"Pacific Crossings: Seeking the Land of Money Trees" (1993)[1]

Ronald Takaki

DURING THE 1890s, American society witnessed not only the Wounded Knee massacre and the end of the frontier, but also the arrival of a new group of immigrants. Unlike the Irish, the Japanese went east to America. But they, too, were pushed here by external influences. During the nineteenth century, America's expansionist thrust reached all the way across the Pacific Ocean. In 1853, Commodore Matthew C. Perry had sailed his armed naval ships into Tokyo Bay and forcefully opened Japan's doors to the West. As Japanese leaders watched Western powers colonizing China, they worried that their country would be the next victim. Thus, in 1868, they restored the Meiji emperor and established a strong centralized government. To defend Japan, they pursued a twin strategy of industrialization and militarization and levied heavy taxes to finance their program.

Bearing the burden of this taxation, farmers suffered severe economic hardships during the 1880s. "The distress among the agricultural class has reached a point never before attained," the *Japan Weekly Mail* reported. "Most of the farmers have been unable to pay their taxes, and hundreds of families in one village alone have been compelled to sell their property in order to liquidate their debts." Thousands of farmers lost their lands, and hunger stalked many parts of the country. "What strikes me most is the hardships paupers are having in surviving," reported a journalist. "Their regular fare consists of rice husk or buck-wheat chaff ground into powder and the dregs of bean curd mixed with leaves and grass."

Searching for a way out of this terrible plight, impoverished farmers were seized by an emigration *netsu*, or "fever." Fabulous stories of high wages stirred their imaginations. A plantation laborer in the Kingdom of Hawaii could earn six times more than in Japan; in three years, a worker might save four hundred yen——an amount equal to ten years of earnings in Japan. When the Japanese government first announced it would be filling six hundred emigrant slots for the first shipment of laborers to Hawaii, it received 28,000 applications. Stories about wages in the United States seemed even more fantastic——about a dollar a day, or more than two yen. This meant that in one year a worker could save about eight hundred yen——an amount almost equal to the income of a governor in Japan. No wonder a young man begged his parents: "By all means let me go to America." Between 1885 and 1924, 200,000 left for Hawaii and 180,000 for the United States mainland. In haiku, one Japanese migrant captured the feeling of expectation and excitement:

Huge dreams of fortune
Go with me to foreign lands,
Across the ocean.

To prospective Japanese migrants, "money grew on trees" in America.

[1] Ronald Takaki, "Pacific Crossings: Seeking the Land of Money Trees," Ch. 10 from *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 246-276.

Picture Brides in America

Initially, most of the migrants from Japan were men, but what became striking about the Japanese immigration was its eventual inclusion of a significant number of women. By 1920, women represented 46 percent of the Japanese population in Hawaii and 35 percent in California. Clearly, in terms of gender, the Japanese resembled the Irish and Jews rather than the Chinese. This difference had consequences for the two Asian groups in terms of the formation of families. In 1900, fifty years after the beginning of Chinese immigration, only 5 percent were women. In this community composed mostly of "bachelors," only 4 percent were American-born. "The greatest impression I have of my childhood in those days was that there were very few families in Chinatown," a resident recalled. "Babies were looked on with a kind of wonder." On the other hand, in 1930, 52 percent of the Japanese population had been born in America. But why did proportionately more women emigrate from Japan than China?

Unlike China, Japan was ruled by a strong central government that was able to regulate emigration. Prospective immigrants were required to apply to the government for permission to leave for the United States and were screened by review boards to certify that they were healthy and literate and would creditably "maintain Japan's national honor." Japan had received reports about the Chinese in America and was determined to monitor the quality of its emigrants. Seeking to avoid the problems of prostitution, gambling, and drunkenness that reportedly plagued the predominantly male Chinese community in the United States, the Japanese government promoted female emigration. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited the entry of "laborers," both men and women, but militarily strong Japan was able to negotiate the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement. While this treaty prohibited the entry of Japanese "laborers," it allowed Japanese women to emigrate to the United States as family members.

Through this opening in immigration policy came over sixty thousand women, many as "picture brides." The picture bride system was based on the established custom of arranged marriage. In Japanese society, marriage was not an individual matter but rather a family concern, and parents consulted go-betweens to help them select partners for their sons and daughters. In situations involving families located far away, the prospective bride and groom would exchange photographs before the initial meeting. This traditional practice lent itself readily to the needs of Japanese migrants. "When I told my parents about my desire to go to a foreign land, the story spread throughout the town," picture bride Ai Miyasaki later recalled. "From here and there requests for marriage came pouring in just like rain!" Similarly, Riyo Orite had a "picture marriage." Her marriage to a Japanese man in America had been arranged through a relative. "All agreed to our marriage, but I didn't get married immediately," she recalled. "I was engaged at the age of sixteen and didn't meet Orite until I was almost eighteen. I had seen him only in a picture at first....Being young, I was unromantic. I just believed that girls should get married. I felt he was a little old, about thirty, but the people around me praised the match. His brother in Tokyo sent me a lot of beautiful pictures [taken in the United States]....My name was entered in the Orites' *koseki* [family register]. Thus we were married."

The emigration of Japanese women occurred within the context of internal economic developments. While women in China were restricted to farm and home, Japanese women were increasingly entering the wage-earning work force. Thousands of them were employed in construction work as well as in the coal mines where they carried heavy loads on their backs out of the tunnels. Young women were leaving their family farms for employment in textile mills where they worked sixteen-hour shifts and lived in dormitories. By 1900, 60 percent of Japan's industrial laborers were women. While it is not known how many of the women who emigrated had been wage-earners, this proletarianization of women already well under way in Japan paved the way for such laborers to consider working in America.

Japanese women were also more receptive to the idea of traveling overseas than Chinese women. The Meiji government required the education of female children, stipulating that "girls should be educated...alongside boys." Emperor Meiji himself promoted female education. Japanese boys as well as girls, he declared, should learn about foreign countries and become enlightened about the world. Female education included reading and writing skills as well as general knowledge. Japanese women, unlike their Chinese counterparts, were more likely to be literate. "We studied English and Japanese, mathematics, literature, writing, and rel1910n," recalled Michiko Tanaka. Under the reorganization of the school system in 1876, English was adopted as a major subject in middle school. This education exposed Japanese women to the outside world. They also heard stories describing America as "heavenly," and some of the picture brides were more eager to see the new land than to meet their husbands. "I wanted to see foreign countries and besides I had consented to marriage with Papa because I had the dream of seeing America," Michiko Tanaka revealed to her daughter years later. "I wanted to see America and Papa was a way to get there." "I was bubbling over with great expectations," said another picture bride. "My young heart, 19 years and 8 months old, burned, not so much with the prospects of reuniting with my new husband, but with the thought of the New World."

The emigration of women was also influenced by Japanese views on gender. A folk saying popular among farmers recommended that a family should have three children: "One to sell, one to follow, and one in reserve." The "one to sell" was the daughter. Of course, this was meant only figuratively: she was expected to marry and enter her husband's family. "Once you become someone's wife you belong to his family," explained Tsuru Yamauchi. "My parents said once I went over to be married, I should treat his parents as my own and be good to them." One day, Yamauchi was told that she would be going to Hawaii to join her future husband: "I learned about the marriage proposal when we had to exchange pictures." Emigration for her was not a choice but an obligation to her husband.

