

travagance," they responded in their own unique ways to the world of plantation Hawaii.

Hana-hana: Working

*Hawaii, Hawaii
Like a dream
So I came
But my tears
Are flowing now
In the canefields.²*

4

Raising Cane

The World of Plantation Hawaii

Paralleling the migration of Chinese to California was the movement of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino laborers to Hawaii, an American economic colony that became a territory of the United States in 1900. Over 300,000 Asians entered the islands between 1850 and 1920. Brought here as "cheap labor," they filled the requisitions itemizing the needs of the plantations. Their labor enabled the planters to transform sugar production into Hawaii's leading industry. "It is apparent," declared the *Hawaiian Gazette* excitedly in 1877, "that Sugar is destined most emphatically to be 'King.'" But to be "King" the sugar industry required the constant importation of workers whose increasing numbers led to the ethnic diversification of society in the islands. For example, in 1853, Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians represented 97 percent of the population of 73,137 inhabitants, while Caucasians constituted only 2 percent and Chinese only half a percent. Seventy years later, Hawaiians and part-Hawaiians made up only 16.3 percent of the population, while Caucasians represented 7.7 percent, Chinese 9.2 percent, Japanese 42.7 percent, Portuguese 10.6 percent, Puerto Ricans 2.2 percent, Koreans 1.9 percent, and Filipinos 8.2 percent.¹

Hawaii was ethnically very different from the mainland. In 1920, Asians totaled 62 percent of the island population, compared to only 3.5 percent of the California population and only 0.17 percent of the continental population. Constituting a majority of the population in Hawaii, Asians were able to choose a different course than their mainland brethren. Powered by "necessity" yet buoyed by "ex-

Asian immigrants were not prepared for their experiences as plantation workers in Hawaii. They had come from societies where they labored to provide for their families within a context of traditions and established rules and obligations. They had greater control over their time and activities, working with family members and people they knew. "In Japan," a plantation laborer said, "we could say, 'It's okay to take the day off today,' since it was our own work. We were free to do what we wanted. We didn't have that freedom on the plantation. We had to work ten hours every day." The Filipino *tao*, or peasant farmer, followed the rhythm of the day, the weather, and the seasons in the Philippines. He worked in the fields with his wife and children, driving the carabao before him and urging his family workers to keep pace with him. *Hana-hana* — working on the plantation in Hawaii — was profoundly different.³

Though laborers still awoke early as they did in the old country, they were now aroused by the loud screams of a plantation siren at five in the morning. A plantation work song captured this moment:

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

Korean, Kanaka and Chinese;
 Everybody whoever you be
 On the whole plantation —
 Wake up! wake up! wake up! w-a-k-e-u-u-u-up!
 Br-r-r-o-w-a-u-i-e-u-r-r-r-up!¹⁴

After the 5:00 A.M. plantation whistle had blown, the *lunas* (foremen) and company policemen strode through the camps. "Get up, get up," they shouted as they knocked on the doors of the cottages and the barracks. "Hana-hana, hana-hana, work, work." A Korean remembered the morning her mother failed to hear the work whistle and overslept: "We were all asleep — my brother and his wife, my older sister, and myself. Suddenly the door swung open, and a big burly luna burst in, screaming and cursing, 'Get up, get to work.' The luna ran around the room, ripping off the covers, not caring whether my family was dressed or not." "You must wake up," a Filipino laborer said, or else a policeman would kick open the door of your room and chase you out of bed. "I got one companion, he like lay off one morning," he added smiling. "Oh, the policeman come, and my friend was so scared that he ran to work in his underpants."⁵

"All the workers on a plantation in all their tongues and kindreds, 'rolled out' sometime in the early morn, before the break of day," reported a visitor. One by one and two by two, laborers appeared from "the shadows, like a brigade of ghosts." From an outlying camp, they came on a train, "car after car of silent figures," their cigarettes glowing in the darkness. In front of the mill they lined up, shouldering their hoes. As the sun rose, its rays striking the tall mill stack, "quietly the word was passed from somewhere in the dimness. Suddenly and silently the gang started for its work, dividing themselves with one accord to the four quarters of the compass, each heading toward his daily task." The workers were grouped by the foremen into gangs of twenty to thirty workers and were marched or transported by wagons and trains to the fields. Each gang was watched by a luna, who was "almost always a white man." The ethnicity of the gangs varied. Some of them were composed of one nationality, while others were mixed. One luna said he had workers of all races in his gang, including Hawaiians, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, and Koreans.⁶

There were gangs of women workers, too, for women were part of the plantation work force — about 7 percent of all workers in

1894 and 14 percent in 1920. Most of the women workers — over 80 percent of them — were Japanese. Women were concentrated in field operations, such as hoeing, stripping leaves, and harvesting. My grandmother Katsu Okawa was a cane cutter on the Hana Plantation, and my aunt Yukino Takaki was an *hapaiko* worker, or cane loader, on the Puunene Plantation. Though women were given many of the same work assignments as men, they were paid less than their male counterparts. Japanese-female field hands, for example, received an average wage of only fifty-five cents per day in 1915, compared to the seventy-eight cents Japanese-male field hands received.⁷

Women also worked in the camps: they washed laundry, cooked, and sewed clothes. "I made custom shirts with hand-bound button holes for 25 cents," recalled a Korean woman. "My mother and sister-in-law took in laundry. They scrubbed, ironed and mended shirts for a nickel a piece. It was pitiful! Their knuckles became swollen and raw from using the harsh yellow soap." On the Hawaii Plantation, my grandmother Katsu Okawa operated a boarding house where she fed her husband and eight children as well as fifteen men every day. On the Honokaa Plantation, Mrs. Tai Yoo Kim prepared meals for her husband and twenty bachelors. Every morning at five o'clock, she fed them a breakfast of rice, broth, and kimchi. For six days a week, she packed twenty-one lunch tins with rice and dried salt fish. Then for dinner she prepared soup, rice, and a soy-seasoned dish of vegetables, meat, or fish, or a dish of corned beef and onions.⁸

The most regimented work was in the fields. "We worked like machines," a laborer complained. "For 200 of us workers, there were seven or eight lunas and above them was a field boss on a horse. We were watched constantly." A Japanese woman, interviewed years later at the age of ninety-one, said: "We had to work in the canefields, cutting cane, being afraid, not knowing the language. When any *haole* [white] or Portuguese luna came, we got frightened and thought we had to work harder or get fired." "The luna carried a whip and rode a horse," another Japanese laborer recalled. "If we talked too much the man swung the whip. He did not actually whip us but just swung his whip so that we would work harder." A Korean woman fumed: "I'll never forget the foreman. He said we worked like 'lazy.' He wanted us to work faster. He would gallop around on horseback and crack and snap his whip."⁹

One of the most tedious and backbreaking tasks was hoeing weeds. Laborers had to "hoe hoe hoe . . . for four hours in a straight

line and no talking," said a worker. "Hoe every weed along the way to your three rows. Hoe — chop chop chop, one chop for one small weed, two for all big ones." They had to keep their bodies bent over. They wanted to stand up and stretch, unknotting twisted bodies and feeling the freedom of arched backs. The laborers cursed the lunas, "talking stink" about the driving pace of the work: "It burns us up to have an ignorant *luna* stand around and holler and swear at us all the time for not working fast enough. Every so often, just to show how good he is, he'll come up and grab a hoe and work like hell for about two minutes and then say sarcastically, 'Why you no work like that?' He knows and we know he couldn't work for ten minutes at that pace." The lunas were just plain mean "buggas." Laborers also did "hole hole" work, the stripping of the dead leaves from the cane stalks. To protect themselves against the needles of the cane leaves, they wore heavy clothing. Still, as they left the fields each day, they found their hands badly cut by the cane leaves. In a plantation work song, Japanese laborers lamented:

*Hawaii, Hawaii
But when I came
What I saw
Was hell
The boss was Satan
The lunas
His helpers.*¹⁰

As they worked, laborers wore *bangos* hanging on chains around their necks — small brass disks with their identification numbers stamped on them. In the old country, they had names, and their names told them who they were, connecting them to family and community; in Hawaii, they were given numbers. The workers resented this new impersonal identity. Laborers were "treated no better than cows or horses," one of them recalled. "Every worker was called by number, never by name." The lunas "never called a man by his name," another worker grumbled. "Always by the bango, 7209 or 6508 in that manner. And that was the thing I objected to. I wanted my name, not the number."¹¹

When the cane was ripe, lunas on horseback led the workers out into the fields to harvest the crop. Describing the harvesting process, a visitor wrote: "Just beyond these Chinese huts were canefields, an intense yellow-green, the long, slender leaves tossing in the breeze like a maize-field before the harvest. There were great bands

of Japanese at work in the field." They worked with "incredible rapidity, the line of men crossing a field, levelling the cane."¹²

Cutting the ripe cane was dirty and exhausting work. As the workers mechanically swung their machetes, they felt the pain of the blisters on their hands and the scratches on their arms. "When you cutting the cane and you pulling the cane back," a worker said, "sometimes you get scratched with the leaves from the cane because they have a little edge just like a saw blade." Their heavy arms, their bent backs begged for a break, a moment of rest.

*Becoming weary
I sit for a while to rest
In the cane field,
And whistle
To call the breezes.*¹³

But the breezes did not always come. Twelve feet in height, the cane enclosed and dwarfed the Asian workers. As they cleared the cane "forests," cutting the stalks close to the ground, they felt the heat of the sun, the humidity of the air, and found themselves surrounded by iron red clouds of dust. They covered their faces with handkerchiefs; still they breathed the dust and the mucus they cleared from their noses appeared blood red. "The sugar cane fields were endless and the stalks were twice the height of myself," a Korean woman sighed. "Now that I look back, I thank goodness for the height, for if I had seen how far the fields stretched, I probably would have fainted from knowing how much work was ahead. My waistline got slimmer and my back ached from bending over all the time to cut the sugar cane."

*My husband cuts the cane stalks
And I trim their leaves
With sweat and tears we both work
For our means.*¹⁴

Collecting the cane stalks, the workers tied them into bundles and loaded them onto railway cars. A train then pulled the cane to the mill where engines, presses, furnaces, boilers, vacuum pans, centrifugal drums, and other machines crushed the cane and boiled its juices into molasses and sugar. Inside the mill, laborers like my uncle Nobuyoshi Takaki felt like they were in the "hold of a steamer." The constant loud clanking and whirring of the machinery were

deafening. "It was so hot with steam in the mill," Bashiro Tamashiro recalled, "that I became just like *pupule* [crazy]."¹⁵

At four-thirty in the afternoon, the workers again heard the blast of the plantation whistle, the signal to stop working. "Pau hana," they sighed, "finished working." Though they were exhausted and though they thought they were too tired to hoe another row of cane or carry another bundle of stalks, they suddenly felt a final burst of energy and eagerly scrambled to the camps.

