.: Report of Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, 1982) pp. 95-100.

known, saying:

With any policy of evacuation definitely arising from reasons of military necessity and national safety, we are in complete agreement. As American citizens we cannot and should not take any other stand. But, also, as American citizens believing in the integrity of our citizenship, we feel that any evacuation enforced on grounds violating that integrity should be opposed. If, in the judgment of military and federal authorities, evacuation of Japanese residents from the West Coast is a primary step toward assuring the safety of this nation, we will have no hesitation in complying with the necessities implicit in that judgment. But if, on the other hand, such evacuation is primarily a measure whose surface urgency cloaks the desires of political or other pressure groups who want us to leave merely from motives of self-interest, we feel that we have every right to protest and to demand equitable judgment on our merits as American citizens.... In this emergency, as in the past, we are not asking for special privileges or concessions. We ask only for the opportunity and the right of sharing the common lot of all Americans, whether it be in peace or in war. (87-88)

Masaoka's expectation, if not assumption, was that it would be a limited removal targeting only non-American citizens, who were the issei, the first generation. But the reality was grimmer, and his efforts ended in futility. In addition to the wholesale internment of aliens and citizens alike, his idealism lent little to the rationale by government authorities that went unexpectedly further. But deep in his heart he might have harbored the notion of using what he thought usable: the sentiment and behavior of the young nisei population in order to achieve the future full-status of Japanese Americans. When seen from today, or framed in the perspective of presentism, military necessity itself can be thought of

as the product of socio-political and economic manipulation. The post-Pearl Harbor mentality, however, saw the threat as a given. In addition, the Japanese American community had been seen as a bitter social problem for the white supremacy in the West.

A common criticism by sansei, or the third generation, on nisei's leadership was that they succumbed to California regionalism or nativism in a wishy-washy fashion. In response, nisei echoed Masaoka's rationale, that the events were inevitable, given the climate of the times. In fact, Mike resentfully argued:

We know now that there was no military necessity to justify any of these possibilities.... the Congressional Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians found after lengthy inquiry that "racial prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership"¹⁰³ were responsible for what it termed a "gross injustice." In 1942 we sensed this to be true, but how could we prove it when we knew nothing more than what was published in the newspapers and broadcast by radio? (88)

Masaoka was particularly troubled by the infringement of the Bill of Rights; "No person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." It was normal for him to think, based upon the Constitution, that no citizen was guilty until tried and sentenced. Yet, Mike said, "the government was presuming our guilt without ever filing charges and putting us away until we could prove our innocence" (93). His supreme dilemma was that "we were being asked to yield to them peacefully in the name of national defense" (93). Many a night passed without sleep and he remembered, "I would toss and turn for hours until

¹⁰³For details see footnote 116 in this Chapter.

exhaustion claimed me” (93).

Presumably recalling the logical arguments he had acquired in his school days, Mike tried to approach his dilemma with logic, but again this was in vain. His compelling argument that compared the situation in the U.S. to that in the U.K., which was at war with Germany, ran as follows:

The Army had taken the racist position that because we were not white, it was impossible to tell the loyal from the disloyal. Earl Warren endorsed this position in his Tolan Committee testimony. In England, at the beginning of the war with Germany, 117 hearing boards were set up. In six months more than 74,000 enemy aliens were summoned before these boards. Some 2,000 were interned, 8,000 were made the subject of special restrictions, and the rest were allowed to go their way. My suggestion for similar boards to clear the loyalty of Nisei fell on deaf ears. (93-94)

Despite Mike’s reflection and imperative, the American majority was fanned by hatred after Pearl Harbor, and all his endeavors were fruitless. Irrationality in the form of racial bigotry prevailed among decision makers, local or governmental. Often Japanese Americans were said to be able to transcend devastating events, but this collective hue and cry was just too much for them, especially after taking into consideration their guilt complex after Pearl Harbor. Masaoka believed that the racial construction of reality was strongly influenced by John. L. DeWitt, the Commander of the Western Defense. To DeWitt this war was a race war. Mike assessed DeWitt’s ideas and actions, saying, “He [DeWitt] saw the war in the Pacific not as conflict between governments or ideologies, but as a race war” (108).

Mike cited two legendary racist remarks made by DeWitt in his *Final Report*¹⁰⁴ justifying the removal en masse:

In the war in which we are now engaged racial affinities are not severed by migration. The Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation Japanese born on United States soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become “Americanized,” the racial strains are undiluted. (108)

The second racial remark Dewitt made was in his testimony before a Congressional committee, in which he stated confidently:

A Jap’s a Jap. They are a dangerous element.... There is no way to determine their loyalty.... It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen; theoretically he is still a Japanese and you can’t change him..... You can’t change him by giving him a piece of paper. (108-109)

Whether he thought of blood as being thick or thin, DeWitt was responsible for the total purge of Japanese Americans, which included, according to an official Army report which Mike cited, “persons who were only part Japanese, some with as little as one-sixteenth Japanese blood.” He argued, “In this he [DeWitt] outdid the Nazis, who did not persecute those with less than one-eighth non-Aryan ancestry” (108).

Indeed, some were driven by racial hatred, some by threatened psychology, and still others by strategic politics. Mike pointed out all of these drives, by

¹⁰⁴John L. DeWitt, *Final Report: Japanese Evacuation from the West Coast 1942* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942).

delineating all persuaders, hidden and articulate, who created rhetoric of their own.

Mike summarized the concerted pressure created in wartime:

The tragedy is that great men like Roosevelt and Stimson, and others in positions of power, listened to the faulty reasoning of Warren, the incomplete reportage of Lippmann, and the racist fears of DeWitt, accepted their counsel, and ultimately committed what legal scholars have condemned as America's worst wartime mistake. Completely ignored were reports from Navy Intelligence, F 131, the Federal Communications Commission, the State Department (Munson Report), and the Army's Chief of Staff (General Mark Clark) that the wholesale eviction program was not necessary as a military expedient!
(109)

Indeed, all nisei were defined as enemy aliens and citizens and non-citizens were lumped together, contrary to the basic belief in the significance and sanctity of citizenship that they were supposed to have learned in American schools. Mike felt remorse at his own failure of leadership, saying, "I felt I had failed JACL and its members" (91). In this time of agony, he felt JACL could only take a kind of palliative measure and "if mass evacuation was inevitable, the Army's request also confronted JACL with the responsibility to help minimize the pain and trauma of the ordeal ahead" (91).

However, Masaoka did not remain long in that penitent state of mind, nor did he go into hiding. Rather, he sought to push forward toward his final goal of full-fledged Japanese American status. His iron will and practical mind in pursuit of this goal were amazingly consistent, fully suggestive of the tenaciousness that he observed in his widowed mother as she raised eight children, including himself,

in times of great hardship.

It was his sense of consistency that did not allow him to succumb to what he had previously been told not to do. He wanted to try to remain true to his convictions. It is certain that a man of persuasion is, in reverse, vulnerable to being persuaded when challenged logically. In his case, he harbored in his mind and entertained what he had been persuaded concerning racial power relations. Through a series of interactions with the authorities, he made yet another of the biggest decisions of his life, although it called into question his consistency. Early in 1943, Mike was asked to go to the Pentagon Office of Colonel William Scobey and was presented with the possibility of nisei's military service. To his credit, Mike remembers that after a long silence, "my protest began to flow" (123). He continued:

...before the evacuation I had proposed formation of an all-Nisei unit and had been turned down with the argument only Negroes were confined in segregated outfits. I also told him that while Nisei would have rushed to volunteer before the evacuation, now there was much festering bitterness in the camps about the way they had been treated. (123)

Mike thus complained of inconsistent expediency, but for the sake of the larger cause, he also considered the immeasurable effect of such nisei action being publicized to the society at large. His political consideration overrode the inconsistency he resented so strongly and he resolved to support the formation of a nisei combat team. It would be a very visual initiative: Japanese American men fighting against the people of Japan, the land where their parents were born. It is

debatable to what extent Masaoka got involved in the actual decision-making process for the formation of this unit. But he did endorse the idea of this critical mission, hoping to channel the pent-up feelings of bitterness in the internment camps toward something rewarding.