Whether a Japanese woman went to America depended on which son she married——the son "to follow" or the son "in reserve." Unlike the Chinese, Japanese farmers had an inheritance system based on impartible inheritance and primogeniture. Only one of the sons in the family, usually the eldest, inherited the family's holdings: he was the son who was expected "to follow" his father. In the mountainous island nation of Japan, arable land was limited, and most of the farm holdings were small, less than two and a half acres. Division of a tiny family holding would mean disaster for the family. As the possessor of the family farm, the eldest son had the responsibility of caring for his aged parents and hence had to stay home. The second or noninheriting son——the one held "in reserve" in case something happened to the first son——

had to leave the family farm and find employment in town. This practice of relocating within Japan could easily be applied to movement abroad. Thus, although the migrants included first sons, they tended to be the younger sons. Unlike Chinese sons who had to share responsibility for their parents, these Japanese men were not as tightly bound to their parents and were allowed to take their wives and children with them to distant lands.

But whether or not women migrated was also influenced by the needs in the receiving countries. In Hawaii, the government initially stipulated that 40 percent of the Japanese contract labor emigrants——laborers under contract to work for three years——were to be women. During the government-sponsored contract labor period from 1885 to 1894, women constituted 20 percent of the emigrants. During the period from 1894 to 1908, thousands of additional women sailed to Hawaii as private contract laborers. Planters viewed Japanese women as workers and assigned 71 percent of them to field labor. Furthermore, they promoted the Japanese family as a mechanism of labor control. In 1886, Hawaii's inspector-general of immigration reported that Japanese men were better workers on plantations where they had their wives: "Several of the planters are desirous that each man should have his wife." After 1900, when Hawaii became a territory of the United States, planters became even more anxious to bring Japanese women to Hawaii. Since the American law prohibiting contract labor now applied to the islands, planters had to find ways to stabilize their labor force. Realizing that men with families were more likely to stay on the plantations, managers asked their business agents in Honolulu to send "men with families."

Meanwhile, Japanese women were pulled to the United States mainland where they were needed as workers by their husbands. Shopkeepers and farmers sent for their wives, thinking they could assist as unpaid family labor. Wives were particularly useful on farms where production was labor intensive. "Nearly all of these tenant farmers are married and have their families with them," a researcher noted in 1915. "The wives do much work in the fields."

As they prepared to leave their villages for Hawaii and America, many of these women felt separation anxieties. One woman remembered her husband's brother saying farewell: "Don't stay in the [United] States too long. Come back in five years and farm with us." But her father quickly remarked: "Are you kidding? They can't learn anything in five years. They'll even have a baby over there....Be patient for twenty years." Her father's words shocked her so much that she could not control her tears: suddenly she realized how long the separation could be. Another woman recalled the painful moment she experienced when her parents came to see her off: "They did not join the crowd, but quietly stood in front of the wall. They didn't say 'good luck,' or 'take care,' or anything....They couldn't say anything because they knew, as I did, that I would never return." As their ships sailed from the harbor, many women gazed at the diminishing shore:

With tears in my eyes
I turn back to my homeland,
Taking one last look.

Tears in the Canefields

"Get labor first," sugar planters in Hawaii declared, "and capital will follow." By pursuing this strategy, they successfully developed a profitable sugar export economy. Between 1875 and 1910, cultivated plantation lands multiplied nearly eighteen times, or from 12,000 to 214,000 acres. To achieve this triumph, planters had to find workers, and their chief source was Japan. To their labor suppliers, they sent requisitions for the commodities that their plantations needed. In a letter to a plantation manager, July 2, 1890, the Davies Company of Honolulu acknowledged receipt of an order for:

> *bonemeal*
> *canvas*
> *Japanese laborers*
> *macaroni*
> *Chinamen*

In another letter, January 3, 1898, the Davies Company confirmed a list of orders which included:

> DRIED BLOOD [fertilizer].
> LABORERS. We will book your order for 75 Japanese to come as soon as possible.
> MULES & HORSES.

Though they imported workers as supplies, planters were conscious of the nationalities of their laborers. The employers were systematically developing an ethnically diverse labor force in order to create divisions among their workers and reinforce management control. Complaining about the frequency of strikes on plantations where the workers were mostly from the same country, plantation managers recommended "Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case of strikes, for there are few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into a strike as a unit." In a "confidential" letter to planter George Wilcox, a labor supply company wrote: "Regarding the proportion of Chinese and Japanese laborers we beg to advise, that the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association and the Bureau of Immigration have agreed upon 2/3rd of the former and 1/3 of the latter. For your *private* information we mention, that the reason for this increasing the percentage of the Chinese laborers is due to the desire of breaking up the preponderance of the Japanese element."*14*

Planters explained that they preferred to divide the work force "about equally between two Oriental nationalities." In 1903, they began importing Korean laborers in order to pit them against the Japanese. Aware of the antagonism between these two groups, planters believed that the Koreans were "not likely to combine with the Japanese at any attempt at strikes." After receiving a demand for higher wages from Japanese laborers, a planter asked a labor supplier to send a shipment of Korean laborers: "In our opinion, it would be advisable, as soon as circumstances permit, to get a large number of Koreans in the country...and drive the Japs out."

But the Korean labor supply was cut off in 1905. Informed about abuses suffered by the Koreans on the plantations, the Korean government prohibited further emigration to Hawaii. A

year later, planters began bringing laborers from the Philippines, a territory acquired after the Spanish-American War. Again the purpose was to diversify and discipline the labor force. On July 28, 1909, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association reported that several hundred Filipino laborers were en route to Hawaii: "It may be too soon to say that the Jap is to be supplanted, but it is certainly in order to take steps to clip his wings," and to give "encouragement to a new class [Filipinos]...to keep the more belligerent element in its proper place." Planters anxiously asked the labor suppliers to hurry the delivery of the Filipino workers. On August 7, for example, one of them complained about the high wages demanded by the Japanese laborers on his plantation: "If possible for you to arrange it I should very much like to get say 25 new Filipinos to put into our day gang....In this way perhaps we can stir the Japs a bit." Twenty days later, he wrote again, stating that he was very pleased to receive the shipment of thirty Filipinos, and that he planned to use them to bring the Japanese workers to "their senses."

Planters cultivated nationalistic consciousness in order to stimulate competition between the different groups of workers. Appealing to Filipino "race pride," the bosses urged them to work as hard as the Japanese. "We are all Filipinos, brothers," a work-gang leader told his men. "We all know how to hoe. So, let's do a good job and show the people of other nations what we can do. Let us not shame our skin!" The planters' divide-and-control strategy promoted interethnic tensions that sometimes erupted into fistfights in the fields and riots in the camps. On a Maui plantation in 1898, three hundred Japanese used sticks and clubs to drive a hundred Chinese laborers from the camps.

To strengthen their authority over their ethnically diverse work force, planters stratified occupations according to race: whites occupied the skilled and supervisory positions, while Asian immigrants were the unskilled field laborers. In 1904, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association passed a resolution that restricted skilled positions to "American citizens, or those eligible for citizenship." Asian immigrants were excluded, for they were not "white" and therefore ineligible to become naturalized citizens according to federal law. In 1915, Japanese laborers were mostly field hands and mill laborers. Of forty-five mill engineers, forty-one were of European ancestry, three were Hawaiian or part-Hawaiian, and only one was Japanese. A racial division was particularly evident in supervisory positions: of the 377 overseers, only two were Chinese and seventeen Japanese, while 313 were white. A Japanese worker told an interviewer how he was frustrated by racial discrimination. "I haven't got a chance" to get ahead in employment, he explained, "You can't go very high up and get big money unless your skin is white. You can work here all your life and yet a *haole* [white] who doesn't know a thing about the work can be ahead of you in no time." Coming to Hawaii with extravagant dreams, Japanese immigrants experienced disillusionment.

