UC San Diego
UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title
Asian Americans at the movies : race, labor, and migration in the Transpacific West, 1900-1945

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7tv1d4pm

Author
Khor, Denise

Publication Date
2008

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Asian Americans at the Movies:
Race, Labor, and Migration in the Transpacific West, 1900-1945

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Denise Khor

Committee in charge:

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Co-Chair
Professor Nayan Shah, Co-Chair
Professor Ross Frank
Professor Natalia Molina
Professor Lesley Stern

2008

Copyright

Denise Khor, 2008

All rights reserved.

This Dissertation of Denise Khor is approved, and it is acceptable

in quality and form for publication on microfilm:

Co-Chair

Co-Chair

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

2008

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Signature Page…………………………………………………………………………iii

Table of Contents………………………………………………………………………iv

List of Figures…………………………………………………………………………..v

Acknowledgements……………………………………………………………………vi

Vita………………………………………………………………………………………ix

Abstract…………………………………………………………………………………xiii

Introduction……………………………………………………………………………..1

Chapter One
Pacific Theatre: Japanese Showmen and the
Empire of Cheap Attractions, 1907-1942………………………………………………..18

Chapter Two
Filipinos Positively Allowed: Race, Property, and
Dispossession in the Migrant City, 1924-1940s…………………………………………66

Chapter Three
Social Reform, Plantation Amusements, and the
Asian Labor Problem in Rural Hawaii, 1909-1930s……………………………………114

Chapter Four
Dangerous Amusements: Labor, Sociability, and
Asian Immigrant Counterpublics……………………………………………………….152

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………………...192

Bibliography……………………………………………………………………………197

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1 Advertisement for Atlas Theatre in Seattle, *Orientale* May 1950…………………...43

1.2 Sanji Abe……………………………………………………………………….62

2.1 Advertisement for Japanese owned Star Theatre and
Imperial Theatre , *Philippine Examiner* 30 July 1938…………………………………...82

2.2 Advertisement for Lincoln Theatre and Nippon Theatre,
Philippine Examiner 30 July 1938…………………………………………………….84

2.3 Advertisement for "Rose of Manila" at
Imperial Theatre, *Philippine Examiner* 18 Oct 1935…………………………………….86

2.4 Advertisement for "Buenavista" at Sierra Theatre,
Philippine Examiner 30 Nov 1940…………………………………………………….91

2.5 Advertisement for midnight showing of Philippine films at
Rialto Theatre, *Philippine Examiner* 31 May 1945……………………………………...92

2.6 "Filipino Show Parade of California,"
Filipino Pioneer 1 July 1938…………………………………………………………..96

2.7 Ink portrait of Shigeaki Hayashino…………………………………………………110

3.1 Program of Philippine films in Hawaii,
Philippine News Tribune 9 Oct 1937…………………………………………………...148

3.2 Movie Billing for "Mga Daliring Ginto"…………………………………………...148

4.1 Photograph of the Honolulu Theatre, ca. 1935……………………………………..158

4.2 Photograph of Honolulu Theatre…………………………………………………...159

4.3 Advertisement for "The Stage Coach Driver" at
Stanley T. Miyamoto's Empire Theatre,
Hilo Tribune Herald 13 Feb 1926……………………………………………………..179

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank first and foremost my two dissertation advisors. Yen Le Espiritu has mentored me since I first arrived at UCSD. She always provided the right dose of rigor and support and I owe much of my growth as a scholar to her example. Nayan Shah has challenged and inspired my thinking from the moment we met. I thank him for the many conversations we have had over the years and the constant and meticulous attention he has given to the research and writing of this dissertation. My committee members deserve special thanks. I am grateful to Ross Frank for always keeping his office door open and helping me with the arduous process of locating research materials. Thanks to Natalia Molina for her insight into archival collections in California as well as her advice over the years regarding the murky waters of graduate school life. I have learned a great deal about film studies from Lesley Stern and would like to thank her for sharing her passion for Bruce Lee with me. In addition, I want to acknowledge and thank Jane Rhodes for her mentorship during my first several years as a graduate student.

The guidance and expertise of many archivists, librarians, and researchers made this project possible. In Hawaii, I extend my gratitude to the staff at the Hawaiian Sugar Planters Plantation Archive at the University of Hawaii; Brigham Young University; Hawaii State Archives; Bishop Museum; and the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii in Honolulu. I am particularly grateful to University of Hawaii archivist Joan Hori and theatre historian Lowell Angell. In California and Washington, I thank the staff at the California State Archives in Sacramento; the National Archives and Records

Administration in San Bruno; Special Collections at the University of California, Los Angeles; Labor Archives at San Francisco State University; Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences; Washington State Archives; Special Collections at the University of Washington; and Wing Luke Asian Museum in Seattle. In addition I want to acknowledge the exceptionally helpful assistance of theatre historian Eric Flom of Seattle and John Taylor of the National Archives, D.C.

Numerous fellowships and grants supported the research and writing of the dissertation. At UCSD, I am grateful for research funding from the Department of Ethnic Studies, Center for the Humanities, and Dean's Social Science Research Fund. I thank the UC Pacific Rim Research Council for supporting my travel and research in Hawaii. The completion of the dissertation was supported by the UC Fletcher Jones Foundation and the Charles Gaius Bolin fellowship from Williams College. In particular I would like to thank K. Scott Wong at Williams College for his mentorship and critical insights into my scholarship and the field of Asian American history. Lastly, a postdoctoral fellowship in the Ethnicity, Race, and Migration Program at Yale University has given me the good fortune of meeting Stephen Pitti and Charles Musser whose support during the final leg of dissertation writing has been immeasurable.

An early dissertation group with May Fu and Jesse Mills helped me jump start the road to research and writing. Ramon Gutierrez deserves special thanks for opening his home to us and offering supportive feedback. I thank Lauren Cole for an afternoon conversation that helped me a great deal in the early stages of the project. Diana Aram provided me with a place to stay (and many good laughs) during research trips to D.C. For commentary on various stages of writing, I am grateful to Kazuyo Tsuchiya, Karin

Velez, Jose Amadour, Alejandro Velazquez, and Christina Hanhardt. In the final hour, Michael Tan read the entire manuscript and provided feedback and much needed encouragement. Rose Khor offered especially astute insight into the final stages of the manuscript. Benita Brahmbhatt has been with this project from the start. She endured prolonged research trips with me and offered countless critical readings of the dissertation.

My gratitude is due to the many good friends who made graduate school feel like home. For their friendship, I thank kindred spirits and fellow pisces Morelia Portillo and Jinah Kim. More than anyone, they have shared in the laughs and heartaches of the past years. Julie Hua has been a dear friend from the first day we met. Good times in San Diego and beyond were also shared with Neel Ahuja, Peter Holderness, Irmary Reyes-Santos, Tania Triana, Su Yun Kim, Neda Atanososki, Kara Lynch, Monika Gosin, Kyla Schuller, L. Chase Smith, Alex Tom, Jon Salunga, Michel Sam, Natchee Blu Barnd, and Mona Brahmbhatt.

My endeavors – academic and otherwise—would not be possible without the unwavering support of my family. My parents, Chin Choon and Margaret Khor, have taken many risks in their own lives. They set the stage for me and I thank them deeply. My brother, Victor, has always cheered me on and helped me stumble with a little more ease. My sister, Rose, has been a source of inspiration. Even though I am older, she is wise and brilliant beyond my years. Of course, I do not relinquish big sister privileges in such a statement.

Final thanks go to Benita Brahmbhatt, my love.

VITA

Education

Ph.D. in Ethnic Studies — Winter 2008
University of California, San Diego
Research Interests: Race and Ethnicity, Asian American History, Social and Cultural U.S. History, and Cinema Studies

M.A. in Ethnic Studies — Spring 2003
University of California, San Diego

B.A. in English and Women's Studies — Fall 1999
University of Florida, Gainesville

Academic Awards

2007-2009 Ethnicity, Race, and Migration Postdoctoral Fellowship at Yale University
2006-2007 Gaius Charles Bolin Dissertation Fellowship at Williams College
2005-2006 University of California Fletcher Jones Foundation Fellowship
2005-2006 University of California Pacific Rim Research Program Mini-Grant
2004-2005 UCSD Dean's Social Science Research Travel Grant
2004-2005 UCSD Center for the Humanities Graduate Student Fellowship

Conferences and Presentations

"Movie House Culture, Asian Immigrants, and Rural Hawaii, 1909-1930s"
Society for Cinema and Media Studies Conference (SCMS)
Philadelphia, PA (Mar. 6-9, 2008)

"Segregation, Migrancy, and Asian Moviegoers in California, 1930-1942"
Pacific Worlds and the American West Conference, American West Center, University of Utah
Salt Lake City, UT (Feb. 8 and 9, 2008)

"Dangerous Amusements: Japanese Showmen and the Moving Pictures in Rural Hawaii, 1923-1940"
Bolin Fellow Lecture, Multicultural Center, Williams College
Williamsburg, MA (Feb. 21, 2007)

"Discipline and Leisure: Asian Laborers and the Work of the Movies"
Asian Studies Conference Japan (ASCJ), International Christian University
Tokyo, Japan (June 24, 2006)

"Movies, Migration, Labor: Working Class Culture in Early Twentieth Century Asian Immigrant Communities"
Annual Conference of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association (PCB-AHA)
Corvallis, Oregon (August 6, 2005)

"The Chinese Connection: Race in Popular Culture" (invited presenter)
Black Belt Art Exhibition at the Santa Monica Museum of Art
Santa Monica, CA (December 14, 2004)

"Gender, Nation, and Sexuality in *Iron Ladies*" (invited panelist)
Critical Gender Studies and the Women's Center Film Series at UCSD
San Diego, CA (November 17, 2003)

"What is this 'Yellow' in Black Popular Culture? Bruce Lee and African American Audiences"
Crossing Borders, Shaping Identities: New Directions in Ethnic Studies
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA (March 14, 2003)

Publications

Book Review. "Doctor Mom Chung of the Fair-Haired Bastards: The Life of a Wartime Celebrity" *Amerasia Journal* 32:2 (2006)

Teaching Experience

Yale University, Program in Ethnicity, Race, and Migration, Department of Film Studies and American Studies — Spring 2008
Lecturer, *Race, Cinema, and the Migrant City*

Williams College, Department of American Studies — Fall 2006
Lecturer, *Asian American Film: Race and Early Representation*

UCSD, Department of History and Ethnic Studies — Summer 2006
Lecturer, *Asian American History*

UCSD, Department of History and Ethnic Studies — Fall 2005
Reader, *Asian American History*, with Nayan Shah

UCSD, Department of Ethnic Studies — Fall 2004
Reader, *Gender Studies, Race, and the Intersection of Difference*, with Julietta Hua

UCSD, Muir College Writing Program 2001-2003
Lecturer, *'Is Yellow Black or White?' Asian American Critique and the Rhetoric of Asian-ness*

UCSD, Department of Ethnic Studies Spring 2001
Teaching Assistant, *Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States*, with Yen Le Espiritu

UCSD, Department of Ethnic Studies Winter 2001
Teaching Assistant, *Immigration and Assimilation in American Life*, with Ross Frank

UCSD, Department of Ethnic Studies Summer 2001
Research Assistant

UCSD, Department of Ethnic Studies Fall 2000
Teaching Assistant, *Population Histories of the United States*, with Denise Ferreira da Silva

Administrative Experience

UCSD, California Cultures in Comparative Perspective Program 2003-2005
Assistant Director

Professional Organizations

Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) 2007 to present

Labor and Working Class History Association (LAWCHA) 2005 to 2006
Graduate Student Representative

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Asian Americans at the Movies:
Race, Labor, and Migration in the Transpacific West, 1900-1945

by

Denise Khor

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2008

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Co-Chair
Professor Nayan Shah, Co-Chair

This dissertation explores the vibrant world of motion picture amusements in Asian immigrant communities in the United States between 1900 and 1945. It traces a circuit of movie-going that spanned from the migrant cities of Seattle and Stockton to the rural plantation towns of the Hawaiian islands. Starting in the nickelodeon era, Japanese showmen crafted a world of cheap attractions in major spots of Asian migration and settlement in the transpacific West. The cultural politics of first generation elites, alongside their struggles with local and national communities, shaped these entertainment spheres. Racial segregation, alien land laws, and prewar governmental surveillance also

demarcated the possibilities for a viable public culture during the first half of the twentieth century.