Given that there was no way for Japanese Americans to prove their loyalty, Masaoka thought that this was their one opportunity, however tough and challenging it may prove to be. One cultural thinking, or to be more specific, his inner expectation, was that the nisei boys would surely fight their bravest to prove that they were not what the larger society thought they were. He knew very well that most nisei were pathetically eager to demonstrate their patriotism in combat due to the long period of societal misperception of their true loyalty. Masaoka said, "... no matter how unfair or hazardous, I knew we must accept the challenge" (125). Masaoka wrote honestly of how the negotiation with Colonel William Scobey took place:

Scobey explained the Pentagon's thinking. The Army was sympathetic with the Nisei's desire to demonstrate their loyalty through military service. But there were millions of Americans in uniform and millions more would be called up, and a few thousand Japanese Americans dispersed among all those men would be virtually invisible. But a regiment-size outfit of Japanese Americans fighting as a unit was bound to attract attention, and win sympathy and admiration, particularly if it set the kind of heroic record that could be publicized.

Scobey also pointed out the hazards of organizing such a unit. If it failed to perform adequately—if the Japanese Americans did not volunteer in adequate numbers, or if they proved to be poor soldiers—the Nisei faced criticism, derision, scorn. On the other hand, their desire to distinguish

themselves could lead to heavy casualties and charges that they were being used as cannon fodder. He urged us to think over the proposal, consult our friends, and report back to him within a few days. (123-124)

Mike Masaoka wanted to consult with other important JACL leaders, but this time physical distance made it difficult to examine the pros and cons from all quarters, and in the end the final decision was on his shoulders. Mike had to do some fast decision-making, something he was no stranger to in the past. But this time his deliberations lingered in his mind and he mulled over the plethora of meanings, positive and negative, that continued to create the Japanese American experience. Masaoka wrote of the variety of opinions: “The reaction of our Caucasian friends was predictable. This was a breakthrough Dillon Myer¹⁰⁵ was seeking, and a segregated unit didn’t bother him. The pacifists were dismayed that we would feel the need to fight to prove our loyalty. The idealists were repulsed by segregation. The pragmatists saw definite advantages” (124).

This moment was the watershed for the assessment of Mike Masaru Masaoka, whether he was a man of noble mind and deed, leading his people into the land of promise, or he was a man of mere expediency and exploit, using their blood to his advantage. Whatever the case, his was an exceptionally distinguishable deed under wartime conditions, worthy of utmost attention. On this score, once again, he was arguably great. But he was unarguably persistent toward his own ends as well. Unfortunately, too often others have judged his initiative without due

¹⁰⁵Dillon Myer was a very amicable and understanding head of the War Relocation Center. In fact, Mike Masaoka thought highly of Myer “who hated the side of his job that required him to be a jailkeeper” (368). See also footnote 87 in Chapter 2.

consideration of the ongoing process within which he had excruciatingly been cast.

It is certain that the end cannot justify the means. It was the process of achievement that called for much attention, because it revealed ongoing conflict, dilemma, and struggles. It follows that this depth-dimension in turn illuminated the man's basic assumptions for norms and behaviors embedded deep in the cultural system. Given this unbending consistency, Mike made the difficult decision to pursue his larger goal, reasoning as well as confirming and reconfirming that he was and had been a man true to his principle for the larger cause. Thus, he was finally convinced that "to pass up an opportunity to prove ourselves, no matter how unfair or hazardous, was unthinkable" (125).

But his compromise might well be counterbalanced by Mike's proposal to enlist when John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, suggested a soft Pentagon assignment for him. He was a man of word and replied, "'No, sir.... We've been pleading for an opportunity to fight, and now that we have it, I don't expect any favors.' I knew then that wherever my military career might lead, I would serve it as an enlisted man, and that was fine with me" (126). Thus he was the first volunteer, even before the formal opportunity to volunteer was available. He did, in fact, serve in the military, much to his honor.

In contrast to Mike's consistency, the official formation of an all-nisei combat unit revealed inconsistencies in the President's words. Mike noted that the same President Roosevelt, who had signed Executive Order 9066 imprisoning all West Coast Japanese Americans on the basis of their racial origin, went on in the next breath to declare that Americanism was not a matter of race. This oxymoron indicated not so much a racial issue itself, as a way of viewing Japanese Americans

as insignificant. Roosevelt thus encouraged all “loyal” citizens in the following oft-quoted phrase:

The new combat team will add to the nearly five thousand loyal Americans of Japanese ancestry serving in the armed forces of our country....

No loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to exercise the responsibilities of citizenship, regardless of his ancestry. The principle on which this country was founded and by which it has always been governed is that Americanism is not, and never was, a matter of race or ancestry. (127)

Mike wrote about the general acceptance in the press of Roosevelt’s decision. He referred to the San Francisco Chronicle’s comment as perhaps most significant: “The decision of the War Department to treat them [the Nisei] like other citizens in the mustering of men for the armed forces will gratify all who have felt that the only proper test in their case is loyalty, not racial origin” (127-128). Mike echoed that thinking in a televised press conference by asking: “Mr. President, if as you say no loyal citizen of the United States should be denied the democratic right to fight and perhaps die for his country, why are so many of these ‘loyal citizens’ continuing to be imprisoned in detention camps?”

In the meantime, Mike continued to stay in touch with Etsu Mineta in her internment camp in Heart Mountain, Wyoming. Looking back, both Mike and Etsu referred to their telephone conversations. Mike talked about the mechanism of communication, fully suggesting that it was always he who took the initiative. He explained, “As I often did when I wanted to talk to Etsu, I sent a telegram to

the Heart Mountain camp asking her to telephone me at a specified time” (131). Calls from outside did not reach internees, but they could call out, using one pay phone near the camp administration office. Very sympathetically Mike described how inconvenient it must have been for Etsu to call him. For a variety of reasons it was usually late at night, probably so they could work out the time difference, because there were fewer people using the one telephone, and because the rates were lower. “Late at night, clutching a handful of coins and bundled against the cold, Etsu would trudge through the dark from the Mineta barracks unit to the administration building to try and reach me,” he said thoughtfully.

Young Etsu remembered that it was difficult, but she used to do it. She said:

“Nine o’clock, your time.” It would be whatever time it was where he was. There was one only public pay phone, and I had to go out on a cold, dark, lonely path for the phone. The phone was within the camp, but located way back on the premises. It was not so encouraging to walk alone. I was afraid but I went there, standing by for my turn.

Etsu eventually learned that Mike was a gifted speechmaker, bolstered by the debate training he received at the University of Utah. She often said, “He came from *yama no naka* [deep in the mountains]. But he was very articulate. He had such a wonderful way with words.” She came to appreciate that “he had a quality that was different from most people,” acknowledging that other people “encouraged him to speak out, to be articulate for them, and that he had devoted himself to this because nobody else could do as he did.” She knew that he was a confident speaker and was not afraid of entering into a discussion with anyone.

She meant it. Etsu's highest compliment on his communication skills was "he had a good talk."

Mike remembered that the long distance phone calls got expensive. He used this as an excuse to propose: "Without wasting time in preliminaries, I asked her to marry me. With equal directness she accepted." About this time, a busy Mike was made even busier after disquieting events in which camp dissidents burned him in effigy and threatened to "get" him. Later, Etsu felt with insight, as well as concern, some of the reactions toward Mike's efforts. She said, "He was able to contact high government officials, speak to them, because he could do that. But because of this he was hated by some of his people." In any case, it turned out to be Etsu who came to meet him in Utah after the negotiations and marriage arrangements of both parties.

