

# “The Pacific Era Has Arrived”: Transnational Education among Japanese Americans, 1932-1941

*Eiichiro Azuma*

Looking back on the two years at Keisen Girls' School, I am so grateful for the opportunity to have been able to study here. . . . Our teachers have taught us that it was mistaken if we simply aspired to mimic the ways of Japanese woman. Cognizant of our special position as Americans of Japanese ancestry, we must instead strive to promote the U.S.-Japan friendship. Furthermore, we must adapt the merits of the Japanese spirit [that we have acquired here] to our Americanism. Back in the United States, we will dedicate ourselves to the good of our own society as best possible citizens, cooperating with Americans of other races and learning from each other. . . . Such is the mission of the Nisei as a bridge between Japan and the United States—one that we have come to appreciate [through our schooling in Japan].<sup>1</sup>

Just about two years before Pearl Harbor, a young Japanese American woman took this pledge to herself when she completed a special study program in Tokyo, Japan. Although the shadow of war loomed increasingly over the Pacific, thousands of American-born Japanese (Nisei) youth like her flocked to their parents' native land during the 1930s to pursue cultural and language learning, as well as formal secondary and higher education. In any given year following 1932, an estimated 1,500 young Nisei students from North America resided in Tokyo and other urban areas of Japan.<sup>2</sup>

---

Eiichiro Azuma is Assistant Professor in the department of history, University of Pennsylvania. He wishes to thank Brian Niiya, Hiromi Monobe, Eileen Tamura, and the *History of Education Quarterly's* staff and anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions. All the translations of Japanese sources are the author's. Issei and Japanese individuals are indicated with their surnames first, while Nisei and non-Japanese with their given names first.

<sup>1</sup>Tsuyuko Kimura, “Ninenkan o kaerimite” [Looking back on the two years], *Keisen* 74 (July 1939), 4, the Keisen Women's College Archives, Tokyo, Japan [hereafter KWCA].

<sup>2</sup>The precise number of Nisei students in Japan during the 1930s is difficult to estimate. According to some contemporary sources, there were 40,000 to 50,000 American-born Japanese in the island country in any given year during the decade. The vast majority of them, however, probably resided in Japan permanently with their parents, who had returned home for good. Only about 18,000 Nisei were considered “Americans” by the Japanese police, who had kept a close eye on any “foreign” elements. Still, most of them had spent a substantial amount of time in Japan, receiving much of their formal education there rather than in the United States. In 1940, a survey of Nisei students over eighteen estimated the presence of 1,500 in the Tokyo area. This is probably the most reliable ballpark figure for the Nisei youngsters who are the subjects of this study. See Nisei Survey Committee, *The Nisei: A Survey of*

Often referred to as Kibei after returning to their native land, these young women and men attempted to embrace their ethnic heritage and identity during their sojourn in Japan with the support of Japanese educators.

In many ways, such endeavors resemble what many Asian American youths—especially Koreans and Chinese—do today under the aegis of governments and organizations in their ancestral countries.<sup>3</sup> Buoyed by the immigrant quest for ethnic maintenance and the Asian sponsors' search for "ambassadors" who would be attentive to the interests of the "homelands," the transnational education of these American-born Asians reveals some timeless commonalities. There is nonetheless one critical difference between Kibei experiences and the current Asian American practice of heritage learning. The post-Sixties' visions of a pluralistic America, which valorizes the value of ethnic diversity within the nation, renders the cultural immersion of Korean and Chinese Americans in their ancestral lands beneficial not only to their own personal fulfillment but also to the larger cause of United States multiculturalism. This aspect of transnational education tends to offset the more self-serving motivations behind the Asian governments' enthusiasm for it, thereby making Asian American transnational education look innocuous in the eyes of most Americans.

The educational sojourn of Japanese Americans across the Pacific took place not only at the height of Anglo-conformist ideology in the United States but also at a time of its growing estrangement from Japan.

---

*Their Educational, Vocational, and Social Problems* (Tokyo: Keisen Girls' School, 1939), 2; and Yuji Ichioka, "Beyond National Boundaries: The Complexity of Japanese-American History," *Amerasia Journal* 23 (Winter 1998), viii. For the general statistics of Nisei in Japan, consult Yamashita Soen, *Nichibei o Tsunagu mono* [Those who link Japan and the United States] (Tokyo: Bunseisha, 1938), 319-334.

<sup>3</sup>For example, the summer language program at Yonsei University in Seoul attracts hundreds of Korean Americans every year, while the Korean government offers college preparatory classes and three-month cultural immersion courses under the so-called "homeland invitation education program." Likewise, the Republic of China has sponsored a summer study tour program (known as the "Love Boat") and intensive language program, and its Chung Hwa Correspondence School has catered to more serious students for long-term education since the mid-1960s. See the National Institute for International Education Development (NIIED: South Korean government) at [niied.interedu.go.kr/job/job\\_03\\_e.asp](http://niied.interedu.go.kr/job/job_03_e.asp); and the Overseas Chinese Affairs Commission (Taiwan) at [www.gio.gov.tw/info/yb97/html/ch0903t.htm](http://www.gio.gov.tw/info/yb97/html/ch0903t.htm); and the Overseas Chinese Youth Language and Study Tour to the Republic of China (Taiwan) at [www.abcfish.com/studytour](http://www.abcfish.com/studytour). To date, there is only one scholarly work on this topic. Based primarily on oral interviews with past participants, Ellen Wu's thesis offers an in-depth analysis of the Overseas Chinese Youth Language Training and Study Tour. See Ellen Dionne Wu, "Chinese American Transnationalism Aboard the 'Love Boat': The Overseas Chinese Youth Language Training and Study Tour to the Republic of China, 1966-1997," (M.A. thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1998).

<sup>4</sup>Wu, "Chinese American Transnationalism Aboard the 'Love Boat,'" 19-30; and Erik Guyot, "Taiwan Program's Benefits Include Acquiring Friends," *Wall Street Journal*, Oct., 2, 2000. See also "President's Message," at the NIIED site above. Many parents also think of "practical advantages," like networking opportunities for career advancement and an enhanced possibility of intraethnic marriages.

Contrary to the current practice, it manifested a multitude of "contradictions" in terms of citizenship and national/racial belonging. Inevitably, transnational education among the Nisei registered extremely negatively with the American public and the government, both of whom had turned increasingly anti-Japanese in the decade of the 1930s. Notwithstanding, neither Japanese immigrants (Issei) nor their Nisei children exhibited hesitation, justifying their pursuit of knowledge in Japan in the language of what historians have described as their "dualism" or "bi-culturalism," exemplified in the pronouncements of the above student.<sup>5</sup> This study will explore the specific historical context in which such transnational education was posited to be of advantage to both this racial minority and the countries concerned despite a contrary reality.<sup>6</sup> Case studies of Nisei education in Japan will illustrate how its Japanese supporters worked (or failed to work) hand in hand ideologically and pedagogically with Issei leaders and parents in the realization of their educational goals. Specifically, three Nisei study programs will be compared with regards to the impact of politics on their transnational education.

### *A Contested Terrain: The Pacific Era and the Nisei as a Bridge of Understanding*

The Nisei's study of things Japanese in their ancestral land was intricately intertwined with the development of twin internationalist ideals: the Pacific Era and the Nisei as a bridge of understanding between the United States and Japan. Needless to say, in sending their children to Japan, Issei parents simultaneously found many other pragmatic advantages, such as the betterment of the Nisei's employment opportunities and the narrowing of cultural and linguistic gaps between the first and second generations. Nonetheless, the advocacy of the Nisei's intermediary role between the two nation-states provided the basic ideological underpinnings of the

---

<sup>5</sup>Yuji Ichioka, "A Study of Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the *Japanese American Courier*, 1928-1942," *Amerasia Journal* 13 (1986-87): 49-81; and Lon Kurashige, "The Problem of Biculturalism: Japanese American Identity and Festival before World War II," *Journal of American History* 86 (March 2000): 1632-54. The theme, which was central to the Issei educational agenda, has received little attention from historians in terms of its relevance to Nisei education. The only notable exception is Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 146-61, 188-200.

<sup>6</sup>To date, there is only one published study that deals with this important aspect of Japanese American history, although it comes short of delving into the local and international contexts of Nisei education in Japan. See Toyotomi Morimoto, *Japanese Americans and Cultural Continuity: Maintaining Language and Heritage* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), 81-104. The following thesis has a section, which discusses the question of the Nisei's going to Japan from a contemporary perspective. Robert Howard Ross, "Social Distance as It Exists Between the First and Second Generation Japanese in The City of Los Angeles and Vicinity" (M.A. thesis, University of Southern California, 1939), 132-38.

Issei's transnational educational agenda.<sup>7</sup> As Yuji Ichioka has shown, the origin of these concepts is traceable to the turbulent years of the mid 1920s, when Japanese immigrants were faced with the adjustment of their focus in life after the completion of their racial subordination in America. Anti-Japanese agitation, which had marshaled political strength during the 1910s, resulted in the eventual passages of alien land laws in many western states. Designed to keep the Japanese from elevating their socioeconomic standing, the legislation justified the systematic deprivation of their land ownership and tenancy based on their racial classification as "aliens ineligible for citizenship"—the legal definition that the Japanese immigrant community subsequently challenged in vain in a historic 1922 United States Supreme Court case (*Ozawa vs. U.S.*). Less than two years later, Congress enacted the National Origins Act, marking the complete termination of Japanese immigration to both the United States mainland and Hawai'i. Now politically disenfranchised, economically subjugated, and racially excluded from mainstream American life, the Issei could see little hope for their own lives and hence shifted their attention to the future of their American-born children—United States citizens who were ostensibly free from legal discrimination.<sup>8</sup>

This shift in expectations coincided with an actual demographic change from the first to the second generations in the ethnic community—a development that anti-Japanese racism helped compound. Because the 1907–1908 Gentlemen's Agreement between the United States and Japan had made it almost impossible for new immigrants other than family members of *bona fide* residents to enter the United States, the decade of the 1910s had witnessed the emergence of many Japanese immigrant households and the resultant increase of Nisei in the country. Both in the Japanese communities on the mainland and in Hawai'i, the change in the generational composition indeed showed a marked contrast after 1910. For example, in California, the percentage of Issei dropped steadily from 92 percent to 71 percent between 1910 and 1920, and by the end of the ensuing decade, the immigrants were already a minority with 50 percent of the aggregate 97,456 Japanese in the Golden State. Although most were still in their teens or under, the Nisei came to constitute the numerical core of the ethnic community by 1930.<sup>9</sup> Considering that Hawai'i's Japanese society had a longer

---

<sup>7</sup>For the discussion of the "benefits," consult Yamashita Soen, *Nikkei Shimin no Nihon Ryugaku Jijo* [On the study of Japanese American citizens in Japan] (Tokyo: Bunseido, 1935), 8–18; and Tsunemitsu Konen, *Nihon Ryugaku no Jissai* [Realities of Nisei education in Japan] (Tokyo: Tunbini Shuppansha, 1936), 21–22. See also Morimoto, *Japanese Americans and Cultural Continuity*, 88–92.

<sup>8</sup>Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First-Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 253–54.