In Hawaii, the cultural sphere of movie-going emerged in relation to sugar planters, Japanese showmen, and the thousands of immigrant laborers who crowded into the show houses to view a diverse program of moving pictures from Hollywood as well as Japan and the Philippines. With the first major labor strike in 1909, sugar planters sought to promote the movies on plantations as a means to appease labor unrest and create a docile labor force. With the increasing threat of organized labor, however, sugar planters grew increasingly distrustful. I trace the apprehensions and anxieties that planters exhibited over the movies, the showmen, and their spectators in order to suggest that this film scene comprised an alternative sphere in rural Hawaii. Beyond simple pleasures, the dangers of Japanese run amusements extended a counter public for laborers beyond the union hall and into the world of leisure and attractions.

This study of early film culture in Asian immigrant communities brings together the field of film studies with Asian American history, U.S. social and cultural history, migration studies, and urban studies. It sheds insight into the ways that race, labor, and migration formed the public sphere of the cinema in the first decades of its inception. The project illuminates how the social experience of the movies, and the engagement with the pleasures and fantasies of the cinema, shaped the relationships of Asian immigrants to both their national communities and American modernity.

Introduction

Japanese showmen opened the first moving picture theatre in Los Angeles the same year that the federal government passed the Gentleman's Agreement restricting immigration from Japan. Bungoro Tani, a prominent merchant from Wakayama-Ken prefecture and vice president of the Asia Company, the largest and wealthiest Japanese-owned business in Los Angeles, unveiled the International Theatre in 1907.[1] According to Junko Ogihara, the Toyo Theatre followed in 1907 and the Fuji Theatre in 1925. These theatres catered to both urban residents and rural migrants coming into Los Angeles from outlying farming areas. In fact, many rural Japanese traveled into the city in their automobiles to go shopping and then end their days in the movie houses to watch American and Japanese silent films.[2]

The moving picture theatre, crowded amongst the grocers, billiard halls, restaurants, nurseries, and rooming houses on East First, Jackson, and San Pedro streets, made the Japanese district, Nihonmachi, more than an enclave of ethnic businesses. In a regular column, "Lee Side O'LA," that appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, the reporter Lee Shippey noted in 1928 that the Fuji Theatre seized the bustle of the streets and hung promotional billboards for Japanese films on a building on San Pedro street:

> On the San Pedro wall of the building occupied by the Asia Company is a picture frame five feet long and three feet wide in which, nearly any time you pass, you are likely to notice the picture of a Japanese girl. And if you

---

[1] William H. Mason and John A. McKinstry. *The Japanese of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: California Bicentennial Publication, 1969), 35.

[2] Junko Ogihara. "The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles During the Silent Film Era" *Film History* 4:2 (1990)

> pass it often you will note that it is not the same girl every time. On the contrary, there seems to be a change of pictures about once a week… it is a Japanese billboard—and we must concede that it has many advantages over the American billboard. The girls pictured in it are the film favorites of Japan, and the posters are printed in Japan, only the dates and announcements of the local theater added to them here. And every Nipponese who passes to stop to look. "Ah, ha!" they murmur (in Japanese) "Uragi Teruko in 'The Geisha Girl.' And next week Yotaro Katsumi. We must see them.[3]

The theatre originally showcased both American and Japanese films. By 1928, however, the showmen of Fuji Theatre obtained a contract with a major Japanese motion picture company and began exclusively screening pictures from Japan. As the observations of Shippey suggest, the sensations of Japanese film culture could be experienced without even entering the moving picture theatre. It was integrated into the street life of the Japanese district in Los Angeles and could be experienced by merely walking in the city.

Similar to cities and towns across the nation, Asian immigrant communities in the United States were transformed by the rise of mass culture and institutions like the cinema. Urban dwellers and rural migrants of the Japanese district in Los Angeles were as apt to experience space, sense, sociability, and mobility in as profound and conflicted ways as individuals in other parts of the city. Though often portrayed as static, timeless, and insular, Asian districts, neighborhoods, and streets in the United States were abound with the daily interchanges, casual encounters, and sensory experiences that scholars have described as formative of modernity at the turn of the century. In moving picture theatres, Asian immigrants could view the same Hollywood pictures as audiences across

[3] *Los Angeles Times* 27 Feb 1928

the United States. Indeed, as the opening anecdote suggests, they could watch the same Japanese films, and adore the same movie stars, that were popularly consumed in Tokyo.

This dissertation begins with an inquiry into the varied places from where Asian immigrants in the United States experienced the promises of modernity in the early twentieth century. As a multiple site study, the project maps film cultures in a region that spans across the Pacific Coast coast cities of Seattle and Stockton to the rural plantation towns of the Hawaiian islands. I argue that the analysis of Asian immigrants and their relationship to movie-going accomplishes much more than a restorative contribution to the history of American cinema and mass culture. Though it is important to recognize the multiplicities of American film history, and to move our analysis beyond the focus on east coast cities and European immigrants, I argue that "Asian Americans at the Movies" sheds crucial insight into the ways race, labor, and migration formed the public sphere of the cinema in the first four decades of its inception. Moreover, I inquire into the various--and at times unexpected--ways that Asian immigrants participated in the growing worlds of mass culture. I illuminate how the social experience of visiting the movies, and the engagement with the pleasures and fantasies of the cinema, shaped the relationships of Asian immigrants to both their national communities and American modernity.

My approach to this project draws upon the concepts raised in the field of cinema history, or what some scholars have described as the "historic turn" in film studies.[4] This mode of inquiry generally departs from the analysis of film as an exclusively psychic or ideological function of the apparatus of the cinema. Following the scholarship of Miriam

[4] A nuanced discussion of these major debates in film studies by Sumiko Higashi, Charles Musser, Richard Abel, Jane Gaines, and Lee Grieveson appears in *Cinema Journal* vol. 44 no. 1 (Fall 2004).

Hansen and others, I emphasize the social and public dimensions of the cinema. By elaborating on the social scene of the movies, I seek to address the cinematic relationship to mass culture and consumerism, work and leisure time, and the organization of public space in urban and rural locations. I focus on the terms of exhibition and spectatorship to address a sphere of the cinema at once historically variable and socially contingent. In drawing on this approach, I seek to place Asian immigrants as historical subjects of the cinema and mass culture during the early twentieth century. Thus I depart from earlier studies that have examined Asians as racialized objects in mainstream cinema or resistant images of alternative media.[5]

Broadly, I address the question, posed by Miriam Hansen in relation to the early cinema, "whose public sphere?"[6] This question derives from the contentious debates around audiences and the proletarian and/or bourgeois potentialities of the early cinema. Scholars tend to agree that the cinema transformed in the years following the end of the nickelodeon period. The ascendance of the narrative or story film, picture palaces, standardized exhibition practices, corporate consolidation of film production, and a wholesale and sanitized appeal to the genteel classes mark this momentous shift in American cinema.[7] According to Hansen, these transformations aligned the cinema with

---

[5] On representation of Asians in Hollywood cinema, see Robert Lee. *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999); Gina Marchetti. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1994); On independent media, see Peter X. Feng. *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002)

[6] Miriam Hansen. "Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* Ed. by Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker (London: BFI Publishing, 1990)

[7] On the history of the cinema before 1907, see Charles Musser. *The Emergence of Cinema: the American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1994); See also *The Silent Cinema Reader* Ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Kramer (London: Routledge, 2004)

the cultural standards of the bourgeois public sphere and "adapted the mechanisms of exclusion and abstract identity characteristic of the paradigm."

What this gentrification to the cinema suppressed, as others have also suggested, were the possibilities, and indeed the actualities, of an alternative or plurality of public spheres. In *Babel and Babylon* (1991), Hansen explores the potentialities of the early cinema to "offer a horizon that made it possible to negotiate the historical experience of displacement in a new form." For Hansen, the formation of an alternative sphere is embedded in – rather than exterior to –mass commercial culture. "If an alternative formation of spectatorship can be claimed, it existed both because of and despite the economic mechanisms upon which the cinema was founded, its status as an industrial-commercial public sphere." The notion of an alternative public sphere, herein, is tied to the institutionalization of the cinema. Yet, there is recognition of a "social horizon of experience" that problematizes the notion of a public organized "from above." In this regard, the public of the cinema also forms from a relation to the "experiencing subjects themselves, on the basis of their context of living."[8]

In her account of a historical film spectatorship, Hansen focuses on eastern and southern European immigrant laborers in general and young immigrant women living on the Lower East Side from 1907 to 1910 in particular. The significance of the cinema for these social groups, as she suggests, emerges in relation to their exclusion from dominant forms of public discourse and their displacement by migration, industrialization, and urbanization. In this capacity, the terms of an alternative or plural public can be

---

[8] Miriam Hansen. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991)

apprehended in the integration of cinema into the public life of immigrant culture and in the experience of a temporality distinct from the factory clock. Though immeasurable in an empirical sense, Hansen suggests that a horizon of reception for the immigrant spectator can be traced in the sphere of exhibition and it can be discerned in the unpredictability of a film spectatorship defined socially rather than textually. That is to say, the terms of an alternative formation can be traced in the public dimension of film spectatorship which is distinguished from a textual spectatorship because "it entails the very moment in which reception can gain a momentum of its own, and give rise to formations not necessarily anticipated in the context of production." For the nickelodeon era, the horizon of reception can be located, for example, in the interpretive agency of the local exhibitor or the individual showmanship of the theatre owner; in the "distractions" of shows and other attractions that maintain a locally specific and interactive dimension of viewership; or in the sociability emergent in the intermingling of social classes in public space.[9]