Half in exhilaration and half in solemnity for the wartime, Etsu left the Heart Mountain camp in Wyoming bound for Salt Lake City. She traveled by train through Billings, Montana, making a connection in Butte on her way to meet Mike. But he wasn't there to meet her. She had come all that way with fifty dollars from her parents in her pocket and he wasn't there. She remembered:

When I finally got to the Salt Lake station, there was nobody to meet me and I thought why did I come here from the camp? There was nobody here for me. I was so disappointed. "I'm gonna turn around to go back to the camp." But I couldn't. I didn't have enough money. After calming down, I had 20 cents for a telephone call. I spent 20 cents for the call to the national headquarters of JACL: "Oh my God, where are you?" I said, "At the station." He [Larry Tajiri, a staff member] said, "Stay there. I'll be down in two minutes." With a bad beginning we managed to make it all come out, for the train

arrived here delayed.

In addition to Mike not being able to meet her at the station, another problem, a much more serious problem, arose that threatened to disrupt the marriage. Mike had not mentioned that he had volunteered for military duty and she learned of it for the first time the next day. He claimed that he assumed she had read about him enlisting in the *Pacific Citizen*, the JACL newspaper, but in fact she had not. She said more angrily than ever:

I had been betrayed into leaving camp. I didn't know such a drastic, major, change-of-life event where the boys were sent overseas by the army and they were bombed and they might come back wounded or dead. As you know, a young girl going to marry was envisioning the future. I had been betrayed. That's right. I've never really gotten angry about anything, but this time I got most angry.

What was discussed or negotiated or argued remains something between Mike and Etsu. But these two matters did not seem to be pertinent to their personal cultures, respectively. In essence Mike's sensitivity and behavior were gender-based, suggestive of a paternalistic culture that could rely on *ex post facto* approval and which relegated a woman's prior engagement to the backseat in favor of a man's initiative. The excuse he made for not telling her about his enlistment implied one of the old parental customs of androcracy, putting men above women for important decisions. Mike seemed to think that he could obtain her approval after the fact.

With some embarrassment, Mike remarked on the angry reaction he got from

Etsu. She was somewhat of an American product who looked at this with an American sense of equity.

She felt I had put something over on her and was as angry as I've ever seen her. On top of that, she had no intention of getting married and returning to the camp while I marched off to war. What a rocky way to start a marriage!

The storm passed over quickly. Etsu agreed I had to volunteer. She said she would marry me and we would be together until I was inducted. (132)

Making meaning out of their interpersonal relationship, he said, "I view the broad picture; she handles details," (133) subsuming her details into his long-range perspective, which, understandably, fit his consistency. Finally and always, it was Etsu who understood Mike's enterprises, making meaning-production through coordination.

Etsu began to have second thoughts about marrying Mike. In the end, her final decision to proceed with the marriage was partly culture inherited from her parents, which gave the man the initiative, if not making the woman subservient. After taking everything into consideration, Etsu also saw more in the context of the future vision of Japanese Americans in which she also played an important part. She thought that she could and would, or to be more specific under the wartime situation, should support him. She was thus convinced that it was the Moses in him that really achieved the loftier purpose. Etsu said:

Mike was always strong-minded, having a strong desire to contribute something to society. He was always working for a cause for the sake of humanity. It was Mike who could

contribute to mankind. A local Mormon church in Salt Lake played a strong part in Mike, giving him the right direction.

Always he was so far ahead of me, showing a tremendous capacity of fulfillment. I just got quiet. There was nothing particular on my part to try to influence him anyway. I was just going along, supporting him. I was simply a support person in the background. Whatever he said or did, I pretty much supported him. I didn't want to stand in his way. Well, he sometimes got upset and impatient, you know. I was just calm and just waited without losing my cool.

However benevolent, Mike's paternalism had been shaped as he grew up, as he and his brothers continued to support the family after his father's sudden death. The cultural father in him was a construct of his life immediacy and routine, which wise Etsu understood as a positive characteristic in him. She said, "I think that sad incident [his father's death] just made him stronger, more determined to want to succeed while knowing his mother worked hard without complaining." Etsu's evaluation of Mike reflects her choice of husband that mirrored her father's life course. Reminiscing, she said:

I know my father as a young man thought, "I'm gonna go to America" for an opportunity. He got on a boat in Japan and arrived in Seattle. I think he said he walked and walked and walked until he finally made it to Salinas, California. He started farming and made enough money to come down to San Jose for better farming, working very hard. He was on his own and determined to succeed. You know the issei people, they did have *meiyo*, [self-esteem] for determination and desire to succeed.

On Mike's part, he felt strongly obliged to Etsu, and acknowledged:

To put it very honestly, it is her understanding, patience, and tolerance of my weaknesses that is the cement of our marriage. I am impetuous, she is steady.... She is the sounding board for my ideas, and I depend on her good sense. She anticipates my needs without in the least being subservient. She deserves an equal share of the credit for anything I may have been able to accomplish. We complement each other. (133)

A very fortunate circumstance for the new couple was that Etsu was cleared from the camp on February 4, 1943. Just ten days after the closing of the Heart Mountain Camp, Mike Masaru Masaoka and Etsuko¹⁰⁶ Mineta were married on Valentine's Day, February 14, 1943. She expressed her joy, saying, "Everybody said 'They are amazing. How nice!' But it just happened that way. That was very nice. We got married at the Community Meeting Hall. Oh, nobody had money." Indeed, the issei and the nisei alike were leading very frugal lives. It was still wartime and a difficult time. Etsu recounted, "You know the American public was against Japanese and they could not tell Japanese Americans born in the United States. Even though we had American citizenship and could speak English, we looked the same. *Shikata ga nakatta* [It couldn't be helped for it was uncontrollable]. So it was very tough."

The toughest thing for the new couple was that time sped by too quickly and soon it was time for him to report for duty. This turned out to be difficult for Mike for the sake of his newly wed bride, especially taking into consideration the

¹⁰⁶Etsu's registered name on her birth certificate is Etsuko. To facilitate pronunciation in English, she calls herself Etsu and is called Etsu by others.

“Go for Broke”¹⁰⁷ mentality of his regiment. Proof in blood was the name of loyalty for these nisei soldiers. For the first time, Mike articulated his honest apprehensions about his life:

I had a premonition that I would not survive the war. Having asked for combat, having urged other Nisei to volunteer for combat, I did not consider it an injustice in the great overall scheme of things that I would become a casualty. Of course, no one wants to die. I had much to live for. I looked forward to a long life with my bride, going back to law school, perhaps going into politics. But I knew I had to be ready for the possibility of battlefield death. (137)

Another anxiety for Mike was that he was not sure whether he would get true support from the volunteering nisei men. While he was concerned with their level of support, he was self-reliant enough not to count on them much, or actually he did not care, as long as they did not oppose him outright. He knew they entertained bitter sentiments for the evacuation, relocation, and detention. To detainees, these programs might not be what they had expected of him as a leader. He did not romanticize his leadership, saying, “I was aware that many of them, even though they had volunteered, still believed in some way I was their Moses responsible for leading them into the detention camps. I didn’t expect them to go out of their way to help me” (137-138).

For his part, Mike Masaoka was proud to say that the Masaoka brothers volunteered for combat. Except for the eldest, Joe Grant, who was responsible

¹⁰⁷See footnote 61 in Chapter 2.

for taking care of their aging mother, Mike and the rest of his brothers, Ben (died in action), Ike (disabled), Tad (wounded), and Hank served in the U.S. Army. Mike not only wanted other nisei to know that he acted on his beliefs, but he also wanted to make public his sincerity: “no one could accuse the Masaokas of shirking their duty” (138). To Mike, bringing no disgrace to the family was a time-old imperative of his parents’ cultural legacy.

Now a private in the army, Mike Masaoka in a new uniform began his military duties with the most menial of tasks: cleaning urinals and toilet bowls. Later, he was ordered to report to the headquarters office where, to his surprise, he was assigned to 422nd regimental public relations. Their mission was “to dramatize the loyalty of Japanese Americans” and “get their story out to the public” (139).