*In the rush at pau hana
I get caught in cane leaves,
When I stumble and fall,
They prickle, they jab.*¹⁶

Planters claimed they treated their workers with "consideration and humanity," seeking "in every possible way to advance their comfort and make them contented and happy." But their purpose was not entirely humanitarian. Planters understood clearly that it was "good business" to have their laborers "properly fed"; it "paid" to have a "contented lot of laborers," for they would then be able to extract a "good day's work" from them.¹⁷

The paternalism of the planters was also intended to defuse the organizing efforts of the workers. A plantation manager explained how laborers were "capable of comprehending the difference between kind words, kind acts, kind wages generally and ruffian roughness and abuse." Paternalism was designed to pacify labor unrest. "We should avail to get our house in order before a storm breaks," planters told themselves. "Once the great majority of the laboring classes are busy under conditions which breed contentment . . . we can expect a gradual and effectual diminution of the power of the agitating [labor] element." Planters agreed that "humanity in industry pays."¹⁸

Plantation paternalism also served to maintain a racial and class hierarchy. White plantation managers and foremen supervised Asians, constituting 70 to 85 percent of the work force. They saw their role as "parental" and described Koreans as "childlike" and Filipinos as "more or less like children" "by nature." The vice president of H. Hackfeld and Company sent managers a circular informing them that the Filipino was "very incapable of caring for himself." Left entirely to his own resources, the Filipino was likely to spend his money on "fancy groceries" and consequently to be insufficiently nourished. Managers should "look after" Filipino la-

borers. Planters explained their paternalism in terms of white racial superiority. They had spread "Caucasian civilization" to Hawaii, where they as members of "a stronger race" had to supervise and care for Asian and Hawaiian laborers. "Where there is a drop of the Anglo-Saxon blood, it is sure to rule."¹⁹

Behind paternalism was the "necessity" of coercion. Planters believed that they should control their workers with "the strong hand." "There is one word which holds the lower classes . . . in check," they declared, "and that is Authority." The plantation organization resembled a system of military discipline. A plantation bulletin explicitly drew an analogy between the army and the plantation work force:

To gain a picture of the plantation organization, as it directly affects irrigation, one may compare it roughly to a military organization, as follows:

Plantation Manager The General
Department of Agriculture:
Control and Research The Staff
Plantation Head Overseer Lieutenant General Head
Irrigation Overseer Major Section
Overseers Captains
Reservoir Men Supply Sergeants
Ditchmen Corporals
Irrigation Men The Troops²⁰

As "generals," plantation managers devised an intricate system of rules and regulations for their "troops." They required their workers to be "industrious and docile and obedient," "regular and cleanly in their personal habits," punctual for work and rest, and present on the plantation at all times. To punish workers for violating the rules, planters developed an elaborate system of fines, which specified a charge for virtually every kind of misconduct. On one plantation, for example, workers were fined for

breaking wagon through negligence — \$5.00
refusal to do work as ordered — \$.25
trespass — \$.50
cutting harness — \$2.00
insubordination — \$1.00
neglect of duty — \$.50
drunkenness — \$.50
drunken brawling — \$5.00
gambling in Japanese or Chinese camps — \$5.00.²¹

Where fines did not work, harsher penalties were employed. Asked how he would punish a contract laborer for idleness, a planter replied: "We dock him; we give him one one-half or three quarters of a day of wages; and if he keeps it up we resort to the law and have him arrested for refusing to work." Sometimes planters used physical punishment to intimidate the workers. Chinese workers on the Olowalu Plantation were allowed five to fifteen minutes for lunch and were "kicked" if they did not return promptly to work. Lee Hong-ki complained about the strictness of a German luna: "If any one violated his orders, he was punished, usually with a slap on the face." The Hawaiian government had outlawed whipping, but the law did not always reflect reality. "It is well known that many are the stripes inflicted and borne because the sufferer is ignorant of the law," the editor of the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* noted in 1868, "or if he knows it, knows also that it is next to useless to seek redress." A plantation manager said disobedient "Japs" should be whipped, for "this class of people [has] no feelings except through the hide." In a letter to his agent, William G. Irwin, dated August 22, 1879, planter George Dole inquired about a "black snake whip" he had ordered for one of his overseers: "If you have received it, please forward it." Kim Hyung-soon bitterly recalled how he and his fellow Korean workers were not allowed to talk, smoke, or even stretch their backs as they labored in the fields: "A foreman kept his eyes on his workers at all times. When he found anyone violating working regulations, he whipped the violator without mercy." A worker graphically described the tiered structure of strict supervision: "Really, life on the plantation is one of restrictions, unwritten rules and regulations imposed upon the inhabitants by the manager who is assisted by his various ranks of overseers and lunas to see to it that the people obey these regulations and do the amount and nature of the work that is expected of them. . . . In conclusion I say that life on a plantation is much like life in a prison."²²

To strengthen their authority over their ethnically diverse work force, planters developed an occupational structure stratifying employment according to race. Skilled and supervisory positions were predominantly occupied by whites. In 1882, for example, 88 percent of all lunas and clerks were white, while 28.5 percent of the laborers were Hawaiian and 48.3 percent were Chinese. None of the lunas were Chinese. In 1904, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association passed a resolution that restricted skilled positions to "American

citizens, or those eligible for citizenship." This restriction had a racial function: it excluded Asians from skilled occupations. They were not "white" according to federal law and hence ineligible to become naturalized citizens. In 1915, Japanese laborers were mostly field hands and mill laborers. There were only one Japanese, one Hawaiian, and two part-Hawaiian mill engineers; the remaining forty-one mill engineers (89 percent) were of European ancestry. A racial division was particularly evident in supervisory positions: of the 377 overseers, only two were Chinese and seventeen Japanese; 313 of all overseers (83 percent) were white. A Japanese worker bluntly explained why he and other Japanese would never be able to get ahead on the plantation. Told by an interviewer that he would be promoted, become a "big shot" if he had "the stuff," the worker retorted: "Don't kid me. You know yourself I haven't got a chance. You can't go very high up and get big money unless your skin is white. You can work here all your life and yet a haole who doesn't know a thing about the work can be ahead of you in no time."²³

After federal law terminated the contract-labor system in 1900, planters used their centralized organization, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association, to institute mechanisms to keep wages low. In a "Confidential Letter" to plantation managers on July 24, 1901, the association called for island conventions of managers to form wage-fixing agreements: "The deliberations of Island conventions at which managers would meet should be behind closed doors as it would be embarrassing to have such proceedings published." To carry out this plan, the association established a central labor bureau to coordinate all employment of Asian laborers and to set wage rates. Laborers were warned they should not try to leave their assigned plantations to bargain for higher wages, for they would not be hired by another plantation unless they could show a certificate of discharge. To provide incentives for their workers to increase their productivity, the association introduced a "bonus system" in 1910. "The Hawaiian sugar plantations are actuated in granting a bonus by the principle of desiring to compensate their employees for loyal labor," the association explained. "It is a reward for faithful service and a spur to productivity. And the bonus payments actually amount to profit sharing with the laborers." But the bonus also kept the workers from leaving the plantation. The bonus was paid only once a year, and workers forfeited it if they left the plantation before bonus time. In a letter to C. Brewer and Company, the manager of the Hawaiian

Agricultural Company Plantation stated frankly: "I wanted to have a string on them by their being on the annual bonus list."²⁴

To control their workers, planters tied other "strings." They utilized a multitiered wage system, paying different wage rates to different nationalities for the same work. Japanese cane cutters, for example, were paid ninety-nine cents a day, while Filipino cane cutters received only sixty-nine cents. Planters also cultivated nationalistic consciousness among the laborers in order to divide them. They appealed to the "race pride" of the Filipino laborers to urge them to work as hard as the Japanese laborers. One Filipino work-gang leader, giving instructions in Ilocano, declared to his men: "We are all Filipinos, brothers. We all know how to hoe. So, let's do a good job and show the people of other nations what we can do. Let us not shame our skin!" The planters' divide-and-control strategy promoted interethnic tensions that sometimes erupted into fistfights in the fields and riots in the camps. On the Spreckelsville Plantation on Maui in 1898, for example, three hundred Japanese, wielding sticks and clubs, drove a hundred Chinese laborers from the camps. A year later, during a riot involving Chinese and Japanese workers on the Kahuku Plantation on Oahu, sixty Chinese were wounded and four killed.²⁵

Politics: Seasons of Rebellion

But plantation workers did not concentrate their discontent against each other; rather, they usually directed their rage outward against their bosses and the system, seeking to gain greater control over the conditions of their labor and a greater share of the profits they had produced. Not passive and docile as the managers wanted them to be, they actively struggled to improve the quality of their lives on the plantation in many different ways.

Occasionally workers fought back violently. They retaliated against mean overseers for physical abuse and mistreatment. Numerous instances of workers assaulting and beating up cruel and unfair lunas can be found in the records. On a Maui plantation in 1903, for example, after an Irish luna had hit a laborer, he was attacked by a gang of Chinese workers and buried under a ten-foot pile of cane stalks. In 1904, on the Waipahu Plantation, two hundred Korean laborers mobbed the plantation physician, claiming he had killed a Korean patient with a kick to the abdomen. Sometimes workers aimed their anger at property, especially the dry cane fields that were easy targets for arson. After the police had broken up a dem-

onstration of protesting Chinese laborers on the Waianae Plantation in 1899, a fire swept through its cane fields.

But while planters worried about direct labor resistance, they also had to watch for subtle and ingenious actions. On the Koloa Plantation in the 1830s, William Hooper used script, or coupons, to pay his Hawaiian and Chinese workers: he wrote amounts for twelve and a half, twenty-five, and fifty cents on pieces of cardboard and told his workers they could exchange the coupons for goods at his plantation store. In 1836, Hooper was dismayed to discover that his workers had learned how to read and write from a young schoolmaster in the village, and some of them had utilized their newly acquired knowledge and skills to make artful reproductions of his coupons. The counterfeit coupons, according to a white neighbor, were "so strikingly like the original, imitating the signatures with scrupulous exactness, that it was some time before the fraud was detected." When he uncovered the deception, Hooper nervously scribbled into his diary: "Some native has attempted to counterfeit the papers which I issued for dollars." He then found that even the Chinese workers were forging his signature. In 1839, Hooper sent some of the counterfeit coupons to Ladd and Company in Honolulu: "I send you up a specimen of what I suppose to be *native* ingenuity in the shape of counterfeit money." Acknowledging its genuine appearance, Hooper admitted: "I would not swear it was not mine." By then, however, he had asked his company to have currency printed from a copper plate in order to be certain it could not be duplicated, and he had given specific instructions for its design: "If the ground work is fine waved lines, or a delicate net work, and the border highly wrought, we doubt if we shall be troubled with counterfeits from the Chinese or any other source."²⁶

But the counterfeit conspiracy was only one moment in a long history of plantation labor struggles. Everywhere workers engaged in day-to-day resistance, trying to minimize the amount of labor their bosses extracted from them. Many workers feigned illness in order to be released from work. A visitor to a plantation near Hilo noticed the prevalence of various ailments among the laborers and commented: "It reminds me very much of plantation life in Georgia in the old days of slavery. I never elsewhere heard of so many headaches, sore hands, and other trifling ailments. It is very amusing to see the attempts which the would-be-invalids make to lengthen their brief smiling faces into lugubriousness, and the sudden relaxation into

naturalness when they are allowed a holiday." Laborers had little incentive to work hard, and discipline was a constant problem for the planters. In one of their songs, field hands described their attitude toward work:

*When it rains I sleep;
When it's sunny I stay away from work;
And, when cloudy, I spend the day
In drinking wine.*