Following the work of Hansen and others, I seek to reconstruct the horizon of reception for Asian immigrants at the movies. In order to understand the significance of the cinema for Asian immigrants during the first half of the twentieth century, it is important to locate the historical circumstances that have shaped their lives and experiences. Though Asian immigrants arrived from different countries and with undoubtedly complex and varied expectations, experiences, backgrounds, languages, and cultures, their livelihood in the United States prior to the Second World War was

[9] Ibid.

commonly bound by what Lisa Lowe observes as the contradiction between the capitalist desire for cheapened differentiated labor and the needs of the state for a homogenous citizenry. From 1850 to World War II, the incorporation of Asian laborers into a segmented labor and economic sphere in the United States was met by the need of the nation to form a unified citizenry. The attempt of the state to resolve this contradiction resulted in the passing of legal exclusions against immigration, citizenship, property ownership, and interracial marriage.[10]

This project explores the significance of public life in a period of "early Asian America" formed by the exclusions that have estranged Asian immigrants from the political community of the nation. In this regard, I elaborate on the experiences of Asian immigrants at the cinema in contradictory terms. In her study of African American moviegoing in Chicago during the 1890 to 1930 Great Migration, Jacqueline Stewart argues that black encounters with the cinema were shaped within the contradictions of the modernist promise of urban mobility and the racial hierarchies and restrictions impeding these transitions into and through modernity. At the cinema, African Americans were depicted in racist portrayals, segregated in theatres, and excluded from production. "In light and in spite of these conditions, the cinema functioned as a contested discursive site in which Black subjects could see and be seen in modern ways; it served as a contested discursive and physical space in which Black public spheres were constructed as well as interpreted, empowered, and suppressed."[11] Similarly, I explore the ways that racial

---

[10] Lisa Lowe. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke UP, 1996)

[11] Jacqueline Stewart. *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2005)

exclusions against Asian immigrants converged with the promises of modernity and everyday experiences such as visiting the theatre. Yet, I also locate the emergent possibilities that the cinema offered for Asian immigrants to refashion themselves and forge another sphere of engagement.

The social and cultural aspects of Asian immigrant life during this difficult period of exclusion have been largely subordinated in historical scholarship.[12] Broadly, this period in Asian American history has been understudied to the extent that Sucheng Chan calls it the "dark ages" of the field.[13] With research heavily focused on the nineteenth century, scholars emphasized labor exploitation and the anti-Asian movements.[14] Though the turn to social history in the field has shed light on the agency of Asian immigrants, the scholarship remains fixated on labor unions and political organizing. Dorothy Fujita Rony argues that this concentration, as one limitation, focuses the field on an overwhelmingly male domain to the neglect of women and the private spheres where their labor remained invisible.[15] I suggest that the turn to mass culture and the cinema in Asian immigrant communities allows for analysis of social relations often obscured in the exclusive focus on labor and politics.

---

[12] For one of the only collection of essays on cultural history and Asian American studies, see *Re/Collecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History* Ed. Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2002)

[13] Sucheng Chan. "Asian American Historiography" *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 65 No. 3 (Aug 1996)

[14] On labor history and Asian immigrants, see Chris Friday. "Asian American Labor and Historical Interpretation" *Labor History* Vol. 35 Issue 4 (Fall 1994)

[15] Dorothy Fujita-Rony. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)

Indeed, commercial leisure in the early twentieth century offered a popular realm for a range of interactions across different social classes. For example, scholars have argued that the rise of mass culture and the movies loosened the ties between leisure and male culture to open up a popular realm for female negotiation of labor demands, leisure time, familial obligation, heterosocial courtship, and Americanization.[16] Though the literature focuses exclusively on European immigrants, some scholars have recently turned their analysis beyond these well-studied communities.[17] Linda Maram has examined the largely homosocial world of working class amusements for Filipino migrant men in the first half of the twentieth century.[18] Other scholars have explored intergenerational dynamics and Americanism in the commercial leisure and recreation of Asian immigrant communities in the prewar era. They address the movies, popular culture, and pageantry as sites for the negotiation of ethnic identity, community, and racial and gendered meanings.[19]

---

[16] Kathy Peiss. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1986); Elizabeth Ewen. “City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies” *Signs* (Spring 1980); Nan Enstad. *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Columbia UP, 1999)

[17] On the impact of mass culture on Mexican immigrant communities in the United States, see Vicki Ruiz. “The Flapper and the Chaperone: Historical Memory among Mexican-American Women” *Seeking Common Ground: Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States* Ed. Donna Gabaccia (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992); “ ‘Star Struck’: Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican American Woman, 1920-1950” *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* Ed. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz Pasquera (Berkeley: UC Press, 1993); Douglas Monroy. “ ‘Our Children Get So Different Here’: Film, Fashion, Popular Culture, and the Process of Cultural Syncretization in Mexican Los Angeles, 1900-1933” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 19 No. 1 (Spring 1988); Laura Serna. “ ‘We’re Going Yankee’: American Movies, Mexican Nationalism, Transnational Cinema, 1917-1935” (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2006)

[18] Linda Espana-Maram. *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’ Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006)

[19] Valerie Matsumoto. “Japanese American Women and the Creation of Urban Nisei Culture in the 1930s.” *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* Ed. Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley:

Building upon this scholarship, the dissertation explores the culture of movie-going in the formation of public life in Asian immigrant communities. Unlike most studies of film history, which focus on the east coast, I locate my study on the Pacific Coast and Hawaii to highlight the particularly strong role that Asian immigrants played in the modernization of these regions. As Edna Bonacich argues, immigrants of Asian origin emerged in and facilitated the early development of capitalism in the West. From 1880 to WWII, Asian immigrants provided the necessary labor for a dependent mode of production that enabled monopoly capitalists to rapidly accumulate and develop their railroad, mining, and agriculture industries in California. American agricultural capitalists in Hawaii also imported Asian labor for the sugar and pineapple industries. In the prewar period, the racialized and non-citizen status of Asian origin immigrants enhanced the incorporation of their labor into the United States economy as temporary and vulnerable to exploitation. The vulnerability of Asian workers ensured their segregation into the lowest labor market and a dual-wage labor system that paid them less than white workers to ensure "ethnic antagonism."[20]

I take the term "transpacific West," proposed by Dorothy Fujita Rony in *American Workers, Colonial Power* (2003), to name the significance of Pacific crossings to the region. Scholars have emphasized the importance of multiple migrations in the new Western history, suggesting that Asian immigration and settlement on the Pacific Coast

---

University of Califonia, 1999); Shirley Jennifer Lim. *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960* (New York: NYU Press, 2005); Lon Kurashige. *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002)

[20] Edna Bonacich. "Asian Labor in the Development of California and Hawaii" *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Laborers in the United States before WWII* Ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich (Berkeley: UC Press, 1984)

mandates a reconsideration of the westward movement of European immigrants as the defining axes of the history of the U.S. West.[21] The port cities of the Pacific Coast, as Fujita Rony argues, were important because of their proximity to Asia in similar ways that urban centers such as New York and Boston were significant as entry ports for cargo traffic from Europe. [22] The region served as a circuit of labor, as well as transport, trade, and commerce, for the United States to develop economic and political interest across the Pacific. Hawaii also bears important relation to the mainland Pacific Coast. Particularly with the growth of the sugar cane industries, Asian immigration linked the region together as a circuit of inter-migration and arena of transpacific encounter. Moreover, John Whitehead argues that Hawaii figured prominently in the nation's westward expansion and may be considered America's first and last Far West. Hawaii has been regarded as a part of the greater Pacific and the thrust of American and European colonialism in the region rather than as a part of American national expansion. However, commercial expansion and the tenets of Manifest Destiny that led to the settlement of the Pacific Coast also extended to Hawaii.[23]

My dissertation thus explores the culture of movie-going in the transpacific West as a region that may be considered a crossroads to both sides of the Pacific. Conceptually,

---

[21] Patricia Nelson Limerick. "Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West" *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992); "Common Cause? Asian American History and Western American History" *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* Ed. Gary Okihiro, Marilyn Alquizola, Dorothy Fujita Rony, and K. Scott Wong (Pullman: Washington State Univ Press, 1995); See also Gail Nomura. "Significant Lives: Asia and Asian Americans in the History of the U.S. West" *The Western History Quarterly* Vol. 25 No. 1 (Spring 1994); "Asian American Frontiers" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* Vol. 17 No. 3 (1996)

[22] Dorothy Fujita-Rony. *American Workers, Colonial Power*, 27.

[23] John Whitehead. "Hawaii: the First and Last Far West?" *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 23 No. 2 (May 1992)

the region offers a productive place to consider the dynamics of immigrant culture during the first half of the twentieth century. Eiichiro Azuma has suggested that the American West constituted a borderland where the expansion of the United States met the project of Japanese imperialism and modernity. Azuma's important argument mandates an understanding of the complex social arena of the region whereby European dominance collided and overlapped with competing national interests and immigrant counterstruggles.[24]

Given the dearth of comparable studies, this project relies upon uncovering primary sources that could not only attest to the presence of a film culture in Asian immigrant communities during the early twentieth century but also illuminate the dynamics that made these encounters at the movies socially meaningful. I approach this study with what Paula Fass calls a "disciplined imagination." According to Fass, this concept recognizes the need for an analytical practice that can address socially interrelated and embedded experiences. Such an approach attempts to dislodge analysis from historical and sociological determinism and recognize the possibilities for change.[25]

This project necessitated researching beyond traditional film history archives. Though occasionally mentioned, Asian immigrants were largely absent in accounts from the trade press and mainstream local newspapers. In order to document the fleeting culture of the movies in Asian immigrant communities, I draw upon a varied and largely

---

[24] Eiichiro Azuma. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2005)

[25] Paula Fass. "Cultural History/Social History: Some Reflections on a Continuing Dialogue" *Journal of Social History* vol. 37 no. 1 (Fall 2003); See also Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt. "Introduction" *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1999)

nonfilmic archive that includes oral histories, immigrant papers, photographs, local business directories, and film ephemera such advertisements and movie billings. Often, the most detailed accounts of film exhibition in Asian immigrant communities appeared in federal government records, in the reports of social scientists and reformers, in civil court transcripts, and in the writings and correspondences of Hawaiian sugar planters. I recognize these disparate sources as socially situated. In my account of Hawaii, for example, I do not take the records of Hawaiian sugar planters as objective or neutral observations. Rather, I locate the Hawaiian sugar planters as historical agents. As Nicole Eustace argues, "any and every social actor is embedded in a matrix of relationships based on a myriad categories of identity and power… [and though] no two subject positions are ever identical… each and every one can be plotted to tell us something about the matrix with in which all are situated."[26]

The dissertation begins with the story of a Japanese film scene in major spots of Asian migration and settlement in the transpacific West. Chapter One, "Pacific Theatre: Japanese Showmen and the Empire of Cheap Attractions, 1907-1942" shows how Japanese showmen crafted a world of cheap attractions from the start of the nickelodeon era that was informed by their status as first generation elites. In their promotion of film and film culture, Japanese showmen sought to reinforce the cultural politics of racial uplift, Americanism, and immigrant nationalism in their communities. They strove to build a movie-going culture that complemented—rather than disrupted—the dominant public sphere of immigrant society. Recognizing the influential role of the showmen in

[26] Nicole Eustace. "When Fish Walk on Land: Social History in a Postmodern World" *Journal of Social History* vol. 37 no. 1 (Fall 2003), 88.

shaping film exhibition, I argue that these cultural spaces were embedded in the dual national worlds inhabited by many first generation Japanese in the United States. In the decade leading up to the Second World War, Japanese ties to Japan were rearticulated as "divided loyalties." Consequently, Japanese showmen and their movie-going cultures garnered greater attention from the federal government as they were identified as a part of the leadership in Japanese immigrant communities.

