
Part II

Convergences and Divergences

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Re-Forming the Immigrant Masses

The Transnational Construction of a Moral Citizenry

Japanese prostitutes in the overseas are a disgrace to our nation. But they are unaware of that. . . . It is useless to reprove those who are ignorant, for it prompts no response. It is those who understand that must be addressed. Who are those people? They are Japan's literati and the government.¹

In 1894, a Japanese student-immigrant in San Francisco penned these words for a Tokyo political journal. His message resonated with early Issei leaders, who disdained the likes of prostitutes and itinerant laborers for tarnishing the national reputation. Until the 1920s, the question of how to control the behavior of "the poor," both in a moral and material sense, was among the most important agendas of the Japanese immigrant community. Self-proclaimed Issei leaders, including mercantilists, colonialists, and nationalist students, attributed the development of anti-Japanese sentiments in the American West to the contempt felt by the white population for these "ignorant" Japanese. The Issei literati moreover shared this attitude with members of the Japanese diplomatic corps and opinion leaders in Tokyo, leading toward their collaborative efforts to "re-form" the immigrant masses according to common visions of progress and civilization. Forged in a slow, laborious process from the 1890s to the 1910s, the transnational elite partnership devoted its energy to producing a self-governing imperial subject and an acceptable member of the American citizenry

out of an apathetic immigrant through the institutional channels of moral discipline and suasion. This chapter examines how the regulation of popular behavior and the mind was interwoven into the construction of a transnational community of Japanese citizen-subjects from above.

As early as 1889, the Japanese consul in San Francisco expressed his concern about the "deplorable" state of the city's Issei settlement. Many of the 3,000 residents, in his opinion, were destitute laborers who barely eked out a daily living. Even worse were "ex-seamen" who had jumped ship. Having brought women with them illegally, many lived by gambling and by forcing their female companions into prostitution.² The situation was similar in the Pacific Northwest. According to an 1891 report, the vast majority of the 300 Japanese in Seattle were prostitutes, pimps, brothel owners, and gamblers, who congregated at Japanese-run gambling dens day and night. Thirty to forty habitual gamblers and pimps reigned over a small minority of "legitimate residents." In 1891, Seattle had twenty-five Japanese brothel owners, who controlled seventy-two prostitutes; Portland had nine and seventeen, respectively.³ In their reports for Tokyo, diplomats stressed a need for resolute government action against the undesirables, but once immigrants set foot on American soil, the officials had neither legal power nor the bureaucratic means to discipline them. Diplomats instead chose to empower the "legitimate" elements among the resident Japanese in hopes that they would be able to create an overseas community that would properly represent modern Japan. San Francisco offered the best chance, since it had a significant number of well-educated students and politically minded expatriates who shared nationalist concerns, as expressed by the Issei contributor to a Tokyo magazine. Before the 1920s, the city provided a key site for Japanese immigrants of community-building, which was constantly manipulated by certain agents and ideologies.

THE FORMATION OF JAPANESE IMMIGRANT LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY

The forging of a cohesive Issei leadership was a gradual and contentious process—one that dovetailed with the development of the anti-Japanese exclusion movement in California.⁴ During the last decade of the nineteenth century, the Japanese community of San Francisco experienced a rapid escalation of white antagonism, a problem that targeted not just Japanese prostitutes but common laborers as well. In May 1892, a local immigration officer declared a number of newcomers from Japan to be illegal "contract laborers," thereby refusing them entry. Concurrent with the political effort to extend the Chinese Exclusion Act

of 1882 for another ten years, anti-Asia advocates, like union leader Denis Kearney, began to attack the Japanese as another "Oriental menace." With the negative effects of the 1882 law on United States-China relations fresh in mind, Japanese consular officials were afraid that, if Japanese exclusion were legalized similarly, it would become a major setback for Japan's diplomacy in light of its quest for equality with the West. Local Issei leaders would experience additional and more imminent consequences; racial exclusion would threaten their welfare and livelihood. Fears rose as local English-language newspapers published one report after another against the Japanese "invasion," using sensationalized headlines and expressions. The San Francisco *Bulletin* printed "The Japs: Another Rising Tide of Immigration" on May 4, 1892.

Like the Chinese, they are here for the purpose of acquiring enough money to enable them to end their days in leisure in their native land, and they have no intention of settling down here and making this place their home. In another respect they are like the Chinese, and that is that few of them in this country are married. The [Japanese] women here are of the lowest class, and like the Chinese women, are imported only to lead a life of shame.⁵

Ironically, both diplomats and the immigrant elite agreed with the exclusionists on the key point that the "inferior" quality of Japanese laborers and prostitutes paralleled the excluded Chinese. Fundamentally, this convergence stemmed from the contradiction between their self-image of the Japanese as the civilized and the prevailing notion of the Chinese as the uncivilized.⁶ Mired in a hopeless "Asia" that was still stuck in the feudal era, this elite imperial ideology reasoned, Chinese lacked "modern" appearance and "civilized" conduct, offending not only white Americans but also the sensibilities of "educated Japanese." As white citizens of San Francisco had criticized, the city's leading Japanese concurred in the notions that the Chinese living quarters were "filthy," that their persons "stank," that their clothing looked "wretched," and that the men were tong criminals and the women prostitutes.⁷ In the midst of the 1892 anti-Japanese agitation, the *Aikoku*, the organ of the Japanese Patriotic League of San Francisco, explained how the types of Japanese with whom the leading Issei associated stood completely apart from the Chinese:

How do the Japanese in America and the Chinese in America differ? First, the Chinese in America represent the lower class of the Chinese race, and the Japanese in America the upper-class of the Japanese race. Second, the Chinese are so backward and stubborn that they refuse the American way. The Japanese, on the other hand, are so progressive and

competent as to fit right into the American way of life. . . . In no way do we, energetic and brilliant Japanese men, stand below those lowly Chinese.⁸

With Orientalist views of their own, the Japanese elite in San Francisco naturally expected to receive due respect from white Americans—their presumed friends in the modern world—in spite of the unequivocal expression of American racism that lumped the two groups together as the “Yellow Peril.”

Distinguishing between the Japanese and the Chinese based on their differing cultural levels, Issei leaders and Japanese diplomats also drew a distinction between themselves and their compatriots from rural Japan, whom the former despised as a “degenerated class,” “dirt peasants,” and “ignorant fools.” To elite eyes, immigrant laborers registered as a group of backward *gumin*, or ignorant masses, who, like Chinese, “prowl about the city with only shabby clothes and straw sandals,” oblivious to American customs and etiquette with no command of English.⁹ In their opinion, a flock of *gumin* did not constitute what they considered to be representative elements of the Japanese—whether in America or back home.¹⁰ Prostitutes were just as bad, if not worse. Not only did they often embarrass themselves in the public eye by “marching in shoals unashamedly with signature hats on in broad daylight,” but they also debauched lowly laborers and, even worse, infected them with venereal diseases.¹¹ The root of the divergence between immigrant literati and *dekasegi* laborers allegedly rested in their moral qualities, intellectual capacities, and behavioral norms. Although the diplomatic agenda of the Japanese state frequently found itself on a collision course with the practical interests of the expatriate society in America, the Chinese question helped to compound grounds for an enduring partnership between officials and immigrant leaders for the transformation of ordinary Issei from the “Sinified” Japanese to the “truly” Japanese fit for modern life.