<sup>9</sup>Zaibei Nihonjinkai, *Zaibei Nihonjinshi* [History of Japanese in America] (San Francisco: Zaibei Nihonjinkai, 1940), 590.

history of immigration and more Issei families, the composition of the native-born Japanese on the islands was proportionately greater than in California. Thus, when the United States completed its policy of racial exclusion in 1924, upward of 254,000 Japanese residents found themselves in the midst of an "epochal" change, an ethnic history in transit from the immigrant era to a Nisei era. In this context, generation-based identities, like Issei and Nisei, as well as a notion of particular roles assigned to each, became so important that they tended to dictate the ways in which many Japanese in America came to understand their collective past, present, and future.<sup>10</sup>

A sense of internationalism, which glamorized a future "role" for the Nisei beyond the pale of the American nation, accompanied this perceptual change. Following the devastating war in Europe in the late 1910s, Issei leaders came to feel that the center of the world had been moving from the Atlantic to the Pacific, where a higher level of civilization would take shape. With the genesis of this "Pacific civilization," history itself would soon enter into a new "Pacific Era," whence the United States and Japan would emerge as the pivotal powers by replacing their European rivals on the wane. Not only would the two nations represent the West and the East, but in this immigrant vision they would also fuse the best of the divided worlds into one. Born as American citizens with Japanese heritage, the Nisei became inadvertently saddled with the mission of facilitating this process as a bridge of understanding between the two nations and the two worlds. To do this, the youth had to be fully informed about the countries between which they were supposed to mediate, thus the need for their transnational education in Japan.<sup>11</sup> (See Figure 1.)

Issei leaders, like Abiko Kyutaro, initiated an educational program based on this ideology as early as the mid 1920s. In 1925 and 1926, Abiko's *Nichibei Shimbun* newspaper sponsored Nisei *Kengakudan*, or study-tour groups, which journeyed throughout Japan on three-month excursions.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, the bridge concept became so pervasive in the Japanese community that many second-generation leaders came to embrace this idea as

---

<sup>10</sup>In fact, immigrant sources indicate that the term "Nisei"—and the concept itself—became popular around 1922 during the height of anti-Japanese agitation in California. A Los Angeles Issei journalist employed that term to differentiate the Japanese youth with American citizenship from those without when discussing the ramifications of racial discrimination to the ethnic collectivity. Thus, the meaning of citizenship relative to the question of anti-Japanese exclusion was intrinsic to the Japanese immigrant ideas of "generations." For the origin of the term "Nisei" (and hence "Issei" as its opposite), see Fujioka Shiro, *Ayumi no Ato* [Traces of a journey] (Los Angeles: Ayumi no Ato Kanko Koenkai, 1957), 521.

<sup>11</sup>Shishimoto Hachiro, *Nikkei Shimin o kataru* [On Japanese American citizens] (Tokyo: Shokasha, 1934), 253–66, 275–82; and Morimoto, *Japanese Americans and Cultural Continuity*, 59, 67–72.

<sup>12</sup>Yuji Ichioka, "Kengakudan: The Origin of Nisei Study Tours of Japan," *California History* 73 (Spring 1994), 34–39.

MORE OF THIS SUNSHINE IN 1937—WE HOPE!



Figure 1: A Role for Japanese Americans in US-Japan Friendship

First Prize Cartoon published in the English section  
of the *Shin Sekai*, January 1, 1937

well. As early as 1926, the Japanese Student Christian Association in North America, which included a number of Nisei members, proclaimed:

The second generation are the living connecting links between the United States of America and Japan. As American citizens, they should be provided with the best of American ideas and trainings; while as offsprings of Japanese parentage [sic], they should be well equipped with the best of Japanese culture and traditions. . . . These, indeed, are the two wheels in their unique position in America, and neglecting one of them will result in an unbalanced future and losing race. What a remarkable future role these second generation Japanese are destined to play on the stage of the dawning Pacific Era, especially with such double background, provided they can develop their invaluable international heritage. . . . And let there be respect for Japanese heritage at the basis of such internationalism.<sup>13</sup>

This ideal, however, was not a Japanese American invention. Ever since the turn of the century, a group of liberal Japanese intellectuals had tackled the question of how Japan, a nation of the "Orient," could succeed in modernization to reach an equal status with "Occidental" powers in Eurocentric modernity. Johns Hopkins-educated Nitobe Inazo posed one solution to this dilemma by "discovering" the commonalties between Bushido, the ethical system of *samurai* warriors and the modern Japanese nation, and Christianity, the basis of Western Civilization. Sharing compatible moral precepts and cultural qualities, Japanese and white Americans were to be partners in the new era of hemispheric reconciliation and cooperation. According to Nitobe's theory, "the Pacific Ocean . . . will become the chief theatre of events in the world's great hereafter [sic]," where the Japanese "represent in the Far East what may be called American ideas, or if you prefer to call it so, Anglo-Saxon ideas."<sup>14</sup> This argument for the amalgamation of the East and West in United States-Japan relations elicited support not only from Japanese liberals but also from many white Americans who sought peace and trade in the Pacific.<sup>15</sup> In light of this, Japanese immigrants generally saw no contradiction in sending their American-born children to their native country.

Importantly, too, the bridge concept concomitantly represented for many Issei an enchanting dream, allowing escape from the harsh realities

---

<sup>13</sup>Roy Hidemichi Akagi, *The Second Generation Problem: Some Suggestions Toward Its Solution* (New York: Japanese Student Christian Association, 1926), 37. For more about the JSCA, consult David K. Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 59-63. See also Ichioka, "A Study in Dualism," and Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 49-53.

<sup>14</sup>Inazo Nitobe, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (New York: G. P. Putnam's & Sons, 1905); and Nitobe, "Americanism in the East," in *Nitobe Inazo Zenshu* [Collective works of Nitobe Inazo] vol. 12 (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1969), 215-17. The quotation comes from the latter source. See also Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 44-46.

<sup>15</sup>See Ichioka, "A Study in Dualism," 59.

of racial subordination in white America. Training the second generation for their role as the international bridge permitted Issei to imagine something empowering, that is, the possibility of putting Japanese Americans on par with white Americans (and thus above all other minorities) in the construction of a new global civilization. This racialized ideology of self-empowerment, grounded in their contrary social realities, compounded enthusiasm for the reclamation of their "superior" racial heritage and support for transnational education in the Japanese immigrant community.<sup>16</sup> Arguably, then, Nisei education in Japan stemmed from the aspirations of the first generation rather than those of the second generation in the local(ized) contexts of racial subordination in America and resistance to it. In fact, although a small number of older Nisei appropriated the lofty internationalist ideal when they crossed the Pacific, a vast majority of students did not partake in the decision-making process. Instead, projecting their own desire upon the lives of their children, Issei parents took the initiative under the aegis of Japanese supporters, who actually facilitated and oversaw Nisei education in Japan.<sup>17</sup>

Not until after 1931, however, did the bridge concept truly become operative as a meaningful discourse. The scheme of Nisei study abroad was predicated upon the development of suitable economic and political conditions for its actual implementation. From an economic standpoint, it was not possible for most Issei parents to finance their children's protracted sojourn in Japan. The rapid decline of the Japanese yen relative to the United States dollar changed the situation, making it half as expensive to attend secondary schools in Japan as in the United States in the 1930s. Since the late 1920s, the Great Depression had caused a sharp drop in Japanese exports and a massive outflow of gold from the island country. In response, the Japanese government took the country off the gold standard and restored the embargo on gold transfers in December 1931, which led to the plunging of the yen-to-dollar exchange rate. By November 1932, the value of

---

<sup>16</sup>See Yamashita, *Nikkei Shimin no Nihon Ryugaku Fijo*, 10-14; and Shishimoto, *Nikkei Shimin o Kataru*, 74, 94-113. In addition, in so far as immigrant leaders also propagated the Nisei's study abroad as a practical solution to the problem of occupational discrimination on the premise that it would enable the youth to pursue opportunities in Japan or in United States-Japan trade, transnational education partially reflected the hopelessness of their economic life in the United States. For more detail on the Nisei's employment problems, see John Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation: The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 127-53; and Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei*, 37-42. Chinese Americans also crossed the Pacific for better occupational opportunities. Unlike their Nisei counterpart, this group did not seem to have included a significant number of students. For more detail, consult Gloria H. Chun, "Go West . . . to China: Chinese American Identity in the 1930s," in *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era*, ed. K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998), 170-80.

<sup>17</sup>See Yamashita, *Nikkei Shimin no Nihon Ryugaku Fijo*, 2-4.



¥100 had dropped by almost 50 percent from \$38 to \$19, and it stayed below \$24 during 1933. Attending college in the United States would cost a student \$40 to \$80 a month, whereas studying in Japan, including living expenses, would only require \$18 to \$20 monthly, depending on the exchange rate.<sup>18</sup> This situation made it financially viable and even sensible for many Issei to send their Nisei sons and daughters to Japan for schooling, although the prevailing economic difficulty still limited practitioners of this option to a leading class of well-off agriculturists and urban entrepreneurs, excluding a great majority of struggling tenant farmers and laborers.

Concurrent with this development, Japanese educators began to make conscious efforts to accommodate American-born youngsters in Japan's educational system for political reasons. Starting in 1931, Japanese military aggression in Manchuria, which paved a way for the establishment of a puppet state there, rendered the bridge concept more ideological than idealistic.<sup>19</sup> Given the deterioration of Japan's image and the upsurge of anti-Japanese agitation in the United States, the Japanese elite found it necessary to have reliable English-speaking spokespersons for Japan. The Nisei—Japanese in their racial origin, and yet "American" in their psychological makeup and cultural sensitivity—would be the best candidates for such a propagandist role. In the eyes of Japanese leaders, the "bridge of understanding" simply became synonymous with being Japan's apologist.<sup>20</sup> And because the class specificity of transnational education meant ensuring the future leadership of Japan-educated Nisei—sons and daughters of the relatively affluent and the powerful—back in the ethnic community, the incorporation of Nisei into Japan's formal educational process was also considered a form of long-term political investment for the Japanese empire.

Beyond the politicization of the bridge concept after the "Manchurian Incident," Japanese elite and educators also embraced Nisei education because of its implications for the future of Japanese imperialism. This perspective saw the education of American Nisei as an unprecedented national "experiment" in the relatively short history of Japan's colonial empire. Since Japanese immigration to Hawai'i and the United States commenced before the exodus of Japanese subjects for other destinations in the world, pundits often claimed that the problems of cultural retention and national allegiance concerning the foreign-born Japanese had manifested themselves in North America for the first time in Japan's modern history. Given the recent increase of the overseas population, Japanese proponents of Nisei

---

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 4-8. Computation by this author.

<sup>19</sup>This process of politicization involved both the people of Japan and Issei. For more detail, see Ichioka, "A Study in Dualism," 58-59; and "*Kengakudan*," 42.

<sup>20</sup>For this, consult Eiichiro Azuma, "Interstitial Lives: Race, Community, and History among Japanese Immigrants Caught Between Japan and the United States, 1885-1941," (Ph.D. diss., University of California at Los Angeles, 2000), 280-90.

education argued that the practical, pedagogical lessons they could garner from the experiment on the American-born would prepare them better for similar future problems elsewhere, thereby bolstering Japan's quest for greater influence in the world.<sup>21</sup> Fundamentally, then, the Japanese interest in Nisei education was fostered by the privileging of their racial (blood) ties over their citizenship status.<sup>22</sup> Put succinctly, American Nisei were expected to be but the first of the overseas "vanguards" for the cause of their racial homeland.