Laborers became skilled practitioners in the art of pretending to be working. On the Kohala Plantation on the island of Hawaii, a luna discovered that supervising Japanese women in the fields could be frustrating. In his diary, supervisor Jack Hall complained: "It always seemed impossible to keep them together, especially if the fields were not level. The consequence was that these damsels were usually scattered all over the place and as many as possible were out of sight in the gulches or dips in the field where they could not be seen, where they would calmly sit and smoke their little metal pipes until the luna appeared on the skyline, when they would be busy as bees."²⁷

To escape from work and daily drudgery, sliding numbly into recalcitrance, many plantation laborers resorted to drugs — opium and alcohol. Visiting a Hilo plantation in 1873, Isabella Bird noted that the Chinese laborers smoked opium. A Chinese plantation worker recalled how the cook for his gang would bring their hot lunches to the field: "In the top of the bucket [lunch pail] was a little paper or envelope with the dope in it. All the men took their dope that way with their dinner." Drinking was extensive on the plantation. In the Japanese camps on Saturdays, "drinking bouts began everywhere" and an "uproar was made with drinking and singing" until late at night. A Filipino worker remembered how "drinks were readily available because just about everyone knew how to make 'swipe wine.' You just ferment molasses with water and yeast and in a week it's ready. And if you distilled that, you got clear liquor ten times stronger than any gin you could buy from the store."²⁸ Planters complained that the use of drugs made it "impossible" to get from their laborers "anything like a fair day's work." "No employees can drink booze and do six honest days' work in a week," managers grumbled. "They are not 'up to scratch,' even if they can keep awake. . . . Their brains are muddled by booze." After saturating themselves with opium or alcohol on the weekends, laborers were

"unfit for work" on Monday. Inspecting the camps on Mondays, plantation managers sometimes found a third of their men "dead drunk."²⁹

Drugs eased, perhaps made more bearable, the emptiness plantation laborers felt on the weekends as well as the boredom of their meaningless and routine work during the week. "There was very little to do when work was over," recalled a Chinese laborer, "and the other fellows who were having a good time smoking asked me to join them, so then in order to be a good sport I took up opium smoking, not realizing that I would probably have to die with it." "If we don't smoke," another Chinese worker said, "we feel as if something were gnawing at our insides. The opium fumes will drive away that feeling and lift us out of our misery into a heaven of blissful rest and peace." Momentarily at least, drugs enabled workers to escape the reality of the plantation and to enter a dream world where they could hear again the voices of fathers, mothers, and other loved ones. They smoked opium and drank to "get their feelings up." "Drinking killed time and made the work day seem to go faster," a Filipino plantation hand explained. "At least, it helped feeling like everything was together. So swipe wine was our coffee in the mornings. And swipe was our milk for lunch. Swipe was our evening juice. And swipe was for sleeping. And the next morning again, swipe was for work. Woozy with swipe was the only way I could stay down with patience for work."³⁰

But drugs were self-destructive and offered only temporary euphoria, and plantation workers often sought a more permanent form of escape — *ha'alele hana*, desertion from service. Until Hawaii became a U.S. territory in 1900, the contract-labor system was legal in the islands and plantation laborers under contract were bound by law to serve three-to-five-year terms. In one of their work songs, Japanese laborers urged each other to desert:

*I hate 'hole hole' work
Let's finish cutting cane
And go to Honolulu.*

Thousands of contract laborers fled from their assigned plantations before the completion of their contracts. In 1892, Marshal Charles B. Wilson calculated that 5,706 arrests, or one third of the total arrests made between 1890 and 1892, were for desertion.³¹

Planters constantly worried about their contract laborers running away. "On the island of Maui," the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* observed in 1880, "scarcely a day passes which does not

bringing along some member of the police force in search of absconding Chinese plantation laborers, who are making quite a business of shipping [signing a labor contract], drawing large advances, and then 'clearing out' causing their employers much inconvenience and expense." References to runaway contract laborers filled many pages of the diaries of plantation managers. On page four of his diary, manager Anton Cropp of the Koloa Plantation wrote: "On Saturday and Monday [December 12 and 14, 1891] Mr. Kahl-Cannu went as far as Mana for Jap. Deserters, and found Yosida 17 and Yosima 22. Before the District Judge in Koloa, they were found guilty and sent to jail." On page twelve, manager Cropp listed the "Deserters Japanese":

- #5 Nakajin recaptured & redeserted
- #8 Kaneki
- #12 Murohisa recaptured & redeserted
- #16 Kako
- #17 Toshida recaptured
- #19 Iwamoto
- #21 Iamamoto Furokishi
- #24 Murakami
- #323 Asahare recaptured
- #326 Hayashi
- #400 Imatzu
- #418 Saito recaptured
- #409 Uyeda
- #416 Murakami recaptured
- #655 Nakane
- #685 Fukushima Kaisaku recaptured
- #619 Seto
- #621 Kuba recaptured Honolulu

On the next page of his diary, manager Cropp recorded the action of a Japanese woman who had abandoned both her boss and her husband: "Ura, wife of Fujinaka #700 deserted on January 1892. Ura was under contract with the K.S.C. [Koloa Sugar Company] to work for 3 years commencing in May 1891 and therefore was bound to work until May 1894. Having worked on 2/3 of a year the K.S.C. charges Fujinaka #700 for passage and expenses for balance of term of Ura:

passage	\$15
2 to plantation	
pro-rata exp	<u>2</u>
total	19

Interest percent of
same for 2 1/3 years 3
\$22

of this 2 1/3 part of 3 to be charged to F.
charged payday — March 7, 1892.

Thus Fujinaka not only lost his wife but was required to reimburse the Koloa Sugar Company for her desertion.³²

Most waited until their contracts expired and then left the plantations. In 1859 the editor of the *Polynesian* reported the massive movement of Chinese workers from the plantations: "In February next the last of the Coolie contracts expires, and we may then expect a still further increase of liberated laborers from the plantations on the other islands, to swell the crowd of Chinamen already prowling about Honolulu." On January 11, 1882, the manager of a plantation scribbled a worried note in his diary: "Most of our Chinamen gave notice today that they will leave after the end of this month." By 1882 only one third of the Chinese population of 15,000 were employed on the plantations. Generally staying on the plantations only as long as they were required by their contracts, Chinese workers moved in search of better employment opportunities. Many became rice farmers, making the swamplands yield rich harvests, and others settled in nearby villages and opened small stores. "My grandfather Len Wai worked on a plantation and operated a store during after-work hours," stated Raymond Len. "The store did well and he went full time into it after his contract was up." Most Chinese ex-plantation laborers went to Honolulu, where they lived in a bustling Chinatown.³³

Thousands of Japanese workers also left the plantations after their contracts had been fulfilled. In 1900 the editor of the *Mau News* observed that a "traveling mania" had seized these workers: "Very many of the Japanese are leaving the plantation by every steamer for Honolulu." After annexation and the prohibition of contract labor in the Territory of Hawaii, laborers were no longer bound to the plantations, and planters anxiously witnessed an exodus of Japanese laborers to the mainland. In their camps, Japanese workers read circulars and advertisements about higher wages in California. In 1906 the *Hawaiian Star* reported: "The 'American fever,' as it is called among the Japs, appears to be causing a lot of agitation among them. Local Japanese papers contain the advertisement of Hasagawa,

who recently got a license to solicit laborers, calling for 2,000 Japanese to go to the coast at once. The advertisement offers wages of from \$1.35 per day up, stating that men who are good can make from \$2 to \$4 per day." In their efforts to stem the Japanese movement to the mainland, planters asked the Japanese Consul in Hawaii to issue circulars in Japanese instructing Japanese laborers to remain on the plantation. In 1903 the consul urged his countrymen to "stay at work steadily on the plantations and not go to an uncertainty on the mainland." Ignoring the consul's advice, Japanese laborers continued to migrate to the mainland in search of the highest bidder for their labor. By early 1907, 40,000 Japanese had left Hawaii for the West Coast.³⁴

But in March President Theodore Roosevelt suddenly issued an executive order prohibiting the passage of Japanese from Hawaii to the mainland. Baishiro Tamashiro had been planning to move to the West Coast, and years later he vividly remembered the disappointment he felt when he learned about the executive order: "On March 20th there was a change in the law, and I was prohibited to go to [mainland] America. It was written all over in the newspapers. We were planning to go on April 9; however, the rule came on the 20th of March. So all my planning was *pau* [finished]." At a mass meeting in Honolulu, Japanese laborers angrily denounced Roosevelt's restriction: "It enslaves us permanently to Hawaii's capitalists!" Trapped by law in Hawaii, Japanese workers saw they had no choice but to struggle for a better life in the islands.³⁵

Most of them saw that the struggle would have to be a collective one, and that their most powerful weapon was the strike. But they also realized the planters had the power to retaliate brutally. Past experiences had taught them some harsh lessons. In 1891, for example, two hundred striking Chinese laborers had protested unfair deductions from their wages and marched to the courthouse in Kapau on the island of Hawaii. The plantation managers ordered them to return to their camps, late in the afternoon, the strikers left the courthouse. But as they were walking back to the camps, they were confronted by policemen armed with bullock whips. In fear, one or two of the strikers stooped to pick up stones. Suddenly, according to a newspaper report, the Chinese strikers found themselves "in the midst of a general onslaught," and were "ruthlessly overriden and welked with the bullock whips." Pursuing the fleeing Chinese strikers, the policemen attacked the Chinese camp. They "demolished every window, strewn the premises inside and out with stones, seized every

Chinaman they came across, and yanked forty or more by their queues. . . . Chinamen were seen with their tails twisted about the pommel of a saddle, dragged at a gallop."³⁶

Planters believed their repression of strikes had been justifiable because contract laborers could not legally strike: they were bound by contract to work for a specified term of years and could be arrested and punished in the courts for violating the agreement. But the Organic Act of 1900, which established Hawaii as a territory of the United States on June 14, abolished the contract-labor system.

Months before the Organic Act took effect, plantation workers anticipated their freedom. On April 4, Japanese workers in Lahaina struck. Upset over the deaths of three mill hands who had been crushed under a collapsed sugar pan, the laborers blamed management carelessness for the accident and refused to work. The strikers seized the mill and the town. For ten days, they defiantly "continued to meet, to parade in the town under Japanese flags, to drill, and even, unhindered by anyone, demolished the house and property of a store clerk who would not give them credit." The Lahaina strikers successfully forced the manager to yield to most of their demands, including a five-hundred-dollar payment to the relatives of each accident victim and a nine-hour day for all workers. Meanwhile, Japanese workers elsewhere went out on strike. On the Spreckelsville Plantation, they demanded the termination of all labor contracts. Two hundred strikers, swinging clubs and throwing stones, fought a posse of sixty policemen and lunas armed with black snake whips. The strikers were "most thoroughly black snaked" and forced to retreat to their camps, but in the end they won the cancellation of their labor contracts.³⁷

In 1900, over twenty strikes swept through the plantations as 8,000 workers withheld their labor from the bosses. While the strikes were led and supported mainly by Japanese workers, two of them involved interethnic cooperation. On June 22, Chinese and Japanese laborers on the Puehuehu Plantation struck to protest the retention of part of their wages, a provision contained in their original labor contracts. Five months later, forty-three Japanese and Portuguese women field hands on the Kilauea Plantation demanded that wages be raised from eight dollars to ten dollars a month. Though the striking women were locked out by the management, they stood together and won their wage increases.