Just as the production of Sino-Japanese difference hinged on the transpacific exchange of ideas between the educated Japanese, the “Sinification” of *gumin* was part and parcel of a highly racialized notion of nationhood in prewar Japan. Intellectuals there generally separated the underclass from the rest of the nation, construing their material conditions as manifesting an “alien,” not pure Japanese, nature.¹² Likewise, the Sinification of *dekasegi* laborers and prostitutes on American soil derived from their presupposed dearth of bourgeois civilities and moralities that sustained the basic fabric of the modern Japanese (or American) nation-state.¹³ Frequently described in racial terms, such difference offered a standard against which to measure one’s worth as a member of the national community and of the modern world at large, creating a bifurcation of a people into the upper (civilized, Japanese/white) and the lower (uncivilized, *gumin*/Chinese). This entailed class-based racial formation processes, which fabricated

the dual cultural affinities between the elite Japanese and the white American middle-class, and between the lowly *gumin* and the excluded Chinese.¹⁴

Because Sinification took place in tandem with the rise of California racial politics that homogenized the two Asian groups, the Issei leaders were greatly affected by white Progressive thinking about racial uplift, which sought to tackle the “Oriental problem” indiscriminately. In lieu of immigrant exclusion, some Christian reformers and liberal Americanizers, like Sidney Gulick, considered that the Orientals in their midst could be transformed into being morally capable of governing their lives as citizen-subjects through a rigorous assimilation process.¹⁵ With the rhetoric of unassimilability, however, mainstream California Progressives, like Hiram Johnson, James D. Phelan, and Chester Rowell, led political assaults against the Japanese by drawing the color line between Asians and whites—the two races that “could not mix.”¹⁶ It was in this complication of Progressive politics over the question of race that Japanese immigrant leaders confronted the problem of Sinification within their community. As historian George Sánchez contends, the ideological tenets of the “progressive impulse,” which celebrated white middle-class cultural norms as the model, often found eager recipients in the upper echelons of many immigrant groups.¹⁷ Issei elite, too, shared the same impulse, and their appropriation of Progressive thinking valorized the meaning of cultural assimilation over that of racial (biological) differences, upon which California exclusionists insisted. The convergence of cultural assumptions between Issei leaders and moderate Progressives induced the former to adopt the project of the latter—moral reform and Americanization—in order to refute the misidentification of the Japanese with the Chinese in American public discourse and politics.

Due to rampant factionalism within the Japanese immigrant population, it took elite Issei nearly a full decade to unite as a reform-oriented leadership. In the spring of 1900, the leading Issei of San Francisco formed the first enduring coalition against Sinification with the blessing of Japanese consular officials. The catalyst was an incident in which Japanese residents, along with their Chinese neighbors, were singled out for compulsory inoculation for bubonic plague by the San Francisco Board of Health.¹⁸ No longer was the problem restricted to the low-class *dekasegi* laborers, for Issei were summarily Sinified in this instance. For the immigrant elite, their worst fear had come true, and this bitter realization accompanied physical pain and humiliation: they “were forcibly detained, violently pushed around and held down tight like an animal to get a needle stuck in the groin.” Declaring that “[w]e are not the people of a fallen nation,” an angry Issei writer thus posed a rhetorical question in a local Japanese newspaper: “How come we the Japanese have to suffer this when the scourge claimed a few Chinese—the people we have no business with?” The Chinese should be held accountable for the epidemic, he argued, but “the

subjects of the Great Japanese Empire" should have been treated with dignity and respect.¹⁹

What came out of this collective elite rage against ethnic conflation was the Japanese Deliberative Council of America which had the dual goal of "expanding the rights of imperial subjects in America and preserving Japan's national prestige." Despite the involvement of 3,000 Japanese in its inception, the council admitted only the propertied class into its core leadership structure. When it quickly achieved its immediate goal of obtaining a court injunction staying the inoculation order, its leaders shifted their focus to a more fundamental problem: the ever-growing presence and geographic spread of Sinified Issei in the American West.²⁰

Whereas sporadic past efforts to "improve social conditions" of Japanese residents concentrated on the urban centers where most undesirables congregated, the council found it necessary to extend its reaches to outlying areas after the turn of the twentieth century. Since the previous decade, Japanese laborers had moved away from the coast for seasonal farm work, railroad maintenance, and mining and lumber work. As early as 1895, the agricultural regions of Vacaville and Fresno already had relatively stable populations of 450 and 220 Japanese field hands, respectively; at the peak of summer harvest, their numbers reportedly approximated 1,000.²¹ This transient life and a gender imbalance among the manual laborers were fertile ground for "immoral" activities to prosper in rural districts. The San Francisco consul, for example, observed a 50 percent reduction in Japanese prostitutes in the city between October 1897 and August 1898, which was offset by the comparable increase of such women outside the Bay Area.²² The vernacular press also frequently reported the eloping of farmers' wives with laborers, as well as cases of "wife stealing" in rural settlements.

Issei leaders believed that the transgression of marital order and patriarchal authority by lawless men was not unrelated to the increase of unchaste women. A story of a prostitute named Tama is a case in point. Though already married to another man, she absconded with a shiftless Japanese gambler whom she had met in Stockton. After finding a hideout in a farm town, Tama plied her trade in a Chinese-owned building, while her companion operated a small pool hall nearby. A few months later, after unsuccessfully trying to make off with her, another vagrant shot Tama's panderer to death in revenge.²³ Typified in this episode, the proliferation of Sinified individuals agonized the elite Issei.

In order to help organize regional chapters for social control at the grassroots level, the founders of the Japanese Deliberative Council dispatched representatives to rural settlements. The first group visited Sacramento, Vacaville, and Winters, where they conferred with the "like-minded" local leaders. The

second and third contingents went to San Jose, Fresno, and Stockton. They appealed to the concerns that small numbers of educated rural immigrants shared with respect to the deplorable state of itinerant laborers and immoral women. The ensuing years saw the formation of a regional council of affiliates, marking the first instance in which some of the rural Issei residents came under the direct influence of a unified urban leadership.²⁴

The intensified American demand for Japanese exclusion induced the new network of immigrant control to funnel its moral reform directives effectively into rural settlements after initial complications. In 1905, a renewed attempt to Sinify the Japanese occurred in California politics as, buoyed by the Hearst press, labor unions and other agitators called for the termination of immigration from Japan. Comparing the prior Chinese "menace" to the present Japanese "invasion," the rationale for racial exclusion included unfair economic competition, cultural deficiency, and racial incompatibility. This organized political movement culminated in the segregation of Japanese students in San Francisco public schools.²⁵ At first, except for a few Issei who filed a lawsuit at a federal court on their own volition, immigrant leaders chose to stand aside, because Tokyo insisted that it would settle the matter in direct negotiation with Washington on grounds of treaty violations.²⁶ Having observed the military victory of Japan over Russia, the Roosevelt administration turned out to be unwilling to offend its new contender in the Pacific. Thus, between 1907 and 1908, the United States and Japan reached a diplomatic compromise known as the Gentlemen's Agreement, whereby the two governments concertedly put a halt to the further influx of *dekasegi* migrants into the continental United States.