Hawaii Hawaii
Like a dream
So I came
But my tears
Are flowing now
In the canefields.

Reduced to supplies along with fertilizer, pitted against workers of other nationalities, and excluded from skilled employment, Japanese workers found themselves in a world of regimented labor. Early in the morning, they were jarred from their sleep by the loud scream of the plantation siren. A work song captured the beginning of the workday:

"Awake! stir your bones! Rouse up!"
Shrieks the Five o'Clock Whistle.
"Don't dream you can nestle For one more sweet nap.
Or your ear-drums I'll rap
With my steam-hammer tap
Till they burst.
Br-r-row-aw-i-e-ur-ur-rup! Wake up! wake up! wake up! w-a-k-e-u-u-u-up!

Filipino and Japanee;
Porto Rican and Portugee;
Korean, Kanaka and Chinese;
Everybody whoever you be
On the whole plantation——
Wake up! wake up! wake up! w-a-k-e-u-u-u-up!
Br-r-row-aw-i-e-ur-ur-rup"

When the whistle stopped shrieking, *lunas*, or "foremen," strode through the camps. "Get up, get up," they shouted as they knocked on the doors of the cottages and barracks. "*Hana-hana, hana-hana,* work, work."

"All the workers on a plantation in all their tongues and kindreds, rolled out' sometime in the early morn, before the break of day," reported a visitor. One by one and two by two, laborers appeared from "the shadows, like a brigade of ghosts." From the labor camps, they came by train, "car after car of silent figures," their cigarettes glowing in the darkness. In front of the mill, they lined up, shouldering their hoes. As the sun rose, its rays striking the tall mill stack, "quietly the word was passed from somewhere in the dimness. Suddenly and silently the gang started for its work, dividing themselves with one accord to the four quarters of the compass, each heading toward his daily task." The workers were grouped into gangs of twenty to thirty workers and marched to the fields. Each gang was supervised by an "overseer, almost always a white man." The ethnicity of the gangs varied: some were composed of one nationality, while others included Hawaiians, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Koreans.

There were gangs of women workers, too. In 1920, 14 percent of the plantation labor force was female, mostly Japanese. Women were concentrated in field operations such as hoeing, stripping leaves, and harvesting. Though they were given many of the same assignments as men, women were paid less than their male counterparts. Female field hands, for example, received an average wage of only fifty-five cents per day in 1915, compared to seventy-eight cents for male field hands.

Field work was punishing and brutal. “We worked like machines,” a laborer complained. “For 200 of us workers, there were seven or eight lunas and above them was a field boss on a horse. We were watched constantly.” A Japanese woman recalled: “We had to work in the canefields, cutting cane, being afraid, not knowing the language. When any *haole* or Portuguese *luna* came, we got frightened and thought we had to work harder or get fired.” “The *luna* carried a whip and rode a horse,” another Japanese laborer recounted. “If we talked too much the man swung the whip. He did not actually whip us but just swung his whip so that we would work harder.”

The *lunas* “never called a man by his name,” the workers grumbled. “Every worker was called by number,” one of them complained. “Always by the bango, 7209 or 6508 in that manner. And that was the thing I objected to. I wanted my name, not the number.” Carried on chains around their necks, the *bangos* were small brass disks with stamped identification. In the old country, workers had names that connected them to family and community; but in Hawaii, they had become numbers. They resented this new impersonal identity. Laborers were “treated no better than cows or horses,” one of them recalled. The *bango* seemed to emblematize a distance between themselves and their humanity.

The laborers cursed the *lunas*, “talking stink” about the driving pace of the work: “It burns us up to have an ignorant *luna* stand around and holler and swear at us all the time for not working fast enough. Every so often, just to show how good he is, he’ll come up and grab a hoe and work like hell for about two minutes and then say sarcastically, ‘Why you no work like that?’ He knows and we know he couldn’t work for ten minutes at that pace.” The *lunas* were just plain mean.

Hawaii, Hawaii
But when I came
What I saw
Was hell
The boss was Satan
The lunas
His helpers.

Under the supervision of the *lunas*, workers hoed weeds, one of the most tedious and backbreaking tasks. They had to “hoe hoe hoe...for four hours in a straight line and no talking,” said a worker. “Hoe every weed along the way to your three rows. Hoe——chop chop chop, one chop for one small weed, two for all big ones.” When the cane was ripe, *lunas* on horseback led the workers into the fields to harvest the crop. The cutting of the cane caught the eye of a visitor: “Just beyond these Chinese huts were canefields, an intense yellow-green, the long, slender leaves tossing in the breeze like a maize-field before the harvest. There were great bands of Japanese at work in the field.” They worked with “incredible rapidity, the line of men crossing a field, levelling the cane.”

Harvesting the cane was dirty and exhausting work. As the workers mechanically swung their machetes, they felt the pain of blistered hands and scratched arms. “When you cutting the cane and you pulling the cane back,” a worker said, “sometimes you get scratched with the leaves

from the cane because they have a little edge just like a saw blade." Their heavy arms and their bent backs begged for a break, a moment of rest.

Becoming weary
I sit for a while to rest
In the cane field,
And whistle
To call the breezes.

Sometimes the breezes failed to come. Twelve feet high, the cane enclosed and dwarfed the Japanese workers. As they cut the stalks, they sweated from the terrible heat and humidity. Surrounded by clouds of red dust, the laborers covered their faces with handkerchiefs. The mucus they cleared from their noses looked like blood.

My husband cuts the cane stalks
And I trim their leaves
With sweat and tears we both work
For our means.

After collecting the cane stalks, the workers tied them into bundles and loaded them onto railway cars. A train then pulled the cane to the mill where engines, presses, furnaces, boilers, vacuum pans, and centrifugal drums crushed the cane and boiled its juices into molasses and sugar. Inside the mill, laborers felt as if they were in the "hold of a steamer." The constant loud clanking and whirring of the machinery were deafening. "It was so hot with steam in the mill," Bashiro Tamashiro recalled, "that I became just like *pupule* [crazy]."

At four-thirty in the afternoon, the plantation whistle shrieked the signal to stop working. "*Pau hana,*" the laborers sighed, "finished working." Though they were too tired to hoe another row or carry another bundle of stalks, they felt a sudden final burst of energy and eagerly scrambled to their camps.

In the rush at pau hana
I get caught in cane leaves,
When I stumble and fall,
They prickle, they jab.

Japanese workers were not passive victims of exploitation. Contrary to the stereotype of the Japanese immigrants as quiet and accommodating, they aggressively protested against the unfair labor conditions and often engaged in strikes. Divided by their diverse national identities, laborers of different groups initially tended to define their class interests in terms of their particular ethnicity. Thus, Japanese workers organized themselves into "blood unions" based on ethnic membership.

The most important manifestation of "blood unionism" was the Japanese strike of 1909. Protesting against a differential wage system based on ethnicity, the strikers demanded higher

wages and equal pay for equal work. They angrily pointed out that Portuguese laborers were paid $22.50 per month, while Japanese laborers received only $18.00 for the same work. "The wage is a reward for services done," they argued, "and a just wage is that which compensates the laborer to the full value of the service rendered by him....If a laborer comes from Japan and he performs the same quantity of work of the same quality within the same period of time as those who hail from the opposite side of the world, what good reason is there to discriminate one as against the other? It is not the color of skin that grows cane in the field. It is labor that grows cane."