It follows that Mike was not engaged in actual combat, doing instead more of the desk work he had originally declined. His indirect contribution, however, made known a more comprehensive picture of Japanese Americans. In addition to his past leadership with the JACL which was nationwide, and having been exempt from internment because he was from Utah, Mike this time was able to assume a position with a much wider range and influence. During the war, he did quite a bit of liaison work with Washington and he reported the whole array of valor in his nisei unit in action. Mike recounted the occasions when the press became aware of gallantry in combat:

Reporters hurried to the area. I worked hard to make sure the sacrifice of the Nisei would be recognized. Suddenly, in newspapers all over America, readers learned about the 422nd. They learned about men fighting for freedom while their

families were still in American relocation camps. (171)

One of the toughest occasions for “proof in blood” for the nisei 422nd Regimental Combat Team was the seizure of the Gothic Line on the European Front. Mike reported, “The Germans had spent some nine months digging into the rock of the Apennine Mountains of Northern Italy and had built a virtually impregnable defense called The Gothic Line” (175). Allied forces could not “dent it in five months of bombing and shelling” (175). The nisei combat team, carrying their weapons, succeeded in climbing a 600-foot cliff completely at night under the cover of darkness. There were several stories of comrades who slipped and fell to their deaths without uttering any cries, as they had been instructed. The Germans did not consider the possibility of an attack coming from over the cliff and they paid no attention to this back side. In about 30 minutes of fierce fighting, the surprised Germans were swept away. Mike Masaoka covered “the first Allied victory in World War II over the Axis powers” (175) as follows:

In our sector the 3rd Battalion, in absolute silence, spent two nights getting into position. The first night the men took eight hours to climb a twisting mountain trail to a village where they hid during the day from enemy observation. The next night they moved silently to a 3,000-foot ridge between two peaks.... The surprise was total, but the Germans reacted swiftly. A furious bloody battle ensued, but it ended quickly. In a scant thirty-two minutes a stronghold that had held out for five months was seized. (175)

This endeavor had been considered next to impossible beforehand. The fact that they dared to attempt it at all was a clear indication of the will of these “Go for

Broke” men, who saw it as their chance to demonstrate their loyalty.

More and more, Mike saw the nisei’s war efforts in the framework of management, especially its sacrificial dimension as compared to the suicidal spirit of Japanese kamikaze pilots. He believed that the nisei fought for the future of themselves and their families while the Japanese kamikaze knew they were losing the war. He supported his line of argument, saying, “I think it can be proved that of all the individual decorations the Nisei troops won for valor, more were awarded for saving the lives of comrades than for killing enemy” (172).

Along this line, Mike discussed the long-simmering issue of self-sacrifice in the nisei unit, regarding the following as the logical fallacy of criticizing past events based on the result:

If the Nisei were not suicide troops, why were they given so many extremely hazardous jobs? It’s true the 442nd was called on to spearhead a number of attacks and assigned key roles in many other critical operations. But these assignments were given us only after we had gained a reputation as a crack fighting team. (172)

More in the background but no less important was the Military Intelligence Service (MIS)¹⁰⁸ serving in the Pacific Theater. Because of the need for a high level of proficiency in the Japanese language, most of these men were recruited from a group of *kibei*¹⁰⁹ nisei, who were born in America, educated in Japan, and who returned to America. Mike gave honorable mention to the MIS group,

¹⁰⁸See footnote 76 in Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁹For more background see footnote 124 in the Conclusion.

although he failed to comment on their complex psyche, given that they were encountering soldiers of the same racial stock, sometimes their cousins, in a case of Japanese American boy meets Japanese boy in action. If Mike had passed the language exam, he might have fought in the MIS. He noted their heavy duty:

But we must not forget the Nisei who served in the Pacific Theater as interpreters and translators, the eyes and ears of the Allied war effort as members of the Military Intelligence Service. They fought in the jungles of New Guinea, landed with the Marines at Iwo Jima, bled at Guadalcanal, fought behind enemy lines in Burma with Merrill's Marauders, entered the caves of Okinawa in search of stragglers and civilians. Mostly they fought and worked and bled and died in anonymity, for they were America's secret weapon. (178)

Mike did not forget to talk about the resisters, mainly *kibei*, who demanded "restoration of their rights before they would serve their country" (179). Mike's thinking was embedded in the criterion of sense-meaning in a politically situated context. His rationale was reinforced by the result of sacrificial combat records of the nisei men. He began his critique with some historical interpretation:

Some historians, writing from the isolation of their ivory towers, have contended the draft resisters were the real heroes of the Japanese-American story because they had the courage to stand up for a principle. These historians are wrong. The significance is in the relatively small number of dissidents in the face of gross injustice. The heroes are the men and their families who demonstrated their faith in America. In the postwar years, Congress passed one remedial measure after another to correct historical wrongs. In every instance it was the record of Nisei military valor and sacrifice that drew

attention to past injustices and convinced those in power that change had come. Without that record the fight for justice would have been infinitely more difficult. (179)

Indeed some historians romanticized these incidents, but Masaoka branded these dissidents as troublemakers for their ignorance of the larger cause that had to receive priority for the sake of their long-range future. To Masaoka they did not understand the wider context of history.

JACL published a resolution in the *Pacific Citizen*, the JACL newspaper, on June 29, 1990, exactly one year before Mike's death, which read:

There were times of controversy here as at very center.... The matter of the draft resisters has been a longstanding sensitive and controversial issue. The 1990 San Diego National Convention of the Japanese American Citizens League passed a resolution saying the draft resisters deserve honor and respect in Japanese American history, and expressed regret for pain and bitterness caused by the JACL's failure to acknowledge the fundamental loyalty of these Internees.¹¹⁰

To this statement, Etsu replied, "Oh, OK," which could have meant many things. She did not want to endorse it, but this is the way JACL's resolution developed over time. Nisei are getting old now and they don't show as much passion as before, especially toward something conflictual within, such as attitudes toward the draft resisters. They tend now to express deeper understanding for whatever is and gracious acknowledgement of all efforts to make Japanese Americans' status what it is today. They also seem to indicate relief over the mutual shedding of

¹¹⁰*Pacific Citizen*, June 29, 1990, Japanese American Citizens League.

past psychological burdens. Etsu might also have been demonstrating thoughtfulness, based upon the old Japanese sense of harmony, given that the two interests have reconciled. She has such a capacity to combine cultures. This attribute was appreciatively recognized by Mike in their most turbulent times. He stated:

My long disability renewed my sense of appreciation for Etsu, wife, helpmate, companion, uncomplaining guardian of my welfare, tireless supporter of causes that interested me, reliable sounding board for testing my ideas. Although she is American through and through, she combines her American strength, initiative, and independence with the finest qualities of Japanese womanhood, which are loyalty, dependability, compassion, and thoughtfulness. (368)

Japanese Americans today, in their positions of security, are able to be big-hearted and tolerant. They can appreciate their Japanese cultural legacy that they had intentionally denied publicly in the past.

When the war ended, Mike started thinking about possibilities for his peacetime work. He did not consider an additional commitment to JACL, figuring that “JACL seemed to have done well without me. Sab Kido had kept the organization together” (183). In fact, Mike did not receive any articulate suggestion or request from the organization that he come back. “Kido had never said in so many words that he wanted me back,” he said. So Masaoka began looking for other postwar jobs and considered journalism where, he said, it “would give me a platform from which I could work for justice and equality for all Americans” (184).

Mike had always achieved a great deal and his energy for his work had been noteworthy once he was given the job. But after the war he did not have a sense of where to put his efforts. In the past he had been given his job, or put more accurately, was asked to take on a task. After the war, he found he was a slow starter when it came to finding his next life's work.

It seemed that Mike's attribute of being a slow starter but perfect achiever attracted Etsu when she first met him. One of the most important cultural messages she had gotten from her parents was something similar to Mike's quality: "*Ittara itta tokoro de gambarinasai*" [Wherever you end up, give it your all]. This discouraged one from expressing one's desire in the initial stages, for that was not "beautiful," instead putting forth all one's energy after getting settled in, for one can achieve much more.

In Japanese culture, when cultivating an important person, it is important to create a highly contextualized atmosphere of welcome. Sab Kido of JACL used just such an approach in pursuing Mike Masaoka, whom he strongly wished to return to the organization. He implored Mike:

We assumed you were going to work for JACL if you made it through the war. That was understood by everybody. We're waiting for you. We have a lot of unfinished business to take care of, and you're the guy who has to get it done. You can't abandon JACL now. Do I have to get down on my knees and beg you to come back? (185)

Unlike the previous career decision which Mike had made without prior consultation, this time he was "highly contextual" enough to talk it over with Etsu.

