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# Pacific Childhoods in the Rafu: Multiple Transnational Modernisms and the Los Angeles Nisei, 1918-1942

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PACIFIC CHILDHOODS IN THE RAFU:  
MULTIPLE TRANSNATIONAL MODERNISMS  
AND THE LOS ANGELES NISEI, 1918-1942

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
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in

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by

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## ABSTRACT

The second generation Japanese Americans (Nisei) who grew up in the Los Angeles area before the Second World War had two primary cultures seemingly competing for their attention: that of their parents (Issei) and that of the dominant culture surrounding them. However, the generation gap between the Issei and Nisei was extreme, with the former being raised right in the midst of the Second Industrial Revolution in Japan while the latter was raised in America during the Revolution's consolidation into the modern that stressed science and intellect over tradition and organization over instinct. An examination of the lives of Nisei who were children and adolescents before the Second World War demonstrates that binary enculturation oversimplifies the transnational links between Japan, United States, and modernity, particularly true in the Greater Los Angeles region which was one of the most ethnically diverse, least dense, and proudly progressive regions in the United States between 1918 and 1942, the period in which most Nisei were in their childhood and adolescent phases.

Because of the accepting nature of the Southland, the children of the Issei could choose what activities to accept or deny not based on that activity's ethnic origin, but on that activity's utility and level of acceptableness to their parents and the larger society. Issei were far from passive and well-understood the implications of their children's choices. Before immigrating to the United States, both male and female Issei experienced Japan's rapid strides toward modernity and were consistently aware of the state of Japan's modernization. After Japanese immigration was cut off and after Issei were declared ineligible for citizenship, their Nisei children—American citizens thanks to their birth—were simply too valuable to a household's future to raise passively. Also thanks to the region's welcoming nature, Nisei children and adolescents in the Southland were insulated from harshly overt forms of

racism and felt a great degree of flexibility in defining their choices on their own terms. Consequently, Nisei were accepted into the fabric of Southland culture before World War II in a way similar to most other immigrant children during this period.

## INTRODUCTION: MODERNITY IN JAPAN AND AMERICA

In 1932 at the age of twelve, Haruko Fujita, a Nisei (lit. “second world,” a second-generation Japanese American) graduating from Arcadia Grammar School gave her valedictorian speech entitled “Why the Japanese Came to America.”<sup>1</sup> Therein she summarized the position in which many Nisei found themselves. Shortly after Commodore Perry’s visit to Japan that forced it to change its policy of near-isolation just eighty years prior, she declared, “Japan has made marvelous progress through the influence of Western nations.” As one-hundred years of Western “civilization [had] advanced westward—first to New England and then on to the Pacific Coast,” so too was eighty years of Japanese modernization advancing eastward. In the middle was California, “the melting pot of the two currents of civilization.” She felt it her duty as an “American Citizen of Japanese origin” to “bring about a better understanding, spiritually, morally, and politically, between the two civilizations. In this speech, Fujita succinctly summarized the rapid drive toward political, cultural, and economic modernity undertaken by the formally-isolated Japan. It was this modernization that enabled her Issei (lit. “first world,” one who was a first-generation immigrant) parents to immigrate overseas to hopefully achieve the middle-class status that was previously off-limits to all but a small percentage of Japanese. Her speech also demonstrates her understanding that the West Coast was, in a way, a new beginning in the United States. Relatively free from deeply-ingrained East Coast and Midwestern notions of class and status, people from a multitude of races were trying to achieve their middle class dreams. In Arcadia, one of the many satellite farming communities within the Los Angeles Region—an area known as the

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<sup>1</sup> Haruko Fujita, “Why the Japanese Came to America,” in *Nisei Voices: Japanese American Students of the 1930s—Then & Now*, 3rd ed., ed. Joyce Hirohata and Paul T. Hirohata (San Jose, CA: Hirohata Design, 2004), 175-76.

Southland—was a multicultural environment in which work and good citizenship could often overcome the muted racism that still lingered in the air.<sup>2</sup> Fujita was right—not only was California where the two cultural streams merged, but the Southland provided the environment that contributed heavily to the personalities of the over 18,000 Nisei who called the region home, creating a generation of Americans distinctly influenced by Japanese culture but, at least in the minds of these Nisei, were still acceptable by the dominant culture.

Nisei children and adolescents developed their identities and personalities through their exposure to and their negotiations with prevailing social and political values, existing cultural mores, the desires of their Issei parents, the expectations of the dominant culture, and interactions with their peers (whether they be Japanese or non-Japanese). Nisei children were the beneficiaries of the changes industrialized societies undertook beginning in the last two decades of the nineteenth century that gave rise to the widespread accessibility of the so-called American Dream—the ability to leave one’s social and economic standing for a higher one through education, hard work, and racial tolerance.. Of course, the reality was that class and racial segregation by the dominant culture still hung over the minority masses, working in various forms to ensure White dominance. While it is true that many Nisei youth on the edge of adulthood living in the Southland began to have inklings that the country of their birth may have not been as open and welcoming as the American Dream implied, children and adolescents, for the most part, were relatively unaware of the realities of roadblocks they may have encountered later

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<sup>2</sup> The Los Angeles Region, as used in this study, is defined by the Los Angeles-Long Beach Combined Statistical Area which is a combination of the Los Angeles-Long Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario MSA, and the Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura MSA. This includes the totality or portions of the counties of Los Angeles (this includes the San Fernando and Antelope Valleys), Orange, Ventura, San Bernardino, and Riverside. Geographically, the area is cornered by the cities of Ventura, Lancaster, Victorville, San Bernardino, Redlands, Riverside, Corona, and San Juan Capistrano.

in life. Nisei children living in the Southland seemed to have even more possibilities as the region was too large, too culturally diverse, too progressive, and too sparsely populated for discrimination to dominate the social milieu of children. The lives of children, both minorities and of the dominant culture living in the Southland during the 1920s and 1930s were full of open-ended choices. Although not completely free of early twentieth-century racial tensions, children in the Los Angeles region had more space in which to roam both spatially and culturally than children did in most of America's other major metropolitan areas since the region was relatively sparsely populated and its leaders prided itself on its potential to become the "anti-New York" which would be "a great region open for movement and enjoyment," free from the ghettoized slums of the industrial East and Midwest. Instead, the Southland would be "a garden landscape assembled from the multitude of single-family houses" that "would stretch in every direction," hosting hard-working people who were willing to turn the Los Angeles Region into a new model metropolis. Unlike New York, Los Angeles was going to become the true "city of the future."<sup>3</sup> Children who grew up in these two decades also benefitted from major changes that arose during the "Age of the Child," which began in the last decade of the 1890s when the gap between childhood and the age of accountability widened and adults scrambled to fill those

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<sup>3</sup> Quotes are from Robert Fishman, "Re-Imagining Los Angeles," in *Rethinking Los Angeles*, ed. Michael Dear, Eric Schockman, and Greg Hise (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 1996), 251. The planning of Los Angeles in this purposeful manner can be found in Jeremiah B. C. Axelrod, *Inventing Autotopia: Dreams and Visions of the Modern Metropolis in Jazz Age Los Angeles. Berkeley and Los Angeles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009) especially pages 46-49 and also Steve P. Erie and Scott a MacKenzie, "From the Chicago to the L.A. School: Whither the Local State?" in *The City, Revisited: Urban Theory from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York*, ed. Dennis R. Judd, et. al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 115.



influential years with education, structured and meaningful activities, and lessons designed to prepare them for matriculation into full adulthood.<sup>4</sup>

This study argues that, assuming a Nisei child or adolescent freely chose the activities in which he or she were involved, the real and imagined conceptualizations of what was acceptable both their parents and American society was more important to their choices than the national origins of those activities. In effect, this study argues against the binary assimilation/dissimilationist model proposed by many historians, but it also against the “American modernity before all else” model of acculturation as has been argued more recently.<sup>5</sup> As an example of the problem with cultural binarism, I point to a 2005 study entitled *Judo in the U.S.: A Century of Dedication*, in which Michel Brousse and David Matsumoto studied the participation of Nisei boys in judo and contrasted their participation with those involved in baseball. When Nisei accepted American sports such a baseball, Brousse and Matsumoto argued that this was a sign of assimilation, and therefore modern, while Nisei who chose Japanese sports such as judo was a sign of cultural affirmation, and therefore traditional.<sup>6</sup> This binary

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<sup>4</sup> The concept was named and studied in David I. Macleod, *The Age of the Child: Children in America, 1890-1920* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1998) and examined in other books such as Mark A. Jones, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the idle class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010); Charles R. King, *Children's Health in America: A History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993); Howard P. Chudacoff, *Children at Play: An American History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Leroy Ashby, *Endanger Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997); and Brian Gratton and Jon Moen, “Immigration, Culture, and Child Labor in the United States, 1880-1920,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34, no. 3 (Winter, 2004): 355-391.

<sup>5</sup> See the original printing of Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: The Quiet Americans, the Story of a People* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969) along with Michael Brousse and David Matsumoto, *Judo in the U.S.: A Century of Dedication* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2005) for the first example and See Valerie J. Matsumoto, *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 4 for the latter. Also, Norman F. Cantor, *The American Century: Varieties of Culture in Modern Times* (New York: Harper Collins Press, 1997), 27.

<sup>6</sup> From Brousse and Matsumoto, 58-9.

simplifies a much more complex interaction and selection undertaken by Nisei. By the time Nisei began to play organized and unorganized baseball just after the First World War, the sport was already the de facto national sport of Japan among youth through college and had been promoted heavily by the Japanese state as a modern team sport that taught its players several valuable traditionally Japanese lessons. Judo—while certainly not a popular sport of the masses—had been accepted in the West as an elegant and modern form of self-defense. Theodore Roosevelt was a practitioner and both the military and police departments were using it to train soldiers and policemen how to defend themselves. Even Sherlock Holmes had used a version of judo to defend himself against his arch nemesis, Dr. Moriarty. What this illustrates is that, so as long their parents and the dominant society allowed their choices, Nisei, just like other children, were more apt to give their time to and place emphasis on that which they enjoyed, allowed them to associate with their friends, or taught them skills they could use both in the near term and the future, whether it be what church they attended, sports they played, or the lessons they took from school. Nisei children discarded activities usually when their enjoyment or interest in it faded, or if they no longer deemed it to have any utility (this is particularly true of Japanese language school). Nisei very rarely quit an activity because it was “un-American” since most of the activities they chose, even those of Japanese origin, did not fundamentally conflict with the progressive, multi-ethnic nature of what was acceptably American, particularly in the Los Angeles region, during the era in focus for this study.

The timing of Issei immigration (both male and female) to the United States was the most important factor leading to the Nisei’s social flexibility. Most of the male Issei who immigrated to the United States did so primarily from 1895 to 1907, during the first phase of Japan’s efforts toward becoming a modern nation, eventually hoping to equal the industrial output and to carry the cultural,

political, and military influences of the great Western powerhouses such as Great Britain and the United States. Most of the male Issei immigrants at this time hailed from rural farming or fishing communities. Always under the threat of conscription and bound to their ancestral villages, they were unable to take part in either Japan's burgeoning sense of modernity or its nascent industrial economies growing only slowly in the cities. The Issei's arrival on American shores could not have been better timed. In 1896, the last depression of the nineteenth century ended, and the United States enjoyed a period of great prosperity into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> High employment rates, the exclusion of Chinese laborers (1882), and low inflation set the stage for Issei males to stake their claim in America. But these favorable conditions preferred most those in the dominant culture and did not allow most Issei males to become rich and to return to their homeland wealthy. Still, their lives were often measurably better and their options more cosmopolitan than their friends and relatives who were still bound to rural life in Japan, so unless the amount of money they saved in the United States was substantial enough to improve their lot in Japan, many chose to remain, even though it was clear that they would never achieve political incorporation in their new homeland. After choosing to stay, Issei were well-aware of Japan's continual changes through letters, Japanese-language newspapers, community meetings with Japanese governmental officials and representatives, speakers, new immigrant Issei, and even through occasional visits back to Japan.

After Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), fear overcame Americans on the West Coast who were living among those who had defeated a Western power. It was this fear that gave rise to restrictions that inadvertently led to the creation of a sizable Nisei generation in the United

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<sup>7</sup> Cantor, 32.

States. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which all but cut male Issei immigration into the United States, made provisions to allow Nikkei<sup>8</sup> to remain enrolled in integrated public schools and for the immigration of family members, including children, parents, and wives. This latter provision sparked a second wave of mainly female Japanese immigrants that lasted until 1920. Female Issei who immigrated to the United States after the Gentlemen's Agreement often had little exposure to their husbands beforehand. These women left Japan one decade later than their husbands on average. The Japanese society they experienced was markedly different from the society their Issei husbands had left and in that time, the Japanese state expanded its priorities. Originally, Japan was most worried about its military weakness and its nearly non-existent industrial base, prompting the Japanese state to stress the ideals of compulsory education, modern capitalistic economics, and a family that centered on a father, mother, and children instead of the Confucian-inspired ancestral family.<sup>9</sup> Given that Issei males were largely unmarried until the second decade of the twentieth century, it should be no surprise that the bulk of Nisei were born between the years 1915 and 1930. During the 1930s until forced relocation in 1942, this block of Nisei grew from an average age of ten to just over eighteen, the peak years they were involved in organized activities and attending the schools that helped define their personae.<sup>10</sup>

A study that approaches the history of Nisei as outlined demands a transnational perspective, but one that views transnationality in a manner applicable to children and adolescents. I have chosen

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<sup>8</sup> Derived from *nikkeijin* (lit. people of Japanese ancestry), is the blanket term for those of Japanese origin.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of this, see Kenneth B. Pyle, *New Generation in Meiji Japan: Problems of Cultural Identity, 1885-1895* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Although there are twelve years between 1930 and 1942, there were still more births after 1930 than before, even though growth slowed after 1930 due to the Great Depression and the aging of the Issei.; as such, the mean age of the children do not advance on a one-to-one basis with the number of years.

borrow elements of two transnational frameworks. The first, defined by historians Genzo Yamamoto and Daniel Kim, as “multiple modernities” takes into account the estuarial confluence of multiple streams of ideas that competed for the attentions of the Nisei.<sup>11</sup> The multiple modernities framework “emphasizes how immigrants bring differing, but also potentially cogent, cognitive and institutional vision of human flourishing into the receiving country. That is to say that their journey to the United States does not automatically mean a complete embrace of American modernity.<sup>12</sup>” This framework, according to its authors, centers on the concept of modernity and defines it as “the various modalities constructed by human societies...that constitute a renegotiation of” the “fundamental values and institutions” that were shaped by “the expansive influence” of the European Enlightenment.<sup>13</sup> The framework allows immigrants to experience and internalize these modalities while allowing “room for multiple forms of modernity that intersect, engage, borrow from, but also criticize Western configurations...free from a direct, identity relationship with the West, while simultaneously recognizing that these alternative forms have often arisen in the context of the West’s expanding influence.”<sup>14</sup> Some of the modernities that are pertinent to this study from a Western point of view include Americanization, organizational management, westernization, progressivism (and Progressivism), and early twentieth-century forms of ethnic assimilationism. From the Japanese point of view, Meiji- and Taisho-era educational, industrial, and political reforms combined with modified

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<sup>11</sup> Genzo Yamamoto and Daniel Kim, “Navigating Multiple Modernities: Soon Hyun and the Envisioning of Korean/American Modernities,” *Journal of Asian American Studies* 13, no. 2 (June 2010), 128 (all 127-162)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>14</sup> See Matsumoto, 7 and Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 129.

forms of religion (including state Shinto and revised forms of Buddhism), adoption and modification of sports, and the promulgation of a new, cosmopolitan form of family in which the father mimicked the role of the emperor, the mother the empress, and the children were deemed “treasures” of the state, Extended to the second generation, the multiple modernities framework frees scholars from notions of “acceptance” and “rejection” of cultural traits and, instead, places “laudable, humanist weight upon the cultural conceptualization from the countries of origin that impact migrant cross-cultural adjustment experiences.” However, where this framework falls short is that its definition of modernity is simply too broad, and Nisei did not choose, and Issei did not necessarily allow choices that were simply “modern” by industrial society’s standards. However, Yamamoto and Kim’s framework is valuable because, at its heart, is an optimistic scaffolding that seeks to understand how immigrants can “flourish” in an environment that is foreign and insists on some manner change (often through some level of assimilation) and yet empowers immigrant groups to retain “modalities” of their homeland.<sup>15</sup> The second framework I found useful is Vicki L. Ruiz’s, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in the Twentieth-Century America*, in which she defines the concept of “cultural coalescence” where “immigrants and their children pick, borrow, retain, and create distinctive cultural forms.”<sup>16</sup> She further asserts that “there is no single hermetic Mexican or Mexican-American culture, but rather permeable *cultures* rooted in generation, gender, region, class, and personal experience” (emphasis in original). Americanization, while pervasive, was a “mixed lot” of “images and ideals” that “were never the only

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<sup>15</sup> I use the words “flourish” and “modalities” as it is used by Yamamoto and Kim for the sake of brevity as they explain that “space constraints” would make it impossible to unfold these words (particularly the latter) into all of its component meanings. See Yamamoto and Kim, 129.

<sup>16</sup> Ruiz, 49-50.

messages immigrant women received.” In contrast to assimilationist messages, “Mexican patriotic and Catholic pageants, newspapers, and community networks reinforced” the heritage legacies of Mexicanos (first-generation Mexicans) and their American-born offspring. But, while Ruiz makes it very clear that Mexicanos and their children did not have “unlimited choice” because “race and gender prejudice and discrimination with their accompanying social, political, and economic segmentation have constrained aspiration, expectation, and decision-making,” what sets Mexicanos apart from Issei was the fact that the United States government encouraged the migration of Mexicans in order to fill labor shortages and essentially allowed Mexicanos to cross the border unimpeded. Mexicanos were afforded naturalization rights (affirmed in *In Re Ricardo Rodríguez*, 1897 and upheld by *U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark*, 1898), whereas Issei were not (affirmed in *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, 1922).<sup>17</sup> Even the Emergency Quota Act of 1917 which enacted extremely stringent quotas on immigrants from all but Western Europe carried a provision not to impede the flow of immigration from Latin America. Further restrictions enacted by the Immigration Act of 1924 all but ended Japanese immigration to the United States, but still placed no limitations on those from Latin America. It was not until the beginning of the Great Depression that the United States government began to restrict Latin American immigration and even began a policy of deportation, but by this time, Issei and their institutions had adjusted to their naturalization restrictions. While the cultural coalescence framework does not well-describe the acculturation of Issei, it is useful because it acknowledges the both the first- and second-generation’s abilities to develop their own individual cultures from the choices that surrounded them.

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<sup>17</sup> See Martha Menchaca, *Naturalizing Mexican Immigrants: A Texas History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), especially 167-9.

Unlike Mexicanos, Issei could not easily migrate between Japan and the United States (Mexicanos did so regularly) and had only their American-born Nisei to look to in order to assert any political potentialities if they chose to remain.

In this study, I propose that transnational, intergenerational coalescence was the primary way in which Nisei eventually chose to identify what they valued, what defined their interests, and how they chose to spend their time and energy as through childhood and adolescence. Not only were these choices not strictly “American,” but these choices were made with the approval of their Issei parents. This contrasts with the view that Issei parents, while hard working, were relatively passive life coaches who simply encouraged their children to simply “be American.” Instead, I argue that their previous and continued contact with Japan, their astute observations of the racism of the dominant culture and its effects on their children (both in the present and their possible futures), and their willingness to encourage their children to aspire to become fully culturally, politically, and economically incorporated (not simply acculturated) into the United States, made them seriously consider the impact their children’s choices would have on the future of the family entire (indeed, some Issei so doubted the possibility that full acculturation was even possible and often sent their children back to Japan to receive at least a partial education in Japan so that they could at least have a future in their ancestral homeland). Put more simply, Issei and their knowledge and observations of the past and present—both in Japan and the United States—as well as their awareness of the future were helped them actively guide the Nisei’s upbringings. This awareness guided Issei parents to teach their Nisei children that what was most important was not a determination of whether a choice is either Japanese or American, but if that choice was acceptable to Americans (both minorities and those in the dominant culture).. In this sense, Nisei culture is a hybrid culture, but one in which the concept of duality was not the ultimate factor in



the development of their personae. Since the vast majority of Issei and Nisei in the Southland were not isolated in ghettos (only Little Tokyo and perhaps Sawtelle could even come close to claiming this title) and both groups were continually informed about the changing culture of Japan, a transnational study of these multiple modern modalities affords the best opportunity to understand the socio-cultural milieu in which the Nisei came of age. As such, an understanding of the histories of both Japan and the United States are necessary to understand the mindset of the Nisei.

This study fills an important gap in the literature between historians who have studied the Issei who formed the foundations for the second-generation Nisei, and historians who have studied Nisei after they became socially self-aware and politically and corporately active in their young adulthoods. The historiography surrounding Nisei has centered on their experiences in wartime internment camps and it has been only recently that scholars have attempted to study Nisei before and after the War years. Although a great deal of work has been done, few have approached the Nisei in their childhood and early adolescence. Instead, most have chosen to focus on those Nisei who had developed a political self-identify in their late adolescence and early adulthood and who were politically active in the years before the war. These Nisei produced a great deal of literature through English-language, Japanese-community newspapers and through Nisei-dominated organizations such as the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL, founded in 1929). They were very vocal about their status as Americans both before and after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and indeed, their decision to support Japanese-American relocation and internment stemmed from their belief that, as Americans they were “going into exile as [their] duty to [their] country because the president and the military commander of this area have

deemed it a necessity.”<sup>18</sup> In order to understand the Nisei’s strong feelings and willingness to sacrifice, even in the face of obvious injustice, it is necessary to understand their childhoods.

Nisei children did not produce a great deal of individual, pre-war primary source documentation. Their youth, combined with the disruptive effects of their relocation and internment, ensured that what little they did produce was lost forever. However, Nisei participated in a great many activities (e.g. Boy Scouts, judo clubs, and school) that produced large quantities of artifacts that survived the war years. Additionally, Nisei youth participated in numerous studies used by religious leaders, academics, and politicians to gauge their progress as the children grew in various organizations, particularly in those designed to instill Japanese or American cultural and social values. Later, however, in various forms, Nisei produced a voluminous quantity of primary source data as interest in their internment experience gained prominence. Such primary sources as diaries, interviews, photographs, periodical editorials, and autobiographies inform this study. Secondary sources that cover the prewar Nisei include Yuji Ichioka’s *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (1988), and Bill Hosokawa’s *Nisei: The Quiet Americans* (1969). Both books are overviews of the milieu surrounding the Japanese in the United States and the lives of their offspring. Since Hosokawa’s study was published, the field of Japanese American history has been inundated, quite understandably, with books about the Japanese American internment during the Second World War. Recently, historians have once again come to look at the Issei and Nisei before the War. Eiichiro Azuma’s, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (2005), utilized “an

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<sup>18</sup> Saburo Kido quoted in Mike Masaoka with Bill Hosokawa, *They Call Me Moses Masaoka: An American Saga* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987), 95.

inter-National perspective...to present a more complete picture of the Issei's transnational past...that stressed the interstitial...nature of their lives."<sup>19</sup> On the other side of the generational gap, David K. Yoo's, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1949* (1999), examines "second-generation Japanese Americans who came of age in California during the second quarter of the twentieth century," in an effort to identify how they "forged their identities within the tangle of immigrant and native contexts."<sup>20</sup> Another study, Lon Kurashige's, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990* (2002), argues that Nisei developed their own ethnic traditions (particularly the Los Angeles Nisei Week), "which communicated intensive meanings about who belonged to the group and on what terms."<sup>21</sup> The most recent work that studies the Nisei as children and adolescents before and after the war is Valerie J. Matsumoto's *City Girls: The Nisei Social World in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*. Matsumoto's study uses Vicki Ruiz's cultural coalescence model, , but she defines modernity" in only its American forms, and does not look so much to the Issei's exposure to Japanese versions of modernity while before or after their immigration.<sup>22</sup>

While these recent studies have moved the state of historiography away from the victimization of Japanese Americans and earlier studies that stressed assimilation, there is a notable gap in them that

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<sup>19</sup> Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

<sup>20</sup> David Yoo, *Growing up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), vix.

<sup>21</sup> Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), xiv.

<sup>22</sup> Matsumo, 4, "The appeal of modernity, defined as American, captivated youth in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo, as well as in Tokyo, Japan."

fails to consider Nisei as children and their place in the historical narrative. Very recently some scholars have attempted to fill this void. Yuki Ichioka's, *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*, published in 2006, contains several chapters about the "Second-Generation Problem," in which Issei parents and community leaders struggled with the reality that Nisei would never be truly Japanese nor truly American. Although Ichioka's study is quite valuable, it is an incomplete work and is a posthumous, edited publication that has been described as a "collection of discourses and biographies in search of an argument."<sup>23</sup> Another publication, *Asian American Children: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, published 2004, contains a chapter by Benson Tong entitled, "Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese American Children and Adolescents During the Internment Era." Tong's analysis attempted to add to what is "little [known] about the changing worldview of girl[s] and boy[s]"<sup>24</sup> who were interned during the war. Although informative, the chapter is short, and does not represent a comprehensive analysis of the subject.

This study answers questions left unanswered by existing scholarship. The study approaches the question of Japanese American childhood from a transnational, multiple modernities perspective, as Azuma has done in his study of the Issei, and will attempt to explain the identities developed by Nisei children before their brief period of political and social self-awareness as covered in studies such as Yoo's and Kurashige's. This study also integrates the historiographical techniques applied to non-Japanese

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<sup>23</sup> Jonathan Dresner, review of *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese-American History*, by Yuji Ichioka, August 2007, <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=13517>; Internet, accessed February 18, 2011.

<sup>24</sup> Benson Tong, "Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese American Children and Adolescents During the Internment Era," in *Asian American Children: A Historical Handbook and Guide*, ed. Benson Tong (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 3.

American immigrant children (of which more voluminous literature exists) in studies such as, *The Changing Face of Home: the Transnational Lives of the Second Generation*, a recent anthology dedicated to laying “the groundwork toward a better understanding of the transnational practices of children of immigrants.”<sup>25</sup> In this way, this study seeks to make a major contribution to the history surrounding the Nisei and the larger Japanese American community before the Second World War. Finally, this study will add to the literature surrounding the social and cultural development of children in the United States, which has recently undergone renewed interest from historians adding to such studies as Wilma King’s, *Stolen Childhood: Slave Youth in Nineteenth-Century America* (1998), Jennifer Ritterhouse’s, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (2006), Wendy Rouse Jorae’s, *The Children of Chinatown: Growing Up Chinese American in San Francisco, 1850-1920* (2009), and Kriste Lindenmeyer’s, *The Greatest Generation Grows Up: American Childhood in the 1930s* (2007).

## Chapter Layout

Chapter One of this dissertation examines the reasons why the Issei left Japan and what they hoped to accomplish after their migration and also evaluates the rise of Japan from a semi-feudal state ruled largely by a singularly powerful, hereditary family (the Tokugawa shogunate) to a semi-democratic nation-state that desperately sought to modernize in all facets so that it would not become the colonial ward of modern and powerful Western nations. Originally, males, most of whom were from the

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<sup>25</sup> Peggy Levitt and Mary C. Waters, eds., *The Changing Face of Home: the Transnational Lives of the Second Generation* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2002), 3.

countryside, emigrated in order to avoid compulsory conscription which began in 1873 and to hopefully make it rich in lands afar before their return. But, for the most part, Issei never became rich, but their lot in the United States was still better than it would have been if they had returned to Japan. After the United States and Japan informally agreed to halt male immigration in 1907, females began to migrate away from Japan in order to join Issei men as both wives and to provide the foundations for family life. Both groups kept in constant communication with Japan and understood the changing nature of modernity both in the homeland while keeping a close, watchful eye on the political and cultural changes within the United States that might unfairly relegate their children—their American-born, citizen children—into second-class status.

Chapter Two addresses the academic experiences of the Nisei, the most important aspect of second-generation transnational cultural coalescence. Reformers in both the United States and Japan stressed education as the only true foundation for a modern mind, and a populace of educated citizens as the foundation for a modern nation. While the dominant culture in some areas of California resisted Japanese Americans in their classrooms, the progressive-minded leaders of Los Angeles welcomed and accommodated them and ensured that their schools were free of overt racial prejudice. Of course, a school free of racial prejudice does not mean that the educational system was free from the notions of race, and Los Angeles-area schools promoted the concept of Americanization in order to ensure that pupils at least understood what the dominant culture expected of them academically, socially, and politically in order for them to become full participants in the American Way of Life. But Issei parents also believed that their Nisei children could form a bridge of understanding between a modern Japan and a modern United States and to that end, built Japanese language schools, or *gakuens*, by the hundreds. *Gakuens*

were designed to teach Nisei both Japanese language and elements of culture and while they were successful to some extent, only the Nisei that found practical value or who were convinced by their parents that they could “bridges of understanding” generally stayed. Most who left did so particularly after the sixth grade when extracurricular choices in Southland junior high schools simply became too attractive to ignore.

Chapter Three investigates the role of baseball and judo and how those sports were both accepted as modern, masculine sports by Southland Issei and Nisei. While it is easy to think of these sports in terms of national binaries, the truth is that baseball and judo were both modern sports that contained few notions of overt nationality. Nisei played baseball because it was accepted and well-understood by a supermajority of their peers in the United States and required only rudimentary equipment and a marginal space in which to host a game. As a side benefit most Issei knew how to play and the sport not only bridged cultural gaps, but was one of the few things that could bridge the generation gap, as well. As Nisei grew older, their opportunities for organized play increased as did their exposure to teams (both organized and unorganized) from Japan. Nisei who undertook judo did so not to better understand their Japanese heritage, but because the sport was an accepted modern sport that stressed physical science and modern techniques of instruction. Judo, along with other combative sports of various nationalities, were analyzed and dissected for their worth not as forms of combat, but for their pragmatic physical and educational values.

Chapter Four seeks to better understand the role of religion in the modern lives of the Nisei. While religion, as a concept, is extremely old, it was forced to contend with modern currents that placed value on science and measurement and was becoming skeptical of faith. In response, the religions that attracted Nisei adherents, mostly Christianity and Buddhism, found ways for their faiths to promote

modernity through education, community outreach, and modern organizational structures. Both found that they could attract second generation by acting as a bridge between the transnational culture of the Nisei and the dominant culture. Both incorporated Sunday school in order to supplement the Nisei's weekday instruction and to help them understand how to incorporate their faiths into their everyday lives.

#### A Quick Note about Word Mechanics

When writing a transnational history, one must take into account differences in spelling, meaning, and word order when converting from one language to another. Thus, when writing names, I have written all Japanese names in Western format, with the given name preceding the family name. I have preferred the Revised Hepburn Romanization (RH) system utilizing macrons over long vowels: e.g. *kyōkai* instead of *kyoukai* as dictated by Traditional Hepburn Romanization (TH). There are two primary exceptions to this: 1) I will honor words as-written in direct quotations from other sources and 2) if a person's Japanese name (or names) has been personally represented by them using a system other than Revised Hepburn or is commonly known in written English outside of either Traditional Hepburn or Revised Hepburn, I will leave it as such. For example, Eejima, the Japanese surname represented by the kanji (Chinese characters) “飯島,” should be represented as “Ījima” (RH) or “Iijima” (TH), but, most likely, “Eejima” is how transit or immigration officials Anglicized it either before or upon an individual's entry into the United States and thus does not conform to standard Romanization systems. If there are oddities or exceptions to this, I will note that in a corresponding footnote. If there is a choice between the spelling of Romanized Japanese words and commonly-accepted Anglicized Japanese words, I opted to use the latter without italicization (e.g. the Anglicized words “judo” and



“dojo” are used instead of “*jūdō*” and “*dōjō*,” the Revised Hepburn spellings of the original Japanese words). As per convention, I have not italicized Romanized Japanese proper nouns and I will use the Japanese convention of singular-plural identification. As such, words such as “Issei” and “Nisei” will be both singular and plural, the exception being Anglicized Japanese words, which will be pluralized according to English language rules (e.g. “dojos”). Finally, if I believe it will help the reader to better understand the proper translation of a proper noun, then I will provide it or explain its significance.

Also, at times, in order to avoid overt repetition, I will use the term “Japanese” as a marker for people of Japanese origin and hope that the context of the sentence will make clear to the reader if I am speaking of Japanese people in Japan or in the United States.

## CHAPTER ONE: FROM JAPAN TO THE SOUTHLAND: ISSEI, IMMIGRATION, AND MODERNITY

Most of the first generation male immigrants from Japan did so in order to achieve the dream encapsulated by the promise of the Second Industrial Revolution—that by working hard to take advantage of the modern world’s opportunities, one could better their status in life, regardless of their background. This dream was particularly salient for the majority of Issei laborers since they were often from impoverished rural communities left untouched by Japan’s nascent, urban-based industrial revolution. This conceptualization of modernity formed the backbone of the so-called “*dekasegi* ideal,” in which males would come to the United States, make and save money, and return to Japan to enjoy a life of retired ease.<sup>1</sup> Robert Nakamura’s father, Harukichi, was so poor growing up in Kagoshima in the southern portion of Kyushu<sup>2</sup> that even rice was a delicacy. Nakamura’s father “used to talk about what they would eat most of the year, sweet potatoes,” and so destitute was he that “he had sweet potatoes in the morning, carry a sweet potato for lunch to school, and have a little fish and sweet potatoes for dinner.”<sup>3</sup> Rice, the grain stereotypically associated as the staple of the Japanese diet was actually a delicacy for Harukichi Nakamura, eaten only during New Year’s, East Asia’s most important annual holiday. The United States offered Nakamura hope to break free of his bonds to a peasant farmer’s life, and after immigrating sometime around the turn of the century, he became a gardener. One of the

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<sup>1</sup> See Yuji Ichioka, *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 10-11 for a detailed analysis of this idea.

<sup>2</sup> In this example, the name of the island spelled correctly in RH is “Kyūshū,” but it has been long-Anglicized as “Kyushu.”

<sup>3</sup> Robert A. Nakamura, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, November 30, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

primary reasons Hitoshi “Hank” Naito’s father, Yasutaro, migrated from Japan in 1904 was to avoid conscription during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and 1905.<sup>4</sup> After landing in the United States, Naito tried out several careers in several different California cities, all of which he eventually quit. Even if he liked none of them, they were at least better than fighting and perhaps dying on foreign soil. Grace Hata’s father, Goro, immigrated and worked as a farm laborer after a large wing of his family-owned *onsen* (hot spring) resort was washed away in a flood.<sup>5</sup> He hoped that if he worked hard in America, he could send regular parcels of his paycheck home so that his family could restore the damaged wing and return the resort to profitability.

But, for many laborers, the *dekasegi* ideal was a dream that transformed from a Japanese exemplar into an American one. Most failed to achieve the ideal’s ultimate goal of riches and for those that did not simply give up and return to Japan, immigrating to the United States gave many Issei a fresh start and a way to achieve a different dream—the American Dream of becoming self-sufficient through hard work and in spite of their ethnic minority status. Robert Nakamura’s father eventually married, and saved up enough money to open a “produce market in the Los Feliz area right on Franklin” that he owned until evacuation. Hank Naito’s father returned to Japan just before the outbreak of World War I was introduced to his wife by family members who had arranged their marriage. After trying out a few more jobs, he finally purchased a small fishing boat and made a home with his new family on Terminal Island. Grace Hata’s father only wanted to stay long enough to pay for the repairs, but it took such a long time to save enough money to do so, he decided to eventually remain

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<sup>4</sup> Hitoshi “Hank” Naito, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, June 11, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>5</sup> Grace Hata, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, March 16, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

permanently. He eventually married a “picture bride” and opened a successful fruit stand on Main Street in Gardena.

Although this study’s focus is second-generation Japanese American children, understanding the Issei’s experiences in both Japan and the United States help us to understand the choices the first generation encouraged and allowed their Nisei children and adolescents to make. While many Issei lived to a standard in the United States that would be higher than what they could have achieved in Japan (even if just barely), a series of formal and informal roadblocks prompted by ethnic tensions, racial prejudices, and the dominant culture’s fears that they could perhaps, one day, no longer be in the majority thanks to immigration and immigrant birthrates, ensure that most Issei had to rely on their children in order to truly realize the American dream; but this created a fundamental complication eventually known as *dai Nisei mondai*, or, the “second generation problem.” The second generation problem, identified by Issei and Japanese statesmen as early as first decade of the twentieth century, acknowledged on the fundamental discord caused by the Nisei’s dual nationality and the problems this would cause for Issei parents raising them in the United States.<sup>6</sup> Understanding the challenges faced by the Issei also helps us understand why they could not simply be passive parents who simply wanted their children to “be American” above all else. The Issei who immigrated to the United States before 1924 were amongst the first sojourners who went overseas to establish a permanent presence away from their native islands. But their Japanese heritage was a long and proud one, and the Issei were forced to come to terms with the fact that their children were Americans—citizens of a relatively young nation at the

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<sup>6</sup> “Nationality” in this context has a twofold meaning. The first is political since any child born to a father with Japanese nationality was automatically considered a Japanese citizen by the Japanese government. The second is ethnic since the Nisei were ethnically Japanese, but, unless they went home for their childhoods (and became Kibei), they would have no choice but to take on American ethnic characteristics, as well.

forefront of Western thought and industrial prowess—but part of a heritage that could be traced back to the beginning of time (at least through their own histories).<sup>7</sup> The questions raised by Issei about raising their children were numerous, and given their wide array of experiences, so too were the answers.

### Issei Immigration

The first wave of Japanese immigrants that came to the United States between 1885 and 1907 initially did not intend to stay in Hawaii or the mainland United States. Their idea was to make and save money, more than they could make as feudal-esque laborers on small land plots in Japan, and eventually return to Japan to have a better life. Life in Japan, however, never favored those from rural areas who comprised most of the Issei, most of whom were known as *dekaseginin* (lit. person who works away from home).<sup>8</sup> Japan's modern economic advances were felt most in the cities, while its constant expansionist wars (e.g. Sino-Japanese War 1894-5, Russo-Japanese War 1904-5) taxed rural areas in blood through conscription.<sup>9</sup> Given these realities back home, *dekaseginin* began to see permanent residency in the United States as a viable future. If settling on American mainland soil was a possibility, might too becoming an actual American that shared modern, American middle-class values?<sup>10</sup> As had happened with Chinese laborers in the 1880s, anti-Japanese sentiment based on fears that they would

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<sup>7</sup> Japan's creation myths are dated in detail in the *Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)* and the *Nihon Shoki (Chronicles of Ancient Japan)* which date the founding of Japan to 660 BC.

<sup>8</sup> Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 23 and Yuji Ichioka, *Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 5.

<sup>9</sup> See Stephen Vlastos, "Agrarianism Without Tradition: The Radical Critique of Prewar Japanese Modernity," in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, ed. Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 89.

<sup>10</sup> Discussion in Ichioka, *Issei*, 4-6.

eventually overwhelm the dominant white population eventually make true acculturation impossible, and after a series of anti-alien laws were passed, a series of negotiations between the United States and Japan led to a virtual halt in immigration of Japanese laboring men in 1908. As such, the bulk of the Issei men who became fathers to Nisei children came within a twenty-year timeframe.<sup>11</sup> However, there was a loophole in the agreement that virtually halted all male immigration and Issei women began to immigrate to the United States in earnest until 1910. In that year, 5,581 women of Japanese origin married immigrants already in the United States. By 1920, that number was over 22,000.<sup>12</sup> As such, the Issei men and women were exposed to different (albeit not mutually exclusive) versions of modernity when they left Japan, and had to adapt to different versions of modernity when they arrived in the United States. Each group brought different ideas of childrearing into their realities, thus ensuring that Nisei had a large and diversified pool of both tradition and modernity from which to draw upon.

Four factors greatly pushed Japanese immigrants out of Japan. Firstly, the Japanese state instituted male conscription in 1873 in an effort to build its military to meet modern standards. Males between the ages of seventeen and forty were eligible for military service, but many exceptions were granted based on traditional Japanese notions of a male's status in a household (e.g. heads of households, only sons and grandsons, adopted sons). Because it wanted to expand as an empire, stricter and stricter draft laws were promulgated until 1889. At that time, one of the few ways to avoid conscription was to leave the country and work overseas.<sup>13</sup> Japan's expansion of the military actually

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<sup>11</sup> See Yuji Ichioka, *Issei*, 55 and Chapter Three in its entirety. This study will not discuss Issei in Hawaii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-17.

contributed to more people going overseas. In the same year the Meiji government began conscription, it also changed tax codes in order to support its expanding military. It began to levy a three-percent tax on government-assessed values of land.<sup>14</sup> As such, the tax did not take into account the fluctuating market values of any crops grown on the land, nor did it take into account variations in crop yields. The taxes did not make up for the expenditures of the government, which printed more money to make up for the shortfall, thus causing inflation. While this benefited farmers initially, monetary policies going forward caused a steep deflationary cycle, which severely undercut farmers' profit margins. A moderate depression occurred in 1880, followed by a drought in 1883, only making matters worse. By the early 1880s, farmers were in such dire straits that uprisings and riots were frequent in rural areas, and mass exoduses had begun to the cities.<sup>15</sup>

A third reason that rural peasants made up the bulk of immigrants to the mainland United States was that the Japanese government believed that they were the hardest working citizens and therefore, represented the best Japan had to offer. Owing to conscription and rural economic instability, combined with a need for laborers in Hawaii, nearly 30,000 laborers, mostly male, emigrated to Hawaii after 1885 to meet the labor needs on sugar plantations. Of these, the consulate began to report that those who were from areas around large urban centers tended to give in to vices such as gambling and prostitution and were reported as being generally "lazy and self-indulgent" more than workers from rural areas.<sup>16</sup> Subsequent recruitment focused primarily on rural areas and reports

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 42-3.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Ibid., 42.

generally listed these people as “industrious, thrifty, and fastidious about the cleanliness of their living quarters and clothing.”<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most important reason that encouraged Japanese immigration to the mainland United States was the relative successes the early sojourners to Hawaii had encountered. When contracting laborers to be sent to Hawaii, the Japanese government made it clear to all involved--the laborers, the Hawaiian government, and the sugar plantations--that the purpose of the laborers going overseas was to make money in order to help their families there, and then to eventually return to Japan in a better financial position from which to operate their farms. Initial wages were set by an agreement between the Japanese and Hawaiian governments and the plantation owners. Twenty-five percent of wages earned by the laborers was deposited directly with the Japanese consulate in Honolulu so that these wages were not squandered. Due primarily to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the need for labor on the mainland drew Issei males to the United States by the tens of thousands from both Japan and the Hawaiian Islands (primarily). And, for those that stayed, the need for companionship and to start a family drew over twenty-thousand women.

The rapidly-growing western United States needed laborers to work all sorts of jobs, thus satisfying America’s need for labor, and Japan’s desires to export its hard-working and not-so-embarrassing rural stock. Much of the west coast’s need for laborers was answered by the over 100,000 [mostly] Chinese men and women who worked building the west’s railroads, mines, and labored in its fields.<sup>18</sup> However, Congress, under pressure from a population who increasingly saw the Chinese as

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989), 16-18.



unassimilable, immoral, harmful to the peace and job prospects of the dominant culture, enacted legislation in 1882 virtually cutting off all Chinese immigration into the United States.<sup>19</sup> Although many Chinese stayed after immigration ended, their numbers slowly receded as many returned home with what money they had saved in hopes of finding stable family lives in their homelands.

While whites who promoted Chinese exclusion may have patted themselves on the back for their victory in keeping the United States free from Asians, the western United States continued to grow, and the need for laborers rose, even as the numbers of Chinese immigrants dwindled. Finally, beginning in 1899, the realities of west coast economics called on readily-available non-Americans to fill the labor needs of western industries. Between 1891 and 1898, 14,805 Japanese were admitted to the United States, but the total number of laborers (almost all male) included in this group was probably fewer than 300.<sup>20</sup> The remainder were businessmen, students, and missionaries or seminarians. However, between 1899 and 1900, 12,635 Japanese entered the United States. The great race to fill the labor shortage had begun. The bulk of *dekaseginin* brought to the mainland United States were hired through Japanese and joint Japanese and American-owned contracting firms just as they had been for Hawaiian sugar plantations. The many railroads veining across the western U.S. were some of the largest contractors, but Japanese contracting companies also provided workers for lumber and timber operations; mines (particularly coal mines in the Intermountain west); and crop planting, cultivating, and harvesting.<sup>21</sup> As in Hawaii, Japanese officials observed both the contractors and laborers to ensure

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<sup>19</sup> See Chapter Three of Daniels.

<sup>20</sup> Numbers derived from Ichioka, *Issei*, 55.

<sup>21</sup> See *Ibid.*, 58-60.

that Japanese interests, both cultural and economic, were well-represented. The Japanese state was so concerned that a flood of Japanese laborers would stoke the fires of racism as it had done with the Chinese, it attempted to keep the overall numbers down by instituting quotas. It was all for naught as the good wages paid for west coast laborers drew Issei men from both Japan and Hawaii to the mainland. The United States recorded somewhere around 38,000 Japanese entering the mainland between 1902 and 1907 although Japanese official records only count 31,720 leaving Japan.<sup>22</sup>

Japanese officials who feared that Americans would eventually come to despise the Nikkei were right, and the same anti-Asian resistance that halted Chinese laborers in 1882 spawned a similar reaction to the Japanese. Most of the real discrimination against Issei came at the governmental level (local, state, and federal) beginning with the federal Naturalization Act of 1870, which made it legal for those of African descent to become naturalized citizens, but Asians were left out since the act specifically did not name them. In 1905, Sections 60 and 69 of the California Civil Code was amended to make marriages between “whites” and all “Mongolians” (i.e. Chinese, Japanese, Indian, etc.) to be “illegal and void.”<sup>23</sup> By this time, however, around 420 Japanese sidestepped the Naturalization Act of 1870 “do to the ambiguous meaning” of what races constituted “white” as required by the Act and thanks to the fact that several state-level courts were naturalizing citizens since only “courts of record” were required to do so.<sup>24</sup> The Naturalization Act of 1906 closed this loophole once and for all by giving

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 65-6.