Seven thousand Japanese plantation laborers halted operations on Oahu, while their compatriots on the other islands provided support by sending money and food. Japanese business organizations such as the Honolulu Retail Merchants Association contributed to the strike fund, and the Japanese Physicians Association gave free medical service to the strikers and their families. A strong sense of ethnic solidarity inspired the strikers. Stridently shouting "*banzais*" at rallies, they declared their determination to "stick together" as Japanese.

The strike reflected an awakening consciousness among the workers, a transformation from sojourners to settlers, from Japanese to Japanese Americans. In their demand for a higher wage, the strikers explained: "We have decided to permanently settle here, to incorporate ourselves with the body politique [sic] of Hawaii——to unite our destiny with that of Hawaii, sharing the prosperity and adversity of Hawaii with other citizens of Hawaii." Significantly, the Japanese were framing their demands in "American" terms. They argued that the deplorable conditions on the plantations perpetuated an "undemocratic and un-American" society of "plutocrats and coolies." Such a pattern of social inequality was injurious to Hawaii in general. Fair wages would encourage laborers to work more industriously and productively and enable society to enjoy "perpetual peace and prosperity." The goal of the strike was to create "a thriving and contented middle class——the realization of the high ideal of Americanism."

The planters responded by pressuring the government to arrest the strike leaders for "conspiracy." Then they hired Koreans, Hawaiians, Chinese, Portuguese, and Filipinos as scabs. The strikers held out for four months before they were forced to return to work. But they had actually scored a victory, for shortly afterward, the planters eliminated the differential wage system and raised the wages of the Japanese workers.

A strike based on ethnicity seemed to make sense to Japanese plantation laborers in 1909, for they constituted about 70 percent of the work force, while Filipinos represented less than 1 percent. But this ethnic solidarity also made it possible for the planters to use laborers of other nationalities to break the "Japanese" strike. After the 1909 strike was broken, planters imported Filipino laborers in massive numbers. Eleven years later, Japanese workers represented only 44 percent of the labor force, while Filipino workers had risen to 30 percent. Organized into separate "blood" unions, workers of both nationalities began to realize that the labor movement in Hawaii would have to be based on interethnic working-class unity.

In December 1919, the Japanese Federation of Labor and the Filipino Federation of Labor submitted separate demands to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association. The workers wanted higher wages, an eight-hour day, an insurance fund for retired employees, and paid maternity leaves. Their demands were promptly rejected by the planters. The Japanese union thought that both groups should plan for a long strike. Feeling that the time for action had arrived, however, the Filipino Federation of Labor unilaterally issued an order for the Filipinos to strike and urged

the Japanese to join them. "This is the opportunity that the Japanese should grasp," declared the leader of the Filipino union, "to show that they are in harmony with and willing to cooperate with other nationalities in this territory, concerning the principles of organized labor....We should work on this strike shoulder to shoulder."

Three thousand Filipino workers went out on strike. They set up picket lines and called for labor solidarity. "What's the matter? Why you *hanahana* [work]?" the Filipino strikers asked their Japanese coworkers. Several Japanese newspapers urged the Japanese laborers to support the Filipinos. The *Hawaii Shimpo* scolded Japanese workers for their hesitation: "Our sincere and desperate voices are also their voices. Their righteous indignation is our righteous indignation....Fellow Japanese laborers! Don't be a race of unreliable dishonest people! Their problem is your problem!" The *Hawaii Hochi* advised Japanese laborers to strike immediately: "Laborers from different countries" should take "action together." Between Filipinos and Japanese, the *Hawaii Choho* declared, there should be "no barriers of nationality, race, or color." Sensing the will of the community, the Japanese Federation of Labor ordered its members to join the strike. United in struggle, eight thousand Filipino and Japanese strikers——77 percent of the entire plantation work force on Oahu——brought production to a sudden stop. Here was a Hawaiian version of the "giddy multitude." "*Pau hana*," they told each other, "no go work." "*Pau hana*," they declared defiantly, "we on strike."

During the strike, the leaders of the Japanese Federation of Labor questioned the wisdom of having two separate unions and consequently formed the Hawaii Laborers' Association——a name that conveyed multiethnic class camaraderie. They insisted that all workers, regardless of ethnicity, should cooperate in safeguarding their standard of living. The fact that the "capitalists were *haoles* [Caucasians]" and the "laborers Japanese and Filipinos" was a "mere coincidence," explained Takashi Tsutsumi. The fundamental distance was class. Japanese and Filipinos were acting as "laborers" in "a solid body" during the 1920 strike. What the workers were learning from their struggle, Tsutsumi continued, was the need to build "a big, powerful and non-racial labor organization" which could "effectively cope with the capitalists." Such a union would bring together "laborers of all nationalities."

The strikers were learning a valuable lesson. Filipinos and Japanese, joined by Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese, had participated in the first major interethnic working-class struggle in Hawaii. They had all been awakened by the 5:00 A.M. whistle and had labored together in the fields and mills; now they were fighting for a common goal. As they walked the picket lines and protested at mass rallies, they understood more deeply the contributions they had made as workers to Hawaii's economic development. "When we first came to Hawaii," they proudly declared, "these islands were covered with ohia forests, guava fields and areas of wild grass. Day and night did we work, cutting trees and burning grass, clearing lands and cultivating fields until we made the plantations what they are today."

Confronted by this interethnic challenge, the planters turned to their time-tested strategy of divide and control. The president of one sugar corporation explained: "We are inclined to think that the best prospect, in connection with this strike, is the fact that two organizations, not entirely in harmony with each other, are connected with it, and if either of them falls out of line, the end will be in sight." The planters fomented distrust between the two unions. They offered a bribe to Filipino union leader Pablo Manlapit. Suddenly, to the surprise of both the Filipino and

Japanese strikers, Manlapit called off the strike, condemning it as a Japanese action to cripple the economy of Hawaii. But, at the rank-and-file level, many Filipinos continued to strike. Escalating their attack, the planters launched a "program of propaganda": they claimed that the Japanese strikers were puppets of Japan and were seeking to "Japanise" the islands.

Meanwhile, the planters enlisted Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Koreans as strikebreakers. They also served forty-eight-hour eviction notices to the strikers, forcing them to leave their homes and find makeshift shelters in Honolulu's empty lots. Homeless during the height of an influenza epidemic, thousands of workers and their family members became sick, and one hundred and fifty died. "My brother and mother had a high fever," Tadao Okada recalled, "but all of us were kicked out of our home." Tired, hungry, and ill, the strikers gave up their struggle in July. The planters claimed a complete victory, but three months later, they discreetly increased wages by 50 percent.

But the strikes represented only the surface of a contested terrain. Beneath the conflict over who would control labor and benefit from the wealth it created was a quiet struggle over the content of culture in Hawaii. Would the culture be dominated by the Anglo-American planter class, or would it be enriched with the traditions and customs of the Japanese as well as of the other nationalities in Hawaii? Culture was critical, for it had the power to give or deny people a way of affirming their individual self-esteem and positive group identity. The plantation camps were sites of day-to-day cultural resistance.

In the camps, Japanese workers were conscious of the racial and class hierarchy symbolized by the plantation housing pattern. According to the graphic description of Milton Murayama in his novel *All I Asking for Is My Body*, the manager's house was on the top of the hill. Below it were the nice-looking homes of the Portuguese and Japanese *lunas*, then the identical wooden frame houses of the Japanese camp, and finally the more run-down Filipino camp. This stratified system was laid out around its sewage system. The concrete ditches that serviced the toilets and outhouses ran from the manager's house on the highest slope down to the Filipino camp on the lowest perimeter of the plantation. The tiered housing pattern and sewage system seemed emblematic: "Shit too was organized according to the plantation pyramid."