The dictates of national interest, as well as a prevailing sense of sovereign rights over the foreign-born Japanese, underlay the mounting support in Japan for the institutionalization of the Nisei's schooling as a part of its national(ist) educational agenda. In 1932, the Japanese Ministry of Education issued a directive, enabling "foreign citizens of Japanese ancestry" to enroll in public elementary schools and to be "treated as Japanese citizens." Three years later, another order stipulated that "Japanese Americans" be admitted into middle schools and higher girls' schools (both equivalents to United States high schools), provided they received permission from the Ministry.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, a number of private colleges and universities began to admit young Nisei men and women into their normal academic tracks.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>For example, consult Otsuka Ko, *Isbokumin to Kyoiku Mondai* [Immigrants/Colonists and their educational problems] (Tokyo: Toko Shoin, 1933); and Kojima Masaru, *Dai-Niji Sekai Taisen mae no Zaigai Shitei Kyoikuron no Keifu* [Historical trajectories of the education of foreign-born Japanese children before World War II] (Kyoto: Ryukoku Gakkai, 1993).

<sup>22</sup>See Sano Yasutaro, "Kaigai ni okeru Kokugo Kyoiku" [Japanese-language education abroad], in *Iwanami Koza: Kokugo Kyoiku* [Iwanami collection: Japanese-language education] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1936), 17-18, 20; and Kojima Ken, "Zaigai Hojin Dai-Nisei Mondai no Tenbo" [Future of overseas Nisei problems], in *Zaigai Hojin Dai-Nisei Mondai* [Overseas Nisei problems] ed. Aoyagi Ikutaro (Tokyo: Imin Mondai Kenkyukai, 1940), 2-5, 14, 18-19. The following contains a complaint on this point lodged by a Nisei. Sam Hataye, "Misunderstood Nisei," *Nichibei Shimbun* [Japanese-American News], Dec. 21, 1936. Interestingly, it appears leaders of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy had contemplated the political use of German and Italian Americans through heritage learning on similar grounds. According to a study on the German-American Bund, the Nazi government annually sponsored selected members of the Bund's youth auxiliaries to receive six-week-long courses on National Socialism and anti-Semitism along with a host of other politico-cultural activities. Italy, too, hosted summer camps for Italian American youngsters during the 1930s. See Susan Canedy, *America's Nazis, A Democratic Dilemma: A History of the German American Bund* (Menlo Park, CA: Markgraf Publications Group, 1990), 99; and Dino Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco: The Immigrant Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), 252-53. To date, however, I have not seen any systematic studies of transnational education among these two groups of Americans in the decade preceding World War II.

<sup>23</sup>"Gaikokujin Jido no Shogakko Nyugaku Toriatsukaikata" [How to deal with the admission of foreign-born pupils into our elementary schools], #130, July 18, 1935; and "Nikkei Beijin Chugakuko, Koto Jogakko to Nyugaku Toriatsukaikata" [How to deal with the admission of Japanese American students into middle schools, higher women's schools, and others], #463, Feb. 19, 1935 and "Migi Futsu Gakumukyoku Kaitono" [Instructions from the educational operations division], no. 6, Feb. 26, 1935, in "Gakusei Seito Sokki" [General volume on students affairs], Japanese Ministry of Education, National Archives of Japan, Tokyo.

<sup>24</sup>See Yamashita, *Nichibei o Tsunagu mono*, 322-25.

Therefore, under the façade of the cosmopolitan bridge ideal, the Nisei's study in Japan formed a field of contestation between the perspective and logic of Japanese immigrants, embedded in their minority experience, and the political agenda of Imperial Japan in pursuit of colonial expansion. Of course, these were not necessarily mutually exclusive, since Issei often interpreted Japan's militaristic ascendancy in Asia in such a way as to bolster their own ideology of racial empowerment in the American context—the conflation of Japan's present and the Nisei's future—which motivated many immigrants to send their children to the "racial" homeland in the first place. Transnational education, in this respect, was a complex entanglement of disparate interests, competing visions, and conflicting expectations that did not look so different *prima facie*. And this very ambiguity of Nisei education in Japan that not only enabled the immigrants and Japanese expansionists to partake together in the endeavor but also caused strong suspicion and antagonism among white Americans, as typified in the frequent attacks on the Nisei returnees (Kibei) as "agents" of Japan.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, the arduous journeys of American-born men and women to their ancestral land continued throughout the 1930s on the delicate equilibrium of the discordant forces. Goro Murata, a senior Nisei journalist in Tokyo, observed: "Scattered throughout the far-flung island empire of Japan are nisei—Americans of Japanese ancestry . . . The movement of nisei to Japan probably started as early as the beginning of the present century but their migration to Japan did not become conspicuous until shortly after the Manchurian Incident of 1931. . . . Since then there had been a continuous stream of these youngsters, both men and women, coming to Japan to study."<sup>26</sup>

### *Varied Faces of Transnational Education*

While hundreds of the Nisei youngsters attended regular institutions of secondary and higher education in Tokyo and elsewhere, many others learned basic Japanese language and culture at special schools for foreign-born Japanese in the capital city.<sup>27</sup> If the former comprised the "elite" and more permanent class of Nisei residents in Japan, many of whom would likely pursue employment in Japan or in its colonial territories upon grad-

---

<sup>25</sup>Led by V.S. McClatchy, a longtime leader of the anti-Japanese movement, the California Joint Immigration Committee criticized the return of Japan-educated Nisei to the United States as another wave of Japanese immigration in disguise. The youths allegedly posed a greater menace to the United States than ordinary immigrants, for they were nominally American citizens with the unflinching "loyalty to Japan." See *Nichibei Shimbun*, June 10, 1936, (English section). Similar agitation recurred frequently during the late 1930s.

<sup>26</sup>*Kashu Mainichi* [Japan California Daily News], March 31, 1940 (English section).

<sup>27</sup>See Yamashita, *Nichibei o Tsunagu mono*, 321-28; and Nisei Survey Committee, *The Nisei*, 53-55.

uation,<sup>28</sup> the latter consisted of Japanese Americans who would return to their native land after a few years of sojourning in their parents' homeland. As such, these Nisei schools saliently addressed the challenges and contradictions that the transnational education of the 1930s encountered in the interstices of the two countries.

The "success" or "failure" of Nisei education—from the vantage point of Issei parents and leaders—depended on the manner in which the receiving institutions in Japan were set up, who acted as the primary benefactors of and caretakers for Japanese American students, and what kind of relationship the schools maintained with the immigrant community. Enjoying the direct backing of Issei parents, some of the special institutions, like Nichibei Home and Keisen Girl's School, strove to meet the expectations of their patrons in America. By contrast, other Nisei schools operated by Japanese educators, like Waseda International Institute, tended to compromise the immigrant agenda for they had the chief goal of preparing foreign-born students for Japan's national education system, albeit under the banner of internationalism. While all espoused the ideal of the Nisei as a bridge of understanding, these special schools practiced that ideal differently, and their programs revealed a variety of issues associated with Nisei education in Japan, including questions of colonialism, national and racial identity, citizenship, and gender roles.

### ***Nichibei (Japanese-American) Home: Enhancing Citizenship and Racial Pride***

Under the aegis of the Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist mission, Nichibei Home pioneered Nisei education in Japan. From its inception in 1930, this boarding school not only provided the vital services Issei parents desired for their children away from home but also addressed some of the key educational ideals that they cherished, that is, to reconcile the Nisei's American citizenship and their Japanese racial heritage. In 1928-29, a Buddhist educator named Tsunemitsu Konen traveled to Hawai'i and the mainland United States to investigate the social conditions of Japanese residents. Having observed the Issei's strong interest in transnational education, Tsunemitsu, upon his return to Japan, lobbied for a special educational institution that could play multiple roles as "a dormitory, family, and school" for Nisei students in Tokyo. Initially, Tsunemitsu's pet project began as a dormitory only with a modest number of students who commuted to regular Japanese schools, but by 1934 resident ministers and Issei Buddhists in America collected about \$10,000 for new school buildings, making

---

<sup>28</sup>See John J. Stephan, "Hijacked by Utopia: American Nikkei in Manchuria," *Amerasia Journal* 23 (Winter 1998): 1-44.

Nichibei Home a genuine boarding school, specifically for Japanese American youth.<sup>29</sup>

In this endeavor, Tsunemitsu first and foremost heeded the Issei's deep-seated concerns when they sent their children to Japan. To the Issei, the question of how to keep Nisei juveniles in line in the absence of parental supervision posed a major dilemma when they contemplated transnational education for their children. For example, in 1935 a substantial number of immigrants expressed such concerns when a Los Angeles vernacular newspaper asked their opinions on the Nisei studying in Japan. One immigrant wholeheartedly endorsed the concept, but with the caution that "it is crucial to obtain trustworthy guardians for the students" while in Tokyo. Another Issei, whose son had actually attended a middle school in Japan, warned from his bitter experience: "it goes without saying that giving Nisei an opportunity to study in Japan is necessary. But unless they can be supervised by responsible people, I am afraid [their study] will end up in a failure."<sup>30</sup> This prevailing anxiety over the lack of proper guidance in Japan provided a background for Tsunemitsu's endeavor. True to his initial intention, he and his wife lived with a few dozen Nisei boys and several girls at Nichibei Home throughout the 1930s, serving as their surrogate parents in Japan. In his 1935 report on Nisei schooling in Japan, the American Consul in Yokohama indeed characterized the Buddhist priest's project as "successful" and "sensible." According to this diplomat, "with the close relationship and personal contact between [Tsunemitsu] and the parents of the boys in the dormitory, the supervision necessary has been maintained." The consul then predicted the institute "may very possibly develop considerably along the same lines it is now following."<sup>31</sup> (See Figure 2.)

At the same time, Tsunemitsu tread the difficult path of honoring the Issei's educational goals despite the constant pressure to co-opt Nisei education in accordance with the homeland agenda. At its core, the collaboration between Issei parents and Japan's biggest Buddhist sect, which authorized Tsunemitsu's work as its own, divulged a conflux of their disparate inter-

---

<sup>29</sup>Tsunemitsu, *Nihon Ryugaku no Jissai*, 147-49; Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Dai-Nisei to Kokuseki Mondai* [Nisei and citizenship issues] (Tokyo: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, 1938), 46-51, box 362, the Japanese American Research Project Collection, University of California at Los Angeles [hereafter JARP]; and Terakawa Honko, *Hokubei Kaikyo Enkakushi* [Historical overview of Japanese Buddhist mission in North America] (San Francisco: Hongwanji Hokubei Kaikyo Honbu, 1936), 556.

<sup>30</sup>"Shitsumon to Kaito," *Rafu Shimpō* [Los Angeles Japanese Daily News], Jan. 1, 1935. This special New Years' edition contains a survey of opinions taken from 75 leading Issei in the Los Angeles area. The quotations are from the answers of Kono Katsuya and Ito Seiju, respectively.

<sup>31</sup>Richard F. Boyce, "The Second-Generation Japanese Program" (File 894.427.11/2), Sept. 20, 1935, pp. 23-24; Records of the United States Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Japan, 1930-1939, Decimal File (LM-58, reel 20); Record Group 59 (RG 59); National Archives at College Park, MD.