After 1900, management-labor conflict became even more intense. As they organized themselves and initiated strike actions, work-

ers found themselves facing the power of the state. This occurred during the 1906 Waipahu Plantation strike. Demanding higher wages, Japanese laborers struck, and plantation manager E. K. Bull immediately requested police assistance. Forty-seven policemen armed with rifles were assigned to the plantation. They functioned as Bull's private army. The policemen marched in review on the plantation grounds to intimidate the strikers with a show of force; patrolling the camps, they stopped and questioned all stragglers. During a tense moment of the negotiations, Bull threatened to use the police to evict the strikers from their homes in the camps. Unintimidated, the seventeen hundred Japanese strikers forced Bull to grant concessions in order to end the strike.

The Waipahu Plantation strike of 1906 underscored the importance of collective labor action. Labor violence and arson were individualistic as well as sporadic actions; they did not seriously undermine planter control. Recalcitrance and drunkenness represented resistance but did not change conditions in the workplace. Desertion enabled dissatisfied workers to escape, leaving intact the mechanisms of planter discipline and regimentation. But striking constituted a particularly effective expression of labor resistance, for it could lead to a positive transformation of the plantation structure. Moreover, striking could enable men and women of various nationalities to gain a deeper understanding of themselves as laborers, to develop a working-class identity and consciousness.

Divided by the political strategy of the planters and by their diverse national identities, workers initially tended to define their class interests in terms of their ethnicity. Thus, at first they organized themselves into "blood unions" — labor organizations based on ethnic membership: the Japanese belonged to the Japanese union and the Filipinos to the Filipino union.

The most important manifestation of "blood unionism" was the Japanese strike of 1909. Protesting against the differential-wage system based on ethnicity, the strikers demanded higher wages and equal pay for equal work. They noted angrily how Portuguese laborers were paid \$22.50 per month while Japanese laborers earned only eighteen dollars a month for the same kind of work. "The wage is a reward for services done," they argued, "and a just wage is that which compensates the laborer to the full value of the service rendered by him. . . . If a laborer comes from Japan and he performs the same quantity of work of the same quality within the same period of time as those who hail from the opposite side of the world, what good

reason is there to discriminate one as against the other? It is not the color of skin that grows cane in the field. It is labor that grows cane."³⁸

The Japanese strikers struggled for four long months. The strike involved 7,000 Japanese plantation laborers on Oahu, and thousands of Japanese workers on the other islands supported their striking compatriots, sending them money and food. Japanese business organizations such as the Honolulu Retail Merchants' Association contributed financially to the strike fund, and the Japanese Physicians' Association gave free medical service to the strikers and their families. A strong sense of Japanese ethnic solidarity inspired the strikers. Stridently shouting *banzai* at rallies, they affirmed their commitment to the spirit of Japan — *yamato damashii*. They told themselves they must "stick together" as Japanese to win the strike.³⁹

The strike reflected a new consciousness among Japanese workers, a transformation from sojourners to settlers, from Japanese to Japanese Americans. In their demand for a higher wage, the strikers explained: "We have decided to permanently settle here, to incorporate ourselves with the body politique [sic] of Hawaii — to unite our destiny with that of Hawaii, sharing the prosperity and adversity of Hawaii with other citizens of Hawaii." Gradually becoming settled laborers, they now had families to support, children to educate, and religious institutions to maintain. Hawaii was becoming home for the Japanese laborers, and they asked what kind of home Hawaii would be for them. The strikers argued that the unsatisfactory and deplorable conditions on the plantations perpetuated an "undemocratic and un-American," class-divided society of "plutocrats and coolies." Such a pattern of social inequality was injurious to Hawaii in general. Fair wages would encourage laborers to work more industriously and productively, and Hawaii would enjoy "perpetual peace and prosperity." The goal of the strike was to make possible the formation of "a thriving and contented middle class — the realization of the high ideal of Americanism."⁴⁰

But the planters pressured the government to arrest the Japanese strike leaders for "conspiracy." Then they broke the strike by hiring Koreans, Hawaiians, Chinese, and Portuguese as scabs and began importing massive numbers of Filipinos to counterbalance the Japanese laborers. Three months after the strike, however, the planters eliminated the differential-wage system and raised the wages of the Japanese workers.

An ethnically based strike seemed to make good political sense

to Japanese plantation laborers in 1909, for they constituted about 70 percent of the entire work force. Filipinos represented less than one percent. But the very ethnic solidarity of the Japanese made it possible for planters to use laborers of other nationalities to break the "Japanese" strike. Eleven years later, Japanese workers found that they had been reduced proportionately to only 44 percent of the labor force, while Filipino workers had been increased to 30 percent. Organized into separate unions, workers of both nationalities came to realize that the labor movement in Hawaii and their strike actions would have to be based on interethnic working-class unity.

In December of 1919, the Japanese Federation of Labor and the Filipino Federation of Labor submitted separate demands to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association. The workers wanted higher wages, an eight-hour day, an insurance fund for old retired employees, and paid maternity leaves. Their demands were promptly rejected by the planters. The Japanese Federation of Labor immediately asked the managers to reconsider their decision and agreed to declare a strike after all peaceful methods had been tried. The Japanese leaders knew there was "no other way but to strike." "Let's rise and open the eyes of the capitalists," they declared. "Let's cooperate with the Filipinos" — "back them up with our fund" and "our whole force." The Japanese leaders thought both labor federations should not act precipitously, however. Rather, both unions should prepare for a long strike and plan a successful strategy.⁴¹

But the Filipino Federation of Labor felt the time for action had arrived. Consequently, on January 19, 1920, Pablo Manlapit, head of the Filipino union, unilaterally issued an order for the Filipinos to strike and urged the Japanese to join them. In his appeal to the Japanese Federation of Labor, Manlapit eloquently called for interethnic working-class solidarity: "This is the opportunity that the Japanese should grasp, to show that they are in harmony with and willing to cooperate with other nationalities in this territory, concerning the principles of organized labor. . . . We should work on this strike shoulder to shoulder."⁴²

Meanwhile, 3,000 Filipino workers on the plantations of Oahu went out on strike. They set up picket lines and urged Japanese laborers to join them. "What's the matter? Why you hahahaha [work]?" the Filipino strikers asked their Japanese co-workers. Several Japanese newspapers issued clarion calls for Japanese cooperation with the striking Filipinos. The *Hawaii Shimpo* scolded Japanese workers for their hesitation: "Our sincere and desperate voices are

also their voices. Their righteous indignation is our righteous indignation. . . . Fellow Japanese laborers! Don't be a race of unreliable dishonest people! Their problem is your problem!" The *Hawaii Hochi* advised Japanese laborers to strike immediately: "Laborers from different countries" should take "action together." Between Filipinos and Japanese, the *Hawaii Choho* declared, there should be "no barriers of nationality, race, or color." On January 26, the Japanese Federation of Labor ordered the strike to begin on February 1. United in struggle, 8,300 Filipino and Japanese strikers — 77 percent of the entire plantation work force on Oahu — brought plantation operations to a sudden stop. "Pau hana," they told one another, "no go work." "Pau hana," they declared defiantly, "we on strike."⁴³

Aware of the seriousness of the challenge they faced and determined to break the strike, planters quickly turned to their time-tested strategy of divide and control. The president of C. Brewer and Company, one of the corporate owners of the sugar plantations, informed a plantation manager: "We are inclined to think that the best prospect, in connection with this strike, is the fact that two organizations, not entirely in harmony with each other, are connected with it, and if either of them falls out of line, the end will be in sight." The planters isolated the Filipino leadership from the Japanese Federation of Labor and created distrust between the two unions. They offered Manlapit a bribe, and suddenly, to the surprise of both the Filipino and Japanese strikers, Manlapit called off the strike, condemning it as a Japanese action to cripple the industries of Hawaii. But, on the rank-and-file level, many Filipinos continued to remain on strike with the Japanese. Escalating their attack on the Japanese, the planters slandered the Japanese strikers as puppets of Japan and claimed they were seeking to "Japanise" the islands. In a letter to a plantation manager, the Director of the Bureau of Labor of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association described the plan for the ideological war to be waged against the Japanese strike leaders: "In order to let the plantation laborers know they are being duped and to make them realize what they are losing by allowing themselves to be misled by the agitating newspapers and strike leaders, we have commenced a program of propaganda. . . . There is absolutely no race so susceptible to ridicule as the Japanese."⁴⁴

To break the strike directly, planters enlisted Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Koreans as strikebreakers. They knew that Koreans had a particular enmity for the Japanese, and the planters had consistently

used Koreans to help break Japanese strikes. During the 1920 strike, Korean laborers under the leadership of the Korean National Association announced: "We place ourselves irrevocably against the Japanese and the present strike. We don't wish to be looked upon as strikebreakers, but we shall continue to work . . . and we are opposed to the Japanese in everything." More than one hundred Korean men and women organized themselves into a Strikebreakers' Association and offered their services to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association.⁴⁵

Planters served forty-eight-hour eviction notices to the strikers, forcing them to leave their homes and find shelters in empty lots in Honolulu. Crowded into encampments during the height of the influenza epidemic, thousands of workers and their family members fell ill and 150 died. "My brother and mother had a high fever," Tadao Okada recalled, "but all of us were kicked out of our home." Under such punishing and chaotic conditions, the strikers could not hold out indefinitely and were compelled to call off the strike in July.⁴⁶

Though they had been soundly beaten, the workers had learned a valuable lesson from the 1920 strike. Filipinos and Japanese, joined by Spanish, Portuguese, and Chinese laborers, had participated in the first major interethnic working-class struggle in Hawaii. Men and women of different ethnicities, realizing how the 5:00 A.M. whistle had awakened all of them and how they had labored together in the fields and mills, had fought together for a common goal. And as they walked the picket lines and protested at mass rallies together, they understood more deeply the contribution they had made as workers to the transformation of Hawaii into a wealthy and profitable place. "When we first came to Hawaii," they proudly declared, "these islands were covered with ohia forests, guava fields and areas of wild grass. Day and night did we work, cutting trees and burning grass, clearing lands and cultivating fields until we made the plantations what they are today."⁴⁷

During the strike, as the workers reached for a new unity transcending ethnic boundaries, leaders of the Japanese Federation of Labor questioned the existence of two separate unions — one for the Japanese and one for the Filipinos — and suggested the consolidation of the two federations into one union. They insisted that Japanese workers must affiliate with Filipino, "American," and Hawaiian workers, for as long as all of them were laborers they should mutually cooperate in safeguarding their standard of living. On April 23, the

Japanese Federation of Labor decided to become an interracial union and to call the organization the Hawaii Laborers' Association — a new name trumpeting a feeling of multiethnic class camaraderie.