Workers of different nationalities were usually housed in separate camps. "There were the Japanese camps," recalled Richard Okawa describing the Hawi Plantation on the Big Island, "and the Chinese and Filipino camps, and one camp for the Puerto Ricans." The Puunene Plantation on Maui had sixteen camps, including many Japanese and Filipino camps. There were also "Young Hee Camp," "Ah Fong Camp," "Spanish A Camp," "Spanish B Camp," and "Alabama Camp." "Yeah," explained Minoru Takaki, formerly of "McGerrow Camp" (named after one of the *lunas*), "we used to have Negroes on the plantation."

Generally, the camps were crowded and unsanitary. According to a contemporary observer, workers were housed in dwellings that resembled "pig sties," and several hundred laborers "swarmed together" in one-storied "tenements." A Japanese laborer recalled: "Fifty of us, both bachelors and married couples, lived together in a humble shed——a long ten-foot-wide hallway made of wattle and lined along the sides with a slightly raised floor covered with a grass rug, and two *tatami* mats to be shared among us." Another worker described the "large partitioned house" she inhabited: "The type of room for married people was small, no bed or anything....It was just a space to lay the futon down and sleep. We didn't have any household

things, only our one wicker trunk, not even a closet. We just pounded a nail by the place we slept, a hook where I hung my muumuu, the old kanaka [Hawaiian] Style."

As planters employed men with families rather than single men, they began replacing the barracks with cottages for families. Planters decided that "dependable married men" were "preferred" as workers and authorized the building of cottages for married laborers. In 1920, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association promoted the development of family housing units: "Housing conditions on the plantations have changed greatly during the past few years, lately on account of the change in labor from single to married men." But planters also had self-interested reasons for improving the camps. They wanted to "stimulate" a "home feeling" in order to make their workers happier and more productive. "Pleasant surroundings, with some of the modern comforts and conveniences," explained a plantation official, "go a long way to make the worker healthier and more efficient in his work."

The laborers had their own reasons for beautifying their camps. Seeking to add a reminder of their homeland, Japanese workers placed bonsai plants on the steps of their cottages. They also created artistic gardens; a mainland visitor observed that the flowers and "miniature gardens with little rocky pools and goldfish" suggested "a corner of Japan." Determined to have their traditional hot baths, Japanese workers also built *furos*. "The bath was communal," Tokusuke Oshiro said. "We all took a bath together. If, however, you got in last, it would be very dirty."

Meanwhile, the workers were transforming their camps into ethnic communities. "There was another thing I'd come to like about the camp," remarked Kiyoshi in Milton Murayama's novel about plantation life. "The hundred Japanese families were like one big family. Everybody knew everybody else, everybody was friendly."

On plantations, Japanese immigrants established Buddhist temples and Japanese-language schools for their children. The camps became the sites for their traditional celebrations. During the midsummer, Japanese held their traditional *obon*, or festival of souls. Dressed in kimonos, they danced in circles to the beat of *taiko* drums to honor the reunion of the living with the spirits of the dead. In early November, they observed the Mikado's birthday. Irritated by the interruption of the plantation production schedule, plantation managers found they had no choice but to let their Japanese workers have the day off. "There is an old custom here among the Japs of observing the 3rd of November as a holiday," a plantation manager complained. "The Emperor's Birthday was celebrated everywhere," Tokusuke Oshiro recalled. "Mainly there was *sumo*....Several young men, usually the good ones, got together at a camp and had Japanese-style *sumo* matches."

The Japanese immigrants also enjoyed their own foods and participated in interethnic sharing. The daughter of a Portuguese laborer remembered how her mother would make gifts of her bread and "little buns for the children in the camp. The Japanese families gave us sushis and the Hawaiians would give us fish. "Everybody took their own lunches" to school, Lucy Robello of the Waialua plantation said. "And like the Japanese used to take their little riceballs with an *ume* [pickled plum] inside and little *daikon* [radish]....And us Portuguese, we used to take bread with butter and jelly or bread with cheese inside." Then, at noon, Japanese and Portuguese children would trade their *kaukaus* (lunches) with each other. Meanwhile, in the fields, their parents were also sharing their lunches. "We get in a group," William Rego recalled. "We pick

from this guy's lunch and that guy'll pick from my lunch and so forth." Crossing ethnic lines, workers would taste each other's foods and exclaim in Hawaiian: "*Ono, ono*!" "Tasty, tasty!"

Initially, the laborers of each ethnic group spoke only their native language. Language gave each group a sense of community within the plantation camps, enabling its members to maintain ties with each other as they shared memories of their distant homelands and stories of their experiences in the new country.

But soon workers of different nationalities began to acquire a common language. Planters wanted the immigrant laborers to be taught a functional spoken English so they could give commands to their multilingual work force. "By this," explained a planter, "we do not mean the English of Shakespeare but the terms used in everyday plantation life. A great many of the small troubles arise from the imperfect understanding between overseers and laborers." Over the years, a plantation dialect developed called "pidgin English"——a simple English that incorporated Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, and Chinese phrases as well as their rhythms and intonations. Though it had begun as "the language of command," this hybrid language with its luxuriant cadences, lyrical sounds, and expressive hand gestures soon became the language of the community. "The language we used had to be either pidgin English or broken English," explained a Filipino laborer describing the communication of different ethnic groups on the plantation. "And when we don't understand each other, we had to add some other words that would help to explain ourselves. That's how this pidgin English comes out beautiful."

As pidgin English became the common language of the camps, it enabled people from different countries to communicate with each other and thus helped them create a new identity associated with Hawaii. This acquisition of a new language reflected a deeper change in their outlook toward themselves and their new land. They had come to Hawaii intending to earn money and then return to Japan. Of the 200,000 Japanese who entered Hawaii between 1885 and 1924, 110,000, or 55 percent, went home. What is so striking and so significant is the fact that so many sojourners stayed.

Gradually, over the years, Japanese immigrant workers found themselves establishing families in the new land. By 1920, 45 percent of the Japanese in Hawaii were nineteen years old and younger. The immigrants were planting new roots in Hawaii through their children. In a letter to his brother, Asakichi Inouye explained why he had decided not to return to Japan: "My children are here, and my grandson [Daniel, who would later be elected to the U.S. Senate], and it is here that I have passed most of the days of my life. I do not believe that my wife and I, in our last years, could find contentment in Yokoyama, which has become for us a strange place." When Shokichi and Matsu Fukuda migrated to Maui in 1900, they were sojourners. Some twenty years later, they decided they would return to Japan and take their Hawaiian-born children with them. But their son, Minoru, was a teenager by then, and Hawaii was his home, the only world he knew. "He refused to go," remembered his niece Aiko Mifune. "Japan was a foreign country to him. He was very adamant that the family should stay in Hawaii." Mitsue Takaki also found herself planting new roots in Hawaii. She had come as a picture bride in 1920; eleven years later, her husband injured his knee on the plantation and returned to Japan for medical treatment. When he tried to reenter Hawaii, the immigration authorities refused to grant him permission. Mitsue chose to remain in the islands with her three small children——Minoru, Susumu, and Kimiyo. She went to night school to learn English and worked as a maid in the plantation clubhouse to

support her children. She wanted them to be educated and have opportunities in the land of their birth.