This bilateral agreement resulted in discord between many Issei leaders and Japanese officials, setting a stage for the heavy-handed intervention of Japanese diplomats in the construction of a more rationalized immigrant leadership structure. The Issei elite, especially expansionist labor contractors, interpreted the diplomatic solution as a "face-saving" act at the expense of their vested interest in labor migration.²⁷ As much as educated Issei despised *dekasegi* laborers, their livelihood depended on the steady influx of new immigrants into the American West as workers and clients, and thus they feared the impact of Tokyo's compromise on their economic welfare. In February 1907, when President Roosevelt issued an executive order to prohibit the remigration of Japanese laborers from Hawaii to the mainland, a storm of protest broke out from within Issei society, demanding that the Japanese government fight the American ban and push for more direct migration to the United States. From Seattle and Portland to San Francisco and Sacramento, Issei residents expressed their frustrations and anger at mass meetings.²⁸ Not only did the question of how to have their voices heard by the government and public at home strain the relations between the im-

migrant society and the Japanese diplomatic corps, but it also fragmented the nascent Issei leadership built on the loose network of the Japanese Deliberative Council of America.

Some leaders of Seattle and northern California Japanese communities decided to dispatch representatives to appeal to Japan's social and political figures in opposition, who were as eager to gain advantage from governmental "failure" as were the Issei to find support for their agenda at home. Three Issei from Seattle first visited Japan in the summer of 1907, but the Japanese government immediately placed the Issei delegation under close police surveillance as a threat to the volatile balance of power in Japan.²⁹ In California, the question of whether or not to directly appeal to the home public caused great commotion, which corroded the power of the Japanese Deliberative Council as the central governing body. Fearing the ramifications for United States-Japan relations, the San Francisco consul wasted no time in urging the leaders of the organization "not to take any extreme action."³⁰ Deliberative Council president Kyutaro Abiko accepted the consul's "advice" as a policy directive, although hot-headed residents in pursuit of direct action had already forced the council to commence a fundraising drive for an official California delegation. For Abiko and moderate leaders, the consul's plea was a welcome pretext to abandon such an extreme measure, but they still encountered intense resistance, particularly from the Sacramento affiliate and segments of the San Francisco community. In order to curb the opposition, Abiko tried to stall the process until cooler heads could prevail. In the spring of 1907, he announced that the delegation would not leave for Tokyo until October, while the *Nichibei Shimbun* newspaper, owned by Abiko, engaged in an extensive publicity campaign to portray the delegation plan as a bad idea.³¹

Sensing the San Francisco leaders' duplicity, many Issei residents continued to press for the delegation to leave in the fall. An association of Japanese laundry owners in the Bay Area—some of whom were council leaders—came forward to publicly castigate Abiko and his inner circle as "irresponsible." Meanwhile, between June and September, the Sacramento affiliate sent its leaders twice to San Francisco in order to obtain a written guarantee for the October dispatch. But as the deadline approached, the Japanese Deliberative Council formally announced the cancellation of the delegation plan—an action that immediately created a schism within the San Francisco leadership and between the council's central body and many of its local affiliates. In the Bay Area, more than fifty Japanese residents united to establish a breakaway organization, the Japanese Association of San Francisco. The Sacramento council branch severed its ties with San Francisco and carried out the delegation plan on its own, sending its president to beseech Tokyo to renegotiate immigration matters with Washing-

ton.³² The Japanese Deliberative Council of America quickly lost its grip on Issei society.

Japanese diplomats decided to restore command over the immigrants by working with a new group of Issei untainted by the recent scandal. Paradoxically, the Gentlemen's Agreement gave Tokyo's agents the upper hand over grassroots Issei leaders. From 1908, Japan's Foreign Ministry issued no passports to new *dekasegi* laborers, but the spouses and children of the immigrants who had hitherto resided in America were still able to travel across the Pacific Ocean. The officials were faced with the practical question of how to determine who was eligible for a passport and who was not. A new administrative mechanism was necessary to certify if an applicant were related to a bona fide resident of the United States. In addition, Japan's new conscription law required that every immigrant without military service records obtain a certificate of overseas residence for annual draft deferment. The handling of various certification applications became such an onerous task for the Japanese consulates that they opted to delegate certain bureaucratic functions to leading immigrant organizations. To set up this new scheme of governance, the Foreign Ministry elevated the San Francisco consulate to a consulate-general and put at the helm an experienced diplomat named Koike Chozo.³³

Given the disintegration of the Japanese Deliberative Council, Koike had to find an alternative way to meet his new administrative responsibilities while quelling immigrant dissension. Rather than reviving the existing central body, he chose to create a new one with more manageable leadership. To spearhead this endeavor, he named Kinji Ushijima and Taro Hozumi, neither of whom had been involved in the council. Known as "Potato King George Shima," Ushijima was arguably the wealthiest Japanese immigrant in the United States, and he had distanced himself from politics until this time. The San Francisco branch manager of Yokohama Specie Bank, Hozumi was more a temporary business expatriate on assignment than a typical immigrant/resident. While Ushijima could help heal the in-fighting and conflicts within the existing immigrant leadership, Hozumi would lead a new organization in accord with the dictates of Japan's national interests rather than with the "parochial," "selfish" ones of the immigrants. By the end of January 1908, these men successfully brought the fragmented leadership together, inducing both the Japanese Deliberative Council and the Japanese Association of San Francisco to disband voluntarily. Then on February 4, members of the immigrant elite and San Francisco representatives of major Japanese trading firms formed the Japanese Association of America, which served as a virtual arm of the Japanese government.³⁴

To establish social control over Japanese residents throughout California,

the new central organization administered what were called "endorsement rights," which consisted of verifying certificate applications, processing them, and issuing official certifications as the proxy of the Japanese consulate.³⁵ Under the umbrella of the Japanese Association of America, the endorsement rights were redistributed to its local affiliates, which played identical roles in their given locales. This scheme allowed Japanese diplomats to keep key immigrant leaders in both urban and rural areas under their command, because they could now arbitrarily decide which local organization would provide these vital services to Japanese residents. Association leaders were reluctant to contradict Tokyo's agents for fear of losing their delegated "rights"—a situation that made less likely the recurrence of open defiance. At the same time, the state-approved authority to issue certificates provided an incentive for rural Issei leaders to set aside internal strife and cooperate with one another in setting up their own associations, since they would otherwise be forced to travel outside their community to obtain this paperwork. The steady income from certificate fees for local leadership created organizational stability, too, which alleviated the financial shortages that plagued rural Japanese associations.

Koike's approach, embodied in the scheme of endorsement rights, was far more effective than sole reliance on a nationalist sense of mission in the mobilization of like-minded immigrant leaders. Indeed, the Japanese Association of America rapidly incorporated remote settlement communities into its institutional fold while grooming a circle of manageable rural elite. Within two years of its founding, the San Francisco headquarters increased local affiliates from twenty-two to thirty-two. In 1916, when the establishment of the Japanese consulate in Los Angeles resulted in the transfer of southern California and Arizona affiliates to the new Central Japanese Association of Southern California, the Japanese Association of America still had thirty-nine locals under its umbrella, which covered the rest of California, Colorado, Utah, and Nevada.³⁶ The Japanese Association of Oregon in Portland (1911) and the Northwest American Japanese Association in Seattle (1913), other regional headquarters, worked hand in hand with the local Japanese consulates in much the same way.