Figure 2: Nichibei Home Students at Japanese Ethics Lecture (above) and at Morning Roll Call (below), ca. 1937. Reportedly, the students sang the Study Corp song every morning.

Source: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo* (Tokyo: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, 1938), 17.

ests, not the latter's pure philanthropy. Not unrelated to the fundamental ambiguity subsumed under the bridge ideal, their differences centered on the matter of national belonging and citizenship. From the immigrant perspective, transnational education proved integral to their efforts to make good American citizens out of the second-generation Japanese, and the success of their international duty hinged first and foremost upon the maximum enhancement of their American citizenship.<sup>32</sup> Buddhist ministers in America, too, abided by the same principle. An official "Instruction to Ministers," issued by the San Francisco mission leadership in 1927, urged them to "[g]et a right understanding of true Americanism," for it was "essential

<sup>32</sup>For this, see Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 256-61, 250-52.

to the work of a Buddhist minister" in America. Moreover, the document stressed, "[I]n your dealing with children, particularly in your official capacity as teacher, you must not forget that you are speaking to American citizens of Japanese parentage."<sup>33</sup> In support of this pedagogical platform, Tsunemitsu always acted as the safeguard and representative for immigrant interests. In fact, his attempt to stay attentive to them translated into frequent and lengthy trips to Hawai'i and the United States—a very rare practice among Japanese so-called "experts" in Nisei education. In 1933, 1935, and 1937, Tsunemitsu spent three to six months each in the immigrant society, meeting with Issei educators and parents to gather their viewpoints of his school operation.<sup>34</sup>

On the contrary, many Buddhist leaders in Japan tended to view Nisei education through their sectarian agendas in the disguise of internationalism. In order to facilitate its foreign missionary program, Hongwanji Headquarters had long partaken of various overseas educational endeavors. Coterminous with its western Christian counterparts, the sect had engaged in religious expansionism, striving to extend its influence beyond existing adherents. Its Korean and Taiwanese missions started around the turn of the century, focusing not only on resident Japanese but also on the colonized populations there.<sup>35</sup> In North America, new targets came to include American-born Japanese and white Americans by the late 1920s. The historic visit of the Chief Abbot in 1925-26 resulted in the creation of a network of Nisei Young Men's Buddhist Associations (YMBA) that encompassed the mainland United States, Hawai'i, and Canada. In 1930, the first Pan-Pacific YMBA Conference was convened in Honolulu with the very goal of "building a bridge of understanding" in the Pacific, bringing together young Buddhists not only from Japan and North America but also from Korea, Taiwan, and China.<sup>36</sup> Further, starting in 1931, selected Nisei Buddhists were dispatched to Kyoto for special ministerial training, while white Americans were officially admitted into rank-and-file membership in 1933.<sup>37</sup> In the eyes of Hongwanji leaders in Japan, Nichibei Home constituted part of this religious expansionist project—one that received increasingly greater endorsement toward the late 1930s.

---

<sup>33</sup>William Charles Rust, "The Shin Sect of Buddhism in America: Its Antecedents, Beliefs, and Present Condition" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1951), 347.

<sup>34</sup>Tsunemitsu, *Nihon Ryugaku no Jissai*, 2-9; Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Beifu Kyokai Yoran* [Guide to Japan America-Hawai'i Society] (Tokyo: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, 1937), 13-14, box 271, JARP; and *Rafu Shimpō*, Feb. 22, 1937.

<sup>35</sup>Shigaraki Takemaro, *Kindai Shinsbu Kyodan Kenkyū* [Study of the Modern Shin Buddhist sect] (Kyoto: Hozokan, 1987), 19, 51-72.

<sup>36</sup>See Imamura Emyō, *Dai-Ikkai Han-Taiheiyo Bukkyō Seinen Taikai ni yosu* [Message to the First Pan-Pacific Buddhist Youth Conference] (Honolulu: Privately Printed, 1930), box 295, JARP.

<sup>37</sup>Terakawa, *Hokubei Kaikyō Enkakushi*, 26-28, 567-68

This confusion proved bothersome to many Issei, including resident ministers in America. The ambition of the Kyoto Headquarters frequently came into conflict with the will of the leaders and lay members of the North American mission. For example, an Issei Hongwanji minister in California protested the hidden agenda of the Japanese pundits in this unambiguous language: "People in Japan like to discuss the problem of American Nisei, but that is utterly inappropriate in spite of their good intention. Our Nisei are Americans. Thus, it [Nisei education] should be left in the hands of residents in America, and the people of Japan should stay out of it. . . . No matter what, the second generation is destined to carve their own way as Americans, and that's how it should be. [The meddling of Japanese] is a great nuisance to the Nisei."<sup>38</sup> Tsunemitsu nonetheless was exempt from such criticism due to his track record of dedication.

Insofar as the promotion of American citizenship in Nisei was posited as a precondition for their success as the international bridge, Tsunemitsu adopted some key pedagogical methods that Issei had collectively practiced in their Japanese-language education. First, in accordance with immigrant concerns rooted in the realities of racial subordination, Tsunemitsu set as the main goal of his program "breaking down the Nisei's racial inferiority complex." American racism, he argued, had deprived the second generation of the Japanese racial trait of "perseverance"—one with which their parent generation had achieved so much economic ascendancy that jealous whites finally had to resort to laws to put a stop to it. Whereas the current racial status of Japanese in America became an ironic consequence and a symbol of the Issei's "superiority," their children were not cognizant of it, inheriting a state of subordination instead. Learning Japanese and experiencing modern Japan firsthand would awaken the Nisei to the fact that "being Japanese is a honorable thing," thereby reviving in them the spirit of "perseverance" and self-confidence as persons of Japanese ancestry. Borrowing the Issei's argument for the racial division of labor in society, Tsunemitsu justified his position to raise American citizens with specific racial/cultural faculties, for, without them, the Nisei remained a liability to their native country, only good for insignificant roles like other racial minorities. Racist as they were, Tsunemitsu's ideas conformed very neatly with those of his Issei friends and patrons.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup>Beifu Kyokai, *Dai-Nisei to Bukkyo* [Nisei and Buddhism] (Kyoto: Shinran Kenkyu Hakkosho, 1935), 42-3, box 295, JARP. Nisei leaders in Japan made similar protests. See *Rafu Shimpo*, May 26, 1938, Dec. 29, 1940 (English section); and *Nichibei Shimbun*, Dec. 22, 1935 (English section).

<sup>39</sup>Tsunemitsu Konen, "Amerika o megurite" [My trip in America], no. 1-5, *Rafu Shimpo*, Feb. 22-25, 1937. Eriko Yamamoto discusses the Issei's effort to instill "racial pride" in the Nisei. See her "Cheers for Japanese Athletes: The 1932 Los Angeles Olympics and the Japanese American Community," *Pacific Historical Review* 69 (August 2000), 399-430.



Another foundation of Nichibei Home's pedagogy rested in the Japanese immigrant belief that education must occur in the family and at school simultaneously. According to this idea, one's intellectual development in a formal educational process should always accompany his/her moral cultivation and spiritual enrichment in a daily living context. Issei believed that smart youth without ethical convictions were no good as productive members of society. The 1928 kidnap-murder of a white child in Hawai'i by a Japanese American adolescent had deepened their belief in this educational principle, since the immigrants viewed the perpetrator as a poignant example of a high intellect deficient of morality, leading to such a tragic fate. After this incident, given the dearth of extended-family structures in the immigrant society, the Issei's emphasis on moral cultivation led to increased support for community-based Japanese schools as a substitute for family education.<sup>40</sup> In Japan, where many Nisei had no family at all, Nichibei Home, as a quasi family and school, aspired to combine the twin goals of molding their intellect and morality.<sup>41</sup> Before acting as the bridge of understanding, the second generation needed to be upright men and women worthy of respect from both Japanese and Americans.

To better achieve the goal, Tsunemitsu devised a unique one-year program called "*Shugakudan*," or "Study Corps." Most immigrant parents, according to him, wanted their children to learn the "essence" of Japan for the least amount of time at the least expense before resuming their lives in America. Posed as an alternative between the short-term study tours and full-fledged study abroad at secondary schools and colleges, this "study corps" required an annual total of \$220 to \$250, only \$50 to \$80 higher than the study tours, and a few times lower than typical four-year college expenses. In order to maximize the educational effects and minimize the worries of parents, the corps' members usually consisted of youth in their mid-teens—when they were thought to be most susceptible to new ideas and influences—who originated from the same communities in the United States. In 1937, the first study corps came from Denver, Colorado, where Tsunemitsu personally recruited seventeen Nisei in cooperation with a local Buddhist minister.<sup>42</sup> The favorable reports of this group allowed the Buddhist educator to recruit over fifty youngsters from various parts of the American West for the second study corps in 1939.<sup>43</sup> (See Figure 3.)

These Nisei experienced a regimented life at Nichibei Home. At 6:30 A.M. they woke up. Following a roll call, the students ate breakfast at

<sup>40</sup>See Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 246-50.

<sup>41</sup>Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo* [New way for Nisei to pursue education in Japan] (Tokyo: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, 1938), 12, box 362, JARP.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid, 9-44; and *Nichibei Shimbun*, Feb. 26, 1937.

<sup>43</sup>*Shin Sekai* [New World Daily], Sept., 25, 1939. For more information, see *ibid*, July 28-29, 1940.

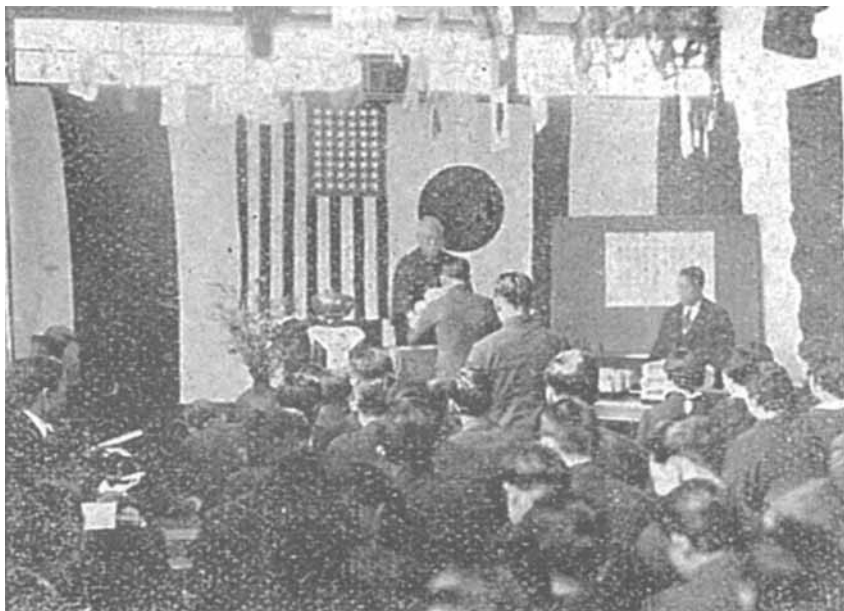


Figure 3: First Study Corps Graduation, Nichibei Home, March 1938

Source: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo* (Tokyo: Nihon Beifu Kyokai, 1938), 26.