<sup>23</sup> Theoretically, Section 60 and 69 as passed in 1880 already made excluded white-Japanese marriages as it prohibited and marriage between whites and “Negro, Mulatto, or Mongolian” races, the “Mongolian” portion of the code was originally designed to exclude Chinese marriages. The 1905 amendments made the exclusions of Japanese more clear. This law was not declared unconstitutional until 1967. See Huping Ling, *Surviving on the Gold Mountain: A History of Chinese American Women and Their Lives* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 88-89.

<sup>24</sup> Ichioka, *Issei*, 211.

the Federal Government sole oversight of the naturalization process and disallowing naturalization by any court that was not under direct federal jurisdiction.

In 1907, Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order halting immigration of foreigners from U.S. insular possessions or foreign soil unless they were granted specific visas to enter the United States. Although Japan was not named directly, it was clear that the purpose was to halt Japanese laborers migrating to the mainland from Hawaii and had the effect of cutting off most immigration of Japanese laborers from countries like Mexico.<sup>25</sup> Fearing international defacement, the Japanese government had already been working on several attempts and agreements outside of quotas in order to slow immigration. Left with no other choice, the Japanese government agreed to a series of stipulations in 1907 known collectively as the Gentlemen's Agreement, which denied passports to laborers and granted them to only a select group composed of businessmen, students, diplomats, tourists, and those Japanese who resided in the United States, but who wished to visit Japan and then return to North America, once again. Further discriminatory acts included the California Alien Land Law of 1913, which barred "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning farmland and stipulated that agricultural land could only be leased for a maximum of three years.<sup>26</sup> Loopholes in the 1913 law were closed by the California Alien Land Law of 1920 (further amended in 1923) that nullified the three-year leasing option, disallowed Issei to own stock in any company that owned agricultural land, and required "guardians or agents of ineligible aliens" to file an annual report on the activities of Issei under their charge.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 68-70.

<sup>26</sup> See John Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 32.

If the Issei had any hope of gaining political power in the United States, it rested on them becoming fully incorporated citizens. An attempt was made by Takao Ozawa, who sued the United States after failing to obtain citizenship because he was not of “free white” or African descent as stipulated by the Naturalization Acts of 1870 and 1906. Instead of attacking the Naturalization Acts that limited his abilities to naturalize directly, he argued that, “at heart,” he was “a true American” who was educated in American schools, married an Issei wife with an American education, was not connected “with any Japanese churches or school, or any Japanese organization here or elsewhere,” that he send his “children to an American church and American school, and that “most of the time” he used American English at home, so much that his children could not even speak Japanese.<sup>27</sup> In his own words he argued that while “in name, General Benedict Arnold was an American, but at heart he was a traitor” Ozawa, on the other hand, was not an American in name, “but at heart” he was a “true American.” However, the court ruling in 1922, in *Takao Ozawa v. United States*, reiterated legislation that people of Japanese ancestry were of an “unassimilable race,” thus banning them from naturalization and citizenship.

Anti-Asian movements in the Southland yielded mixed results in part, thanks to timing. There was an organized anti-Japanese movement in the Los Angeles area, and though they did have moderate legal successes against the Japanese, the movement generally weakened by the start of the 1920s. The Japanese arrived in the Los Angeles area at a time of expansion proved to be valuable to the workforce, which lead to the important role of Japanese in local area businesses. After the Chinese Exclusion Act passed in 1882, the Los Angeles City Council created legislation so that local businesses could not hire

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<sup>27</sup> Ichioka, *Issei*, 219.

Chinese workers. While most area business agreed not to hire Chinese workers, the legislation never fully worked as businesses held Chinese workers in high regard and could pay them less than other workers.<sup>28</sup> Once immigration restrictions went into place and the nation began to prosper in the Roaring Twenties, anti-Japanese sentiment declined.

### The Issei and Modernity

During the latter years of the Meiji Era, the Japanese State had made a major push to form a “middle core of society.”<sup>29</sup> The words for this concept varied, but many intellectuals and government officials believed that a large middle class was necessary in order to be a “ballast and bulwark” as well as “an emblem of national strength and an antidote to social instability.” In summary, by a prominent Japanese sociologist, “through morality and education, the middle class raises individuals who are the backbone that supports society.”<sup>30</sup> Japan’s modernity relied on a modern social and cultural structure.<sup>31</sup> Although the Japanese political and intellectual elite couldn’t simply conjure up a middle class, they spent the better part of twenty years propagating the ideals through Japan’s educational system, community associations, and in media such as the newspaper press, magazines, books, and plays.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> William David Estrada and Devra Weber, *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 78.

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter One of Mark Jones, *Children as Treasures: Childhood and the Middle Class in Early Twentieth Century Japan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

The promotion of these middle class family ideals by Japan's elites helped turn the middle class into an ideal goal for Japan's population, but it was the pragmatics of urban living that began to create what was known as the "new family," in which young married couples would live with their children, but absent the elders that had been common social practice in Japan.<sup>33</sup> These new families began to concentrate extensively on their children's education, and, set the tone for the meritocratic achievement that had been promoted by the government during the last twenty years of the 1800s. "The ten principles of the model family," issued by the Jitsunen Saji, a Buddhist-cum-Socialist Unitarian, centered on the concept of the "moral family" for whom "hard work" and "self-reliance" were the foundation for *chūtō teido no katei* ("middle core of society") that could become the bedrock of a "stable society and a powerful nation."<sup>34</sup> Tōyō University sociologist Ryūkichi Endō agreed with Saji's emphasis on morality, as did "other family reformers" who "held aloft the moral family of the middle class as a social vanguard full of new ideals and practices in need of adoption within a rapidly modernizing Japan."<sup>35</sup> On the surface, these appeals to morality were about creating a strong familial core, but, in reality, the intelligencia were attempting to legitimize Japan's current middle class, which was comprised mostly of individuals who had inherited their middle class status rather than earned it. This appeal to morality was also an appeal to anti-materialism. Materialism and the love of money would, perhaps, erode the traditional, Confucian-based ideas of loyalty, filial piety, and love of nation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 31-9, especially 37.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 38-9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 40.

If these reformers would have seen the realities of Japan's economic weaknesses, perhaps they would not have been worried. The middle class grew slowly. In 1903, based on income, a mere 2.38% of Japanese were included in this new "middle class." By 1917, five percent of households were in the middle class tax bracket and by 1925, the middle class came to constitute eleven percent.<sup>37</sup> But even though the constant talk about the middle class and the appeals to morality did not meet with Japan's reality, the concept of the potential for middle-classness had great effect on the Issei. By the time of immigration to the U.S from Japan, the ideal and goal of becoming part of the middle class was well-entrenched within the Japanese psyche. Middle-class meant modern, being part of a newer world and a social stratum that had only been available through heredity. Middle-classness meant having the social mobility to choose to live in cosmopolitan areas if one so chose. These types of social and geographic mobilities were unheard of during the Tokogawa rule.

Although many of the Japanese males who came to the United States during the period of immigration had limited exposure to the discussions of family-based, middle class potential, the Japanese females who eventually made their way Stateside lived through it all. After 1900, Japan became flooded with family-oriented publications, many of which were aimed directly at women, who, under the Meiji government were supposed to be *ryōsai kenbo* ("good wife and wise mother"). *Ryōsai kenbo*, a term coined in 1875 by Masanao Nakamura, an educator and Confucian scholar turned Christian humanist, implored women to become the household's "supreme ruler" so that a husband might "leave the home in order to devote all his efforts to work" and not be bothered by the particulars of day-to-day

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<sup>37</sup> Ai Maeda and James A. Fujii, *Text and the City: Essays on Japanese Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 168.

family life.<sup>38</sup> Under this directive, women were to be educated so that they could both tend to home matters through tasks such as cooking and sewing and master the concepts of morality and hone their intellect in order to perform their most valued task, childrearing.<sup>39</sup> Before most Issei women left for the United States, they would have been exposed to a class of magazine called *katei zasshi* (lit. home journal), designed to “accompany...calls for family reform.”<sup>40</sup> *Jogaku Sekai* (*Women’s Education World*) appeared in 1901, followed by magazines founded under the auspices of female family reformists such as Motoko Hani (*Katei no Tomo*, lit. *Home Companion*, 1903) and Toshihiko Sakai (*Katei Zasshi*, 1905). Hani and Sakai’s publications opened the floodgates and by 1908, there hardly remained a “newspaper or magazine in which you don’t see the word home [*katei*].”<sup>41</sup> Within these texts, women learned that the elite turned their homes into “character cultivation centers” where children learned to save money, keep their rooms tidy, work hard, and learn the values of frugality, hard work, and self-reliance.<sup>42</sup> *Katei zasshi* also stressed education and began to celebrate the elementary schoolteacher as both the exemplar and the gateway to a middle class future based on meritocracy earned through both a child and their

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<sup>38</sup> Jones has an entire chapter, his third, dedicated to this ideal as well as Robert J. Smith “Making Village Women into ‘Good Wives and Wise Mothers’ in Prewar Japan,” *Journal of Family History* 8 (March 1983): 70-84. The quote is from Mikō Gunji, “Katei to shinbun,” *Katei no Tomo* 6.12 (March 1909), 340.

<sup>39</sup> Jones 117 and Smith, 71, and see Jordan Sand, “At Home in the Meiji Period: Inventing Japanese Domesticity,” in Stephen Vlastos *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998): 191-207

<sup>40</sup> Jones, 44, Maeda and Fujii, 166-8, Sand, 199-204, and Chizuko Ueno, *The Modern Family in Japan: Its Rise and Fall* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2009), 87-92.

<sup>41</sup> See Jones, 44-45 and Carole Cavanaugh, “Hasegawa Shigure (1879-1941)” in *The Modern Murasaki: Writing by Women of Meiji Japan*, ed. Rebecca L. Copeland and Mark Ortabasi (New York: Columbia University Press), 269. Quote is from Masako Miwata, “Katei no kōfuku,” *Katei no tomo* 7.4 (July 1909): III.

<sup>42</sup> Jones, 51-2.



parents' hard work. Although the total number of children who went to school during the years Issei mothers were forming the ideals they would eventually bring to America (only nine percent of boys and six percent of girls continued beyond elementary school in 1909) the ideal of an educated middle class dominated the discussions of family and the future.<sup>43</sup>

### Racial Strife in the Southland

There can be little doubt that the Chinese immigrants living in the area helped pave the way for the Issei who generally came in larger numbers after the Chinese exclusion in 1882. Although the Issei were not immune to racism and anti-immigrant sentiment, which culminated for the Japanese in the Gentlemen's Agreement's restrictions on immigration, by the time their children, the Nisei, began to come of age, a great deal of anti-immigration and racism was directed at the influx of Hispanics, African Americans, and Filipinos.<sup>44</sup> Southland Chinese residents had been treated poorly in the past, but the diffusion of these situations helped smooth things over for the Japanese who eventually settled in the area. By 1870, over 12,000 Chinese had lived in San Francisco, while, at the same time, just under two hundred lived in Los Angeles. By 1900, that number only reached 2,111, and a great deal more Chinese lived outside of the area's Chinatown than within since the city's Chinatown had moved at least two times.<sup>45</sup> Even though the Chinese population in LA was small, racial violence still existed, most notably the Chinese Massacre that took place on October 24, 1871, in which a mob of approximately 500

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<sup>43</sup> Jones, 226-8.

<sup>44</sup> A good overview can be found in Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth H. Marcus and Yong Chen, "Chinese Elites in Exclusion Era California," *Pacific Historical Review* 80, no. 3 (August 2011), 372.

Caucasian and Hispanic-American men, incensed by the apparent killing of a local rancher who had unwittingly been caught in the middle of a Chinese gang war—entered Chinatown and beat, robbed, ransacked, and looted and eventually lynched eighteen Chinese males in the nation’s largest mass-lynching in history. The anti-Chinese sentiment in California climaxed with over 150 riots which stretched from the early 1870s until the late 1880s and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

Because Issei realized that being associated with the Chinese by their physical characteristics had a negative impact, Japanese immigrants, more often than not, held anti-Chinese views that were as strong as or even stronger than by the dominant American society. Although it was common knowledge that Japanese culture and society owed a great deal to China, Japanese felt a kinship to only the “old” China that existed before the “new” led by the “barbarian” Qing (Ch’ing). Members of the Japanese elite worked for more than two centuries to carve out a Japanese society that was separate and distinct from China after the political consolidation of the Japanese islands under Tokugawa rule in 1600 and the fall of the Ming dynasty in 1644. By the end of 1715 a wildly popular puppet play entitled *Kokusen’ya Kassen* (*The Battles of Coxinga*), captured the populace’s attention as it told the tale of Koxinga [sic.] (full name: Zheng Chenggong)—born in Japan to a Chinese father and a Japanese mother—and his valiant attempts to restore the Ming dynasty to its proper place of power over the barbarous and primitive Qing, who many Japanese believed to be the same as the Mongols who attempted and failed to conquer the Japanese islands in the late thirteenth century. Japan, with the help from the divine, defeated them and certainly did not view them as equals. The Japanese military of the Meiji Era “proved” that these earlier victories were not flukes and that the new spirit of Japan rested on the backs of their modern conscripted military. On the battlefields of Formosa (Taiwan, 1895) and

Korea (1894-95), during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and in Northern China during the Boxer Rebellion (where Japanese troops fought alongside modern Western nations such as France, Germany, Britain, and the United States as part of the Eight-Nation Alliance, 1899-1901), Japanese forces found nothing but victories over their mainland foes.

But overseas military victories against the Chinese (and the Russians in 1905) would not be enough to separate Japanese from the Chinese. If Issei wanted to gain a modicum of respect from their non-Japanese Southland neighbors, they would have to convince their Nikkei community to become morally upstanding citizens and to stop participating in the very same vices (gambling, prostitution, etc.) that had previously gotten the Chinese into trouble with the surrounding community. They also had to convince both themselves and the dominant population that Japanese immigrants were somehow more ethical and cultured than their Chinese counterparts, and perhaps other minorities, as well. There were Americans who wholeheartedly agreed with these early Japanese sojourners that there was a strong distinction between the Japanese and Chinese. Sidney Gulick an American missionary who travelled extensively through Japan lecturing, teaching, and working, wrote about the Japanese and defended their ability to immigrate, even at the expense of other Asiatics. Throughout his many writings, Gulick clearly favors the Japanese who, “to all appearances is an American’ his hat, his clothing, his manner, seem so like those of an American that were it not for his small size, Mongolian type of face, and defective English, he could easily be mistaken for one.” To Gulick, this contrasted strongly with “a Chinaman” who still wore his hair in a queue--a long, braided ponytail mandated by the Han dynastic government--wore clothing that was “entirely un-American” and who made “no effort to conform to his surroundings [and seemed] to glory in his separateness.” Perhaps Americans had good reason to be suspicious of the Chinese, who made “no effort to conform to his surroundings,”

but not the Japanese, whose “flexible...mental constitution” allowed them to “accept new ways so easily...to assimilate many elements of [American society].” Many Issei readily agreed with and expanded upon sentiments such as those given by Gulick. Kyoshi Kawakami immigrated to the United States in 1901 to study political science at the University of Iowa and eventually served as director of the Pacific Press Bureau, a U.S.-based news agency set up and controlled by the Japanese government. Kawakami rightfully pointed out that the nation-state of Japan as it was understood was only a recent invention that this “new” nation was readily absorbing and integrating modern ideals while creating a new, ostensibly unified Japaneseness.

While rhetoric may have swayed some to believe that the Japanese were superior to the Chinese, most simply would not believe it. The Issei were still Asian, and just like the Chinese that came before them, most of them were male. In 1900, both the Japanese and Chinese communities were predominately single males, a threat to the family dynamic preferred in American culture, but in the Southland in 1910 there were still fewer than 9,000 people of Japanese origin in Los Angeles County (out of 504,131 total), so . There was little real effort by any large groups to enact severe discrimination against them and any anti-Japanese sentiment was patchy and disorganized. Business owners, who perhaps derided the presence of the Japanese in public, quietly hired Japanese labor and praised their industriousness.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> By the 1920s, there was no truly organized movement pressing for Japanese expulsion from the region, and actually the Japanese gained allies who thought that few, sporadic demonstrations against the Japanese were “aggressive” and advocated “closer contact” rather than aggressiveness. See Modell, 24-55, especially V.S. McClatchy “Progress Report” on 45.

## Settling in the Southland

Without families, the Issei would never have any possibility of being seen as anything but a relatively small manual labor or migrant worker pool in the Greater Los Angeles Area. Interestingly, the Gentlemen's Agreement allowed for one loophole that the formal legislation banning Chinese immigration to the United States did not. The Agreement allowed parents, spouses, and children of Japanese already residing in the mainland United States to immigrate. This loophole, combined with the economic benefits of staying in the United States, enabled Issei an honest chance to become modern in their own right and to raise modern families. Free from "urban tyranny" (urban areas receiving the benefits of economic development at the expense of rural areas) and the "blood tax" (conscription), Issei men could become modern, albeit it away from their homeland.<sup>47</sup> As such, the second wave of Japanese immigration, consisting of women, and to a smaller extent children and elderly family members, began in earnest.

The response to this call was impressive. Between 1868 and 1900, somewhere between 1,195 and 2,036 Issei females entered the United States. The census of 1900 only recorded 985 Japanese-born females living in the country, but from 1910 to 1920, nearly 17,000 Japanese and Okinawan women who were already married or who were married soon after their arrival immigrated to the United States.<sup>48</sup> This number not only demonstrated the willingness of many to escape Japan, but it also demonstrated the successes of the Japanese males living in the United States. In an effort to stave off

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<sup>47</sup> For a concise overview of this, see Stephen Vlastos, "Opposition Movements in Early Meiji, 1868-1885," in *The Nineteenth Century (The Cambridge history of Japan, vol. 5)*, ed. Marius B. Jansen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 367-431.

<sup>48</sup> Ichioka, *Issei*, 164.

further embarrassment, the Japanese government was reluctant to allow Japanese women to flood into the United States, which might force its government to set up formal legislation curtailing further immigration from Japan. Initially, the Japanese government disallowed laborers were not allowed to send for wives. Only businessmen, reasonably well-off farmers, and in some cases, students and missionaries and those working as urban manservants could do so. Before 1915, laborers could send for wives if they made an average of \$1,000 per annum or farmers could send for wives if they earned at least \$400 per year. Both classes of people had to have at least \$1,000 in savings.<sup>49</sup> In 1915, the Japanese government lowered the requirements and laborers could bring in relatives so as long as they had \$800 in savings. All males had to demonstrate through bank statements, that they had this buffer money at least five months in advance of their application.<sup>50</sup> The women who came to the United States had very different reasons for doing so. Some were simply socially pressured by their parents into marrying, particularly if any form of bride-price were to be had. Others were already paired with an Issei male through arranged marriages (often both the man and women were from the same area in these cases). Others came as a way to escape the impoverished nature of their village or towns. Still others came to escape reputations of ill-repute (deserved or not), accusations of infertility, or other “social predicaments.”<sup>51</sup> Others still were encouraged by their lack of choices or by the lure of adventure.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>50</sup> The monies used to demonstrate financial solvency was often cobbled together from several sources and then given to another person so they could demonstrate solvency as well. The money collected and passed around in this manner was known as “show money.” See Daniels, 131 and Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia, Politicians, and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990), 187-8.

<sup>51</sup> Ichioka, *Issei*, 166.

Certainly, many came out of a sense of duty to Japan or family, just as many of the men had done earlier.<sup>52</sup>

No matter the reason, the Japanese women who immigrated to the United States permanently etched themselves into the community and were a stabilizing force that, once again, began to scare the dominant culture and eventually closed off immigration to Japanese (particularly true since most people thought the Gentlemen's agreement was similar to the Chinese Exclusion Act and would cut off immigration completely). Approximately 8,000 Japanese immigrated to the United States each year from 1913-1919. This, once again, raised red flags among the dominant culture, particularly on the West Coast. To make things worse, Issei couples were reproducing. Although anti-Japanese activists skewed numbers to support their cause, there was no doubt that the many young, newly married Japanese women were in their prime childbearing years and were producing Japanese children, who were American citizens, at a rate that alarmed nativists.<sup>53</sup> V. S. McClatchy (1857-1938)—a vehement anti-Japanese newspaper publisher from California—opined (with dubious calculus) that if Japanese immigration were to continue, even at a slow pace, the numbers of Japanese in the United States, given their “high” birthrate, would reach over half a million by 1923. This type of activism, combined with a nation of people weary of war and distrusting of immigrants from other “undesirable” parts of the world such as Eastern and Southern Europe, led to the Immigration Act of 1924, which all but cut off immigration from Japan, as well as the rest of Asia. The women had made their mark, however, and couples began bearing children in larger numbers, coinciding with the peak years of Japanese brides

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<sup>52</sup> *Denshō Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Picture Brides,” accessed May 28, 2012, [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Picture\\_brides/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Picture_brides/)

<sup>53</sup> See Daniels, 146.

after 1907 (see Table 1 and Table 2). With a multi-ethnic population free of the crowded, ghettoized living conditions of cities such as San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, Los Angeles was congenial to minorities such as the Issei. While it is true that there were housing restrictions within Los Angeles itself, the Southland as a whole was generally welcoming and open to the Nikkei and the Nisei were also the beneficiaries of the sacrifices made by previous generations of immigrants and owed a great deal to the Chinese who, through their hardship, found a balance with the dominant culture around them and carved a respectable niche within the area. Selecting the Los Angeles basin was fortuitous for Issei since it was quickly filling with people in industry and required hard-working laborers, regardless of their ethnic background. As Modell stated, “the nature and rapidity of Los Angeles’s growth is reflected in an economic structure highly encouraging to newcomers as ambitious and hard-working as the Japanese.”<sup>54</sup> He continued on, saying that “Los Angeles offered the Japanese an opportunity for quick penetration into the occupational system and they accepted that opportunity with alacrity.”<sup>55</sup> This helped establish the Issei as a permanent and vital part of the economic community, particularly during the region’s heavy-growth phase in the first three decades of the twentieth century.

By 1930, Los Angeles was one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States, and most of its residents had lived there fewer than twenty years.<sup>56</sup> At that time, only Baltimore had a larger non-white population than did Los Angeles, but Baltimore’s “population was less diverse.”<sup>57</sup> On top of

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<sup>54</sup> {Modell, Economic realities, 24}

<sup>55</sup> {Modell, 25}

<sup>56</sup> {Waldinger Bozo, 45}

<sup>57</sup> Gutfreund, 6.



Table 1: Approximate Number of Nisei in 1930 in the Los Angeles Region Broken Down by Age Group<sup>58</sup>

<u>Ages</u>	<u>Years Born</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>M/F Ratio</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0 – 5	1925 – 1931	2493	2,351	4,844	51/49	26.81
6 – 10	1920 – 1924	3261	3,133	6,394	51/49	35.39
11 – 15	1915 – 1919	2060	1975	4,035	51/49	22.33
16 – 20	1910 – 1914	1059	884	1,943	55/45	10.75
21 – 25	1905 – 1909	484	233	717	68/32	3.97
26 – 30	1900 – 1904	208	23	262	79/21	1.45
31 – 40	1895 – 1899	88	5	111	79/21	.61
41 – 50	1890 – 1894	12	10	22	55/45	.12
51+	< 1890	6	6	12	50/50	.07
		9671	8669	18,340		
Average Age:		1930	~9-11			
		1940	~18			

Table 2: Approximate Live Nisei Births in Southern California After 1912<sup>59</sup>

<u>Year</u>	<u>Births</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Births</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Births</u>
1912	323	1920	1,281	1928	667
1913	267	1921	1,360	1929	523
1914	632	1922	1,306	1930	496
1915	527	1923	1,292	1931	656
1916	838	1924	1,155	1932	409
1917	716	1925	980	1933	358
1918	950	1926	800	1935	353
1919	1,004	1927	722	1936	330

<sup>58</sup> These numbers are approximate and were taken from a survey undertaken by the Japanese Consulate and the *Rafu Shimpō* after the 1930 census. However, the Consulate's and *Rafu Shimpō*'s numbers included "nine counties" in Southern California, including San Diego and San Louis Obispo counties, which outside the Southland. I extrapolated these numbers by removing the total number of Nisei included that were in San Diego and San Louis Obispo Counties, which left 90.1% of the original total. See Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, *Japanese in Southern California: A History of 70 Years*, (Los Angeles: JCCSC, 1960), 13. See also *Rafu Shimpō* 9/7/31 and Isami Arifuku Waugh, "Hidden Crime and Deviance in the Japanese-American Community, 1920-1946," (DCrim diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1978), 106. Note that the Waugh and JCCSC age categories do not match, even though their numbers generally do. In the average age, I have also excluded births before 1890. The Average age for 1940 from Waugh, 106.

<sup>59</sup> Derived based on the percentages in Table 1 based on numbers from Toyotomi Morimoto, *Japanese American and Cultural Continuity: maintaining Language and Heritage Language and Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 61. Generally, the Southlands births accounted for around 22% to 25% of the total births in California and this approximate does not account for infant mortality. As such this table serves more as a demonstration of the peak in births between 1919 and 1925 than a true reflection of births on a yearly basis.

this, the population density of the area was fantastically low. If the entire size of the Los Angeles metropolitan area is considered, even in 1930, the area's population density was just over seventy-six people per square mile (assuming 33,945 sq. mi. as the area's size), far lower than that of most major metropolitan regions and not even double of the 39.35 people per square mile that lived in the contiguous United States in 1930.<sup>60</sup> In 1900, San Francisco ranked as the ninth largest city in the United States, and on its compact peninsula lived over 340,000 people, with more arriving every day. In contrast, Los Angeles itself was home to just over 100,000 with 170,298 people total throughout Los Angeles County. The next largest city in the basin at the time was Pasadena, which was home to 9,117 residents. Out in the San Gabriel Valley, Pomona was the next most populous at 5,526. The Los Angeles region's population grew rapidly, but the immense amount of land in the Southland comfortably accommodated its new residents. The San Bernardino-Riverside metropolitan area, just over the hills from the Los Angeles Basin held just over 45,000 people in 1900s, which grew to 214,924 in the decade preceding 1940. Taken as a consolidated statistical area, the Los Angeles region's population beginning in 1900 was 250,187, then 648,316 by 1910, climbing to 1,150,252 by 1920, and 2,597,066 in 1930. Official statistics demonstrate that in 1930, the Los Angeles area held 1,572 people per square mile (2,811 within the city, 1045 outside).<sup>61</sup> In contrast, New York's density was listed as 4,336 people per square mile (23,178 in the city itself with several other cities well over 15,000 per square mile), Chicago at 3,900 people per square mile (16,723 within, 1077 outside), and San Francisco

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<sup>60</sup> Census records denote 122,775,046 people living in the 3,119,885 square miles of the contiguous forty-eight states. In 2010, 103 people lived per square mile in the contiguous 48 states.

<sup>61</sup> Figures obtained from Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 143.

at 9,651 people per square mile (15,104 within, 9651 in counties surrounding, and across the bay in Oakland at 5343). Even with this measurement, the Los Angeles area was one of the most sparsely-populated metropolitan areas, and Los Angeles was significantly less dense than other large, single central cities. However, these official measurements do not tell the whole story since surrounding areas with a minimum density of 150 inhabitants per square mile were counted, and only within the city or district limits of the survey. No matter how one looks at it, the Los Angeles area did not suffer from population problems related to scarcity while the Nisei were growing up before World War II.

The relative youth of the city and the vibrancy and steady, dependable growth of the area's economy meant that the area could absorb laborers of all skill levels with few labor clashes since there were relatively few well-established unions or guilds. Los Angeles also lacked a large centralized factory area, and as such, did not promote large ghettoized areas that contained only unskilled, manual laborers. Instead, the Southland boasted a diverse economy included petrochemicals, light and medium manufacturing, cargo shipping by ship, truck, and train, fishing, farming, and a fast-growing service sector. This particularly suited the Issei, who were opportunistic, hardworking, were apt to accept whatever work was available, and were willing to live wherever they could find housing. Oil, discovered in the 1890s helped spur the county's growth as did the creation of the Owens River Aqueduct into the San Fernando Valley in 1913, which brought both water and many immigrants who looked to farm the fertile and now-arable valley. Corporations, land owners, developers, and local governments also began to push the growth of Southern California by advertising in newspapers nationally in an effort to bring people, their skills, and capital into the region. Finally, the Pacific Electric Railway Corporation, more popularly known as the Red Car system after its trollies' bright red paint scheme, built an extensive

network of trolley lines between 1902 and 1911 enabling geographic mobility.<sup>62</sup> Since many of the Issei coming to the region were happy to farm, fish, or undertake day tasks (piecework, gardening, man/maidservant work), and could now get around the Southland with relative ease, many did not feel a compelling need to live in a Nihonmachi such as Little Tokyo or Sawtelle's Little Osaka. Some areas, such as Boyle Heights and Uptown Los Angeles were still within the city, but separated from the downtown area by geography (the Los Angeles River in Boyle Heights' case) or through sheer distance (while still within the city limits, Uptown was around five miles to the west of downtown).

In order to properly manage its growth, particularly to avoid urban blight and crowding, the Los Angeles Housing Commission began advising the mayor in 1906, after an outbreak of bubonic plague in the valley, and began to study the area for the next year.<sup>63</sup> Although the city was unable to completely rid itself of slums and depressed regions, it made available, through zoning ordinances, large tracts of suburban land slated strictly for residential use.<sup>64</sup> The controlled urban growth of the region, which was designed to spread horizontally and vertically, and the planned pace of expansion caused Southlanders to flow throughout the Los Angeles region as roads and the Red Car slowly connected the area's cities. As the infrastructure connected the area, Issei were willing and ready to spread out with the city so that they could farm land and fill the day jobs required by the expanding population. Right by the central core of Los Angeles, streetcar suburbs such as Crown Hill, and Angelino, Boyle, and Lincoln

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<sup>62</sup> See John H. M. Laslett, "Historical Perspectives: Immigration and the Rise of a distinctive urban Region, 1900-1970," in, *Ethnic Los Angeles*, 2nd ed., ed. Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 45-53.

<sup>63</sup> Sophie Spalding, "The Myth of Classic Slum: Contradictory Perceptions of Boyle Heights Flats, 1900-1991," *Journal of Architectural Education* 45, no 2. (February 1992), 107.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Heights, and Highland, Leimert, and Huntington Parks grew up along the banks of the Los Angeles River.<sup>65</sup> Close by, cities such as Pasadena (incorporated in 1886 and gained popularity as a resort town), Glendale (incorporated 1906, two years after the streetcar was extended there), Alhambra (founded 1903 and promoted as the “City of Homes”), and, Montebello (in full settlement by 1910, but not incorporated until 1920) provided even more options to the growing population. By the ocean, cities such as Long Beach (incorporated 1897), San Pedro (consolidated into Los Angeles in 1909), and Santa Monica (1886) attracted fishermen, farmers, small businessmen, grocers, and concession workers. In the valleys, cities began to serve local farmers and ranchers. Anaheim (the second incorporated city in Los Angeles county in 1870), Compton (1888), Gardena (populated in the 1870s and the “only green spot” between Los Angeles and the ocean during railroad expansion in the late 1880s, but not incorporated until 1930), and anchoring the area, farming and railhead cities like Riverside (founded 1870, incorporated 1883, and connected to San Bernardino through electric trolley in 1911), San Bernardino (incorporated 1857 by mostly Mormon settlers and connected by the Red Car to Los Angeles in 1910), and Santa Anna (1869, the Red Car reached this far south in 1906) began to attract those who felt they could make a living off of the sparsely-populated land or providing services to the rail workers and travelers bound for the coast.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 107 and passim. in Greg Hise, “Border city: Race and Social Distance in Los Angeles,” *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 2004).

<sup>66</sup> See The Electric Railway Historical Association of Southern California, “R&A: Riverside and Arlington,” accessed on January 5, 2012, <http://www.erha.org/r&a.htm> Jim Walker, *Pacific Electric Red Cars* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2007).

## Dissecting the Geography of the Nisei

In the center of it all sat the area ethnople, Little Tokyo, or known by its colloquial names, the Nihonmachi (lit. Japan city), Japantown, J-Town, or Li'l Tokyo (or, earlier, Li'l Tokio).<sup>67</sup> This was the heart of the Southland's Japanese American community. There was a few small Japanese grocery and sundry stores, Turner Street Hospital (an Issei-run hospital) and, later, Japanese Hospital (which eventually became City View Hospital), Kame Restaurant, the *Rafu Shimpo* and *Kashu Mainichi* newspapers, three Japanese language schools, the International theater, and San Kwo Low chop suey house, the Enbun Market, the Fugetsudo and Mikawaya confectionaries, the Fukui Mortuary, Yamato Hall (with its large auditorium), several Japanese churches (both Buddhist and Christian), the Japanese YMCA and YWCA, two Japanese banks (Yokohama Specie and Sumitomo), and the City Market of Los Angeles, a major outlet for Issei and Nisei farmers who grew upwards of 75% of all the fresh produce consumed in the basin.<sup>68</sup> Most of the residents of Little Tokyo lived north of First Street and east of Alameda and did not extend much south of Second Street.<sup>69</sup> Made up of boarding houses and inns, much of the population was heavily transient as businessmen, students, ranch and farm hands, and

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<sup>67</sup> Ethnoples are ethnic enclaves that empower a particular ethnicity to cooperate or act against the dominant culture surrounding them. This term differs from "ghetto," which denotes an ethnic enclave into which its residents are forced either directly or political or socio-cultural duress. While ethnoples are often fully-functioning and politically and economically compatible with the areas surrounding it, ghettos are considered less desirable and incompatible with the areas surrounding them. Michel S. Laguerre, *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>68</sup> Katsuma Mukaeda, interviewed by Dave Biniasz, November 28, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 1.

<sup>69</sup> See Kango Kunitugu, interviewed by Dave Biniasz, November 28, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 1.

Japanese nationals moved in and out of Little Tokyo as needed.<sup>70</sup> Little Tokyo fostered very little family life.<sup>71</sup>

But the Issei did not remain solely in the ethnopole. Just south of downtown was the Japanese ethnopole, Little Tokyo, similar to the well-known and burgeoning areas of Chinatowns and Little Italys in many major cities. But these places were for the unmarried or recently-immigrated Issei males who tolerated and even enjoyed the city life with its constant sounds of traffic, its gambling establishments, and nightlife. There was an out, even for Issei who were living modestly in Los Angeles, as potentially middle-class areas were connected by the Red Car. Like a geographic vascular system, the Red Cars spread out from downtown Los Angeles, to far-flung communities such as Ontario, Santa Monica, San Bernardino, and Riverside. Another, less known trolley system, the Los Angeles Railway, also known as the Yellow Cars system, served Japanese Americans in basin communities such as West Adams, Crenshaw, and Hawthorn. One of the first areas favored by many Issei parents with newly-born Nisei children was the East L.A. neighborhood of Boyle Heights. "East Side Greeting, We Welcome All" was the banner that was displayed in Boyle Heights on the first day of service of the Los Angeles Cable Railway into East L.A. in 1889, and greet all the Heights did.<sup>72</sup> Wanting to be free of the traditionally single male-dominated Little Tokyo with its gambling halls and unsafe streets, many Issei families felt they could obtain the American suburban dream by simply moving east across the Los Angeles River. With its loose racial covenants, Boyle Heights attracted many Japanese immigrants,

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<sup>70</sup> See Kango Kunitugu, interviewed by Dave Biniasz, November 28, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> A smaller ethnopole, known as Little Osaka, was situated at the heart of Sawtelle.

<sup>72</sup> ?? LABH Los Angeles's Boyle Heights, JANM, 33 and Japanese American National Museum, "Boyle Heights: The Power of Place," accessed in August 10, 2013, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bh/exhibition/exhibition.htm>.

particularly those who worked in central Los Angeles or Little Tokyo. They would have a short Red Car ride to work, and when they came home, their wives and children could walk the streets where they would run into their neighbors, many of them who were also middle-class Italians, Blacks, Armenians, Russians, Mexicans, and Jews. Pauline Young, a sociologist who studied the area in the late 1920s and early 1930s noted that people in the area were polite and their children played freely in the evenings after having gone to school with each other during the day.<sup>73</sup> Many residents at the time described living in Boyle Heights as a melting pot. One resident at the time described his experiences at Roosevelt High as “the most amazing experience anyone could have gone through. It was really a melting pot. No one had any bad feelings about the other person's color, their religion, or their beliefs. We worked together. Very seldom did we have any problems.”<sup>74</sup>

## Conclusion

By 1900, the Issei, mostly male, began to establish themselves as functioning residents of the nation. Although many were initially determined to make their fortunes and to return home, many more decided that their future might lie in the United States. Many of those men found a welcoming environment in the Los Angeles area. With ample opportunities to make a living and a cultural and political landscape reasonable free from racial strife, Issei found a place they could eventually make a home. But in order to put down permanent roots and to create a true life for themselves, Issei men

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<sup>73</sup> Pauline V. Young, *The Pilgrims of Russian-town: The community of Spiritual Christian Jumpers in America* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), 17-20.

<sup>74</sup> ” Hershey Eisenberg, “On Hollenbeck Park,” accessed on May 19, 2012, [http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bh/resources/collecting/oral\\_history.htm](http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bh/resources/collecting/oral_history.htm).



needed an education (particularly in English), greater contact with the surrounding community, an established business reputation, and the ability to work within the larger American business community, and, perhaps if the fates aligned, a wife, children, and a home to call one's own. When Issei women began to arrive in bulk after 1907, they added the stabilizing force the Nikkei community needed. Children soon followed and many Issei parents could not envision their children growing up in the bachelor-dominated and vice-ridden Little Tokyo, so they began to spread out around the Southland's massive geography. Once they were settled in places such as Boyle Heights, Uptown, Sawtelle, Gardena, and Riverside, Issei parents could begin to live the lives of modernizers both in Japan and in United States, with educated children, working men, and women who helped run the home.

But even after they had decided to stay, the Issei never lost touch with Japan. Constant letters home and even occasional visits kept Issei apprised of the changes going on in Japan.<sup>75</sup> Whenever possible, Issei formed *kenjinkai* (lit. prefectural association), groups made up of individuals who hailed from the same prefecture or region of Japan. *Kenjinkai* would regularly meet formally and informally in order to socialize and to discuss events happening in Japan and their home prefecture. Eventually, Nikkei newspapers such as the *Rafu Shimpo* (lit. *L.A. Newspaper*, founded in 1903) and, later the *Kashū Mainichi* (lit. *Japan-California Daily Newspaper*, founded 1931), kept Southland Japanese informed of the goings-on back in their ancestral homeland. Organizations such as the Japan Association of

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<sup>75</sup> Many letters from Japan were destroyed, lost, or purposefully destroyed (most likely to get rid of any evidence that could be used as evidence of sedition) after the outbreak of hostilities with Japan in 1941, but interviews indicate that letter writing was a common aspect of the lives of many Issei. It is difficult to determine what percentage of Issei went back for occasional visits, but mentions of them appear in about one out of every fifteen interviews used to complete this study.

America (founded sometime before 1900 in San Francisco)<sup>76</sup> and the Japan Society (founded in 1909 as an outreach mission of the Los Angeles Young Men's Christian Association and renamed several times, eventually to the Japan-America Society of Los Angeles) brought United States- and Japanese-based missionaries, students, businessmen, and scholars together regularly to discuss relationships between the Nikkei of the Southland and Japan and to entertain prominent visiting Japanese politicians, tradesmen, and dignitaries (the organization also acted as a political lobbying organization for the interests of area Nikkei).<sup>77</sup> In 1915, a Japanese Consulate opened in Los Angeles that continually reached out to the local Nikkei community as it kept track over them in a concerned and watchful manner. The Foreign Ministry of Japan demanded constant updates about the status of the Issei (who were still Japanese citizens) and their children, and instructed the consulate to ensure that the Southland community understood the goals and actions of the Japanese government (this became particularly important after the outbreak of hostilities with China in 1931). The consul would also host talks and send its representatives out among the community to help keep them apprised of Japanese domestic and international politics. At a more social level, it was not uncommon for Nikkei families to host sojourning students, businessmen, athletes, and missionaries and clergy as they travelled through the region and some families would regularly host Japanese sailors and exchange information while feeding them a home-cooked meal on dry land.<sup>78</sup> As soon as Japanese language schools began to open, many

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<sup>76</sup> The Japan Association of America was created by the Japanese Counselor General in San Francisco, California and handled all travel documents for Issei travelling between Japan and the United States.

<sup>77</sup> JASSC, *Japan American Society of Southern California: The First 70 Years*, 1-2

<sup>78</sup> Again, it is difficult to determine how often this happened, but it is clear that homestays were not uncommon from the available literature. Some families went out of their way to host Japanese sailors who were docked at the Port of Los Angeles. See Kiyō Maruyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives, for example.

hired teachers who were Japanese students studying at one of the Southland-area colleges or universities and Issei would learn about the state of their homeland either directly or through what their Nisei children had learned. And, finally, some parents would send their Nisei children back to Japan for education. Upon their return, they were known as Kibei (literal translation?), and brought back with them a great deal of knowledge about Japan.

Although slightly under ten thousand Issei males eventually settled in the Southland before 1910, it was not until females began to arrive in great numbers in the second decade of the twentieth century that most made the commitment to make America their permanent home. However, residency and incorporation were decidedly separate for the Issei who, thanks to a series of anti-immigration laws, were ineligible for citizenship and unable to own land or lease large tracts for extended periods of times. Having children also legitimized the Nikkei community by changing their image from fortune-seeking, temporary workers, to active, permanent residents of their community. The children of Issei, however, thanks to the Fourteenth Amendment, were citizens of the United States (so as long as they were born on American soil) who could offer Issei incorporation via proxy. But, of course, for the vast majority of Issei, children were not simply a utilitarian means to a political or social end, they completed their family. For male Issei who immigrated around the turn of the century, this outcome meant that they had to change their mindset about migration several times after first stepping on the gangplank in Japan.

But having children was the culmination of one series of changes and marked the beginning of another that had lifelong and serious implications for the Issei and their Nisei children. Although the term “Nuclear Family” had not yet been coined, the concept of a self-contained family unit that revolved around a husband, wife, and children, living apart from their extended family was necessary in

order to form a stable unit that would be recognized as a “family” within the rest of the Japanese community, for, as the groundbreaking cultural anthropologist Chie Nakane noted, “the core of the Japanese family, ancient and modern, is the parent-child relationship,” rather than the bond between husband and wife.<sup>79</sup> Politically, the Issei were second-class residents of the United States but their Nisei children were citizens of the United States owing to their birthright. The Nisei could own property, homes, and businesses, and someday they would be able to vote and, with any luck, they would sit in influential positions on city councils and perhaps even as members of state or federal governments. The Japanese government worked hard to ensure that Nisei would not be placed into segregated schools, thus conferring upon them a guarantee of education that would be equal to members of the dominant culture. Potentially, Nisei would graduate and have access to the middle class that was such a large part of the dreams of modernity. As such, the Nisei were a grand amalgam of the many hopes, dreams, and aspirations the Issei developed over decades during their upbringings in Japan and the realities that surrounded them in the United States.

The remainder of this study seeks to answer the primary questions that Issei certainly asked themselves when they decided to have children. What would even mean to have children in the United States? Would that improve their stature as residents of the United States or would it, somehow, promote disdain from the dominant culture who might not accept their Nisei children as equals to their own? Who should primarily educate the Nisei? If it was the Japanese, themselves, then how would

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<sup>79</sup>), 128. Although it is often believed that the Japanese extended family unit, or “*ie*” usually demanded that several generations of family members live together, the *ie* system demonstrated primogeniture in which the first-born male inherited the family and its assets while lesser sons and all daughters were destined to form family units away from the primary family unit. However, in Japan during the time of this study, lesser sons and daughters generally remained geographically bound to the primary *ie*.

their children learn the skills necessary to survive within the dominant culture? If the schools of the dominant culture educated the Nisei, how would they learn about their Japanese heritage, if they should learn anything about it at all? What should they learn about religion and what were the important ingredients to faith? How integrated should the children of the Issei be in the culture of their birthland? These questions formed the basis of the second generation problem that arose out of necessity after the “*dekasegi* ideal” ceased being realistic.<sup>80</sup>

The resources used by Issei parents to answer questions such as those posed above was twofold. The first was to look to guidance from the ideals instilled in them before their immigration (most Japanese women tended to immigrate to the United States later than most men and were generally younger than the men they married) and from traditions and progressive notions of childrearing taken from both their adopted and ancestral homelands. From the beginning, American civic and religious leaders, politicians, and experts from various disciplines wrestled with the ideal way in which to raise the children of immigrants (not only Japanese), but, so too did Japanese intellectuals, reformers, and Japanese state officials both in Japan and the United States. Through parenting books, magazines, and sections devoted to the craft in daily newspapers (both American and *Nikkei*), Issei parents stayed up-to-date on the latest trends in childrearing in order to cull from the most recent research, trends, and fads. Letters home and discussions with, and observations of neighbors helped the Issei establish parenting norms. The second resource utilized by which the Issei answered questions about childrearing was more instinctual—it was to form dialogs (both verbal and tacit) with their children to best understand how to find compromises between the desires of parents and the desires of the Nisei to

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<sup>80</sup> A succinct summary of these issues can be found in the second chapter of Ichioka, *Before Internment*.

lived fulfilled lives, become integrated politically and culturally with their native homeland, and to have some form of respect for, and understanding about their ancestral homeland.