At the juncture, Koike and other diplomats sought the extragovernmental control mechanisms for another, more imminent political need in addition to the long-standing goal of immigrant reform. Within the power vacuum in Japanese immigrant society following the Gentlemen's Agreement emerged an especially dangerous type of Issei: leftists hostile to Japanese officials and their sympathizers. With the suppression of the nascent socialist movement in Japan, San Francisco had become a refuge for exiled socialists and anarchists, and Tokyo was determined to crack down on these political defiants who increasingly posed threats from overseas. In 1906, a group organized the Socialist

Revolutionary party (SRP) in the Bay Area, and on the imperial birthday the following year, it placed leaflets around the Japanese consulate that blasphemed Emperor Meiji and threatened to assassinate him. Diplomats first attempted to dispose of the culprits with the help of the American authorities, but to no avail. Unable to take legal action against these men outside its sovereign power, the Foreign and Home ministries of Japan agreed to prosecute immigrant socialists when they returned home, ordering the consuls to compile blacklists. Koike purposefully used the Japanese association network, recruiting some local leaders for clandestine information gathering. The president of the Fresno affiliate was specifically ordered to report on the activities of the Fresno Labor League, a leftist organization founded by SRP members.³⁷

Whereas the Fresno group quickly fell victim to community-wide disciplining, the remaining Issei radicals in northern California tested the ability of the Japanese associations to serve as unofficial policing agencies—the hurdle to overcome before taking on the project of reform-based community building. Effective in October 1909, Tokyo instituted a new policy of compulsory registration for overseas Japanese. In the United States, all Issei had to register at their nearest consular offices through the agency of the Japanese associations. To ensure their prompt registrations, the San Francisco consul ordered that no certificates be issued unless residents filed the paperwork at the local associations by September 1910. Because the new registration system was mandatory, the Japanese Association of America viewed this additional delegated authority as an opportunity to fatten its coffers. Although Tokyo stipulated no fee for the new bureaucratic function, Issei leaders announced that they would charge an annual fee of \$2 to every Japanese resident for the registration service and the maintenance of the registry. While notifying the local affiliates that they would receive a portion of the money, the Japanese Association of America requested that the consul make an exception for charging the registration fees despite the contrary government guideline.³⁸ No one voiced dissension until Issei socialists in Berkeley criticized this arbitrary bending of the rule.

Immigrant radicals mobilized against the registration plan, first within the Japanese Association of Berkeley. On February 9, 1910, they successfully organized a sizable opposition within its rank and file and managed to pass a formal dissenting resolution. Characterizing the proposed annual fee as a form of "poll tax," the Berkeley resolution maintained that the Japanese Association of America, which it called "a mere private organization," had no right to monopolize such an administrative role. Its attempt would constitute not only the "usurpation of the equal rights that every citizen should enjoy," but also a sinister act of "establishing a separate government within the territory of another sovereign state." Clearly, socialists linked the fee issue to the larger and fundamental question of the Japanese association as Tokyo's proxy. So objectionable was this

resolution to immigrant nationalists, however, that most old leaders in Berkeley, including the vice president, the secretary, and twelve board members, resigned their positions while thirty lay members also withdrew. Socialists dominated the vacated offices, and in order to extend the anti-Japanese association movement beyond Berkeley, they distributed copies of the resolution to other regional affiliates, immigrant newspapers, and organizations throughout California. In Los Angeles, their position found considerable support, not so much because Issei residents agreed with the political ideology of the radicals, but because many disliked the idea of giving up two dollars every year to an organization in which they had no part.³⁹

Encountering the first real challenge to its authority, the Japanese Association of America attempted to alienate the core group of dissidents from the rest of the Japanese community. On March 9, the San Francisco consul suggested the unacceptability of Berkeley's socialist leadership as the recipient of the endorsement rights. Immigrant elites promptly responded to this veiled directive by severing ties with Berkeley at once. The following day, the central body began to refuse certificate applications from Berkeley on the grounds that the local Japanese association could no longer process the documents. The Japanese of Berkeley had to go to the inconvenient Oakland affiliate to take care of their certificate needs, which quickly turned the area's residents against the radical leaders. Then, following the advice of the consul, San Francisco decided to appease the public by repealing the mandatory registration fee. Instead, residents were "encouraged" to donate fifty cents every time they used the services of the local Japanese association. Moreover, the rule was altered in such a way that registration was necessary only when relocating to the jurisdiction of another Japanese consulate.⁴⁰ While this nullified the financial advantage of the registration system, it robbed the Berkeley radicals of an issue around which to rally the public against the transnational elite partnership.

After these counterassaults, the decline of the anti-Japanese association movement was quick and thorough. By the end of March 1910, the socialists were almost completely purged from the Japanese Association of Berkeley. A new conservative leadership was swiftly formed in the organization, which restored formal affiliation with the Japanese Association of America. The dissidents could no longer effectively threaten either the central position of the Japanese associations in the immigrant society or the official-immigrant nexus that they embodied.⁴¹ Now, based on the rationalized network that could channel central directives and programs to the further reaches of Issei society, the Japanese associations were finally ready to undertake their twin goals of popular moral reform and fighting American racism in a concerted manner.

MORAL REFORM UNDER RACIAL EXCLUSION

Supported by Tokyo's policy of extraterritorial nation-building, the apparatuses of immigrant control allowed a relatively cohesive ethnic collectivity to emerge in the American West during the 1910s. To that end, the Japanese Association of America, as well as its counterparts in Los Angeles, Portland, and Seattle, defined basic objectives and goals and coordinated reformist programs, while the Japanese government and opinion leaders furnished funds, personnel, and general guidelines from across the Pacific. The actual work fell largely on the shoulders of each Japanese association affiliate, which adapted the central mandate to local conditions. The transnational collaboration between urban immigrant leaders and a circle of social and political figures in Japan set the basic parameters, focuses, and directions of the effort to re-form the Issei masses and construct a respectable community of Japanese citizen-subjects in the American West.

Moral reform was also a site where Japan's nationalizing impulse, appropriated by Issei literati, came into contact with the domestic project of Americanization. Unlike the white Progressive goal of severing the immigrant from Japanese culture, the Issei reformists aimed to turn ordinary residents into acceptable members of the two nation-states, not just to Americanize them. Having been implored to assimilate by both Japan and the United States, immigrant leaders inevitably understood their position and identity in dualistic, rather than binary, terms. Thus, in January 1911, when inaugurating the first statewide moral reform campaign, Kinji Ushijima, president of the Japanese Association of America, declared before assembled California Issei representatives:

Like a bridge between the two countries, we, the Japanese in America, occupy the most important place, representative of the Japanese national interests. Not only must we refrain from irresponsible and careless behavior, but we are also obliged to elevate our individual character and moralize our community. We must endeavor to get [whites] to recognize that the civilization of our nation is worthy of utmost respect. . . . Regrettably, in spite of recent improvements within our society, many of the backward customs still stay with us. The most serious ill is the epidemic of Chinese gambling that has poisoned our general populace in America. The solution rests with all of us here—our leadership is essential.⁴²

That "Chinese gambling" was singled out as a particular menace was not accidental. Throughout the 1910s, gambling was a chief object of Issei reformist politics, because it was seen as corrupting the basic moral fabric of Japanese immigrant society. Although gambling always held a special place in the male culture of Western frontier society, Issei leaders attributed Chineseness to it.⁴³

Most gambling establishments that Japanese frequented were Chinese-owned, and the Chinese lottery called *baahk gap piu* and *fantan* were particularly popular, because these games were simple and language differences were no obstacle to playing.⁴⁴ Yet, at the root of the gambling problem was its indiscriminate appeal to the immigrants who wished to achieve their American Dream quickly. Chinese gambling could lure into its trap of Sinification Japanese of any class, not just *dekasegi* laborers but also local residents and even "respectable" entrepreneurs. Its deleterious effects, as the Issei elite worried, ranged from bringing financial ruin to ordinary immigrants to producing new groups of degenerate Japanese. Chinese gambling was blamed especially for the increase of the so-called *shakkotai*, or shiftless vagrants, who habitually gambled and cadged money off law-abiding residents. Although there is no way to know the exact number of *shakkotai*, a Japanese diplomat estimated 8,000 to 15,000 in 1909, or 10 to 20 percent of the working-class Issei in the West, and their number was increasing each year.⁴⁵ Consequently, the Japanese associations devoted a large part of their moral reform effort to the gambling problem among rural residents and migratory laborers, who they felt were most helplessly addicted to it.