In Chapter Two, "Filipinos Positively Allowed: Race, Property, and Dispossession in the Migrant City, 1924-1940s," I argue that property relations shaped the culture of the movies for both the showman and the spectator. I focus on the particular site of Stockton, California in order to show the ways that racial segregation and the alien land laws structured the cultural landscape for Asian immigrants. In particular, the chapter shifts attention to the Filipino spectator of the Japanese run amusements. Rather than exclusively examine the intentions and motivations of the showmen, I consider the unexpected social and political relations of a filmic culture located at a major intersection of migration in the U.S. West. In the 1930s, Filipinos fashioned a dynamic social world around leisure, entertainment, and consumption of American and Philippine films. I draw out the Japanese showman's role in this migrant social world. In exploring the unequal relationship between Japanese entrepreneurs and Filipino patrons, I illuminate the interdependent and contentious dynamics that shaped the relationship between two distinct Asian communities. Ultimately, this chapter underscores the unequal relations between Caucasians, Japanese, and Filipinos that shaped and indeed produced the public sphere of the cinema for Asian immigrant communities.

The second part of the dissertation moves from the urban and migratory context of California to the rural towns around the sugar cane fields in the Hawaiian islands. Though Honolulu fostered a dynamic film culture for Asian immigrants, I turn to the rural context to counter the prevailing assumptions that cinema was an urban phenomenon that most aptly articulated a metropolitan sensibility of American modernity. The study of film culture during the first several decades of the cinema has been bound by the tyranny of the city and most specifically Manhattan. Though understandable, the tendency to generalize this New York urban experience as emblematic of the history of the cinema obscures a number of important regional, ethnic, and racial differences.[27] Moreover, the rural context merits study because, as Kathryn Fuller notes, the majority of Americans until the 1920s lived in small towns and the rural countryside. By one estimate, seventy five percent of Americans in 1920 could be counted as living in small cities, towns, and rural areas.[28]

My final chapters investigate the relationship between labor and leisure by focusing on the Hawaii sugar cane industry. I examine the cultural sphere of movie-going formed by Hawaiian sugar planters, Japanese showmen, and the thousands of immigrants from the cane fields who crowded into the theatres to view a diverse program of moving pictures from Hollywood, Japan, and the Philippines. Chapter Three, "Social Reform, Plantation Amusements, and the Asian Labor Problem in Rural Hawaii, 1909-1930s," begins with a project of rural modernity that sugar planters initiated in 1909 after the first

---

[27] For a critical discussion of the urban and Manhattan concentration in film scholarship, see Robert C. Allen. "Manhattan Myopia: or, Oh! Iowa!" *Cinema Journal* 35 No. 3 (Spring 1996)

[28] Kathryn Fuller. *At the Moving Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1996), 3.

major labor strike on their plantations. Drawing on the momentum of the progressive reform movement sweeping the continental United States, the sugar planters of Hawaii introduced a program of social engineering to placate and reform their laborers. They subsequently made the moving pictures and the building of theatres a part of their project. Though the movies arrived in rural Hawaii much earlier than 1909, the initiatives of the Hawaiian sugar planters significantly bolstered the circulation and reception of moving pictures across the islands. I explore the various methods that planters employed to manage the film culture in Hawaii. In particular, I examine the creation of a censorship bureau in the 1920s that seemed to indicate that planters preferred certain films over others. I argue that these preferences illuminated the subtlest strategies of planters to reinforce the racial divisions between laborers. In turn, I locate the social relations that planters sought to regulate as the imminent danger to their rule in Hawaii.

Finally, Chapter Four, "Dangerous Amusements: Labor, Sociability, and Asian Immigrant Counterpublics," addresses a movie-going scene in rural Hawaii that exceeded the motivations of sugar planters. It traces a film culture formed by Japanese immigrant showmen and the rural residents and the immigrant laborers of the sugar cane fields. From even the earliest days of cinema in Hawaii, the presence of Japanese showmen in the film circuit of Hawaii was pervasive. They operated show houses, worked as traveling exhibitors, and gained a foothold in the culture of the movies in ways that were unparallel to the U.S. mainland. However, these Japanese run amusements and the laborers who patronized them aroused concern for the planter class. Sugar planters necessarily worked with a number of Japanese showmen because they needed to satiate social welfare requisites that were standardized in the sugar industry after 1909. These

engagements with the Japanese showmen were increasingly strained with labor unrest and increased antagonism over Japanese presence in Hawaii and the Pacific. However, the most dire concerns over the movies expressed by sugar planters entailed the movie-going practices of their largely Filipino and Japanese immigrant laborers. I trace the apprehensions and anxieties that planters exhibited over the movies, the showmen, and their spectators in order to suggest that this film scene comprised an alternative public sphere in rural Hawaii. I suggest that the conditions for another sphere of engagement can be discerned even in spite of the sugar cane industry's domination over life and labor in Hawaii.

Chapter One

Pacific Theatre: Japanese Showmen and the Empire of Cheap Attractions, 1907-1942

Sanji Abe opened the first moving picture theatre meant to showcase exclusively Japanese films on the island Hawaii in 1922. Born in Kailua-Kona in 1895, Abe was a showman who wore many hats. Like many of his class and generation, he took a prominent role in the racially embattled prewar society of Hawaii. An immigrant "pioneer," his civic involvement included work for the Hilo Police Department, first as an interpreter then as a Deputy Sheriff, and then service in the U.S. Army during WWI.[1] He was president of the Society of American Citizens of Japanese Ancestry, known as the Nisei Club, and in 1941 became the first American of Japanese descent to enter the Hawaii Territorial Senate as a Republican Senator from Hilo.[2] His ties and affiliations across the Pacific were reinforced by a brief stay in Japan, assuring that he would share the traits of many Kibei, American born Japanese who studied or lived abroad in Japan. His theater, not surprisingly, exemplified the dual national worlds that many prewar Japanese immigrants, Issei and others, inhabited as subjects who lived "between two empires."[3]

---

[1] Abe's name is reported amongst a list of police officers present during a 1938 Hilo solidarity strike with Honolulu workers for the Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company in Hilo. The strike became popularly known as the "Hilo Massacre" because of violent police suppression; William J. Puette. *The Hilo Massacre: Hawaii's Bloody Monday August 1st, 1938* (Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1988), 86.

[2] "Sanji Abe First Big Islander out for Senate" *Honolulu Advertiser* 2 May 1940

[3] Eiichiro Azuma. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford UP 2005)

Sanji Abe named his venue the Yamato Theatre, an important descriptor in that immigrant island world. In Meiji Japan, the term "Yamato" came to signify a racial ideology that named a common lineage by which the Japanese race descended. John Dower notes that the idea of the "Yamato race," derived from mythohistory, was particularly salient with the militarized imperial state. It made purity the unique trait of the Japanese self just as innocence comprised the "exceptional" trait of the American self. Most significantly, "Yamato" formed the crux of the racial ideology that Japan bore in the crucible of the Pacific Wars.[4] In a place where Japanese immigrants comprised the majority population, the name "Yamato" made clear that showman Sanji Abe would be neither restrained nor reticent in his promotion of Japanese film culture. He brought popular Japanese films to Hawaii and screened them just as they were in Japan, with a benshi who provided introductory remarks, narration, and explanation. As Japanese immigrant nationalism peaked during the 1930s, showman Abe also welcomed the sailors who arrived at Hilo from Imperial Japanese Navy ships into this moving picture theatre.[5] At a gathering meant for those new arrivals at the Yamato Theatre in 1939, showman Abe included a program of moving pictures that federal authorities called "nationalistic."[6] Abe and other Hawaiian residents attending these public rituals commemorating the Japanese military no doubt hoped to reinforce Japanese immigrant ties to Japan, and most

---

[4] John Dower. "Race, Language, and War in Two Cultures" in *Japan in War and Peace* (New York: The New Press, 1993)

[5] Although ceremonies commemorating the arrival of Imperial Navy ships from Japan to U.S. shores were held as early as 1875, they became regular public rituals after WWI when the ships started making regular trips to the ports of San Francisco and Los Angeles. See Brian Masaru Hayashi. "The Governed: Japanese Americans and Politics, 1880-1942" in *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), 50.

[6] Bob Dye. "The Case of Sanji Abe" *Honolulu* (Nov 2002)

importantly, to underscore the role elite immigrants played as "pioneers" of that modern nation.

Showman Abe brought these values to bear on the promotion of moving picture amusements. Although historians have paid little attention to these sites of immigrant nationalism, Japanese residents of Hawaii and other U.S. locales invested great energy and resources in movie theatres prior to World War II. Other showmen also crossed the Pacific and brought the moving pictures to urban centers and small towns throughout the continental United States and Hawaii. This chapter traces the formation of a vibrant Japanese film scene that spanned the Pacific and comprised a public sphere in immigrant society. It shows how the movie going worlds fostered by Japanese showmen mediated a cultural sphere of Japanese immigrant politics in two important phases.

The first phase, 1907 to 1924, has been commonly described as the "settlement period." Japanese showmen first opened their nickelodeon theatres during a moment in their communities when cultural reform, respectability, and Americanism comprised important political projects that not only "rooted" the Japanese immigrant community but also strengthened and reinforced their allegiances and ties to Japan. As Azuma argues, the period of settlement cannot be understood by the exclusive terms of race and labor. Rather, scholarship on the "settlement period" must grapple with the embedded ties of pre-1924 Japanese immigrant communities with the imperial and expansionist project of modern Japan.[7] In their showmanship and exhibition, Japanese movie men mediated the cultural politics and social boundaries of this difficult and hostile time period.