## CHAPTER TWO: MODERNIZING THE NISEI MIND: JAPANESE AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

Illustrating the hopes, goals, and desires of young Nisei academics, Jimmy Nakamura who graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School in January 1927 gave his speech entitled “The Purpose of Education.”<sup>1</sup> A son of florists, Nakamura’s speech highlighted the usefulness of education to empower individuals and its ability to shape a society. He spoke of a holistic exchange of knowledge centering on the teachers who were “lovers of virtue and haters of vice.” Education, he opined, made humans “world endeavorers” who could, no matter what their chosen profession, demonstrate the “seven cardinal principles of education,” which were: health, worthy home membership, command of fundamental tools, character, worthy use of leisure time, and civic and vocational efficiency. Nakamura commended public education for its previously-“unheard” of abilities to develop “vocational training and the opportunity to pursue artistic abilities” that he felt prepared he and his fellow students “for the game of life, by pointing out its rules and by bringing to us the desire to abide by them.” He ended his speech with a plea for future curriculum choices to emphasize “the importance of doing right for right’s sake, which glorify that sublime end toward which we are striving, and which will guide us toward it in a manner which everyone can comprehend.”<sup>2</sup> Nakamura’s speech along with the others in the anthology demonstrates the palpable effect education had in the minds of Nisei who were urged by their Issei

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<sup>1</sup> Jefferson High (as it is commonly known) is in what was Central Los Angeles at the time. Mary Hamano indicated that a lot of Nikkei involved in the flower business sent their children there since it was near the Ninth Street and Seven Street Markets. “Quite a few” Japanese people went there, but she remembered that the school was highly multi-ethnic, including a great deal of Asian and Eastern European children as well as a large contingent of African Americans. See Mary Hamano, interviewed by Megan Asaka, May 14, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Nakamura, “The Purpose of Education,” in *Nisei Voices: Japanese American Students of the 1930s—Then & Now*, 3rd ed., ed. Joyce Hirohata and Paul T. Hirohata (San Jose, CA: Hirohata Design, 2004), 117-120.

parents to take advantage of “unlimited opportunities” in the United States “for people to use their brains [and] to extend their knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

But why organized schooling at all? Essentially because the modern world, as recognized by both the United States and Japan, demanded it. Before the Meiji restoration in Japan and before the onset of the First Industrial Revolution in the United States, most children were taught either at home or in special schools designed to propagate only the essentially knowledge that a child needed in order to continue on with their adult life. Children in both nations, even before the age of ten, apprenticed under the tutelage of a master craftsman who taught them their life’s trade. Others learned through practical experience, working with their parents (and, in the case of Japan, in particular, the extended community) until they could take over the family business or farm. Even others had little reason to achieve any level of even semi-formal education at all. The First Industrial Revolution brought with it the need for child labor in factories, and by the late 1800s (during the Second Industrial Revolution), immigrant children disproportionately filled these roles in the United States and many were hurt or even killed due to their exposure to machinery and the detritus of the manufacturing process.<sup>4</sup> None of these educational techniques (or, in the last case, the lack thereof) was very democratic or egalitarian as they left little options for social mobility or for most children to define, for themselves, what career path they wanted to take, and the Second Industrial Revolution and the increasingly urbanized nations of Japan and the United States created many possible pathways. Therefore, reformers (particularly urban

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<sup>3</sup> The quote comes from Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, whose father was a schoolteacher in Japan but immigrated to the United States and ran a fruit and vegetable stand so that his children might have a better life than he did in rural Kumamoto.

<sup>4</sup> A comprehensive discussion about this can be found in Chapter Four of Joseph M. Hawes, *The Children’s Rights Movement: A History of Advocacy and Protection* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991).



Progressives) began to emphasize education and its abilities to act as a democratizing force that allowed children to be removed from the hazards of factory or farm life.<sup>5</sup> Education also socialized children “into the authoritarian order they would encounter in the workplace,” protected them (or at least attempted to protect them) from the “class division, corruption, ethnic conflict, crime, and violence” that were rife in America’s growing urban areas, and, ostensibly, gave students a chance at “economic mobility, political liberation, and moral questioning.”<sup>6</sup> For immigrants, schooling also gave their children the ability to acculturate into the dominant culture, but, in most cases (particularly in Southland schools), still encouraged the children to retain elements of their ancestral culture.<sup>7</sup>

No institution gained more presence in, and brought more meaning to the lives of children in any modern society than schools, nor did anything more confirm a sense of modernity upon a society than a state’s ability to formally educate its children. Formal education formed the bedrock of modern society. Both public schools and Japanese language schools (*gakuen*) prepared Nisei for a world in which they would be able to finally realize their parents’ dreams. Nisei generally excelled in school, and by 1940, twenty-two percent of Nisei twenty-five years or older attended some college, a figure one

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<sup>5</sup> Wayne J. Urban and Jennings L. Wagoner, Jr. *American Education: A History*, 5th Edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 155.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 159-60.

<sup>7</sup> Zevi M. Gutfreund has argued in his 2013 dissertation that Los Angeles-area school reformers were particularly interested in creating a “liberal legacy that would shape the political culture of” a city that hailed itself as “the city of the future.” See Zevi Moses Gutfreund, “Language Education, Race, and the Remaking of American Citizenship in Los Angeles, 1900-1968” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2013), 18.

percentage point higher than their white counterparts.<sup>8</sup> Education was a democratizing force that, in its ideal form, could eventually bring whole classes out of poverty, make invisible the differences of race, teach individuals to govern their passions, and would make clear the folly of evil and elevate the status of virtue. Education allowed individuals to understand the mysteries of both nature and the divine, and to form a consistent and acceptable notion of their role in their home, community, and society. Education validated and spread the ideals and conclusions of the many Enlightenment-era philosophers, politicians, and intellectuals who laid out the roadmap to modernity and gave an opportunity to potentially anyone with the resources, time, and desire to understand, conceptualize, and put to practical use the many Enlightenment ideals. Even though the concept of education and its necessity was well-entrenched by the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was still generally a privilege for a wealthy few. The process of educating the masses outside of the confine of the home took time to develop and did not fully come to fruition until after the Civil War, but once it did, the race to institute public education for children of all classes went through very rapid and definite changes. By 1880, in order to be modern, a nation had to dedicate itself to educating its entire population in the rudiments that Western society had been deeming as “enlightened” since the late seventeenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The Issei took the concept one step further, however, and insisted upon having their own system of education to supplement what their children were learning in American schools. As their

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<sup>8</sup> Modell, 127. A study conducted by Stanford University between 1928 and 1933 found that Nisei general outperformed Whites until the eighth grade, and then their performance began to fall off. This study, however, was a wide longitudinal study of West Coast Nisei and included Nisei from farming areas as well as those from cities. In the former, most children were groomed to take over their family’s farming operations. Joel Spring, *Deculturalization and the Struggle for Equality: A Brief History of the Education of Dominated Cultures in the United States*, 3rd ed., (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2001), 66.

<sup>9</sup> Cantor, 30-1.

name suggests, *Nihongo gaku*en (lit. Japanese language schools) were formed to ostensibly provide Nisei the education necessary to speak in the common tongue of their ancestors. Also, the schools were formed to help the Nisei understand and take part in the culture of Japan, an idea that met with little resistance in the Los Angeles region whose teachers were mainly of the “ambivalent assimilationist” set who believed that only the English language was truly essential, while Americanization (defined in terms of social inclusion, acculturation, and a respect for American ideals, customs, political mechanisms, and history) could still occur “without abandoning ethnic tradition” or ancestral languages.<sup>10</sup> Issei also hoped that *gaku*en could eventually form a “bridge of understanding” between the United States and Japan, between the Nisei and their Issei parents, who were ineligible for American citizenship and could hopefully “dispel the ignorance that had been...the fundamental cause of the exclusion movement.”<sup>11</sup> If carried through to its full potential, *gaku*en could prepare the Nisei for study tours of Japan so that they could “educate Americans about Japanese immigration and Japanese immigrants,” dispel “the misunderstandings behind the exclusion movement,” and, particularly after Japan’s aggressions on the Asian mainland in 1931, better understand and explain to Americans the “political issues that affected United States-Japan relations.”<sup>12</sup>

Given the timing of education’s acceleration in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that education greatly defined the interactions between Japan and the West. While many Christian missionaries poured into Japan from the West, a few proselytizers from the East sought

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<sup>10</sup> Gutfreund, 3-4 and 9.

<sup>11</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-9, quotes from 28.

converts in the West. While many laborers and businesspeople flowed from Japan to the West, generally only businesspeople traveled to Japan from the Occident. While politicians travelled between both nations, the very nature of their profession generally limited their numbers. From nearly the beginning, however, few individuals flowed as freely between Japan and the United States as did educators and students. *Oyatoi gaikokugin* (lit. “hired foreigners”) were brought by the Japanese government to teach the Japanese how to modernize. Although a few *oyatoi* (usually Dutch) were brought in each year after the Tokugawa came to power in the early 1600s, it was the Meiji government that gobbled up experts from many Western countries to help build Japan’s factories, begin their businesses, plan their roads, and teach their students. Out of these, approximately fifteen percent of *oyatoi* were Americans.<sup>13</sup> The first large student exchange from Japan to the United States began with the Iwakura Mission of 1871 in which sixty students accompanied the first official diplomatic mission to the United States after the Meiji Restoration. At that time, the most populous Asiatic group in America, the Chinese, were mostly manual laborers or microbusiness owners, but it was hoped that the students, including five females, would become a bridge not only between nations, but also between the nation Japan was and what it wanted to become.<sup>14</sup> Japanese statesmen such as Education Minister Arinori Mori monitored the progress of Japan’s *ryūgakusei* (lit. “foreign students,” between 200 and 500 total

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<sup>13</sup> Robert S. Schwantes “Foreign Employees in the Development of Japan,” in *The Modernizers: Overseas Students, Foreign Employees, and Meiji Japan*, ed. Ardath W. Burks, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 207-9. This is a rough estimate, because no good records of the actual number of *oyatoi* exist. Most likely anywhere from 1400 to more than 2,000 served in this capacity. The approximate percentage is derived from a table presented on Schwantes, 209.

<sup>14</sup> A good description of the life of the female students can be found in Yoshiko Furuki, *The White Plum: A Biography of Ume Tsuda: Pioneer in the Higher Education of Japanese Women* (Boston: Weatherhill, 1991).

by 1873).<sup>15</sup> Approximately forty percent of Japan's early *ryūgakusei* studied in the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Although the total number of sojourning students was small, their impact upon segments of the intelligentsia was large such as was the case with the renowned Chōshū Five.<sup>17</sup> Just before Issei began to immigrate to the Hawaiian islands, the 1881 Memorandum for Elementary School Teachers—which was based on several official documents to appear from the Monbushō (Ministry of Education) in the previous decade—instructed teachers to “guide [and] make [people] good” The Memorandum instructed teachers to specifically “stress moral education to their pupils...loyalty to the Imperial House, love of country, filial piety towards parents, respect for superiors.”<sup>18</sup> In 1885, the first cabinet post of Monbudaijin (Minister of Education) was filled by Arinori Mori, who introduced reforms designed to ensure that “school teach the new citizenry their prime commitment to the well-being of the state.”<sup>19</sup> Mori's normal schools taught Japan's teachers using a militaristic structure and discipline that infused a

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<sup>15</sup> A good description of Mori Arinori is found in chapter five, “Representing Japan at Washington” in Ivan Parker Hall, *Mori Arinori* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). The numbers of official students from Japan in 1872 numbered about 200. These students were given around a yearly stipend of \$1,000 and were generally required to write to Japanese officials such as Mori. However, Minoru Ishizuki, “Overseas Study by Japanese in the Early Meiji Period,” in Burks, *The Modernizers*, indicates that several hundred non-government-sponsored and unauthorized students were probably Stateside by 1873, as well.

<sup>16</sup> This percentage is derived from a table, “Overseas Students by Countries of Destination” found on page 169 of Ishizuki.

<sup>17</sup> Who were: Kaoru Inoue, Hirobumi Ito, Masaru Inoue, Yozo Yamao, and Kinsuke Endo. Two of whom, Ito and Inoue, who became Japan's Prime Minister (four times: 1885-888, 1892-1896, 1898, and 1900-1901) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1885-1887), respectively. The most seminal work that includes the Five is Albert M. Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961). The five *ryūgakusei* were so renowned that celebrations are held for them in both Japan and at the University College London where they were students.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Michael D. Stephens, *Japan and Education* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

Japanese sense of duty with a Victorian utopist's sense of obedience.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the Meiji period, citizenship, education, and children were deemed by the popular press and the Ministry of Education to be “little citizens” (*shōkokumin*), “next-generation citizens” (*daini no kokumin*), and even “treasures of the nation” (*kokka no takara*).<sup>21</sup> The crowning achievement of Japanese educational reforms was the *Kyōiku chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education) of 1890 that brought to a close decades of debates about the nature and purpose of the Japanese educational system. The Rescript was an acknowledgement of Japan's Spenserian belief that the “survival in an international struggle in which ‘the strong devoured the weak’ required national confidence and pride.”<sup>22</sup> As such, the document emphasized citizenship and the core tenets of *kokutai* (national polity), *kokumin* (national spirit), and *shūshin* (moral education) in an effort to define the ideas of loyalty and patriotism.<sup>23</sup> A great deal of male Issei, and nearly all female Issei would have been exposed to this nationalistic educational system before immigrating to the United States. After the Rescript, *shūshin* (ethics) classes were mandatory and students were required to be able to recite the Rescript from memory after the third grade and

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<sup>20</sup> The development of Arinori Mori's policies and beliefs of are complex as is the development of Japan's national polity. See Parker Hall and Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West* (London: Routledge, 1998). For a detailed view of the development of patriotism, morality, and national polity in Japan, see Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> See Jones, 51.

<sup>22</sup> Gluck, 102.

<sup>23</sup> See Chapter Five of Gluck for a comprehensive examination of this.

would have heard the Rescript read along by their principal on each national holiday, ceremony, and “monthly convocations held expressly for the purpose.”<sup>24</sup>

Even when the earliest Nisei were born, Issei parents knew that modern schooling was paramount to any success their children might have, either in the United States or back in Japan should they return. But what kind of schooling should Nisei children have? It was clear that in the end, the exact lessons taught to Nisei in schools, particularly in *gaku*en were not as important as the modern ideal that the Nisei were learning and moving forward. Many Nisei children (especially first-born) could barely speak English by the time they went to school, if at all.<sup>25</sup> Then, usually in preschool or kindergarten, Nisei used an amalgam of English and Japanese.<sup>26</sup> Akio Tanamachi Endo was frustrated by her attempts in kindergarten to communicate with her teacher and both often had to consult her older sister to act as an interpreter.<sup>27</sup> Imbued with a great respect for education as the foundation for all modernity, Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga’s parents were similar to many Issei who saw education as a means to create better, more modern human beings and not to simply produce workers. She described her father, in particular, as an “education nut” who believed that the United States was at the forefront of modern education, regardless of what awaited Nisei in the job world.<sup>28</sup> If she were to do poorly in school it would bring shame to her family, evidence of her inability to endure the trappings of

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<sup>24</sup> The required subjects handed down by the Rescript were also reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and history. See Gluck, 108 and 148-9.

<sup>25</sup> See Roy Y. Taketa, interviewed by Mary M. McCarthy, July 13, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 4.

<sup>26</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, July 7, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

modernity. Parents were often very interested in their children's schooling, encouraging them to stick with it and "participate in whatever school offered."<sup>29</sup>

### *Gakuen*: The Japanese Language Schools

When Minoru "Min" Tonai enrolled in first grade, his mother had difficulties deciding what to do with him (his father largely disowned parenting decisions). From a long line of educators, Tonai's mother attended the women's normal college in Mie Prefecture as did all of her sisters.<sup>30</sup> When they lived on Terminal Island, his mother enrolled him in Sogi Gakkuen, the island's Buddhist *gakuen*. Upon learning of this, his first grade teacher advised her to take him out since he was "already having difficulty with English" and Japanese language instruction would "make it worse." Upon relocating to San Pedro, Tonai's mother changed her mind and he was once again enrolled in a *gakuen*, but instead of daily, after-school classes as were held on Terminal Island, San Pedro's classes were only held on Saturdays. Given that Tonai was probably schooled some by his mother and grew up on the relatively homogenous Terminal Island, he found that he was actually ahead of the children in San Pedro's *gakuen*. His mother noticed another problem, however, and that was the children who lived on Terminal Island and in San Pedro spoke a regional dialect known as Wakayama-*ben*, which often sounds stronger, harsher, and, in some instances, unintelligible to those who spoke in *hyoujungo*

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<sup>29</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 7.

<sup>30</sup> This would have most likely been Mie-Ken Jyoshi Shihan Gakkō (Mie Prefectural Women's Normal School) in Kageyama City.



(standard dialect).<sup>31</sup> Tonai eventually landed at Compton Gakuen where his principal insisted that his students speak *hyoujungo* rather than the pastoral Wakayama-*ben* dialect. In the end, he measured an extreme amount of pride in his ability to speak in *hyoujungo*, and be understood no matter whether he met Japanese people in the United States or, later, in Japan.<sup>32</sup>

Tonai's mother went through the three questions all Issei parents had to ask of themselves: Firstly, was it worth sending children to *gakuen* at all, secondly, what kind of education would their children receive at the local *gakuen*, and thirdly, what were the expected outcomes for a child who attended? While many Southland parents consistently believed that their children should attend a *gakuen*, there was rarely consistency in the kind of education the students received, though most Issei parents believed that the *gakuen* would act as a linguistic and cultural bridge between generations. For some Nisei, Japanese language school helped them to become such a bridge, but most children accepted or rejected *gakuen* on their own terms.

Issei, both men and women, grew up during a period when the concept of universal, compulsory schooling was pressed into reality by a Japanese state that realized education was a necessity for any nation that wanted to participate in modern commercial, political, and social intercourse. As such, Issei were well-aware of the value of a modern education. Before Meiji educational reforms in the

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<sup>31</sup> Also, Terminal Island Issei males had a tendency to speak rather abruptly since their lives on small boats required non-polite speech patterns in order to ensure that verbal directives were enunciated quickly and accurately. This stands in stark contrast to normal Japanese usage, which requires politeness when requesting others to complete an action. Speaking in *hyoujungo* was most closely associated with those who received their education in Tokyo, and is considered a mark of sophistication in Japan today unless you are from one of the few cities that prides themselves on their distinct speech, such as those who speak Osaka-*ben* from the Osaka region of Japan.

<sup>32</sup> The transcriptionist typed that Tonai's interview indicated that he went to "Sogi Gakuen," but as there was no such school on Terminal Island and Sōkei was one of the largest, it would stand to reason that this was the school he was denied access to. Minori "Min" Tonai, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, September 2, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

1870s, the Confucian ideal of education existed in Japan, but structured, long-term schooling was generally targeted at the samurai class who accounted for approximately two percent of the population.<sup>33</sup> The importance of education for this class was enhanced during the long period of relative peace during the Tokugawa era when samurai were cut off from their main point of pride, which was their ability to fight. While a few *terakoya* (lit. commoner schools) existed in Japan during the Tokugawa reign, they were locally-funded and often existed simply to inculcate “moral instruction” in Confucian and neo-Confucian ideals that stressed filial obedience to the power hierarchy. Some clans and villages also ran schools for both samurai and commoners, but they were informal and run as private or semi-private operations by samurai, doctors, priests, and widows.<sup>34</sup> By the mid-1800s, as the samurai class’ power waned and businessmen began to gain power, Japan’s intelligencia were calling for education to help de-class Japan’s population. In lieu of heredity, formerly the bedrock of Japan’s Confucian-based class structure, achievement and ambition could democratize success in modern Japan.<sup>35</sup> Although haphazard and unfocused in nature, some estimates place the total number of schools in the waning years of the Tokugawa regime close to 17,000 and male literacy rivaled that of other developed Western nations (around fifty percent).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ardath W. Burks, “The Role of Education in Modernization” in *The Modernizers: Overseas Students, Foreign Employees, and Meiji Japan*, ed. Ardath W. Burks, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 254

<sup>34</sup> See Ronald P. Dore *Education in Tokugawa Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 22, 226-230, 252-257, and passim. Dore states that in Edo (modern Tokyo), about one-third of the educators were women.

<sup>35</sup> See Dore, 210-211 and Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1978) 72-3.

<sup>36</sup> Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 72.

After the Restoration, Meiji era intellectuals helped guide public opinion and official policy to develop education as a civilized and pragmatic component of modern society.<sup>37</sup> Although work toward a modern, compulsory school system had begun during the Tokugawa years, competing factions (particularly those who wanted Japan to avoid Western influences) made implementation difficult. In February 1869, the Meiji government issued its first directive regarding the establishment of elementary schools with a nativist, nationalistic bent that emphasized Tokugawa-style learning of Buddhist and Confucian-inspired morality. Sensing immediately that nativism was not modern or pragmatic, the government issued another directive in February 1870 that “shifted the ideological emphasis...to produce learning that was ‘useful to the nation’”<sup>38</sup> Within one more year, the Ministry of Education (*Monbushō*) was created in order to oversee the “establishment of elementary education...wholly in terms of useful knowledge” for all classes of Japanese children.<sup>39</sup> The *Monbushō* helped create the Education Act of 1872 (*Gakusei*) that codified into law a detailed public compulsory education system offering four years of compulsory education and the creation of eight university districts, 256 secondary schools, and 53,760 elementary schools.<sup>40</sup> These were lofty goals and the Japanese state had no way to afford all of these institutions and their associated expenses, nor could they train enough teachers to

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<sup>37</sup> See Mark E. Lincicome, *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Gluck, 104. The quote is from Ōkubo.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See Stephens, 30, and A very detailed breakdown of these early years can be found in Satoshi Yamamura, “National Education Policy and the Masses in Modern Japan: The Origins of a State-Oriented Mentality and the Long Detour to a New Form of Citizenship Education,” *International Education Journal* 3, no. 5, (2002): 5-15, Also a quick summary of Japanese schooling’s history until the Meiji period can be found in Burks “The Role of Education in Modernization,” 254-263 in idem. *The Modernizers*.

staff all these schools. In 1880, the number of compulsory years was lowered to three. The number went back up to four years in 1900 and by 1907 the number of compulsory years was six.<sup>41</sup> Increased difficulties appeared when the state once again attempted to insert nationalistic values into the curricula, especially as it furthered its imperialistic goals in the Far East and Pacific. While no universally-agreed upon ideal of moral construction emerged from these early debates, one clear thing did, and it was, not surprisingly, very similar to the ideals of the west—if a nation was to be modern, it had to have an educated population that could help the state morally, physically, and economically move forward.<sup>42</sup> By 1910, over ninety-eight percent of Japanese children at least attended an elementary school, even if only for a few years.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike their counterparts in their native homelands, Japanese educators in the United States responsible for *gakuen* never developed a wholly consistent view for Japanese language schools.<sup>44</sup> Little of this had to do with the dedication or the foresight of the educators but was more a reflection of the changing political and social realities both in Japan and the United States and the differences in the goals and resources between communities and various school operators. Obviously, the growing compulsory educational system in the United States were guided by standards similar to those in Japan,

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<sup>41</sup> See Stephens, 31.

<sup>42</sup> See Gluck, Chapter Five, “Civil Morality” for a detailed discussion of this.

<sup>43</sup> At this time, nationwide only nine percent of boys and six percent of girls advanced beyond elementary school, but this number was higher in cities such as Tokyo in which twenty-seven percent of boys and fourteen percent of girls continued on to middle school. See Jones, 227.

<sup>44</sup> *Gakuen* can be translated as “school,” “academy,” “campus,” or “learning house.” For simplicity, I will use the term “school,” although other sources may translate differently. If a strict translation of a *gakuen*’s name is available, I will provide it. Otherwise, the school is usually named after the name of one of its founders or primary benefactors. The slang term for *gakuen* in some areas was “tip school” for reasons I have yet to discern. See Chris Kato, Yoshi Mamiya, Tad Soto, interviewed by Stephen Fugita, August 14, 1998, Denshō Digital Archives.

so the *gakuen* would act as a supplemental system, at best. Additionally, there would be no way for the Japanese government to have tight control of the language schools without risking anti-Japanese sentiment which could shut them down entirely. Although Nisei were American citizens at birth, many Issei were unsure if they were going to remain in the United States, which created a somewhat haphazard system of creation of *gakuen*.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the formation of *gakuen* was often caught in the competing milieus of the Japanese and American governments, social and political pressures, and the Issei's own difficulties in understanding how their children should absorb the cultures of the United States and their ancestral homeland. Because of this, the development of *gakuen* was often capricious, mercurial, and quixotic, which often meant that *gakuen*'s only real consistency was that they served as a type of community-based auxiliary education system. As such, Japanese language schools were somewhat of an enigma as their nominal purpose was to provide Nisei children an invaluable link to their heritage and homeland and to ensure that they would retain a measure of their cultural heritage. Did this mean that *gakuen* also had to instruct Nisei according to how they were instructed in the Japanese school system, or would references to emperor-loyalty and concepts such as *kokutai*, *kokumin*, and *shūshin* (literal translations) be left out of the curriculum?<sup>46</sup> No one could answer that clearly and, while yearly conferences began in 1912, no authoritative accreditation body ever existed to oversee this

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<sup>45</sup> Detailed accounts of the development of *gakuen* can be found in Morimoto and in Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 10-24 and passim.

<sup>46</sup> See Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 153-156 and passim. The most definitive book on these elements of Japanese national culture is Brian J. McVeigh, *Nationalisms of Japan: Managing and Mystifying Identity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003).

type of standardization.<sup>47</sup> Many also argued that acculturation and Americanization were important factors and should be included, somehow, in *gakuen*, and that there would be economic benefits for those trained in Japanese. Anyone speaking Japanese and who understood its culture could potentially work for Japanese- or Caucasian-owned businesses in the United States (or, perhaps, Japan) or for companies that that did business with Japan. In the final analysis, the existence of *gakuen* was more for the satisfaction of the parents than the students.

Issei, themselves, often promoted English since it was beneficial to both themselves and their children, who could more easily navigate through American society speaking English. Although many Issei desired for their children to be able to communicate in Japanese in order to improve communication between family members, many could only hope that their children could understand them and were willing to let them answer back in English.<sup>48</sup> Many Issei parents, on the other hand, looked at *gakuen* as the only possibility they had to reinforce the Japanese cultural traits and language

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<sup>47</sup> Morimoto, 67, For instance, in April of 1912, thirty-four representatives of *gakuen* met into define standards for *gakuen*, and decided to that “Japanese language schools would teach the Japanese language and the current state of national affairs in Japan as supplementary education...moral education, they decided...should reflect the...Imperial Rescript of Education...but at the same time should teach pupils positive aspects of the American experience.” Just a year later, however, “they changed their mind [sic.] and decided not to include the Imperial Rescript of Education in their statement of purpose, nor *shūshin*.” Instead, “they wanted to retain moral education as a theme to be included throughout Japanese language, history, and geography instructions” with the goal of bringing “up children who will live and die in American, and, as such, the whole educational system must be founded upon the spirit of the public instruction of America.”

<sup>48</sup> Morimoto, 63 and Tamura, 156. A study published in 1939 indicated that over seventy percent of Nisei and their parents in Los Angeles said they spoke Japanese between themselves “almost always.” Forty-five percent of Nisei responded that they spoke in Japanese with their siblings “very rarely” while around ten percent reported that they “almost always” used English. Between Nisei and other Japanese, thirty-eight percent reported that they “very rarely” (23%) or “rarely” (15%) used Japanese to converse with others outside of the home in Japanese and only thirty percent reported that they “sometimes.” The 1939 survey indicated that only just under half of the Nisei in the Southland were “very rarely” urged by their parents to attend, a number their Issei parents generally agreed with. Only twelve percent of Nisei indicated that they “almost always” urged by their parents to attend while almost thirty percent of Issei answered similarly. These figures were calculated by Morimoto from 140 from Robert H. Ross, “Social Distance as it Exists Between the First and Second Generation of Japanese in the City of Los Angeles and Vicinity” (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1939).

they felt were being taken away from their children by the dominant culture.<sup>49</sup> Others, particularly Japanese intellectuals, businessmen, and educators hoped that children who learned Japanese could act as a bridge between cultures and could help “fuse the best of the divided worlds into one.”<sup>50</sup> One of the most prominent proponents of using the Nisei as “bridges of understanding” was Kyūtarō Abiko, the publisher of the *Nichibei Shimbun*, perhaps the most influential Nikkei newspaper before the war.<sup>51</sup> Abiko, always a supporter of permanent residency, became strident in his belief that the Nisei were the key of the Nikkei community’s ability to assimilate into American culture after the passage of the 1924 Immigration Act. If the Nisei were to act as cultural bridges, he argued, the Nisei must be interested in Japan and encouraged to learn as much as they could about their ancestral homeland’s history and its current state of political affairs. Abiko believed in this concept so much that he believed that *gakuen* should be combined with study tours that would allow Nisei to return to Japan and encouraged various organizations (including his own paper) to sponsor these trips.<sup>52</sup> The secretary of the Los Angeles Japanese Association wrote an even more focused opinion, stating that not only should the *gakuen* help Nisei become bridges, but that the “future development of [the Japanese] race in North American fell

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<sup>49</sup> Morimoto, 66, and see Tadashi Fukutake, ed., *Amerika-mura: Imin soshutsu mura no jittai* [*An American Village: The Impact of Emigration upon the Village*] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1953), 271-97

<sup>50</sup> Historian Eiichiro Azuma is the leading expert on educational “bridging” experiments between Japan and the United States. The quote is from Eiichiro Azuma, “‘The Pacific Era Has Arrived’: Transnational Education among Japanese Americans, 1932-1941,” *History of Education Quarterly* 43, no 1 (Spring, 2003), 43, but he has expanded upon this article in *Between Two Empires*. This topic is also covered extensively in Yuki Ichioka, *Before Internment*.

<sup>51</sup> The *Nichibei Shimbun* (the characters for “nichi” [lit. “sun”] and “bei” [lit. “rice”] was a shorthand way to write “Japan and America,” thus making the newspaper’s name figuratively the *Japanese American Newspaper*) was founded in 1899 in San Francisco and become one of the most influential Japanese language newspapers for the American Nikkei community. Abiko strongly felt that the Issei should make the United States their home.

<sup>52</sup> See Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 25-26 and the chapter entitled “The Second-Generation Problem” for detailed information about the study tour movement.

solely upon [the] activity of the Nisei.”<sup>53</sup> The future, it seemed, was critical and Japanese language schools could, if properly administered and executed, could be significant in their impact upon the very survival of the Nikkei community in the United States.

Other Japanese argued that the creation of *gakuen* could actually hurt the Japanese and could spur on more anti-Asian sentiment, particularly among restrictionists and hard assimilationists.<sup>54</sup> Still others argued that *gakuen* served little purpose, as there was no way to stop children from preferring the dominant culture over what was learned in *gakuen*. One such believer was Tora Uemura, who, in a seminal report about Japanese immigrants in North America in 1912, wrote that there was “no definite policy among” the many *gakuen* in America, which, in turn, gave little support to its students who were “badly influenced by their surroundings.” Uemura further lamented that *gakuen* did little to help Nisei retain their “Japanese characteristics,” and would eventually lead to “psychologically deformed” (i.e. overly Americanized) children “who insist only their own individual ideas.”<sup>55</sup>

While a very select few *gakuen* became fully comprehensive schools, most did not have the resources or desire to fill this roll.<sup>56</sup> Instead, most *gakuen* focused on language and culture in an effort to protect themselves and their students from potential legislative and cultural threats from the dominant

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Gutfreund, 72-3.

<sup>54</sup> Morimoto, 64, 78-9, and passim. and Eileen Tamura *Americanization, Acculturation*, 152.

<sup>55</sup> Translated in Morimoto, 66 from rom Tora Uemura, *Hokubei no Nihonjin [The Japanese of North America]* (Tokyo: Naigai Shuppan Kyōkai, 1912), 129.

<sup>56</sup> Some *gakuen* formed in concentration camps that offered all-day instruction. See Grace Hata, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, March 16, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.



society.<sup>57</sup> Japanese language schools loosely followed the recommendation of the Japanese Association of America's ambivalent assimilationist mantra in which *gakuen* were to: 1) prepare Nisei children (many of whom had little English training at home) to enter English-language elementary schools; 2) instruct Nisei children for up to one hour each day after they entered elementary school; 3) enhance the children's physical attributes through play and fitness; and 4) to use lesson plans and supplemental materials (e.g. textbooks) that did not interfere with the American national polity or educational aims of the public school system.<sup>58</sup> These recommendations were, not surprisingly, heavily influenced by progressive educational models that increasingly looked toward organized schools to homogenize learning rather than leaving the education of children to chance, habit, or local and familial customs.

While two *gakuen* were opened in San Francisco and one in Sacramento in 1903, it was not until 1911 that the Southland gained its first, Daiichi Rafu Gakuen (lit. First Los Angeles School; usually referred to as Daiichi Gakuen). By 1913, Southern California had twelve teachers teaching at ten *gakuen*, with seventy-two boys (fifty-nine U.S.-born) and fifty-six girls (forty-seven U.S.-born).<sup>59</sup> Of course, with this early bunch there were great disparities in age and skill levels, and with so few teachers, it was nearly impossible to instruct in a consistent manner. Also, schools differed greatly in funding, purpose, and their ability to teach students. As the total number of schools grew, they diluted the

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<sup>57</sup> Several bills were introduced after the First World War that sought to limit the scope and breadth of *gakuen* and other private ethnic schools (mostly those from Asia). See Morimoto 66-86.

<sup>58</sup> One of the first textbooks published under these guidelines, the *Nihongo Tokuhon (Japanese Language Reader)*, stated that it was a "textbook for Japanese children born in the United States, based on the premise that the Japanese language school is a supplementary institution, but which it follows the spirit of American education for the sake of education good and useful citizens. With this premise, the textbook aims at providing Japanese American children with the necessary linguistic and cultural education for their present and future lives." See Morimoto, 87, 96 and *Nihongo Gakuen Hensan Iinkai Nihongo Tokuhon*, (San Francisco: Aoki Taiseidō, 1930).

<sup>59</sup> Table from Morimoto, 76. Does not differentiate the Los Angeles region from San Diego.

resource pool in the Los Angeles region and recruiting qualified teachers was always a difficulty for all but the largest *gakuen*, but even in those, the student-teacher ratio was often as high as fifty to one.<sup>60</sup> Bacon Sakatani who attended a *gakuen* in El Monte, felt that the high student-teacher ratio was the language school's undoing. His school "had only one teacher for the whole school" of "forty, fifty students," which he felt severely undermined the teacher's ability "to handle all of them."<sup>61</sup> Kiyo Maruyama, whose father owned a gardening business in the Glendale area, first attended Daiichi Gakuen but switched to Rafu Chūō Gakuen (Los Angeles Central School [actually in Boyle Heights], usually shortened to Chūō Gakuen) at the insistence of his mother who believed that Daiichi was not teaching her son properly. Maruyama felt that Chūō Gakuen's smaller class size gave him an edge in personal attention over the larger classes at Daiichi.<sup>62</sup> Many of these teachers were simply underqualified, having never had any formal teacher training. Many were also underpaid and had difficulties putting their full efforts into a part-time, one- or two-hour per-day job.<sup>63</sup> Much to the

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<sup>60</sup> Many schools were chronically underfunded, either being the only school in an area with too few Nisei, or being one of too many in an area (such as Boyle Heights). In 1939, Daiichi Rafu Gakuen had eight teachers for 400 students. Rafuu Daini Gakuen, one of the more financially stable *gakuen* employed ten teachers who taught some 275 students. Smaller schools, such as Rafu Gakuen (Named after the Shōwa Emperor and founded in 1927), had one teacher and forty pupils of differing grades. See Morimoto 146-161 for a comprehensive analysis of *gakuen* teachers and 172-177 for statistics pertaining to Southern California *gakuen*.

<sup>61</sup> Although El Monte had a small farming population at the time (it grew during the Depression), it had a larger number of Nikkei. Sakatani never states which *gakuen* he attended, but there were at least three: Kita El Monte Nihongo Gakuen (North El Monte Japanese Language School, 53-1 S-T ratio), Minami (South) El Monte Nihongo Gakuen (42-3), and Minami El Monte Katei Gakuen (South El Monte Family School, 24-1). Bacon Sakatani, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, August 31, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>62</sup> He also felt that the smaller class sizes made Chūō Gakuen "stricter" than Daiichi. There is some discrepancy in his report, however. In 1939, Chūō Gakuen reported a teacher-student ratio of 1-to-60 (five teachers for 300 students) while Daiichi Gakuen reported a 1-to-50 ratio (eight teachers for 400 students). However, Maruyama was born in 1920 and transferred to Chūō Gakuen when he was either twelve or thirteen. Between 1932 and 1934, it is possible that Chūō had a more favorable teacher-student ratio at that time and it is also possible that the more elevated grades simply had fewer students. Bacon Sakatani, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, August 31, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives..

<sup>63</sup> See Morimoto, 143.

detestation of many Nisei, many teachers were Issei who had gone to school in Japan and were used to punishments that were much more harsh and severe than their counterparts in the public school system. This was exacerbated in the Southland where progressive attitudes eschewed harsh verbiage and corporal punishment. Students who spoke out of turn during the day at their public school might receive a harsh glance or a verbal warning whereas the Japanese teachers often doled out slaps on the wrist or head with a stiff ruler or would verbally confront students in front of their classmates.<sup>64</sup> Hy Shishino found the corporal punishment aspect to be the most troubling. Since he was left handed his teachers slapped a ruler on his right hand, apparently in hopes of encouraging him to write with his now-in-pain hand.<sup>65</sup> Shishino quit soon after and instilled such fear in his younger brother (who was right handed) about the *gakuen* that his father had to pay the younger a nickel to attend language school on Saturdays.<sup>66</sup> Mo Nishida, whose father was a salesperson at Three Star Crate Yard, despised the “mean old priest” at Senshin Gakuen who “used to walk around with a big stick.” If in need of discipline, Nishida and his classmates were “supposed to stick out [their] hand and he’s swat you.” Nishida “put up with that for a little hot minute” and he soon quit the school.<sup>67</sup> It appeared that, in these cases, the *gakuen* were forming a bridge between the Nisei’s ancestral society and their new

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<sup>64</sup> Peter N. Stearns, “Defining Happy childhoods: Assessing a Recent Change,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 179 and see Marian Shingu Sata, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, September 23, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>65</sup> Writing left handed is considered a grave abnormality in Japanese society to which this author can authoritatively attest.

<sup>66</sup> Eventually his younger brother enjoyed attending and asked not to be paid, anymore. Hy Shishino, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, January 31, 2013, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>67</sup> Mo Nishida, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, November 29, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

homeland that its students were more than happy to burn in order to save themselves the indignity of under-motivated or under-prepared teachers or the humiliation and pain of old-world punishments.

Other than its lack of clear focus and the high student to teacher ratios, nothing held the consistency of Southland *gakuen* back more than the inconsistent number of days each was held. Although these schools were, at least in principle, supposed to mirror the K-12 system, their inability to coordinate the total number of contact hours between students and teachers meant that students in similar grades would not have equivalent abilities. Within a decade after the first wave of *gakuen* were founded, great disparities in the number of class hours were already apparent. By 1924 Southern California recorded twenty-three schools, one of them held classes six days a week, sixteen of them held school five days per week, one school held classes three days per week.<sup>68</sup> Some schools held classes as little as one day per week. Of the twenty-three schools, eleven of them held class for five total hours per week, four of them for ten hours, and the remainder held class for “two, eleven, thirteen, and nineteen hours per week.”<sup>69</sup> Those who lived in Little Tokyo or in other high-density Nikkei areas generally attend language school most days after they completed their American school for the day. Some would attend beginning in the morning, around 7:00 for an hour, and after school beginning around 3:00 until 5:00.<sup>70</sup> Rafu Uwamachi Daini Gakuen (Los Angeles Uptown Second School, often referred to as Daini Gakuen, founded in 1915) was one of the most well-funded *gakuen* and held classes weekdays

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<sup>68</sup> Morimoto, 77.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Irene M. Kobayashi, interviewed by Betty E. Mitson, April 11, 1972, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 1.

after local schools.<sup>71</sup> Those from outlying communities would often go to Japanese school on Saturday since markets were closed and farming families would have the day off.<sup>72</sup> In larger Japanese communities, language schools were held most weekdays after school.<sup>73</sup> The most extensive instruction was at Venice Ocean Park Futaba Gakuen (usually just called Futaba Gakuen), a small, one-teacher language school with about twenty students. Esther Takei Nishi, whose parents owned amusements at Venice beach, used to attend Futaba Gakuen every day after school and then “all day” on Saturdays.<sup>74</sup> Bacon Sakatani’s schedule was “once or twice a-week” after-school class and then “from nine to three or something like that” on Saturdays.<sup>75</sup>

Many Nisei found the lack of structure (or the lack of structural enforcement) made it difficult for them to find the motivation to take their Japanese language education as seriously as they did their American coursework. Henry Nishi, whose father “owned and operated several nurseries and a landscaping business” in Los Angeles, thought attending Hollywood Gakuen (1915) was a “drag.” The large school’s ability to operate daily meant that he “couldn’t hang around after [public] school...with [other kids].”<sup>76</sup> Katsumi Kunitugu, a Kibei (Nisei who were sent to Japan for some or all of their schooling) remembered that attending Japanese language school from Boyle Heights was “kind of a hassle.” After his regular schooling ended at 3:00, he would be picked up at 3:30 by a *gakuen* school bus

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<sup>71</sup> Founded in 1915 as a more secular alternative to the perceived Christianization of Daiichi Rafu Gakuen.

<sup>72</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 8.

<sup>73</sup> In a very few instances, language school was held in the morning, beginning around 7:00 for an hour and then after school, from around 3:00 to 5:00. }

<sup>74</sup> Esther Takei Nishio, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, September 21, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>75</sup> Bacon Sakatani, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, August 31, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Henry Nishi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

that “picked up kids all over.” Thanks to this disbursement, the ride would “take over an hour” just in time to make it for class that usually lasted until 5:30 or 6:00, Monday through Friday. He remembered wanting “to pursue after-school cubs and other interests” once they got into high school, so he, like many, dropped out or only attended on Saturdays.<sup>77</sup> Jack Kunitomi, who grew up near Little Tokyo and attended Daiichi Gakuen, knew he was supposed to attend every day, but would often sneak out in order to play football or “whatever sports which [were] in season” as they “took precedence” over his *gakuen* training. Daiichi Gakuen was partially liable for Kunitomi’s behavior, as it sponsored his teams that visited other well-off language schools that could afford large practice yards and intermural teams.<sup>78</sup> Bill Shishima, who took Japanese language lessons at Maryknoll Catholic School’s *gakuen*, only had Japanese class on Fridays for one hour. Shishima’s father, a USC graduate already fluent in English, encouraged him to focus on English, so he simply used the hour to work on his English assignments.<sup>79</sup> Yoshindo “Yo” Shibuya, a Nisei whose father died before his birth simply stopped attending Daiichi Gakuen after he began a more lucrative career delivering newspapers.<sup>80</sup> These inconsistencies remained an indelible aspect of the entire *gakuen* system until relocation closed them all in 1942.

By 1939, over 100 Japanese language schools were scattered all over the Los Angeles basin run by Japanese and Japanese-American community organizations as well as Buddhist and Christian

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<sup>77</sup> Katsumi Kunitsugu, interviewed by Sherry Turner, July 15, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5-6.

<sup>78</sup> Some of the other schools he identified were ones located in Venice, Norwalk, San Fernando, and Long Beach. Jack Y. Kunitomi, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 20, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>79</sup> Bill Hiroshi Shishima, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, February 8, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>80</sup> Yo Shibuya, interviewed by Richard Potashin, June 2, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

churches, and their confusing structures remained.<sup>81</sup> Surveys of Nisei between the World Wars demonstrates the unstructured and uncoordinated nature of *gakuen* as these results were often confusing and inconsistent. Edward K. Strong's 1933 surveys of Nisei generally found that *gakuen* were not necessary for their careers, and that twenty-seven percent of girls and fifteen percent of boys attended *gakuen* for less than a year, while nearly seventy percent of Nisei attended language school around three years total.<sup>82</sup> Further studies by Japanese researchers found that, overall, Nisei between fourteen and thirty-four years of age scored 2.28 out of five (where one indicated total proficiency) for females and 2.16 for males, placing both between "the best [Japanese] heard in the United States" and "average."<sup>83</sup> Children ages fourteen to nineteen educated in "one of the best" *gakuen* scored 2.5 in reading, 2.3 in writing, and 2.5 in speaking. Although through numbers alone, these scores seem reasonable for non-native speakers, these were considered "relatively low" according to Strong, who believed that the language's inherent complexity was to blame. Another study by the *Nichibei Shimbun* (Nikkei newspaper established in San Francisco in 1899, sometimes written as *Nichi Bei Shimbun*) indicated that students who had completed the junior-high level of *gakuen* in the States had difficulties

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<sup>81</sup> See Yoshiaki Yoshida, interviewed by Alice Maxwell and Yukiko Sato, November 9, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 15 and Morimoto 172-177 for a list of Southern California *gakuen* operating in the Los Angeles region. Often Buddhist and Christian *gakuen* were within blocks or even yards of each other in certain areas in Southland. Maryknoll Gakuen (founded in 1915) was the single largest *gakuen* by 1939 (425 students) was run by the Maryknoll [Roman Catholic] Church in Little Tokyo. The second largest, Daiichi Rafu Gakuen (~400 students) was secular.

<sup>82</sup> Edward Keller Strong, Jr. (1884-1963) was a Stanford psychologist who is well-known for his studies in American career choices. Edward K. Strong, *Vocational Aptitudes of Second Generation Japanese in the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1933), especially 114-131.

<sup>83</sup> See Moriimoto, 138-9.

understanding fifth and sixth grade texts in Japan.<sup>84</sup> During the Second World War, it was reported that of the almost 4,000 uniformed Nisei, fewer than ten percent could use the language except for a few words, while “not more than one hundred could be considered to be ‘somewhat competent’ in Japanese.”<sup>85</sup>

One piece of evidence clearly demonstrates the difficulties Japanese language schools encountered when defining their mission to the Nisei. In 1937, the Jichi Kwai (lit. Self-Governing Association, figuratively, the Autonomous Students Association),<sup>86</sup> a group of students attending the Rafu Daiichi Gakuen published *Daiichi*, an annual, they claimed, that was a first for *gakuen* students in the United States.<sup>87</sup> Its content gives us some understanding of what Nisei saw as the ideals of Japanese language school from a second generation perspective. The first essay, entitled “Appreciation,” written on behalf of the entire Jichi-Kwai praised the Issei for being “pioneers in a lesser light” who “suffering in their ignorance of the English language,” endured “periods during which they were the object of great antipathy, toiling as labors [sic.] disdainfully disregarded by others.” This, the author believed “made it possible for [the Nisei] to appreciate the ‘American Way’” and ensured that the second generation owed an “enormous...social debt” to the Issei. To the Issei, the author wrote, the Nisei bowed their

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<sup>84</sup> Nichi Bei Shimbun, Jun 1, '36.