In 1912, the Japanese Association of America staged its first orchestrated campaign against Chinese gambling. In April, it invited representatives from local affiliates to form a special Committee for the Eradication of Gambling, which resorted to a combination of punishment and education. Each association would compile a blacklist of gamblers, publish in the vernacular press personal information on those who continued gambling despite warnings, notify their families in Japan of their antisocial behavior, and refuse to issue certificates and then inform the Japanese consulate of the fact. The associations also distributed handouts and leaflets and sponsored lectures on the harm of Chinese gambling and the need for a moral lifestyle. Upon request from local affiliates, the San Francisco central committee dispatched a special task force to rural communities for assistance in their popular "enlightenment" program.⁴⁶ These efforts were repeated annually throughout the 1910s.

One of the key community projects during that decade, the antigambling crusade provides a glimpse into how the Japanese association system in rural California facilitated leadership formation and community-building concurrently. What transpired in a farm settlement of Walnut Grove, California, exemplified such processes. Situated in the agricultural heartland of the Sacramento River delta, Walnut Grove was known for its slumlike conditions and the prevalence of Chinese gambling.⁴⁷ Both the Chinese and the Japanese lived in a crowded "Oriental district" completely separate from the white district across the Sacramento River. Japanese diplomats and urban Issei literati had constantly admonished Walnut Grove residents for their shamefully Sinified

state. In 1908, for example, one official depicted what he witnessed there in disgust: "[L]ewd women and lazy men loiter around day and night disgracing the reputation of the Japanese people and the nation." In his opinion, almost all Chinese establishments were gambling dens, where "the Chinese fattened themselves by squeezing dumb Japanese laborers."⁴⁸

Established in August 1910, the Japanese Association of Walnut Grove, which consisted of local merchants and leading farmers, had two specific reform goals: self-segregation from the Chinese community and a direct assault on Chinese gambling. In October 1915, the first goal was furthered by a devastating fire, which reduced much of the Oriental district to ashes. A need for a genuine Japanese town as a deterrent to the Issei's Sinified behavior had been on the community agenda, but financial and other practical hurdles had proved too difficult to overcome. Yet, at this tragedy-turned-opportunity, the fire victims unambiguously declared their intention for self-segregation at a mass rally shortly after the disaster. Characterizing the residents' resolve as a testament to their collective "atonement for their past disgraced life," the Japanese Association of Walnut Grove appealed for support for the reconstruction to the San Francisco headquarters, which subsequently dispatched delegations of legal specialists and financial advisers.⁴⁹

Within two months, a new Japanese residential/commercial district separate from Chinatown arose in Walnut Grove.⁵⁰ Residents continued their efforts to keep their town free from "corrupting" Chinese influence by passing resolutions to prohibit gamblers and other undesirables from entering the Japanese section. Whenever there was a renegade, they made an example of him. The first such case involved a Japanese barber, who opened a shop in nearby Locke Chinatown. The Japanese association dropped all relations with his family and resolved to inform his home village in Japan of the "traitorous" deed. Not until the barber made a public apology and suffered intense humiliation did the community lift these sanctions. This effectively inhibited other potential renegades, and in ensuing years, Japanese residents remained in their own quarter.⁵¹

During the last years of the 1910s, the crusade against Chinese gambling in Walnut Grove, as elsewhere in California, became especially zealous and effective. In the delta region, if self-segregation symbolized a unity of purpose among local settler-residents under the auspices of the Japanese association, the subsequent reformist endeavor was an attempt to stretch the boundaries of the new community by reaching out to laborers on the social margins. The option now was that either they would join the association or they would be outcasts with no place in the local collectivity. The 1918 antigambling campaign unfolded just that way. Meeting with Japanese association secretaries from Fresno, Stockton, and Sacramento, Walnut Grove residents discussed the state of gambling in each community and countermeasures. Resolving to resort to social ostracism

cism, the local leaders formed an antigambling committee, which adopted guidelines similar to the 1912 San Francisco model. Gamblers would be turned over to the local police, their deeds reported to other affiliates, and their names and photographs published in immigrant newspapers. Boardinghouses in the Japanese town were ordered not to accommodate gamblers, and all stores were to prohibit informal gambling on their premises.⁵² These strong-arm tactics achieved a considerable, albeit impermanent, success. Many habitual gamblers left Walnut Grove, while others were prevented from wasting their hard-earned wages on the empty dream of quick riches.⁵³ Until the mid-1920s, when the triumph of the white exclusionist movement made fighting Chinese gambling less important on the general Issei agenda, the Japanese associations exerted themselves to turn the working-class Issei into an integral part of their moral ethnic community.

Tangential to the popular habit of gambling, the Issei elite also felt that the problem of Sinification had to do with the general attitude of ordinary immigrants toward American society. This interpretation led them to look inward even more for a solution as if exclusion was of their own making. Rather than chalking the racist politics up to injustice, the ethnic leadership placed a major blame on the popular Issei disregard for American culture, social customs, and lifestyle.⁵⁴ In 1915, the Japanese Association of America officially adopted cultural assimilation as a priority on its general moral reform guidelines. But unlike the white formulation of the linear progression from "Japanese" to "American," Issei leaders embraced a heretical notion of acculturation, envisioning a dual process of nationalization relative to the two worlds to which Japanese immigrants stayed connected. This is because the ideal of East-West parallelism enabled the immigrant elite to imagine the retention of Japanese identity despite, or because of, assimilation.

By distinguishing the external and internal dimensions of assimilation, Japanese association leaders argued that all residents first needed to conform their persons and environment to American middle-class norms, but this external assimilation was not incongruous with the modern ways which Japan's state elite had imposed on the populace in their native land. The Japanese upper class had long favored and promoted the use of Western clothing as a symbol of modernization, for instance, and during the 1910s, the Japanese Association of America similarly encouraged immigrant women to switch from the Japanese *kimono* to Western dress as soon as they landed in San Francisco. Neither did the Issei's internal assimilation deviate from Tokyo's general endeavor to modernize the ordinary Japanese mind, insofar as it aimed to produce a civilized, self-governing individual agreeable to modern societies, including white America.⁵⁵ While it was a means of racial uplift in the American domestic context,

assimilation also offered Japanese immigrants the way to achieve national authenticity in the transnational context.