7 A.M. Morning classes began at 8:00 A.M. and lasted until noon. One hour later, class resumed for another 3 hours. The topics of instruction included: Japanese reading (10 hours a week), composition (3 hours), speaking practice (3 hours), and calligraphy and penmanship (3 hours); Japanese morality, etiquette, and customs (3 hours each); Japanese history and geography (2 hours each); mathematics and music. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to martial arts training and other physical activities before dinner. Between 7:00 P.M. and 10:00 P.M. were self-study hours. The typical day ended at 10:00 after an evening roll call. On weekends, the students visited cultural and industrial sites in and around Tokyo.<sup>44</sup>

Considering the Nisei's limited grasp of Japanese, it is doubtful if the lessons had any substance beyond basic language instruction. One observer noted only basic level instruction. A teacher had students repeat a phrase like "are you going to walk?" in Japanese before seeking responses. Many students had difficulty comprehending even such rudimentary questions,

<sup>44</sup>Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo*, 15-16, 21-23, 37-38.

so the teacher had to resort to gestures to get the meaning across.<sup>45</sup> Yet according to Tsunemitsu, this intensive one-year program produced positive results in the first contingent of students. These included: the notable improvement of their language skills, their growth as persons of Japanese ancestry, and their successful conquest of their racial inferiority complex, all of which would contribute to the Nisei's future in America, as well as their internationalist role.<sup>46</sup>

Viewed from the immigrant perspective on Nisei education, these results were probably satisfactory. At least, by the time they returned home to the United States, the students must have been able to understand the meaning of the school song—the musical embodiment of the Issei's educational ideology that the students had to sing in Japanese every morning at Nichibei Home:

Our pride  
In our vein we have the precious blood of Japanese  
The nation now glittering in the world  
We are Japanese American citizens  
Our heart is filled with pride  
So lofty is the ideal of our Study Corps  
For that let us work arduously  
Our mission  
The bright light now shining in the East  
The Pacific Era has arrived  
To coalesce the cultures of the East and West  
Is the duty placed upon our shoulders  
So majestic is the mission of our Study Corps  
For that let us study arduously<sup>47</sup>

### ***Keisen Girls' School: Teaching Gender Roles and Cultural Pluralism***

A division of Keisen Girls' School, its special Nisei department founded in 1935, appeared to have outdone Nichibei Home in its steadfast adherence to internationalism and respect for the Nisei's American citizenship, albeit in a markedly gendered way. With the goal of producing cosmopolitan Japanese women, Keisen began its history six years earlier on the outskirts of Tokyo under Kawai Michi, one of the leading female Christians in Japan. Having been involved in reformist activities dealing with Issei women during the 1910s, Kawai was among the most faithful supporters of Japanese immigrants in the United States. Her interest in Nisei education was not motivated by the expansionist agenda of the 1930s and neither did her belief

---

<sup>45</sup>Nakajima Naoto, "Dai-Nisei Ryugakusei no Nayami" [Predicaments of Nisei students in Japan], *Kaizo* [Reconstruction] 18 (Aug. 1936), 19-20. See also Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo*, 23-25.

<sup>46</sup>Nihon Beifu Kyokai, *Nihon Ryugaku no Atarashiki Hobo*, 43.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 17.

in the bridge ideal derive from immediate political calculations. A Bryn Mawr College graduate, Kawai had earlier professed that she “belonged not only to Japan but also to the world.”<sup>48</sup> In accordance with the same spirit, her engagement with the Issei women in the 1910s and their Nisei daughters in the 1930s developed.<sup>49</sup> For Kawai, then, the two generations of Japanese American women were allies in her long-term politics of internationalism in Japan, in America, and beyond. As she often so stated, both Issei and Nisei were “pioneers” whose “task” was “to blaze the trail for those who come after” in their own ethnic community and for international peace.<sup>50</sup>

The establishment of Keisen’s Nisei department resulted from Kawai’s response to the pleading of her Issei friends and disciples for educational help. Her 1934 visit to California decidedly “turned [her] attention to the problems of the ‘second generation’ Japanese,” prompting Kawai to offer her assistance to the delight of the immigrants. Addressing Nisei at lecture meetings, the Christian educator declared: “Come to Japan when you can . . . and let us work together to solve your problem.”<sup>51</sup> No sooner had she returned to Japan did Keisei witness the arrival of one Nisei after another, “[s]ome I had met and some of their parents I had talked with in America.”<sup>52</sup> Her ensuing effort to work out ways and means to build a special western-style dormitory revealed a glimpse of Kawai’s unflinching commitment to the welfare of her Nisei students and the second generation in general. Indeed, whereas most Japanese educators actually held little sympathy for the youngsters’ particular dilemmas as a racial minority, condescendingly treating them as Japan’s pawns, Kawai’s attitude exhibited a notable exception. When those “experts” in Tokyo convened a roundtable discussion on Nisei education under the aegis of the Foreign Ministry, all but this Christian educator indulged themselves in criticizing the American-born, ridiculing their “outlandish ways,” their “horrible, low class, boorish country style Japanese speech,” and their “simple-minded chattering.” This heartless lambasting led to a scornful stereotype of Japanese in America. One participant concluded: “[t]he Nisei are children of low class, peasant emigrants, so what could one expect of them?” While everyone else “solemnly nodded” in the affirmative, it was only Kawai who “stood up fearlessly for the Nisei.”<sup>53</sup> (See Figure 4.)

In line with the Issei’s educational visions, Kawai’s respect for the Nisei’s American citizenship seemed to have been taken as a matter of course

<sup>48</sup>Michi Kawai, *My Lantern* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1939), 91.

<sup>49</sup>For her ties to Issei women, see Azuma, “Interstitial Lives,” 119–22.

<sup>50</sup>Kawai, *My Lantern*, 199; and Kawai, “Kami to tomoni Hataraku Warera” [We, who work with God], *Keisen* 46 (Jan. 1937), 1, KWCA.

<sup>51</sup>Kawai, *My Lantern*, 200.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>53</sup>Letter, Miya S. Kikuchi to Robert A. Wilson, 4, Jan. 13, 1968, folder 13, box 160, JARP.



Figure 4: Nisei Students at a Keisen dormitory, ca. 1940

Source: *Keisen News* no. 23 (July 1940).

by her students. One can detect little confusion as to their national identity in the young women's writings, which usually show tremendous enthusiasm "to understand and to appreciate the Japanese mind, culture, life, customs, and traditions" as outsiders, but not aspirations to become assimilated into them.<sup>54</sup> At Keisen, the Nisei did not seek to emulate Japanese-ness in order to become Japanese. Their heritage, according to the students, only served as "the foundation upon which they may build their future life and society" as useful citizens when they returned to the land of their birth.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup>Nisei Survey Committee, *The Nisei*, 3.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

Keisen also embraced the concept of the Nisei as the transcultural bridge to a greater extent than other educational institutions in Japan. In the eyes of Kawai and her largely non-Japanese staff, the fundamental purpose of a Keisen education was not to improve the Nisei's language skills or extend their knowledge of Japanese culture per se. At the second graduation ceremony, Kawai addressed the class of 1938, stressing the importance of their education: "Even if you have not made as much progress as you hoped in your Japanese, or if you could not familiarize yourself fully with Japanese customs, . . . you have still achieved the goal of your study in Japan as long as Keisen has given you an 'inspiration' for your pivotal role in promoting Japanese-American friendship and peace, as well as the well-being of humanity."<sup>56</sup>

As Kawai and other teachers appeared to have avoided politicizing the Nisei's role relative to contemporary East Asian affairs, the second generation at Keisen generally held on to their idealism throughout the pre-war years. Predictably, Nisei students often reiterated Kawai's naively lofty pronouncements in their essays, speeches, and the like. A student from Upland, California, wrote in English: "We *nisei* should tear down the racial barrier with friendship and sincerity, and take to the West a part of the East and receive in return some of the West; thus fostering a lasting understanding and amity between the two countries."<sup>57</sup> When it came to the question of the Sino-Japanese War, the students did not have much to say. A Los Angeles native could only confess her ignorance of political issues with a vague pacifist wish for an early ceasefire. Another student observed the patriotism of Japanese people in a relatively positive light, but with no propagandistic justification for the war. In fact, she remained detached enough that she took strong exception at the chauvinism of some Japanese who derided the Chinese.<sup>58</sup>

Keisen's unique curriculum also rendered the internationalist ideal in a gendered manner. Rather than training its students for political functions, traditionally a "male role," the school limited the dualism of Nisei women to the realm of family and culture—a feminized domain. In lieu of history, politics, and other contemporary social issues, the Keisen students learned traditional aesthetics like flower arrangement and tea ceremony, basic womanly etiquette, and the "arts" of Japanese sewing, dyeing, and

---

<sup>56</sup>Kawai Michi, "Ryugakusei no Sotsugyoshiki ni saishite" [At the graduation of our Nisei students], *Keisen* 63 (July 1938), 8, KWCA. Kawai always stressed the importance of the bridge role in her commencement speeches. See Kawai, "Kusabi o utsu mono" [Those who become a bridge], *Keisen* 52 (July 1937), 1, KWCA.

<sup>57</sup>Sadako Nagahashi, "A Nisei Philosophy," *Keisen News* 14 (July 1938), 3, KWCA. See also Hoshi (no first name), "Kawai sensei kara nani o manandaka" [What have I learned from Ms. Kawai?], *Keisen* 69 (Feb. 1939), 6; and Kimura, "Ninenkan o kaerimite," 4.

<sup>58</sup>Japanese letters by Emiko Murayama and Emiko Yamada, in *Keisen* 55 (Nov. 1937), 5, and *Keisen* 56 (Dec. 1937), 5, respectively, KWCA.

cooking. Combined with basic language instruction, these subjects sought to make good Japanese wives and mothers out of the young Nisei women.<sup>59</sup> This effort squarely corresponded with what Issei leaders had long pursued in their educational programs. Abiko Kyutaro had spelled out a mission of Japanese-language schools in America as "develop[ing] gentleness, tranquility, and chastity—the virtue of an ideal [Japanese] woman in a Nisei girl."<sup>60</sup> While many community-based schools incorporated the teaching of such gendered values in language instruction throughout the 1930s, individuals and organizations made special efforts to foster domestic and feminine qualities in Nisei daughters. In Hawai'i, from 1934 to 1941, the *Nippu Jiji* newspaper sponsored family-cooking seminars, which drew hundreds of local Nisei women every year. In Los Angeles, Abiko's wife Yonako—Kawai's close friend—offered immensely popular lectures, in which she taught second generation Christians proper feminine speech and manners.<sup>61</sup> Keisen's program furthered the cause of immigrant educators and leaders in the making of ideal Japanese American womanhood. The emphasis Kawai put on this pedagogical principle is exemplified by the project of the Class of 1940, a 220-page English treatise entitled *Japanese Cooking and Etiquette*.<sup>62</sup>

Student compositions again offer a window to what was taught at Keisen and how the Nisei students might have understood it. In her essay titled "Nisei Philosophy," one student postulated the duty of the second-generation women—"the products of two cultures"—would be to "lay the foundation for a happier and a more complete family life" in America. According to her, as wives, they should build Japanese American households around "the companionship and equality of the American life, and the sense of respect and duty of the Japanese." As mothers, they must "teach both languages to [their] children; also to encourage and cultivate the different talents which [their] children may possess by giving them the proper education." Her discussion of the Nisei's dualism stayed with the question of family formation to the end. "As Japanese, born and developed in the fertile soil of American civilization," the writer concluded, "we have all the possibilities of making an ideal family life."<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup>"Dai-Nisei no Tokubetsu koza" [Special program for Nisei], *Keisen* 31 (Oct. 1935), 1, KWCA; and Nakajima, "Dai-Nisei Ryugakusei no Nayami," 18.