One of the leaders of the Hawaii Laborers' Association articulated this new and developing class perspective. The fact that the "capitalists" were "haoles" and the laborers Japanese and Filipinos was a "mere coincidence," explained Takashi Tsutsumi. Japanese and Filipinos had acted as "laborers" in "a solid body" during the 1920 strike. What the workers had learned from their struggle, Tsutsumi continued, was the need to build "a big, powerful and non-racial labor organization" that could "effectively cope with the capitalists." Such a union would bring together "laborers of all nationalities." The 1920 strike had provided the vision — the basis for a new union: in this struggle, Japanese and Filipino workers had cooperated against the planter class. "This is the feature that distinguishes the recent movement from all others," Tsutsumi observed. "There is no labor movement that surpasses the recent movement of Japanese and Filipinos." Tsutsumi predicted that a "big" interracial union would emerge within ten years, springing from a "Hawaiian-born" leadership. "When that day comes," he concluded, "the strike of 1920 would surely be looked upon as most significant."⁴⁸

This possibility of class unity in a multiethnic working class was explored by the son of a plantation laborer — Milton Murayama. In his novel *All I Asking for Is My Body*, Murayama describes an incident that occurs on a Maui plantation. During a strike of Filipino workers, the manager tries to recruit Japanese boys as scabs, and the youngsters view the situation as a chance to make extra money. But one day a discussion on the strike erupts in an eighth-grade class. "What's freedom?" asks Tubby Takeshita, and the teacher and students agree that freedom means being your "own boss," not "part of a pecking order." And they see that workers are at the bottom of the pecking order and getting a "raw deal." "You gotta stick together even more if you the underdog," Tubby says. And the teacher asks: "How much together? Filipino labor, period? Japanese labor, period? Or all labor?"⁴⁹

Plantation Camps: Culture and Community

The plantation pecking order, Murayama observes, was reinforced by a plantation housing pattern resembling a "pyramid." At the top of the hill was the big house, the luxurious home of the manager; below were the nice-looking homes of the Portuguese, Spanish, and

Japanese lunas; then the identical wooden-frame houses of Japanese Camp; and finally the more run-down Filipino Camp. Moreover, the organization of the housing hierarchy was planned and built around its sewage system. The concrete ditches that serviced the toilets and outhouses ran from the manager's house on the highest slope down to the Filipino Camp on the lowest perimeter of the plantation. The tiered housing pattern and sewage system seemed emblematic: "Shit too was organized according to the plantation pyramid."⁵⁰

Murayama's description is insightful. The physical organization of its housing reflected the social hierarchy of the plantation community. The manager lived in a mansion with spacious verandas and white columns overlooking the plantation; his foremen and the technical employees were housed in handsome bungalow cottages surrounded by well-kept lawns and flower gardens. "This section of houses on this tree-lined street was called 'lunas row,'" my cousin Minoru Takaki pointed out as he drove me around the Puunene Plantation on Maui in 1985. "Only the white lunas could live here, in the houses." As we then passed a recreational hall, he said: "That's 'haole club.' In the old days, only haoles were allowed to go there. It was segregated." He chuckled. "But you know what, my mother could go there. She was the maid." A Korean worker said that his three haole bosses lived in "big houses" far away from the laborers' camps. A government inspector found that the kind of housing varied with the class of labor: European laborers (either a family or two single men) were assigned two rooms in a four-room cottage, while Chinese workers were placed in barracks with from six to forty men in one room.⁵¹

Workers of different nationalities were usually housed in separate camps. "There were the Japanese camps," said my uncle Richard Okawa, describing to me the Hawi Plantation on the Big Island of Hawaii, "and the Chinese and Filipino camps, and one camp for the Puerto Ricans. Our family used to sell fish on the side, and your mother and I when we were young kids had to go from camp to camp on payday and collect the money the workers owed for the fish." The Puunene Plantation on Maui had sixteen camps, including many Japanese as well as Filipino camps and also "Young Hee Camp," "Ah Fong Camp," "Spanish A Camp," "Spanish B Camp," and "Alabama Camp." "Yeah," explained Minoru Takaki, formerly of "McGerrrow Camp" (named after one of the lunas), "we used to have Negroes on the plantation."⁵²

The organization of camps into different nationalities supported

the planters' strategy of dividing and controlling their work force. But it may not have sprung from a consciously designed planter policy of residential ethnic segregation. Rather, the formation of segregated camps reflected the wave pattern of labor recruitment and immigration. As planters recruited groups of workers from different countries, they constructed new camps for them. Living together in ethnically separated camps, laborers found they could practice the customs and traditions of their homelands and speak their native languages. A Filipino worker, describing the development of separate camps for different nationalities on the Ewa Plantation, said: "At that time nearly everyone who worked at all in this plantation lived in one camp. There were Puerto Ricans, Spanish, a handful of Portuguese, Chinese, a few Japanese and a few Koreans. Each nationality group more or less constituted an exclusive group of its own; no group seemed to mingle with any other. . . . Every year there were many Filipino immigrants who joined our camp. There were so many Filipinos that a separate camp was given to them. The other nationalities soon had a camp of their own too, a thing which pleased everyone, as not only work was thought of but also parties among the laborers could be held."⁵³

But not all plantations had separate ethnic camps, and a few planters even deliberately assigned their workers to integrated camps. The manager of the Waialua Plantation, for example, placed Korean workers in a "detached camp" after they arrived in 1903 in order to avoid the "danger of race troubles of any kind with Japanese, Chinese or Portuguese." This arrangement, however, was intended to be only temporary. His plan was to locate Koreans eventually in the "regular plantation camps where they will be subject to the same rules . . . and thereby lose their identity as Koreans and be merged into the plantation community as a whole." Describing one of the camps on the Waipahu Plantation, a Japanese laborer said: "In those days, we were living in a part of Waipahu called Pake [Chinese] Camp. In that camp, Pake and Japanese were all mixed up. We didn't have any trouble with the Pake." In his *Plantation Sketches*, Jared C. Smith praised the integrated camps of the Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Company on Maui: "None of the camps are given over to one race exclusively, and equal treatment is given to all. The result of this mixing of all races in one village has been the disappearance of racial antagonisms and jealousies and the development of mutual respect."⁵⁴

Housing conditions for workers varied from plantation to plan-

tation. In 1899 Dr. Charles A. Peterson of the Bureau of Immigration found model camps where every house was weatherproof and where the surrounding space was clean and well drained. But he also visited camps that were "decrepit and dilapidated rookeries with roofs leaking and danger and disease threatening the occupants, with masses of filth blocking the drains and decaying refuse all about and beneath the houses." Seventeen years later, another investigator also reported a wide range of housing conditions. Some plantations had "splendid camps," "very clean" and "well-planted" with flowers. But other plantations had very dirty camps with houses in "a rotten condition."⁵⁵

Generally, plantation laborers lived in crowded and unsanitary camps. Yasutaro Soga reported that workers were housed in dwellings resembling pig sties, and that several hundred laborers "swarmed together" in one-story "tenements." A Japanese laborer recalled: "Fifty of us, both bachelors and married couples, lived together in a humble shed — a long ten-foot-wide hallway made of wattle and lined along the sides with a slightly raised floor covered with a grass rug, and two *tatami* mats to be shared among us." Another worker described the "large partitioned house" she inhabited: "The type of room for married people was small, no bed or anything. . . . It was just a space to lay the futon down and sleep. We didn't have any household things, only our one wicker trunk, not even a closet. We just pounded a nail by the place we slept, a hook where I hung my muumuu, the old kanaka [Hawaiian] style." Chinese laborers on the Paia Plantation were crowded into "big warehouses filled with bunks stacked four or five high, steamer style. Two or three hundred lived in a building." Visiting the camps of Korean laborers, Hyon Sun found his compatriots living in tenements: "The married men each occupy one room, but single ones are put in compartments in groups of five or six people. The filth and uncleanness of their living quarters are beyond description." An investigator for the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association in 1916 reported that Filipinos on one plantation were housed in congested camps. In many instances, six men occupied a small eight-by-twelve-foot room and two families had to share a single room. Due to the lack of privacy and space, workers often became tense and nervous. "Ten of us shared a small house and in such a cramped space we were constantly brushing against each other," a Filipino worker said. "We were often irritated at each other. Small annoyances led to quarrels. Endless arguments arose as to whose turn it was to prepare supper, wash dishes or buy the food.

An innocent remark or comment, interpreted wrongly, might result in a fight."⁵⁶

After the 1909 strike, planters increasingly acknowledged the need to improve the squalid conditions of the camps. In September 1910, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association advised planters to award cash prizes to workers who had the best-kept yards and gardens around their homes. The association wanted to prettify the plantation. "An attractive camp," the association stated, "is something which always attracts visitors, and which always gives them a favorable impression of the treatment of laborers by the plantations. When taking visitors around we always show them camps that are well kept in preference to those that are barren. . . . The plantations should also see to it that trees are furnished to laborers and that they are encouraged to plant and care for them."⁵⁷

As planters employed men with families rather than single men, they began to abandon the barrack system and to provide cottages for families. In a letter to the manager of the Hawaiian Agricultural Company Plantation in 1916, C. Brewer and Company wrote that "dependable married men" were "preferred" as workers and authorized the building of cottages for married laborers. In 1920 the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association promoted the development of family-housing units: "Housing conditions on the plantations have changed greatly during the past few years, largely on account of the change in labor from single to married men." Planters had self-interested reasons for their camp-improvement program. They wanted to "stimulate" the "home feeling" in the camps in order to make workers happier and more productive. "Pleasant surroundings, with some of the modern comforts and conveniences," explained a plantation official, "go a long way to make the worker healthier and more efficient in his work."⁵⁸

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

plantation, and how he washed himself with the wives of other men stepping over him matter-of-factly as if he were "a dog or cat in their path," "the cold drops from the ends of their hair" falling on his bare back. A plantation manager reported that the Japanese camp had separate bathhouses for men and women. "But we find that both men and women are still making use of both tubs," he noted. "It will be difficult to break the Japs of this time worn custom."⁵⁹

Workers cultivated vegetable gardens on plots assigned to them by the plantation manager. During his investigation of welfare conditions on the Grove Farm Plantation, a plantation official found an extensive system of vegetable gardens: "Each family is given a plot . . . and given water for the purpose of irrigation. These gardens have been very successful and supply a large part of the vegetable need of the family." A Japanese laborer recalled how he cultivated his garden even after ten hours of hard work in the cane fields: "After we came home from the field, it was dark especially in the winter months but we tilled our little vegetable garden with the help of the kerosene lamp light to raise the vegetables we ate."⁶⁰

Gradually over the years, the workers transformed the camps into communities as cottages for families replaced barracks for single men. As they landscaped their yards and planted vegetable gardens, they developed a "home feeling" in their camps. People began to know and care for one another. "There was another thing I'd come to like about the camp," remarks Kiyoshi in Murayama's novel about plantation life. "The hundred Japanese families were like one big family. Everybody knew everybody else, everybody was friendly."⁶¹

Still, life on the plantation was largely an isolated and drab existence. "For the first two and a half years here," a Filipino plantation worker recounted, "I lived pretty much the same. Six days a week I worked from siren to siren." To escape from the plantation routine, laborers found ways to entertain themselves. Many of them went fishing. A Filipino worker said that he "went with friends to the rocky edge of the ocean" to "throw net" for fish on Sundays. "After *pau hana* . . . we caught small shrimp for fish bait," a Japanese laborer recalled. "There were a lot of fish there. We could catch as many *papio* [jack] as we wanted in those days."⁶²