<sup>85</sup> From Morimoto, 141 and quote from Joseph D. Harrington, *Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America's Pacific Victory* (Detroit: Pettingrew Enterprises, 1979), 233.

<sup>86</sup> Even the name of this association is telling. The characters used to describe this association are 自治會, (post-World War II characters, 自治会) in *hyoujungo* are pronounced “jichi-kai”; thus, by choosing to pronounce and Romanize the term as jichi-kwai, the students of the *gakuen* demonstrate that regional dialects trumped national standards in these schools. The Japanese portions of this yearbook, which constitute the latter fifteen pages, are rife with regional dialectical differences such as this as well as a multitude of outright errors.

<sup>87</sup> “Foreword” in *Daiichi*. There are no page numbers in this text.



“heads respectfully in the best Japanese manner.” In another essay entitled “The Future (‘Shorai’),” written by Togo W. Tanaka, an older Nisei (born 1916) who enrolled in UCLA and became the English Section Editor of the *Rafu Shimpo*, Tanaka found *gakuen* the concept be a “blessing,” even though he “flunked” *gakuen* because he could not take it seriously as a child. However, perhaps in part to the increasing tensions between Japan and the United States, he believed that Japanese language was “of immediate importance” to the Nisei and opined that the increasing importance of Japan would make Nisei who spoke Japanese in the future “a far safer bet” than one who did not. Roy Takeno, the English Section Editor of the Los Angeles-based *Kashu Mainichi Shinbun* (figuratively the *Japan-California Daily News*), contributed his essay entitled “A Language of the Future,” in which he admitted that on “any number of fairly plausible grounds...the study of Japanese language is a futile effort.” He encouraged students at Daiichi Gakuen to “knuckle down” in order to better understand “the nature of the Japanese people” and warned that the inability to speak Japanese would mean the loss of culture and that the study of it would help Nisei advance “toward the status of an [sic.] universal citizen.” Carl Kondo, the English Section Editor of the *Southern California Japanese Daily* offered an essay entitled “The Long View,” which, similar to Tanaka and Takeno, viewed the study of Japanese as a way to gain “perspective” of the present and future “firmly build on a knowledge of the past.”<sup>88</sup> While each of these essays takes up a page, six of the following pages are dedicated to the school’s sports teams

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<sup>88</sup> The *Southern California Japanese Daily* went through several name changes and was originally published as the *Kashu Nosan Shubo* (*California Farm News*), then as the *Wanka Sangyo Nippo* (*The Japanese Industrial Daily*), and then, finally, as the *Beikoku Sangyo Nippo* (*American Industrial Daily*) from August 5, 1938. See Yuji Ichioka, et. al., *A Buried Past: An Annotated Bibliography of the Japanese American Research Project Collection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 133.

(the Mustangs), and the final pages are written in Japanese and dedicated to the social clubs and activities performed by the *gakuen* students.

For all of the *gakuen*'s confusing characteristics, Nisei found that they were occasionally attractive to them in small, but specific parcels based on their utility. Firstly, within the United States before the Second World War, extracurricular youth-oriented group activities and structured play were encouraged by progressive reformers and child advocates, and language schools gave many Nisei opportunities to associate with their ethnic peers outside of normal school hours.<sup>89</sup> Dorothy Yasoe Ikkanda, whose father managed concessions on Santa Monica pier, stated this fact plainly: “we enjoyed it because all of our friends went, too.”<sup>90</sup> Kaz Yamamoto, whose parents owned a farm in Santa Monica, only made friends with his classmates at Santa Monica Nihongo Gakuen (Santa Monica Japanese Language School) and felt that anyone else, including Nisei, was a “stranger” to him.<sup>91</sup> Even though the education may have had questionable immediate carry-over value, many Nisei remember a great deal of their social lives centering on Japanese language school. Most language schools also served as Japanese cultural centers for both youth and adults, alike. Japanese dance, sand sculpturing, flower arranging, movies (both Japanese and American), speakers (both Japanese and American), calligraphy, picnics, and, in some schools, checkups from local Japanese doctors helped the *gakuen* become de-facto

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<sup>89</sup> In most of the interviews used in this study, Nisei often bring up the fact that they were able to play with their friends as one of the main sources of importance in *gakuen*. Also see Harry Kitano, *Japanese Americans: The Evolution of a Subculture*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976), 27

<sup>90</sup> Dorothy Yasoe Ikkanda, interviewed by Richard Potashin, July 18, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>91</sup> Kaz Yamamoto, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 20, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

community centers.<sup>92</sup> *Gakuen* also gave students a way to stay in their parents' good graces, as many Issei did not necessarily mind how well their children performed in language school, just so as long as they went and stayed out of trouble.<sup>93</sup> Japanese language schools were often built as, or became, Japanese community centers. While many started out in rooms of a church, they often became like large halls, accommodating all sorts of Japanese ethnic things like kendo and dances.<sup>94</sup> Also, *gakuen* often sponsored more modern activities such as the Boy Scouts and athletic activities. Bruce Teruo Kaji attended Chūō Gakuen normally for an hour of Japanese language instruction after school. However, "either Wednesday or Thursday" was judo night with the other reserved for kendo, while Fridays were set aside for Boy Scouts.<sup>95</sup> Many of the teachers who were well-liked often taught language and instructed the children in playground activities as well. Roy Taketa's father, who came over to the United States as a laborer but went back to Japan to enroll in agricultural college, was one such sensei. After settling in Hollywood, he was asked to teach Japanese at a *gakuen*, along with kendo and judo, as well.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> See Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 10-11 and 14; Sue Kunitomi Embrey, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, et. al., August 24, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 7, 10; Kiyō Maruyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives; and Marshall M. Sumida, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, April 8, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>93</sup> Morimoto, 142.

<sup>94</sup> See Yoshiki Yoshida, interviewed by Alice Maxwell and Yukiko Sato, November 9, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 16.

<sup>95</sup> Bruce Teruo Kaji, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 28, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>96</sup> Roy Y. Taketa, interviewed by Mary M. McCarthy, July 13, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 1-2; who came to earn money as a farm laborer to complete college in Japan (agriculture and secondary education). In 1916, returned to Japan, finished college, married, and then returned to the U.S. with a Japanese wife in 1919.

Some students also found utility in going to a language school since it assisted in their ability to navigate in their world much easier. Such was the case with Aiko Endo, a farmer's daughter from Seal Beach who attended Long Beach Nihongo Gakuen in order to learn Japanese and was educated on how to use the *soroban* (*abacus* [bead calculator]) along with her friends and siblings during weekly lessons at a San Pedro *gaku*en.<sup>97</sup> She and other students used them to gain an advantage in their math-intensive high school classes until forbidden to do so by their teachers.<sup>98</sup> Other Nisei, particularly for those living in more rural areas where Japanese school might be held only once a week, found that *gaku*en gave them a chance to entertain crowds and to share their culture to non-Japanese. In Orange County, many of the Japanese language students would entertain crowds in Long Beach, when they would dawn Japanese kimono and dance during the annual Sakura Matsuri (Cherry Blossom Festival).<sup>99</sup> Some older students near graduation finally learned to appreciate the their parents' dedication to their education when they realized that the Issei often "sacrificed greatly" for them to enjoy the privilege of attending language school, while others understood that the Japanese language had cultural and perhaps fiscal values, thus maturing in their civic understanding.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> As the San Pedro *gaku*en was larger, given the higher density of Nikkei in the area, it was able to offer more cultural courses such as these.

<sup>98</sup> The teacher at Long Beach Nihongo Gakuen was also a teacher in the much larger Nikkei community in San Pedro. Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 8.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>100</sup> Two speeches given at the Southern California Japanese Language School Association speech contest in 1939 by eighteen year-old students acknowledged that they did not care much for the process when they were younger but came to appreciate it later. See Morimoto 144-6.

If Nisei stopped attending, it was often because *gakuen* interfered with other activities during the week. Japanese language school attendance lapsed once their extracurricular activities filled up too much of their calendar. Sueko Embrey, the only one of eight siblings who “seemed to have any interest in [Japanese Language school],” finally stopped going during twelfth grade after her high school activities became too much and a bilingual teacher sensed that she would not be “happy within the Japanese community” as she was not “intellectually tuned in” with the rest of the children in language school.<sup>101</sup> Often, students of Japanese were required to memorize speeches for a contest held in front of their parents. Many recollect these exercises as being “miserable” and discouraged them from participating.<sup>102</sup> There were those that outright rejected Japanese instruction, like Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, who attended weekend language school at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church and “resisted” her education “terribly.” It was her goal to be “two hundred percent American,” and remembered that if she spoke Japanese outside the home, she often felt self-conscious and felt that she would receive “dirty looks”<sup>103</sup>

Some Nisei derived pride, not necessarily from the lessons they learned in *gakuen*, but because it provided their family with opportunities to gain respect within their community. Many Japanese language schools were run by boards, which would give parents an opportunity to be vocal about their support. Aiko Endo’s father found a way to make up for his lack of education by continually being on

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<sup>101</sup> Sue Kunitomi Embrey, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, et. al., August 24, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 7.

<sup>102</sup> It does not seem as if the competitions were mandatory at most *gakuen*. Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 9.

<sup>103</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, July 7, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

the board of his children's language school.<sup>104</sup> They always came to him first for donations and he would then collect donations from the neighbors. Parents would often take turns on boards, particularly in community-run schools.<sup>105</sup> Also, Issei parents were able to improve their standing amongst the others in the community by donating their time, energy, or money to the school.<sup>106</sup> Parents were afforded further influence over other families as they lobbied on a school's behalf. They could also serve on their board, which helped to dictate which aspects of Japanese culture were taught to both children and adults.<sup>107</sup> Also, they generally helped at regular cultural activities, which served to bond children and their parents with the larger community. One student's father performed magic tricks and bow spinning and juggling.<sup>108</sup> Students would also perform Japanese dances and recite plays, while their parents would reciprocate by entertaining the children.<sup>109</sup> Some parents were also valued by the Nisei for their ability to play the political game as it related to the *gakuen*. One such Nisei was Toshi Ito, whose bilingual mother was educated at Aoyama Gakuin University and director of Los Angeles' Jane Couch House. She was able to help several schools get around a 1925 law that required at least one teacher on staff at a foreign language school to pass a test on American civics. After quickly studying with her mentor, Lillie Douglas, Mrs. Ito passed the civics exam and was listed as faculty at both Daini Gakuen as well as a

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<sup>104</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 11.

<sup>105</sup> Anonymous male, interviewed by Richard Curtiss, March 4, 1966, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 9-10.

<sup>106</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 11.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

language school in Brawley.<sup>110</sup> Of course, some teachers—particularly those who were married and were involved in the local community—gained notoriety in their local communities for their teaching ability and continually communicated with the community in order to help raise funds for the school.<sup>111</sup>

In the end, the *gakuen* have a very mixed record. The most successful aspect of the language schools was to reinforce the social lessons that were stressed in American schooling. *Gakuen* helped children learn how to socialize with their peers and they kept children off the streets and away from corrupting influences (as mentioned before, one of the primary reasons Nisei stopped going to language school was when it began to interfere with other school- and non-school-supported extracurricular activities). Language schools were also relatively successful promoting the Los Angeles' region's dominant ambivalent model of Americanization since lessons about Japanese culture were common, and children often took advantage of the lessons in Japanese art and music. One of its largest failures was as a “bridge of understanding” between the United States and Japan. In this area, the *gakuen* offered very little to the Nisei who went to school for its applicability to the United States, not Japan.<sup>112</sup> And, finally, given the failure as a bridge and many *gakuen's* questionable standards, it is not surprising that

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<sup>110</sup> The school is never named completely, but it was most likely Brawley Bukkyōkai Gakuen (Brawley Buddhist School) Toshi Nagamori Ito, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, November 11, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives and Toshi Negamori Ito, *Memoirs*. The Jane Couch Home was a mission home in Los Angeles that served women, and children most of whom had either been abandoned or were fleeing abuse. See Lester E. Suzuki, “Persecution, Alienation, and Resurrection: History of Japanese Methodist Churches,” in *Asian American Christianity: A Reader*, ed. Viji Nakka-Camauf and Timothy Tseng (N.C.: Pacific Asian American and Canadian Christian Education Project and the Institute for the Study of Asian American Christianity, 2009), 57-74, and Leslie A. Ito “Japanese American Women and the Student Relocation Movement, 1942-1945,” in *Asian American Women: The Frontiers Reader*, ed. Linda Trih Vo, et. al. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 72.

<sup>111</sup> See Kaz Yamamoto, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 20, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>112</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 45.

many Nisei took very little away from the language schools in terms of their abilities to speak Japanese—after all, to the Nisei, their futures as Americans were going to be in the United States.

### American Schooling

By the First World War, a nation's schools and the abilities of its people to provide it to their children were its foundation, the bedrock of modernity for any nation. The main function of the public school system was to create educated individuals who could function in a modern, scientifically-based, industrial economy while upholding the civic and cultural virtues of the nation. While the modern conceptions of school may have originated primarily in the west, the concept of publically-funded, compulsory school has almost parallel histories in the United States and Japan. While the United States had a fairly long tradition of education, modern standardized education was mostly for the rich or well-connected and rarely took place outside of urban areas. Common children were "educated" in the United States, but much of it was provided in an *a la carte* fashion that was secondary to apprenticeships, child employment, or work around the home. Standardized "common schools" supported by taxes and open to all children regardless of social status formed the bedrock for later educational reforms but were relatively under attended and were dominated by recitation and moral lessons, which was "the most important aspect of teaching in the antebellum common school, whatever the subject matter."<sup>113</sup> Compulsory education for children did not begin until after 1880. One attempt by Massachusetts in 1852, "which required twelve weeks of schools, at least six of which had to be continuous" failed due to lackadaisical enforcement for over two decades. Another attempt failed for

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<sup>113</sup> Urban and Wagoner, 88.



similar reasons in 1874 when the New York legislature “passed a compulsory attendance law that required students between the ages of eight and fourteen to attend school for fourteen weeks a year,” at least eight of which had to be consecutive. The reason these laws were never enforced is because they were designed by Victorian era reformers who were more concerned about the vices involved with child employment more than actual education.<sup>114</sup> Between 1860 and 1890, children attending public schools increased from forty-nine percent to sixty four, which indicates fair growth, but it took until the final decade of the nineteenth century before laws began to favor education over labor.<sup>115</sup> By 1900, state-run, compulsory education for every child was still not quite a universal norm, but it was well underway to becoming a reality. By 1910, about two out of every three children attended school, and by the end of the First World War every state required children to complete elementary school.

From the beginning, the public schools in the Greater Los Angeles area welcomed Nikkei students, creating a cooperative bond and stable environment in which most Nisei could aspire toward the future. Unlike their brethren in Northern California, the Issei of the Southland found their children cared for and affirmed by the vast majority of educators, most of whom were white. Administrators in the region prided themselves on their forward-looking, progressive nature.<sup>116</sup> In May 1905, after Japan’s victory over Russia, the San Francisco Board of Education moved to segregate “Mongolians” from Caucasian students. The Board’s actions brought strong protest among the Japanese American community and the Japanese government who worried that their status as a modern

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 155-6.

<sup>116</sup> See Sue Kunitomi Embrey, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, et. al., August 24, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5-6. See also Richardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983), 136-8.

nation was being challenged. While the results of the direct intervention from President Theodore Roosevelt led to the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, Los Angeles City Schools Superintendent, Ernest Carroll Moore publically denounced the actions of the San Francisco School Board, describing Japanese students as "quiet and industrious" and that they had "a most helpful influence upon the other pupils with whom they associate."<sup>117</sup> Moore, along with many in the community, believed that labor unions in San Francisco, who lobbied against the cheap labor and perceived vices of the mostly male Chinese population, were to blame for the anti-Japanese agitation in the Bay Area. The lack of unionization among Southland workers accounts for the lack of organized working-class agitation against Japanese immigrants. While turn-of-the-century business leaders in Los Angeles did not specifically support Issei laborers, they also did little to dissuade their industriousness. This effectively muted any large-scale agitation, and allowed progressive leaders such as Moore (and, by extension, his subordinate administration) to lobby to keep his schools multicultural. In his mind there was simply "no Japanese question" to rally against, and thus no reason to segregate schools in the Los Angeles School District.<sup>118</sup>

Given the timing of their arrival, great numbers of Issei (particularly women who arrived after 1907) had been exposed to compulsory schooling in Japan and well-understood that it would remain a bedrock of Japanese society. Through their constant lines of communication with Japan, Issei were well-appraised of the rise in stature of school in their homeland, particularly as elementary schoolteachers and principals became celebrities during the early Taisho era (the era immediately following the Meiji era, 1912-1926). Mass media promoted the modern, middle-class nature of the

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<sup>117</sup> Morimoto, 59.

<sup>118</sup> See Modell, 36 and quote from *Los Angeles Herald*, Feb. 3, 1907.

elementary school and promoted a teacher's "knowledge of proper study habits, school textbooks, and entrance examinations" as "crucial to the child's attainment of educational advancement" and subsequent entrance into the modern middle class.<sup>119</sup> This is probably even more pronounced since while good at hiding this fact from their children, the Issei had great difficulties attaining middle class status themselves and often moved through the economic world laterally with little hope of true economic mobility.<sup>120</sup> Their general feeling on the matter was nearly universal—education was of paramount importance. While Japanese and American cultures may have had separate histories and were separated by an ocean, what they had in common was an intense belief in education's abilities to promote welfare, teach morals, and to potentially better student's lives. Even more so, education could give Nisei children economic, political, and social mobility, which was the modern, progressive ideal for the existence of compulsory schooling. The vast majority of Nisei memoirs confirm this attitude, recounting their parents' emphasis on education and the presence of modernity surrounding it. Joseph Ishikawa's father felt so strongly about the possibilities of education in the United States that he emigrated at forty years of age in 1905 or 1906. As the oldest son in a family of samurai caste, Ishikawa's father ceded his inheritance to his brother and came with his only daughter, Fusaye, "to the land of

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<sup>119</sup> The value of education to Issei and Japanese parents is well-chronicled. See Jones, 223; Tamura, *Americanization*, Chapter 5, "Schools as Avenues to Middle Class Life," 92-124; Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 122-44; and Mei T. Nakano, *Japanese American Women: Three Generations, 1890-1990* (Berkeley: Mina Press, 1990), passim.

<sup>120</sup> See Chapter III "Assessing Economic Success: Where Japanese Immigrants Middle Class Before World War II?" and IV "Lateral Mobility" in which Masao F. Suzuki, "Japanese American Economic Achievement, 1900-1942," Ph.D. Stanford University. Here, he counters the prevailing view by some through numerical analysis in which he finds that although fewer Nikkei were involved in low-skill labor (89% in 1900 to 38% in 1940), to "farmers, proprietors, and professionals" (3% in 1900 to 36% in 1940) before World War II, their overall earned income was still general at poverty levels (around 54% of all Nikkei heads of household were living below the poverty line while Southland area farmers and nursery owners reported a per-capita income of \$643 to the California average of \$982). Through narrative analysis it is also evident that a great deal of Nisei were surprised when they finally learned how little their parents earned yet, somehow, they were able to participate in a great deal of extracurricular activities.

opportunity” since he felt “that a girl couldn’t get a proper education in Japan” and he “wanted all of his children to be educated.” Eventually all of the Ishikawa children received educations and Fusaye graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in pharmacy.<sup>121</sup> Robert Nakamura’s gardener parents from Venice were so caught up in the presence of education’s modern promise of social and economic mobility, that they believed their children to be a future “pharmacist or a doctor or a dentist.” Nakamura was forced to leave home after turning down a post-war scholarship to Pepperdine, a scholarship he did not decline until after his mother bragged to family members and to friends. Eventually, Nakamura graduated with a B.F.A from Art Center College of Design and came back into his mother’s good graces as her son, “the college professor,” accepted a job to teach photography at UCLA.

Japanese American children spread out among the Southland, some arriving at schools as the only member of their race while other schools were saturated with them. Although most of the staff were Caucasian (as was the case at most Los Angeles basin schools), Amelia Street School (K-8), founded in 1885 at 611 Jackson Street, was one of the closest to Little Tokyo. It was, by some estimates, around ninety percent Japanese with a few Chinese and Mexican children smattered about.<sup>122</sup> Similarly high numbers of Japanese Americans attended Ninth Street School as well, and almost one hundred-percent of East San Pedro Grammar School (eventually renamed in honor of its first teacher to Mildred O. Walizer Grammar School) on Terminal Island. Further west, Asians and African Americans

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<sup>121</sup> Joe Ishikawa, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, January 10, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>122</sup> The school was so Japanese in its makeup that it had an *ofuro* (Japanese bath) for the children and adults who took language and vocational classes at the schools after hours. See Jack Y. Kunitomi, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 20, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives and Sue Kunitomi Embrey, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, et. al., August 24, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5.

dominated schools like Alta Loma Elementary School (near Venice and Labrea), and its nearby counterparts, Mount Vernon Junior High School and Los Angeles High School (although Los Angeles High had a higher ratio of Caucasians than the former two).<sup>123</sup> At most other area elementary schools, Nisei ranged from a handful to just one, such as Venice Beach's Florence Nightingale Elementary School where Esther Takei Nishio attended as the sole Nisei.<sup>124</sup> No junior or senior high schools in the region were primarily Japanese although some, such as Venice Junior and Senior High School had a reasonably-sized population.<sup>125</sup>

A good example of the organization at a Japanese-heavy elementary schools can be found on Terminal Island, where, with the odd exception of an occasional European immigrant, the enrollment was almost completely Nikkei. The elementary school on Terminal Island, East San Pedro [Grammar] School, began when the Los Angeles City School warehouse on Fifth Street paid \$2.70 to transport a flagpole to Tuna Street and Terminal Way on May 18, 1918. During construction of the first one-room bungalow that summer, Mildred Obarr (by the end of 1921, Walizer) was sent by the Board to begin Americanization work with the island's immigrant community. Obarr was soon joined by Annie S. Garcia in the bungalow and both taught grades B1 through A3 (roughly kindergarten through first grade) and both occasionally taught day and night courses for Issei in "order to prepare them for

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<sup>123</sup> See John Yukio Mori, interviewed by Betty E. Mitson, December 19, 1972, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 15.

<sup>124</sup> See Esther Takei Nishio, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, September 21, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives..

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

naturalization, learn English, as well as to teach sewing and cooking.”<sup>126</sup> During the early years of Nisei education (roughly 1910-1925) some students were staying in kindergarten as long as eighteen months, unable to learn English well enough to advance. By 1923, many Los Angeles area schools (125 in Los Angeles City Schools, alone) offered a separate grade, “Little B1” (pre-kindergarten) that was reserved for students who entered school with no English who would otherwise be forced to retake their kindergarten or B1 semesters (Little B1 continued even after the school converted to the modern K-6 grade system).<sup>127</sup> Parents stayed very active in their children’s schooling, even if they had difficulties. By 1924 Issei formed the Fukei Kai (lit. Parents Association) to help parents, students, teachers, and the rest of the community come together to promote “child-welfare,” to bring “home and school into closer relationship by contacts between parents and teacher who may cooperate intelligently in the training of the children,” to “raise the standards of home life,” and, finally, “to develop between teachers and the general public such efforts as will secure for each child the highest advantages in physical, mental, moral, and spiritual education.”<sup>128</sup> The organization helped supply the school with equipment (e.g. building a Japanese garden with pond and bridge in 1924 and donating playground equipment in 1915 and 1930) and provided both monetary and logistical support for special occasions and programs honoring the students’ culture (e.g. *Tango no Sekku* [Summer Festival, now *Kodomo no Hi* or Children’ Day],

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<sup>126</sup> Maggie Shelton, *Red Lacquer Bridge: The Story of a Forgotten Community and a Bridge Between Two Worlds* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2006), 111-119. At this time, the numeral generally indicated the semester while the letter indicated the grade. “B” grades had to be passed before a student could move to “A” grades. Presumably courses for naturalization tapered off after *Ozawa v. United States* in 1922.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 117-8.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 120-2 and Kanichi Kawasaki, “The Japanese Community of East San Pedro Terminal Island” (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1931), 107-112.

*Hinamatsuri* [Girl's/Doll's Day], *Sakura Matsuri* [Cherry Blossom Festival]), Friday-night film screenings, and school leaders (e.g. raising \$4,000 in 1930 to send *Walizer* to Japan).<sup>129</sup>

Predominantly-Nikkei schools in the region often had situational harmony between parents, students, teachers and administrators, most of whom were also ambivalent assimilationists. Amelia Street School was particularly multi-cultural and had a carefully planned and full calendar emphasizing the multicultural makeup of the Los Angeles region. Guest speakers from many cultures, including African Americans and Native Americans were often invited, and on May 5, Cinco de Mayo was celebrated alongside *Tango no Sekku*.<sup>130</sup> Although of differing cultures, “teachers were very nice toward the Japanese American kids, because it was generally felt that they were neat, clean, obedient, didn’t make any trouble...and did well in school.”<sup>131</sup> Hikoji Takuchi, whose parents operated a restaurant in the same building as the Allen Hotel (232-1/2 East Second Street, Little Tokyo), believed that his teachers “were real dedicated people that cared about kids” who taught them “lots of things besides the three Rs...how to be human,” how to have proper comportment in public, and even how to handle, discern, and eat different types of cheeses.<sup>132</sup> Takuchi’s teachers were expressive in their belief that all

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<sup>129</sup> The local community was also prominent in the school, helping to uphold teach their children Japanese culture alongside their daily lessons including showing Japanese movies on Friday nights and playing and singing accompaniment and dressing their daughters and sons in kimono during traditional holidays (including loaning kimono to the “two Russian girls” who lived on Terminal Island) such as the *Sakura Matsuri* (Cherry Blossom Festival). The original playground was actually provided by the Fishermen’s Association in 1918. See Shelton, 122-4 and Toshiro Izumi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, February 2, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives. The Russian family that lived on Terminal Island were the Kaserovs.

<sup>130</sup> Sue Kunitomi Embrey, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, et. al., August 24, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5-6.

<sup>131</sup> Katsumi Kunitugu, born in 1925, spoke mostly Japanese at home, but quickly learned after enrolling in Kindergarten at the Ninth Street School. When the war broke out and the Japanese were sent away to camp, Amelia was forced to close. *Ibid.*, 6 and Katsumi Kunitugu, interviewed by Sherry Turner, July 15, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 3.

<sup>132</sup> Hikoji Takuchi, interviewed by John Allen, November 7, 2002, Denshō Digital Archives.

people who were born in the United States were “all Americans” and “had one thought in mind,” that all who immigrated to America “had the same idea,” to be free and to make a life for themselves.<sup>133</sup>

Takuchi believed this to mean that he should not “be worried about different colors and faces.”<sup>134</sup>

Many teachers in these predominantly-Nisei schools felt as Lucile C. Regan did; she took pride in her students for their staunch work ethic and “their eagerness to learn,” but felt her students’ true potential as Americans would not be realized because of the inherent racism waiting for them outside of her school walls.<sup>135</sup> Regan graduated from the UCLA in 1924 when she was asked if she would be interested in teaching “foreign-speaking children.” She quickly went to work teaching approximately 500 K-6 students at the seven-building (one for each grade plus auditorium), East San Pedro School (later known as the Mildred O. Walizer School) “located on the sand flats of Terminal Island.” All of her students were Japanese American, save one family of Russians that “[added] a yellow-haired contrast to the sea of shining black heads” every weekday. Regan’s progressive spirit is evident in her assessments of her students. She praised them for their attentiveness and their willingness to embrace their educational opportunities. Regan honestly enjoyed teaching her students, many of whom could not speak English, and balked at any mention of transferring. She also dismissed the idea of her students

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<sup>133</sup> Takeuchi does not specifically verbalize the exact message when queried about it. The direct quotes from his interview are “She taught us how to be human, and one thing that still is embedded in my head is she said, ‘one of the reasons why America...is so strong is because no matter where the people had come from, they had one thought in mind. Though the faces and the colors may be different, in those days they never had to use the word ‘minority.’” His teacher, who he identified as “Mrs. McDougall,” continued on saying, “people from the foreign country and migrated to American...they hated what they had over there so they came over here...and they wanted to exercise what they believed in. No matter what happens, we may voice our opinion in a different way, but eventually, when you get to the nucleus of the subject, they all have the same idea, that they wanted to practice what they believed in.”

<sup>134</sup> Hikoji Takuchi, interviewed by John Allen, November 7, 2002, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>135</sup> Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, 23 and Lucile C. Regan, “Nisei: The Second Generation,” *Los Angeles School Journal* 19 (June 1, 1936): 15, 48-51.



differing “from any other school group in their mental abilities.” The difference in her mind, instead lay “in their attitude toward school...they are eager, ambitious, and grateful for all we are trying to do for them.” In these children Regan saw industriousness and maturity as she was both concerned and amazed that they were often left at home alone at night to care for their younger siblings while their mothers worked in the cannery and their fathers went on long fishing expeditions that could last weeks.<sup>136</sup> Regan, like most of her fellow teachers in the Southland, was firmly in the camp of ambivalent assimilationists who believed that retaining cultural traditions and values gave students worth not only to themselves, but to the entire country. She worked hard to ensure that she affirmed in the children under her care the hope that they would retain their customs (which she referred to as “treasures which have come to them from the children of [past] generations”) and encouraged them to share them with others in the dominant culture. Commenting on the many spring festivals the Terminal Island school held, she indicated her “American born...boys and girls” wore “beautiful kimonos” that “blossom[ed] from [their] brown houses like flowers from the soil.” She described the songs they sung as being those which all children sing about, the silver moonlight, the bright sun, and the rain.” These, she hoped, would be preserved in order to make their lives “richer” and presented to the “children of America,” few of whom had “such a heritage” of their own.<sup>137</sup>

The memoir of Lucile Regan summarizes an ideal vision for the children at the elementary-school level—children who, regardless of their racial or social status were able to use an American education to gain acceptance into the larger fabric of society in a positive and progressive manner.

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<sup>136</sup> Memoir dated June 1, 1936, reprinted in Shelton, 5-17.

<sup>137</sup> Lucile C. Regan, January 22, 1936, in *Ibid.*, 23.

Americanization, as stated earlier, was not under monolithic control, but no single institution took up its cause as did the public schools. Progressive ideology vaunted education as the cornerstone of Americanization and from a practical standpoint no other establishment had the compulsory and near-universal reach of government-run academies. Given the pre-existing multiethnic nature of the region, Los Angeles area schools were deeply involved in Americanization from their very founding. Los Angeles-area K-12 educators were driven to help immigrants fit into the socio-cultural and political fabric of the United States. Beginning in 1913 until the late 1920s, Southland-area schools worked with the California State Commission of [sic.] Immigration and Housing (CSCIH) to help children understand how to positively deal with the racism and discrimination that could befall them and to ensure that their students were well versed in civics and English. The two organizations partnered together to implement curricula in which immigrant and non-immigrant students understood their place in the nation and how they could mutually learn from and understand the strengths of their respective backgrounds. Even after official assimilationist organizations such as the CSCIH succumbed to the decline of progressivism and the Depression, Los Angeles-area teachers continued to keep the attitudes used during Americanization's heyday.<sup>138</sup>

For the most part, Nisei children reported very little overt discrimination in Southland schools, even up through to the end of high school, and their Japanese heritage was positively affirmed by their teachers (albeit under the guise of the dominant culture's patriarchy, at times).<sup>139</sup> Ann Sugimoto who

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<sup>138</sup> See Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, 22-5.

<sup>139</sup> Recent histories are finding this to be a fairly common phenomenon amongst young children, even in highly racialized climates, as children's relationships to other children are often highly utilitarian, particularly if they have not been coached by authority figures beforehand. See Jennifer Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 85, 126, 146, 153, and passim.

grew up in the racially-mixed Venice Beach area and was “treated real nice in school” and recollected “no discrimination.” At Venice High School she was voted the “second prettiest girl” in her senior class and became secretary of the student body after the vice principal encouraged her to run.<sup>140</sup> Arthur Ogami, who grew up in the mostly-white area of Whittier felt no discrimination or prejudice of any kind, even while attending Whittier High School where only “some minorities” (“two Koreans, one or two Chinese, very few blacks” and “a few Japanese”) attended with him. Many schools like those Sugimoto and Ogami attended bolstered their students’ sense of cultural pride by having “world cultures day” or similar events where students were allowed to demonstrate their culture to their classmates (e.g. wearing native dress, sharing native foods).<sup>141</sup> While in his youth, Bacon Sakatani attended school in the then-isolated farming town of El Monte where he was segregated (along with the Mexican students) until he reached the fifth grade.<sup>142</sup> He had no recollection of any negative experiences, and remembered that the nearby integrated school in La Puente (which he attended from grades five to seven) was made up of “about twenty percent Japanese, a few Hispanics, and the rest...[white]” and was a place where “all got along very well.”<sup>143</sup> Charles Hamasaki, who went to the well-integrated San Pedro Junior High School believed that the school’s ethnic makeup—mostly second and third-generation Eastern Europeans—helped create a rather uniform immigrant racial experience that kept discrimination down. Also, the fact that so many Nisei excelled in sports at the

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<sup>140</sup> Ann Sugimoto, interviewed by Richard Potashin, June 9, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>141</sup> Interview with June Berk, video-taped interview with author, Los Angeles, CA, July 17, 2010.

<sup>142</sup> Sakatani was born in 1929, and assuming he attended elementary school between 1934 and 1939, the population would have started near 4,000 (3,479 in 1930) and ended at 4,746 according to the 1940 census. He agreed with the interviewer that a segregated school in that area was “a little unusual” and indicated that “there may have been a couple” like it elsewhere. Bacon Sakatani, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, August 31, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

junior high and San Pedro High School made them community celebrities.<sup>144</sup> This youthful camaraderie spilled over into the personal lives of most Nisei to the point that few found racial characteristics to be part of their daily social experience. Joe Ishikawa grew up in the fairly racially-mixed “Hollywood Slums” (on the same street where *Our Gang* occasionally filmed) played with his closest friends who were primarily Caucasians, along with other Nisei and “a few blacks.”<sup>145</sup> Jun “Juno” Ogimachi, who attended San Fernando Elementary School with a majority Mexican American population made close, lifelong friends with three.<sup>146</sup> Part of the reason for the lack of reported discrimination can also be attributed to the generally good academic performance by Nisei. By the time they began attending schools in larger numbers, Southland educators made observations about Japanese students being “brighter and more studios [sic.], sometimes, than the others.” The educator making these comments, Mary A. Henderson of the Amelia Street School, in 1921 further opined that this was due to the “ambitious” nature of the Nisei’s “educated parents who follow school work up very closely in the home.”<sup>147</sup> Some Los Angelino educators took their praise farther, comparing them to other minorities, even going so far as to “prove” via I.Q. testing that Japanese were more academically adept than all other minorities and, perhaps to some embarrassment, whites.<sup>148</sup> This contradicted earlier

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<sup>144</sup> Charles Oihe Hamasaki, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa and Tom Ikeda, February 24, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>145</sup> Joe Ishikawa, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, January 10, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>146</sup> Jun “Juno” Ogimachi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, June 3, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>147</sup> Letter address from Mary A. Henderson to Harry M. Shafer on January 19, 1921, reprinted in *The Los Angeles School Journal* Jan 31, 1921, 7.

<sup>148</sup> See Gutfreund, 32-6

opinions and studies in which many educators were worried that perhaps Japanese American students would suffer from “educational retardation” due to the use of Japanese language at home.<sup>149</sup>

Issei expected the American school system to teach modern American political values that relied on the history of the West just as the teachings of modern Japanese schools rested on traditional, semi-traditional, and even recently-constructed notions of nationalism. For many Issei, this conceptualization of school in which nationalistic ideals were an unspoken was paramount ingredient in school life. Eastern or Western, living under a government gave rise to the notion of what a good citizen-subject was, and Issei made little distinction between Japan and the United States.<sup>150</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga believed that the Nisei’s drive to do well in citizenship (not a formal classroom subject, but graded, nonetheless) stemmed directly from their parents’ instruction that taught them to “instinctively...respect all authority...especially teachers.” Nisei, she recalled, “almost always had As” in citizenship, “because they toed the line.”<sup>151</sup> The concept of child-as-citizen was expected to stay with Nisei, even outside of school. Children who got out of line, particularly in gangs were often referred to as “*yogore*,” or “stains” on the community. This was certainly the case with Robert Wada—the youngest of nine siblings raised in Redlands where perhaps only three or four Nikkei families lived—whose parents took their children’s civic responsibilities to an extreme. In one instance, his father forced him to return a cork gun he found to the previous tenant of a home they had just rented telling him “that belongs to the people that lived here.” In another instance his mother dragged he and his Caucasian

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 36-7.

<sup>150</sup> Many parents, such as Robert Wada’s actually brought notions of familial ties and their lack of political clout in the community into the argument saying “You’re Japanese [and] Japanese don’t do bad things. Redlands is a small town [and] they know who you are, so don’t do bad things. Japanese don’t [do bad things].”

<sup>151</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, July 7, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

friend, Bob “Bat” Madrid, to the police station after assuming a local gas station heist was their responsibility simply because the police had cruised their street looking for the perpetrator. Mrs. Wada insisted (probably in hopes of gaining an easy admission of guilt) “that [the police] said you two stole some money from the service station.”<sup>152</sup> Wada’s mother, disregarding her son’s testimony of innocence, marched them up to the desk sergeant who “was up kind of like a judge...above a big, high counter,” only to learn that the perpetrator was in custody and that Misters Wada and Madrid were “too small” to have reached the cash register, anyway.<sup>153</sup>

Nisei began attending Southland schools during the heyday of Americanizationist sentiment in the United States. As stated earlier, the concepts of Americanization was a hodgepodge of ideas and ideals held by both the dominant society and immigrant communities. By 1924, Americanization had become so oblique that the U.S. Bureau of Education argued that “the term had been tossed about with such reckless abandon” that it was completely meaningless.<sup>154</sup> While the Bureau was correct from a cultural perspective, Americanization was a fixture in the minds’ of educators who believed that it was their responsibility to prepare “immigrants and their children to be citizens of the United States” by encouraging a sense of pride in the nation’s democratic ideas; developing their sense of “devotion and allegiance” to the Constitution; promoting a willingness to fight for and defend the American way of life; explaining how to commit themselves to “civility in political discourse” and the toleration of divergent points of view; and helping them believe in the principle of equality and the necessity of their

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<sup>152</sup> My Shin-Issei (New Issei) mother attempted to use this tactic on me quite often.

<sup>153</sup> Robert M. Wada, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 19, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>154</sup> See Jeffrey E. Mirel, *Patriotic Pluralism: Americanization Education and European Immigrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4.

participation in political life. Educators believed that they could help students through three areas of emphasis: English language, American history and civics, and, “understanding and embracing” American democratic ideals. Americanists hoped that, as good, educated Americans, they could, in some, albeit nebulously-defined way, slowly win their way into the hearts and minds of the dominant culture. The concept of Americanization, was, at its heart, a conceptualization of modern nationalistic pride and polity, and Issei parents approved of this conceptualization of school. As discussed earlier, the very concept of a modern school in Japan largely extended from the post-Meiji state. This type of Japanese progressivism was strongly linked to patriotism and the concept of a family-state in which parents (particularly mothers) and the education system existed to “raise good future citizens” into a nation that was “an extension of the family” in which the mother operated as the Ministers of Home, Finance, and Health while the father operated as the “Prime Minister...in charge of foreign affairs.”<sup>155</sup> Even before the Imperial Rescript on Education was promulgated in 1890, most Japanese officials increasingly rejected what they considered to be a pervasive sense of individualism, particularly in the American school system, which many believed eroded a sense of unified polity.<sup>156</sup>

The reason why compulsory schooling was so much more successful with than its Japanese language counterpart children (besides the fact that it *was* compulsory) is that it was wholly relevant to the future of the Nisei. Not only did American schooling fulfill its social and academic obligations, but the schools in the Southland did so without disparaging the Nisei’s ethnic heritage—in fact, school

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<sup>155</sup> See Jones, 128. These quotes came from Jintarō Ōmura, “Hakkan no ji,” *Nihon no Katei* 1.1 (March 1905): 2; Sohō Tokutomi, “Shin Nihon no chiban (2),” *Katei Zasshi* 1.5 (January 1893): 3; and Toshihiko Sakai, *Sakai Toshihiko Zenshū*, Vol. 2, 51.

<sup>156</sup> Stephens, 32-3.

administrators actually encouraged the Nisei to take pride in their ancestry. Nisei excelled in American schools because they could see a clear path through the process and understood what their efforts could amount to in the end, the path through *gakuen* was not so clear, nor were the outcomes one could hope to achieve.

## Conclusion

Both public schools and *gakuen* were optimistic institutions and the lessons they provided to their Nisei students were essential to understanding Nikkei conceptualizations of their place in society. Schooling was supposed to break down the walls of prejudice and discrimination and for the vast majority of Nisei this was the case while they were actually students. American teachers treated Nisei fairly and their schools gave them the opportunities they needed for affirmation. It was not until somewhere near their senior year of high school that reality finally crossed the paths of many Nisei who were forced to choose between their aspirations and the realities of their careers. Some Japanese were actively discouraged from attending college by both Issei and whites, as many who attended faced certain discrimination. This was particularly true since many Nisei came of college age during the Depression of the 1930s and were warned that they would have to become overeducated landscapers or fruit stand operators simply because those from the dominant culture would have first dibs on any vacancies that might arise during this period of economic hardship. George Fukasawa who attended UCLA in the late 1920s and early 1930s as a chemistry major ignored the comments, and instead focused on the idea that education was permanent and, “someday,” he felt, it would “hold [him] in good



stead.”<sup>157</sup> While usually not welcomed into white Hellenic fraternities and sororities (as were few other non-whites), Nisei moved about college with relative ease, forming their own social institutions (e.g. the Japanese Bruin Club at UCLA) and Nikkei fraternities and sororities, playing on sports teams, and attending non-segregated clubs.

During their childhoods and adolescent phases, the most important aspect of education was that children attend school and perform well so that they could be held in high regard by both the Nikkei community and the larger, dominant society. Through *gakuen* and public schools, the education Nisei received achieved many of the goals set forth by their parents and other concerned Issei who wanted to ensure that Japanese American Nisei citizens not only had opportunities to socially uplift themselves, but would help ensure that the larger Nikkei community looked like they were raising their children in the modern, progressive manner that the culture of the United States required. Issei hoped that education would instill in their children the idealized values of sacrifice, hard work, and virtuous citizenship that set the “desirable” Americans apart from the “undesirable.” However, these values were not merely American—Issei, whether they were earlier male immigrants or the females that came later, lived through periods of rapid educational restructuring and change while growing up in Japan. The educational modernization undertaken by the Meiji and succeeding Taisho states turned organized, compulsory education into a cultural and social ideal that, at least in theory, would become the bedrock of a new classless and more democratic Japan. As such, Issei parents were already primed to view

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<sup>157</sup> Interestingly, George worked taking photographs and making documentaries at motion picture studios in order to make his way through college and became a photographer after graduating and remained so for the rest of his life. With his photography money, George invested in several area fruit stands that prospered during the 1932 Olympics. George Fukasawa, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, August 12, 1974, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 8.

American compulsory schooling as an absolute necessity, not only so that their children coalesced into the new society, but so that their progeny met the industrialized world's idealized visions of modern childhood.

Issei did not want to fall into the segregation trap that befell children from other races, particularly the Chinese. If Nisei children were held apart and segregated in this manner, they could possibly befall the same fate of racial subordination that African American children faced in many parts of the United States who were relegated to second-class status, and educated in separate, but clearly unequal schools. Southland schools—thanks to the region's emphasis on racial harmony and its desire to be a “new” city in which children of all races were educated together (although, contradictorily, they were still restricted to live apart)—welcomed Nisei children and affirmed their ethnicity. Japanese children were free to be Japanese, with the tacit understanding that they would allow the schools to help mold them into Americanized Japanese. This compromise was accepted by most Issei parents who realized that, if the family were to remain in the United States, their children would have to learn to work and succeed according to American standards. As such, American compulsory schooling turned into a type of American finishing school, where Nisei children could learn the valuable skills needed to coalesce into society—skills Issei parents could never hope to fully teach them. For Nisei, American schooling was a fact of life and they well-understood, even from an early age, that their futures in the United States required an American education. In school, they found that their Japaneseness was accepted by not only their teachers but their fellow students, many of whom were ethnic minorities, themselves. As such, Nisei children and adolescents had a very “normal” school life, albeit with extra parental and community pressure added in to ensure that they were helping to improve the stature of the Nikkei community, entire.

Although many children found little to like about their Japanese language school experience and scores quit before the sixth grade, it is unfair to categorize the *gakuen* as failures and it is also improper to conclude that Nisei chose not to attend or appreciate the language schools simply because they were not “American.” The Japanese language schools helped give the Nikkei community a sense of cohesion and connection to Japan. Many Issei parents were keen to send their children to *gakuen* so that they might understand their heritage, learn to communicate better with the family, and, perhaps, form an important bridge between the homeland of their birth and the homeland of their ancestors. While the compulsory educational system provided Nisei children with the foundations essential to full participation in American commercial and social intercourse, Nisei were often left to interpret what *gakuen* meant on their own. Language schools emphasized the importance of education to many Nisei, and taught many students facets of the culture that their parents treasured, even if these lessons were secondary in between playtime with friends. *Gakuen*, for all of its inconsistencies and ostensible failures, had value to many Nisei as a generational bridge between the Issei and Nisei, which they often recognized later in life.