<sup>60</sup>Hokka Nihongo Gakuen Kyokai, ed. *Beikoku Kashu Nibongo Gakuen Enkakushi* [Historical overview of Japanese-language schools in California] (San Francisco: Hokka Nihongo Gakuen Kyokai, 1930), 311.

<sup>61</sup>*Shin Sekai*, Jan. 27, 1932, Sept. 11, 1934; *Nippu Jiji* [Japan-Hawai'i Daily] June 22, 1934; *Nichibei Shimbum*, August 6, 1934, and *Rafu Shimpo*, February 26, 1935. See also Brian M. Hayashi, "For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren": *Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 119.

<sup>62</sup>1940 Graduating Class, ed. *Japanese Cooking and Etiquette* (Tokyo: Keisen Girls' School, 1941).

<sup>63</sup>Nagasaki, "A Nisei Philosophy," 3.

At times, what Keisen's Nisei came to envision as a result of their educational stint in Japan not only paralleled the Issei's call for racial pride but also approximated the present-day notion of racial/ethnic diversity as a viable form of American nationhood.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the students' essays often intimated views that transcended Anglo-centric orthodoxy. For example, published as *The Nisei: A Survey of Their Educational, Vocational, and Social Problems*, the project of the Class of 1939 valued "a few years of study in Japan" to the extent that it was portrayed as having helped eradicate the Nisei's feeling of "inferiority" and rectified their "apologetic" attitude toward their Japanese heritage. "We must realize that all Americans are descendants of foreigners and that they are proud of their ancestry." The second generation authors added, "[t]he Nisei, too, have the right to feel just as proud of their own ancestry, and must do so."<sup>65</sup> According to the bridge ideal, then, not only would the Nisei play a role in uniting nations in the international arena, but they would also internationalize the American nation, "cooperating with Americans of other races and learning from each other" as one Keisen graduate pledged.<sup>66</sup> (See Figure 5.)

This idea resonated neatly with the "cultural pluralism" of the late 1910s and the early 1920s, which contested the imposition of Anglo-conformity upon people of non-English origin. Redefining America as "a transnationality," Randolph Bourne, one of its proponents, discovered the agency of positive social change in such an unorthodox population: "They are no longer masses of aliens, waiting to be 'assimilated,' waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-Saxonism. They are rather threads of living and potent cultures, blindly striving to weave themselves into a novel international nation, the first the world has seen."<sup>67</sup> Whereas Bourne and his fellow cultural pluralists only attempted to make a case for the inclusion of non-Anglo Europeans into the national/cultural membership of America, Keisen's Nisei stretched its boundaries even further to provide room in it for the Japanese, a racial minority, thereby foreshadowing, if only discursively, the current politics of multiculturalism. Considering the ideological constraints in which they operated, it was notable that some of Kawai's students were able to pose an alternative vision to "Anglo-Saxonism" without succumbing to or being alienated by the nationalizing pressure of Imperial Japan.

---

<sup>64</sup>Horace M. Kallen coined the term "cultural pluralism" in 1924. For a succinct discussion of "the battles between the assimilationist and the pluralist perspectives" around World War I, consult Werner Sollors, "Forward: Theories of Ethnicity," in *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: New York University Press, 1996), xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>65</sup>Nisei Survey Committee, *The Nisei*, 43-44.

<sup>66</sup>Kimura, "Ninenkan o kaerimite," 4.

<sup>67</sup>Randolph S. Bourne, "Trans-National America (1916)," in *Theories of Ethnicity*, 105.



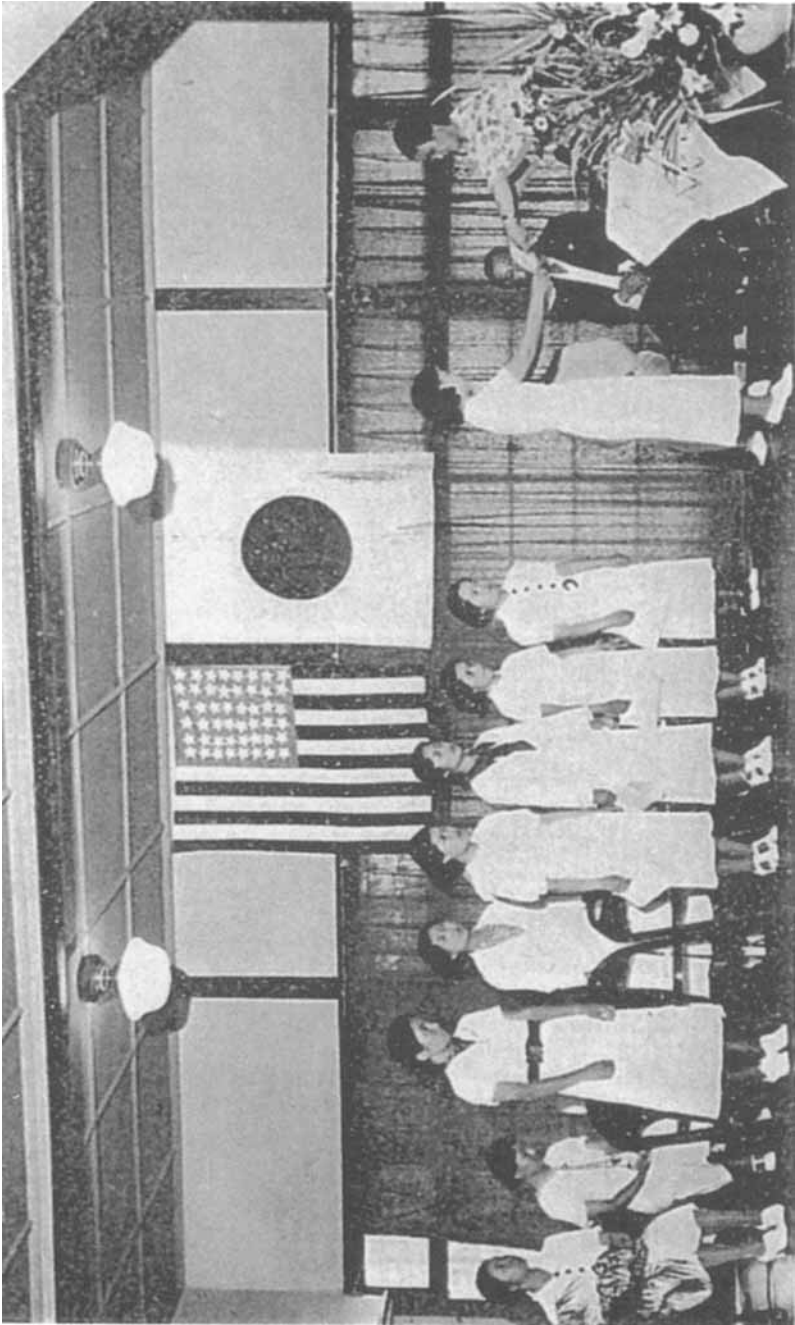


Figure 5: First Commencement for Keisen’s Nisei Students, 1937

Source: Michi Kawai, *My Lantern* (Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kan, 1939).

Importantly, whatever the positive effects, Keisen's transnational education benefited only a chosen few. Like Nichibei Home, the boarding school maintained a relatively small student body, and at its peak in 1940, there were only forty girls studying there.<sup>68</sup> The regular program ran two years, while some students opted for the one-year course. By the demise of the Nisei department in March 1942, 47 women had completed the former and 16 the latter, although a total of 125 Nisei attended the school during the seven years of its operation.<sup>69</sup> Upon their return to the United States, most of these women subsequently got married and began new Japanese American households, while a few strove to share what they had learned at Keisen with their fellow Nisei women. In one exceptional case, a graduate of the first class ran a sewing school for the benefit of future Nisei homemakers in Los Angeles's Little Tokyo—a dream that ended prematurely with the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans in 1942.<sup>70</sup>

### ***Waseda International Institute: Intersections of Nisei Education and Colonialism***

In contrast to the above two schools, Waseda International Institute exemplified a "failure" of transnationalism in Nisei education, where Japan's official agenda outweighed the immigrant goal of making culturally/racially endowed United States citizens. From 1935 to 1945, Natori Jun'ichi, a Boston University Ph.D., took care of the day-to-day affairs of the institute, which served as an affiliate of Waseda University, one of Japan's most prestigious private universities. While studying in the United States between 1928 and 1934, Natori, an ardent advocate of the Pacific Era, endeavored to defend his homeland by dispelling white American "misunderstandings" concerning Japan's military action in Manchuria. During his lecture tour on the West Coast, Natori became intrigued by the need for Nisei education to benefit Japan's cause in Asia.<sup>71</sup> Upon his return, the Waseda University president, who had contemplated establishing a special foreign student division, recruited Natori for the vice presidency of the new International Institute.

---

<sup>68</sup>Aiko Kuromi, "Marching Forth in the Ryugakusei Department," *Keisen News* 23 (July 1940), 2, in KWCA.

<sup>69</sup>Keisen Jo Gakuen, *Gojunen no Ayumi* [Our footsteps in the past 50 years] (Tokyo: Keisen Jo Gakuen, 1979), 159.

<sup>70</sup>Irene Kaoru Sakai, an Indio native, ran a school in cooperation with an Issei woman.

<sup>71</sup>Natori Jun'ichi, "Taibei shichinen" [Seven years in the United States], *Rikko Sekai* 375 (March 1936), 33-36; Natori, *Sayonara* [Farewell] (Tokyo: Waseda Daigaku Shuppanbu, 1971), 192; and "Kaigai Hojin Dai-Nisei no Kyoiku taiken o kataru Zadankai" [Round-table discussion on the experiences of educating foreign-born Nisei], *Kaigai Iju* [Overseas emigration] 12 (July 1939), 10.

As Natori's trajectory suggests, Waseda International Institute mirrored Japan's colonialist educational mandate in the guise of internationalism. Its inception in 1935 was not coincidental because that year marked the beginning of a state-sponsored educational enterprise that attempted to systematically import a large number of foreign students for pro-Japan inculcation. While the Japanese government established a new agency to facilitate this project, many universities and colleges started to admit students from Asia in hopes that they would later become the "bridges" between Japan and their home nations, over which the empire aspired to exert more influence.<sup>72</sup> Insofar as the school was meant to produce foreign students fit for formal Japanese higher education, Nisei education at Waseda International Institute tended to be subsumed under Japan's general colonialist policy from the outset.

The changing composition of its students testified to Waseda's compliance with the state program. While it started out with only twenty students, all Nisei, the institute's student body grew steadily larger and more diverse. In the first three years (1935-1937), students from Hawai'i, the mainland United States, and Canada constituted over three-quarters of the aggregate 226 students, while non-Japanese Asians accounted for only 18 percent. By 1940, out of the 195 students in that year, the percentage of North American Nisei had declined to 59 percent, while their Asian counterparts rose to 32 percent.<sup>73</sup> On this change after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Natori expounded: "it is particularly noticeable that yearly other foreign students [than the Nisei] are increasing rapidly. From China and Thailand have come children of state ministers. Also a very close relative of the Manchurian Emperor is, at present, studying here."<sup>74</sup> As such, Japan's escalating aggression in China and growing ambition over other parts of Asia generated this change.