Lonely, far away from the families they had left behind in their homelands, many workers sought solace and entertainment in card playing and gambling. "Here and there gambling was in favor," reported Yasutaro Soga on the Waipahu Plantation. "On the Saturday evening following pay day, questionable women and professional

gamblers from Honolulu came on business to the camp. . . . And the visitors wrung from the workers the fruits of their painstaking toil." Chinese gamblers traveled from plantation to plantation, and gambling in the Chinese camps became so intense it sometimes interfered with the plantation work schedule. On September 2, 1881, an annoyed plantation manager scribbled into his diary: "There are only a few Chinamen carrying cane. O. Otto [a foreman] went to the China house and drove the gambler outsiders out and told those who did not come to get their money and leave." According to the Japanese Consul in 1888, gambling among Japanese workers had reached a point where "all night sessions" were "common." Baishiro Tamashiro said he became so involved in gambling that he stopped working: "When I won, I would pay for my cook charge first of all. If not, I had to borrow money. I spent about half a year on gambling." Cockfight gambling was popular among Filipino laborers. "On Sundays I just sat around playing Sakura [a Japanese card game] and talking stories," said Bonipasyo. "But mostly, I watched the cockfights. It felt good to see blood spilled regularly." Many workers spent their weekends and nights gambling to help them forget their hardships, hoping to win big — perhaps even enough money to return home rich. Usually they lost, and in the fields the next day, they would sing:

*The thirty-five cents
That I earned and saved
Is gone by night
From gambling.*⁶³

Many Filipino laborers found their wages gone by the end of the evening, spent at taxi-dance halls. There were few Filipino women on the plantations, and Filipino men crowded the taxi-dance halls, craving the company of women. On paydays, Filipino string bands, traveling from plantation to plantation, played music at dances. On the dance floor, Filipino men eagerly purchased tickets that offered them momentary joy, three minutes to hold, touch, and dance with a woman. "Some guys, they spend \$50, \$30, one man, one night," recalled Dorotio Allianic, a string-band player. "Go for broke, the men."⁶⁴

After the 1909 strike, planters recognized the need to develop recreational programs and facilities for their workers. In 1910 the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association advised managers to provide amusements on the plantations. Such a "welfare program" of ath-

letics, music, and movie entertainment, explained a sugar-industry official, would offer plantation managers "magnificent results." The program would not only hold the laborer on the plantation but also help to prevent strikes. "Leaving out of consideration the humanitarian side of any such welfare work," he added, "we believe it would be to the financial benefit of the plantation to endeavor to cultivate a spirit of contentment among the laborers." Sports, especially baseball, should be promoted: "A baseball ground well laid out and grassed, could be afforded by every plantation, and to encourage this sport, which every nationality of laborers is keen for, prizes could be offered to winning teams." Musical activities should be supported: "Every plantation could afford to encourage a band or a stringed orchestra; instruments could be provided by the plantation, and concerts and dances would become a feature of plantation life." Films and movies should be shown regularly on the plantation: "A moving picture show is something all nationalities enjoy. . . . Carefully selected films which would give the most satisfaction could be shown on every plantation." Nine years later, a plantation manager wrote to the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association: "Every Sunday we have baseball games between the Filipino laborers and our young Japanese and Portuguese boys in which our timekeepers and some of our overseers join. . . . In looking around at the almost universal unrest amongst labor and thinking of the absence of it upon these Islands, we feel that an unremitting endeavor should be made to keep our laborers content and happy."⁶⁵

Planters also supported religious activities: they understood the usefulness of Christian churches and Buddhist temples as mediating institutions, and they permitted and sometimes even promoted religion on the plantation. Baptized by Lutheran missionaries in China, some of the Chinese laborers had come to Hawaii as Christians. Others were converted to Christianity by missionaries in Hawaii. On the plantations, Chinese laborers were given Chinese translations of the Bible and encouraged by the missionaries and the planters to organize congregations of Chinese Christians. In Paia, missionary Frank Damon was pleased to report in 1882: "A most suitable and commodious church has recently been erected here, which is used by . . . the natives in the morning and the Chinese in the afternoon." In Kohala, Luke Ah Seu became a lay reader at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where he continued missionary work until 1898, and Kong Tet Yin served the Chinese members of the Congregational Church under the direction of the Reverend Elias Bond.⁶⁶

The most energetic evangelist to the Chinese plantation laborers was S. P. Aheong. A contract laborer, Aheong had arrived in Hawaii in 1854 and worked on the Makawao Plantation on Maui. Converted to Christianity by the Reverend Jonathan Green, he was asked by the Hawaiian Evangelical Association to distribute religious literature to Chinese plantation workers. In 1868 Aheong plunged into a whirlpool of evangelical activity. He traveled from island to island, visiting plantations and holding religious meetings for his fellow Chinese. During his first ten months of religious work, he gave seventy-five sermons in Chinese. On August 18, 1868, Aheong wrote to the Reverend L. H. Glick from Lahaina: "My work was commenced the same day which you pointed out and I hold a Chinese meeting here at last Sabbath. Five out of 13 Chinamen came. I gave them some books to read which know how to read. One of them says how can a man say that China's idols are not the God because if a man say a bad word to the idol, then he shall have pain in the whole body. I say to him that he has by all mistaking, for I am since the great many years refuse the idol; and speak bad word to them but I do not pain my body at all, and I told him good deal about our heavenly father is the true God." A few weeks later, Aheong was in Hilo, where he wrote to the Reverend S. C. Damon: "I am glad to tell you about the Hilo Chinamen. Some of them been in this country more than 40 or 30 years, and never been to church since they been in these Islands, until I came here."⁶⁷

Koreans gave Christianity a visible presence on the plantations. Many had been converted in Korea, and they began to found churches on the plantations shortly after their arrival in Hawaii. Visiting plantations in 1905, missionary Homer Hulbert reported the construction of seven plantation chapels for Koreans: "The Koreans themselves subscribed generously toward the erection of these edifices. A good part of the money was subscribed by the plantation proprietors who are keen to encourage all agencies looking toward peace and order and morality." Christianity spread rapidly among the Koreans, and in 1906 a visiting missionary was delighted to find "little congregations" of Koreans everywhere in the islands. "In the evening," he reported, "the sound of their hymns can be heard in most camps." He estimated that one third of all the Koreans in Hawaii were Christians and commended them for the moral influence they had on the camp community in stamping out gambling and intoxication. Planters considered their support for Korean churches was a "paying investment." One of them wrote to a Korean missionary: "These

Koreans make the most sincere Christians I have ever known. They are becoming more and more the most desirable and efficient laborers. . . . Your work among them [at the Mission] is showing excellent results. I shall certainly build a school house for their children as you request. They are among my most faithful employees."⁶⁸

Japanese plantation laborers carried Buddhism with them to Hawaii. On every plantation, they established Buddhist temples; planters themselves often donated lands for temples and even subsidized Buddhist programs and priests, for they viewed Buddhism as a stabilizing influence on their workers. The Waipahu and Kahuku plantations financially supported Buddhist temples and schools; the Ewa, Aiea, Waiialua, Waianae, and Waimanalo plantations on Oahu, and many plantations on the other islands, also provided grants of rent-free lands and monetary subsidies to Buddhist temples. In a letter to a plantation manager in 1902, a sugar-industry director encouraged planters to give financial support to Japanese-Buddhist schools and added: "The Directors are quite in sympathy with any movement on the part of the Japanese which should have good influence amongst them."⁶⁹

The churches and temples reflected not only a spiritual requirement but also a broad need for ethnicity — a deeply felt urge of plantation laborers. Separated from their homelands, workers strove to retain their national identities; in the camps, they celebrated traditional festivals and recreated in Hawaii the familiar scenes of the old countries. One of the most colorful and noisy festivals was the Chinese New Year. "The explosion of fire crackers throughout the day," reported the *Hawaiian Gazette* in 1867, "demonstrated that the great day of the Chinese year was being properly remembered." On their New Year's Day, Chinese plantation laborers took off from work; the manager of a plantation recorded in his diary on February 17, 1882: "No work on account of the Chinese New Year." To celebrate the important event, the Chinese trimmed the roofs of their joss houses with "long lines of small flags of every hue" and hung colored lanterns on the verandas of their barracks and cottages. Then they exchanged cards or slips of paper to wish one another good luck. Celebrators strummed Chinese musical instruments that resembled "a cross between a banjo and a guitar." The highlight of a traveler's visit to a plantation in 1888 was the Chinese New Year's festival: "Ah See was, apparently, something of a fire-worshipper, as one morning, when a Chinese feast was in progress on the plantation, we heard a tremendous cracking and fizzing, and on going out . . . we

found he had lighted two bundles of firecrackers, which were going off in every direction, and Ah See, with his hands to his forehead, was bowing and grimacing to the crackers, as though they were so many spirits, and muttering what I suppose were charms against evil." During festival time on the Kohala Plantation, two rival Chinese benevolent societies, within view of each other across the Kapauu Gulch, competed to see which one could burn the longest or loudest string of firecrackers.⁷⁰

During the midsummer, Japanese plantation laborers held their traditional *obon*, or festival of souls. Dressed in kimonos, they danced in circles to the beat of *taiko* drums in celebration of the reunion of the living with the spirits of the dead. In early November they observed the Milkado's birthday as a holiday. Irritated by the interruption of the plantation production schedule, plantation managers found they had no choice but to let their Japanese workers have the day off. "There is an old custom here among the Japs of observing the 3rd of November as a holiday," a plantation manager unhappily reported to C. Brewer and Company in 1911. "The Emperor's Birthday was celebrated everywhere," Tokusuke Oshiro recalled. "Mainly there was *sumo*. . . . Several young men, usually the good ones, got together at a camp and had Japanese-style *sumo* matches." Seichin Nagayama said that on the emperor's birthday or "Tenchosetsu," the "Okinawans would rest from work and order *bento* [lunch] from the *meshiya* [eating place]. At night the Okinawans would play *shamisens* [three-stringed musical instruments] made out of *tengara* [tin cans] on which they put strings. So we had music with the *tengara shamisen* — 'jara-jara, jan-jan, chan-chan' — and we danced Okinawan dances."⁷¹

The most important celebration of Filipino plantation laborers was Rizal Day — December 30, the day the Spanish executed the famous revolutionary leader Jose Rizal in 1896. To honor Rizal, Filipino plantation bands played mandolins and guitars at outdoor concerts. As the Filipino laborers remembered Rizal, they told one another tales of his heroic deeds. "The Kastilas could not kill him, because the bullets bounced off his chest," a worker would declare. And a compatriot would "tell it up one notch" and quickly add: "He caught them [the bullets] with his bare hands!" Filipinos repeatedly told the story about how the revolutionary leader actually did not die: "After he was buried, his wife poured his love potion on his freshly filled grave, and in the night — he rose, Apo Rizal rose from the grave."⁷²

Asian plantation workers carried to Hawaii not only their festivals and myths but also their foods. In the camps could be found an interesting and unique variety of Asian ethnic foods — Chinese *char siu* (barbecued pork) and *manapua*, or *bao* (bun with pork stuffing), Korean kimchi (pickled cabbage laced with garlic and hot red pepper), Filipino adobo (stewed garlic pork and chicken), Japanese sashimi (raw fish) and sushi (rice cakes with seafood). Tofu (Japanese bean curd) was in great demand on the plantations. “My wife and I made the tofu and I would go out and sell it in the camps,” Tokusuke Oshiro said. “The farthest I went to sell is Ola’s Juyonri — the camp at the 14 mile marker in Ola plantation. I had regular customers who knew the days I would come. So when I honked my horn, people would come out with container in hand.” Japanese families made *mochi* (sweet rice cakes), especially on New Year’s Day. For their lunch, Japanese laborers ate *musubi*, rice balls with *ume* (pickled red plums) inside, and Filipinos spread *boggoong* (salted fish) over their rice.⁷³