---

[7] Ibid., 9.

In the interwar period, 1924 to 1941, Japanese showmen played an even greater role in the cultural sphere of immigrant politics. The passage of the 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act, which severely restricted immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and nearly eliminated Asian immigration, energized Americanization projects in the United States.[8] From the perspective of Japanese immigrants, however, the 1924 Act merely added to an extensive series of anti-Japanese legislation that included the California alien land laws in 1913 and the Ozawa ruling in 1922. For Japanese immigrants, the exclusion act diminished any earlier aspirations for belonging in the United States and shifted their sights from America to Japan. Coupled with the outbreak of the undeclared war between Japan and China in 1931, Japanese nationalism surged in the post-1924 immigrant communities, assuring that showmen of Japanese descent would work harder to bolster immigrant cultural nationalisms during the interwar years.[9]

During this second period, the activities of Japanese movie house owners garnered more than publicity and community notice. As the Pacific Wars escalated and U.S. Japan relations deteriorated, Japanese showmen and their cheap amusements drew the attention of the United States government. The American government intervened more directly into the affairs of domestic minority populations and Japanese immigrant communities became targets of state surveillance. This chapter uses the term "Pacific Theatre" for the Japanese showmen and their empire of cheap attractions to name the

---

[8] The Act set quotas for immigration based on national origins, but prohibited Asian immigration by fully excluding the all "aliens ineligible for citizenship." See Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2004)

[9] Yuji Ichioka. "Japanese Immigrant Nationalism: The Issei and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-41" *California History* (1990)

cultural sphere of Japanese immigrant communities, to call attention to their dual national worlds, and to highlight the cultural politics involved in its production.

Showman, Promoter, Impresario

For Japanese entrepreneurial men, the operation of nickelodeon and picture palace theatres offered an opening into an American market largely foreclosed to them. As early as 1903, Japanese showmen in Seattle owned and operated a moving picture theatre called the Bison Theatre. Other theatre openings by Japanese showmen in Seattle followed such as the Nippon Kan in 1909 and the Arctic Theatre in 1912. The moving picture trade press reported in 1919 a bold enterprise when Japanese movie men built and purchased ten different moving picture theatres in Seattle, mostly located in the lower downtown section of the city where the majority of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants resided throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Commenting to the trade press on the operation of moving picture theatres by Japanese showmen, E. Fujimoto, who worked as the purchasing agent and supervisor for seven of the ten Seattle theatres, remarked: "Japanese living in Seattle want to invest their money, but there are only three business lines open to them, truck farming, the hotel business and the motion picture business."[10]

The prospect of even securing their own businesses was slim for most Japanese immigrants. According to Masao Suzuki, Japanese immigrants worked overwhelmingly in low wage and unskilled occupations even though they tended to have higher rates of literacy and educational attainment than their European immigrant counterparts.

---

[10] *Moving Picture World* 18 January 1919

According to the U.S. Census in 1904, 89 percent of Japanese immigrants in the continental U.S. worked as either "farm labor," "laborer," or "domestic" while only 2 percent counted as "farmer," "business owner," or "professional." The U.S. Census in 1923 records an increase to 20 percent of the "professional" class in Japanese immigrant communities. Suzuki, however, notes that this percentage increase does not necessarily mean that Japanese immigrants achieved economic mobility; rather, the purported increase was largely due to the disproportionate return migration of Japanese from the lowest occupational ranks. Of the 12,342 Japanese leaving the U.S. for Japan between 1921 and 1930, 85 percent were farm laborers, nonfarm laborers or domestic workers.[11]

For the few in Japanese immigrant communities, the end of the novelty period and the boom in nickelodeon theatres across the country opened small yet significant opportunities. There were an estimated eight thousand nickelodeons by 1908 and over ten thousand by 1910. The nickelodeon theatre transformed and replaced earlier film exhibition and this shift expanded, to a degree, the range of openings into the business of the movies. Whereas most opera houses and theatres were operated by American born and local elites, nickelodeons created opportunities for newcomers that were previously unavailable. In urban centers like New York, many of the managers of nickelodeon theatres were Jewish immigrants relatively new to the city.[12] Compared to the earlier phase of entertainment, there were fewer obstacles to entering film exhibition during and

---

[11] Masao Suzuki. "Success Story? Japanese Immigrant Economic Achievement and Return Migration, 1920-1930" *The Journal of Economic History* Vol. 55., No 4 (Dec 1995); See also "Selective Immigration and Ethnic Economic Achievement: Japanese Americans before World War II" *Explorations in Economic History* 39 (2002)

[12] Charles Musser. *The Emergence of the American Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1990)

after the nickelodeon era. Many novice showmen could consult the abundant advice literature from the readily accessible film exhibitor's trade press.[13]

In urban centers like Seattle, Los Angeles, and Honolulu, as well as outlying small town and agricultural regions, Japanese immigrant men secured a foothold in the business of circulating, exhibiting, and promoting the moving pictures. However, their entrance into the world of moving picture amusements required more than opportunity. Compared to other businesses and investments in the immigrant economy, the moving picture theatre was a considerable risk. The North American Japanese Association of Seattle surveyed four Japanese owned moving picture theatres in 1930. The average investment into opening a theatre was $11,250 with an estimated annual income of $22,500. Other businesses required far less capital up front. Restaurants, pool halls, and grocery stores averaged an initial investment of, respectively, $5595, $3,000, and $4,712. Hotels required more investment capital than moving picture theatres at an average $13,242; yet, they yielded far greater profits, an estimated $42,868 annual income.[14]

With greater economic vulnerability in the business of moving pictures, most Japanese immigrants with the means might have sought their livelihood and fortunes elsewhere. Junko Ogihara notes that the two earliest Japanese owned moving picture theatres in Los Angeles, the International Theatre and Toyo Theatre, struggled from their start in 1907 to their closing in 1918. Ogihara contends that before 1920 Japanese moving

---

[13] Kathryn Fuller. " 'Let's Go to the Picture Show': The Nickelodeon" in *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996)

[14] Business Census of Seattle Japanese Community, December 1930, North American Japanese Association, cited by F. Frank Miyamoto in *Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle*. Publications in the Social Sciences II, no. 2 (Seattle: Univ of Washington, 1984), 73.

picture theatres were difficult to sustain in part because Japanese films were more difficult to come by since the industry was still in a nascent phase.[15] Because of the comparably greater capital required to open a theatre, Japanese showmen who entered the business of the moving pictures seldom did so alone. They often formed partnerships or stock companies and pooled their resources. When the Fuji Theatre in Los Angeles opened in 1925, the two Japanese showmen secured capital from shop owners in Little Tokyo.[16] In Honolulu, the Asahi Theatre was built with the investment of ten shareholders who contributed two hundred dollars per person.[17] Many of the Japanese showmen were also members of prominent prefectural, fraternal, trade, and business associations. These organizations served the needs of newcomers and provided mutual aid and rotating credit.[18] For Japanese immigrants, the most prominent of these associations was the Japanese Association of America which formed in 1908 and included branches throughout California, Washington, and many cities in the Pacific Northwest and Southwest.[19]

---

[15] Junko Ogihara. "The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles During the Silent Film Era" *Film History* 4:2 (1990)

[16] Ogihara, "The Exhibition of Films," 84.

[17] Lowell Angell, "Theaters in the Aala District," *A'ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003), 35.

[18] Sucheng Chan, "The Social Organization of Asian Immigrant Communities," in *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), 63-78.

[19] According to Yuji Ichioka, the Japanese Associations retained close relations with the Japanese government, particularly with local Japanese consulates. The Japanese Associations greatly aided Japanese immigrant settlement; yet they also often served as moral guardians over the Japanese immigrant community. See "Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government: A Special Relationship, 1909-1926" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 46 No. 1 (August 1977)

Even when resources could be secured, Japanese immigrants found that operating moving picture theatres and businesses were particularly difficult in the anti-Asian city. When the news of a Japanese led "theatre buying movement" reached the Seattle community in 1919, there was, as one journalist described it, a "feeling of alarm."[20] The acquisition and operation of so many moving picture theatres by Japanese showmen aroused the concern of many in the Seattle community. Particularly with the end of WWI, Japanese immigrants experienced a re-energized anti-Japanese exclusion movement in Seattle. According to Kazuo Ito, nativists in Seattle decried the opportunities many Seattle Japanese gained when workers left for the war front.[21]

The foothold that Japanese immigrants secured in the economy was evident to many in Seattle. By 1920, Seattle Japanese owned 1,462 establishments in sixty-five different businesses. Although they comprised only 2.8 percent of the population, they owned 26 percent of hotels in the city, 23 percent of barbershops, and 26 percent of dye and cleaning businesses.[22] Frustrated by these inroads that Japanese immigrants gained in the Seattle economy, white business owners organized for Japanese exclusion. In 1919, they formed the Anti-Japanese League and garnered enthusiastic support from the Seattle City Council, American Legion, and *Seattle Star* newspaper. In 1921, Washington state legislators passed the Alien Land Law which restricted the property ownership of "aliens ineligible for citizenship." The law covered agricultural holdings as well as business and

---

[20] *Moving Picture World* 18 January 1919

[21] Kazuo Ito. *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* Trans. by Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Japanese Community Services, 1973), 124.

[22] Shelley Sunn Hee Lee. "Cosmopolitan Identities: Japanese Americans in Seattle and the Pacific Rim, 1900-1942" (PhD Dissertation, Stanford University 2005), 44.

residential realty, although most of the cases brought against Japanese immigrations for violation of the law involved farm property.[23] The city of Seattle also passed a municipal ordinance in 1921 that restricted the licensing of select urban businesses (including employment agencies, billiard halls, and dance halls) to aliens without citizenship.[24]

Speaking on behalf of the Seattle Japanese showmen, Fujimoto responded to the hostile reaction and "yellow peril" sentiment permeating the Seattle community by emphasizing the desire of Japanese movie men to practice American business methods:

> In entering the motion picture business we are not trying to take away from Americans as much money as possible and give nothing in return. We want to give our employees, who are invariably Americans, a square deal. We always co-operate with the unions, and our operators will be found to be as well if not better satisfied than those working in American-owned theatres. Neither are we trying to dominate prices of the film. We realize that the producer must be paid according to scale, if he is to continue to produce good pictures, and we are willing to pay our share.[25]

The Japanese showman's appeal to reciprocity, a "square deal," and the intention of "paying our share" undoubtedly signaled their desire to project themselves in the standard of American labor.[26] Fujimoto's specific reference to the theatres' cooperation with local

---

[23] Ito, *Issei*, 168.

[24] In Asakura v. Seattle, 122 Wash. 81 (Wash. 1922), the Supreme Court in Washington held the statute to be legal. Two years later, the U.S. Supreme Court held the ruling in violation of the 1911 U.S.-Japan Treaty.