She agreed that he should continue his work with JACL. When all was set, “the adrenaline began to flow,” (185) which was typical of Mike’s leadership style.

But it took several conversations between Masaoka and Kido before Mike came to that conclusion. It was Kido who created the comprehensive program of JACL that was to be carried out under Mike’s leadership. The major points of the platform included: a change in federal law to give Issei the right of citizenship through naturalization, revision of immigration law to give Japan treatment equal to that of other nations, and compensation for actual monetary losses suffered in the evacuation (185-186). To Mike it seemed almost impossible to fulfill these objectives unless they hired a professional lobbyist. At this stage, he was more careful than before, because he had learned that the political decision did not always reflect the original intention, often with a partial proposal being implemented and utilized in the interests of the parties concerned. The interaction between Mike Masaoka and Sab Kido gradually led to Mike’s consent. A man of persuasion, such as Masaoka, is vulnerable to being persuaded himself, and Kido was very persuasive:

“Gee, Sab,” I said, “What you’ve outlined is an impossible mission. Why don’t we hire a lobbyist who’s familiar with the ins and outs of Washington?”

“That’s exactly what we’re going to do,” he said. “We don’t have the money to employ a real one, so we’re giving the assignment to you. Besides, we know you can do a better job than any hired hand unfamiliar with our history and our problems. Dedication to our cause and commitment to our people can make up for lack of experience.”

Kido’s own dedication and commitment imbued him with an irresistible persuasiveness, and I somehow had to translate

his vision into action. (189)

Through this persuasion process, Mike was made a lobbyist. In their lobbying work, both Mike and Sab organized an important reality through the on-going persuasion process. This world is not a special world but a very everyday world in which reality is embedded in interactive talk in the form of persuasion. It was this “situated use in talk-in-interaction”¹¹¹ that made the “postwar mandate” (181) meaningful to their joint work. Both men came to share the sense of meaning-production. Before long Mike’s commitment took shape in the form of a broader organization slogan: “Better Americans in a Greater America” (189).

As is easily imagined, Mike Masaoka was a determined lobbyist and made strenuous efforts, both spoken and written, trying to persuade those in legislature and personnel. His basic argument was that the Japanese Americans had always been loyal. In the postwar period, he was able to supplement this with the actual deeds of actual Americans who had proved it in combat. He consistently used the nisei’s record. Again, as is easily imagined, Mike mobilized everybody concerned with his skillful arrangement and fine management. He was able to bring together many voices to support the fact that Japanese Americans were, indeed, loyal. Once he had General Mark W. Clark write a letter to be presented at one of the extensive hearings. General Clark wrote, “Under my command in

¹¹¹The emphasis on talk-in-interaction has developed into the idea that social reality is co-constructed. For a discussion of talk-in-interaction, see James A. Hostein and Jaber F. Gubrium, “Phenomenology, Ethnomethodology, and Interpretive Practice,” *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., (California: Sage, 2000) p. 262-72. For verbal interaction, see Emanuel A. Schegloff, “On the Organization of Sequence of ‘coherence’ in talk-in-interaction,” Bruce Dorval, ed., *Conversation Organization and its Development* (New Jersey: Ablex, 1990) pp. 51-77.

Italy the 442nd Regiment and 100th Infantry Battalion, composed of Nisei, fought the Nazi combat forces with the valor and skill characteristic of the young Americans that they are” (221). Mike, himself, added:

Sure, we wanted America to win the war, but we also wanted America to be the kind of America that it professed to be, and that kind of America would not discriminate against people like my mother, who came here early in the 1900s...when the test of supreme loyalty to this country came it was my mother who first said, “Boys, your job is to go out and fight for these United States, because it is my country.” (221-222)

Over time, the rejuvenation of JACL took place as successive generations assumed positions of leadership and it came time for Mike Masaoka to retire. In fact, JACL choice for Mike’s successor in Washington, D.C. was a talented and energetic man, David Ushio. “More accurately, he was my choice,” (313) Mike said. During this period Mas Satow announced his wish to retire, at the age of 65, from the position of national director. An impatient Ushio changed direction and applied for the director’s job, “without consulting me” Mike remembered. Mike, himself in his late 50s, encouraged Ushio to stay in Washington, D.C. for a while to get some experience before moving up to the national level, warning him of the “danger of getting cut up in JACL’s internal politics” (313). A young Ushio spoke out, criticizing factions within JACL. Mike recounted, “it appeared Satow’s successor would be either a caretaker type or a radical activist...he didn’t like the prospect of working for either kind of boss and decided to seek the directorship himself” (313). In the end, Ushio assumed the national director’s position in San Francisco in 1973. Mike knew that his own influence within the

organization was diminishing, especially since his retirement. The long-serving Masaoka knew from experience and insight what internal conflict was politically like in a “mature” organization past its exciting pioneering stage. Mike summarized what happened to Ushio:

Ushio had declared his independence and adopted a high profile, and my influence in the organization diminished abruptly. Unfortunately, many of the internal problems of which I had warned Ushio surfaced quickly. With every good intention, he tried to broaden JACL’s concerns. Inevitably his version of the great leap forward alarmed the conservatives and provoked the activists. He resigned in September 1976.... (314)

After all was said and done about the new JACL leadership and their broadening social movement beyond Japanese American issues proper, Mike gradually lost his enthusiasm. He felt that such a change was inevitable, saying, “Undoubtedly the generation gap was showing” (315). He complained of losing traditional social protocols, suggesting that the new JACL did not give enough consideration to what Mike and his people used to nurture as important. This was a trend of postmodernistic “decentralization” of sense-making, blurring a finely established center of culture into a borderless and fuzzy state without social demarcation. He pointed up a socio-cultural scene that the older generation would not have let happen:

I was embarrassed when I was asked to invite members of Congress to JACL functions, and found later that they had not been given the courtesies that were standard in a more gracious time, such as being met and escorted to their tables. (315)

But Mike could not wipe his past commitment from his mind, entertaining thoughts of the socio-political world he had thoughtfully formed. As we have seen, the world was a world of his own design and construction, but was a co-construct with a tremendous number of other people. He was not a self-starter who established the locus from which to work, but once asked to take on a challenge, he tried his hardest. He involved himself heavily in the circumstances around him. He pondered over the dream of his youth, saying, “In my Utah youth I had vague thoughts of going into politics, but circumstances ended that idea” (317). He expected that his wife’s younger brother, Norman Mineta, would become someone of significant influence in the political arena. He could not know at the time his autobiography was published, that Mineta would become Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation. He recounted:

Kinship has not given me any special political advantage with Congressman Mineta except for access to his staff. To the contrary, I have gone out of my way to avoid any appearance of special treatment. However, the Minetas are a close-knit clan, and we see each other not infrequently. I encouraged Norman’s early interest in politics, have campaigned for him, and vicariously enjoyed his development. (317)

The other reason behind Mike’s expectations of Norman was that Mike wanted to remind everyone that even members of Congress harbored the misconception that “Asians aren’t Americans.” Like Mike with his predominant consideration of impacts and effects, Norman Mineta’s strategy was consciousness-raising by way of non-harsh judgment. He was known to use

humor which destabilized taken-for-granted assumptions and moved into the arena of workable correction. Mike presumably regarded such management as yet another possibility:

I'm particularly fond of a story about Norman that is the flip side of racial stereotyping. President Carter was entertaining Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira at the White House. Congressman Mineta thought he might get an invitation, but it didn't arrive. Then on the afternoon of the dinner a frantic social secretary called with apologies and asked Congressman and Mrs. Mineta to attend. Mineta declined. What happened was that the White House staff had assumed Mineta was of Italian ancestry. When a newspaperman asked Mineta why he hadn't accepted the tardy invitation, he replied: "Oh, I thought Ohira was Irish." (318)

Mike Masaoka spent some time away from politics and seemed to enjoy life with his extended family. But this man of politics once again stepped into the fray to pursue redress for Japanese Americans to amend the past wrongs done to them. The reason for his commitment was that the evacuation matters still clouded his mind, flowing very deep inside his veins.