But the planters did not want the children of immigrant workers to have opportunities: they needed the second generation as plantation laborers and saw Japanese Americans as a colonized labor force. In their view, these children should not be educated beyond the sixth or eighth grade, and their education should be vocational training. A sugar corporation president declared that teachers should not keep “their students from working on the plantations.” If the schools continued to encourage high career aspirations, he warned, “we had better change our educational system here as soon as possible.” Pointing to the need for agricultural labor, a plantation manager complained that the school system was too expensive: “Why blindly continue a ruinous system that keeps a boy and girl in school at the taxpayers’ expense long after they have mastered more than sufficient learning for all ordinary purposes?” A visitor from the mainland noticed the presence of Japanese children on the plantations and asked a manager whether he thought the coming generation of Japanese would make intelligent citizens. “Oh, yes,” he replied, “they’ll make intelligent citizens all right enough, but not plantation laborers——and that’s what we want.”

Many schools, however, were not preparing these children to be plantation laborers. They were learning about freedom and equality and reciting the Gettysburg Address and the Declaration of Independence. “Here the children learned about democracy or at least the theory of it,” said a University of Hawaii student. They were taught that honest labor, fair play, and industriousness were virtues. But they “saw that it wasn’t so on the plantation.” They saw whites on the top and Asians on the bottom. Returning from school to their camps, students noticed the wide “disparity between theory and practice.” This contradiction was glaring. “The public school system perhaps without realizing it,” the university student observed, “created unrest and disorganization.”

Seeing their parents suffer from drudgery, low wages, and discrimination, many second-generation Japanese Americans did not want to be tracked into plantation labor. Education, they believed, was the key to employment opportunity and freedom from the plantation. “Father made up his mind to send his children to school so far as he possibly could,” said the daughter of a Japanese plantation worker. “Yet he had no idea of forcing us. Instead he employed different methods which made us want to go to school. We were made to work in the cane fields at a very early age....After a day’s work in the fields dad used to ask: ‘Are you tired? Would you want to work in the fields when you are old enough to leave school?’...My father did everything in his power to make us realize that going to school would be to our advantage.”

Indeed, the immigrant parents believed their children were entitled to educational advantages. After all, they had transformed the islands through their labor: their sweat had watered the carpets of canefields. As they spoke pidgin English and as they watched their children grow up in the camps and attend American schools, they realized that they had become settlers and that Hawaii had become their home.

With one woven basket
Alone I came
Now I have children

And even grandchildren too.

Transforming the Land: From Deserts to Farms

During a visit to California in the 1920s, a young Japanese man from Hawaii was shocked by the pervasiveness and intensity of anti-Japanese hostility. He had heard "various rumors" about the terrible ways whites treated the Japanese there. "But I didn't realize the true situation until I had a personal experience," he said. "In one instance, I went to a barber shop to get my hair trimmed. On entering the shop, one of the barbers approached me and asked for my nationality. I answered that I was Japanese, and as soon as he heard that I was of the yellow race, he drove me out of the place as if he were driving away a cat or a dog."

This Japanese American had come from a vastly different society. In Hawaii, the Japanese were needed as laborers, and they had been incorporated by the planters into a paternalistic racial hierarchy. A large white working class did not exist in the islands. In fact, most of the people in the islands were Asian, and by 1920, the Japanese alone represented about 40 percent of the population. Their problems and difficulties were primarily related to their condition as workers. They were generally confined to the wage-earning plantation labor force. Possibilities for self-employment in shopkeeping and small farming were limited. The plantations operated retail stores for food, clothing, and other provisions, and most of the arable land in the islands was owned by the government and the sugar corporations. Aware of their extremely limited opportunities to advance themselves through individualism and small business, the Japanese in Hawaii tended to emphasize a class strategy of unionization.

On the mainland, however, the Japanese faced a fundamentally different situation: they were a racial minority, only 2 percent of the California population in 1920. They felt scorned by white society and had become the target of hostile and violent white workers. Denied access to employment in the industrial labor market, many Japanese entered entrepreneurial activity. "When I was in Japan, I was an apprentice to a carpenter," explained an immigrant, "but in America at that time the carpenters' union wouldn't admit me, so I became a farmer." Unlike their counterparts in the islands, the mainland Japanese were able to find economic niches in shopkeeping and farming. Consequently, theirs would be a different path——ethnic solidarity and ethnic enterprise.

Initially, the Japanese were employed in agriculture, railroad construction, and the canneries. As migratory farm laborers, they constantly moved from field to field. Similarly, railroad workers were shuttled from one construction site to another. "We slept in the freight cars," one of them recalled, "suffering a lot from the troops of bedbugs." Cannery workers were shipped from the West Coast to Alaska and then back after the fishing season.

Work was punishing. Railroad laborers gritted their teeth as they loaded the heavy ties onto the cars and grunted in pain as the square logs bit into their shoulders. Cannery workers had to race furiously against the machinery. After the boats brought in their catch, conveyor belts carried as many as two hundred salmon per minute up to the deck. The men, holding hooks in both hands, had to sort this charging multitude of huge fish without a single moment to relax. When they returned to the bunkhouses, they exuded the "Alaskan smell," "a nasal cocktail of

rotten fish, salt, sweat and filth." Meanwhile, farm workers were in the fields from dawn to dusk, harvesting crops and hoeing weeds, row after row, their bodies constantly bent.

The weather was a daily harsh reality. In the California valleys during the summer, workers felt the hot wind blowing against their perspiring bodies as temperatures soared to 120 degrees and the field became as "hot as though it were paved with hot iron boards." In the mountains during the winter, railroad workers were whipped by frigid winds. "In winter...the temperature went down to 20 degrees below freezing," they recalled. "Because of the severe cold, our excrement froze immediately when we went to the toilet outside the tent."

Japanese immigrants wanted to escape from such exhausting work. Most had been farmers in Japan: for centuries, their families had cultivated small plots, irrigating the land and relying on intensive labor. To become a farmer in America was their dream. Within two decades after the first immigrants arrived, thousands of them were rising from the ranks of common laborers to become farmers.

To obtain land, the Japanese used four methods——contract, share, lease, and ownership. The contract system was a simple arrangement: the farmer agreed to plant and harvest a crop for a set amount to be paid by the landowner when the crop was sold. The share system involved greater risks as well as the possibility of greater remuneration because the farmer received a certain percentage of the crop's profit. The contract and share systems enabled Japanese immigrants to raise themselves from field laborers to farmers without much capital. Under both arrangements, the landowner provided the tools, seed, fertilizer, and everything else necessary for the production of the crop; the Japanese farmer, in turn, was responsible for the labor. In order to feed himself and his workers, he purchased supplies on credit from storekeepers and merchants. After the crop was harvested and sold, he then paid his expenses——wages owed to his laborers and bills owed to his creditors. Under the lease arrangement, the Japanese farmer rented the land. He could obtain capital through loans from brokers and shippers. At the end of the season, if he harvested a bountiful crop and received a good price for it, he would pay his rent and clear his debts.

What enabled the Japanese to become farmers so rapidly was their timely entry into agriculture. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization had led to increased demands for fresh produce in the cities. The development of irrigation in California at this time opened the way for intensive agriculture and a shift from grain to fruit and vegetable production: between 1879 and 1909, the value of crops representing intensive agriculture skyrocketed from just 4 percent to 50 percent of all crops grown in California. This tremendous expansion occurred under a market stimulus created by two extremely important technological achievements——the completion of the national railroad lines and the invention of the refrigerated car. Now these farmers were able to ship their perishable fruits and vegetables to almost anywhere in the United States.

As early as 1910, Japanese farmers produced 70 percent of California's strawberries, and by 1940 they grew 95 percent of the fresh snap beans, 67 percent of the fresh tomatoes, 95 percent of the celery, 44 percent of the onions, and 40 percent of the fresh green peas. In 1900, California's Japanese farmers owned or leased twenty-nine farms totaling 4,698 acres. Within five years, the acreage had jumped to 61,858 and increased again to 194,742 by 1910 and to 458,056 acres ten years later.