For this reason the Issei assimilation project featured intellectuals who could articulate the likenesses of the two cultures in lieu of simply slighting the old. To inaugurate its statewide "campaign of education," the Japanese Association of America invited Ebina Danjo, a well-known scholar and Christian leader who celebrated the ideal of immigrant assimilation as part of Japan's general aspiration for modernization. Touring California from August to September 1915, he gave fifty-five lectures to 7,525 audience members, while his wife spoke exclusively to Issei women on eighteen separate occasions.⁵⁶ Other public lecturers were recruited from within the educated circle of Issei, including Stanford University professor Yamato Ichihashi, whose speech at Walnut Grove stressed learning English and the customs of white America, acquiring good homemaking skills, and avoiding gambling.⁵⁷ In southern California, informal gatherings for the farming population were held "in every locality about twice a week" with regional leaders as instructors.⁵⁸

During the First World War, the mainstream reformist movement engulfed minority communities, including Japanese, in the coercive "100 Per Cent American" campaign, which added momentum to the ongoing assimilation project within Issei society. This situation differed from the concurrent experience in California of Mexican immigrants, who were reportedly caught between the polarizing forces of Anglo conformity and the "Mexicanization" efforts by their home government.⁵⁹ In contrast, Japanese immigrant moral reform was piggy-backed on the white Progressive platform, appropriating its Americanizing thrust as its own. In the eyes of Issei leaders, playing along with the white nationalist cause could serve the interests of both Japanese immigrant society and the Japanese state—an idea that Japan's officials and social leaders enthusiastically supported. Americanizing the laboring Issei masses continued to parallel the making of imperial subjects in the United States.

An example in the Pacific Northwest throws light on the harmony between Issei nationalistic reform and the goal of becoming "100 Per Cent American." Joining forces with state and municipal social agencies, local Issei incorporated government-backed educational films into their program. Not only did such films as *Home Improvement* and *Childhood of Abraham Lincoln* "stir the American spirit in children and women," they made perfect companions for didactic lectures foisted upon Japanese residents. The inclusion of white reformists into the ethnic community programs also helped to foster the Issei's sense of connection and agreement with a larger "American" agenda. In addition to lecture meetings held at Japanese halls, churches, and schools, the educational campaign sponsored "community services" at private households, both white and

Japanese, which offered a relaxed atmosphere of interracial friendship and mutual learning. In May 1921, a total of thirteen such meetings were held in Seattle and its vicinity, attended by more than 400 Japanese and white residents, who together sang "The Star-Spangled Banner," watched Americanization films, and listened to reformist preachers while enjoying tea and snacks. White reformists and Issei lecturers also traveled to sawmills and railroad labor camps in remote areas.⁶⁰

A product of transnational collaboration among educated Japanese, moral reform was also deeply integrated into the diplomacy of the Japanese state. With a shared faith in Japanese assimilability, both diplomats and immigrant elites believed that racial oppression would disappear as soon as Americans at large became cognizant of who "real" Japanese were.⁶¹ Hence, moral reform would not suffice without public relations activity. In order to shift the white gaze from the morally deprived working class to the culturally refined bourgeoisie, Tokyo instituted a division of labor, assigning the project of immigrant assimilation to the Issei leadership and a propaganda mission to the consular agents and selected English-speaking immigrant literati. In 1914, Numano Yasutaro, San Francisco consul, devised the plan and recruited as chief publicist Kiyoshi Kawakami, also known as K. K. Kawakami, who held a master's degree from the University of Iowa and had previously served as the general secretary of the Japanese Association of America. With funds from Tokyo, Kawakami established the Pacific Press Bureau, which supplied pro-Japanese English-language materials to the American print media under the guise of an independent news agency.⁶² Additional propagandists were recruited subsequently, including Harvey H. Guy, a professor at the Pacific School of Religion and president of the Japan Society; Kiyosue Inui, one-time secretary of the Japanese Association of America; and, occasionally, Yamato Ichihashi. While arguing that this "publicity" program and the existing Issei reform campaigns "would constitute indispensable halves for each other," Numano defined the former as belonging to the domain of governmental affairs and the latter as noblesse oblige for the immigrant elite.⁶³

Between 1914 and 1920, Issei leaders accepted this scheme of divided roles, and it afforded the Japanese Association of America a lucrative partnership with Japan's leading entrepreneur, Shibusawa Eiichi. Founder of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and head of his own financial-industrial conglomerate, Shibusawa knew that Japan's economy was dependent on exports to the United States, and he feared that California's exclusionist movement would affect bilateral trade relations badly. Allowing San Francisco Issei leaders to use his personal office as their Japan headquarters, Shibusawa lent his full support to the Japanese Association of America.⁶⁴ While serving as a powerful advocate for Japanese residents in America and a reliable go-between for Tokyo bureaucrats and

corporate heads, the business tycoon held all Issei accountable for their self-improvement and assimilation.

In reaction to the 1913 Alien Land Law of California, which deprived Japanese immigrants of land ownership and restricted their tenancy to three years, Shibusawa sent two of his protégés to the United States with messages of reconciliation to white exclusionists and of self-reflection to Issei residents.⁶⁵ While in California, these men admonished the immigrants to "maintain the attitude of a civilized nation and avoid [further] provoking Americans to criticize the Japanese as an inferior race." Yet, what Shibusawa's messengers saw in California did not make them optimistic. They found that "the old undesirable customs of the Japanese peasantry" still prevailed in the Japanese immigrant community. Their dwellings generally fell far short of their white American counterparts and needed better sanitation. The men also emphasized, "The Japanese pattern of living in segregation [from whites] or near the Chinese and frequenting Chinese gambling houses must be stopped."⁶⁶ Such a critical observation of Japanese lives in America pushed Shibusawa to get even more involved in the Issei reform program from across the Pacific.

Shibusawa contrived to launch his own campaign for moral education through a brand-new organization in Tokyo, which he envisioned as spearheading the cause of "civilizing imperial subjects abroad" in collaboration with his immigrant allies in San Francisco.⁶⁷ With an eye to better preparing new rural emigrants for an "orderly" and "civilized" life in the United States, Shibusawa's Japan Emigration Society set up a center for emigrant training in the port city of Yokohama in February 1914. With an annual subsidy from the Foreign Ministry and an endowment from wealthy businesspeople, the center offered an intensive educational program that supplemented the efforts of the Japanese Association of America. At no cost, individuals bound for the United States and other countries could learn basic Western etiquette and values (six hours); practical English (six hours); living conditions in a foreign land (six hours); vital domestic skills (six hours); household management (six hours); public sanitation and feminine hygiene (three hours); and child rearing (two hours). This thirty-five-hour program was repeated every week.⁶⁸

Many subjects specifically addressed women's needs, since a large number of attendees were "picture brides" summoned by Issei men. Mindful of the critical role that immigrant wives (and mothers) would play in household matters and child care, the Japanese Association of America worked closely with the Japan Emigration Society. Indeed, Yokohama's curriculum mirrored the specific concerns raised by San Francisco Issei leaders. In 1916, they compiled a woman's guide to the United States for use as a textbook at the Yokohama institute and for wider distribution, which laid out gendered expectations along with the familiar nationalistic admonition that they were "obliged to demon-



FIGURE 2.1. A Taste of American Life for "Picture Brides" at the Yokohama Emigrant Training Center, ca. 1916

These women of rural origin received lectures on American life before their disembarkation for America. Notice a contrast between the two male instructors in western attire and the women in traditional Japanese *kimono*. The women were expected to adapt to American material life quickly so that they could properly represent Japanese modernity in the United States. But for most emigrant women, it was the first time to see and touch western utensils, kitchenware, and home furniture. Courtesy of Nihon Rikkōkai.

strate the true virtue of Japanese women and compel [white] Americans to admit them as first-rate women in the world." Their primary goal, the guide stressed, was to "create an ideal household in America" to offer their husbands "comfort" and "a place of relaxation." As mothers, immigrant women were expected to discourage "unsavory conduct and foul speech" and purge "gambling, drinking, and smoking," which second-generation children might mimic. To keep her husband and children from harmful activities, each Issei wife was expected to turn her household into a bastion of moral living.⁶⁹