Senator Daniel Inouye, who lost his right arm in combat with the 442nd, came on the scene with a proposal for reparations. Mike saw this as "the last problem, which I endorsed fully," (322) and he supported "asking Congress to establish a fact-finding commission to investigate the circumstances that led to the evacuation, and giving the commission the responsibility of recommending appropriate redress if any" (322). Mike Masaoka thus got involved once again for two reasons: "to make a contribution to the resolution of issues in which I had

been involved for so long, and to make certain my input would be included in the record” (322). The bill authorizing the establishment of the “Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians”¹¹² (CWRIC) passed and was signed by President Jimmy Carter, who said:

It is designed to expose clearly what has happened in that period of war in our nation when many loyal American citizens of Japanese descent were embarrassed during a crucial time in our nation’s history. I don’t believe anyone would doubt that injustices were done and I don’t think anyone would doubt that it is advisable now for us to have a clear understanding as Americans of this episode in the history of our country.... (323)

Mike strongly felt that it was his duty to see “that their sacrifice would not go unrecognized,” (322) and he, himself, testified at the hearings. He recalled the emotional voices of the nisei who gave testimony and realized that the familiar traditional cultural functions of *enryo*¹¹³ [reserve and restraint] as well as *gaman*¹¹⁴ [patience and perseverance] exceeded the boiling point:

The commission’s hearings proved to be a long-overdue catharsis. Many Nisei had not hesitated to express their feelings about the evacuation experience, but others had kept

¹¹²This congregational commission was established on July 31, 1980 and hearings began in 1981 where many talked about their wartime experiences for the first time. After 18 months of research the CWRIC published the report, *Personal Justice Denied*, recommending redress with monetary compensation. Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

¹¹³See footnote 57 in Chapter 1.

¹¹⁴See footnote 39 in Chapter 1.

their anger repressed for decades. Urged to speak by commissioners who indicated that they cared, witness after witness released the unforgotten frustration and humiliation in torrents of emotional testimony. (323)

The hearings were not only the occasion where heavy emotions were released. Also it provided another opportunity for in-house criticism over Mike's wartime leadership, with charges that "Masaoka and JACL had created the loyalty oath and persuaded WRA to set up segregation camps for those who failed it" (324). Mike was honest enough to recount the criticism directed toward him, although he set it aside as "ethnic hara-kiri by Judge Muratani" (324).

Mike felt highly satisfied with the testimonies; they confirmed and reconfirmed for him that his long-sustaining convictions were true. It was a bit of a pleasant surprise for him to see that the Commission was articulate in spelling out the causes, rather than falling back on general and psychological terms:

This and other testimony confirmed what I have long felt: the evacuation was not due to military necessity, nor was it an intentionally malicious act. It was the result of ignorance about our minority, insensitivity about racial differences within the American mosaic....

The commission put it another way. After denying military conditions were involved, it said that "the broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria and a failure of political leadership."¹¹⁵ (324)

The issue of redress for Japanese Americans included the culture-laden

¹¹⁵See footnote 116 in this Chapter.

problem of monetary compensation. This was a long-simmering issue in the Japanese American community, where several argued that something mercenary or venal went against their traditional culture. Here Mike stayed closer to the view of JACL, which was in favor of compensation, but he supported his rationale by citing the War Claims Act. Thinking this category of compensation was little known, he explained:

JACL contends strongly that monetary compensation for damages is the “American way,” that apologies are easy to make but the real impact of this historical tragedy will not be felt unless substantial money is involved....

However, there is precedent for compensation for loss of individual freedom on a mass scale. The War Claims Act compensated American civilians \$60 for each month they were held prisoner by Japanese armed forces during World War II. (325)

Mike perceptively argued, “in our instance, the commission proposes compensation not for victims of foreign governments but for American citizens victimized by our own government” (326-327).

The 1980s saw a tremendous amount of change, physically, institutionally, and socially about and around Mike Masaoka, to say nothing of the first redress movement starting in 1980. Mike was getting gradually weaker. After his third heart attack, he underwent “double-bypass surgery” (352). By 1982, there was a lull in his health problems, giving him the chance to attend the JACL convention in Gardena, California. He was assailed “by a few revisionists for selling Japanese Americans down the river into the desert WRA camps 40 years ago”

(352) but he made three marvelous rebuttals, off the cuff, without memo or notes. Understandably, Mike spoke of the leadership falling on inexperienced, young nisei after the issei leaders were caught by the FBI. He rationalized, “There was no group capable of moving into the breach to provide assurance and leadership” (353). He defended the leadership of the young JACL, saying that they had no intention of “seizing the reins of power in the Japanese American communities” (353). Of the decision to seek the right to serve, however, he made no excuses, but felt “only pride that the Nisei stepped forward to offer their lives after JACL successfully petitioned the federal government for the privilege of defending their country” (353). As for the *kibei* matters, he “admitted to errors of judgment but not venality” (353).

Once again, the basic assumption of his speech was grounded in the situated climate of the period to which Mike had given weight. In actuality, he had exercised leadership by exerting tremendous energy under hostile conditions in a hostile culture. He could not make any compromise at this point for JACL, embedded deep in a difficult history, noting that the current JACL enjoyed the security of even being able to voice such criticism. He seemed to be saying that the current generation’s advantage had been established by the previous generation’s sacrificial efforts. In this sense, credit might be due to his non-presentism, his not interpreting history through relevancy to the present, albeit leaving the issue of justice unsolved. His vociferous sense of historical meaning-making was reflected in the rhetorical question he asked in his rebuttal:

[W]hat point [was there] in blaming the JACL leadership of 40 years ago without acknowledging the greed, the blatant racism,

the ignorance, the malign intent of those who stirred latent prejudices to engineer the evacuation of Japanese Americans and who succeeded in changing simple removal to semipermanent confinement behind barbed wire[?] (353)

He saw himself as a Moses “reasoning with doubters,” (354) encouraging his doubting people, continually reminding his followers “not to despair, that our sacrifice had been worthwhile” (354). Feeling and believing that the promised land was not so far, Moses Mike Masaru Masaoka and his people “needed to struggle just a little more to witness America living up to its promised land. Moses did not live to see the promised land. Would I?” (354) In fact, his autobiography was published in 1987 and the redress was finally made, including monetary compensation, in 1988.¹¹⁶

In the end, Mike, under Etsu’s care for his poor health, acknowledged her and thanked her in print:

I know that in my preoccupation with matters that I considered important, I neglected her, took her presence and support for granted. I failed to tell her of my appreciation for the contributions she made to the fullness of my life. Doctors tell me she has literally kept me alive this past decade. *I am not demonstrative* [italics mine]; I did not tell her as often as I should have that I love her. (368)

¹¹⁶In 1988, President Ronald Reagan signed a law that provided an official apology and monetary compensation from the U.S. government for the wrongs done to Japanese and Japanese Americans. For a discussion see Toyoshi Kase, “Japanese American Redress Movement as a Cultural Phenomenon,” *Shikoku Gakuin University Treatises*, Vol., 91 (Japan: Shikoku Gakuin University, 1996) pp. 21-49. For further details and facts, see *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the Present*, Brian Niiya, ed. (New York: Facts On File, 1993).

In addition to Mike apophasis, Etsu's evaluation of Mike at present is derived from his indelible achievement-driven personality, expressive of Meiji international entrepreneurship¹¹⁷ on American soil. She said, "The stronger the background in your growing up, the more influence you have in your whole life afterwards." Her recurring reminder was "he is very articulate," if not so demonstrative.

Recalling Mike's characteristic of speaking at the top of his voice, Etsu Masaoka said that his last words on his deathbed were: "*Okii koe wo dashite, sore ga yaku ni tatta*" [Speaking in a loud voice has been of great benefit to my whole career]. Mike's dying words symbolically summarized his whole life as a true spokesman. It was a role in which he most presumably felt contented. Thus his role as a voice for his people ended, leaving a powerful memory in his last moments. He had lived during a most demanding era and had committed himself to a most challenging task, despite pressures from outside as well as within.