The political orientation of Waseda International Institute unambiguously set the basic tone of its curriculum and the characteristics of its students. At a glance, the list of subjects appeared similar to Nichibei Home's, but Waseda's program proved more advanced and intensive with the standard of two- to three-year college preparatory courses. The Institute only admitted high school graduates or above, and a large number of the students had already completed higher education outside Japan.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup>For more detail, see Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 287-88.

<sup>73</sup>The statistics are taken from the following sources: "The Institute's World," *The International Youth* 1 (Dec. 1938), 82; and Jun'ichi Natori, "Waseda International Institute and Its Educational Ideal," *The International Youth* 1 (Feb. 1941), 21, the Waseda University History Archives [hereafter WUHA], Tokyo.

<sup>74</sup>Natori, "Waseda International Institute and Its Educational Ideal," 21.

<sup>75</sup>*Shin Sekai*, May 16, 1935; "Waseda Kokusai Gakuin ni tsuite" [On Waseda International Institute], *Rikkyo Sekai* 375 (March 1936), 28-32; and "Waseda Kokusai Gakuin nara-bi ni Keiei Kogakubu Setsuritsu Keikaku" (Plan to establish Waseda International Institute

A majority of its graduates moved on to prestigious Japanese universities and colleges, including Waseda, Keio, and Tokyo Imperial Universities. Others entered Japan's business world or the public service sectors after mastering Japanese language and culture. Their employers included Mitsui and Mitsubishi Corporations, various news agencies and broadcasting stations, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the South Manchurian Railway, and even the "Manchukuo" government.<sup>76</sup> In a few years, many of these Nisei were to be swallowed up in Japan's war machine against their native country.

Unlike their counterparts at the other Nisei schools, many Waseda graduates, willingly or unwillingly, lived as Japanese after graduation. In some cases, this literally involved their dropping of American citizenship due to nationality requirements for certain positions.<sup>77</sup> Natori's view on this question is illustrative of the critical "compromise" he had made in light of the Issei's expectations. Professing the idealism of the Pacific Era, Natori still wanted to see his Nisei students "establishing . . . the bridge to cohere a firm and everlasting link of peace and friendship between Japan and their native land."<sup>78</sup> Yet, as he personally admitted in 1939, he had ceased to oppose their permanent residency in Japan or its colonial territories—the idea many Issei dismissed as contradictory and counterproductive to the basic purpose of Nisei education and the bridge ideal.<sup>79</sup> (See Figure 6.)

Teaching the so-called "Japanese spirit" (*Nippon Seishin*) represented the core of Natori's pedagogy—another point of contestation with the Issei's visions.<sup>80</sup> In Japan, the extolling of the national spirit fed the ascendancy of militarist nationalism in the 1930s that mobilized the masses around the Imperial symbol. The valorization of this notion did not necessarily contravene what many Issei leaders emphasized in their daily teachings at Japanese-language schools or in the vernacular press, but on one point Natori diverged from them. The immigrants generally interpreted that spirit as the reification of Japanese ethics, which would benefit the moral cultivation of the second generation as American citizens, and as such, lacked the statist/militarist thrust. For example, Issei usually argued that the key Japanese precepts of loyalty and filial piety helped enhance the Nisei's Americanism, not their Japanese patriotism; they pledged their ultimate alle-

---

and the Management Science Department), *Waseda Daigaku-shi Kiyo* [Journal of Waseda University History] 14 (July 1981), 161–62, 166–67.

<sup>76</sup>Natori, "Waseda International Institute and Its Educational Ideal," 22.

<sup>77</sup>See Nisei Survey Committee, *The Nisei*, 37; and "Kaigai Hojin Dai-Nisei no Kyoiku taiken o kataru Zadankai," 11.

<sup>78</sup>Natori, "Waseda International Institute and Its Educational Ideal," 23.

<sup>79</sup>"Kaigai Hojin Dai-Nisei no Kyoiku taiken o kataru Zadankai," 11.

<sup>80</sup>The Institute had "the two main purposes: to prepare graduates of foreign schools and foreign-born Japanese for entrance into Japanese colleges and universities; and second, to instruct them in the language, culture, and spirit of the Japanese." See "Kokusai in Perspective," *The International Youth* 1 (Feb. 1940), 86.

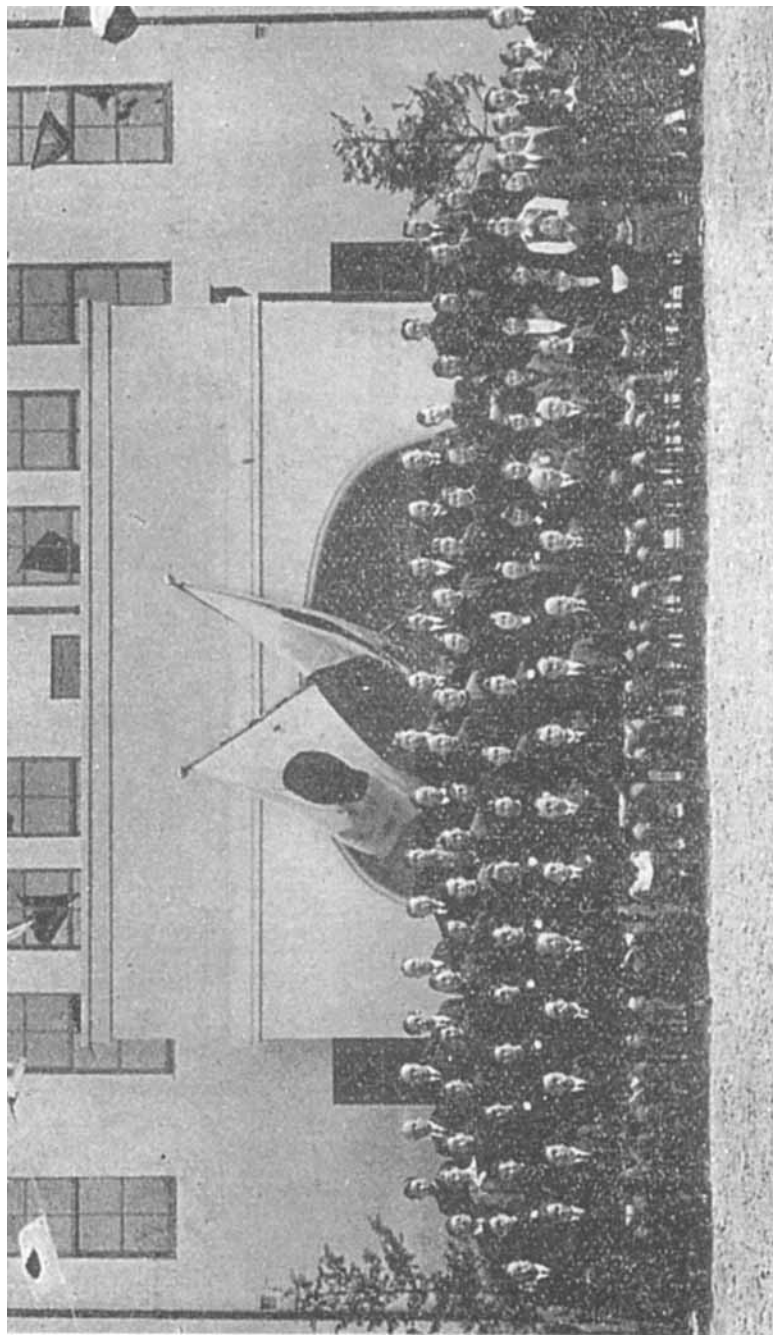


Figure 6: Instructors and Students in front of the Waseda International Institute, ca. 1940. Whereas Nichibei Home and Keisen displayed the flags of Japan and the United States to illuminate their internationalism, Waseda hoisted two Japanese flags, which epitomized the nationalistic nature of its Nisei education.

Source: "Regulations of the Waseda International Institute."

giance to the United States, their motherland.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Natori regarded the Japanese spirit to be "one that propels a person to dedicate himself to the Emperor and promote the imperial interest."<sup>82</sup> Despite his frequent reference to its positive moral effect on the second generation, Natori's interpretation had the potential to undermine the Issei's, thereby sending confusing messages to Nisei students. Moreover, most other instructors were Waseda professors, who had an even greater tendency toward the statist version of the "Japanese spirit." Wary of Nisei education in Japan from the standpoint of United States strategic interests, an American consular official struck a note of warning against Natori's "instruction" at the institute, branding it "pure [pro-Japan] propaganda."<sup>83</sup>

Many student compositions indeed betray mixed understandings associated with this slippery concept. Some provide a glimpse of the deadly confusions. In a short essay on his first impression of Japan, an American Nisei declared in the end: "I am determined to continue studying hard to put to use my Yamato spirit as an imperial subject."<sup>84</sup> Discussing the menace of Communist Russia to Japan, one young man expressed his resolution: "I am a Nisei, but I, too, have the red blood of the Japanese in me. I will fight the Soviet for the sake of the empire."<sup>85</sup> And yet, other Nisei were not engulfed so much by Japanese nationalism. A Hawai'i-born man wrote in English: "By coming to Japan, I have learned to understand the beautiful ideals of the Japanese, such as loyalty, patriotism, voluntary service, and filial piety." Claiming that studying in Japan was "valuable for gaining a knowledge of the morals which constitute the unique Japanese spirit," he concluded that he did all that, "so that [he] may be able to perform [his] mission as a Japanese born in Hawai'i."<sup>86</sup> This very ambiguity, exhibited in the Nisei's writings, elucidated the fundamental nature of Waseda International Institute, as well as its education relative to Japanese nationalism and colonial-

---

<sup>81</sup>See Azuma, "Interstitial Lives," 251-52, 259-61; and Ross, "Social Distance as It Exists Between The First and Second Generation Japanese in The City of Los Angeles and Vicinity," 136-37.

<sup>82</sup>See Natori Jun'ichi, "Nikkei Dai-Nisei no Shiso to Nippon Seishin (2)" [Ideology of American Nisei and the Japanese Spirit], *Shin Sekai*, Oct. 24, 1939.

<sup>83</sup>Richard F. Boyce, "American Citizens of Japanese Race Residing in Japan" (File 894.427.11/7), Jan. 29, 1940, p. 11; Records of the United States Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Japan, 1930-1939, Decimal File (LM-68, reel 11); RG 59; National Archives at College Park, MD.

<sup>84</sup>Roy Takaya, "Nihon no Insho (1935)" (Impressions of Japan), in *Gakusei Sakubunshu* [Collections of student essays] ed. Natori Jun'ichi (Tokyo: Waseda Kokusai Gakuin, 1942), 12, WUHA.

<sup>85</sup>Yasuo Kunimoto, "Hijoji ni taisuru Warera no Kakugo (1938)" [Our resolution at this time of national emergency], in *Gakusei Sakubunshu* vol. 2 ed. Shimada Hatsuko, et al. (Tokyo: Waseda Kokusai Gakuin, 1942), 104, WUHA.