[25] *Moving Picture World* 18 January 1919

[26] In the late nineteenth century, immigrants and women workers were perceived as threatening to American labor by their willingness to accept lower wages and their inability to acculturate to the rising standards of American consumer living. Chinese immigrants were particularly lambasted by American labor for accepting lowered wages. Anti-Chinese proponents believed that Chinese laborers were willing to work for "unfree" wages because they did not participate in the culture of consumerism and, without families to support, maintained fundamentally lower standards of living. Chinese exclusion from these standards of living and labor demarcated the racial borders of American labor and working class identity. See Lawrence Glickman. "Inventing the 'American Standard of Living': Gender, Race, and Working Class Identity, 1880-1925" *Labor History* Vol. 34 Issue 2-3 (1993); Nayan Shah. "White Labor and the American Standard of Living," in *Contagious Divide: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley:

labor unions was especially apt given that the hostility directed towards Japanese businesses came from not only white businesses owners but also the American labor movement in Seattle. As Dana Frank notes, the Seattle AFL excluded Japanese immigrants from union membership and promoted anti-Asian consumer campaigns that, in effect, reinforced class solidarity and white identity. In the 1920s, a number of restaurant and craft unions in Seattle declared boycotts on Japanese establishments and identified them as "scab" businesses. With their exclusion from union membership, Japanese workers and businesses owners were positioned as antithetical to the "American standard of labor." "Not only was 'union' actively equated with 'white,'" Frank argues, "but the converse as well: 'Nonwhite' functioned as an easily accessible code for 'non-union.' A Japanese American-owned restaurant was by definition a 'scab' restaurant."[27] In order to conduct business in the hostile racial climate of Seattle, Japanese business owners like the theatre showmen necessarily devised strategies to respond to the circumstances that placed them in opposition to American business and labor. The assurance of union cooperation undoubtedly signaled one common mode by which Japanese immigrants attempted to navigate the world of anti-Japanese politics.

Additionally, showman Fujimoto's appeal to "American standards" responded to American racism with the prevailing discourse in Japanese immigrant communities. From their perspective, Japanese emigration, from the onset, was meant to promote the colonialist ambitions of a modernizing Japan. Between 1891 and 1909, the Japanese

---

Univ of California, 2001); Chandan Reddy. "Home, Houses, Non-Identity: Paris is Burning" in *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity* Ed. Rosemary George (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998)

[27] Dana Frank. *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1994), 230.

government sought to regulate and limit the emigration of Japanese citizens from the "lower classes" by separating Japanese emigrants into passport categories that differentiated between the undesirable Japanese deemed to be the "culprits" for anti-Japanese racism and the "gentlemen" who could appropriately represent the modern and civilized traits of the Japanese nation. These class demarcations in Japanese emigration law mirrored the class distinctions that the U.S. government created in their exclusion of Chinese immigration in the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Japanese officials were acutely aware of the treatment of Chinese in the U.S. and they aggressively sought to distinguish themselves from the status and fate of the "lowly Chinese." When faced with the American racism that had targeted earlier Chinese immigrants, Japanese elites and Meiji government officials decried the erroneous association the American public made between the Chinese and Japanese.[28] Moreover, with immigration from Japan to the United States severely restricted by the Gentlemen's Agreement, Japanese immigrants in the U.S. entered a phase of "permanent settlement" between 1907 and 1924. Japanese elites in the U.S. and Japan, in particular, sponsored a policy that called upon the Japanese immigrant community to adhere to American standards and gain the acceptance of the American populace. They believed that moral discipline and adherence to American standards and customs would shield the Japanese immigrant masses from

---

[28] Mitziko Sawada. "Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan's Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909" *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 60, No. 3 (Aug 1991)

American racism and simultaneously project a favorable international image of Japan as a civilized modern nation.[29]

Japanese immigrants were well aware of the presentation of a public self in the anti-Asian city. Even at the turn-of-the-century, Japanese arriving in the U.S. were engaged in a project of cultural reform. Narratives of "self made men" like those of Abraham Lincoln were popularly circulated in Japan and well known to Japanese arriving in the United States.[30] As Amy Sueyoshi notes, Japanese men and women widely adopted American style dress and bodily comportment amidst ever growing anti-Japanese sentiment. However, these quotidian acts of cross dressing "American" accomplished little for the Japanese immigrant community. As Sueyoshi suggests, the American public barely noticed these "mindful masquerades" that were performed. The failure of Japanese immigrants to pass as "American" merely underscored the intractability of their racially marked bodies. [31]

In the wake of a fervent anti-Japanese movement, Japanese movie men adopted their own "mindful masquerades." Showmanship entailed a great latitude for self-fashioning. Proprietors, exhibitors, impresarios often played active and creative roles in the presentation and exhibition of the moving pictures. The strategies they adopted drew in audiences, appealed to popular sensibilities, and often mediated social boundaries.

---

[29] Yuji Ichioka. *The Issei: the World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (London: The Free Press, 1988); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (Oxford: Oxford UP 2005)

[30] Earl Kimmonth. *The Self Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1981)

[31] Amy Sueyoshi. " 'Mindful Masquerades': Que(e)rying Japanese Immigrant Dress in Turn-of-the-Century San Francisco" *Frontiers* Vol. 25 No. 3 (2004)

Through their attention to exhibition and spectatorship, showmen orchestrated the cultural sphere of the cinema and, significantly, brought their own visions and values to bear upon the experience of movie-going. The theatres themselves were often evocative of the sensibilities that showmen were trying to convey in their promotion of the ethos of movie-going worlds. The names of the nickelodeon and picture palace theatres, as Kathryn Fuller points out, illustrated the varying appeals to new and old sensibilities; the local or the exotic; and the novel, spectacular, or respectable. Particularly throughout the silent film era, showman and exhibitors sought to create a vernacular to convey and promote a particular experience that would differentiate their theatres from their competitors.[32]

One of the most frequently used names for Japanese operated theatres was Kokusai or Bankoku which conveyed the international, worldly, and cosmopolitan character that many Japanese showmen strove to build into the social architecture of their theatres. Japanese owned moving picture theatres in Hawaii had names that included Yamato (Ancient Japan), Asahi (Morning Sun), and Ebisu (God of Wealth) which recalled a tradition or sentiment of Japan. Other theatres were called, simply, Nippon. It must be noted that the vibrancy of the Japanese film scene in Hawaii was incomparable to the cities in the continental U.S. and the sensibilities of the Hawaiian showmen, as well as the ease or unease of their expression, can be clearly seen in the naming of the theatres. Several theatres in Hawaii such as the Tanimoto Theatre on the Big Island and the Kobayashi Theatre in Maui were given the surname of their Japanese owners.

[32] Fuller, " 'Let's Go to the Picture Show', " 52.

Generally, Japanese showmen in Hawaii made the "Japanese-ness" of their theatres less veiled than their mainland counterparts.

Japanese proprietors, particularly in the continental U.S., most often adopted popular and common English language names for their theatres. On the one hand, moving picture theatres operated by Japanese showmen often solicited the trade of non-Japanese and in particular the working and migrant class that frequently lived or traversed the Japanese districts of major cities. In his 1933 study of Japanese immigrants in California, sociologist Edward K. Strong noted that while most Japanese businesses in the Walnut Grove district of California depended upon the patronage of their fellow countrymen, the Japanese owned moving picture theatre was "patronized by all races."[33] On the other hand, many Japanese showmen undoubtedly chose the names of their theatres with due caution in a climate of anti-Japanese hostility. All ten of the Seattle based and Japanese owned moving picture theatres mentioned in the 1919 *Moving Picture World* article were English language names, one even named "Occidental Theatre."[34] During the post WWI surge in anti-Japanese sentiment, many business owners in the Japanese district of Seattle removed any of their signboards printed in the Japanese language in accordance with their community's Americanization campaign. "The electric sign in front of Maneki Neko restaurant, well known to the Japanese community, was darkened," one Seattle resident recalls. "We wept over the disappearing Japanese signboards."[35]

---

[33] Edward K. Strong. *Japanese in California* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1933), 289.

[34] The ten theatres listed as Japanese owned are: Class A (1506 Third Ave), the Palace (116 First St), the Occidental, the Bison, the Jackson (519 Jackson St.), the Flag (1413 First St), the High Class, the Victory (1424 Third Ave), and the Atlas (412 Maynard Ave). *Moving Picture World* 18 January 1919

[35] Interview with Kikuzo Ueminami in Ito, *Issei*, 148.

Cultural Reform and Moral Respectability

The anti-Japanese sentiment in Seattle did not deter Japanese showmen from opening moving picture theatres. Though residents adopted a number of strategies to mitigate the hostile climate, the Japanese immigrant community in Seattle continued to thrive. Kazuo Ito noted that Seattle exhibited a particularly strong community in lieu of the pervasive racial violence and exclusion laws against Japanese immigrants in the Pacific Northwest. He attributed these strengths to the "outstanding quality of Seattle immigrants" and in particular the elites. "Japanese in this city were not mere floating laborers," Ito explained, "members of the intelligentsia who were skillful with tongue and pen, orators and aspiring politicians were in the forefront of the community."[36]

As often the case, elite men were perceived as the beholders of the welfare of the entire community. For communities of color, these elite men often represented the public face held up for outsiders. Hazel Carby takes the term "race men" to denote the status of elite men and their roles as public figures in African American communities. She argues that these elite men often commanded the leadership and public life in the community. This gendering of the sphere of the community also often entailed the subordination of women.[37] In Japanese immigrant communities, "race men" were often defined by not only class but also generation. Issei (first generation) elites typically assumed the onerous duty of presenting a respectable image of "the race." This particular class and generation,

---

[36] Ito, *Issei*, 137.
[37] Hazel Carby. *Race Men* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998); See also Kevin Gaines. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996)

as Lon Kurashige notes, perceived their leadership roles as burdens of privilege. Similar to elites in all societies, they highlighted their own values as a ruling class and sought to mold the entire community in their own image. "Self interest and group interest," as Kurashige put it, "were two sides of the same coin of racial uplift."[38]

The Japanese showmen who first opened the Atlas Theatre in Seattle were, arguably, the race men of their community. Iwasuke Kaida and another showman that the trade press noted as named Yamada unveiled an impressive picture palace to great fanfare in 1918. The theatre opening was welcomed by representatives from major Japanese presses, banks, and hotels in the community and, as one observer noted, "no less than fifteen large floral pieces were received by the management."[39] The theatre was undoubtedly a showpiece of the Japanese immigrant community in Seattle. Rarely mentioned in mainstream papers, this Japanese owned theatre was reported in several articles of the *Moving Picture World*. One article wrote that the Atlas Theatre was the "finest motion picture theatre in the downtown section of Seattle."[40]

Japanese showmen Kaita and Yamada were not novices to the business of the movies. They were successful entrepreneurs who had opened the Bison Theatre in Seattle in 1903. They were also planning to take over the Orientale Theatre, a picture palace that, similar to the Atlas Theatre, had up-to-date facilities like two Power's 6-B machines and