### CHAPTER THREE: MODERNIZING THE NISEI BODY: JAPANESE AND AMERICAN SPORT

In the June preceding the 1932 Summer Olympics, Shizue Ohashi's graduation speech at Canoga Park High School, entitled "The Ideal of the Olympic Games," mused that "nothing occupies so large a space in our conversation and in our daily press as athletics." Ohashi continued, saying that "a student may toil for many years with scholarly success, yet remain in obscurity, while his companion, a successful athlete, has become a national figure." Ohashi's sentiments illustrate that "modernist culture was manifested by a novel, intense interest in sport."<sup>1</sup> During the Second Industrial Revolution, "sport ceased to be a marginal, amateur activity and a gentleman's pastime" and evolved to become "an object of full-time pursuit that deserved intense concentration" and "came to constitute a world of its own...capable of absorbing everything around it and transforming it into its own terms."<sup>2</sup> Viewing the way in which the Nikkei community supported the Japanese athletes competing in the Summer Games also gives us great insight into the prevalence of athletics amongst Nikkei. Nikkei communities around the world helped raise money for Japan's team to come to the games. In the Los Angeles region, *kenjinkai*, businesses, organizations, language schools, and individuals (including children) contributed their time, resources, and money to ensure the Depression-starved team could compete in their city. Going one step farther, the Japanese Consulate, the Dainippon Taiiku Kyōkai (Greater Japan Physical Education Association), the Central Japanese Association, and the Los Angeles Japanese Association formed the Nihon Senshu Kōen Kai (Support Association for Japanese Athletes) and eventually raised

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<sup>1</sup> Cantor, 149.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

\$7,215.24 “to help subsidize the Japanese delegates’ expenses.”<sup>3</sup> Issei and Nisei alike warmly welcomed the 142 athletes (second in number only to the United States’ contingent) and their retinue with waving flags, open homes, and much fanfare. From the moment the athletes began to arrive in May, they were treated as celebrities and commonly “invited to numerous receptions and parties, given gifts, asked for autographs.”<sup>4</sup> *Kenjinkai* were almost universally generous with gifts to athletes who came from their prefectures as was the case with the eighteen year-old female discus and javelin thrower, Mitsue Ishizu of Hiroshima. Even though she did not medal, the Hiroshima *kenjinkai* declared her a “champion” and flowered her with gifts, including a diamond ring.<sup>5</sup> Nikkei by the thousands crowded into venues to watch Japanese athletes perform. Among the more famous Japanese Olympians they adored were swimmer Kusuo Kitamura who, at the tender age of fourteen, became the youngest gold medal winner up to that point (1,500 meter freestyle) and dashing handsome and sophisticated Lieutenant Baron Takeichi Nishi who won a gold medal show jumping his horse, Uranus.<sup>6</sup> On August 15, after the Games’ conclusion, the Los Angeles area Nikkei community held a dinner banquet at the Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles in which 400 sat under hanging lanterns, Japanese and American flags, and a banner that read “Japan, first Place, Hop Step Jump.” Two days later, the first

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<sup>3</sup> Eriko Yamamoto, “Memories of the 1932 Olympics,” in *More Than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community*, ed. Brian Niiya (Los Angeles: Japanese American Historical Museum, 2000), 94.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. Ishizu placed 7th and 8th in discus and javelin, respectively.

<sup>6</sup> As of this publication date, Kitamura remains the youngest ever gold medalist in swimming. Nishi eventually reached the rank of lieutenant colonial and died while commanding a tank regiment during the Battle of Iwo Jima. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of colonel and was immortalized in several textual works and was a major character in Clint Eastwood’s, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, in 2006.

group of athletes began to leave and over 5,000 Nikkei came to San Pedro to watch the *Shun'yō Maru* depart for the Land of the Rising Sun.<sup>7</sup>

Ohashi's observations about, and the response of the Nikkei to the 1932 Olympics demonstrated just how important sports were to the Southland Japanese American community. On one hand, the Summer Games were a type of allegory for the Nikkei and the way they viewed themselves within their adopted homeland. Even though Japanese athletes were often shorter in stature when compared to competitors of European ancestry, they were ardently training their hardest and fearlessly competing against the best the world had to offer. Similarly, Issei worked hard and succeeded in a dominant culture that had violently rejected the presence of the Chinese just a generation before. As such, there was something innately successful about the Japanese in the Southland that rose above their Asian heritage, both in sport and in the measure of their lives. But more than their symbolic meaning, sports were a very real and visceral activity in which most Nisei children participated before the Second World War. Ohashi's comments and the response to the 1932 Olympic also demonstrated the use of sport as an important component of both individual and community spirit. Even if the dominant culture often ignored or even derided the progress of both Japan and the Nikkei, sports offered a type of undeniable, objective forum in which Japanese could prove themselves to both one another and to the dominant society. Although it was certainly uncommon for sportsmen and sports teams from the dominant society to allow Japanese to compete directly against them, when it happened, Japanese could hold their own and even emerge victorious to the praise of all. If the spectre of racism

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

and prejudice could simply be eliminated as stipulated by the American Dream, then equality in sport was more than a possibility.

For Nisei children and adolescents growing up in the Southland, sports offered a chance to compete against one another for both the pride of competition and the fun of socialization. And, although direct competition against the dominant culture was rare, those opportunities did present themselves and gave Nisei hope that theirs would be the generation to finally disregard both their nationality as well as the nationality of the sport in which they participated. Although the rules of the sport were formalized by Americans, as was its initial popularity, by the time the bulk of the Nisei were coming into their childhoods, baseball had no special claim to ethnicity or nationality. As they grew, the sport gave Nisei children and adolescents a way to compete both informally in neighborhood sandlot games and formally in clubs and, later, in junior high, high school, university, and semi-professional leagues. On the other hand, judo was a sport whose roots lay in Japan. Judo, however, was a new sport that broke away from its progenitor, *jujutsu*, and was purposefully designed to have practical physical and mental benefits beyond its combative intent. Issei, on their part, encouraged both sport, because both met the modern ideals espoused by both American and Japanese childrearing experts of training both mind and body and promoted training methods that eschewed tradition and ethnicity and encouraged progressive notions of science and organizations. The dominant culture obviously approved of baseball, given its origins and its alignment with the ideals of Americanization. The dominant culture also cared little for judo's Japanese origins (at least until the outbreak of the Second World War) since it was a modern "antagonistic" art that had already been embraced by celebrities such as movie stars, fitness experts, and former presidents and its techniques were regularly used by the military and police

in hand-to-hand combat. Indeed, for Nisei children before World War II, the sports of judo and baseball were practiced not because of their ethnic origin, but because they often transcended notions of race and ethnicity and were accessible, fun, and encouraged by their parents and members of the dominant culture, alike.

### The Masculine Ideal

When Isao Kikuchi was young, he was always a “skinny little kid,” but his small stature hid a larger problem—asthma. Due to that illness, Kikuchi “almost kicked the bucket.” After this harrowing episode, his father, an avid athlete and dentist whose practice was located at First and San Pedro in Little Tokyo, urged Kikuchi to “get into sports...to build up [his] body.”<sup>8</sup> Kikuchi began to practice different sports and eventually became a multi-sport athlete. He found his heroes in the Japanese athletes that competed in the 1932 Los Angeles Summer Olympics. Later, while interned at Manzanar War Relocation Center, Kikuchi believed that sports were the one thing that allowed he and other Nisei to express their “own personalities,” because sports “took up time and gave [one’s] mind to grow and be active.” Because of this, Kikuchi believed that sports, strengthened not only the body, but the mind, which was the one thing that “would never be broken” by his captors at Manzanar. Kikuchi also believed that the body and mind as strengthened by sports was analogous to the “culture of the Japanese,” which prompted Nikkei to keep their minds active and growing, as was commonly taught in Japanese schools after the Meiji reforms went into effect during the latter twenty years of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>8</sup> Isao Kikuchi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, May 15, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.



Kikuchi's recollection of his experiences both before the War and during his internment experience speak volumes to the malleable and adaptable nature of sports. Sports were not only important to his physical well-being because it helped him overcome a life-threatening illness, but it was important to his mind—steeling it for the harsh realities of camp—and gave him a way to internalize the culture of his ancestors. Although he may not know it, a lot of politicians, intellectuals, academics, and progressive reformers, both in the United States and Japan, ascribed similar physical and mental developmental powers to sport. It is also telling that Kikuchi related to his father via athletics. Brian Niiya, a historian of Nisei sport noted “sport as one of the few things” both the Issei and Nisei “could agree on.”<sup>9</sup> Both groups, parents and children, found that sports bridged cultural, language, and generational gaps since it was played outside of these boundaries using its own, standardized rules. Not only this, sports that developed during the Second Industrial Revolution stressed that the mind and body were intimately connected.<sup>10</sup> Physical strength and adroitness were necessary, of course, but the rise of modern sports (particularly team sports) were inextricably linked to their rise in popularity amongst educators beginning in the 1860s and during the last decade of the nineteenth century in

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<sup>9</sup> Brian Niiya, “More than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community—An Introduction,” in *More than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community*, ed. by Brian Niiya (Los Angeles, Japanese American National Museum, 2000), 20.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Spencer dedicated an entire section of his book *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (London: John Childs and Son, Printers, 1861) to the “Reaction of the Brain on the Body.”

Japan.<sup>11</sup> By the time Nisei began to enter American schools, Issei were assured by both Japanese and American educators of the value of sports, ensuring that it was “an overt part of the educational message some Issei wanted to pass down to the Nisei”<sup>12</sup>

This ideal place of sport—that it could develop both mind and body—was exemplified by a *Rafu Shimpo* columnist in early 1926, when he wrote that Nisei children needed to be “strong and right.” Rhetorically, the columnist was writing about both males and females, but in reality the strength of the male physique was targeted more often than females’. This type of appeal to the physicality of the male form—the Cult of Masculinity or the “physical culture movement,” as it became known in the United States and represented by the term “*bankara*” (“rough and vigorous”) in Japan—held that men could become leaders and contributors to the common good only if they lived a strenuous life beginning

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<sup>11</sup> Terao Hisashi’s, *Seiyo Kogai Yugiho* (*Western Outdoor Games*, 1885), which emphasized that children needed to take pleasure from sports and should be encouraged to play so that their minds could be refreshed and invigorated. In 1884 Yusa Eisaku, one of the first graduates of Japan’s Taiso Denshujo (National Institute of Gymnastics), wrote *Shinsen Shogaku Taiiku Zensho* (*New Physical Education for Elementary Schools*) and linked physical morality to traditional Chinese proverbs and traditional aphorisms, particularly the maxium “*gokin no tawamure*” (lit. “five fowls’ plays [the ways five different birds play]”) that linked the movements of five types of birds to a healthy life. Eisaku argued that children’s general health and welfare could not rely on mental study alone. In *Shinsen Danjo Yugiho* (*New Games for Boys and Girls*, 1893), Shukichi Yoshida argued that sports could help inculcate both traditional and modern useful and character traits in addition to moral characteristics such as how to observe rules, make good decisions, be self-reliant, and demonstrate important characteristics such as “magnanimity, philanthropy, prudence, compassion, decency, and loyalty.” For a good introduction to the early connections between sport and intellect, see James Anthony Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 22. For Japan, see Jones, 134 and 248-311 and Jacqueline G. Haslett, “A History of Physical Education and Sports in Japan from 1868 through 1972,” (EdD diss., Boston University, 1977) and Ikuo Abe and J.A. Mangan, “‘Sportsmanship’—English Inspiration and Japanese Response: F.W. Strange and Chiyosaburo Takeda,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 19, issue 2-3 (2002), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Brian Niiya, “More than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community—An Introduction,” in *More than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community*, 22.

in childhood and continued to hone those ideals into adulthood.<sup>13</sup> In the United States, one of the greatest proponents of this lifestyle was Theodore Roosevelt whose 1899 speech entitled “The Strenuous Life” reflected his beliefs that, like Isao Kikuchi, vigorous exercise helped him to overcome a sickly, asthmatic youth. Bernarr Macfadden, a popular and influential bodybuilder and fitness enthusiast credited with beginning America’s fitness craze, believed that the overall health of the body was paramount.<sup>14</sup> He, like Roosevelt, was a sickly youth and credited a vegetarian diet along with strenuous physical activity in helping him recover his vigor and strength. His slogan, “Weakness is a crime. Don’t be a criminal!” became one of the battle cries for the physical culture movement. During the same period in Japan, many critics of Meiji reformers charged them with becoming “extravagant dandies” who stressed “superficiality, imitation, and decadence” and were becoming effeminate in their acceptance of a non-rigorous, urban life.<sup>15</sup> In an effort to restore their image as warriors and manliness, men, mostly under thirty and the sons of former samurai or landed gentry called “*sōshi*,” were characterized by their rugged and traditional dress, propensity for carrying blunt weapons such as clubs, and their distaste for “high collar” etiquette and mannerisms.<sup>16</sup> While rarely directly imitated by the

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<sup>13</sup> For a comprehensive introduction to the cult of masculinity see Michael S. Kimmel, *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005). For the *bankara* ideal, see and Gregory M. Pflugfelder, *Cartographies of Desire: Male-Male Sexuality in Japanese Discourse, 1600-1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 228 and Jason G. Karlin, “The Gender of nationalism: Competing Masculinities in Meiji Japan,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28, no. 1, (Winter 2002): 41-77.

<sup>14</sup> The most comprehensive work on the life of Macfadden is Robert Ernst, *Weakness is a Crime: The Life of Bernarr Macfadden* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

<sup>15</sup> Karlin, 54-58.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-60.

larger Japanese populace (*sōshi* were defined, in part, by the privilege of their heredity) there were often praised for the pride they took in their distinctly Japanese manliness.

Given the rise of manliness both in Japan and the United States, the columnist's question was timely, as both Japanese and American parents and reformers watched an increasingly urban and industrial world emerge as the new standard for nations who were at the peak of their evolution. At the heart of reformers' missions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to ensure that men and women were as physically prepared for the increasingly market-driven and urbanized world. Before the market revolution, rural life provided a relatively insular, structured environment for children as they worked side-by-side with their parents or were under the care of a schoolmaster. This type of compact world allowed fathers and mothers to ensure femininity in their girls and masculinity in their boys, while their teachers and pastors taught them the practical and philosophical boundaries of these attributes. Even in cities children often worked from an early age and were, once again, under the constant supervision of adults. As the children's rights and public school movements began to flourish after the Civil War, youngsters were increasingly legislated out of the workplace and into schools during the day and into city streets at night.<sup>17</sup> Without constant supervision, particularly concerning urban immigrant and transplanted rural youth, how would children learn their correct physical attributes? In the new urban world, if something could not take the place of community supervision, social chaos and possibly destruction loomed in the near future.<sup>18</sup> Issei parents in the Southland were concerned that their children, most of whom were either very young or even unborn, would fall victim to this type of

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<sup>17</sup> See Hawes, *The Children's Rights Movement*.

<sup>18</sup> Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 32

chaos. Issei were also concerned with the social and cultural implications of play and sports and had to wonder if their Nisei children would somehow use sports to affirm their heritage. Could sports be used to both acculturate Nisei to their heritage and help them assimilate into their lives as Americans?

## Judo

While the many sports that interested Nisei easily fulfilled the masculine/*bankara* ideal a *Rafu Shimpō* columnist believed that judo and kendo were the sports that made “youngsters...strong and right,” but lamented that “American-born [Nisei] don’t show an interested in either of them” and determined that it would be “impossible” to interest them at all.<sup>19</sup> In reality, the very growth of judo and their related dojos in the Southland were thanks to Nisei. While there were a handful of pioneering dojos in existence before the rise of the Nisei adolescence in the late 1920s, the majority of them were founded after 1930. Also, given the sport’s specific emphasis on modern science and psychology and its disassociation with the Japanese state (in contrast to Kendo), many Nisei denied that judo held any cultural meaning to them. Roy Shuichi Murakami, who took judo lessons from the Japanese pro wrestler (and Nikkei hero) Tokugoro Ito at the Southland’s first judo school, the Rafu Dojo (founded in 1910), felt that the sport had no boundaries.<sup>20</sup> “Anyone could use it,” he maintained. When asked

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<sup>19</sup> *Rafu Shimpō*, Also quoted in Yoichi Nagata “The Pride of Lil’ Tokyo: The Los Angeles Nippons Baseball Club, 1926-1941,” in *More than a Game: Sport in the Japanese American Community*, ed. Brian Niiya (Los Angeles, Japanese American National Museum 2000), 100.

<sup>20</sup> Roy Murakami, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives. There is some disagreement on the year that the Rafu Dojo was founded. Most sources give the date 1915, but this is the year that most people acknowledge Tokugoro Ito took over the dojo. Sources disagree—Joseph R. Svinth, “Judo in Southern and Central California, 1910-1942: Clubs Associated with Nanka Yudanshakai,” *Journal of Combative Sport* (April 2005), accessed April 15, 2012, [http://ejmas.com/jcs/2005jcs/jcsart\\_ejmas\\_0405.html](http://ejmas.com/jcs/2005jcs/jcsart_ejmas_0405.html) states that the dojo’s first sensei was Mogusa Nina and from 1915 to 1922 Tokugoro Ito was associated with it. While others state that Ito established the school in 1915.

about judo's "nationality," and if it was "more Japanese [than] American," Frank Emi believed that the sport did not have any real sense of nationality. He was enmeshed in the physical requirements of the sport in which one would "work out," perform, and eventually go home. While the physical and practical mental lessons of the sport stayed with the practitioner, memories of its national origins had no "effect on [one's] thinking one way or another."<sup>21</sup> Emi participated in a sport whose presence and acceptance in the dominant culture of the United States predated his 1916 birth by over a decade. As such, the sport existed in a transnational halfway point between Japan and the United States before Nisei began to take up the sport beginning in the 1920s. As Emi's testimony indicates, the *Rafu* columnist was wrong in thinking that Japanese sports were unusually unattractive to Nikkei youth. Sports like kendo and judo (and to a smaller extent, sumo) attracted Nisei boys in numbers large enough to have Stateside-based governing bodies, numerous dojos, and regular, well-attended tournaments. It is clear from the incorporation dates of various Southland that Nisei drove the region's demand for the sport. Judo and Kendo did not attract the numbers of Nisei that baseball enjoyed, but Judo found acceptance as a self-defense and fitness sport in the Western world almost a decade before the first Southland dojo was founded in 1910. Judo was not only modern—combining scientific elements such as the understanding of human physiology, physics (to better understand the leverage needed for tosses, throws, and holds), ranking (which dovetailed nicely with notions of scientific

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<sup>21</sup> Frank S. Emi continued to gain an international reputation in judo by producing several notable judo athletes and eventually reached eighth degree black belt himself in 2008. Denshō Digital Archives.

organization), character building, and personalized instruction—but it was also accepted in the United States by both the Issei and the dominant culture long before all but the earliest Nisei were born.<sup>22</sup>

Roy Murakami’s father, a sensei at Rafu Dojo, cared more about “the character...of [a] person” than the actual physical art of judo, and in doing so, spoke to the heart of judo’s founder, Jigorō Kanō.<sup>23</sup> Judo was a “new” Japanese martial art based on *jujutsu*, designed from its inception in the 1880s to be a modern fighting technique that combined progressive elements of self-defense, physicality, and kinesiological philosophy with modern ideals of education and scientific organization.<sup>24</sup> Kanō was smaller and weaker than his contemporaries during his youth like Roosevelt, Macfadden, and the many Nisei boys who grew up in Los Angeles area’s multi-cultural schools. Classmates often picked on Kano and he often found himself on the losing side of fights.<sup>25</sup> In 1877, in an effort to fend off his larger classmates, Kanō first undertook training in *jujutsu* under his father’s sensei and then continued training under a former instructor to the shogunates’s military after his first sensei died.<sup>26</sup> In 1883, Kanō became a licensed teacher in Kitō school *jujutsu* and began to teach students of his own but was

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<sup>22</sup> Inoue Shun, “The Invention of the Martial Arts: Kanō Jigorō and Kōdōkan judo,” in *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Tradition of Modern Japan*, ed. by Stephen Vlastos (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 171.

<sup>23</sup> Roy Murakami, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>24</sup> *Jujutsu* (also correctly spelled: “*jujitsu*,” “*ju-jitsu*,” and “*ju-jutsu*”) the nominal “traditional” martial art of mainland Japan, developed on Honshu during the sixteenth century and was practiced mostly by the samurai class. Also, judo, as a derivative martial art of jujutsu was, at the time, often described as “*jujutsu*” or “*jujitsu*” by some observers, both Western and Japanese, who simply ignored or were ignorant of the differences. Although several authors at the time referred to jujutsu and judo as “*jiu-jitsu*,” the spelling “*jiu-jitsu*” has recently been associated with Brazilian-style jiu-jitsu, itself a derivative of judo and not directly of traditional jujutsu. As such this study will prefer the term “*jujutsu*” unless other spellings are used in direct quotes. Karate, the martial art often associated with Japan developed primarily in Okinawa, which while a vassal island of Japan, was not integrated into the larger polity of Japan until 1879. Karate wasn’t practiced on mainland Japan until the mid-1920s.

<sup>25</sup> Shun 164. also in Brousse and Matsumoto, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Shun 164. also in Brousse and Matsumoto, 12-13.

dissatisfied with the state of instruction of the sport and its lack of a modern philosophical foundation.<sup>27</sup>

Kanō found *jujutsu* lacking in modern understanding of physiology and kinesiology and believed that the martial art had not kept with the times. During the Tokugawa Era, martial skills went by the wayside amongst the Samurai who had no enemies to fight. Non-Samurai were not allowed to carry swords and were generally discouraged from learning fighting skills and by 1870 *jujutsu* was a dying tradition. Although *jujutsu* schools were quite numerous during the Tokugawa era, they were not guided by a common set of standards or overarching organization and *jujutsu* never coalesced under one standard philosophy or school. It was a piecemeal martial art, and was associated with the quickly disappearing past. Unlike modern team sports such as baseball that relied on constant practice and repetition, *jujutsu* was traditionally taught through a master-student technique that stressed *kata* (forms) and observation. In order to bring *jujutsu* up to date, Kanō emphasized verbal instruction, rational explanation, lectures, question-and-answer sessions, demonstrations, and structured practice.<sup>28</sup> Kanō believed that his new, integrated art could be an educational tool that could help in “producing a new type of talented and capable citizen who, through self-improvement, made a positive contribution to society and the nation.”<sup>29</sup> “Energy,” as defined by Kanō, was both mental and physical, and the best

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<sup>27</sup> Kanō’s grandfather was a well-known Chinese scholar, poet, and high-ranking official who helped oversee Japan’s westernization by opening Hyogo Harbor to Western merchants and vessels. With a particular affinity for languages and sciences, Kanō entered foreign language school when he was fourteen and played baseball there only one year after it was introduced to Japan by his English teachers. Kanō reveled in the sport’s team spirit and structure. Shun, 164 and Brousse and Matsumoto, 11-12.

<sup>28</sup> Shun, 165.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 168.



use for that energy was to promote goodness, “something that promotes the continuing development of collective and social life.”<sup>30</sup> Kanō’s goal was to link a variety of forms and moves from *jujutsu* through education. He carefully systematized and classified techniques from several branches of *jujutsu* and culled them in order to find the most useful and physiologically-sound techniques of locks, throws, and holds, and “discarded the rest.”<sup>31</sup> Kinesiological science alone was not enough for his modern sport, so Kanō spent a great deal of effort understanding both Eastern and Western methods of pedagogy to better understand the benefits of “verbal communication...rational explanation...lectures, and question-and-answer-sessions.”<sup>32</sup> He went one step further in his progressive view of his version of *jujutsu* and eventually believed that the sport should benefit mankind positively, by perfecting a person’s mind and body. Kanō firmly believed that cultivating a healthy body was worthless if that cultivation did not somehow profit society.<sup>33</sup> Eventually, this modern approach to his martial art caused Kanō to stress the refining of not only the body of the practitioner, but also the intellect and morals of the practitioner as well.<sup>34</sup> Kanō eventually came to believe that, in modern fashion, this blending of body and mind was not only the key to self-realization, but also took from the traditional Japanese Confucian notion of social obligation. Consequently, the ultimate goal of judo was holistic: it was a modern sport designed

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

to efficiently blend the mind and the body, while, at the same time, helping its practitioner help others at both the individual and social level.<sup>35</sup>

He opened his own school, the Kōdōkan (figuratively, “the place for the study of the Way”) in Tokyo in 1882, to teach his own version of *jujutsu*, judo (lit. the “gentle way”). Initially, only nine students enrolled and for quite some time, Kanō’s school crept along, but after several notable victories over rival *jujutsu* practitioners by Kōdōkan students, the dojo’s enrollment reached nearly five hundred in 1887. After a very public competition hosted by a police superintendent in 1885, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department hired Kanō’s students as martial arts instructors. By 1892, Kanō had instructed over 2,755 students.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, many *jujutsu* sensei realized that they too must modernize their techniques to include progressive ideals so that their version of traditional martial arts could keep up with the reputation and popularity of Kanō’s Kōdōkan.

Kanō’s timing could not have been better for his modernized form of *jujutsu* to find acceptance in the Western world. Judo gained fame during a period when “antagonistics” (as self-defense arts were called) were popular with the Western middle and working classes. By the mid-1800s new methods of self-defense were necessary as the influences of industrial and urban culture began to discourage swordplay and guns became so powerful and accurate that duels were no longer practicable. “Garroting panics” swept England in 1856 and 1862 whereby London newspapers salaciously began to over report and sensationalize muggings (usually via strangleholds) and began to blame police for their apparent failure to protect the public. Even though law enforcement apprehended the vast majority of muggers,

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Shun, 166.

many promoted self-protection via martial arts as the only immediate solution. After muggers attacked James Pilkington, a parliamentarian from Lancastershire after midnight on Pall Mall in July of 1862, the newspapers' stories seemed correct, and self-protection became such a mantra that many people not only learned some form of martial arts, but many men reportedly attacked each other on the streets, both parties thinking the others were potential muggers.<sup>37</sup> Beginning in the late 1800s, antagonistics were clearly in-style among Westerners both as a form of exercise and as a modern way to defend oneself in a modern, efficient manner. It mattered little where the art they came from, although a careful reading of the texts at the time indicated that most of the popular forms of martial arts came from modern nations participating in the Second Industrial Revolution. Western reporters began to compare well-known arts (western-style wrestling, pugilism [boxing], and stick and quarterstaff fighting) to “new methods” of martial arts from all over the world, including *jujutsu*, cane fighting, and *savate* (French kickboxing).<sup>38</sup> By 1900, organized, annual mixed martial arts tournaments were taking place in England, France, and the United States to showcase the inherent value of martial arts.

An example of the extent to which antagonistics and “new martial arts” worked themselves into public culture is a martial art that appeared in England beginning in 1898 called “bartitsu.” Developed by an Indian-born Englishman, Edward William Barton-Wright (1860-1951), who, after earning his degree in France, ended up in Japan as a railway engineer and surveyor. While there, he studied in several Japanese martial arts dojos in Kobe and Yokohama and eventually studied at the Kōdōkan.

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<sup>37</sup> See R. Sindall, “The London Garroting Panics of 1856 and 1862,” *Social History* 12, no. 3 (October 1987): 351-9.

<sup>38</sup> The quote is from W.T.A. Beare, a well-known sports journalist and Rugby and Cricket manager from England who wrote prolifically on sports from the last decade of the 1800s through the first twenty years of the 1900s. Justin Bonnafous, “Cane fighting,” *Outing*, XXXI, no. 5. (February 1898): 489-491.

Upon his return to England in 1898, he opened a school to teach a hybrid Western-Japanese form of martial art of his invention called “bartitsu” that combined *savate*, cane and stick fighting, wrestling, and *jujutsu*. Bartitsu quickly became the martial art *de jure* in England and Barton-Wright gave innumerable demonstrations of his sport to journalists, academics, and even the Prince of Wales. By 1900, the Bartitsu Club founded by Barton-Wright boasted over sixty students who studied under *jujutsu* instructors from Japan, wrestlers from Switzerland, and the famous France *savate* and stick-fighting specialist Pierre Vigny. Although Barton-Wright’s school has closed a year early, in 1903 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle even gave Sherlock Holmes the use of bartitsu in *The Adventure of the Empty House* (spelled as “baritsu”) to physically overcome his arch enemy, Dr. Moriarty.<sup>39</sup>

Kanō’s judo received similar notoriety from Western modernizers and progressives who praised the modern concepts that judo instilled in its practitioners. Educational reformer John Dewey, who met Kanō while he was a guest lecturer at Imperial University (the University of Tokyo), became one of his most ardent supporters. Dewey and Kanō exchanged views on education and found a great deal of parallels in their educational philosophies. After a demonstration, Dewey was thoroughly impressed and believed that judo was an “art,” that blended “old practiced...Zen Buddhist teachings” and “the laws of mechanics.”<sup>40</sup> Dewey went on to say that judo was “much better than most [Western] formal gymnastics” since, in his view, “the mental element is much stronger.” John Dewey’s writings about Kanō promoted judo as a viable form of progressive education and he believed that it could be parlayed

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<sup>39</sup> See E.W. Barton-Wright, *The Sherlock Holmes School of Self-Defense: The Manly Art of Bartitsu as Used Against Professor Moriarity*, Reprint (East Sussex: UK, Ivy Press Limited, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 14-15.

into personal values such as obedience, subordination, self-sacrifice, cooperation, friendliness, fair play, and sportsmanship.<sup>41</sup> Kanō continued to find Western admirers for his sport. Kanō educated Lafcadio Hearn—a Greek-born writer who had spent over a decade in New Orleans before arriving in Japan—about his thoughts on martial arts, to which Hearn dedicated a long essay in which “he analyzed the Japanese art of self-defense as an integral part of Japanese culture and deciphered its intricate implications.”<sup>42</sup> Hearn saw a system “in which defense, philosophy, economy, and morality cross-pollinated one another.”

Hearn and others also understood the political ramifications of judo as a sport that demonstrated the trappings of modernity. Although generally small in stature, the Japanese, through the use of progressive and modern ideals could project their power over larger adversaries, just as Kanō demonstrated with judo. In *Out of the East* (1895)—one of the first books in the Meiji Era written by a Westerner dedicated to spreading knowledge of Japan’s culture—Hearn elaborated on judo and the state of Japan, making parallels between the sport and the country’s recent military victory over China in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5). In 1902, Samuel Hill—an American businessman, lawyer, and railroad engineer who frequently travelled to Japan—asked Yamashita Yoshitugu, one of Kanō’s star pupils, to teach his nine-year old son judo as “the thing to imbue young James Nathan Hill with the ideas of the Samurai class, for that class of men is a noble, high-minded class.”<sup>43</sup> Hill might have been familiar with Inazō Nitobe’s 1900 English-language book, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* in which he

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<sup>41</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

boiled down the Japanese essence to “wisdom, benevolence, and courage.” *Jujitsu Combat Tricks*, by H. Irving Hancock (1904)—a prolific American novelist and journalist—clarified the connection between judo, Japan, and modernization when he wrote “the physical performances of the Japanese in their war with Russia should be sufficient to establish even seemingly extravagant claims for the value of [Kanō’s martial art] as the best system of bodily training known to the world.”<sup>44</sup>

Judo’s popularization in America grew outside of the established Issei community through modern institutions such as the work of health writers, colleges and universities, and police academies. The Japanese victory over Russia, gave some credence to judo’s claim to holistically train both the mind and body of the practitioner. With this encouragement, and funds provided by Samuel Hill, Kanō’s sent one of his star English-speaking pupils, Yoshitsugu Yamashita (along with his wife, Fude, and an assistant) to the United States in 1903 to demonstrate judo to anyone who would watch. After winning several bouts against western pugilists, Yamashita met with President Theodore Roosevelt, who was already familiar with Japan and its martial arts traditions.<sup>45</sup> In 1901, William Sturgis Bigelow, a physician who first moved to Japan in 1882, demonstrated *jujutsu* to Roosevelt. With “minimal training in the martial art,” Sturgis “threw” Secretary of War Elihu Root “with ease.”<sup>46</sup> After his next visit to Japan, Bigelow brought six judo “jackets” for Roosevelt, a book on judo, a supply of Japanese

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<sup>44</sup> Quoted directly in *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> An early account of this can be found in John J. O’Brien, *The Japanese Secret Science: Jiu-Jitsu. Demonstrated by the Ex. Supt. Of Police at Nagasaki, Japan and Instructor of Pres. Roosevelt: A \$50.000 Course in Jiu-Jitsu for \$1.00* (Boston: Physician’s Publishing Co., 1905). Bigelow, in fact, was probably well-trained in the art as he often sparred with the famous Japanese scholar Kakuzō Okakura. Also see Brousse and Matsumoto, 23.

green tea, and Nitobe's *Bushido*.<sup>47</sup> He recommended to Roosevelt that he begin to practice with John J. O'Brien, who had learned *jujutsu* as part of his training as a police inspector in Nagasaki.<sup>48</sup> O'Brien taught the president for only two months, and Roosevelt switched his allegiance to judo after meeting Yamashita. Roosevelt went so far as to prepare a separate room in the White House so that he could take lessons and often practiced three or four times a week with his sons and "a few staff members." Roosevelt, Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge I, Gifford Pinchot, and thirteen others, including three children, eventually signed Yamashita's register swearing "upon [their] oath" that they would "become his pupils and agree to allegiance and fidelity to the honor and respect the art of judo and all the teaching of the professor."<sup>49</sup>

Roosevelt's continued interest in the sport certified it as a modern sport, particularly in the context of the Cult of Masculinity. Judo came into the United States at a time when the Progressive movement was starting to stress physical exercise and exertion within the upper and middle classes. Roosevelt himself was one of the greatest proponents of this new, modern style of viewing the body. He believed that he overcame a sickly and effete childhood thanks to daily exercise. Roosevelt also was dedicated to Pacific economic expansion and firmly believed that America's future lay in Pacific Rim markets. He publically admired Japan's well-coordinated surprise attack against the Russian Asiatic Fleet in 1904 and associated judo's use of "trickery" with their defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet at the

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<sup>47</sup> See Christopher Benfey, *The Great Wave: Gilded Age Misfits, Japanese Eccentrics, and the Opening of Old Japan* (New York: Random House, 2007), 245.

<sup>48</sup> It is important to note that many Westerners used the term *jujutsu* when discussing all Japanese martial arts. Brousse and Matsumoto, 24.

<sup>49</sup> John Stevens, *The Way of Judo: A Portrait of Jigoro Kano and His Students* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2013), np.

Battle of Tsushima.<sup>50</sup> Roosevelt went so far as to get Yamashita a position teaching self-defense at the U.S. Naval Academy, for which Yamashita received \$1,666 per semester.<sup>51</sup> Yamashita also taught wealthy people in Washington D.C., including the “wives and children of politicians and prominent individuals in society.”<sup>52</sup> Charles Atlas (1892-1972) and Earle Leiderman (1886-1970), along with other famous strongmen such as Galen Gough (1899-1962) began to offer courses in their own versions of *jujutsu* at their clubs and gyms and through correspondence. Atlas’s correspondence course claimed that *jujutsu* was “the method the sneaky Japs use to overpower an opponent. It is seemingly miraculous in that it enables a weaker person to easily subdue one much stronger than himself.”<sup>53</sup>

All of this preceded the establishment of formal judo dojos in the United States and the founding dates of most dojos indicate that their existence was due largely thanks to the Nisei coming of age. Rafu Dojo’s incorporation in 1910 on the first floor of Yamato Hall, came just five years after judo’s introduction to Roosevelt, but the other American dojos did not appear until over a decade later. San Fernando Dojo opened in 1923, followed by San Gabriel (~1925), Garden Grove (1928), Seinan (lit “southwest,” 1928, now known as the Crenshaw District), Hollywood (1931), Terminal Island (1933), Compton (1932), Long Beach (1935), and Uyemachi (lit. “upper town,” the Uptown district of Los Angeles, 1937). Before the outbreak of World War II at least twenty-eight stand-alone dojos existed in the Southland, not including classes held at *gakuen*, churches, and community centers.

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<sup>50</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 25-6.

<sup>51</sup> Joseph R. Svinth, *Getting a Grip, judo in the Nikkei Communities of the Pacific Northwest 1900-1950* (Guelph, Ontario: Electronic Journals of Martial Arts and Sciences, 2003).

<sup>52</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 46.



Previously, in a few stateside Japanese communities, Issei began to give lessons or set up martial arts dojos soon after their arrival, usually attracting single Issei laborers or farmers.<sup>54</sup> A few dojos were stand-alone, but most were attached directly to *gakuen* or were in spaces rented or donated on a part-time basis by area Nikkei businesses, community centers, and churches. For the main adherents to the martial arts, it was a way to hold on to their cultural heritage and find meaningful ways to engage in spirited, masculine competition with their Japanese peers. Interestingly, Issei were probably influenced more by the rising popularity of judo with Westerners than they were from the traditions of their homeland. At this time native self-defensive martial arts were fairly unpopular in Japan, particularly traditional *jujutsu*, which was associated with the samurai who were often viewed as snobbish power barons (both in real life and folk tales) to the rural peasantry, from which most Issei came.

The opening of dojos was an important moment in the history of judo to Southland Nisei since the rising interest in the sport led to a spirit of competition and stronger neighborhood and regional affiliation. Judoka (Anglicized from *jūdōka*, lit. “judo person,” one who practices judo) were required to participate in dojo tournaments in order to advance in rank, but the growing number of dojos meant that students wanted to compete against one another in order to prove that their sensei were the best.<sup>55</sup> Nisei enjoyed performing in front of large audiences and representing their home dojos (and, by extension, the area from which they hailed) by participating in five-man teams. The organization that came to coordinate these tournaments, the Nanka Yudanshakai (lit. Southern California Judo Grade

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<sup>54</sup> Roy Murakami, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

Holder's Association), formed in late 1929 by those who attained their black belts.<sup>56</sup> The organization standardized judo events in the Los Angeles region and held its first tournament in 1930.<sup>57</sup> Eventually, the Southern California judo Championships became a bi-yearly event held in Little Tokyo in which "visiting dignitaries and athletes" would be invited to watch along with throngs of parents and other interested parties.<sup>58</sup> Tournaments became so popular that exhibitions matches were held between local students and those aboard Japanese merchant or military vessels docked in the Port of Los Angeles.<sup>59</sup>

Judo's reputation as a strenuous but disciplined form of exercise based on modern scientific principles and progressive philosophy gained popularity. By the second decade of the twentieth century, judo was so popular in the United States that film and movie stars openly associated with the sport. Mary Miles Minter, a famous silent actress, bragged that during the winter, she was "strong enough to take the boys' sleds away from them," which was "lots of fun because it [made] them so angry." Slight of figure, she credited her abilities to *jujutsu*, which she was "crazy for" and had been "taking lessons in it for some time."<sup>60</sup> Jack Sergil, a sergeant with the Los Angeles Police Department took lessons at the San Fernando Dojo and during the war took over instruction and management at the Seinan Dojo in

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<sup>56</sup> "Grade holder" is the literal translation but the subjects in question here are black belts, which is the first belt one holds that qualifies the holder as an instructor.

<sup>57</sup> Svinth, "Judo in Southern and Central California."

<sup>58</sup> Photographs of these events demonstrate that they were very well attended. See Roy Murakami, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives; Shig Miyaki, interviewed by Tom Ikeda and Barbara Takei, September 22, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives; Takashi Hoshizaki, interviewed by Tom Ikeda and Jim Gatewood, July 28, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>59</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 62.

<sup>60</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 29.

southwest Los Angeles.<sup>61</sup> More practitioners began to publish literature praising judo such as those by Hancock, entitled, *Japanese Physical Training* (1904) and another by the American College of Physical Culture in 1905 entitled *A Complete Course of Jiu-Jitsu and Physical Culture* which claimed that “the Japanese are the heartiest race of people in the world today, and we attribute their wonderful strength and power of endurance solely to the persistent practice of their national system of physical development.”<sup>62</sup> The book went on to praise Japanese martial arts, particularly judo, as it developed “every muscle and strengthens every organ in the human body.” Not only were its benefits for the outward body praised, but so too was its ability to help heal and cure inner ailments and maladies. The martial art, the writers of the College reasoned, could help cure or relieve constipation, indigestion, dyspepsia, insomnia, heart problems, and could make its practitioners restore lost vigor and vitality in both body and brain.

Although Yoshihiro Uchida eventually went on to help judo achieve acceptance at the collegiate and then Olympic levels, he started learning judo in Garden Grove simply because it was “fun” and allowed him to “tumble around with [his] friends.”<sup>63</sup> Although it may have been Kanō’s

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<sup>61</sup> Both dojos had a large contingent of Caucasian students and Seinan trained Warren Lewis, Southern California’s first African American black belt. *Seinan* literally means “southwest” and was also the name for an area with a large Nikkei community now known as the Crenshaw District. See Seinan: Southwest Los Angeles, Storeis and Experiences from Residents of Japanese Ancestry (2011). Sergil eventually went on to become a Hollywood stuntman and trained famous Hollywood stuntman Gene “Judo” LeBell at Seinan. See Svinth, “Judo in Southern and Central California” and James C. Udel, *The Film Crew of Hollywood: Profiles of Grips, Cinematographers, Designers, a Gaffer, a Stuntman and a Makeup Artist* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 43. Seinan and Uyemachi Dojo stayed open throughout the war.

<sup>62</sup> The full title of Hancock’s book is *Japanese Physical Training: The System of Exercise, Diet, and General Mode of Living that has made the Mikado’s People the Healthiest, Strongest, and Happiest Men and Women in the World* (New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905). The book published by the American College of Physical Culture contains lessons by John J. O’Brien, but is not written entirely by him. See also John J. O’Brien, *A Complete Course of Jiu-Jitsu and Physical Culture* (Boston: Physicians Publishing Company, 1905).

<sup>63</sup> Yoshiro Uchida, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, May 17, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

desire for judo to instill cooperative morals in its practitioners, to Uchida and his friends the sport was simply good, clean, culturally-acceptable (by both mainstream American and Japanese immigrant cultures) fun. Sam Horino, who grew up gardening with his family in Hollywood, enjoyed the sport's ability to connect him to his friends. He and his best friend often split bouts on a "fifty-fifty" basis, neither admitting defeat, instead preferring to explain their shortcomings by saying they "tripped" on their own feet, forcing the referee to award a point to the other.<sup>64</sup> Frank Emi—who used to get up at four in the morning to purchase produce for his family's grocery store—actually reveled in the contact aspects of the sport. He began judo at the San Fernando dojo when he was fourteen (he had to wait a year to convince his father to let him go because his father "didn't like the teacher") and took to it because he liked contact sports and "loved tackling" while playing sandlot football.<sup>65</sup> Frank Omatsu also enjoyed playing football, but after an injury to his brother, his father, who wanted his sons to take judo, "wouldn't sign [his] consent [forms.]" When, after returning from a trip to Japan ("in 1935 or '36) the boys' mother presented he and his three brothers with judo and kendo uniforms and gave them a choice. All four chose judo and eventually undertook the sport at Kenneth Kaname Kuniyuki's Uyemachi Judo Dojo located at Fedora and Twelfth Streets.<sup>66</sup> Some Nisei used judo's practical training,

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<sup>64</sup> Sam Horino, interviewed by Frank Abe, February 22, 1993, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>65</sup> Frank eventually became a member of the Hollywood Judo Dojo in 1937 where he remained a student until his evacuation. The San Fernando Dojo was started in 1923 by Seigoro Murakami. Frank Emi, interviewed by Frank Abe and Frank Chin, February 23, 1993, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Kaname Kuniyuki was an early Nisei born in 1910 in Seattle and eventually trained in Seattle and then at Keio University in 1932. He returned to the United States in 1935 and was soon hired by Jack Wada, Sr. the owner of Seinan Dojo in Southwest LA (established 1928) to take over for the retiring Nasutaro Matsura, one of its founders. Kuniyuki eventually became head instructor at Uyemachi Dojo. Both dojos attracted enough Caucasian students to remain open during the Second World War and were the only two in the Los Angeles region to accomplish this feat. See See Svith, "Judo in Southern and Central California" and an obituary that ran in the *Rafu Shimpō* in "Los Angeles: Kenneth Kaname Kuniyuki, 9 Dan, Judo Shihan (Master Instructor) died on November 28, 2002 due to illness. He was 92 years old."

particularly as they came of age in the 1930s. Thomas Shigekuni whose parents owned several nurseries in the Southland had a younger brother, Osamu, who had “a little difficulty” from a group of boys because of his race. Problems ceased after his brother took them out one-by-one to “the grass someplace up around the schoolyard” and held them until each submitted.<sup>67</sup>

Nisei who lived in the Los Angeles area were also undoubtedly attracted to the sport in the early 1930s (after which the bulk of Southland dojos opened) when, on the eve of the 1932 Olympiad in Los Angeles, Jigorō Kanō went on a tour of the western hemisphere to promote judo as an Olympic sport. Although he failed to garner enough votes from the International Olympic Committee, Kanō became a Nikkei celebrity whose persona and modern ideals bridged the gap between their Japanese heritage and modernity. Kanō tirelessly traveled to many European countries, Canada, Hawaii, and several large cities in the United States, including San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, and New York.<sup>68</sup> He promoted judo at speaking engagements, demonstrations, interviews for the media, and through gala dojo openings.<sup>69</sup> Kanō also campaigned both in and out of the Japanese community in America and helped local dojos organize into more tightly-knit societies. In 1932, Kanō spoke at the University of Southern California and published in *the Journal of Health and Physical Education*, stating in both that judo did not exist simply to overcome attackers, but to help youth improve themselves, their spirit and their morals and, by larger extension, society.<sup>70</sup> That same year, Kanō spoke to Nisei and demonstrated

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<sup>67</sup> Thomas Shigekuni, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, August 31, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>68</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 51.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 52-3 and Roy Murakami, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>70</sup> Jigoro Kano, "The Contribution of Jiudo to Education," *Journal of Health and Physical Education* 3, no. 9 (1932), pp. 37-40, 58.

his holistic approach to education, imploring them to learn what they could do in judo and Japanese language school so that they could help their fellow non-Japanese countrymen to better understand their homeland.<sup>71</sup> He also spoke to the Issei, explaining his belief that the Nisei “must first of all be taught to become...good American citizens.” and that “Americans of Japanese ancestry could only fulfill their proper part in their country’s national life by becoming genuine (meaning patriotic and servile) citizens.”<sup>72</sup>

Many Nisei took Kanō’s lessons to heart, which allowed their parents to use the sport to turn around divergent youth. Frank Sumida, whose parents ran a restaurant on fifth street in Little Tokyo, was misbehaved as a child and “used to love to fight” other children in the neighborhood.<sup>73</sup> When Sumida turned twelve, he began to take judo lessons at Rafu Dojo under the direction of Carl Shoji, who also taught at the San Gabriel Dojo. Sensei Shoji took Sumida under his wing and began to earn his respect. Sumida believed that Sensei Shoji found him “curable” and began to show him techniques more advanced than his level. Eventually Sumida began to attend practices four nights a week and win at tournaments, unless it was “against a real tough guy.”<sup>74</sup> Students who did not take these lessons to heart found it difficult to advance through the ranks. One such student was Charles Oihe Hamasaki, a Terminal Islander who described himself as a bit of a “juvenile delinquent.” He eventually made it to *nikyu* (second brown belt) but failed to advance further even though his skills warranted advancement

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<sup>71</sup> Brousse and Matsumoto, 60-1.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> His parents generally ignored his behavior so as long as no one was injured or nothing was damaged and other adults seemed to encourage his behavior so as long as the fighting was “just fists.”