The workday on the farms was long and demanding. Stooped over the rows of plants, husbands and wives worked side by side, their hands in constant motion as they felt the hot sun on their backs.

Both of my bands grimy,
Unable to wipe away
The sweat from my brow,
Using one arm as towel——
That I was...working...working.

Remembering the relentless pace of farm work, Yoshiko Ueda said: “I got up at 4:30 A.M. and after preparing breakfast I went to the fields. I went with my husband to do jobs such as picking potatoes and sacking onions. Since I worked apace with ruffians I was tired out and limp as a rag, and when I went to the toilet I couldn’t stoop down. Coming back from the fields, the first thing I had to do was start the fire [to cook dinner].” Ueda worked so hard she became extremely thin. “At one time I got down to 85 pounds, though my normal weight had been 150.”

Women had double duty——field work and housework. “I got up before dawn with my husband and picked tomatoes in the greenhouse,” Kimiko Ono recounted. “At around 6:30 A.M. I prepared breakfast, awakened the children, and all the family sat down at the breakfast table together. Then my husband took the tomatoes to Pike Market. I watered the plants in the greenhouses, taking the children along with me....My husband came back at about 7 P.M. and I worked with him for a while, then we had dinner and put the children to bed. Then I sorted the tomatoes which I had picked in the morning and put them into boxes When I was finally through with the boxing, it was midnight——if I finished early——or 1:30 A.M. if I did not.”

Face black from the sun
Even though creamed and powdered,
No lighter for that!

“We worked from morning till night, blackened by the sun. My husband was a Meiji man; he didn’t even glance at the house work or child care. No matter now busy I was, he would never change a diaper.” Another woman described how after a long day laboring in the greenhouse and taking care of the children, she had to work at night: “I did miscellaneous chores until about midnight. However tired I was, the ‘Meiji man’ wouldn’t let me sleep before him.”

These pioneer men and women felt a certain boundlessness, driven by their dreams of making the land yield rich harvests. Over the years, they converted marginal lands like the hog wallow lands in the San Joaquin Valley, the dusty lands in the Sacramento Valley, and the desert lands in the Imperial Valley into lush and profitable agricultural fields and orchards. “Much of what you call willow forests then,” farmer S. Nitta proudly told an interviewer in 1924, “Japanese took that land, cleared it and made it fine farming land.” In 1910, the agricultural production of Japanese farms was valued at $67,000,000——approximately 10 percent of the total value of California’s crops.

One of the most successful Japanese farmers was Kinji Ushijima, better known as George Shima. After arriving in 1887, he worked as a potato picker in the San Joaquin Valley and then became a labor contractor, supplying Japanese workers to white farmers. Shima wanted to become a farmer himself and began by leasing fifteen acres. To expand his operations, he leased and purchased undeveloped swamplands in the delta; diking and draining his lands, he converted them into fertile farmlands. A fleet of a dozen steamboats, barges, tugboats, and launches transported Shima's potatoes from Stockton to San Francisco. By 1912, Shima controlled ten thousand acres of potatoes valued at $500,000 and was regarded as a Japanese Horatio Alger. The *San Francisco Chronicle* praised Shima as a model: his success "pointed to the opportunities here to anybody with pluck and intelligence." Wealth did not immunize Shima from racism, however. When he purchased a house in an attractive residential section close to the university in Berkeley, he was told by protesters led by a classics professor to move to the "Oriental" neighborhood. The local newspapers announced: "Jap Invades Fashionable Quarters" and "Yellow Peril in College Town." But Shima refused to move. America was his home, he insisted; he had lived in this country so long that he felt "more at home here than in Japan." Widely known as "the Potato King," Shima had an estate worth $15 million when he died in 1926. His pallbearers included David Starr Jordan, the chancellor of Stanford University, and James Rolph, Jr., the mayor of San FranciSCO.

Many Japanese immigrants believed that their success, especially in agriculture, would help them become accepted into American society. This was the vision of Abiko Kyutaro. His mother had died giving birth to him in 1865, and Abiko was raised by his grandparents. When he was fourteen years old, he ran away to Tokyo where he was converted to Christianity. Separated from his family, Abiko lacked the usual ties binding him to Japan. Feeling his "ambitions were stifled" there, Abiko departed for America. In 1885, he arrived in San Francisco, with only a dollar in his pocket. While doing menial jobs to make ends meet, he attended the University of California but did not complete his degree. By the early 1890s, Japanese immigrants were arriving in increasing numbers, and Abiko saw opportunities in the service business. During the 1890s, he operated several enterprises, including a restaurant and a laundry, and began publishing a newspaper, the *Nichibei Shimbun*. Fluent in English and familiar with business, Abiko became a labor contractor and one of the founders of the Japanese American Industrial Corporation. His company quickly became one of the largest labor contracting agencies in California, supplying Japanese labor to agriculture, mining, and the railroads.

A thoughtful man, Abiko worried about the future of the Japanese in America. They were coming as sojourners, and he believed that this mentality was one source of their problems. They seemed to be driven by a single purpose——to make money and return to Japan as soon as possible. Thinking they would be here only temporarily, they did not seem to care about their shabby living conditions and indiscreet behavior such as drinking, gambling, and carousing with prostitutes. Neither did they feel a desire or a responsibility to contribute to American society. The sojourner identity, in turn, was contributing to an anti-Japanese exclusionist movement, for it seemed to confirm hostile claims that they were foreign and unassimilable.

In Abiko's view, the Japanese should bring their families and settle in America. Abiko personally set an example: in 1909, he returned to Japan to marry Yonako and brought her back to his new homeland. But the Japanese immigrants had to do more than establish families here,

Abiko argued. They had to establish themselves as farmers. A student of American history and culture, Abiko realized that farming had been the path for many European immigrants to become Americans. He was certain the Japanese were suited to become Americans through agriculture, for most of them had been farmers in the old country. The realization of a Japanese-American community rooted in agriculture became Abiko's crusade. The *Nichibei Shimbun* became the voice of his message: go into farming, own land, be productive, put down roots in America.

An activist, Abiko took his crusade beyond words. He decided to create an actual model of his ideal Japanese farming community. In 1906, he founded the American Land and Produce Company, which purchased 3,200 acres of undeveloped desert land near Livingston in the San Joaquin Valley and parceled them into forty-acre lots for sale to Japanese farmers. "We believe that the Japanese must settle permanently with their countrymen on large pieces of land if they are to succeed in America," Abiko's company announced in an advertisement. "Those wishing to take advantage of this opportunity for success are welcome to visit one of our offices." The settlement was called the Yamato Colony. "Yamato," the ancient name for Japan, was to be a "new Japan," Abiko's "city upon a hill" in the San Joaquin Valley of California.

A handful of Japanese pioneers responded to the invitation in 1907 and moved to this desolate site where they were greeted by clouds of fine sand blowing in the wind. The colonists settled as families and planted grapevines, which took four seasons to mature——a sign they were planning to stay. Significantly, the pioneers chose a site for a cemetery. "If there was to be a permanent colony," Seinosuke Okuye wrote in his diary in 1907, "the spot for the cemetery should be chosen from the beginning." Abiko's faithful followers had left the graves of their ancestors in Japan, and now they were preparing to become literally one with the soil of their adopted land.