---

[38] Lon Kurashige. "Succeeding Immigrants: Ethnic Leadership and the Origins of Nisei Week" in *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2002)

[39] *Moving Picture World* 7 December 1918

[40] *Moving Picture World* 14 December 1918

a Minusa Gold Fibre screen.[41] The architecture and features of the Atlas Theatre were carefully described in the trade papers. Whereas most nickelodeon theatres seated an average of fifty to three hundred persons, the Atlas Theatre had five hundred seats. A huge marquee and lighted electric sign hung at the front of the theatre that would undoubtedly attract passers-by on the street. Unlike the older theatres, the Atlas Theatre could also boast of modern facilities that included a well ventilated projection room and fotoplayer to furnish music. Film service was signed with first rate Paramount, Fox, Select, Vitagraph, Pathe, and Universal studios.[42]

One portion of the moving picture theatre was especially distinguishing. As the paper noted, "a particular feature of the seating arrangement of this house is that there is no balcony."[43] The balcony was a place that Japanese and non-white patrons knew quite well. In American owned theatres, they were often directed to racially segregated seating on the balcony. Many nickelodeons did not have a balcony and exhibitors often used other methods to segregate theatre patrons. In the era of the picture palace, the balcony was a staple and perhaps the writer found the absence of the balcony an oddly outdated aspect of an otherwise modern theatre. Perhaps the writer also perceived the absence of a balcony to mean that the proprietors were unlikely to practice racial segregation in their theatres and this was "particular" in a typically racially ordered theatergoing world in Seattle.

---

[41] *Moving Picture World* 20 July 1918

[42] *Moving Picture World* 14 December 1918

[43] *Moving Picture World* 14 December 1918

For the Japanese showmen, the Atlas Theatre (even without the balcony) was envisioned as a place with "high class" and modern features. Similar to other picture palace exhibitors, they sought a diversity of audiences and wanted to distinguish their theatre from other nickelodeons, which tended to attract an exclusively working class patronage. Japanese showmen wanted the Atlas Theatre to attract "the large transient patronage which other theatres in this vicinity rely on" as well as the "family trade from the rooming houses and hotels in the immediate neighborhood and the near-by Japanese residence district." The theatre fees included a lowered 10 cent admission for children and a regular 15 cent admission for adults.[44] By the 1920s, the lower downtown section of Seattle, where the Atlas Theatre was located, had become the hub of the Japanese district where the majority of the city's 9,000 Japanese immigrants resided.[45] At the same time, the area was also a residential district and transit point for the many laborers who migrated along the Pacific coast, down from Alaska and up from California.

Japanese immigrant settlement in Seattle dated back to the late nineteenth century as Japanese workers in farming, mining, railroad, cannery, and lumber industries migrated to the region. Although the early immigration of Japanese to the U.S. comprised of mostly single men, a substantial migration of Japanese women changed the gender imbalance that characterized most Chinese and Filipino communities in the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1907 played a large role in shaping this gendered migration. The agreement restricted the immigration of Japanese male laborers but it contained no stipulation regarding the immigration of Japanese

---

[44] *Moving Picture World* 14 December 1918

[45] The Japanese Association reports higher numbers of Japanese in Seattle than the U.S. Census count of 9,000. See Lee, "Cosmopolitan Identities," 44.

women. Many Japanese women arrived as "picture brides" and comprised 38,000 of the Japanese population in the United States by 1920. In Seattle, Japanese immigrants and families took root in the downtown area, known popularly as Jackson Street. The Japanese district of downtown Seattle swelled from Chinatown and stretched from Jackson and Waller Streets to Maynard and Eighth Ave.

Throughout the years, Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants who came to Seattle tended to settle in the Jackson Street region as did African Americans.[46] The many young male transients who patronized the businesses and resided in the boarding houses and residential hotels of the region in part led many to characterize the region as a vice district. Overall, in the Jackson Street region, men far outnumbered women. As late as 1940, the ratio of men to women exceeded 7 to 1.[47] Of the many foreign migrants who passed through and settled in the district were Filipinos. Particularly after 1924, with greater Filipino immigration to the U.S., the downtown Seattle district comprised part of a migrant world of Filipino laborers.[48]

The large scale patronage of working class and immigrant audiences had long troubled many American film exhibitors and industrialists seeking to gain legitimacy from an American public still skeptical of the moving pictures. From the onset,

---

[46] For black and Asian interrelations in Seattle, see Quintard Taylor. "Blacks and Asians in a White City: Japanese Americans and African Americans in Seattle, 1890-1940" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Nov., 1991); see also *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: Univ of Washington Press, 1994)

[47] Lee, "Cosmopolitan Identities," p. 33

[48] As Dorothy Fujita Rony notes, the travel and settlement of Filipinos in Seattle bound the city to other locations like Stockton, Los Angeles, and Honolulu as node in a circuit of colonial labor migration. Filipino immigration made these cities not only immigration settlements but also colonial metropoles. See *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: UC Press, 2003)

conservatives, social reformers, and the clergy identified the moving pictures as prurient and conducive to a range of social dangers. Reformers and their adherents circulated cautionary tales of assaults, robberies, and even rapes in the amusement centers of the city. The growing participation of women and adolescents in the world of urban amusements disturbed these reformers and their proponents who saw in the movies the seeds of delinquency and the "disorganization" of the family.[49]

Film exhibitors responded to the social anxieties over the moving pictures in a number of ways. They used projectors that brought more light into the theatre to mitigate the associations between the darkness of the theatre and social danger. Uniformed ushers were employed and objectionable films were avoided to assure "ladies without escorts" of their "safety." The extra-filmic activities, such as vaudeville and music, were eliminated. Other popular means of upgrading the status of nickelodeon theatres included decadent furnishings and increased admission prices.[50] In the promotion of picture palaces, exhibitors increasingly appealed to middle class tastes and sensibilities and sought to debunk the prevailing association of their theatres with crowds of the unruly laboring classes. These uplifters promoted the picture palace as a place for "family entertainment." As Eileen Bowser notes, with the threat to old stability by

---

[49] During the early twentieth century, the increased participation of women in the public sphere and the gradual blurring of traditional gendered divisions between the private and the public, particularly in the context of mass culture and industrialization, aroused a host of social anxieties that included concerns over female and adolescent patronage of the moving pictures. See Kathy Peiss. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ Press, 1986); Mary Odem. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1995); Andrea Friedman. *Prurient Interests: Gender, Democracy, and Obscenity in New York City, 1909-1945* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000)

[50] Eileen Bowser, "The Recruiting Station of Vice" in *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 39.

industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, "family" was the atmosphere that exhibitors of the picture palace wanted to create.[51]

Japanese showmen Kaita and Yamada followed in the sensibilities of fellow picture palace exhibitors. For the Atlas Theatre, they sought to craft an aura of cultural respectability and legitimacy by encouraging the patronage of the "family trade." Patronage from the "respectable classes" might yield greater revenue and diversifying the race, class, and generation clientele of their theatre might bolster their own place in society. As film scholars have noted, nickelodeon theatre owners tended to come from the same class and social position as their audiences and their motives in uplift seemed to include the goal of their social improvement.[52] As proprietors of a first rate moving picture theatre in the Japanese district of Seattle, Kaita and Yamada may have wanted to cultivate an image of themselves within their own communities and throughout Seattle as respectable businessmen. Given the common association of the district with vice activities, the Japanese showmen may have tried to promote their theatre as a higher grade amusement that would reflect positively on their community. In order to cultivate the "family trade," Atlas Theatre proprietors devised a number of strategies to manage and mediate social boundaries. They sought to project themselves and their theatre in ways that would meet race, class, and gender expectations.

For example, while most moving picture theatres in downtown Seattle permitted patrons to smoke tobacco, the Atlas prohibited smoking. By doing so, Atlas proprietors attended to the safety concerns over potential fire hazards which were a common concern

---

[51] Bowser, "Movie Palaces" in *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990), 123.

[52] Bowser, "The Recruiting Station of Vice," 38.

of the time given the regularity of fires in poorly ventilated theatres. The restriction against smoking also mitigated the oft cited anxieties over the close proximity of varied classes of people in the enclosed space of the moving picture theatre. Bourgeois patrons often complained that the crowded theaters emitted offensive odors. One New York theatre in 1910 even advertised that it had an usher who wandered the aisles to spray audiences with a deodorizing spray.[53] The anxieties over theatres and public spaces with interracial mixing could also be seen in the complaints of white and upper class patrons over the noxious smells and odors of "colored" patrons. In the prohibition of smoking, Japanese showmen sought to manage the perceived offending sensibilities of male working class culture, smells and all.

The Japanese showmen of the Atlas also attended to the changing gender and social demographics of their neighborhoods and communities as greater numbers of Japanese women immigrated and settled in the U.S. and a second generation came of age. With the arrival of Japanese women, the vulnerable immigrant community faced renewed hostility from anti-Japanese groups who seized upon the practice of picture bride marriages as evidence of Japanese difference. As such, the role of young Japanese women in public drew considerable concern from the immigrant community. According to Evelyn Nakano Glenn, most of the Japanese women who arrived in the U.S. between 1907 and 1924 were in their early twenties and married to a man ten years her senior. Japanese "picture brides" faced a host of challenges when they arrived in the U.S. and for some that included disingenuous husbands who presented themselves in considerably more favorable terms. For most Japanese women, their labor was a necessity in the

[53] Bowser, "The Recruiting Station of Vice," 39.

struggling immigrant household. In addition to care of the home, most Japanese women were wage earners and entered the labor market as domestics or agricultural workers.[54] They provided not only the reproductive labor but also the productive labor to sustain immigrant families.[55]

The social expectations for Japanese women were consequently shaped by a climate of anti-Japanese racism that heightened their visibility and public representation as well as concerns over the blurred boundaries between the public and private as she entered the labor market. That is to say, Japanese women's place in public was subject to particularly stringent regulation. Upon arrival in the U.S., Japanese women were often instructed on proper dress and bodily comportment.[56] Conduct guides were even put together by the Japanese Association and distributed at ports of disembarkation in Japan.[57] As early as 1908, the immigrant press circulated a number of desertion narratives that focused on the immoral character of discontented Japanese picture brides who abandoned their husbands and children and fled with other men.[58] In effect, the popular stories served as warnings about the dangers of Japanese women's unregulated sexuality and the need for disciplining.

---

[54] Evelyn Nakano Glenn. "The Dialectics of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1905-1940" *Feminist Studies* 6 No. 3 (Fall 1980)

[55] Yen Le Espiritu. "Stretching Gender, Family, and Community Boundaries, 1840s-1930s" in *Asian American Women and Men* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2000), 30.