¹¹⁷One of the most conspicuous imperatives of the new government in the Meiji era (1868-1912) is found in *Gokajo no Goseimon* [Five Charter Oath], 1868. Two of the five oaths were "All classes of the people shall be allowed to fulfill their just aspirations..." and "Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world..." Cited in Toyoshi Kase, "The Japanese Immigration," *L & C*, Vol. 1 (Japan: Graduate School of Shikoku Gakuin University, 2003) pp. 13-57. See also footnote 29 in Chapter 1.

CONCLUSION

THREE SAMURAI'S ADAPTATION STYLES AMID CULTURE AND AGENCY

This exploration of these three lives reveals the existence of real cultural complexities within the nisei community and some of the diverse forms that cross-cultural adaptation might take. As we have seen, Grace Yuri Kokura integrated Japanese traditions and habits deeply into her life. Her attempts to negotiate the twin pulls of Japanese and U.S. culture reflect a deep and abiding commitment to traditional Japanese culture and perspective. Her belief system and “habits of heart, mind, and association”¹¹⁸ reflect a high sense of honor that transcended the boundaries of geography and national residence and might even be viewed as ahistorical, the longing for something universal within which one might create a greater truth. What is more, her life and experience proceeded in a cultural terrain free from anything ostentatious, showy, or demonstrative and thus was hard to discover. This exploration of her life reveals, nonetheless, that her attachments to Japan were deep and enduring, situated in the past and the future, and worked out through parental guidance. She proceeded as though Japan, in a manner of speaking, could be reproduced in the U.S. For her, this made sense and security in the United States. Her deeper assumption was that this is what a universal world of culture was like. Thus she maneuvered around a social

¹¹⁸Barbara Finkelstein, “Educating Strangers: A Comparison of Cultural Education Policies and Practices in Japan and the U.S.” (Osaka, Japan: Osaka University Study of Socialization and Multicultural Education Policies and Practices, 1996) p. 12. See also footnote 5 in the Introduction.

structure and, in this way, revealed the meaning of her life in the complicated tapestry of the era in which she lived.

Grace Kokura was indeed a kind of cultural artist with a fine grain of sensitivity. As one of her friends recalled in homage in her Queens Chapel memorial service in 2004, “She never acknowledged her own talent but people around the Japanese American community knew she had a true talent for aestheticism.” In fact, she often chose to speak of a larger cultural subject beyond her personal experience, albeit leaving one unanswered question. “If we were Caucasians we could do anything” she once whispered to me from the secrecy of her heart. My whispered response was that she unarguably designed a world of great cultural beauty while she allowed her personal self to abide within the self-determined aesthetic world. Or she might have wished to undo her experience for “*Minasama ni awaseru ‘kao’ ga nai*” [She had no “face” to meet her people]. This was an understandable wish, but this might be another name for historical amnesia. She longed to secure a good name, knowing that failure would cause disgrace for her and the people around her. The wartime experience was her appalling nadir, shattering human dignity, causing her to seek cultural aestheticism as an alternative into which no one could intervene.

In her lifetime, Kokura’s thinking was pure in the sense that once something aesthetic is framed by language or psychology, the riches of the boundless world die. “*Mu*” or nothingness in Zen Buddhism¹¹⁹ can explain this strength of silence better. In fact, Kokura was fond of talking about the paradoxical truth. *Mu* does not mean that there exists nothing, but simply hates being conceptualized

¹¹⁹Daisuke T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1959); *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider and Company, 1926).

through language, because true reality is beyond any form of framework. In short, nothingness does not mean the mere state of non-existence, but the state without any conceptual imposition or abstract framework.

In this sense, Kokura hated any type of behavior explained by logic and method as well as policy and management. This cultural transcendency, embedded deep in her habits of the heart, constituted a specific response to a new environment—apolitical, deeply traditional, non-competitive, and socially accommodating—which led, then, to her belief that something aesthetic should not be used for ends, let alone political maneuvering. She was a samurai with stoic composure and real traditional modesty. What was seemingly unfulfilled in her life in this country might forever be unknown or articulated in her words. But what is certain is that the cultural consistency in her soul is a tribute to us all.

Joe Ichiuji, unlike Grace Kokura, proceeded differently and organized a more complete reconciliation of the traditions of Japanese culture and the requirements of U.S. culture and society. He chose a socially engaged life that inspired him to combat, but not cultural radicalism in any form. He was politically indifferent and set apart from the pressures of both the Japanese American community and the American government. He became strong-minded by offering himself as an instrument to prove that Japanese Americans were loyal citizens and willing to sacrifice life and limb for the United States.

Joe's adaptation to U.S. culture and society functioned on a foundation of delayed gratification and gradual assimilation that became a working rationale throughout his life course. His constant reference to cultural tradition stemmed from *enryo* [reserve and restraint], reflected in the overall norms of his behavior.

He put it this way, “We can’t appreciate radicalism for modesty.”

Notwithstanding his commitment to restraint and gradualism, he had a fine grasp of power relations and the way to negotiate his way within their constraints and possibilities.

In order to clear the social onus of disloyalty,¹²⁰ he did not mind putting his life on the line in daring military feats, knowing that the failure to do so would create no proof. To his mind, proving his loyalty was his paramount duty. This fierce determinism was his “habit of mind.” He did not feel apologetic for his ethnic background. Rather, he was a man of action, risking his life for his reasoning that such proof was the only way to overturn the claim of “military necessity” for relocation and internment. He convinced himself that the action he chose was the most appropriate and desirable at that time. In so doing, he envisioned the creation of much greater social acceptance of Japanese Americans, thus making his wartime efforts legitimate.

Joe’s story was not merely a struggle in the face of adversity, or a success

¹²⁰Along this line Ruth Benedict discussed in her independent chapter, “Clear One’s Name” in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, “Giri to one’s name [Duty to keep one’s reputation unspotted] also demands acts which remove a slur or an insult; the slur darkens one’s good name and should be got rid of. It may be necessary to take vengeance upon one’s detractor or it may be necessary to commit suicide, and there are all sorts of possible courses of action between these two extremes. But one does not shrug off lightly anything that is compromising” (145). This book was not only most widely read among the Japanese populace but also bitterly criticized for its extreme generalizations as well as Orientalistic overtones. But it is noteworthy that this book was written as a result of anthropological research done exclusively on interned Japanese Americans during World War II in an attempt to depict the characteristics of Japanese in general. Benedict’s involvement was part of her job at the Office of War Information (OWI) from 1943 to 1945. Whatever issue with this work, what Benedict pointed up was the enormous sensitivity to clearing one’s name at any cost. Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Vermont and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1946, 1972) pp. 145-176.

story of overcoming odds against a hostile group, or a jingoistic activity for the country of his birth. Rather, his was a sure agentic self-actualization process through the formidable culture of Japanese Americans.

This nisei man defined the meaning of Americanization in relation to cross-cultural accommodations of Japanese traditional duty and American forward-looking spirit. He achieved this self-defined meaning through personal sacrifice by deploying the cultural value system that he had deeply internalized into his psyche since childhood: the Meiji ideology of supreme duty to be gained by supreme effort. He did it on American soil in which he was denied a part; therefore, he did it in dead earnestness. In fact, Joe's particular account became all the more salient for his transformative capacity in his human agency, the proof of which he revealed in numerous self-sacrificial actions on the battlefield.

What his life course makes clear in this paper is that his agency, like that of Grace Kokura, transcended traditional norms while at the same time was adapted to the present moment. He understood the pressures of discrimination and spent a lifetime trying his best to create another possibility for the future. That is why he valued the "present now" by which, in that moment, he stepped into that "Go for Broke" mission. Given the unusual opportunity to fight against the country of his ancestors, he made a duty-laden decision to fight against Japan for America for a broader future.