As the laborers and their families mingled together in the camps, they began to exchange their different ethnic foods, including not only various Asian dishes but also Hawaiian *kalu* pig (baked in the ground) and *lau lau* (fish and pork wrapped in ti leaves) and Portuguese hot sausage and sweet bread. The daughter of a Portuguese laborer remembered how her mother would make gifts of her bread and “little buns for the children in the camp. The Japanese families gave us *sushis* and the Hawaiians would give us fish.” “Everybody took their own lunches” to school, Lucy Robello of the Waialua Plantation said. “And like the Japanese used to take their little rice-balls with an *ume* inside and little *daikon* [radish]... And us Portuguese, we used to take bread with butter and jelly or bread with cheese inside.” Then, at noontime, Japanese and Portuguese children would trade their *kaukaus* (lunches) with one another. Meanwhile, in the fields, their parents were also sharing lunches. “We get in a group,” William Rego recalled. “We pick from this guy’s lunch and that guy’ll pick from my lunch and so forth.” Crossing ethnic lines, workers would taste each other’s foods and exclaim in Hawaiian: “*Oho, oho!*” “Tasty, tasty!”⁷⁴

Sitting on the ground in the cane fields and eating their *kaukaus*, workers of different nationalities also began talking to one another. Initially, the laborers of each ethnic group had spoken only their native language. The language of their home country provided an essential basis for their particular ethnic identity and culture. Lan-

guage gave each ethnic group a sense of community within the plantation camps by enabling its members to maintain ties with one another as they shared memories of their distant homeland and stories of their experiences in the new country. Japanese and Korean parents sent their children to Japanese- and Korean-language schools respectively; thus their children had to attend public school all day and then spend another hour or two in language school.

Gradually, however, workers of different nationalities began to acquire a common language. Working on the plantation required cross-ethnic communication, and planters used English as the “language of command.” Plantation managers wanted the immigrant laborers to be taught a functional spoken English. “By this,” explained a planter, “we do not mean the English of Shakespeare but the terms used in everyday plantation life. A great many of the small troubles arise from the imperfect understanding between overseers and laborers.” Over the years a plantation dialect called “pidgin English” developed: incorporating peculiarly Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Chinese, and other elements, it grew out of management’s need to give commands to a multilingual work force. On the plantation, a foreman was able to give instructions to an ethnically diverse gang of workers in pidgin English and communicate to all of them at once, and workers were able to respond in a pidgin English.⁷⁵

Isolated on the plantations, workers sometimes came to think pidgin was the English language. On one occasion, Chinese workers found they could not understand their new field boss. A recent arrival in Hawaii, he had given his instructions to the men in “pure English.” He explained to them that he wanted them to cut the cane close to the ground and to lop off the tops and throw them between the furrows for fertilizer. But his men found his language strange and unintelligible. A bystander noticed the confusion and translated the instructions in pidgin: “*Luna*, big boss speak, all men down below cutch; suppose too much *mauka* (uphill, high) cutch, too mucha sugar *poho* (wasted) — *keiki* (shoots) no use. Savvy? All men *opala* (trash) cutch, one side t’row — byenby mule men come, *lepo* (dirt) too mucha guru (good). Savvy?” “Savvy,” the Chinese men replied and added in disgust: “Huy! wasamalla dis *Haole* — he no can taok *haole!*”⁷⁶

“Our English in those days was really funny,” a Japanese plantation worker recalled amusingly. “A contract worker in Lahaina Plantation was asked by his superiors, ‘How many people are working here?’ He answered, ‘Ten, ten, wan burooku’ (Ten, ten, one

broke), in loud voice. The supervisor said, 'All right, boys,' and galloped away. What the worker meant to say is that ten plus ten minus one, 19." The workers also happily and promiscuously combined words from different languages. "You like hemo [Hawaiian] cope ka [Japanese?]" (Will you pick coffee?) "Chicken he too much makee [Hawaiian]." (Many chickens died.) "No more hana hana [Hawaiian], no can kaukau [Hawaiian]." (I have no work, therefore I cannot eat.) They also invented their own expressions such as "mo betta": "Cow he mo betta come home." Newspapers even carried advertisements in pidgin English:

Me — P. Y. Chong plenty smile any time now. Anybody too muchee kokua Me — P. Y. Chong new chop sui lestunt fix up Hotel Sleet between Nuuanu and Smith. Too many person come Hotel Sleet Lau Yee Chai, catchem Me — P. Y. Chong Numbh One kaukau lunch time, dinneah time, atfeh-theateh suppeh time, any time catchem.

Disce new Lau Yee Chai chop sui place no so hard to find, Chineer red and Chineer jade paint all oveh. Numbh One lestunt, no so muchee money cost kaukau. You come looksee, eh?

Me — P. Y. Chong tank you so muchee.

A worker said lunas and workers would mix Japanese and Hawaiian words with hand gestures. "The Portuguese luna used to speak a little Japanese. 'Ni-ban (number two) dis you dirchee,' and the luna would pantomime with his hands and feet what we were supposed to do. We somehow managed to communicate." They more than managed, creating a new language of luxuriant cadences and expressive hand gestures.⁷⁷

As pidgin English became the common language in the camps, it enabled people from different countries to communicate with one another and helped them create a new identity associated with Hawaii. "The language we used had to be either pidgin English or broken English," explained Faustino Baysa of the Wai'alua Plantation on the island of Oahu. "And when we don't understand each other, we had to add some other words that would help to explain ourselves. That's how this pidgin English comes out beautiful." A Korean mother recalled how she noticed her children were growing up as "Hawaiians," for they spoke "Hawaiian English" much more fluently than their native tongue. Speaking pidgin English, the immigrants and their children were no longer just Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or

Filipino; they were now embracing a local or regional identity transcending their particular ethnicity.⁷⁸

Their acquisition of a new language reflected a deeper change in their outlook toward themselves and their new land. Most of the Asian laborers initially saw themselves as sojourners rather than settlers. They had come to Hawaii to earn money as wage laborers and then return to their homelands. Between 1852 and 1887, 26,000 Chinese arrived in the islands and 10,000, or 38 percent, went back to China. Of the 200,000 Japanese who entered Hawaii between 1885 and 1924, 110,000, or 55 percent, returned to Japan, including my grandfather Santaro Takaki. (Years later, after World War II, my uncle Nobuyoshi Takaki would also move back to Kumamoto.) Between 1903 and 1910, 7,300 Koreans arrived in Hawaii and 1,200, or 16 percent, saw their homeland again. Of the 112,800 Filipinos who came to the islands between 1909 and 1931, 18,600 remigrated to the mainland and 38,900, or 36 percent, returned to the Philippines. But what is so striking and so significant is the fact that so many sojourners stayed.⁷⁹

Gradually, Asian-immigrant workers found themselves becoming settlers, establishing families in the new land. Married Chinese women increased from 559 in 1890 to 1,555 in 1910 to 3,212 in 1930. By then, 39 percent of the Chinese population was female. Many Chinese men married Hawaiian women. In 1871, colporteur Samuel P. Aheong of the Hawaiian Board Mission estimated a total of 1,201 Chinese men living in the islands and reported that 121 of them had "taken unto themselves" Hawaiian wives and their unions had produced ninety-one boys and seventy-six girls. By 1900, about 1,500 Chinese men married or lived with Hawaiian women, and their children represented the first Chinese-Hawaiian generation.⁸⁰

Some Chinese men had two families: they were married to Hawaiian women but also had Chinese wives living in the old country. Len Wai, for example, had left his wife Len Mau Nin in China when he sailed to Hawaii as a contract laborer in 1882. "Every seven years after his initial arrival in the islands," reported his grandson Raymond Len, "he returned to China. My uncle was born there in 1889, my auntie in 1896, and my father, Len Too Shing, in 1903. While in Hawaii, my grandfather also had an Hawaiian wife and they adopted two Hawaiian children." When Raymond's father came to the islands, he became part of this Chinese-Hawaiian family. "I was ten years old when I came to Hawaii," explained Len Too Shing.

"The Hawaiian wife, Julia Kuli, became like my own mother. She was a big *wahine* [woman]. My father was 5'6" and she was 5'11" and over 200 pounds. They spoke Hawaiian to each other. I spoke to my father in Chinese and my new mother in Hawaiian." Asked whether he saw himself as Chinese or Hawaiian, Len Too Shing replied: "I didn't think of myself as anything. I was just a 'local' kid." His Hawaiian mother died in 1930, and his father returned to his wife in China in 1932 — fifty years after he had first landed in the islands.⁸¹

Born in Hawaii, sons of Chinese-Hawaiian parents sometimes migrated to China. One of them remembered how he had been taken to China by his father when he was eight years old and discovered he had "two mothers." His father's Chinese wife treated him "just like her own son." "Hawaiian mother good too, treat me good," he said, "but China mother very, very good." A few Chinese men took their Hawaiian wives to China. "There were Hawaiian women in our villages in Quangdong," remembered Len Mau Yun. Some Chinese men eventually brought their Chinese wives to the islands, where they maintained both their "Chinese family" and their "Hawaiian family." In the Chinese-Hawaiian family, languages, customs, and foods were "mixed." "When my mother just married my father, she didn't know any Chinese," said the daughter of one such family. "Later she picked up Chinese and now she can speak enough to carry on conversation. She speaks Chinese to our Chinese relatives and friends. My father speaks Chinese mostly, but some Hawaiian. We have a mixture of food at home. . . . Every time we have Hawaiian food we also have rice and other cooked vegetables."⁸²

Families were also forming among the other Asian groups. By 1920, 46 percent of the Japanese and 30 percent of the Koreans in Hawaii were female. Between 1909 and 1924, 61,649 Filipinos entered Hawaii through the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association: 7,322 of them were women and 4,651 were children, representing together 19 percent of all Filipino immigrants. A new generation of Asian Americans was taking root in Hawaii. By 1920, 39 percent of the Chinese population in the islands were nineteen years old and younger, compared to only 20 percent on the mainland, and 45 percent of the island Japanese compared to only 32 percent of their continental counterparts. Meanwhile, minors constituted 32 percent of the Korean population in Hawaii and 29 percent of the Filipino. A plantation work song expressed a new sense of belonging springing from the presence of children:

*With one woven basket
Alone I came
Now I have children
And even grandchildren too.*⁸³