Other topics of the guide specifically aimed to develop an Issei womanhood suitable for American life. As a majority of female migrants originated from rural Japan and had mostly lived in a traditional way, they were taught the basics of being a modern woman, such as how to wear Western dresses, how to use Western-style toilets and bathtubs, how to walk like a "lady" without



(氏子ぎす生實しりた事幹時當は生先) スラク語英の頃其
FIGURE 2.2. English Class for Issei Women at the Japanese YWCA in San Francisco, ca. 1916

As a part of the general reform campaign, educated urban Issei women played a central role in instilling middleclass values, teaching white American culture, and promoting modern Japanese womanhood among "picture brides." Unlike emigrant women in Yokohama, the women in this classroom were dressed "appropriately," having traded their Japanese *kimono* for western clothes. Other aspects of "Americanization" than such a superficial change nonetheless proved to be much more daunting for them. Reprinted from the SF Japanese YWCA, *Kaiko nijūnen*.

tottering on Western shoes, and how to prepare meals with Western kitchen utensils. Cooking "fetid" dishes would offend white neighbors, they were told, so it should be avoided. Breast feeding in public would transgress the American sense of decency and be seen as disgraceful. Indeed, "[white] Americans tend to find Japanese life style and customs strange, unpleasant, and even reprehensible," the women were cautioned, "which often leads to the unfortunate misconception that Japanese are unable to Americanize, undesirable, and such." Negative references to Chinese—the example *not* to follow—were always part of reformist pedagogy, thus: "[O]ne of the reasons why the Chinese have been discriminated against more than the Japanese is their stubborn adherence to Chinese life style and Chinese clothing despite their long-term residence in the United States."⁷⁰

The increasing need for the cultural development of immigrant wives during the 1910s prompted the formation of female-centered organizations in the ethnic community, to which Issei male leaders delegated much of the day-to-

day reform operations. One such organization was the Japanese Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in San Francisco, which played a significant role in the adjustment of picture brides to American life beginning in 1912. Like their husbands, the city's leading Issei women had long taken exception to being "grouped together with Japanese prostitutes" and unchaste, selfish elopers, protesting the perception that "among Japanese women living on the American West Coast there were none who were of good conduct or who were not shameful."⁷¹ Equating the cultivation of the newcomers' moral regimes for self-governance with the defense of stable marriages and family relations in immigrant society, the female elite felt it indispensable to normalize Issei womanhood to the standards of middle-class white America and modern Japan. Against this backdrop, the transnational venture of female reformers began in June 1915 by following the pattern of the partnership between Shibusawa and the male immigrant elite.

In collaboration with Issei YWCA leaders in San Francisco, Kawai Michi, a Bryn Mawr College graduate and head of Japan's YWCA, took the lead in developing a female-centered program. Though she was well informed of the denigration of picture brides by anti-Japanese advocates, Kawai wanted to see the living conditions of Japanese women in the United States for herself. In March 1915, she traveled to California, where she encountered mostly "uneducated" brides.⁷² The pathetic sight of her countrywomen detained for inspection on Angel Island upset this Westernized intellectual profoundly. "The brides were mostly from country communities and looked queer," wrote Kawai in English, "for no one had told them that . . . their efforts to beautify themselves with an excessive use of powder resulted only in giving an impression of uncleanness."⁷³ The problem ran much deeper than the appearance of these rural women, however. In her subsequent encounters with Issei wives and mothers in California farm communities, Kawai found that they were also utterly ignorant of the basic concepts of sanitation, neglectful of child rearing, and careless about public decency. In her opinion, most Japanese immigrant women "lagged in their intellect and morality" behind their rural Japanese sisters, much less their urban middle-class counterparts. What terrified her most was that they were inculcating these "inferior" behavioral norms in their American-born children.⁷⁴ This problem would eventually doom the Japanese community in America unless it were resolutely checked, she decried.

With institutional ties to her like-minded Issei sisters in California, Kawai felt it possible for the Yokohama YWCA to play a significant role in tackling issues facing Japanese emigrant women. Because more brides were leaving for the United States each day, providing them with the proper knowledge and skills prior to their departure would render the women better prepared for their new lives in America. While in San Francisco, Kawai discussed her idea with

local Issei YWCA leaders, who were delighted with the support and promised to work together. Soon, the Yokohama YWCA developed its program faithfully around the agendas and pedagogical principles of the Issei women reformers. On the two sides of the Pacific, the coalition of female Japanese literati furnished rural brides with predeparture education and postarrival reinforcement in an integrated manner.⁷⁵

Under the guidance of Kawai, who returned from California, reform workers in Yokohama compiled two instructional handbooks. In terms of its content, the first booklet resembled the guide published by the Japanese Association of America; the second gave immigrant brides information about the moral reform programs in California and where to get additional help within the ethnic community.⁷⁶ Armed with these documents, the Yokohama YWCA staff regularly visited the steamships in port, as well as the emigrant inns where picture brides stayed until they passed stringent medical examinations. While distributing handouts, the reform workers explained to each woman why she was supposed to keep her appearance neat and tidy without exposing bare legs, refrain from using a men's toilet on board, and "maintain such a chaste and noble demeanor that would invite no contempt from foreigners even when she has to travel in third-class steerage."⁷⁷ After 1917, Kawai successfully convinced steamship companies to place Japanese "matrons" to chaperon the picture brides on the voyage.⁷⁸

Once the newcomers arrived in the United States, the local Christian associations and other immigrant organizations met their needs, offering lessons in American housekeeping methods, child care, and English conversation. In this endeavor, based on the shared Progressive impulse, Issei woman leaders united forces with white churchwomen in San Francisco to organize the Society of American Friends of Japanese Women (Yu Ai Kai). Many of the key white reform workers were former and future missionaries to Asia, who saw their work not so much as the making of Japanese "Americans" in the domestic context of racial uplift, but as part of the larger international project to Christianize "heathen Orientals."⁷⁹ Despite the different goals, their Issei partners proved to be indispensable for their missionary work on this side of the Pacific. Sarah Ellis, a former colleague of Kawai and immigration secretary for Yu Ai Kai, was regularly stationed on Angel Island—which was off-limits to non-U.S. citizens—where she assisted incoming picture brides "with advice and introductions to Christian women, Japanese or American, in the places to which they [were] going." Helen Topping of the YWCA Field Committee did "the follow-up work of calling on the newly arrived Japanese brides" up and down California in cooperation with local Japanese pastors and female leaders. As translators and guides, her Issei assistants often accompanied Topping to rural districts for slide shows and lectures.⁸⁰

During the latter half of the 1910s, many local Issei women, especially educated Christians, aided the grassroots reformist crusade within their own communities.⁸¹ In a farming settlement of Hood River, Oregon, the wife of a leading entrepreneur compiled a list of "requests to Japanese ladies." She argued, "We, Japanese wives, are the 'diplomats' who represent all Japanese women, and you have greater influence [on the white perception of Japanese women] than [do] the Japanese government officials."⁸² Criticizing their sojourner mentality, this college-educated woman—perhaps the only such female in Hood River—urged the others to commit themselves to permanent settlement in America. She preached the centrality of homemaking in their lives, and warned Issei mothers not to leave their children unattended while working on the farm. This woman also took the initiative in putting together an "informal orientation center," which taught incoming brides "American table manners, how to entertain [white] guests, child care methods, and other American customs." In this way, during a decade of massive female immigration, a viable Issei female leadership was forged in various parts of the West—a leadership that sought to shape a womanhood and motherhood suitable for the emergent community of assimilable Japanese in America.⁸³