The nearby Merced River had been dammed, and the Yamato colonists constructed a system of irrigation canals and ditches to tap this life-giving supply of water. By 1910, they had planted 1,064 acres of grapes, 507 acres of fruit trees, 100 acres of alfalfa, and 500 acres of hay. "In the eleven years since the Japanese founded their colony," reported the *San Francisco Chronicle* in 1918, "fruit shipments from Livingston have increased from nothing in 1906 to 260 carloads in 1917." By then, the Yamato Colony was home for forty-two farmers, all with families. They were mixing their labor with the soil and becoming Americans.

A wasted grassland
Turned to fertile fields by sweat
Of cultivation:
But I, made dry and fallow
By tolerating insults.

Fertile fields moistened by sweat, Abiko hoped, would bring respect to the Japanese and an end to the insults directed against them as "strangers."

But this strategy of acceptance through agriculture failed to recognize the depth of racial exclusionism. Their very success provoked a backlash and the creation of new borders. In 1908, the federal government pressured Japan to prohibit the emigration of laborers to the United States. Shortly afterward, California and many other states enacted legislation to exclude

Japanese immigrants from owning and leasing land. These restrictive alien land laws were based on the ineligibility of the Japanese for naturalized citizenship: a 1790 law had provided that only "white" persons could become citizens. In 1922, the United States Supreme Court affirmed that Takao Ozawa, a Japanese immigrant, was not entitled to naturalized citizenship because, he "clearly" was "not Caucasian." Commenting on the Court's decision, a Japanese-language newspaper expressed the rage and disappointment of the Japanese community: "The slim hope that we had entertained...has been shattered completely." In 1924, an even more devastating development occurred. Congress enacted a general immigration law that included a provision prohibiting the entry of "aliens ineligible to citizenship," the code phrase for the Japanese.

The immigrants had hoped that their lands, transformed from deserts to farmlands, would entitle them to settlement in America. But now the Issei, the first generation, feared they would have no future in their adopted land, except through their children——the Nisei, the second generation. Representing a rapidly growing group within the Japanese community, the Nisei constituted 17 percent of the mainland Japanese population in 1920 and 63 percent twenty years later, on the eve of World War II.

Through the Nisei, the parents hoped, the Japanese would someday find tolerance in America. English speaking and educated in American schools, the second-generation Japanese would be the "ambassadors" for the first: they would teach white Americans about the culture of Japan and the hopes of the immigrant generation. As "intermediaries," they would "interpret" the East to the West and the West to the East. The Nisei would be the "bridge" to the larger society.

Because their children were Americans by birth, the Issei hoped the Nisei would be able to secure the dignity and equality of opportunity denied to them. "You are American citizens," they reminded their children time and again like a litany. "You have an opportunity your parents never had. Go to school and study. Don't miss that opportunity when it comes." Education would give the second generation access to employment opportunities denied to the immigrants. The parents were willing to give up their own comforts, even necessities, for the education of their children.

Alien hardships
Made bearable by the hope
I hold for my children.

But citizenship and education, the second generation soon discovered, did not immunize them from racial discrimination. Even they, American citizens by birth, were told to "go back" to Japan and were called "Japs." Walking home from school, Japanese children were often attacked by white boys throwing stones at them. Nisei were often perceived as foreigners. They winced when they were asked: "You speak English well; how long have you been in this country?" As citizens, they were legally allowed to own land and homes, but they experienced widespread housing discrimination. When Togo Tanaka tried to purchase a home in Los Angeles, he made 119 inquiries about houses for sale, and in 114 instances he was told: "You cannot live here. Your money is not good enough. The deed has a racially restrictive covenant, and only members of the Caucasian race may reside here."

The Nisei also experienced difficulty finding jobs in the mainstream economy. Generally, Japanese Americans graduated from high school with good grades, even honors, and many had completed college. The average educational level of the Nisei was two years of college, well above the national average. Still they found themselves denied employment opportunities in the larger economy. Many came of age during the depression——a time of massive unemployment in the country. But job possibilities were especially limited for them because of racial discrimination. A study of 161 Nisei who graduated from the University of California between 1925 and 1935 found that only 25 percent were employed in professional vocations for which they had been trained. Twenty-five percent worked in family businesses or trades that did not require a college education, and 40 percent had "blind alley" jobs.

The Nisei were trapped in an ethnic labor market. Only a very tiny percentage of them worked for white employers. In Los Angeles, only 5 percent were employed in white-owned businesses in 1940. The vast majority worked in small Japanese shops, laundries, hotels, fruit stands, and produce stores. "I am a fruitstand worker," a Nisei explained. "it is not a very attractive nor distinguished occupation. I would much rather it were doctor or lawyer...but my aspirations of developing into such [were] frustrated long ago by circumstances [and] I am only what I am, a professional carrot washer." Some Nisei became doctors and dentists, but they served the Japanese community exclusively; many more became "Japanese gardeners." As a senior in college, a Nisei woman described her restricted career future: "After I graduate, what can I do here? No American firm will employ me. All I can hope to become here is a bookkeeper in one of the little Japanese dry goods stores in the Little Tokyo section of Los Angeles, or else be a stenographer to the Japanese lawyer here." Denied equal employment opportunities in the larger economy, the Nisei were confined to "the Japanese colony."

But the problem for the Nisei went far beyond the mere matter of jobs. It was profoundly cultural, involving the very definition of who was an American. In his reflective essay "The Rising Son of the Rising Sun," Aiji Tashiro explained why Japanese Americans were viewed as strangers. "The Jablioskis, Idovitches, and Johannsmanns streaming over from Europe," he pointed out, "[were able] to slip unobtrusively into the clothes of 'dyed-in-the-wool' Americans by the simple expedient of dropping their guttural speech and changing their names to Jones, Brown or Smith." Tashiro knew it would make no difference for him if he changed his name to Taylor. He spoke English fluently and had even adopted American slang, dress, and mannerisms. But "outwardly" he "possessed the marked characteristics of the race." To be accepted as an American seemed hopeless. "The voice of the flute has long been the unfathomable voice of the East beating upon the West with futility."

Many other Nisei, however, cultivated an American cultural outlook. In 1939, the San Francisco *Japanese American News* celebrated the Nisei's American consciousness: "Once upon a time, and surely it was a long time ago, someone had the magnificent idea of the Nisei bridging the Pacific" to establish an understanding between Japan and America. But the moment had arrived to "burn a few of our bridges behind us." The Nisei did not really have ties to "the homeland of their parents." Their true culture was not one of Japanese art and music and literature but instead was essentially "middle-class American." Young Nisei listened to Bob Hope and Fred Allen, sang songs popularized by Bing Croshy, and read *Collier's* and the

Saturday Evening Post as well as the *American Magazine*. They enjoyed "swing, the Sunday funnies, and Myrna Loy."

Actually, the editorial had simplified the feelings of the Nisei. Deep in their hearts, many Nisei did not wish to be completely assimilated, to become simply "American." They felt they were a complex combination of the two cultures, and they should be allowed to embrace their twoness. Everything they had learned at school about their country had taken "root," and they felt they were Americans. Nevertheless, many second-generation Japanese did not want to reject the culture of their parents, which had also become a part of themselves. James Sakamoto explained how the Nisei had a "natural love for the country of their birth" as well as for the land of their parents. In their view, Japan was "a nation, complete in itself, great, wonderful, with a glorious future." Deep within, the Nisei experienced "the clash and the adjustment and the synthesis of the East and the West." They stood on the "border line" that separated the "Orient" from the "Occident," the "streams of two great civilizations——the old Japanese culture with its formal traditions and the newer American civilization with its individual freedom."

But their hope to be both Japanese and American would be violently shattered on a December morning in 1941.