<sup>74</sup> Frank Sumida, interviewed by Tom Ikeda and Barbara Takei, September 23, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

because his “character wasn’t that good.” Hamasaki was known to run with a rather rough group of friend and used his familiarity with the small island community to become a successful petty thief until he was finally caught and was, to the embarrassment of his parents and the larger community, given a year’s probation.<sup>75</sup>

Judo was not a sport with an American origin, but that made little difference to its acceptability to Americans. The acceptability of settling arguments in bloody, murderous ways had long-since vanished in the civilized world. Thanks to this, less-lethal combative sports became popular in the late 1800s and little care was given to their origin (with the exception that most came from countries participating in the Second Industrial Revolution) as long as they emphasized physical development and kinesiological science over destructive capabilities. Kanō gave the world this type of sport and Westerners readily accepted it as a form of exercise and self-defense. Nisei had more exposure to judo than most Americans and began to practice it in numbers large enough to sustain several Southland-area dojos. Nisei were also ensured of its acceptability because it had been used to train professional wrestlers, Hollywood stars and starlets, and even ex-presidents.<sup>76</sup> Los Angeles-area minorities and whites even took to the sport, so much that two dojos stayed open throughout the internment period. In the end, Nisei never saw judo as a Japanese sport because the sport never stressed its ethnic heritage—only its modernity.

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<sup>75</sup> Charles Oihe Hamasaki, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa and Tom Ikeda, February 24, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>76</sup> Granted, some of these celebrities took American forms a *jujutsu*, but since they are all under the same family of martial arts, acceptance of *jujutsu* be a major celebrity would indicate acceptance of the concepts of judo, as well.

## Baseball

While the *Rafu Shimpo*'s columnist in 1926 was misguided about judo, he was certainly correct about one thing: Nisei were drawn to baseball and the sport was deeply entrenched within the sporting histories of both the United States and Japan. The solution in his mind was to find an acceptable substitute for judo that would instill masculine qualities into children and the answer was in a game Nisei youth already gravitated toward. "Baseball is it!" he proclaimed. Its supporters on both sides of the ocean argued that it was modern, scientific, and appealed to the common senses and inherent physical nature of most hard-working, masculine boys and men. While the United States is undoubtedly the home of modern baseball, by the time the first organized team emerged in Japan, the rules stipulating the modern form of the game were not even forty years old. And although baseball's popularity grew during the Civil War, the sport remained relatively unorganized until structured social clubs and fraternities became popular in the late 1860s.<sup>77</sup> It was only in the early 1870s that baseball's popularity began to clearly supersede that of one of its progenitors, cricket, partially because baseball was being branded an "American" sport and partially because Americans from many walks of life began associating baseball and its domestic roots with masculinity and working-class manhood while

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<sup>77</sup> See Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 236-239.



increasingly associating cricket with its English heritage and the upper-class.<sup>78</sup> By the 1880s, when baseball began to accelerate in popularity thanks, in part, to the organization of truly professional leagues, others had introduced the sport to Latin America and the Caribbean (at least as early as the 1860s) and, soon thereafter, into far-flung nations and territories such as Japan, the Philippines, and Hawaii. Since baseball spread so far and wide so quickly, one historian concluded that the United States “could never claim a monopoly on a special connection with baseball,” even during these most formative years of its development.<sup>79</sup> By the 1890s, baseball secured its future with American adolescents and it quickly became the most popular organized youth sport and the only sport to regularly interest over sixty percent of the boys surveyed in the decades before the Second World War.<sup>80</sup> Also, by the 1910s, baseball was already Japan’s de facto team sport, especially among youth. Later that year, the *Rafu Shimpō* reported that Sunday league play commenced between 130 players representing twelve Nisei baseball teams. Soon, the newspapers were regularly covering area teams, particularly the darlings of the Southland Nikkei community, the Los Angeles Nippons.

*Oyatoi* (hired foreigners) were the first to introduce baseball to Japan in hopes of interjecting a team-oriented sport (of which Japan had basically none) that could also appeal to the country’s growing

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<sup>78</sup> A basic description of this change can be found in Avi Santo, “Baseball,” in *American Masculinities: A Historical Encyclopedia*, ed. Bret Carroll (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2003). Albert G. Spalding summarized the changing attitude toward cricket by saying the sport was simply an excuse for effeminate men to gather “drink afternoon tea, flirt, gossip, smoke, and take a whisky and soda,” while those who played baseball were filled with an excessive number of lexicographically-ordered “American” ideals including courage, confidence, combativeness, dash, discipline, determination, energy, eagerness, enthusiasm, and a host of other ideal traits ending with “virility.” Also, a typical description at this time for men from middle class (today, upper-class) background was be one of a “dandy” who was attracted to tailored clothing and paid too much attention to his fashionable appearance.

<sup>79</sup> Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams: How Baseball Linked the United States and Japan in Peace and War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). 2.

<sup>80</sup> Generally followed by football or basketball, swimming, and marbles. See Macleod, 122.

sense of modernity. Often well-versed in the scientific physical literature coming from Europe and North America, *Oyatoi* saw the potential for baseball to elevate and uplift the physical culture of Japan. One of the most influential reports by J. Adams Puffer—the director of a private welfare agency in Boston who wrote a widely-read book on gangs and hooliganism—reasoned that baseball was scientifically instinctual to boys because of its gang-like organization and a boy’s primitively masculine desire to “run...dodge...throw accurately and hard, to hit any quick-moving object with a club” because he reasoned that man’s “ancestors have been getting their food by swift running and quick dodging, by accurate throwing and deft hitting of objects with clubs.”<sup>81</sup> Frederick William Strange (1853-1889)—a British educator and athlete who preferred the game of baseball to that of his native land’s cricket—wrote *Outdoor Games* in 1883 as a textbook at Tokyo University (Tokyo Daigaku) and its preparatory school (Tokyo Daigaku Yobimon), which was designed to introduce various Western outdoor sports to Japanese students (by this time, students at the *yobimon* had already been introduced to the game by an American English teacher, Edward Mudgett, sometime between 1872 and 1874).<sup>82</sup> Although the text covered many Western sports, the bulk of it was spent on baseball, a sport which he described as utilizing both a person's “mental ability” as well as their “manly qualities.”<sup>83</sup> Strange connected the idea of these sports to the concept of holistic modernity, writing that “the aim of exercise is not only to

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<sup>81</sup> The quote is from J. Adams Puffer, *The Boy and His Gang*; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1912, 124. Analysis of Puffer and his beliefs see, David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press), 22, 110 and passim.

<sup>82</sup> Abe and Mangan, 100. See also by J. A. Mangan and Fan Hong, *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass Publishers, 2003) and Ikuo Abe “Muscular Christianity in Japan: The Growth of a Hybrid” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 5 (August 2006): 714-38. See Guthrie-Shimizu, 15 about Mudgett and 14-19 for other early teachers of the game.

<sup>83</sup> Donald Rodin, “Baseball and the Question for National Dignity in Meiji Japan,” *The American Historical Review* 85, no. 3 (June 1980), 518-9.

discipline the animal spirit of the human being, but also to cultivate the intelligence and morality of man” and, stressing baseball’s ability to go beyond mere book learning, “the moral training of the playing field evokes human qualities far more than the disciplines of the classroom.”<sup>84</sup> Strange’s status and his influence continued to grow in Japan throughout the next two decades as did the sports he introduced to Japan. Baseball, it seemed, was the perfect sport for indoctrinating youth into late nineteenth century-reformers’ ideals of masculinity, hard work, organizational management, and scientific refinement.

Japanese intellectuals, policymakers, and eventually the youth who became Issei did not only accept baseball because it emphasized modern masculinity, they rallied behind it because they believed that the sport was compatible with both Japan’s own sense of its moral past and future. One of Strange’s students, Chiyosaburo Takeda—who went on to become deeply involved in Japanese amateur athletics—found ways to connect Strange’s moral philosophies to Japanese history. “Sportsmanship,” Takeda wrote, “is equivalent to the qualities of [samurai],” stressing the concept’s sense of punctuality, meritocratic non-disputation, humbleness, and sense of thrift and fairness.<sup>85</sup> Baseball encapsulated the traditional virtues of “order, harmony, perseverance...self-restraint...loyalty, honor, and courage” that could be compared to Japanese traditional aesthetic and martial sensibilities.<sup>86</sup> Baseball’s promoters (both Western and Japanese) even compared a “skilled batter to samurai swordsmen” and described the

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<sup>84</sup> Quoted in Abe and Mangan, 101. Strange’s concept of “physical moralization” became so popular and well-known in Japan that he was decorated in 1888 by the Meiji government for devoting “himself to the task of encourage a love of athletic sports and out-door exercise among the students of Tokyo University and its Principal Schools, with results of *permanent value* to the nation.”

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Abe and Mangan, 102.

<sup>86</sup> Rodin, 519-20.

game using “embellished...poetic allusions to medieval warrior epics,” which meshed well with Japan’s “new bushido” (new warrior) spirit.<sup>8788</sup> Agreeing with him was Tei Nishimura, a Meiji educational reformer.<sup>89</sup> Connecting sports with the Meiji state’s attempts to foster a modern sense of nation-state among its population, Nishimura noted that “national” games such as American baseball and English cricket fostered both spirits of nationalism and *esprit de corps*.<sup>90</sup>

While baseball was connected to the American and Japanese past by drawing parallels between ideas of traditional culture and the sport, the rapid spread of baseball in both nations resulted from educators, industrialists, and the sporting public’s acceptance of the sport due to its compatibility with modern society.<sup>91</sup> Early records indicate that baseball was probably introduced to Japanese students in 1872 by Horace Wilson (1843-1927), a professor of English at the forerunner to Tokyo University.<sup>92</sup> By 1876, his teams were regularly drawing Saturday crowds, playing both each other and teams made up of foreigners in Yokohama.<sup>93</sup> Later, a young railroad engineer, Hiroshi Hiraoka—sent in 1871 (at the age of fifteen) by the Ministry of Engineering to study in the United States—organized the first private

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>88</sup> Abe and Mangan, 103. Also see Ikuo Abe, “The Japanese Reception of Sport: A Modernization” *Bulletin of Institute of Health and Sport Science, University of Tsukuba* 22 (1999), 80.

<sup>89</sup> Nishimura is general understudied in English, but some of his influence is reflected in Lee Yeounsuk and Maki Hirano Hubbard, *The Ideology of Kokugo: Nationalizing Language in Modern Japan* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

<sup>90</sup> Abe and Mangan, 103.

<sup>91</sup> See Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu, 2-3, which summarizes the abrupt growth of baseball in Japan.

<sup>92</sup> See Ibid., 13 and William W. Kelly, “The Spirit and the Spectacle of School Baseball—Mass Media, Statemaking, and ‘Edu-tainment’ in Japan, 1905-1935,” in *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World XIV, Information and Communication*, ed. Umesao Tada, William W. Kelly, and Kubo Masatoshi (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 105.

<sup>93</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 14.

baseball club in 1878. Named the Shinbashi Athletic Club, it was made up of railroad officials.<sup>94</sup> Other students sent to America also brought their love of the game to Japan.<sup>95</sup> The sport received even more support after the Meiji government began to stress the need for physical education. Even more universities began to form baseball teams and elementary and secondary school teachers began to teach the sport in urban and rural areas, alike. By the turn of the century, Japanese athletic clubs began to compete against each other as well as university teams. In the decade following, the popularity of baseball had grown so much that the sport had become Japan's unofficial national sport due to its nearly-universal acceptance in compulsory schooling, its popularity at the collegiate level, and increasing popularity among the general public (particularly in port cities such as Yokohama). By 1910, Japan was in the midst of a baseball craze kicked off by professional barnstorming tours (began by the Reach Sporting Goods All-Americans in 1908 followed by visits by the Chicago White Sox and the New York Giants in 1913) and international collegiate team swaps (beginning in 1905 when Waseda University's baseball team toured the United States). This craze eventually spawned companies such as Mizuno Kabushiki-gaisha (lit. Mizuno Corporation, Limited, founded in 1906 as one of the first sporting goods manufacturers in Japan), several baseball magazines (including *Undo-sekai* [1908, lit. *Sporting World*] and *Gekkan Bēsūbōru* [1908, lit. *Monthly Baseball*]), and gave rise to even more youth and adult leagues.<sup>96</sup> Just after the end of World War I, a new inexpensive and safer version of the baseball made of

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 20-2 and Rodin, 519. His love for baseball was sealed while he studied in Boston, where he was able to watch the Red Stockings win four consecutive national championships between 1872 and 1875.

<sup>95</sup> See Guthrie-Shimizu 19-23.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 83-5.

rubber was introduced, making the game more accessible to both the young and to recreationally-minded adults.<sup>97</sup>

The rise of baseball among Japanese was not isolated to Japan as Issei laborers living in Hawaii were also exposed to the game even before its rise in popularity in their homeland, thus creating a sport that became the de facto team sport for Japanese who emigrated even before it became popular with youth in Japan.<sup>98</sup> By 1852, several teams were active on the islands and by the early 1890s, Japanese plantation laborers had already adopted the game as one of their favorite pastimes.<sup>99</sup> By 1899, baseball was the most popular team sport played by the Japanese living in the Hawaiian Islands who constituted seventy percent of the population (exceeding 60,000). When Issei began to have children, many of the islands' business and social leaders were concerned about the exposure of Hawaii's growing number of Nisei to the large numbers of Issei bachelors. In an effort to properly socialize the Nisei and to give bachelor Issei a "non-vice" outlet, a Japanese missionary, Reverend Takie Okamura opened a Japanese language school in Hawaii in 1896 and immediately began to teach baseball to his Nisei pupils, the same sport that their counterparts in Japan were learning. Within three years, some of his players were so skilled that the first organized team, the Nisshin Club (lit. "daily progress," later named the Excelsior) began to play in Hawaii's youth leagues against other teams of primarily Hawaiian, Portuguese, and Chinese extraction.<sup>100</sup> In 1905, the Asahi (Rising Sun) baseball team was formed by Honolulu Japanese

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<sup>97</sup> Kelly, 108.

<sup>98</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 41-5. While folklore credits baseball's introduction to Hawaii in 1849 by Alexander Cartwright, the game probably arrived on the islands via New England Christian missionaries in the 1820s.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 45-7 and 57-61 and passim and Bill Staples, Jr., *Kenichi Zenimura: Japanese American Baseball Pioneer* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 16.

<sup>100</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 57-58 and Staples, Jr. 18.

youth and were soon playing in Hawaii's multi-ethnic leagues.<sup>101</sup> Thanks to Hawaii and the way it acted as a bridge between both people and athletics, baseball was a permanent social and athletic connection between the United States and Japan. For Japanese boys and men who embraced baseball after the turn of the century, the game was no less Japanese to them than it was stridently American to those stateside.

Just as they did in Hawaii, Nikkei on the mainland began to play the sport almost immediately as their play was encouraged by both the Japanese and dominant communities alike. Nisei were easily able to play the sport among themselves and with children of other ethnicities since, at the heart of the sport's appeal was that it was easy to play, rudimentary and inexpensive equipment, and required only an open field in which to play.<sup>102</sup> At the most informal levels, children spontaneously played the sport on the open lots, fields, and schoolyards at their disposal. Akira Kageyama who grew up near Little Tokyo would often play sandlot baseball against other local groups of children in local empty parking lots.<sup>103</sup> Bill Shishima, whose father jumped ship in New York while working on a Norwegian vessel, recalled it being one of the common games played on Maryknoll's dirt playground.<sup>104</sup> Most churches, *gakuen*, and *kenjinkai* (prefectural associations) used baseball as a form of entertainment since most Nikkei knew the rules for the game. Charles Hamasaki, who grew up on Terminal Island, recalled that Nisei and Kibei, groups often at odds with one another (even though they were of the same generation), would learn Japanese sports as a group, but they would always play against one another in baseball,

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<sup>101</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 58 and Staples, Jr., 18.

<sup>102</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 100.

<sup>103</sup> Along with football and hide and seek within local cemeteries. Akira "Frank" Kageyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, May 5, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Along with "tag, hide and go seek, marbles, and 'pocket knife games.'" Bill Hiroshi Shishima, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, February 8, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

demonstrating that the sport went beyond notions simple play and encouraged conceptualizations of group organization, cohesion, and advancement.<sup>105</sup> In some of the more rural areas of the Los Angeles region, isolated Japanese families would also picnic with families from other nearby areas and these meetings would almost invariably turn into impromptu baseball games.<sup>106</sup> George T. “Joe” Sakato’s parents, who ran a barbershop and bathhouse in Colton, often coordinated with the four other Japanese families in Colton for baseball-picnics in one of the neighboring towns such as Riverside or Redlands.<sup>107</sup>

Baseball was one of the main sports utilized by groups of Nisei to peacefully challenge Nisei who lived in differing geographical areas of the Southland.<sup>108</sup> Cedric Masaki Shimo, who grew up in Boyle Heights, and eight of his friends began to play sandlot baseball and began to enter area tournaments as the Cougars. Eventually, the group became so diverse and large that it came to encompass around fifty boys and several teams (e.g. Cougar Seniors, Juniors, Babes, etc.) and they regularly challenged groups from the region, particularly their greatest rivals, the Olivers, who hailed from Little Tokyo.<sup>109</sup> Henry Nakano, whose parents originally owned a small Spanish-English-Japanese

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<sup>105</sup> Interestingly, Hamasaki was born in Japan and moved to the United States when he was three months old. Although he was a Kibei-Nisei, he identified as a Nisei growing up and did not find out he was born in Japan until he entered junior high school. Charles Oihe Hamasaki, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa and Tom Ikeda, February 24, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>106</sup> See George T. “Joe” Sakato, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, May 14, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. Although a small town, Colton was (and still is) a major rail junction in the San Bernardino Valley and George’s family served mostly Caucasian and ethnic railworkers. The other three families were: Nishida, who ran a chop suey house; Shimazu, who ran a grocery store; and “a single [Japanese] man” who “worked at various places” including the Shimazu’s.

<sup>108</sup> See Hillary Jenks, “‘Home is Little Tokyo’: Race, Community, and Memory in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles” (PhD. diss., University of Southern California, 2008), 92-94.

<sup>109</sup> Cedrick M. Shimo, interviewed by tom Ikeda and Martha Nakagawa, February 24, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.



(both his parents were trilingual) grocery store in Boyle Heights played on more than one team growing up, including the Red Sox.<sup>110</sup> George Sakoto, gathered up his many brothers and other San Bernadino-area Nisei and played teams from Riverside, Pomona, Orange County, and Los Angeles.<sup>111</sup>

Out of these clubs, several became competitive at the amateur and semi-professional levels. With near-universal support from Los Angeles-area Nikkei, baseball became central to the community as a source of entertainment and pride as well as a way to strengthen community bonds and to smooth over intraethnic faults—particularly the rivalries between members of larger Nikkei communities such as Little Tokyo, Boyle Heights, Sawtelle [Little Osaka], and Terminal Island—that sometimes separated Nikkei. These clubs became an important center of community pride and connected Nikkei together based on their love for the game, the modernity it represented, and its connections to both the United States and Japan. The first team was probably the Fuji Athletic Club, formed in San Francisco in 1903 by Issei businessmen and intellectuals while the first team in the Southland was probably the Nanka, who went on a regional barnstorming tour in 1907 and 1909.<sup>112</sup> Around 1913, the Pasadena Tomoyes began play against the Hollywood Sakuras, and the Los Angeles group of three: the Hayotos, the Sanshu, and the Nippon Club.<sup>113</sup> A year later, after playing for some regional, multi-ethnic all-star

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<sup>110</sup> Henry Nakano, interviewed by Richard Potashin, December 5, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>111</sup> George T. “Joe” Sakato, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, May 14, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>112</sup> See “Japanese in Southern California,” Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, 18. A summary of early clubs can be found in Guthrie-Shimizu, 100-4. Also covered in Samuel P. Regalado, “Baseball’s *Kakehashi*: A Bridge of Understanding and the *Nikkei* Experience,” in *Mapping an Empire of American Sport: Expansion, Assimilation, Adaptation and Resistance*, ed. Mark Dyreson, J. A. Manga, Roberta J. Park (London and New York: Routledge, 2012). Also see Joel S. Franks, *Asian Pacific American and Baseball: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008) and Samuel O. Regalado, *Baseball in Nikkei America: Japanese American Players from Immigration and Internment to the Major Leagues* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 18.

<sup>113</sup> Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, 18-19.

teams, several Nisei and Shin-Issei<sup>114</sup> youth began to form an all-star group known as the Los Angeles Japanese Nine. That year, the Nine and other Nisei semipro teams began a tradition of transregional competition in the Intermountain West, and even across the Pacific in barnstorming tours.<sup>115</sup> By the late nineteen-teens, many cities in California had organized leagues that consisted of semipro and amateur teams, one of the earliest being the Fresno Athletic Club (FAC), which first played in the Fresno Winter League of 1919-1920. Soon, a farm system was set up in the Nikkei leagues that resembled that of the pros. In the Los Angeles region, team-based Nisei baseball began to take formal shape sometime during the 1910s, beginning with the all-Issei Pasadena team and teams such as the Los Angeles Japanese. Teams such as these were playing organized, regional semi-professional ball no later than 1918.<sup>116</sup> By 1922, enough Japanese teams were playing organized baseball that a state-wide championship occurred, in which it appears that the FAC defeated an all-star team from Los Angeles named the Nippons (not the same team formed in 1926).<sup>117</sup> Around 1926, the Los Angeles Nippons (often shortened by Nikkei and non-Nikkei, alike, to “the Nips”) were formed when the Diamonds, an

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<sup>114</sup> The Japanese character “shin,” (新) when affixed to the front of a word this way means “new.” Shin-Issei were the young sons and daughters who came over with their Issei parents. As such, this technically makes them Issei (and therefore unable to take American citizenship at the time), but their relative age makes them closer to Nisei in age.

<sup>115</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 104

<sup>116</sup> Records of organized Nikkei baseball are sparse before the mid-1920s, but see Franks, 60, and Regalado, *Nikkei Baseball*, Chapter Three. While there were several semi-professional Nisei teams in the Los Angeles region, few received the coverage and notoriety of the Nippons. In April of 1920, Doc Anderson, a Los Angeles resident and black businessman, and Joe Pirrone, a white, winter league veteran, built White Sox Park (also known as Anderson and Anderson’s Park) in Boyle Heights for use by West Coast Negro League and soon negotiated a deal for the Nippons to play there. See William McNeil, *Black Baseball Out of Season: Pay for Play Outside of the Negro Leagues* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), 69, Staples, 32-3, and Regalado “Baseball’s *kakehashi*,” 69-73.

<sup>117</sup> Northern California teams were holding championships at least by 1920, if not earlier. See Staples, 32-35 for a breakdown of these early championship years. This team, as far as I can tell, is not the same as the Los Angeles Nippons that formed circa 1926.

uptown team primarily made up of gardeners' sons, and a portion of the Olivers merged.<sup>118</sup> Although the year of their founding is difficult to discern, by the mid-1920s, the San Pedro Skippers—a community team supported by voluntary donations from Terminal Islanders—were also playing ball on a field purpose-built near the island's Baptist Church.<sup>119</sup> In 1926, numerous teams in the Los Angeles region consisting of around twelve teams with around 125 players (including the San Fernando Nippons [later renamed the Aces], the L.A. Nippons, and the Skippers) formed the Southern California Japanese Baseball Association in order to strengthen bonds between Nikkei and to demonstrate the Nisei's athletic prowess (baseball at most club levels was usually, but not always, segregated, while play within some civic and religious intuitions and all public schools was integrated).<sup>120</sup>

From almost the beginning, professional baseball was a White man's game, but even with this restriction, a few Japanese players received the attention of professional teams. Indeed, in June of 1897, the Cleveland Spiders signed "Sorakichi," a "relative" of a "Japanese wrestler" who had perished a few years prior, who was playing amateur ball in Chicago and caught the eye of the manager of the Spiders. Nothing ever came of his signing and not much is known about the player from the Land of the Rising Sun.<sup>121</sup> In 1905, Shumza Sugimoto, a 23 year-old outfielder was invited to play for a training team of the New York Giants in Hot Spring, Arkansas. Sugimoto was a "jiu jitsu expert" who apparently made

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<sup>118</sup> Nagata, 100. And Japanese American Chamber of Commerce of Southern California, 19.

<sup>119</sup> The Skippers were certainly playing by the mid-1930s, but one of their logos reads "est. 1939." See Susumu Iwasaki, interviewed by Richard Potashin, April 11, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>120</sup> *Rafu Shimpo*, July 18, 1926. The paper actually reported the existence of twelve Nisei teams comprised of about 130 players. Also see Regalado, "Nikkei Baseball," 61 and Nagata, 100.

<sup>121</sup> Staples, Jr., 15.

quite a spectacle of himself when he successfully took the Giants' outfielder, Mike Donlin (118 lbs vs 175) off of his feet. The Giants' manager, John McGraw, praised Sugimoto, saying that he was "extraordinarily alert, a splendid batter and base runner and unusually quick and accurate picking up flies and grounders."<sup>122</sup> Unfortunately, the yellow color line had been drawn in professional baseball in the United States by the time *Sporting Life Magazine* asked in 1905 "should the color line be intended to include Japanese players?" The *defacto* answer was "yes" and McGraw passed on Sugimoto who eventually played ball for the semi-pro Creole Stars, a racially-integrated team in New Orleans.<sup>123</sup> In 1920, a Japanese outfielder named "Satsumma," who played with the Atlanta Southern League Club, was purchased by the Pittsburgh Nationals. Again, he never played in the major leagues, but his presence within the system gave rise to hope that someday, skill and persistence could offset the color barrier.<sup>124</sup> Doc Anderson and the White Sox also invited Los Angeles High School baseball phenom, Sanji "the Japanese Wonder" Sakamoto, who according to the *Los Angeles Times* had "as much zip on the ball as any of the big fellows" and "perfect control," to play for his club. Although the physically diminutive Sakamoto (five feet, 125 pounds) was eventually cut in favor of another player and went on to become a dentist, his consideration once again gave presence to the possibilities of playing at higher

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<sup>122</sup> "Japanese for McGraw's Team," *New York Times*, February 10, 1905, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Staples, Jr., 16.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

levels.<sup>125</sup> Later, Kenso Nushida, a Nisei from Hilo eventually became the first Japanese American to play successfully at the professional level when he played for the Class AA Sacramento Solons in 1932.<sup>126</sup>

As was true with the larger national culture, the love for baseball was not limited only to boys. Many girls also had fond memories of the sport. Dorothy Yasoe Ikkanda (a self-described tomboy) resented *gakuen* because its after-school schedule meant she had to miss Girls' Athletic Association-sanctioned baseball. She often tried to miss her ride to *gakuen* (provided by the teacher) by walking too slowly to her rendezvous point.<sup>127</sup> Ikkanda's desire for baseball was regularly fulfilled by her Buddhist church's high school-age girls' club, on which she was allowed to play even after she married just before the war. Kay Une Kaneko—a member of the only Japanese family who lived in their community, who was also a self-proclaimed tomboy—regularly played ball with the other neighborhood children in their backyards or in the area's many vacant lots and little-used streets.<sup>128</sup> After growing up isolated in Monterrey Park, Keiko Kageyama was finally able to attend *gakuen* in Downey when her family relocated to Hynes sometime around 1933.<sup>129</sup> Once again, the students at Downey played co-ed baseball as a team sport, just as their contemporaries did in Japan. Kageyama's athletic interests

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<sup>125</sup> Sakamoto was actually an Issei-Nisei who immigrated to the Los Angeles area from Kagoshima with his parents in 1906.

<sup>126</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 106.

<sup>127</sup> She also enjoyed playing basketball. When asked about what *gakuen* meant to her outside of language lessons, Ikkanda once again demonstrated her fondness for the sport by stating that “it was one of your social outlets, even though you didn't get a chance to play baseball, you got a chance to be with your friends.” Dorothy Yasoe Ikkanda, interviewed by Richard Potashin, July 18, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>128</sup> Kaneko described her home as being “quite a ways out” from Little Tokyo on “38th Street.” This probably put her family in or near the Historic South Central district of Los Angeles. Kay Uno Kaneko, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, June 9, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>129</sup> Hynes has now been integrated into Paramount, California. Kageyama had to attend *gakuen* in Downey since, according to her testimony, only a “three other” Nikkei “people” living in the area. Keiko Kageyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, May 5, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

expanded, and by the time she attended Compton High School, she shot archery as well as played field hockey, soccer, volleyball, and baseball. Kiyoko Morey Kaneko, who was from the sole Nikkei family in their part of west Los Angeles, tried to play baseball as much as she could with the local boys, but was often rebuffed for being a girl.<sup>130</sup> Toyoko Okumura, whose parents ran a tofu factory in Gardena, was thankful that the family business provided a “wide area” where she and her neighborhood friends played softball.<sup>131</sup>

When Nisei looked toward the future, baseball was one of the areas that showed promise and held presence for their aspirations. As stated before, baseball is the only team sport in which a supermajority of American boys aspired to play. Out of these, few, regardless of their ethnicity, would ever have any hope of playing for the major leagues, but young Nisei had ample opportunities to play the sport in the same organized manner that any other young child did growing up in the United States. Robert M. Wada attended the multi-ethnic and working-class Lincoln Elementary School. Part of an area-wide elementary-school league, Wada’s baseball team enjoyed regularly beating the boys from the upper-class Kingsbury Elementary School from the other end of town.<sup>132</sup> Even though his father wanted him to study judo (and forbade him to play football), Frank K. Omatsu, who lived in the uptown region of Los Angeles where his father worked as a produce buyer for J.T. Bunn & Company, played baseball “all the time” for his Wilshire YMCA team against other uptown-area Ys, none of which were primarily

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<sup>130</sup> Kaneko described her home as being “West L.A.; not Sawelle kind of West L.A., but the west part of Los Angeles,” where her father, who owned a grocery store on Alameda Avenue, moved his family away from downtown because he did not want his children “to grow up among drunkards.” Kiyoko Morey Kaneko, interviewed by Dana Hoshide, July 29, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>131</sup> Toyoko Okumura, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, July 6, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>132</sup> Robert W. Wada, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 19, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

Japanese American.<sup>133</sup> In schools, baseball was sponsored at both the club and institutional levels. After Frank Omatsu matriculated into Berendo Junior High, the gym coach, Harry “Cap” Trotter ran two lunch-hour leagues (major/minor, big/peanut).<sup>134</sup> In order to teach the players business sensibilities, Trotter had captains form teams by having their classmates sign contracts and they could promote, relegate, or trade that person depending on their level of play. Frank denied experiencing any prejudice of any sort under this system and eventually played varsity baseball at Los Angeles High School.<sup>135</sup> Although Kiru Maruyama loved the game, his performance at the highly-regarded Glendale High School was not enough to earn him a position on the team, but thanks to his enthusiasm he was made equipment manager.<sup>136</sup> Although the only Nisei on the squad, Maruyama denied prejudice either from the team or anyone else during his travels. Eventually, during his senior year, Glendale won the California Interscholastic Federation state championship in 1938, for which Maruyama was awarded “a little gold baseball for my keychain.”<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> While the definition of Uptown Los Angeles is now anachronistic, the area was well defined before the Second World War. Omatsu defined uptown as bounded by “Vermont and Western and Olympic and San Marino.” Frank K. Omatsu, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>134</sup> Harry Elber “Cap” Trotter (189-1954) was also a well-known track and football coach at UCLA before World War II. Both Berendo Jr. High and UCLA eventually named their track fields after him and he was eventually elected into Ventura County’s Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.

<sup>135</sup> Omatsu was the only Nisei playing baseball at Los Angeles High on December 7, 1941. His teammates were very supportive and met him en-masse the next day where they jokingly commented that “we got our first war prisoner.”

<sup>136</sup> Maruyama stated that he did not play Nisei-league baseball, but did not indicate why. Kiyu Maruyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. He did make it on to the B squad in football. Maruyama does not decisively say that was his senior year in this interview. He states “and that year, that last year...there were...we won the California championship.” Given that Maruyama was born in 1920, he most likely attended Glendale High School sometime in the years between 1935 and 1938. The publication *League Championships won by Glendale High School*, “Spring Sports,” <http://www.glendalehigh.com/league-championships.pdf> indicates that the only time in the 1930s that the team won the league championship was in 1938.

While the upper-tier professional leagues remained off-limits to Japanese, Nisei excelled at the semi-professional level and their successes at the secondary, college, and semi-professional levels continued to promote the dream of baseball. As noted earlier, Nisei semiprofessional teams were already playing regularly sometime before 1920. By 1927, the Los Angeles Nippons were the Nikkei stars of the Los Angeles region and between 1927 and 1931, the *Rafu Shimpō* almost “exclusively featured the Nippons in their Sunday editions...save for small snippets on other Nisei clubs.”<sup>138</sup> In 1927, Waseda University’s team was on another barnstorming tour; although the home-town team lost 11-7, “one of the largest crowds to witness a Japanese ball game” heaped admiration on their Nisei stars.<sup>139</sup> Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, the Nippons continually kept their presence within the community and raised their stature not only by playing well against other area Nisei teams, but by hosting several Japanese collegiate teams, as well. The entire Southland Nikkei closely followed the Nippons’ 1931 barnstorming trip to Japan and their 1935 and 1936 games against the nascent Tokyo Giants. In the former, the Nippons were invited by the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun* (Osaka Daily Newspaper) and left in February of 1931 and played a twenty five-game schedule in which they only lost five games. The club from Tokyo (officially founded as the Dai Nippon Tokyo Yakyu- Kurabu [Tokyo Japan Baseball Club]), left Japan in February 14, 1935 and played a 104-game, 59-city schedule included cities and towns in Canada, the United States, and Mexico.<sup>140</sup> Before crowds averaging more than 5,000, the Giants won more contests against the Nippons than they lost, but at the end of their

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<sup>138</sup> Regalado, “Baseball’s *Kakehashi*,” 70.

<sup>139</sup> See *Ibid.*, 71 and the *Los Angeles Japanese Daily News*, 9 May 1927 and *Rafu Shimpō*, 9 May 1927.

<sup>140</sup> The team began to refer to itself as the Tokyo Giants while they were touring the western part of the United States in order “to make the team easily recognizable to American audiences.” See Shimizu-Guthrie, 159-61.



tour the Giants declared that the Nippons were the best of the California Japanese group of semi-professional teams they played.<sup>141</sup> Even for those who did not aspire to be semi-professional players, baseball exchanges like these were an early staple of aspirational success for Nisei and even some of the youngest Nisei could look toward the possibility of someday touring Japan. In 1914, just one year after the White Sox and Giants toured Japan, two newspapers, the *Tokyo Nichinichi* (*Tokyo Daily*) and the *Osaka Nichinichi*, sponsored the Seattle Asahi's (made up of Nisei) tour of Japan where they played both college and semipro teams.<sup>142</sup> Just a year later a similar tour was undertaken by the Honolulu Asahi, the 1915 all-Hawaii interethnic champions. In the 1920s, baseball exchanges became commonplace and Nisei talent was regularly displaying their athletic talents in Japan.<sup>143</sup> By the middle of the 1930s, a few, select Nisei who toured in Japan were being picked to play in the startup Japanese professional baseball leagues.<sup>144</sup>

Baseball represents the epitome of physical modernity and resonated with the Nisei for many reasons. To begin with, the sport was simply immensely popular with all children of the Southland and almost all understood its simple rules. With a minimal amount of inexpensive equipment, anyone could begin a game in the region's multitude of empty spaces. Most children knew how to play the game and a majority of boys chose it as their most favorite sport. Because of this, the game crossed ethnic (and even gender) lines quite easily. The sport was also a common tool used to encourage socialization at organized at schools, civic and religious outings, and other group outings. Both parents and community

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<sup>141</sup> See Regalado, "Baseball's *Kakehashi*," 71.

<sup>142</sup> Guthrie-Shimizu, 105.

<sup>143</sup> It is important to note that many of these teams went with a few Caucasians (usually between one and four).

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

leaders appreciated baseball's flexibility because it piggybacked onto education's ideals of creating a properly socialized person who is used to working constructively in groups in order to overcome obstacles. Baseball's appeal was so widespread that Nisei could even aspire to join baseball teams at many different levels of organization, all the way up to semi-professional and college teams. Finally, the sport was ideal for Nisei because they had both Japanese and American heroes to look up and could incorporate the sport into their lives without worrying about its nationality.

## Conclusion

Although children may not have recognized the sports they played as specifically meeting the requirements of modernity, their very popularity and acceptance often relied on parents', educators', and reformers' acknowledgements that those sport somehow educated children and reinforced the progressive and "American" values learned in schools. The most modern of sports were ones that "could be intensively pursued, that allowed people to make a living in them and the masses to participate vicariously."<sup>145</sup> Baseball and judo were in a unique position to gain acceptance from the Nikkei community as they were popular both accepted in Japan and the United States. Both nations' notions of modern childrearing appealed to a physical ideal that could only be achieved through sports that took both modern science and conceptualizations of "the primitive" into account. Judo was a combative sport, appealing to man's base nature, but it cleverly went beyond the primal because it utilized scientific notions of leverage and kinesiological perfection in order to achieve its ends. Baseball also spoke to a child's primitive nature, but did so in a way that substituted innate instincts designed to kill

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<sup>145</sup> Cantor, 149.

or maim with those that were designed to hit a ball and run across bases. Both sports appealed to modernity's call for education and organization because they developed players' skills through instruction, cooperation, and incremental practice. What may have been the most modern element of all was that the entire Nikkei community could rally around both judo (cheering judoka on at the Southland's regular tournaments) and baseball (watching the Nippons take on the Skippers or the Aces) and find in them points of ethnic pride and conversation.

Indeed, Nisei gravitated toward many sports such as baseball and judo because athletics were an area in which Japanese American excelled in the United States. Soichi Sakamoto, an elementary school teacher and Boy Scout Scoutmaster from Maui started the Three Year Swim Club in 1937 in order to train potential swimmers to enter the 1940 Tokyo Olympics.<sup>146</sup> One of his students, Keo Nakama, born on Maui in 1920, won five gold medals in the 1940 Pan American Swimming Championships in Ecuador and starred as a two-sport athlete at The Ohio State University (baseball and swimming). Right before the war, basketball star Wataru "Wat" Misaka, a Nisei born in 1923, led the Ogden (Utah) High School Tigers to the state championship title in 1940 and regional championship in 1941.<sup>147</sup> Many Japanese wrestlers made their mark in the United States, beginning with Sorakichi "Mat, the Jap" Matsuda (born Koukiro Matsuda, 1859) who landed on American soil in 1883 as "the champion wrestler of Japan who was imported...for the purpose of contesting for the catch-as-catch-can

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<sup>146</sup> See Niiya, *More Than a Game*, ed., sidebar 49. Sakamoto had no training as a swim instructor, himself, but realized that swimming up-current would require more work than swimming down current. From this nascent idea came the concept of "hard-easy," or interval training.

<sup>147</sup> See Niiya, ed., *More than a Game*, sidebar, 55.

championship.”<sup>148</sup> His U. S. career began in New York City in January 1884, and he achieved fair success as a middleweight against larger and more powerful Caucasian opponents. Following pioneer Japanese wrestlers such as Matsuda was Kaimon Kudo, born in Seattle in 1906.<sup>149</sup> Although he was a small professional wrestler at 170 pounds, Kudo attracted large crowds and a great deal of respect for integrating judo and jujutsu “tackles, butts, and quick moves” into his routines from 1935 to 1940 against famous wrestlers such as Abe Coleman, Gorgeous George, Yukon Eric, and the 300 pound goliath, Mountain Dean.<sup>150</sup> Boxing was another form of Western antagonistics practiced by Nikki. One of the most popular Nisei boxers was Harold Shoji Hoshino, born in 1916 in Pendleton, Oregon. Fighting as a featherweight, Hoshino both wrestled and boxed as a youngster but under the guidance of Lonnie Austin became quickly known as a knockout artist. Much to the delight of audiences and as a hero to Nisei youth, he fought on the professional circuit on the west coast and in Hawaii and became known as “Homicide Hal” and the “Japanese Sandman” and compiled a record of 36 (29ko)-3-2.<sup>151</sup> Another successful pugilist was the Nisei featherweight boxer Yoshio (Hank) Nakamura, born in Honolulu in 1915. Nakamura’s professional career began in 1938 when he began a series of fights, including several bouts at the New York Coliseum. After he fought his last professional bout in 1941,

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<sup>148</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 15, 1884. The form of professional wrestling at this time was known as Catch Wrestling is the forerunner to modern professional-style (pin-and-hold) wrestling and mixed martial arts fighting.

<sup>149</sup> Other notable include Tokugoro Ito (1880-1939), Taro Miyke (1881-1935), and Manjiro “Matty” Matsuda (1887-1929). See Thomas A Green and Joseph Svinth, *Martial Arts of the World* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 446

<sup>150</sup> Steven Johnson, “When Japanese Wrestlers were Good Guys,” *Canoe.ca Sports*, December 27, 2012, <http://blogs.canoe.ca/gregoliver/wrestling/when-japanese-wrestlers-were-good-guys/> and Japanese American National Museum, “Wrestling,” accessed on January 18, 2013, [http://www.janm.org/exhibits/mtg/sports\\_cards/3\\_wrestling.html](http://www.janm.org/exhibits/mtg/sports_cards/3_wrestling.html)

<sup>151</sup> See Niiya, ed., *More than a Game*, 26-7 and passim.

Nakamura had compiled a 17-14-7 record and attracted a great deal of attention from both the Nikkei and larger boxing communities.

Sports such as judo and baseball and the success of other Japanese at all levels of sport were a constant reminder to Nisei children and adolescents that there were at least possibilities open to them in the future. This was typical of the Nisei childhood and adolescent experience—even though prejudice and racism surrounded them, adults in both the Nikkei and dominant communities worked hard to ensure that, at the very least, possibilities could remain dreams. Perhaps if Nisei worked long enough and practiced hard enough, they would be one of the first minorities welcomed into the “Bigs.” Even if playing alongside future Babe Ruths, Lou Gherigs, and Bob Meusels was not likely (even for talented whites, this would be a difficult feat to accomplish), Southland Nisei might play and become stars at their high school or college, play in front of home crowds as a member of the Nippons, Aces, or Skippers, or might be lucky enough to play teams all over the United States or in Japan. Although there were no Nikkei playing in the Majors, at least interest was expressed in the past, and perhaps, if the modern progressive promise of the American dream were finally realized in total, Nisei children may just grow up to become Major Leaguers, after all.

Both baseball and judo also offered many pragmatic benefits to Nisei children and adolescents since both allowed them to socialize with their friends and others in their same age group in both organized and unorganized fashions and most of the children who undertook judo did so for this reason. Far from being a “Japanese” or “Oriental” sport, by the time Nisei children reached the minimum age to being practicing martial arts, judo and its sister martial art, *jujutsu*, were already long-accepted by the dominant culture as legitimate, civilized, and scientific techniques one could use to

defend themselves against a larger and stronger opponent. Most of the Issei who settled in the Southland were not of samurai stock and appreciated judo's disconnection from the caste that had constituted less than ten percent of Japan's population but had the bulk of its political, social, and economic power. The samurai caste kept *jujutsu* to themselves and discouraged (and even outlawed) non-samurai from learning it. But Jigorō Kanō's creation was different and was specifically designed to enlighten all, including those from rural areas. In the Southland, Issei parents could find Japanese instructors teach their Nisei sons a self-defense sport that instilled modern conceptualizations of physicality and kinesiology that were proudly born in Japan. Nisei children and adolescents, however, took their Issei parents' encouragement for the sport and practiced it for their own purposes. Enjoying wrestling, falling and tumbling around with friends combined with the pride of competing in large competitions in front of their parents for the sake of their dojos and sensei to create a sport in which fun, physicality, and pride intersected. Movie stars, police officers, and others from the non-Nikkei community often enjoyed Japanese martial arts as a way in which to get fit and defend themselves—justifications that related to the universal nature that many Nisei believed their sport possessed. Although their sport did not have the professional organizations enjoyed by baseball, the carryover value of the sport was salient to the Nisei as its ultimate goal of honing both the mind and body complied with the era's progressive ideal of holistic mind-body education with a nod to the primitive instincts that should not be lost in modernity.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE NISEI SPIRIT: JAPANESE AND AMERICAN RELIGION

When some Nisei asked their parents what church they should attend, many answers reflected the malleable state in which religion existed to many Issei. Roy Taketa's father, although raised and attended Buddhist church with his children, told them to "go your own way after you get old enough." Taketa became a Protestant, his brother became a Catholic, and two other siblings remained Buddhists.<sup>1</sup> Another father, a member of a local Congregational church, replied that "it didn't matter whether they went to a Christian church or a Buddhist church, but that they should go to some kind of a church." His children chose to attend a Methodist Church in order to be with their friends.<sup>2</sup> Katsumi Kunitugu, who was born in Orange County in 1925 and grew up in Boyle Heights, described her parents as "indifferent Buddhists" who would go to temple for funerals.<sup>3</sup> Her parents did not mind her going to a Christian church, so as long as regular schooling was not disrupted.<sup>4</sup> Eventually an "an older lady in the neighborhood" invited her to Sunday school at Hollenbeck Presbyterian Church where she attended a class of "some Japanese, some Mexican, and a few other nationalities." Eventually Kunitugu began to attend Hollenbeck with her brother. Certainly not all Issei, or even a majority of Issei responded in such a way, but these parents' instructions lend insight to the realities of organized religion as it pertained to Nikkei. While a great many took their faith seriously, the general attitude

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Y. Taketa, interviewed by Mary M. McCarthy, July 13, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Daniels, 174.