<sup>86</sup>Harry Sano, "Why I came to Japan to Study," *The International Youth* 1 (Dec. 1938), 58.

ism. And Waseda's example was perhaps typical of the prevailing state of Nisei education in the formal institutions in Japan. Given the rigid control of the government over the accredited schools, thousands of Nisei students in Japanese high schools, colleges, and universities fell victim to similar confusion and contradictions.

***Changes in Transnational Education: From Internationalism to Multiculturalism***

This essay has examined the historical development and political nature of transnational education among Japanese Americans during the 1930s. The discourse of internationalism, which rationalized the migration of Nisei across the Pacific, had its roots in the racial subordination of Japanese immigrants in the aftermath of legal exclusion during the first half of the 1920s. The resulting condition of hopelessness prompted many Issei to devise ways to repudiate the existing mode of race relations and hence defy white hegemony while arousing their nationalistic sentiments. Out of this emerged the concept of the Nisei as a bridge of understanding between the two nations, races, and worlds for which transnational education was deemed especially crucial. Coming as an effort to undermine the Issei's hegemonized present and promising a hope for future empowerment, Nisei education in Japan was a by-product of American racism, rather than a simple reflection of the immigrant yearning for cultural retention, which happened to neatly fit the colonialist agendas of the host country. Yet, because the immigrants presented heterodox ideas of nationhood and citizenship along the way, it was inevitable that their educational principles eventually came into conflict with not only the accepted norms of Imperial Japan but also those of white America.<sup>87</sup>

The practice of transnational education became untenable in the months before Pearl Harbor. In 1940, with a view to solving the problem of dual nationality and questionable national allegiance, the United States Congress enacted a new nationality law, which required overseas Americans eighteen or older born to aliens ineligible for citizenship to register at American consular offices before January 1941 or risk losing their citizenship. Two months prior to that deadline, the Department of State issued official advice for American citizens to vacate Japan in anticipation of a diplomatic crisis. The flight of Nisei from Japan ensued and continued until

---

<sup>87</sup>In understanding this dynamic, Rogers Brubaker's insight into "the triadic relational interplay between national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands" is useful. He explains that a "national minority" has its own "nationalism" based on localized collective interests, which often clash with the nationalizing nationalism of the country in which the group resides, as well as the "transborder nationalism" of its external homeland. For more detail, consult Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4-6.

June 1941 when the last scheduled boat left Yokohama for San Francisco.<sup>88</sup> During these turbulent months, Keisen's Nisei department saw its student population decline from forty to a mere five.<sup>89</sup> Catering exclusively to the second generation from North America, Nichibei Home met a similar fate, resulting in the virtual shutdown of its school division. Waseda International Institute, on the other hand, could sustain its operation, albeit with a shrinking student body, since it opted to redefine itself as an official wing of Waseda University's colonial education for the construction of the so-called Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>90</sup>

The divergent trajectories of the three institutions pointed to the different kinds of relationships they had maintained with Japanese immigrants, as well as the politico-ideological orientation of their educational programs. Since Tsunemitsu and Kawai had always acted responsively to their Issei patrons and friends, their schools had built their identities and *raison d'être* upon those very international collaborations. In this sense, the demise of Nichibei Home and Keisen saliently elucidate how the tyranny of opposing wartime nationalisms had annihilated the ideal of transnational education on both sides of the Pacific. Subsequently, with neither alternative nor power to resist these pressures, Japanese Americans were embroiled in the storms of Americanization and Japanist totalitarianism in their respective countries. While in America's concentration camps many of his fellow Nisei were compelled to pledge to destroy Imperial Japan in defense of citizenship and democracy, a California-born man at Waseda International Institute professed his unflinching allegiance to Japan and commitment to its race war: "[R]ealizing that it would, with black hair, brown eyes, and yellow skin, be impossible to be assimilated by the [white] Americans, I crossed the blue Pacific to be in the land of cherry blossoms. . . . And, on that historically memorable morning of the eighth of December, 1941, . . . I felt

---

<sup>88</sup>Naimusho Keihokyoku, "Showa 16-nen chu ni okeru Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyo" [General report of anti-foreign police bureau], 1941, reprinted in *Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyo* vol. 7 (Tokyo: Ryukei Shosha, 1980), 164.

<sup>89</sup>See Aiko Hiyama, "Ryugakusei-bu no kinkyō" [Whereabouts of Nisei students], *Keisen* 95 (June 1941), 6, KWCA.

<sup>90</sup>See Natori Jun'ichi, "Showa 17-nendo Hokoku" [Report: 1942], *Waseda Kokusai Gakuin Ho* [Waseda International Institute newsletter] 26 (July 1943), 13-14, WUHA; and "Waseda Kokusai Gakuin narabi ni Keiei Kogakubu Setsuritsu Keikaku," 163-65. The idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere formed an ideological underpinning of what John Dower has called a "race war" which Japan waged against the United States and other "whitemen's countries" in the years between 1941 and 1945. Based on the notion of Asia for the Asiatic, Imperial Japan proclaimed its leadership in the struggle for the liberation of Asian nations from white/western control. In this context, Japan often portrayed the history of racial discrimination against Issei and the current internment of Japanese Americans as a concrete example of American racism that Japan was purportedly fighting. For more detail, see Akira Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World: from the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Longman, 1997), 63-87; John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1986).



more than ever before that I was a Japanese, to work, struggle, and fight for Japan in building a Greater East Asia to the best of my ability."<sup>91</sup> In his—and others—pronouncements, no trace of internationalist idealism was detectable.

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that internationalism and nationalism had never been diametrically opposed or mutually exclusive in the Issei's ideology of transnational education during the prewar years. As explicated, the concept of the Nisei as a bridge over the Pacific brought into sharp contrast disparate interests among the parties involved in their education in Japan. Issei and their Japanese sympathizers employed a pluralistic idea in order to justify the study of the Asian heritage for the enhancement of the Nisei's American citizenship. Their support for Americanism through transnational education then encountered Japan's aspirations to turn the American-born Japanese into propagandists on the ground of promoting "understanding" and "peace" in the Pacific. Both sides, in their unique ways, had subsumed their respective nationalist-driven or nation-based logic in the enchanting, yet slippery concept of international friendship. However, when geopolitics provided no alternative or need, naked nationalism took hold at the cost of persecuting anything heterodox or subversive, that is, "international" in the language of war.

Indeed, whether they stayed in their ancestral land or had previously returned to their home country, the internationalized Nisei found themselves doubly marginalized for the duration of the conflict due to their dualistic education. In the United States, wartime nationalism rendered "Japan" antithetical to what America purportedly stood for. As the personification of the vilified enemy, the Nisei returnees, now Kibei, were considered especially dangerous. United States intelligence agencies, military, and media all singled out this subgroup and crucified it for being the product of transnational education.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, in Japan, their linguistic traits and American backgrounds made the resident Nisei a target of constant harassment, close surveillance, and frequent abuse by the Higher Police and the war-mongering public. While the Japanese military often conscripted them for its propaganda and intelligence work, epitomized in the case of "Tokyo Rose," many Nisei also suffered social ostracism as "American spies."<sup>93</sup> Thus, from the perspectives of the two warring states, the pop-

---

<sup>91</sup>Edwin Taro Ohashi, "Why I came to Japan," *The International Youth* 1 (Feb. 1942), 22.

<sup>92</sup>See, for instance, Michi Weglyn, *Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976), 41, 127, 149-51.

<sup>93</sup>Naimusho Keihokyoku, "Showa 17-nen chu ni okeru Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyo" [General report of anti-foreign police force] 1942, reprinted in *Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyo* vol. 8 (Tokyo: Ryukei Shosha, 1980), 77; and Murayama Tamotsu, *Shusen no Koro* [Around the end of the war] (Tokyo: Jiji Tsushin, 1968), 23-24, 156. See also the autobiographies of such Nisei in *Amerasia Journal* 23 (1997), 145-216; Masayo Duus, *Tokyo Rose: Orphan of the Pacific*

ulations of transnational Nisei symbolized Japanese militarism or Americanism, no matter how profusely they professed their American or Japanese patriotism, respectively. Instead of the bridge of understanding, the youth turned into the embodiments of loathsome enemy influences that had to be crushed.

The ramification of this extreme alienation proved far-reaching in the postwar years. Because the Japanese American community has kept the Kibei on its social fringes and buried the Nisei in Japan, the idea of transnational education could not inspire succeeding generations until the emergence of a new pluralism in the wake of the Civil Rights movement.<sup>94</sup> Now, like other Asian American youths, many Sansei and Yonsei (the third and fourth generation Japanese Americans) take strong interest in heritage learning in their ancestral land through various education-abroad programs and modern-day versions of *Kengakudan*, or study tours to Japan. This time, however, rather than the notion of internationalism, such educational endeavors conform to the *national* formation of multicultural America, thereby confining the new discourse in the comfortable bounds of United States national education.<sup>95</sup> Consequently, the tendency of Asian "homelands" to claim ownership of the American-born youth and use them for national(ist) purposes seldom draws suspicion or criticism, even though one could very well argue, as exemplified in the tragedy of Kibei, that such a nationalizing thrust would contravene the singularity of Asian Americans' United States citizenship. Indeed, insofar as the slogan of diversity functions to celebrate

---

(New York: Kodansha International, 1979); Russell Warren Howe, *The Hunt for "Tokyo Rose"* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1990); and Mary Kimoto Tomita, *Dear Miye: Letters from Japan, 1939-1946*, ed., Robert G. Lee (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>94</sup>For the critique of the exclusion of these Japanese Americans from history, see Ichio-ka, "Beyond National Boundaries," vii-xi. In 1957, a prominent Nisei journalist Bill Hosokawa printed a poignant article with regards to the Nisei's abandonment of transnationalism in the postwar years. In it, the writer traced the origins of the prewar bridge concept to "idealists and do-gooders on both sides of the ocean," as well as Issei, whose "dreams could not stand up under the realism of power politics and hot steel" after Pearl Harbor. "But if the Nisei flopped as bridges," Hosokawa continued, "their faith in their country was justified" because "[t]oday their acceptance as Americans is complete and their position in their native land is secure." As if he forgot his own struggle to live a transnational life in the late 1930s as the editor of Japan-sponsored newspaper in Singapore, Hosokawa dismissed the bridge concept as having no relevance to their collective identity—one forged in the context of the wartime internment and military service. See Bill Hosokawa, "Maybe Nisei Have Flopped as 'Bridges' Across the Pacific," *Pacific Citizen* (Holiday Issue), Dec. 20, 1957, 4.

<sup>95</sup>Good examples include Ron Takaki's narratives of multicultural America and its national identity based on diversity, which counter the recent reaffirmation of the preeminence of Western civilization by pundits like Allan Bloom and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. See Ronald Takaki, "Multiculturalism: Battleground or Meeting Ground?," in *Color-Lines to Borderlands: The Matrix of American Ethnic Studies*, ed. Johnnella E. Butler (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 3-17; *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (New York: Little, Brown & Company, 1993), esp., 1-17; and *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1998), 1-13, 509.

a particular form of American nationhood and society, the current practice of transnational education among Japanese and other Asian Americans is fundamentally "domesticated." It is therefore more benign and less subversive, from the perspective of the dominant society, than the Nisei's study of Japan in the 1930s that fatally overstepped the established boundaries and categories of Anglo-centric America.