Sojourners when they arrived in the islands, immigrant plantation laborers gradually found themselves becoming settlers. My grandparents Kasuke and Katsu Okawa had eight children who were born in Hawaii; in 1922 they left the Hawi Plantation on the Big Island and bought a house in Honolulu. In a letter to his brother Yabei, Asakichi Inouye explained why he had decided not to return to Japan: "My children are here, and my grandson [Daniel], and it is here that I have passed most of the days of my life. I do not believe that my wife and I, in our last years, could find contentment in Yokoyama, which has become for us a strange place." In his autobiographical novel, *Hawaii: End of the Rainbow*, Kazuo Miyamoto describes the process that led Seikichi Arata to stay in the new land: "With the passage of the years, he came to love Kauai as a place to live and possibly raise a family. The carefree atmosphere of this new country, not tied down by century-old traditions and taboos, and an immense opportunity that existed for those that could settle and seek their fortune, changed Seikichi's original intention of returning to this homeland at the expiration of the three year contract." A second-generation Korean, born on the Kahuku Plantation in 1905, told a similar story: "My parents . . . left Korea in the early part of 1903 and came to the Hawaiian Islands. Their intention was to return to their land as soon as they had saved money. In this hope they were disappointed, for they soon found out that it was not so easy to save money as they thought it would be. However, they became so used to the climate, freedom and advantages of this land that they no longer desired to leave this land permanently." When Shokichi and Matsu Fukuda migrated to Maui in 1900, they were sojourners; in fact they had left behind their six-month-old baby, Fusayo, with her grandparents. Some twenty years later, after Fusayo had emigrated to California as a picture bride, they decided they would return to Japan and take their Hawaiian-born children with them. But their son, Minoru, was a teenager by then, and Hawaii was home, the only world he knew and loved. "He refused to go," remembered his niece Aiko Mifune. "Japan was a foreign country to him. He was very adamant that the family should stay in Hawaii."⁸⁴

After working and living in Hawaii for nine years, Tsuru Ya-

mauchi took her four children to Okinawa, a southern island of Japan. She had been away from her birthplace for so long and wanted her Hawaiian-born children to see her homeland and to meet their family in Okinawa. But she found Okinawa "very different from Hawaii: the climate, the food, the inconvenient things, such as closed windows even in the summertime. . . . Even if we said Hawaii was bad or something like that, there wasn't any place as good as Hawaii for climate and sanitation. Okinawa hadn't changed a bit since before. That's why the children didn't like it, either. So I thought I couldn't stay there too long."⁸⁵

My aunt Mitsue Takaki also found herself planting new roots in Hawaii. She had come as a picture bride in 1920 to marry my uncle Teizo; eleven years later, her husband injured his knee at work and returned to Japan for medical treatment. When he tried to reenter Hawaii, however, the immigration authorities refused to grant him permission. Mitsue chose to remain in the islands with her three small children — Minoru, Susumu, and Kimiyo. She went to night school to learn English and worked on the Puunene Plantation to support her children. She wanted them to be educated and to have opportunities in the land of their birth.⁸⁶

But planters did not want the children of immigrant workers to have opportunities: they needed the second generation as plantation laborers and saw Asians as a racial underclass. Several white boys from Punahou High School, an elite institution for the children of the planter class, were asked in 1928 to discuss their career plans. "What do we care about these vocational discussions?" one of them snapped. "Yes," agreed another. And referring to the school attended mainly by Asian students, he added: "It's all settled; we, the Punahou boys, will be the lunas and the McKinley fellows will carry the cane." But young Asian Americans did not want to be cane carriers, and worried planters stated candidly: "Sheer necessity, in order to prevent starvation, may ultimately cause the island youth to return to plantation work."⁸⁷

Many planters did not want the children of plantation laborers to be educated beyond the sixth or eighth grade. They wanted the schools to offer vocational training, not literature courses. Richard Cooke, president of C. Brewer and Company, a major producer of sugar, said that the public-school teachers should not keep their students from working on the plantations. If the schools continued to give students high career aspirations, Cooke warned, "we had better change our educational system here as soon as possible." Not-

ing the need for agricultural labor, planter John Hind complained that the public-school system was too expensive: "Why blindly continue a ruinous system that keeps a boy and girl in school at the taxpayers' expense long after they have mastered more than sufficient learning for all ordinary purposes?" A visitor from the mainland noticed the increasing presence of Japanese children on the plantations and asked a Maui planter whether he thought the coming generation of Japanese would make intelligent citizens. "Oh, yes," he replied, "they'll make intelligent citizens all right enough, but not plantation laborers — and that's what we want."⁸⁸

But many schools were not educating them to be plantation laborers. From teachers who had come from the mainland to the islands, children of immigrant workers learned about freedom and equality, reciting the Gettysburg Address and the Declaration of Independence. "Here the children learned about democracy or at least the theory of it," said a University of Hawaii student in 1947. They were taught that honest labor, fair play, and industriousness were virtues. But they "saw that it wasn't so on the plantation." They saw haoles on top and Asians on the bottom: "If you were a haole applying for a job, you didn't have to worry too much." Returning from school to their homes on the plantation, the students noticed the wide "disparity between theory and practice." Something was wrong they felt. "The public school system perhaps without realizing it," the university student observed, "created unrest and disorganization."⁸⁹

Seeing their parents suffer from drudgery, low wages, and discriminatory barriers, many second-generation Asians did not want to be tracked into plantation employment. They disliked the "plantation pyramid," the structure of racial hierarchy, and they aspired to be something more than field laborers. My father, Toshio Takaki, who had come to the Puunene Plantation from Japan at the age of thirteen, felt the same restlessness as many Nisei. Initially, he worked as a field laborer, but he had an artistic passion and developed an interest in photography. He certainly was an "extravagant" young man. "The cottages in camp were small and he used the closet as a darkroom," an old friend, Ellen Kasai, recalled. He went around the plantation carrying a camera and taking pictures, and he impressed the people of McGerrow Camp as an odd and interesting individual. The plantation could not hold him down, and sometime in the 1920s he left to study with the photographer Jerome Baker in Honolulu. My father went toward "what persisted," an urge to be creative and

"the freeing of beauty" through photography. The 1926 Honolulu city directory's entry for Toshio Takaki listed him as a finisher for the Honolulu Photo Supply Company; six years later he was listed as Harry T. Takaki, photographer. His studio was on Bethel Street.⁹⁰

In 1922, the boys at McKinley High School in Honolulu were asked what they hoped to be in the future: 15 percent wanted to become professionals, 50 percent skilled workers, 5 percent farmers, and only half of one percent laborers. Presumably the others were undecided. In a 1929 survey of seventeen plantation schools, junior-high-school boys charted similar figures for themselves: of those who had considered careers, 8 percent wanted to become engineers, 11 percent doctors or teachers, 8 percent farmers, 12 percent businessmen, and only 1.7 percent laborers. "My father was a common laborer on a plantation, who worked every day from six in the morning to four o'clock in the afternoon," said a Japanese youth. "Whenever I saw some businessman in town, well dressed and gentle, my ambition was to become a businessman, and I was jealous of those who had high positions." A Korean student explained that young Asians had been born with "yellow skins and educated as if their skins were white." To send a young man through high school and then ask him to labor in the fields, he added, was an "absurdity." Second-generation Asians said they were American citizens and resented being told that they were "not fit to be anything but plantation laborers." At a conference of social workers in 1928, the governor of Hawaii urged them to direct the youth back to agriculture. In response to the governor, a young Chinese declared: "You cannot force the oriental youth with a high school education to go back to the plantations. He will not do it. We realize that our parents started on the plantations, but you cannot expect us to go back."⁹¹

Education, many Asians believed, was the key to employment opportunities and freedom from the plantation. "Father made up his mind to send his children to school so far as he possibly could," said the daughter of a Japanese plantation worker. "Yet he had no idea of forcing us. Instead he employed different methods which made us want to go to school. We were made to work in the cane fields at a very early age. . . . After a day's work in the fields dad used to ask: 'Are you tired? Would you want to work in the fields when you are old enough to leave school?' . . . My father did everything in his power to make us realize that going to school would be to our advantage."⁹²

Education also seemed to promise opportunities for the second

generation and their children to enter a world of words and ideas. A Nisei mother wrote to her son, who had gone away to college on the mainland: "It's 8:00 P.M. as I sit writing to you. About 1 A.M. in Ohio and I imagine you are snug in bed. We are still down at the store since Dad has to catch up soaking the teriyaki steak, etc. This week has been very busy and I am exhausted." She and her husband worked long, twelve-hour days, seven days a week. To send their son away to a college on the mainland was extravagant. She herself had to quit school after the eighth grade in order to work and help her parents pay for the needs of the family. "I never went to school much and you can say that again," she wrote in other letters. "What I do know is from reading. . . . In my small way I am trying and doing my best (working) so that you being an exception *can and must* be above our intellectual level. At times I yearn for rest (6 years without a vacation)."⁹³

Her parents and other immigrants had labored as plantation workers to build the great industry of Hawaii and had laid the foundations for the American-born generations to have greater educational and employment opportunities. Years earlier, when they had first seen the plantations and the dreary camps, they had been uncertain about their future in the islands. "Here you couldn't see anything, no view, no landscape, just fields and hills," one of them complained. "Ah, such a place. Is Hawaii a place like this?" Confused, many migrants had asked in quiet moments of reflection:

*Should I return to Japan?
I'm lost in thoughts
Here in Hawaii.*

And what would happen if they stayed too long?

*Two contract periods
Have gone by
Those who do not return
Will end up as fertilizer
For the cane.⁹⁴*

In the evenings, sitting on their porches in the camps, the workers "talked stink" about the howling haole lunas, the way they were called by their bango numbers rather than their names, the regimentation of daily labor, and the "shit system" of social hierarchy on the plantation. But, powered by the liminality of the islands, they refused to allow the "necessity" of the plantation to determine their

lives, and over the years, their feelings toward the place had begun to change. As they worked in the fields, they saw how their labor had transformed and enriched the new land. "With my bare hands and calloused heart and patience," a Filipino worker boasted, "I helped build Hawaii." As Asian workers went out on strike, they realized the need to improve the conditions of their communities, to turn the camps into homes for their families. Japanese workers struck for higher wages, saying their action was *kodomo no tami ni*, or "for the sake of the children." And as Asian workers transplanted their customs and traditions and foods to the camps, as they erected new churches and temples and planted gardens near their cottages, as they spoke to fellow workers from other countries in a new language, and as they watched their children grow up and play in the camps, they began thinking of themselves as settlers and of Hawaii as their home.⁹⁵

"Lucky come Hawaii," some of them whispered as they stood breathless before rainbows arching over ancient volcanoes, the steep sides of the mountains hanging vertically from the clouds like corrugated curtains. The opportunities to make a place for themselves in the islands were greater for them than for their brethren on the mainland. They lived in a society where the elite included Hawaiians, people with dark skin, and where racial divisions could not be drawn as sharply as on the continent. With a greater proportion of women among their number, they were able to establish families sooner than their continental counterparts. They lived in stationary communities — in plantation camps where they formed critical masses enabling them to transplant large parts of their traditional cultures. Moreover, unlike Asians on the mainland, they constituted a majority of the population. They did not compete with a large white working class or arouse "ethnic antagonism" between Asian and white labor. They did not become victims of white working-class racism and violence. By their numerical preponderance, they had greater opportunities to weave themselves and their cultures into the very fabric of Hawaii and to seek to transform their adopted land into a society of rich diversity where they and their children would no longer be "strangers from a different shore."⁹⁶

III

NECESSITY

Positively No Filipinos Allowed.

Sign on hotel door

From our tree tops we would see the boss coming 'way off in the distance and when he reached us he found us working very hard.

Dhan Gopal Mukerji

If we wanted to rent land, it had to be in a child's name that was born in this country — a citizen. It was impossible as a foreigner.

Do-Yun Yoon

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

Kimiko Ono¹