<sup>3</sup> Katsumi Kunitsugu, interviewed by Sherry Turner, July 15, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

presented to many Nisei children indicated that church was a necessary and modern social activity designed not only so that one could learn about faith, but gain a measure of acculturation and social validity while doing so.<sup>5</sup>

It might be difficult to think that anything associated with religion could ever be considered “modern,” but by the time Issei began to arrive in Hawaii and on the west coast, both Western Countries and Japan were in the middle of progressive religious evolutionary change. Modern religions, particularly those of liberal strains, understood that in order to survive churches needed a “shared commitment to cultural adaptation” in order to explain a deity’s “imminent role in human development” in the context of progressive thought.<sup>6</sup> Liberal religious strains and progressive theologians began to separate dogmatic “religion,” which was man made, from the “religious,” which lived universally in humans. Modern Christians, usually of liberal Protestant denominations as well as more progressive expressions of Roman Catholicism, were “complicit in a contemporaneous cultural explosion in the arts and sciences” and allied with “the inherent values of method.”<sup>7</sup> In the United

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<sup>5</sup> While the general indifference to the specific faith practiced by their children was held more by Buddhist Issei more so than Christians, the Buddhist religion as practiced in Japan was almost always pluralized with native animistic and folk religions, generally held under the informal umbrella of Shinto. This chapter will discuss Buddhism and Christianity, the two primary religious strains that Nikkei associated with. However, there were a few “new” Japanese religious movements that found some adherents (Tenriism, Kurozumikyō, etc.) as well as various brands of Shinto such as Konkōkyō.

<sup>6</sup> Quotes come from Kathryn Lofton, “The Methodology of the Modernist: Process in American Protestantism,” *Church History* 75, no. 2 (June 2006), 375. The standard work covering modern evolution in religious demeanor is William Hutchingson, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, 1976. “Liberal” or “progressive” as used in this manner refers to the willingness of a particular sect or subgroup of a faith’s willingness to adapt to and accept modernity. This is in contrast or “orthodox” forms of religion or truly conservative branches. For example: one of the more reactionary sects that arose during this same period in contrast to Liberal Protestantism was Christian Fundamentalism. Liberal and progressive religion should not be confused with Progressive religion; the latter is more concerned with issues of social justice, human rights, tolerance for under-represented lifestyles, etc. and is a more recent phenomenon, not directly related to Progressivism movement or post-Victorian progressivism as described in this study.

<sup>7</sup> Lofton, 380.



States, John Dewey, who described “religion” as the “creeds, doctrines, rituals, and other elements” found in “organized religion,” still found place for the “middle way” between science and “religion,” advising that it was actually the “religious quality in experiences” that allowed humans to use them to adjust properly for “life and its conditions.”<sup>8</sup> Using these ideals, liberal, modern-minded churches sought to ensure their survival by using deities as models that could be used as “strategic manuals,” backed by social scientific method, to help people cope with changes happening around them, brought about by the Second Industrial Revolution.<sup>9</sup>

In the United States, religion during the late-Victorian and Progressive eras stayed mainstream and relevant, particularly through the efforts of the more liberal strains of Christianity—particularly several branches of Calvinist and Wesleyan Protestantism—that the historian Richard Wightman Fox described as “protean,” and appeared “secular and religious and democratic and antidemocratic” at the same time and “refused to choose between faith and reason” and “was fundamentally inclusive.” Liberal Protestants “helped preserve an older producer culture that saw human responsibility as the cultivation of character in self-sacrificial service” and promoted the progressive ideals of virtuous popular democracy, organizational management, and insisted that the rising tide of scientific worldview in no way contradicted “God’s purposes.”<sup>10</sup> Liberal Protestantism eventually offered counterarguments to

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<sup>8</sup> Quote from Bradley Baurain “Common Ground with a *Common Faith*: Dewey’s Idea of the “Religious.” In *Education and Culture* 27, no. 2 (2011), 75. See Michihiro Ama, *Immigrants to the Pure Land: The Modernization, Acculturation, and Globalization of Shin Buddhism, 1898-1941* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 113, Larry A. Hickman, *Reading Dewey: Interpretations for a Postmodern Generation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 139. Also see Baurain, 74. Original quote from John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

<sup>9</sup> Lofton, 318

<sup>10</sup> Richard Wightman Fox, “The Culture of Liberal Protestant Progressivism, 1875-1925,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, XXII, no. 3 (Winter 1993), 639-40.

Karl Marx that eventually asserted that Christianity and capitalism (and by extension, material success) were interrelated and that the pursuit of the former gave rise to the democratic attainment of the latter.<sup>11</sup> In order to remain relevant, progressive religion rested on a foundation of on education and promote class-blind social uplift. The concept of having separate lessons on Sundays for youth developed in the United Kingdom in the mid-1700s and Americans followed before the end of the century. Although the goals of Sunday school changed over time, late Victorian-era and Progressive church officials worked toward a more standardized curriculum, age-based instruction, teacher training, smaller class sizes, and used “methods of instruction...in accordance with the best principles of psychology and pedagogy.” The YWCA, traces its lineage back to 1855 in London where Emma Robarts and Mary Jane Kinnaid set up single women’s outreach groups that eventually merged in 1877.<sup>12</sup> The organization entered the United States in 1858 (as the Ladies Christian Association in the City of New York) and Japan around 1904 where it worked, in part, to help married women “to join their husbands in the United States and Hawaii.”<sup>13</sup> Its male counterpart, the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), originally founded in 1844 by George Williams (a “London dry goods clerk”) quickly made inroads in to the United States (1851) and Japan (probably 1880).<sup>14</sup> By 1912, approximately 1.1 percent of males in America were affiliated with the organization.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The most famous of these works is by Richard Henry Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London: John Murray, 1926) published in 1926.

<sup>12</sup> See Putney, 153.

<sup>13</sup> Young Women’s Christian Association, *A Trip through Japan with the YWCA (ca. 1919)*, The Benjamin Brodsky Moving Picture Co.

<sup>14</sup> Cary Otis, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Volume II, Protestant Missions* (New York: F. H. Revell, 1909), 151.

<sup>15</sup> Putney, 65.

Nikkei, particularly Issei parents and Japanese officials concerned with immigrants were well-aware of the importance placed on religion by American society and worked purposefully to ensure that Nisei children, if religious, attended churches that were acceptable to mainstream culture. Of course, Issei who converted to Christianity either in Japan or after migrating to the United States had greater choice and more support, but forms of Americanized Buddhism appeared just after the turn of the century which helped staunch practicing Buddhists to continue their faith and pass it on to their children. The dominant society, while obviously tolerant of most forms of Christianity, was also accepting of foreign religions so as long as they matched the requirements of modernity. Religions that worshiped in the open with regular services, bricks-and-mortar “churches,” Sunday schools, identifiable and purposeful deities, and that promoted progressive concepts such as equality, education, and social uplift were acceptable and preferable to religious traditions that relied on paganistic or animistic rituals performed in private or behind unwelcoming, closed doors. Indeed, by the time Nisei began to attend church, Buddhism (albeit mostly in its Indian incarnations) had already achieved a faddish acceptance by some Western intellectuals, writers, and academics and was not under any kind of attack.<sup>16</sup>

For many, however, religion was not about simply fitting in to American society. Faith, either in Buddhist or Christian form, was a very real and important part of the lives of Issei who sincerely wished to pass their beliefs on their Nisei children. In the Southland, Christian Issei had a better chance since their religion was simply more practiced and refined in its abilities to offer children and adolescents structured activities and church services geared toward their needs. From the outset, most Christian

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<sup>16</sup> This is a rather under-studied topic in the historical literature, but a good starting point is Thomas A. Tweed and Stephan Prothero, *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), which is an annotated collection of primary sources.

churches offered Sunday school and extracurriculars that appealed to children accustomed to and steered toward organized activities. From the outset, church services were conducted in English and Christians benefited from the faith's long tradition of apologetic discourse designed to help its adherents understand and accept its underlying tenets. Japanese Buddhism began to realign itself based on the Christian model even before the Meiji Restoration, but by the time Buddhist priests arrived in the United States to better understand the needs of their practitioners, they were still far behind the Christians. By the time Nisei were born, Buddhists in the United States had changed their outward appearance to match what they saw in American Christian churches, but had not yet fully prepared themselves to teach young Nisei the foundations of their Eastern faith. Nisei who attended church were often placed in ad-hoc and barely organized Sunday schools and often had to sit in silence during services conducted purely in Japanese. But as the Nisei matured, so, too did the Buddhist churches serving them. Eventually, Buddhist churches realized that the Nisei were the future and began to conduct separate services in English and provided extracurricular activities for them that included judo, Buddhist analogs for the YMCA and YWCA, and chartered Boy and Girl Scout troops. By the Second World War, both Christian and Buddhist faiths were addressing the needs of the Nisei in ways both approved and praised by their Issei parents and the dominant society.

### Religious Change in Japan

Japan and Christianity are linked through the concept of modernism and Christian churches were obliged to identify themselves with the larger modernist movement in order to convince Japanese that their faith was not simply a Western superstition on par with the Eastern superstitions that were being derided by the Japanese government as ancient and un-modern. Outside of industrialism and

education, nothing connected modern Japan to the United States as did religion, particularly liberal Protestant strains. Liberal Protestants sent by American missionary boards were some of the first missionaries to Japan even before Perry's forced opening of Japan to commerce and diplomatic ties.<sup>17</sup> While Roman Catholicism had a long history in Japan, Protestantism was a relative latecomer, unable to gain any sort of foothold on the islands until 1858 when Presbyterian Samuel Wells Williams (who had attempted to land in Japan previously), Episcopalian E. W. Syles, and the Chaplain of the U.S.S. *Powhatan* met with the Dutch envoy in the newly-opened port of Nagasaki.<sup>18</sup> There, the proselytizers learned that while the port was open for trade, opium and Christianity were illegal. Not willing to accept this as a final defeat, the three prayed and wrote to American Presbyterian, Episcopal, and Reformed mission boards, asking them to appoint missionaries for the country. Within a year, all three appointed and sent missionaries. In October 1859, one married Presbyterian couple, two Episcopal clergymen, and three Reformed Church missionaries and their wives landed and began missionary

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<sup>17</sup> For an early account of this, see, Charles W. Stewart, "Early American Visitors to Japan," *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute*, 31, no 4 (1905), 948-51 and Gordon M. Laman, *Pioneers to Partners: The Reformed Church in American and Christian Mission with the Japanese* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013), 27-8.

<sup>18</sup> In the mid-1830s, Karl F. A. Gützlaff one of the earliest Protestant missionaries in the Far East, came into contact with three apprentice sailors who had been swept by a storm to Cape Flattery, Washington. The three sailors were eventually captured by Native Americans who then ransomed them away to officials of the Hudson Bay Company. In July 1837, Charles W. King sailed his ship *Morrison* (stripped of its armaments and all religious texts) brought his wife and Gützlaff; a Presbyterian missionary, Samuel Wells Williams; a medical doctor, Peter Parker, who hoped to gain employment; the three sailors from Washington; and four more stranded Japanese sailors from Luzon, presents, and letters drafted. Their goal was to anchor in Japan in hopes of establishing commercial relations and, if possible, planting the seed of Protestant Christianity. On the thirtieth, after a brief stop in the Ryukyus, the *Morrison* anchored in Edo Bay and delivered letters asking for an official to retrieve the stranded sailors and negotiate trade. The next morning, only official cannonballs replied to the *Morrison's* requests, damaging the ship slightly before it sailed away. On August 10, the ship attempted to anchor at Kagoshima, but they were once again driven away by cannon fire. King deciding that, at the very least, he could leave the sailors in Japan sailed for the Dutch factory in Nagasaki Bay, but the Japanese castaways, now fearing for their lives, asked to return to China. While this first, direct effort was a failure, Gützlaff managed to translate some portions of the Bible (primary the Gospels) into Japanese with the help of three sailors who had visited North America.

work, disregarding the Tokugawa regime's restrictions against them.<sup>19</sup> Within two years, the American Baptist Free Mission Society and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions sent two more missionaries (and one wife) and the Reformed Protestant missionary J. H. Ballagh soon baptized the first convert, a person he described as a "Buddhist quack doctor selected by the Shogun's Council of State as a language teacher."<sup>20</sup>

Missionaries continued to pour into Japan and they worked tirelessly as pastors, in groups, and as individuals spreading the Gospel as well as reforming prisons, teaching English, and forming organizations such as orphanages, outreach missions to the poor and the unclean, schools (at all levels, including colleges, particularly those for women, whose higher education had largely been ignored by the Meiji government), and hospitals.<sup>21</sup> The first formal church began in 1872 in Yokohama when a group of eleven men known as the Yokohama Band founded the first Japanese Church (with Ballagh as their first pastor), which was "not partial to any sect, believing only in the name of Christ, in whom all are one."<sup>22</sup> Their efforts prompted other missionaries and Japanese Christians to form churches and "bands" (groups of converts, often of the defunct samurai class) and their numbers increased rapidly beginning a year later when the Meiji Government renounced its ban on Christianity. Although not

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<sup>19</sup> Laman, *Pioneers to Partners*, 29-31 and Carolyn Bowen Francis and John Masaaki Nakajima, *Christians in Japan* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991), 23.

<sup>20</sup> Francis and Nakajima, 24.

<sup>21</sup> Several groups (usually hereditary), known by the blanket label "*burakumin*" (lit. hamlet/village people, as they could only live in isolated locations away from the general population) were involved in labor considered unclean by Buddhist standards. These jobs classes usually centered on animals and included butchers, abattoirs, tanners, and people who collected manure to be used as fertilizer. One could generally not escape this label, as an entire family and their lineage was parceled into the class and they were required to wear specific styles of clothing, footwear, and even hairstyles.

<sup>22</sup> Francis and Nakajima, 25 and Hamish Ion, *American Missionaries, Christian Oyatoi, and Japan, 1859-73* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), xi and passim.

specifically directed to promote Christianity, the state adopted Sunday as the official day of rest in 1876, following suit with the trend in modern Western nations, ensuring that the Sabbath would be open for religious services.<sup>23</sup>

For all of its modernity, Christianity was far from successful on a large scale in Japan. Christians, while welcomed for their modern, non-religious institutions, struggled to find many converts, particularly outside of Japan's intelligencia. Social services (e.g. hospitals, orphanages), outreach centers, and educational institutions exclusively offered by churches upon their arrival to Japan soon competed with state-, prefecturally-, and municipally-run counterparts put into place, particularly after the "medical section" of the Ministry of Education initiated health services in 1872.<sup>24</sup> By 1900, at least fifty Christian missionary organizations were active in Japan along with over 1,100 missionaries with 1,700 "Japanese spiritual workers."<sup>25</sup> When Issei male emigration to the mainland United States was cut off in 1907, Protestant churches counted nearly 73,000 baptized members while the Roman Catholic Church counted 61,095, the Greek Orthodox Church, 30,166, and another 460

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<sup>23</sup> Francis and Nakajima, 26. See Alexis McCrossen, *Holy Day, Holiday: The American Sunday* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001) for a fundamental understanding of the depths of Sunday as both a religious day and how it eventually became the modern day of leisure.

<sup>24</sup> Although there were some Buddhist hospitals in place before the Restoration, the state began to establish Western-style medical schools beginning with the University of Tokyo. Within twenty years, both city and prefectural governments were running hospitals alongside private doctors and larger organizations such as the Red Cross. The history of social services in Japan is sorely underrepresented in the English language, but some information can be found in: Institute for International Cooperation and Japan International Cooperation Agency, *Japan's Experiences in Public Health and Medical System: Toward Improving Public Health and Medical Systems in Developing Countries* (Tokyo: Research Group, Institute for International Cooperation, Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2005) and Kiyoshi Iwasa, "Hospitals in Japan: History and Present Situation," *Medical Care* 4, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec., 1966): 241-242, 244, 246.

<sup>25</sup> Seija Jalagin, "Racing with Secularization: Protestant Missions in Japan, 1900-1930," in *Sights and Insights: Interactive Images of Europe and the Wider World*, ed. Mary N. Harris and Csaba Levai (Pisa, Italy: Edizioni Plus-Pisa University Press, 1990).

listing themselves as independent.<sup>26</sup> At that time, there were slightly fewer than fifty million inhabitants in Japan, meaning Christianity's presence accounted for less than one percent of the population. While initial acceptance of the Gospel was relatively quick in urban areas, particularly in port cities with high concentrations of educated ex-samurai, growth slowed after 1890. Rural areas were never exposed to large-scale missionary efforts and growth in these areas remained painfully slow.<sup>27</sup> Some of the factors that limited its growth were the occasional, but public, opposition by the Meiji government and intellectuals, ignorance and fear about the religion among rural denizens (particularly since it took some time for missionaries to make inroads into rural areas and the bulk of early converts were of the samurai class), and the rejection of it by devout Buddhists and Shinto thanks to its doctrine that asked for unwavering allegiance to no one other than Jesus Christ.

While the parents and grandparents of Issei were technically members of a local Buddhist temple, it was probably the case for most Issei growing up that they never thought much of their membership except during funerals, weddings, and perhaps local folk-religious celebrations (Shinto was generally not responsible for these rites and rituals). Given that many Issei were from rural areas, most probably knew little to nothing of Christianity, either. Although Christianity had early success in converting swatches of the population (particularly many influential individual in academia and politics) the growth of Christianity in Japan was never truly overwhelming; however, its growth in the

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<sup>26</sup> From Cary, Appendix B, "Statistics," 358-9.

<sup>27</sup> For example, by 1922, the Presbyterian mission in the Hiroshima area still reported that a "great number of villages are barely touched," even though this region sent a large number of emigrants to the West Coast of the United States. Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, *Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 85, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. Board of Foreign Missions (1922), 296.



1870s and '80s still outpaced the growth of Buddhism which had undergone attacks from the Tokugawa regime and early Meiji intellectuals who promoted state Shinto and derided Buddhism as “outdated superstition that could only appeal to the ignorant masses.”<sup>28</sup> Western missionaries not only converted Japanese intellectuals by the thousands each year, but various Christian-backed organizations began to create schools, universities, orphanages, hospitals, and community relief societies that Buddhists simply could not match (albeit primarily in urban areas). At best, most Issei during their childhood might have had contact with one of the ever-growing native Japanese who began to confidently expand the reach of Christianity on their own and to win the favor of the public and the popular press, both of whom praised Christianity for its modernity and its ability to survive without government sponsorship.<sup>29</sup> Seeing this native expansion, many Buddhist leaders and intellectuals lambasted non-proselyting Buddhist priests for their “laziness” and the way the religion had been used to support only nationalistic goals in the past. These admonitions in themselves did little to change priests, and by 1880, even though they were not making great inroads into areas from where most Issei were starting to leave, Christians did not even view Buddhism as a potential enemy and focused, instead, on an ever-increasing group of anti-Western intellectuals and politicians.<sup>30</sup>

Buddhism, long-derided by the Tokugawa shogunate (who saw it as a potential challenge to their authority) and early Meiji leaders (who felt it was decrepit and dying and preferred their own brand of religion, state Shinto) underwent a renaissance after it studied liberal Christianity’s in-process

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<sup>28</sup> Notto R. Thelle, *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1854-1899* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 56 and Isao Horinouchi, *Americanized Buddhism: A Sociological Analysis of Protestantized Japanese Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 36.

<sup>29</sup> Jalagin, 94-98.

<sup>30</sup> Thelle, 56-59.

modernization that began during the Second Great Revival.<sup>31</sup> Buddhist leaders simply could not find the solutions to save their faith in their own past and began to study Christianity in hopes of saving their own religion.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the concept of regularly-scheduled, weekly church services was not native to Japan, but by 1870, Buddhists realized that they needed to adopt Western notions of apologetics, dogma, and organizational structure. The first Buddhist mission to the West, sponsored by the Jōdo Shinshū sect (trans. True Pure Land sect; commonly known as Shin Buddhism, one of the largest sects in Japan) set off in 1872 with scholars and priests from the main temple in Kyoto. The delegation visited several countries in Europe, Jerusalem, and India. Steadily, more missions extended out from Japan to the West and dedicated students began arriving in Western countries starting in 1875. Beginning in the early 1880s, a surge of Japanese Buddhists began studying Christianity both in Japan and abroad. While there was purely scholarly interest from a great number of these students, most had in mind a similar goal: to study Western (particularly Christian) apologetics so they could better understand how to expand their own, seemingly dying religion.<sup>33</sup>

The Buddhist scholars were apt pupils and quickly realized that the methods and arguments used to justify Christianity could just as easily be coopted by their faith. Because of this, many Buddhists were able to conflate their religion with the anti-Western contingent. Missionaries began to

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<sup>31</sup> Before the Meiji restoration, Shinto and Buddhism were often conflated into a system known as *shinbutsu-shūgō* (lit. Shinto-Buddha syncretism) or *shinbutsu-konkō* (lit. Shinto -Buddha contamination) and could share deities, buildings, priests, etc. In 1868, the Meiji state propagated a policy known as *shinbutsu bunri* (lit. Shinto -Buddha separation) meant to depreciate the power of Buddhism. That was the beginning of widespread anti-Buddhist sentiment in Japan.

<sup>32</sup> Thelle, 79-82.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Imadate Tosui went to the United States while, a year later, Nanjō Bunyū and Kasahara Kenji arrived in England to study in Oxford under Friedrich Max Müller, a polymath who studied Sanskrit wrote critiques of Hinduism and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

assert that Japan's modernization, if left unchecked, would become soulless and materialistic. Buddhists also pointed out that modernity did not rely on religion as they had found many examples of science and religion arguing against one another during their studies. They argued that modern scientists such as "Darwin, Huxley, Spender, and Mill," worked strenuously to demonstrate that it was Progressive scientific notions that propelled the West forward, not religion.<sup>34</sup> Buddhism, on the other hand, which did not prioritize the creation of the universe and all that was in it was in a better position to harmonize itself with modern science.<sup>35</sup> When combine with anti-Western sentiment, Buddhism seemed like a faith that could anchor the resistance of foreign social, moral, and philosophical iniquities while still moving Japan toward modernity. In order to strengthen their influence, Buddhists began to band together. The Sonnō Hōbutsu Daidōdan (Federation of the Great Way of Venerating the Emperor and Repaying the Buddha) was founded in 1889 by several nationalistic priests, scholars, and lay ministers "for the purpose of maintaining the majesty of our Emperor and the truth of the doctrine of Buddha—a union of all those who wish to protect our land and religion from the contempt of the foreigner."<sup>36</sup> In order to counter the threat to Japan's young people from organizations such as the YMCA, the Buddhists founded the Bukkyo Seinenkai (lit. Buddhist Youth Association, but would become known in English as the Young Men's Buddhist Association [YMBA]) in 1892 and, three years later, the Bukkyo Fujinkai (lit. Buddhist Woman's Association, which eventually spawned the Young Women's

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 82-3.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 103. The character that is pronounced as "*butsu*" is the Japanese word for Buddha.

Buddhist Association [YWBA]).<sup>37</sup> Within just a few years, Buddhism in Japan was replete with organizations and structures that efficiently integrated new conceptualizations of Buddhism into the fabric of the nation and the national polity and all under the surprising umbrella of modernity.

## Buddhism in America

Nisaburo Hirano landed in San Francisco in 1891 and was unable to find work and sought the help of a Methodist mission that provided him with food and English lessons and tried unsuccessfully to convert the devout Shin Buddhist. Upon returning to Japan five years later, Hirano pleaded with his sect to send priests to fulfill the needs of America's Issei Buddhists.<sup>38</sup> In direct response to Kikuchi's pleas, in 1898 two priests were dispatched and saw that Christian organizations were well-entrenched within the Issei community and found them providing "a range of services such as housing, job placement, and English language classes."<sup>39</sup> Buddhism, on the other hand, was underrepresented with only a smattering of lay ministers and no formal organization. The influence of Buddhism was so minor that when one of the two priests arrived in Seattle, the local Japanese consul was barely aware of the sect's primary tenets and was not even sure if Buddhism was "legal" in the United States.<sup>40</sup> In response, the priests helped establish formal organizations to serve Issei males (these eventually became

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<sup>37</sup> See Ibid., 111 and Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 22.

<sup>38</sup> See Ives, 42 and David Yoo "Enlightened Identities: Buddhism and Japanese Americans of California, 1924-1941," *Western Historical Quarterly* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1996), 286, and *Growing up Issei*, 42

<sup>39</sup> Yoo, "Enlightened Identities," 286.

<sup>40</sup> See Martin E. Marty, *Modern American Religion, Volume 1: The Irony of it All, 1893-1919* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 109.

YMBAs).<sup>41</sup> Formal, permanent missionary work began in September 1899 when two priests landed in San Francisco and began to immediately form strong bonds with the Nikkei community who were without anyone to perform marriage or funeral rights or to preside over annual festivals.

While the arguments were going on in Japan about Buddhism and its new status, Buddhist Issei (mostly of the Jōdo Shinshū sect) began to live overseas without any formal structures to guide them religiously or to provide modern relief services attached to the Buddhist faith. At best, many Issei who wanted to partake in any element of their faith would have to invite a priest (perhaps from fairly far away) to minister to them individually or with others from the local community.<sup>42</sup> Even when a long-travelled priest would visit Issei in areas without a formalized church, gatherings usually turned into social celebrations with tea and refreshments served to those who would come.<sup>43</sup> Many Issei also kept a *butsudan* (lit. Buddhist altar, usually a wooden cabinet) in their homes in order to have a spiritual center. The cabinet held *butsugu* (lit. “Buddhist tools,” e.g. candles, incense, bells, offering pedestals, scroll-sutras, etc.) used in Buddhist practices and prayer.<sup>44</sup>

In order to find any parcel of acceptance, the sect felt that it needed to quickly develop efficient and practical organizations to serve Issei practitioners in a country already steeped in Western religious traditions and nomenclature. In 1900, the Jinji Shusen Bu (Welfare Assistance Program) was set up in

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<sup>41</sup> Yoo, “Enlightened Identities,” 287. Paul David Numrich, *North American Buddhists in Social Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 94.

<sup>42</sup> Ayako Nishi Fukimoto, Kyoko Nishi Tanaka, and Nancy Nishi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, August 12, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Interestingly, few Nisei interviews and memoirs reference *butsudan*, even though they are fairly common household items for people who identified as Buddhist, particularly those who come from rural areas. I have yet to determine why this disparity exists.

San Francisco to mirror the organizations that helped Issei such as Nisaburo Hirano in 1891. In order to establish its presence among the spread-out Nikkei, the newsletter *Beikoku Bukkyo* (American Buddhism) was founded along with a chapter of the Bukkyo Fujinkai.<sup>45</sup> In 1905 the San Francisco YMBA changed its name to the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, establishing the first formal “church” on American soil (something a Buddhist temple in Japan would not refer to itself as, nor would it generally be structured in this way).<sup>46</sup> By 1909 twenty churches existed in three states, and by 1915, the Shin Buddhists had formed the Hokubei Bukkyo Dan (North American Buddhist Mission) which represented over twenty-five churches and sub-organizations.<sup>47</sup> Buddhist churches operated as modern organizations, eschewing a traditional model in which a local cleric and his sons owned, operated, and staffed local temples, and opted instead for boards of trustees, salaried and assigned priests, structured finances, and memberships based on voluntary attendance rather than lineage.<sup>48</sup> When American Buddhist churches had internal squabbles, many of these disputes ended up in court, whereas in Japan, the head organization was charged with dealing with them.<sup>49</sup>

Japanese Buddhist churches in the United States were designed to fit within American expectations of what a church should look like not only to attract Nisei, but to gain the acceptance of

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<sup>45</sup> Issao Horinouchi, “Americanized Buddhism: A Sociological Analysis of a Protestantized Japanese Religion,” (PhD diss. University of California, Davis, 1973), 113-4.

<sup>46</sup> See Numrich, 95.

<sup>47</sup> See Brian Niiya: *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (New York, Facts on File, 1993), 114. Michael K. Masatsugu “‘Beyond this World of Transiency and Impermanence’: Japanese Americans, Dharma Bums, and the Making of American Buddhism During the Early Cold War Years,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 77, no. 3 (2008) 425-29.

<sup>48</sup> Yoo, “Enlightened Identities,” 287 and Horinouchi, “Americanized Buddhism,” 77-82.

<sup>49</sup> See Ama, 147-55

the dominant culture, as well. When asked about the relationships between Buddhist and Christian Nisei, Chris Kato, Yoshi Mamiya, and Tad Soto agreed that while there were a few divisions, Nisei were inclined to worry more about geographical differences than “whether [one was] a Protestant... Methodists, Baptist, Congregational, Japanese Presbyterian, Episcopalian,” or one of the “five different kind of Buddhists.”<sup>50</sup> The Buddhism that arrived on the west coast of the United States was very different to the faith that strained relationships and weathered persecution in Hawaii just two decades before. One advantage that Buddhism had on the west coast of the United States was that its character was relatively modern from the start. The YMBA and YWBA, aid societies, “churches” (many of which even had steeples and stained-glass windows and sat people in folding chairs or pews rather than cross-legged on the floor), congregationally-elected lay ministers, pipe organs and pianos, worship books and hymnals, Sunday services (including “sunrise” and evening services for day laborers), sermons (known as *sekkyō*), marriage ceremonies (traditionally performed by a Shinto priest in Japan), and voluntary congregational membership gave the impression that Buddhism, itself, was being Americanized. Buddhist priests and “ministers” operated according to American models while in the States, which often diverged greatly from their responsibilities in Japan. They gave themselves the Western title, “Reverend,” received a modest and often-standardized salary (priests were usually patronized by the wealthy in Japan), issued marriage certificates, helped teach Sunday school, and mediated between disputing parties, including spouses (for which a minister would be hailed if the dispute was resolved

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<sup>50</sup> These three actually grew up together in Seattle’s Nihonmachi, but I believe their experience is similar (if not identical) to that of children growing up in the Southland. See Chris Kato, Yoshi Mamiya, Tad Soto, interviewed by Stephen Fugita, August 14, 1998, Denshō Digital Archives.

and derided if it was not).<sup>51</sup> As Nisei began to come of age, many morning services (particularly at larger churches and temples) were given in English while Japanese-only services were moved to the afternoon in order to accommodate Issei and in the 1930s, various Buddhist organizations collaborated to complete a hymnal in English.<sup>52</sup>

Buddhism grew with little interference from the dominant society and remained a relatively low-key operation that blended in with their geographical and cultural surroundings.<sup>53</sup> The three major branches of Buddhism established their churches in the region in between 1904 and 1914 and some of them eventually gained *betsuin* status, which acknowledged them as a direct representative of the home temple in Japan. The first Buddhist church founded in the Southland was the Rafu Bukkyōkai by the Reverend Junjō Izumida in 1904. The temple, originally located at 229 1/2 East Fourth Street, was a representative of the Higashi strand of Shin Buddhism.<sup>54</sup> After several moves and a painful merger that went through the courts, it eventually ended up in Boyle Heights in 1926 as the Los Angeles Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple where it remained for fifty years. Within a year, the Nishi branch of Shin Buddhism opened their first church, the present-day Hongwanji Los Angeles Betsuin. The temple was founded as the Southern California Buddhist Church on Jackson Street by Reverend Koyu Uchida. In 1917, the church moved into Yamato Hall and within a year, a *fujinkai* (lit. women's association) and

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<sup>51</sup> Over time, this structure earned Buddhist adherents in the United States the slag title of "Rice Christians" by Nikkei and the rest of society, as well. See *Immigrants to the Pure Land*, 60-61 and 88-93. The Buddhist Mission of North America established non-binding salary guidelines by the 1920s that suggested single ministers earn at least \$120 a month, married ministers, \$150, etc.

<sup>52</sup> Ama, 95.

<sup>53</sup> See Horinouchi, PhD diss., 116 and Masatsugu, 431-2.

<sup>54</sup> Ama, 146-9 and Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple, "About the Temple," accessed on May 14, 2012, [http://hhbt-la.org/?page\\_id=52](http://hhbt-la.org/?page_id=52).



Young Buddhist Association were formed. In 1925, the temple relocated to Central and First, and in 1931, the temple received *betsuin* status and branched out to over twenty locations around the Southland.<sup>55</sup> In 1909, the Reverend Shutai Aoyama arrived to help Los Angeles Shingon Buddhists (a branch of Esoteric Buddhism). In 1912 he and other Nikkei members created Koyasan Daishi Kyōkai of Los Angeles near Elysian Park. In 1935 after a couple of moves, the church was given *betsuin* status, renamed Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, and finally ended at its present location in 1940.<sup>56</sup> In May 1914, an established group of Nichiren Buddhists known as the White Lotus Club joined with the Reverend Kanjo Asahi and rented a room at the Federal Hotel on East Second Street, there founding the Nichiren Buddhist Temple of Los Angeles.<sup>57</sup> In 1930, the group built their first permanent temple in Boyle Heights. In 1922, Reverend Hosen Isobe established the Zenshuji Sōtō Mission, the first Sōtō Zen temple in North America. It completed its physical temple in 1926.<sup>58</sup> By the 1930s, Buddhist *kyōkai* (lit. “religious meeting,” but adapted to be used to mean “Western-style church”) were serving Nikkei in similar form to Christian churches including meeting spaces, *gakuen*, regular Sunday services and schools. This modern mimicry of Christianity is what gave an opportunity for Nisei to accept Buddhism with little interference from the dominant culture. Just as Christianity was forced to do, Buddhism (one of Japan’s two traditional religions along with Shinto) also sought to validate itself as a

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<sup>55</sup> Nishi Hongwanji, L.A., “Brief Temple History,” accessed on May 13, 2012, <http://www.nishihongwanji-la.org/church/history.html>

<sup>56</sup> Koyasan Buddhist Temple Los Angeles, “Temple,” accessed on May 13, 2012, [http://www.koyasanbetsuin.org/Koyasan\\_Temple.htm](http://www.koyasanbetsuin.org/Koyasan_Temple.htm)

<sup>57</sup> See Nichiren Shu Beikoku Betsuin, “The history of Los Angeles Buddhist Temple---Minobusan Betsuin of North America.” Webpage defunct.

<sup>58</sup> Sōtō Zen is the largest Zen Buddhist denomination. Zenshuji Soto Mission, “History,” accessed on May 14, 2012, <http://www.zenshuji.org/history.html>

forward-looking religion capable of speaking to a modern, educated society. Historian Lori Pierce believed that Buddhism was successful in this and its ability to modernize gave it “legitimacy” among Westerners.<sup>59</sup>

Buddhist churches began to offer extra-religious training by teaching Issei the cultural and practical skills they needed to survive in America (including English) and to give Nikkei an opportunity to participate in the educational life mandated by modern religious norms. Buddhist churches probably began Sunday school soon after their formation, but for the first decade of the 1900s, they were usually outreach missions that taught practical skills or English to recent immigrants. These were eventually coordinated into a church’s own *gakuen*. Sunday school teachers were usually priests, but taking lessons from the American Sunday school system, teachers soon came from the ranks of a church’s lay ministers, parents, students, and single YMBA and YWBA members.<sup>60</sup> One Japanese observer noticed that early versions of Sunday school acted more like a Japanese cultural class that “was neither formal nor completely religious.” In classes, volunteers gave short sermonettes and taught children Japanese folk and fairy tales (both secular and religious), and gave them singing lessons in which they sang traditional songs along with piano accompaniment.<sup>61</sup> Although the histories of Buddhist Sunday schools in the Los Angeles region is sparse, it probably followed along similar lines to the Buddhist Church of Sacramento that served a similar population. In 1915, the Sacramento church initiated a formal Sunday school program to counter the strong drawing power of the area Nikkei Christian

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<sup>59</sup> Lori Pierce, “Buddhist Modernism in English-Language Buddhist Periodicals,” in *Issei Buddhisms in the Americas*, ed. Duncan Ryuken Williams and Tomoe Moriya (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 93.

<sup>60</sup> Horinouchi, PhD diss., 128.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 124-5.

churches who began to win many Issei over by offering Sunday school to their Nisei children. Sunday school was the primary way that churches offered structured religious and progressive social lessons. Given its importance in the modern concept of church, it was difficult to claim to be a modern church without a Sunday school and it was difficult to claim to be a religious American child and not attend. By 1920, over 150 children in age-divided classes beginning with the first grade and going up through high school followed a lesson plan formulated by a Japanese student majoring in religious education at the University of Southern California. By 1925, instruction was increasingly given in English, including a few original hymns written by English-speaking and Caucasian Buddhist priests and others adapted from Christian standards such as “Buddha Loves Me, This I Know.”<sup>62</sup> In some instances, Sunday school was actually held on alternate days, usually Saturday. Kay Matsuoka, who grew up working on her family’s strawberry farm in Moneta, took Buddhist classes “every Saturday” where she and her fellow Buddhist Nisei “learned a lot of Buddhist songs and [the] Buddhist way.” This was the primary way in which she learned about her faith, since her parents were often working on their farm on Sunday morning and would only attend temple for memorial services.<sup>63</sup> Some Buddhist churches (not only in Sacramento) followed their Christian counterparts in giving children candy for their weekly attendance.<sup>64</sup>

Buddhist churches became similar to Christian ones, leading to greater acceptance, or at least less conspicuousness, in American society. Frank Nishi’s staunchly Buddhist family owned a flower

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 125-7, 130, and Ama, 91.

<sup>63</sup> Kay Matsuoka, interviewed by Alice Ito, December 29 and 30, 1999, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>64</sup> Horinouchi, PhD diss., 127.

shop in Hollywood. The Christmas holidays were “the biggest part of their business,” and because of this, the entire family celebrated Christmas. Cedric Shimo, who grew up in Boyle Heights and attended the Nichiren Buddhist Temple, recounted Christmas at the church in which “the priest would dress up as Santa Claus, pass out presents, and at that time, we thought it was normal.” When looking back upon the incongruity of “a Christian tradition and here was a Buddhist minister dressed as Santa Claus” he determined that, like many of the Buddhist churches, the Nichiren temple was “very liberal and open-minded.”<sup>65</sup>

Buddhism was not always successful with Nisei because the religion lacked the sophisticated integration into the dominant culture, its large-scale coverage, and complex apologetic interpretations associated with Christianity. There were many Buddhist churches that did not regularly incorporate English into their services. Often, their priests would be the youngest who were sent from Japan and who spoke very little English, if any at all. Hy Shishino, whose staunchly-Buddhist parents ran a flower shop in the Uptown area of Los Angeles, failed to accept his parents’ religion because “Buddhists spoke only Nihongo (Japanese)” and he “didn’t understand what they’re saying.” His parents, realizing that he was “too hardheaded” to change his mind, encouraged him to “have some belief than none at all.” Shishino eventually accepted Christianity after attending services with his friend, Jimmy Kawasaki.<sup>66</sup> At other times, the language gap caused a cultural gap, as well. Kay Matsuoka was married in a hurriedly-planned wedding before her evacuation. At the altar, Matsuoka did not “understand [the] Buddhist

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<sup>65</sup> Cedric Shimo, “On the Buddhist Church,” Boyle Heights Project, accessed December 1, 2013, [http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bh/resources/collecting/oral\\_history.htm#buddhist\\_church](http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bh/resources/collecting/oral_history.htm#buddhist_church).

<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, when Shishino’s father died shortly after World War II, he was unable to secure the services of a Buddhist priest for his funeral in Minneapolis (where he found work as a florist after the war) and chose an Episcopalian priest to perform his service.

chanting” and had to be nudged by others in order to respond “hai” (“yes”) to her vows. After the service, she told her new husband, Jack, that she “didn’t understand what [the priest] said” and thus “really [didn’t] know what kind of vows” she took.<sup>67</sup> Other Issei, unaccustomed to the apologetics of Buddhism had difficulties explaining fundamental tenets their religion to their children. In Japan, their children would be surrounded by Buddhism, but in the United States, lessons about the Buddhist faith could not come from the surrounding environment. Even though Jun “Juno” Ogimachi’s parents came from a “[Buddhist] church family,” they “didn’t really push it.” Although his mother (seemingly in charge of his religious upbringing) tried to explain the central tenets of her faith (“before you’re born” you might be born “a few times as an insect or animal”), she centered her religious philosophy on self-confidence and self-belief, “the church building is there” she said, but “if you don’t believe in yourself forget it.”<sup>68</sup> Kay Matsuoka’s father had a very difficult time understanding his own religion and conflated it with Christianity, warning her that “if you’re bad [on earth], you’re gonna go to hell...and you’ll get all burned up and this—the *oni* (demon) thing is gonna, with a pitchfork, poke you around and so forth.” Matsuoka never understood why her father taught this lesson and did not know if it was even “the teaching of the Buddhists or not.”<sup>69</sup> While the concepts of an afterlife of tortuous hell is generally not a Buddhist concept, the concept of an *oni* was, indeed, native to the religion. Most likely, Masumoto’s father was accustomed to Japanese Buddhism’s malleability (its conflation with Shinto, for

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<sup>67</sup> Kay Matsuoka, interviewed by Alice Ito, December 29 and 30, 1999, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>68</sup> Jun “Juno” Ogimachi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, June 3, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Obviously, this is not the teaching of Buddhism. Kay Matsuoka, interviewed by Alice Ito, December 29 and 30, 1999, Denshō Digital Archives.

instance) and either purposefully attempted or mistakenly used this characteristic in which to encourage his daughter's faith.

Determining the seriousness of Buddhists and their children is difficult. Certainly many adherents were like Nancy Shimotsu, (whose Buddhist parents ran a farm in Dominguez Hills) who was "very active with the Buddhist church" and attended regular services and eventually joined the *fujinkai* of the closest Buddhist church, the Nishi Shin-affiliated Gardena Buddhist Church (founded in 1926).<sup>70</sup> Some parents may have been nominal Buddhists, treated it as a private religion and often did not expose their children to their beliefs. This was the case with Osameru "Osamu" Mori's mother who would occasionally "put her hands together" and pray, but Mori could not even deduce whether her prayers were Buddhist or Shinto or "what she was praying for or praying to." Mori, whose parents ran a farm in San Pedro, eventually had his "first exposure of an organized church" while he was interned in the Tule Lake Segregation Center.<sup>71</sup> Many Issei Buddhists took a pluralistic view of religion and many did not attempt to have their children follow in their footsteps. The memories of many Nisei concerning their Buddhism are similar to Hitoshi "Hank" Naito who grew up on Terminal Island. When asked if he was raised Buddhist, Naito answered, "I guess. We were...my family never took me to...Buddhist church, but...the family maintained...Buddhist books and...a *butsudan*. All of that...so I assume the family was Buddhist." Many families, like Yoshiki Yoshida's, believed that religion's main purpose was "to teach [one] to be good...they all teach the same thing, only by different routes...the

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<sup>70</sup> Shimotsu eventually converted to Methodism a "few years" after marrying her Christian husband at Koyasan Buddhist Temple. Nancy Shimotsu, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, February 7, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>71</sup> Osamu Mori, interviewed by Richard Potashin, April 14, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

main thing is to believe in something.”<sup>72</sup> This is probably truer of Shin Buddhists—who are generally a more liberal sect than Nichiren Buddhists—who possessed the largest and oldest temple in the Southland. Yoneko Iwatsuru’s parents were Buddhist, and attended services in Little Tokyo, but as their children grew up, the elder Iwatsurus followed their children, who joined the Friends Church of Yorba Linda.<sup>73</sup> Other families were not enculturated into going to church every Sunday and simply carried on the patterns of their association with religion in Japan. Minoru “Min” Tonai’s parents were “nominal [Zen] Buddhists” who did not take a position on church. The family attended Buddhist services only for funerals and weddings.<sup>74</sup> Tonai did not understand the service when he did attend as he was used to listening to his parents’ Terminal Island dialect, which varied greatly from the standard Japanese he learned in *gakuen*. Tonai and his sister would occasionally go to a Christian church (his parents would “give them a penny” for the offering plate), and they would go “regularly” on Christmas and Easter because they were given candy on those days. Robert Nakamura’s parents were Buddhists, but “not like real practicing Buddhists.” However, they “were Buddhists” during funerals, weddings, and other priest-performed rites, and never really encouraged his faith.<sup>75</sup>

While seriousness of faith and adoption of doctrine is difficult to determine, the Buddhist churches were very successful in attracting Nisei outside of Sunday worship and Sunday school, Buddhist churches, as with Christian churches, tried to adopt the concept of modernity by becoming

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<sup>72</sup> Yoshiki Yoshida, interviewed by Alice Maxwell and Yukiko Sato, November 9, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Yoneko Dobashi Iwatsuru, interviewed by Diane Tappey, January 19, 1984, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Minoru “Min” Tonai, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, September 2, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>75</sup> Robert A. Nakamura, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, November 30, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

involved in progressive organizations. One of the most successful organizations to be integrated into Buddhist and Christian churches was the Boy Scouts. The Scouting movement was founded by Robert Baden-Powell and based on field manuals he wrote to train soldiers in the basics of field reconnaissance (*Reconnaissance and Scouting* [1884] and *Aids to Scouting* [1899]) while serving as a British Army officer in South Africa. When he returned to England, he was surprised to find that boys were reading his book in order to teach them how to have “outdoor fun” and was urged by educators to rewrite the texts so that it could be used to teach boys more basic skills such as camping, tracking, and wilderness survival.<sup>76</sup> Eventually, the book was published in 1908 as *Scouting for Boys*, thus beginning the international Scout Movement. In the United States, Scouting for Boys was used almost immediately by “a few YMCA secretaries” during wilderness outings, but by 1910, thanks to the YMCA and reformers like Edgar M. Robinson, Ernest Thompson Seton, and William D. Boyce, the Boy Scouts of America was incorporated in 1910 (separate from the YMCA) to teach boys “civic and moral values,” “social order,” “and moral behavior.”<sup>77</sup> The organization did not discriminate racially (it did so on citizenship, however), was a fixture of “modern” nations, accepted charters from virtually any religious organization, and allowed Buddhist leaders to incorporate their religious ideals into a modern, systematized, and well-known progressive organization. In 1931, Koyasan Daishi Kyōkai in Little Tokyo formed one of the most decorated troops in the Southland, Troop 79 (later changed to 379 in

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<sup>76</sup> Robert W. Peterson, *The Boy Scouts: An American Adventure* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1984), 25.