But Joe's agentic mechanism was also deeply constituted within a Japanese ethical code of behavior. Practically, he regarded Japanese cultural values as ethically workable and, therefore, as a usable past. All in all, his lived experience as a survivor was a cross-culturally thought-provoking piece of his own

meaning-production, having acted with no sense of hyperbole the true “Yankee Samurai”¹²¹ on American soil.

Mike Masaru Masaoka, or Mike Moses Masaoka as appropriate, was the most influential leader in the Japanese American community which he spent a lifetime trying to form, protect, and assimilate. Because of his fervent leadership to achieve the full-fledged status of Japanese Americans, he attracted great loyalty and great hatred from a Japanese American community that both admired his leadership and despised his alleged act of “selling out” his own people to the American War Department. As we have seen, his initiatives were politically inspired and situated within the formidable power of U.S. social, political, and economic realities. That was why he took a stand, trying hard to undo the social and racial positioning imposed by the dominant white society and fully utilizing legislative channels as a lobbyist while cooperating with the U. S. government.

In so doing, Mike showed his own characteristic Japanese Americanness, using a cultural combination of his parents’ culture and his experience in the American system. Thinking the core of Japanese tradition was politically unworkable, he reworked its static bent into more of a potent driving force in a persistent attempt to fulfill his objective. Assuming that the low profile among Japanese Americans derived from the central cultural norm of behavior *gaman*¹²² [patience and perseverance], he cross-culturally reactivated *gaman* strength, not as stoic strength but as heroic fortitude by empowering it with the spirit of

¹²¹“Yankee Samurai,” a popular idiom, was in the air in Japan. Joseph Harrington first published a book under this title in Japan in 1981. Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai*, trans. Satao Senoo (Tokyo: Hayakawa Shobo, 1981).

¹²²See footnote 39 in Chapter 1.

entrepreneurship in American culture. Unlike Grace and Joe, he could not endure the simple measure of stoic self-control and, instead, favored a more energetic potentiality of self-command as well as self-definition. Most functionally he made some hybrid culture by redefining the traditional cultural norms into a more dynamic behavior made possible in his American experience. One recurring voice in him was that the nisei should not be passive recipients but active agents; he advocated more socially relevant action rather than social and ethical submersion. He thus dramatized the Japanese American experience as a larger political agenda.

In Mike's full leadership career, he most regretted his cognitive error in supporting the removal of Japanese Americans. He fully expected that issei and nisei, citizens and non-citizens, would be treated separately. However, wartime authorities, claiming that they could not separate "the sheep from the goats," ordered the wholesale evacuation and detention of issei and nisei on the West Coast. In short, Masaoka did not expect the worst case scenario of the undifferentiated mass removal of non-citizens and citizens alike from the entire West Coast. He could not imagine such a thing happening to American citizens. He felt remorse that he had not succeeded in gaining separate generational treatment for those with citizenship and those without.

But he was confident in the formation of an all-nisei combat team that would be best used for the future benefit of the Japanese American community as a whole. An all-nisei unit would show that they were brave, they were loyal, and they deserved full-fledged status as Americans. Mike, therefore, used what discretion he had to support this strategy and, as part of that nisei regiment, worked to

publicize their efforts to the broader American society, shape public opinion, and effect change from within. Despite a great deal of controversy as to whether Japanese Americans had to shed blood to prove their loyalty, Masaoka organized his efforts and energy to persuade his people that their efforts would push them ever closer to their future goal of full status as Japanese Americans.

For his larger cause, Mike associated himself with influential members of the wider society. His associations also covered the whole scope of the Japanese American community through the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), going beyond the individual dreams of each. This was his style of adaptation of cultures, old and new, and this was his “habit of association.” He articulated a vision that Japanese Americans as patriotic citizens were entitled to share fully in the American dream. Abandoning cultural norms and habits, he linked himself deeply and fully to a power elite in U.S. society. As we have seen, while many Japanese Americans consider him a great man, others believe that he compromised Japanese identity and refracted traditions of Japanese perspectives, experience, and cultural habits. But credit was due to him in the sense that he was another samurai fighting for justice for all Americans.

Taken together, these three lives reveal the continuing interplay of dual cultures, but at the same time, reveal the variety of its forms. All three were invariably steeped in the past through issei parents, actively engaged in an assessment of the present, and inspiringly cast toward the future,¹²³ inside and

¹²³While the harmonic idea of the links between past, present, and future is common in Japan, for the concept of the “temporally embedded process of social engagement” in English, I relied on the basic framework of human agency “as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment” in Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, “What Is Agency?” *American Journal of*

outside. In their history, they were plunged into formidable reality where they acted on “the present now” not by discarding their parents’ tradition as unusable, but, rather, by transforming the past as meaningfully usable to their current concern or imperatives. This was their co-construction of reality and their way of defining themselves and composing individual and social importance.

The three historical accounts differ, revealing the deployment of three different forms of cultural sense-making and representation. But all of them can be credited with being cultural actors and actresses, making negotiations, personal or social, for a new reality. The whole array of agentic activity became all the more salient in their struggle against the unfavorable forces of cultural structuring at work.

Through ethnographic access to their life experiences as they lived, this study has hopefully revealed the variety of inner thoughts and feelings as well as covert or overt behaviors among nisei persons as historical agents, displaying, then, specific patterns in their way of cross-cultural adaptation. This variety was Japanese American diversity which also produced complexity that made them characteristically Japanese American.

Future studies might expand the study of adaptation patterns of nisei to include another voice, that of the *kibei*¹²⁴ or “Japan boys.” This group was

Sociology, Vol. 103, 1998, p. 963.

¹²⁴“*Ki*” means return, and “*bei*” America. The literal meaning of this compound word means a returnee to America. This is a subgroup of nisei who were born in the United States, educated during childhood in Japan, and came back to the United States. They were given to the care of their grandparents in Japan for the parents’ economic reasons as well as their own cultural experience. See footnote 46 in Chapter 1.

commonly treated as an illegitimate identity, separate from the larger Japanese American community. To date, the exploration of *kibei* life history by *kibei* nisei has been scarce¹²⁵ in the corpus of Japanese American scholarship. Perhaps this is still assumed to be too hot, politically, to be discussed. *Kibei* were once branded as troublemakers by JACL and war authorities as well, although JACL issued a formal apology as late as the early 1990s. This minority within a minority has been disappearing fast from the scene. Now in their 80s and 90s, a *kibei* man is hard to find.

Rather than take an assimilationist or accommodationist stance, these *kibei* nisei instead demanded justice and maintained a strong sense of self-worth. In their own sense-making, they rejected America because they felt America had rejected them. They would be denied liberty before they would swear loyalty to the land of liberty and, in fact, they ended up in the Tule Lake Segregation Center¹²⁶ in California. *Kibei* voices should be addressed for the possibility of

¹²⁵In the limited scholarship, *No-No Boy* was first published in Tokyo by a *kibei* nisei in 1957; John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979). Minoru Kiyota published *Nikkei Hangyakuji* [An American Resister of Japanese Parentage] in Japanese which was translated into English as *Beyond Loyalty: The Story of a Kibei* (Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1997).

¹²⁶Tule Lake was one of the original ten relocation centers but was converted into a segregation center in February-March, 1943 for those who responded negatively to loyalty questions No. 27 and No. 28 (see the foreword in Chapter 2). Many of them answered No-No to the questions as a form of protest against the forced removal and internment but were branded as troublemakers by the wartime authorities and the Japanese American Citizens League of the time. “The failure of administrators to understand or trust the internee community resulted in a condition of mutual hostility that endured until the closing days of the center.... A curfew kept people indoors and put an end to many recreational activities. The army arrested anyone suspected of being anti-administration, including many innocent people. A stockade was constructed in which several hundred people were held for up to nine months without hearings or trials.” Brian Niiya, ed., *Japanese American History: An A~to~Z Reference from 1868 to the*

further complexity, although this will demand the “deepest and dirtiest” scrutiny of their inner psyche as a complementary cross-cultural adaptation style. Such study could also form a powerful critique toward structuring context and especially against hegemonic constructions of reality.

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