As the work of the Japan Emigration Society and the YWCAs exemplified, Issei leaders, Japanese officials, and the social elite fashioned out of their transnational partnerships the institutional mechanisms for immigrant moral reform, in the service both of Issei society and of Japan's diplomacy and nation-building. Their reformist endeavors also dovetailed with the white Progressive project of Americanization, creating a movement even larger than an intraethnic one. Despite the powerful system of elite collaboration, however, the divisions between the educated and the laboring masses among the Japanese in America remained significant enough to continue disappointing diplomats. By the late 1910s, many diplomats actually conceded that immigrant moral reform was "a disastrous failure." In 1917, the San Francisco consul criticized the policy of divided responsibilities, disparaging Issei leaders for their "inability" to influence a large portion of ordinary residents. He proposed that the diplomats take back the primary role of re-forming the immigrants in addition to the propaganda work.⁸⁴ Two years later, his successor repeated: "No [notable] outcomes have been generated thus far, and many residents remain the same as before in their behavior and character—a situation that feeds the exclusionist politics with tangible and incontestable evidence."⁸⁵

One of the major reasons for such an unimpressive result was that the Japanese association network, despite its ability to mobilize leading rural residents, fell short of infiltrating the furthest reaches of Japanese immigrant society. In May 1909, when the control mechanism was still in an early stage, a Japanese

consul calculated that approximately 2,000 Issei men in the Pacific Coast states formed the educated core leadership, encompassing professionals, literati, and other social leaders. An additional 8,000 belonged to the class of "small-scale settler-entrepreneurs and agriculturists," who purportedly had the potential to become the "pillars" of Japanese society in America—the kind of rural leaders that emerged during the 1910s. These 10,000 male residents were expected to participate in the operation of the Japanese associations, with the core elite responsible for the central bodies and the rest responsible for the rural affiliates. Most of the remaining 78,000 Japanese immigrants were laborers of one sort or another, who seldom heeded the Japanese associations, except when they needed specific services or certificates. By 1916, the situation had improved, as the official membership of the associations in central and northern California alone reached about half of the 23,442 adult Japanese males there.⁸⁶ Yet, thousands of ordinary Issei, especially single migratory laborers, still lived on the periphery of the ethnic community.

Class differences continued to pose a formidable barrier to the elite attempt to forge national consciousness based on the discourse of civilization. The material conditions of Japanese farm laborers made no significant progress, insofar as they functioned primarily as a source of cheap, expendable labor for the agricultural industry of the American West. In 1919, a vernacular newspaper criticized the unchanging, Sinified state of the working-class Issei in terms of their lack of concern for basic hygiene: "Japanese fieldhands in Walnut Grove nonchalantly stay in dirty labor camps where bedbugs have continuously swarmed since the Chinese lived there fifty years ago." In their 1920 report, California state inspectors concurred that the rural Japanese camps were poorly equipped with only "open toilets, open drains from the kitchen sink, unscreened dining and cooking quarters, and living quarters generally littered with boxes, bags, etc."⁸⁷

Another factor that mitigated the elite project was the increase of *shakkotai* at the grassroots level. Immigrant gangsters expanded their realm of influence during the latter half of the 1910s despite the reformist activities. In 1916, an organized Issei crime ring was born in Los Angeles, where hardcore gamblers in Little Tokyo merged into a Yamato Club. Renamed the Tokyo Club, it controlled numerous gambling dens in California until the late 1930s.⁸⁸ In Seattle, there was a similar crime ring known as the Toyo Club, which extended its own network of gambling halls throughout the Pacific Northwest. By depriving the Chinese of the monopoly in the ownership of the business, the Issei gangsters literally turned the racial connotation of gambling from Chinese to Japanese—a situation that ran counter to the elite goal. Furthermore, in the eyes of many residents, the outlaws effectively had established themselves as an alternative to the elitist Japanese associations, providing vital social services,

including generous donations and loans, free meals for the poor and elderly, and the enforcement of unwritten law and order within the immigrant society.⁸⁹ Often, the crime syndicates placed Japanese association affiliates under their thumb, as they habitually manipulated association leaders with money and the threat of violence.⁹⁰

However, moral reform was ultimately doomed for another reason: the subsiding of the organized anti-Japanese movement. During the early 1920s, the U.S. Supreme Court categorically ruled the Japanese to be an inadmissible race that deserved neither citizenship, land ownership, nor agricultural tenancy.⁹¹ By classifying the Japanese as racial pariahs along with the Chinese and other Asians in no uncertain terms, the court thus nullified the foundations of the Issei's reformist endeavors. So different were the Japanese from the white race that no moral uplift or cultural assimilation could overcome the chasm. Although elite Issei did not discard their sense of superiority to the Chinese and compatibility with the whites, the American judicial system declared the Sinified state of the Japanese to be simply a matter of their "Mongolian" origin—one that could neither be discarded nor covered by cultural changes or assimilation. Symbolizing the decisive triumph of racial exclusion, the National Origins Act of 1924 dealt the coup de grace to transnational collaboration in immigrant control, since its ban on immigration from Japan deprived the Japanese associations of their delegated administrative functions and state-authorized disciplining power. Then, in April 1926, with the formal severance of their relations with Japanese diplomats, the Japanese associations found their control network and their influence collapsing rapidly within the ethnic community.⁹²

Yet, convergences and divergences among Japanese in the United States, and between them and people of Japan, were more complicated than the relations revolving merely around the networks of the Japanese associations and the questions of immigrant moral reform and assimilation. Institutionalized racism provided another crucial context, in which a different kind of social formation transpired within the American West and between the two empires during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Unlike the re-form of the immigrant masses, which aimed to construct a community of civilized citizen-subjects according to a modernizationist hierarchy of class and culture, the simultaneous development represented the making of new relations of power in terms of the wholly different logic among three racial(ized) groups—America's Japanese minority, American whites, and imperial Japanese—in a transnational space.

3

Zaibei Doho

Racial Exclusion and the Making of an American Minority

One week before the National Origins Act of 1924 effected the complete ban on Japanese immigration, the *Nichibei Shimbun* of San Francisco elucidated how Japanese residents in the American West had come to form a group distinct from their compatriots in Japan. In response to a call for returning to the bosom of the caring homeland from the anti-Japanese attitude of the United States, an Issei writer hinted at a collective world view that was taking shape in Japanese America: "One sympathetic poet in the motherland . . . urges [us] to come back home quietly, as [the people of Japan] are ready to embrace us with open arms and provide for [us] by sharing and sharing alike." While stressing how grateful Issei were for their "sincere sympathy," the editorial added, "But you see, the Japanese in America have reasons not to leave this place, and that is what we want the people of Japan to understand."¹

As shown by such statements, the first two decades of the twentieth century ushered in the emergence of a community of "the Japanese in America" (*zaibei doho*). That diasporic community evolved around a unique identity, which not only transcended class and intellectual differences among the immigrants but also broke with the Japanese back home. Unlike the collaboration between state officials and Issei elites, this nascent identity did not hinge on the orthodox notion of Japaneseness that was meant to serve the project of modern nation-building on both sides of the Pacific. Instead, what bound diverse groups of Issei was their shared experience of being a racial Other in America, which