<sup>77</sup> Edgar M. Robinson was the Boys' Word Secretary of the International Committee of the YMCA. Ernest Thompson Seton was an American-resident British author, naturalist, and founder of the League of Woodcraft Indians (an organization similar to Scouting) who met with Baden-Powell while he was working on *Scouting for Boys*. William D. Boyce was a Chicago publisher who met the Unknown Scout who refused to take a tip from Boyce after helping him find his way on a foggy London street in 1909. The summary is from David I. Macleod, *Building Character*, 146-9.



early 1935), designed to give Issei a modern outlet that would enable them to get their city-hardened boys (who were now becoming teenagers) off of the streets.<sup>78</sup> Sadamu “Sam” Eejima, an early Kibei (born 1910 in Moneta, but educated in Japan) was exposed to Boy Scouting while attending “an elementary school in a small country town about 120 miles north of Tokyo.”<sup>79</sup> There, a “young teacher” taught several boys skills from the Boy Scout handbook (probably first published in the early 1910s) in order to afford them practical extracurricular instruction. In 1912, Eejima’s teacher may have been exposed in some manner to the visiting founding father of Scouting, Robert Baden-Powell, who likened some of Scouting’s tenets to *bushido*.<sup>80</sup> Although he was never in a formal troop (troops were independent until the Boy Scouts of Japan was formed in 1922), Eejima’s teacher did the best he could to instill the morals and ethics outlined in the handbook and even taught them the Scout salute. Upon his return to the United States sometime in the mid-1920s, Eejima joined a troop in Chico, California in 1926 and upon returning to Los Angeles, in 1929 became an Assistant Scoutmaster and then Scoutmaster of Troop 64, sponsored by the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Church.<sup>81</sup> On November 5, 1931, eleven Issei leaders (including Eejima and a representative from Troop 64 to represent the local district) met at Koyasan with about “eight tough Nisei boys” who needed a modern organization to help tame them. Eejima noted that the leaders of Koyasan “knew nothing about the formation of a

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<sup>78</sup> is important because boys could not join Boy Scouts until they were twelve years old in 1931.

<sup>79</sup> Boy Scouts of America Troop 379 of the Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, *1931-1981: 50th Anniversary*, 5.

<sup>80</sup> See Hashimoto Yorimitsu, “White Hope or yellow Peril? Bushido, Britain, and the Raj,” in *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective: World War Zero, Volume 2*, ed. David Wolff and John W. Stainberf (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005), 398, (pp. 379-402)

<sup>81</sup> I cannot determine when Troop 64 was founded, but it was certainly operating by the mid-1920s as was Troop 29, which was founded in Sawtelle in 1927. Boy Scouts of America Troop 379 of the Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, *1931-1981: 50th Anniversary*, 5.

Scout troop or its activities, but they were firmly convinced that Scouting was the only answer to the problem at hand.”<sup>82</sup> Conditions were primitive and the church’s backyard served as the outdoor center. To make matters worse, many of Little Tokyo’s Issei could not afford the weekly five-cent dues, much less ten dollars for a complete uniform. Eejima’s job was made even more difficult because he had to maintain a rather rigid standard of discipline “or the streetwise kids would have trampled all over him.”<sup>83</sup> By February of the next year, twenty five more scouts were added to the roster.

Parents of the boys, members and leaders of the church, and local-area residents and business owners rallied behind the new troop. The church often made up for the funds some scouts were unable to pay. Eventually, over 2,500 people turned up at Luna Park Zoo to put on a picnic potluck and carnival to raise funds for the troop to tour Japan. Eejima’s five-year goal was to create one of the most outstanding troops in the country, but, that timeline was simply too long for the boys. Within three years the troop earned the President Hoover Award for Outstanding Achievement (1933), recognition from the national Chief Scout Executive for its outstanding record (1933). They set the state record for most merit badges awarded in a single Court of Honor (numbering 170, 1934), defeated seventeen other Troops in the 1934 Regional First Aid Elimination Contest, and were awarded “outstanding troop in the United States” by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, along with a personal invitation from him (backed up by the National Council) to attend the First National Jamboree in 1935 (1934-5,

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<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, Issei had to recruit some local, non-Japanese in this endeavor, since only American citizens were allowed to sign off on a Troop’s charter. Eejima quoted in *Boy Scouts of America Troop 379 of the Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, 1931-1981: 50th Anniversary*. 24.

<sup>83</sup> *Boy Scouts of America Troop 379 of the Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, 1931-1981: 50th Anniversary*. 25

the troop re-routed the funds it had collected to tour Japan in order to attend the Jamboree).<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, an outbreak of infantile paralysis near the Jamboree site caused the cancellation of the event, but the scouts toured the country for twenty days beginning on August 15, 1935. Eventually in 1937, the troop finally toured Japan for 67 days, beginning on June 28, 1937.

The Buddhist churches in the Southland held on and eventually flourished because they understood that in order to have a future, they had to find a way to Americanize themselves. Although Americans did not demand foreigners be Christian (and, in fact, were proud of their general religious tolerance), Buddhist churches were careful to not run afoul of American sensibilities regarding religion and purposefully shaped their religion as practiced in the United States to more closely. Because it was foreign, the Buddhist church was always aware of its precarious position in the Christian-dominated landscape of the Southland. One of the ways in which it could ingratiate itself to Americans was uphold its ideals. One of the ways in which it did this was to constantly stress to its parishioners that they were in America and that the entire Nikkei community—particularly the Nisei, who were citizens—owed the nation its adherence and loyalty. Hikoji Takuchi attended both *gakuen* and a Buddhist Church and even though all of his teachers and priests were from Japan, both groups implored him “over and over” to remember that he was a citizen of the United States and that “once born in [a] country, you are indebted to that country.”<sup>85</sup> But Buddhist churches did not change themselves simply for the sake of appearances to the dominant culture. Few Buddhist Issei had strong religious ties in Japan and the

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<sup>84</sup> Boy Scouts of America Troop 379 of the Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin, *1931-1981: 50th Anniversary*. 25-33 and “Japanese Scouts Prefer Jamboree to Nippon Trip,” *Los Angeles Times*, Jan 25, 1935. “Lil’ Tokio to Boost Boy Scout Trip to Nation’s Capital in Fund Drive; Troop 379 Chosen by National Council Out of More than 43,000 in United States for Outstanding Record,” *Rafu Shimpo*, March, 1935.

<sup>85</sup> Hikoji Takuchi, interviewed by John Allen, November 7, 2002, Denshō Digital Archives.

religion's (particularly many of its Japanese incarnations) pluralistic nature did not place much pressure on Issei to demand that their children regularly attend Buddhist services. If Issei did not attend and did not encourage their children to attend, Buddhism would have no future in the United States. As such, Americanization gave Issei parents a reason to attend themselves and to encourage their children to attend since it seemed American to attend *some* sort of religious service, even if it was not Christian.

## Christianity

Reverend Paul Nagano, a Nisei-Sansei (born in 1920 to an Issei mother and a Nisei father)—who grew up in Little Tokyo and was ordained a Baptist minister while incarcerated at Poston War Relocation Center—is a case study in the attraction of Christianity to Nikkei who emigrated to the United States. His father was a Christian while his mother was a Buddhist. In order to settle upon their religious nature, the Naganos bounced from church to church in Little Tokyo until they found one that worked for them. At first, they went to the Japanese Free Methodist Church (now Centenary United Methodist Church) and began “socializing and feeling comfortable.” Afterwards, they went to church and Sunday school at the Shin Buddhist-affiliated Nishi Hongwanji and “enjoyed that for a bit.” After the Naganos moved to Boyle Heights, however, his friends there convinced him to attend the Japanese Baptist Church, where he stayed until he was evacuated during the war.<sup>86</sup> In reflecting upon his

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<sup>86</sup> This was the church's colloquial name. It was founded in 1925 by the Los Angeles Baptist City Mission Society (by Reverend Haruye Shibata) as Boyle Heights Baptist Church in order to serve Nikkei residents of the area. The name was changed to Evergreen Baptist Church and an English-speaking ministry began in the 1930s in order to address the needs of the Nisei. Two authors claim that sometime after the war, it became known as the Nisei Baptist Church of Los Angeles, but as of this writing, its homepage still indicates that the original name remains. See Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 20 and Young Hannah Cho, “From Political Representation to Cultural Hybridism: A Paradigm Shift of Pan-Asian Identity in the U.S.,” (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2009), 85.

experiences, Nagano opined that “many” of the conversions from Buddhism were due to Christianity’s prevalence in the dominant society. “It’d be to their advantage to become Christian,” Nagano opined, citing their ability to better assimilate initially through “the study of the Bible as an English language [text].”<sup>87</sup> Many Bible studies disguised as English lessons were run by missionaries and others involve in immigrant outreach, which “naturally” helped many people become Christians.<sup>88</sup> Nagano further believed that Christian churches, particularly Protestant varieties, were able to attract Issei through networking opportunities provided by social outreach, job programs, and by facilitating the formation of groups that would help Issei and their children form a connection both within the community and without. Christian churches, according to Nagano, fit the social profile of the Los Angeles region and all churches were just part of a “family.” Nagano also believed that the religious symbolism could be converted into commonalities between Buddhists and Christians (e.g. tea ceremony and communion), thereby making Christianity more acceptable to Nikkei converts.

While Christianity may have been unable to compete with the other expressions of modernity in Japan, in the United States, it offered an undeniable pathway to the society and culture at large. In the United States, churches and other philanthropic organizations, not the government (save public schools), took on the burden of acculturating immigrants and liberal church leaders were well-versed in the needs of immigrants and were quick to connect themselves to areas with immigrant growth (which, in the Southland, meant nearly everywhere). A great number of Christian churches serving Japanese in America grew up in the Los Angeles region, most tracing their beginnings to missionaries (usually

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<sup>87</sup> Paul Nagano, interviewed by Stephen Fugita and Becky Fukuda, May 25, 1999, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

American, but sometimes Japanese) who had served in Japan. The first Nikkei-oriented Christian organization in the Southland was the Japanese Mission Home founded in 1890 on Fourth Street, between Broadway and Spring as an interdenominational outreach to Issei.<sup>89</sup> The first church organized specifically for Nikkei formed when Reverend Tokutaro Nakamura created the Los Angeles Japanese Methodist Episcopal Church (now Centenary United Methodist Church) in 1896. In the next decade and a half, several churches with large Nikkei congregations were founded by the Los Angeles Presbyterian Church (1905), the Los Angeles Congregational Church (1908) and the Bethlehem Congregational Church of Log Angeles (beginning in April 21 1907, branching off into the Japanese Bethlehem Congregational Church of Log Angeles in 1911). Eventually these three churches merged to form the Japanese Union Church of Los Angeles in 1918.<sup>90</sup> In 1912, the first Mass was read in Japanese by Father Albert Breton in direct response to a request sent to the Bishop of Hakodate by Roman Catholic Issei living in Little Tokyo who could not complete confession. By 1915, eight women from Nagasaki arrived to turn his small mission into the St. Francis Xavier School. By 1920, Priests and Nuns from the Maryknoll order took over and changed the name to Maryknoll School and established an evening English language school for Issei, an orphanage, and a sanatorium (eventually they founded a *gaku*en).<sup>91</sup> St. Mary's Episcopal Church was founded as a mission in Uptown Los Angeles by a former

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<sup>89</sup> OMS Holiness Church of North America, "Japanese Activities in the Los Angeles Area," accessed December 6, 2013, [http://kuzuharalibrary.com/history/los\\_angeles.html](http://kuzuharalibrary.com/history/los_angeles.html).

<sup>90</sup> See "Japanese to Join Bethlehem Church," p.5 - *Los Angeles Herald*, April 19, 1907 and National Park Service, s.v. "Japanese Union Church of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, Los Angeles County," accessed on November 12, 2013, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/5views/5views4h43.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/5views/5views4h43.htm).

<sup>91</sup> See Little Tokyo Historical Society, *Los Angeles's Little Tokyo* (Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing Company, 2010), 61-2 and St. Francis Xavier Chapel Japanese Catholic Center, "History of our Community," accessed on December 16, 2013, [http://sfxjcc.org/index\\_files/SFXJCChistory.htm](http://sfxjcc.org/index_files/SFXJCChistory.htm).

female missionary to Japan in 1907 and then taken over by a Japanese priest, Father “John” Misao Yamazaki in 1913 became a mainstay for many Japanese immigrants and their families.<sup>92</sup> By 1910, there was enough activity for Japanese Protestants to form their own organization to promote an agenda centered on Nikkei churchgoers’ needs and to have an umbrella organization that could act as a social and political advocate to fight against racism and prejudice. The Southern California Church Federal, Japanese American (SCCFJA, eventually becoming the Japanese Christian Church Federation of Southern California, JCFSA) began its work immediately, forming an orphanage, credit union, social center, and a long-running Christian summer school on Terminal Island beginning in 1932.<sup>93</sup> By 1934, over twenty-nine churches in the Southland belonged to the JCFSA.

From the beginning of Nikkei immigration, Christianity’s profusion on the American landscape and its experience in foreign missions work was certainly the reason many Issei and Nisei converted. Pastors and priests became cultural bridges between not only their faiths and Nikkei, but became educators, therapists, job referral counselors, community activists, and socio-political intermediaries. When Issei Yoriyuki Kikuchi, immigrated to the U.S. in 1905 in an effort to escape conscription during the Russo-Japanese War. What he desired and prayed for was that “God make me a man...and give me education; and if I can, maybe make money”; but the god to whom he prayed was not the Christian deity. Kikuchi explained that he was neither Christian nor Buddhist because, “in Japan” at the time, “they [were not] particular with religion” instead, the concept of religion was more of a

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<sup>92</sup> St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, History,” accessed November 16, 2013, <http://stmarys-la.org/lang/en/history/> and “Obituary: John Yamazaki; Episcopal Priest at St. Mary’s,” Los Angeles Times, February 1, 1998.

<sup>93</sup> See Yoo, *Growing up Nisei*, 56-7

“custom...they recognize God but so slightly and selfishly...they really don’t think deeply or seriously.”<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, when Kikuchi prayed, “[it was] a serious thing-life or death.” After working at several businesses, Kikuchi eventually began to “attend a Christian mission,” and in 1907, converted, and prayed “help me find a business where I don’t have to lie.”<sup>95</sup> Eventually, Kikuchi graduated from the University of Southern California School of Dentistry because he believed that God “ordained [him] as a dentist,” a profession one could “practice...without a lie.”<sup>96</sup> Eventually, Kikuchi became one of the first practicing dentists in Little Tokyo, opening his office at 121 South San Pedro St. after passing his examinations in June of 1914.<sup>97</sup> He went back to Japan briefly in 1917 to marry a Christian woman who graduated from Doshisha Christian College.<sup>98</sup>

Irene Kobayashi’s father is a prime example of how Christian churches often appeared more attractive to both Issei and Nisei, alike. Her father, the son of a Zen Buddhist priest, found the Japanese strain of Buddhism too traditional and restrictive and “liked the freedom” to speak his mind he had when visiting Christians in Japan. He began to explore various Christian churches while living in Japan and eventually began to socialize in and out of school with Christian boys there. Kobayashi’s father also appreciated what he perceived to be a more egalitarian relationship between husband and wife in

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<sup>94</sup> Yoriyuki Kikuchi, interviewed by Arthur A. Hansen, July 29, 1974, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 3-4.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>98</sup> Now Doshisha University—this school’s language of instruction is primarily in English). Kikuchi’s father-in-law was in the first graduating class and eventually went on to Osaka Seisoku Eigo Gakkō (Osaka Formal/Proper English School) where he met his father. See also Margaret Mehl, *Private Academies of Chinese Learning in Meiji Japan: the Decline and Transformation of the Kangaku Juku* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2003), 154



Christian households. Although he had to hide his curiosity for Christianity, when he became older, he began to openly attend Christian services. He eventually converted to a Christian denomination that sponsored his way to Hawaii when he was nineteen, and he worked at that congregation's boarding school as a janitor until he could pay them back. While there, he learned English but was compelled to convert to Buddhism when he vied for his wife's hand in marriage since she was from a long, priestly line of Buddhists and so he could take on her family name.<sup>99</sup> However, he compelled his children to attend multiple religions including Mormonism, Roman Catholicism, and several branches of Protestant and Buddhist churches and allowed them to pick their own. In the end, Irene and her siblings choose to join Christian congregations.<sup>100</sup>

Nisei Fumi Hayashi, whose Buddhist parents owned a flower business in Glendale, could “not go to Japanese town to get to [the] Buddhist church service,” so she “became a Christian because there was a Christian church nearby.”<sup>101</sup> George T. “Joe” Sakato's, Buddhist family would catch the streetcar from Colton to attend a San Bernardino Japanese Christian church as a way to congregate in the nearby “hub [of] the Japanese community” with other Nikkei.<sup>102</sup> Although Henry Nishi's father was a “very staunch member...very involved with” the Shingon-affiliated Kōyasan Beikoku Betsuin in Little Tokyo, he attended Hollywood Presbyterian Church nearer to his home because his parents felt that “religion [was] something that was necessary, but you didn't have to go all the way downtown” to

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<sup>99</sup> This tradition is known as *mukoyōshi* (lit. adopted son-in-law) and is quite common in Japan when a man does not produce a male heir. He will adopt his son-in-law when his daughter marries, thus assuring his family lineage will continue.

<sup>100</sup> Irene M. Kobayashi, interviewed by Betty E. Mitson, April 11, 1972, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 5-6.

<sup>101</sup> Fumi Hayashi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, May 14, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>102</sup> George T. “Joe” Sakato, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, May 14, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

experience it. Margie Wong's father, who owned a wholesale grocery store in Boyle Heights, wanted his children to stay in America at all costs. Even though Wong's parents were Shinto, her father's credo was "this is America, so let the kids go to a Christian church." Her father went as far as to give a donation to Maryknoll and sent his children to Maryknoll School. While in camp, Wong changed her affiliation from Roman Catholic to Protestantism, while her parents remained Shinto.<sup>103</sup> Peggy Yamato Mikuni was stridently encouraged to attend church by her Buddhist parents.<sup>104</sup> Her mother was content with her to go to any church since one was "not gonna learn anything bad at a church," while her father, probably because of his position in the business community, insisted that she go to a Christian church, even though he never went himself.<sup>105</sup> Mikuni eventually attended Union Christian Church in Little Tokyo.

Christian churches were also making themselves more relevant in the socio-cultural landscape by emphasizing the modern ideals of education through their Sunday school classes. "Whatever was convenient" was good enough for Nishi's "staunchly Buddhist" father who also sent his children to a Christian school.<sup>106</sup> The same happened to Kiyō Maruyama, whose Sōtō Zen Buddhist parents did not mind her attending a Sunday school specifically set up to serve Nikkei at the Mikuni Christian Church in Glendale.<sup>107</sup> Maruyama credits her attendance at this Sunday school with her abilities to better

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<sup>103</sup> Margie Y. Wong, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 21, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>104</sup> Mikuni's father started the Yamato Service Bureau in Little Tokyo to aid the Nikkei population (the Bureau helped with income taxes, immigration, accounting, etc.

<sup>105</sup> Peggy Yamato Mikuni, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, November 28, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>106</sup> Henry Nishi, interviewed by Richard Potashin, January 8, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>107</sup> Sunday school set up originally by Julius Soper in 1915. Later, Grace Van Loon of the Christian Missionary Alliance. Maruyama. See Katherine Yamada, "Verdugo Views: Church Reflects Japanese History," *Glendale News-Press*, October 26, 2007. The church is now known as New Life Christian Church.

integrate herself in with other local Nisei.<sup>108</sup> Lillian Soto, whose father worked as a gardener in Santa Monica for many “high-profile people” including Loretta Young and Lana Turner, was “recruited” by a Caucasian church-going couple who simply asked many Issei parents if driving their Nisei children to and from Sunday school and church service would be agreeable. Soto’s parents were Buddhists, but her mother was “introverted” and the closest Buddhist church was in Sawtelle, at least three miles distant. When asked, her mother responded with, “yeah, let them go,” as they felt that their children should “have some religious background.”<sup>109</sup> Dorothy Yasoe Ikkanda’s parents were so convinced of the necessity of Sunday school that she and her siblings were “always sent.” Her parents thought so strongly of the concept that, even as a Buddhists, they would send them to Christian Sunday school if that was all that was available.<sup>110</sup>

In order to maintain a constant presence in their parishioners’ lives, churches tried to ensure that body, spirit, and mind be fed on days other than Sundays, and did so in many cases without the inherent spectre of racial discrimination that was often found in other organized activities.<sup>111</sup> Both the Young Men’s Christian Association (YWCA) and the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) were heavily vested in Issei when they landed on American shores, providing them with outreach services, English lessons, and opportunities to assimilate into the cultural and economic milieu of their new home. “The [YWCA],” wrote “Katy,” a “Nisei male columnist” for the *Rafu Shimpō*, “is well known” and “their activities are ever helpful to the women” of the Southland Nikkei

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<sup>108</sup> Kiyō Maruyama, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>109</sup> Lillian Soto, interviewed by Megan Asaka, July 6, 2008, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>110</sup> Arthur Ogami, interviewed by Alice Ito, March 10, 2004, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>111</sup> See Putney, *Muscular Christianity*.

Community.<sup>112</sup> “Katy” went on to write that “their activities are ever helpful to the women of this community, and the effects of their work are unconsciously felt more or less by every woman of the Japanese community in the Southland.”<sup>113</sup> Historian Valerie Matsumoto has traced the Los Angeles Nikkei YWCA to a 1912 outreach mission for Nikkei women and children, which within four years was subsumed under the Y’s umbrella “to meet the needs of Oriental maids” with childcare, and classes in domestic science, childcare, English, and dressmaking.<sup>114</sup> By 1921, the YWCA also ran a downtown branch and “hospitality center.” Masao Satow, an early Nisei born who moved to Los Angeles as a young child in 1908, was instrumental in ensuring that Nikkei had access to their own YMCA in Little Tokyo as well as open reception at other Southlands Ys.<sup>115</sup> After his return to the Southland with an advanced degree in 1922, he labored in order to open to Japanese previously-segregated YMCA pools and facilities and eventually opened a basketball court, gym, and boxing facilities for Nikkei men at Second and Main.<sup>116</sup>

By the time Nisei became old enough to participate in the YWCA and YMCA on their own terms, the organizations offered what Valerie Matsumoto described as a “dazzling array of activities,” much of it self-directed by the Nisei, themselves.<sup>117</sup> At the most basic level, Ys offered Nisei a place to

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<sup>112</sup> Quoted in Matsumoto, 26.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 25-8.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Satow received his bachelor’s degree in Jun 1929 from the University of California, southern branch (now UCLA) and completed theology training at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1922. See Brian Masaru Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism Among the Japanese of Los Angeles* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 16.

<sup>116</sup> Jack Y. Kunitomi, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 20, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>117</sup> The quote is from Matsumoto, 29.

congregate, to perhaps play sports (often on teams that would compete regionally), participate in service projects, camp, hike, learn trade skills, learn about Japanese culture and art, meet area businessmen, and listen to influential speakers.<sup>118</sup> Athletic and social clubs could be formed simply by finding enough Nisei of similar age to petition to their local Y for sponsorship. Beyond this, the Y-branded organizations operated both racially segregated and integrated clubs and service organizations in order to carry out progressive extra-church missions. Toshi Nagamori Ito joined the Junior Misses, an affiliate of the YWCA Girl Reserves, an organization begun in 1918 to “help girls” from ages twelve to eighteen to “build character and contribute to society” in a Christian manner. By 1926, there were five Nisei Reserve clubs in the Southland.<sup>119</sup> In addition to the arts, crafts, and service activities one normally found in a Reserve meeting, Ito’s Junior Misses would invite boys from corresponding YMCAs to dances and would regularly have outings such as “skating parties at the Shrine Skating Ring.”<sup>120</sup> Although the Reserves were segregated, the Ys school-based organizations were not. The YMCA and the YWCA extended their influences to local area schools where Nisei would join Hi-Y clubs (males) and Tri-Hi-Y clubs (females).<sup>121</sup> Hi-Y clubs were officially sanctioned in 1927, with Tri-Hi-Y clubs following soon after (having been converted from various “triangle” girls clubs), just about the time

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<sup>118</sup> See Frank K. Omatsu, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>119</sup> The male versions of these clubs were the Pioneers (ages twelve to fourteen) and the Comrades (ages fifteen to seventeen), which both began probably in 1919. Interestingly, I can find no Nisei boys in the Southland naming either of these clubs directly, although many did belong to YMCA programs of various sorts.

<sup>120</sup> Toshi Nagamori Ito, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, November 11, 2010, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>121</sup> Note that many females called their Tri-Hi-Y clubs simply Hi-Y clubs, even though both were segregated by sex. Eventually Gra-Y and Jr. Hi-Y clubs were formed for elementary-aged and Jr. high-aged students, respectively. This aspects of YMCA/YWCA history is fairly understudied, and it appears that the two organizations cooperated a great amount on Hi-Y for both boys and girls.

many Nisei began to attend high school.<sup>122</sup> Officially, Hi-Y and Tri-Hi-Y clubs were designed to “create, maintain, and extend to the fullest capacity of one’s ability, throughout the home, school, and community, high standards of moral character through improvement, brother/sisterhood equality, and service in high schools.” What did this look like in practice? Since the Hi-Y clubs were run as school clubs, they were open to all races. Robert Wada, who joined Hi-Y when a student at Redlands High School, recalled that the club centered on sports and service. “Free time,” with the Hi-Y was spend “playing sports,” especially basketball, at the nearby YMCA. When the local Y would have a large event (“Thanksgiving or something”), the Hi-Yers would work “in the kitchen or the mess hall...[cleaning] up after the party and stuff like that.”<sup>123</sup>

Christianity, particularly its liberal and progressive strains, was appealing to the Nisei for two primary reasons. The first is that Christianity was the established religion in the United States and the services were in English. Some Issei converted to Christianity during its era of greatest success in the final decades of the 1800s, but many Issei were not exposed to Christianity before their arrival in the United States. Christian groups made up of both Japanese and non-Japanese had many support organizations in place to aid and assist Issei upon their arrival and often converted them after granting them succor or providing them with invaluable English lessons. Becoming a member of the dominant religion of the dominant society had obvious advantages as it leveled one barrier of inequality between the two groups. Nisei who attended a Christian church would never have to answer for not being

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<sup>122</sup> The triangle was the official symbol of the YMCA and YWCA. See National Committee on Work with High School Youth of the YMCA, *The Official Tri-Hi-Y Manual: A Manual for Leaders and Officers of Tri-Hi-Y* (New York: Association Press, 1946).

<sup>123</sup> Robert M. Wada, interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, July 19, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

American because of their religion (although it appears that Buddhist children were never accused of being un-American because of their religious choices, either). The second reason many Nisei were attracted to Christianity is because of Sunday schools and the extracurricular clubs and activities, the churches sponsored. Most Christian sects had already perfected their ability to attract and hold children's attention before most Issei began having children of their own and had to make very few, if any, adjustments to attract Nisei. Sunday school for children allowed them to gather with their friends and extra-church activities ensured that youth would have something to look forward to outside of Sundays.

## Conclusion

As one Japanese observer of Nikkei religion during this era noted, the "ultimate purpose" of religion, according to Nikkei, was to "instill the hope for a better life" and the ideal God that they worshiped was one who could "fulfill the needs of a particular environment and the people in it."<sup>124</sup> As such, religious life for the Nisei in the United States was strongly connected to the ideal of Americanization and the American Dream. This broad definition of religion and a supreme deity as followed by the Nikkei gave Issei parents ample room when allowing their Nisei children to choose the faith they wanted to follow. Although Japan was a religious nation on the surface, most religions including Shinto and the different strains of Buddhism had few serious adherents. However, before Issei immigrated to the United States, they saw the nature of both Buddhism and Shinto change in order to adapt to modernities expectations that religion be active, have a critical and expanding set of

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<sup>124</sup> Kyojiro Takehashi, "A Social Study of the Japanese Shinto and Buddhism in Los Angeles," (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1937), 89.

associated apologetics, and offer social services to those who were destitute, lost, or otherwise uncared for. Religion in the context of Nisei is complicated by the fact that many Issei had a pluralistic view of religion thanks to the way Buddhism and Shinto were seamlessly combined in Japanese culture.

Christianity had an early advantage in the Southland in gaining converts and growing Nikkei congregations. Not only were Los Angeles-area Christians within both the dominant and Nikkei communities outwardly concerned with the spiritual lives of the recently-immigrated, Christians simply had a more sophisticated organization and sense of community than did Buddhists, who traditionally worshiped at home except during exceptional events such as funerals. Christianity also had the luxury of being the dominant religion that surrounded the Nisei and the more liberal strains of Christianity, in particular, understood how to attract and keep not only children, but their parents, as well. Christianity also fully met the requirements of Americanization—no one in the Nikkei community doubted the Americaness of Christian churches and because of this, many Issei were happy to allow, or even purposefully encouraged their children to explore Christianity on their own. Thus, Christianity was the “safe” religion, particularly since it did not run afoul of Japanese religious traditions, was acceptable to the dominant culture, provided safe extracurricular activities to the Nisei, and would feasibly offer Nisei a way in which they could find another measure of cultural equality amongst their peers in the Southland.

Even though their religion long-pervaded the cultural traditions and folklore of Japan, Buddhists were relative latecomers in the act of retaining parishioners and encouraging them to come to regularly-scheduled, structured services. Religion in Japan existed (and still exists) in a state of mutual acceptance. Buddhism and Shinto have co-existed since the sixth century and most Issei did not feel conflicted by being both a Buddhist and a Shinto simultaneously. Because of this, Issei parents who



were not strongly-tied to their branch of Buddhism often let their children explore religion on their own. Because of this, Nisei children with Buddhist parents were often left to fend for themselves when choosing a religion, and a great many of them chose Christianity in order to take advantage of the programs specifically geared toward children that most Christian churches offered. But many Issei view this as a win-win—their children were given further opportunities for education, were kept off the streets and away from undesirable influences, and had ways in which to socialize and network with their peers. Put more simply, the attractive element for any religion for Issei was simply to be a part of it since that was the “American” thing to do. Buddhists, particularly larger sects such as Pure Land, eventually mimicked their competition and offered the Nisei services and programs similar to their Christian counterparts. Sunday schools, services in English, and both Buddhist and semi-secular extracurricular activities (e.g. Boy Scouts) became staples of Southland Buddhist churches and their pluralistic nature and disassociation with the Japanese state gave them ample room to promote patriotic sentiment and American cultural traditions, even if those traditions were rooted in Western religiosity (e.g. Christmas).

## CONCLUSION: CULTURE SHOCK: RACE ECLIPSING MODERNITY



Photograph 1: On December 8, 1941, a *Los Angeles Examiner* photographer captured an image of this Nikkei family window shopping in Little Tokyo.

On December 8, 1941, the *Los Angeles Examiner* printed an image of a Nikkei family staring into a toyshop window in Little Tokyo.<sup>1</sup> Despite the escalating tensions between the United States and

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<sup>1</sup> *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner Collection*, order #00068526

Japan, its caption, “A family shops for toys on E. First St. before Christmas in 1941,” is surprisingly muted.<sup>2</sup> Just the day prior, pre-war “tensions” reached a pinnacle with Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor and the day this photograph went to press, the United States declared war. Yet, as the *Examiner’s* reaction demonstrates, Nikkei were not automatically considered enemy agents or a fifth column poised to attack the United States from its interior. Extra police were assigned to the Little Tokyo area to “keep their eyes open,” but, as the *Los Angeles Daily News* reported, “they found little to do aside from examining Japanese bibelots in store windows.”<sup>3</sup> The major newspapers in the Southland also published the Japanese American Citizens League’s statement that the Nikkei were mostly loyal and that those suspect within the community would be investigated and if found “by word or act consort with the enemies” they would be turned over to authorities. A photograph of Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron appearing alongside the leaders of the JACL who made the statement even made it into the *Times*, giving Southland-area residents—both Nikkei and non-Nikkei, alike—a small sense of hope that the positive gains made by the Nikkei in the Los Angeles Region were enough to prove their dedication to the United States and the American way of life.<sup>4</sup> At least in the very short term, most Southland residents considered the Japanese American community an integral part of the community who added to the area’s relatively harmonious ethnic collage and few doubted their loyalty.

Except for the immediate questioning and arrest of some high-profile Nikkei adults, for a few fleeting weeks after Pearl Harbor, the veneer of racial harmony for the Nisei children—most of whom

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<sup>2</sup> The *Examiner* was a morning newspaper, and it was most likely that the copy had already gone to print.

<sup>3</sup> *Los Angeles Daily News*, December 8, 1941, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> See Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle of Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 52-3.

were now in high school or beyond—cracked and chipped, but for the most part, held up. Much of this was thanks to the progressive and pragmatic attitudes still held by school administrators and teachers who specifically instructed their students to treat Nisei as Americans, not potential enemies of the state. When Frank Omatsu, who never experienced “any kind of prejudice” growing up was greeted by his high school baseball team on the practice field the next day. Obviously supportive (albeit in an off-colored way), his teammates jovially remarked that they “got [their] first war prisoner.”<sup>5</sup> James Kanno, one of five Nisei attending Santa Ana High School was called into a special assembly on Monday the 8th along with roughly 1,300 students. His principle touted the school’s dedication to diversity, stating that the “Japanese Americans coming to this high school are not Japanese, but they are Americans.” Instructing the students directly on how to act as tensions were rising all around them, the principle further instructed his student body that they should not treat the Nisei any differently after that Monday then before. Kanno and his Nisei classmates appreciated the gesture and felt that it helped them stay in the others’ good graces.<sup>6</sup> Katsumi Kunitsugu recalls similarly, meeting in Roosevelt High School’s field along with the rest of the student body and listened to Roosevelt’s “Day of Infamy” speech. Teachers at Roosevelt, already quite used to large numbers of Nisei within their student body were “very understanding, and pointed out to the student body how this had nothing to do with the Japanese students” at Roosevelt. The teachers implored students that “because [Nisei] were Americans, and they hoped everyone would treat [them] as such.” Until she was evacuated, school at Roosevelt

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<sup>5</sup> Frank K. Omatsu, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, October 24, 2011, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>6</sup> James Kanno, interviewed by John McFarlane, April 26, 1971, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 2.

continued on as “fairly normal” for Kunitsugu and the rest of the Nisei.<sup>7</sup> Outside of school, in Seal Beach, Aiko Tanamachi Endo’s family experienced a brush with racial prejudice when Endo’s brother, Tom, was investigated briefly by their local chief of police (a personal friend of the family) who laughingly told them that someone had reported “a couple of Japanese trying to blow up [a] bridge, so I had to check it out.”<sup>8</sup>

But after America’s population geared up mentally and culturally for war, the curtain of protection afforded to Nisei children by their Issei parents, community leaders, and by the standards of decency held by most in the Southland community began to crumble. Nisei’s childhoods, which were relatively free from prejudice and ill will from those around them, began to change for the worse. Nisei were slowly beginning to understand that in times of ethnic conflict their race would trump their Americanness. Akiko Herzig-Yoshinaga believed that her non-Nisei friends “were caught in a little dilemma” as they knew that Nisei like Akiko would suffer hurt feelings “if...ostracized.” However, as time went on, more and more of her friends “felt if they were too friendly with [Nisei], they would be labeled ‘Jap-lovers’” and it “became harder and harder for them to remain our friends.”<sup>9</sup> The only overt discrimination remembered by George Fujii, a Nisei-Kibei, was that a barber refused to give him a haircut at a local Anaheim barber shop (interestingly, business at his parent’s Chinese restaurant grew as local Germans and British began coming to the eatery to argue with one another about the future of the

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<sup>7</sup> Katsumi Kunitsugu, interviewed by Sherry Turner, July 15, 1973, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Aiko Tanamachi Endo, interviewed by Marsha Bode, November 15, 1983, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 24 and Larry Strawther, *Seal Beach: A Brief History* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2014), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Aiko Herzig, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, March 20, 1994, Denshō Digital Archives.

war).<sup>10</sup> By far, the worst overt discrimination faced by Nisei were those who attended Los Angeles High School in the uptown area of Los Angeles. The principal, Paul Webb, announced to the fifteen Nisei seniors in a class of around 300 people that they would not be obtaining their diplomas. Webb blatantly defied school board orders and would not issue diplomas to them because “[their] people bombed Pearl Harbor” and that they simply “didn’t deserve [a diploma].” Akiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, Hayao Shishino, and their fellow Nisei classmates did not received their diplomas until 1989.<sup>11</sup>

In less than three months, wartime hysteria, combined with racism and propaganda, prompted Roosevelt—a delegatory president more concerned with military expediency than social justice—to sign Executive Order 9066 on February 12, 1942 and the subsequent Order 9102 on March 18, which allowed the United States government to forcibly remove any persons the “Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander” deemed appropriate from “zones” of military necessity.<sup>12</sup> Although over 14,000 people of German, Italian, and Jewish ancestry were evacuated via these orders, by far the largest group were the Nikkei, of whom over 110,000 were eventually forced to leave. On February 25, 1942, the first to face removal were Terminal Islanders, but the subsequent order on April 20, 1942 gave all residence of the Southland until only noon on April 28 to assemble for evacuation. Nisei children, who had believed for so long that they were American and represented the best that America

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<sup>10</sup> George Fujii, interviewed by Russell Nowell, May 21, 1984, California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, Japanese American Project, Fullerton, California, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, July 7, 2009, Denshō Digital Archives and Aiko Herzig, interviewed by Tom Ikeda, March 20, 1994, Denshō Digital Archives and Anita Snow, “Japanese Americans to get High School Diplomas 47 Years Late, Associated Press, October 27, 1989. This was in stark contrast to some principals, such as the one on Santa Monica High School, which ensured that all Nisei were who able to graduate received their diplomas, even in camp. See Arnold T. Maeda, interviewed by Tani Ikeda, January 9, 2012, Denshō Digital Archives.

<sup>12</sup> The quote is from Executive Order 9066.

instructed them to be, were forced to view themselves as unwanted, rejected, and, worst of all, un-American.

### The Nisei Legacy

It would be wrong to take from this study that in their drive toward modernity, the Japanese and American cultures of the Nisei blended into a singular, overarching personality. Nisei, encouraged by both their Issei parents and the dominant culture, became comfortable looking both toward their ancestral home and toward the country they called home and found ways to integrate the modern from each into their personas and psyches. In this way, the Nisei ensured, to the best of their knowledge, that they would have a chance to flourish in their new home. For many, this meant fostering the American side of modernity more than the Japanese side, but they were not forced to choose between assimilation and rejection. Nisei chose to participate in the activities that surrounded them, usually without regard to those activities' national origin, sense of cultural pride, or obligation to either their American or Japanese heritage. Instead, the diverse nature of the Southland and its relatively progressive population created an environment that allowed Nisei to choose activities based on their personal preferences. In addition, Issei parents generally approved of their children's choices because these activities were in accord with the ideals held by both American and Japanese modernizers' views of childrearing.

There is no doubt that American public and parochial schooling and Japanese language schools were the frameworks for the Nisei's approach to modernity. Educational modernizers in the United States and Japan had faithfully believed that education was the key to a nation's strength in a world undergoing massive transformations due to the Second Industrial Revolution and its reliance on structures and specialized organization and the scientific method. Knowledge was an important tool

that provided the foundation for economic growth, political stability, and cultural harmonization and acculturation. As such, Issei—who had been exposed to Japan’s own modernizing education system before their migration—and the dominant culture greatly encouraged the Nisei’s education. Issei parents even had more at stake since their children were American citizens and their hope that their legacy could flourish in their selectively unwelcoming but permanent home. Education as promoted in the Los Angeles region by its progressive administration and teachers—most of whom were used to teaching in multiethnic classrooms—welcomed the Nisei and guided their assimilation while, at the same time, affirming their Japanese heritage.

The vast majority of Issei stridently promoted American schooling to their offspring and only a few sent their children back to receive a Japanese education. For the majority of Issei that kept their children at home, most believed that, somehow, formal Japanese language and, perhaps, cultural instruction should be a part of the Nisei’s formal educational experience. Here, the goals for their children were less specific than those set forth by the American educational system. Issei believed, at a minimum, that the *gakuen* served as a way in which the Nisei could better understand and appreciate their ancestry and hoped that it would also ensure that Issei and Nisei could communicate with one another since many of the former barely spoke English. This was in accord with the dominant educational system and its desire for children of color to have some appreciation for their heritage. Others who had hoped that their children would become a bridge of understanding between Japan and the United States were, more often than not, disappointed with the marginal outcomes of the Japanese language school system as a whole. While American-style schooling was certainly more successful than *gakuen* in convincing Nisei of its importance, those who embraced Japanese language school did so



because they felt it had some modern benefit including the ability to communicate with their parents, prepare them for future careers, and, if anything, an opportunity to continue to interact in modern play with their friends.

Sports helped define the lives of a great deal children growing up between the World Wars, fulfilling earlier reformers' beliefs that sports were necessary in order to give children productive, safe, and moral activities outside of school during the newly-defined period of adolescence. By choosing baseball, Nisei were following the footsteps of American, Nikkei, and Japanese players at all level who associated the sport's ability to easily draw players together from all cultures and nationalities in venues ranging from a corner sandlot to a college or professional stadium that drew perhaps tens of thousands. Baseball's emphasis on teamwork, running, and throwing, were accepted and promoted by modernizers who saw these elements as important to the physical development of a child and a natural outlet for his or her primitive desires to run, jump, and throw. For the Nisei who chose judo, Issei parents approved because of the sport's Japanese origins, emphasis on character-building, and its reliance on modern physics and kinesiological science which were being used by other modern martial arts to help those who were weaker overcome antagonizers who were stronger. Universally-accepted individuals of influence such as movie stars, ex-presidents, Charles Atlas, Jigorō Kanō, and even the fictional Sherlock Holmes viewed martial arts as a modern, civilized way to overcome an opponent without resorting to the primitive bloodletting that had been accepted in the near past. Nisei, on the other hand, chose the sport most often because it was fun and allowed them to play with their friends.

Although the concept of religion was certainly not modern, ways in which modernizers changed the presentation of religion were—this was particularly the case for Buddhism, first changing in order to compete with both state Shinto and Christianity in Japan and then to make itself relevant

and acceptable in the United States. Both Japanese and Western forms of worship gave many Nisei a way in which to practice ancient faiths in a manner agreeable to their parents, friends, and surrounding community. Christian churches were quick to include Nisei as part of the active congregations that built schools, orphanages, hospitals, and outreach centers in their ancestral homeland and in areas where recently-immigrated Issei congregated. Eventually, these same churches attracted Nisei through Sunday schools, extracurricular organizations, and English-language services that increasingly featured Nisei pastors who spoke to their own generation's concerns and culture. Although Buddhist churches in Japan lagged behind their Christian counterparts, they quickly learned how to adapt to the requirements of modern religion. Buddhism, a religion that was on the verge of disappearing from Japanese culture, sent its own students to the West, not to accept Western religions, but to learn what made Western religion so strong and stalwart in a time when science and rational thinking threatened the concept of faith. Buddhism also began slowly in the United States, but by the time Nisei were old enough to choose the religion for themselves, many felt fine in choosing it because it appeared similar in form to Christianity. Sunday school, extracurricular activities, and services in English appeared alongside modern worship accoutrements such as pews, organs, stained glass, and hymnals.

It is difficult to end this study on that positive note. The lives of childhood and adolescent Nisei, as guided by the Issei parents and the dominant society, was guided by the very salient idea of the American Dream as expressed by James Truslow Adams in *The Epic of America*, in which he stated that the United States was:

A land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement...It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to

the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.<sup>13</sup>

Trunslow's ideals were published in 1931, a time when the bulk of the Nisei in the Southland were emerging from childhood into adolescence, a time in which they began to choose for themselves a course through life—a life in which most believed in the dreams of which Trunslow wrote. for the American Dream that was supposed to be available to all “regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position” ended sharply and severely in February 1942, when it became forcefully clear to Nisei that they were not like the other children they grew up with, played with, and went to school with in the Southland. Even though the Los Angeles region may have afforded Nisei a level of social protection, that fragile biome crumbled less than two short months when the fears and prejudices of the dominant society at large came to bear thanks to wartime hysteria, jaundiced governmental policies, and dubious claims of military expediency. While many older Nisei's fears that Trunslow's ideals may not have been as sanguine as they were led to believe were affirmed by the wartime orders that led to their removal, to many younger Japanese Americans, relocation and internment was a confusing betrayal that violated everything they had been led to believe. In this way, 1942 represents a failure of the modernity presented to the children of the Issei since all of their hard work, education, civic aptitude, and coalescence meant nothing when the dominant society still could not get past the color of their skin, the features of their faces, and the ancestry of their blood, defying what Issei and those in the dominant culture had been telling Nisei children all along.

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<sup>13</sup> James Trunslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931), 214-5.

On the other hand, ending this study on a wholly sour note would deny the successes by the Issei and others to recognize that there were opportunities for Nisei children, even if small, to find success and happiness in a country that had, just one generation prior, stridently believed and legally asserted in *Ozawa* that native Japanese were unassimilable. While older Nisei and Issei understood how truly narrow the gates were into the field of full incorporation into American society, they also understood that setting the Nisei generation on the path of cultural coalescence was that generation's best hope. Indeed, while many Nisei high school and college graduates could not find their way into the middle class and were forced to begrudgingly work on their family farms or in their family businesses, a select few *were* making it and, perhaps when the Great Depression ended, there would be even more opportunities for Nisei to achieve the Dream, too. The ideals of coalescence instilled into the Nisei during their childhoods provided many of them with the resiliency necessary to weather the internment camps where they attended both American and Japanese language school, played baseball with their family and friends, wrestled one another in judo, learned camping and survival skills in Boy Scouts, and came to find deeper spirituality in camp-organized Buddhist and Christian churches and organizations. As restrictions were eased, Nisei children were allowed to play outside the camp's fences and, in some cases, played with local children (usually organized sports under guard). Thus, in the camps, children continued to be children, playing, laughing, and making the best of an imperfect situation, just as they had done in the Southland before February 1942.

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## VITA

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