[56] One Japanese woman arriving in Seattle in 1919 wearing a kimono recalls that immediately after she left immigration processing she was taken to a store, specifically set up for recent arrivals, and outfitted with a corset, stockings, and shoes. See Glenn, "The Dialectics of Wage Work," 437.

[57] Ichioka notes that the Japanese Association of America issued these guides in 1916 after a few reported cases of picture brides having affairs with seamen or other men aboard ships en route to the United States. See *The Issei*, 171.

[58] Ichioka, *The Issei,* 169-170.

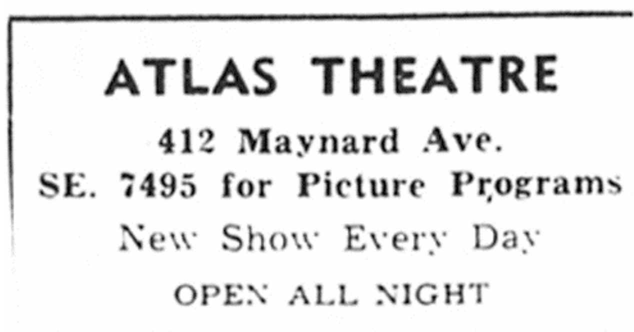
In their attempt to facilitate and encourage the "family trade" in their theatre, the Atlas showmen sought to craft a place for female spectators in a theatre largely dominated by working class and migrant men. They set up spatial boundaries within the theatre in an attempt to make the moving pictures an appropriate place for single women to attend. "In the old days, [when] all the single men would go [to the Atlas Theatre]," one female patron recalled, "there was a rope cordoning off the area… and a Japanese man who would let the single women come in and sit in a section where there wouldn't be anyone else to bother them."[59] The boundaries set up by the Japanese showmen responded to social anxieties over the increased participation of women in public. Undoubtedly, as Japanese immigrant women entered the public realm of labor they also participated in the growing cultures of leisure. The rope separating women from men in the Atlas Theatre signaled more than an attempt to protect women. It also functioned as a means to police female sexuality and reinstate the social borders that had become blurred by female participation in the public realm of labor and leisure.

In separating patrons by gender, the Japanese showmen, in effect, also served to reinforce the social borders around the Japanese immigrant community. The rope placed women on the one side and the large working and migrant class of male patrons on the other side. Such divisions regulated interclass and interracial heterosociability in a period of increased tension over the contacts of second generation, Nisei, with young Filipino men who frequently patronized the establishments owned and operated by Japanese merchants.

---

[59] Florence Eng. Oral History Interview by Ron Chew, November 15, 1990. Wing Luke Asian Museum, Seattle, Washington.

By the 1930s, the Atlas Theatre turned into a leisure site for many Filipino laborers living in or passing through Seattle. Despite the earlier efforts of Japanese showmen Kaita and Yamada to orchestrate the social composition of the theatre to promote a "family trade," the Atlas Theatre was claimed by theatre patrons as a space for male migrant sociability. Filipino journalist Willy Torin recalled that, after the taxi dance hall closed at 1 am, Filipino laborers would head to the Atlas Theatre.[60] It had become a regular spot for Filipino leisure and, consequently, advertisements appeared in Seattle based Filipino papers like the *Orientale*.



1.1 Advertisement for Seattle based Atlas Theatre in the Filipino paper *Orientale* May 1950

Ads in the 1950s stated that the theatre was "open all night."[61] Linda Maram notes that Filipino laborers disproportionately suffered during the Depression. They were the targets of white working class frustration and, given the instability of seasonal work, often left

[60] Doug Chin. *Seattle's International District: the Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* (Seattle: International Examiner Press, 2001), 49.

[61] *Orientale* (May 1950)

without resource. Leisure sites such as movie theatres provided many young Filipino men with not only entertainment but also domicile.[62] Chris Menslaves, who first migrated from the Philippines to Hawaii when he was 18 years old, recalled that the Atlas Theatre doubled as a show hall and rooming house in the most difficult days of the Depression. “A lot of us who got no rooms especially the single guys you don’t got no room you have to go to all night movies. So you stay there all night. You get out there in the mornings.”[63] Consequently, the working and migrant class patronage of the Atlas Theatre led community leaders in the postwar era to condemn the space as a “disgrace to the neighborhood… and a breeding place for prostitution and other offenses against decency.” They filed a complaint with the Seattle City Council to deny a license renewal.[64] The Atlas Theatre, nonetheless, remained in operation for decades.[65]

---

[62] Linda Espana-Maram. *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles’ Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 33.

[63] Chris Menslaves, Oral History Interview, PNW81-Fil—11Pa, National Pinoy Archives of the Filipino American National Historical Society. The interview is also cited by Maram, 33.

[64] The Jackson Street Community Council (JSCC) formed after the war in 1946 as an interracial neighborhood organization to address social ills of the community that ranged from neighborhood beautification to school segregation and minority rights. In 1949, the JSCC president James M. Matsuoka requested the Seattle City Council to investigate the Atlas Theatre before renewing its license. He contended that the JSCC had received countless complaints over the past several years. Investigators from the JSCC, Department of Public Health, and Seattle Police Department visited the Atlas Theatre a number of times and reported loud talking, smoking, drinking, disorderly conduct, and occasional sleeping amongst theatre patrons. The Seattle Police Department sent inspectors to the Atlas Theatre no less than twelve different times to make observations. All investigators made special detailed notation of the men’s bathroom and urinals. The Seattle Police investigator noted that the “men’s washroom is particularly bad” while the JSCC reported that an usher was needed to “supervise the conduct of patrons both in the auditorium and the rest rooms.” Petition for Investigation of Operating Standards for Atlas Theatre 1949, Board of Theatre Supervisors Documents, Record Series 1802-E5. Box 1, Folder 23. Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, Washington.

[65] The Atlas Theatre has a fascinating and complicated history. Owners of the theatre included Seizoburo Mukai, B.C. Johnson, Tadao Kitamura, Lance Kitamura, and Assunta Ng. In the *Film Daily Year Book* (1949-1955), the Atlas Theatre is listed as “Negro theatre.” In 1960, the Atlas Theatre changed names to the Kokusai Theatre. It ran first run films from Japan and the Philippines. See Ellen Kiyomizu. “Kokusai: 60 Years of Asian Films” *International Examiner* 15 Nov 1980; John Hart. “Two Seattle theatres present wide range of Japanese movies” *The Seattle Times* 29 Oct 1981

The "100 Percent American"

Though Japanese showmen like Yamada and Kaita went to great lengths to improve their theatres and craft an aura of respectability and safety, other members of the Japanese immigrant community disapproved of the culture of the movies. They struggled to discern the influence of the movies on the morality and ethnic sensibility of the second generation. Writing for the Seattle based *Japanese American Courier*, Elmer Ogawa puzzled over the impact of the movies on the American born. In a 1928 editorial he asked *Courier* readers to consider whether or not the movies were a "neutral thing" for the younger generation. Since most young Japanese Americans had "no close intimate contact with American family life," Ogawa reasoned, they would have to learn the "American way" outside of the family—in their schools, their participation in sporting activities like baseball, and in their consumption of the "democratic movies." The movies were different than the well-monitored institutions of education and sports life—Ogawa believed—and they were equally different from the culturally enriching consumption of high art and respectable literature.[66]

Ogawa was an active and well-known member of Seattle's Japanese American community who had worked for many years as a photographer for the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*. The popularity of the movies stirred concern amongst immigrant elders like Ogawa who wondered whether or not urban leisure such as the movies had something to do with what they also called the "Nisei problem." For many Issei leaders of the

---

[66] Ogawa, Elmer. "Movie Influences Spread Wide Among Young Generation" *Japanese American Courier* 14 Jan 1928

community, the emergent sociological discourse on Americanism and immigrant youth provided the language to address the community's anxieties in the post-1924 exclusion era. The future of the Nisei was a much debated topic in the community particularly in papers like the *Japanese American Courier*. James Y. Sakamoto founded the Seattle based paper in 1928 as the first English-language Japanese American newspaper in the United States. Sakamoto later established the Japanese American Citizens' League (JACL) and promoted an agenda of "100 Per Cent Americanism" for the Nisei. Similar to many other Issei he believed that the Nisei were the future bridge builders between the U.S. and Japan. He promoted Nisei integration into American society yet also believed that the values and heritage of Japan could compliment and even promote the project of Americanization.[67] As a major arm in this project the *Courier* imagined itself as a paper to guide the increasing numbers of American-born Japanese in Seattle, most who spoke more English than Japanese, in their fashion, political actions, and social activities.[68] The paper reflected the particular "dual" understanding, both cosmopolitan and patriotic, of the brand of Americanization promoted by Issei like Sakamoto.

The problem, as Ogawa saw it, was that the movies catered to the "moronic millions" and presented a "debased and deleterious modern conception of what constitutes happiness and a good time." He was not alone in his distrust of American films and the dark, unsupervised spaces of the theater. The Japanese Students Christian Association in North America convened in 1924 with the primary objective of solving the

---

[67] Yuji Ichioka. "A Study of Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the *Japanese American Courier*, 1928-1942" *Amerasia Journal* 13 (1986-1987); David K. Yoo. "Read All about It: Race, Generation, and the Japanese American Ethnic Press, 1925-41" *Amerasia Journal* 19 (1993)

[68] *The Japanese American Courier* 1 Jan 1928

"second generation problem." In place of the "demoralizing moving pictures," they suggested a program for "wholesome recreation" and a "social hygiene education" that would start, appropriately, in the home.[69] Americanization, for these proponents, could be maintained on equal footing with the values of Japanese heritage. The fear was that the movies always presented the "good time" as one that involved cabarets and "big necking parties" with no proper or healthy alternative. Would this vision of American life bearing down on the "minds of a gullible public," Ogawa asked readers of the *Courier*, be a "neutral thing" at all?

In the years following WWI, Americanization reformers readily made use of educational films, community forums, and other public venues to school immigrants on the myriad of ways to properly join the national body politic. After the passage of the Johnson-Reed immigration act in 1924, which severely restricted immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and nearly eliminated Asian immigration, Americanization proponents approached the nation's immigrant enclaves with renewed energy.[70] Knowing that their efforts would no longer be weakened by the constant stream of new immigrants, reformers aggressively focused on the problem of assimilating the approximately 30 million immigrants settling in the United States. On the east coast Americanization advocates focused on European immigrants who settled in the tenement districts and crowded neighborhoods of urban cities. The West coast, however, presented

---

[69] Roy Hidemichi Akagi. "The Second Generation Problem: Some Suggestions Toward Its Solution" (New York: Japanese Students Christian Association in North America, 1926)

[70] The Act set quotas for immigration based on national origins, but prohibited Asian immigration by fully excluding the all "aliens ineligible for citizenship." See Mae Ngai. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2004)

a different problem: racialized immigrants from Mexico and Asia could not be seamlessly assimilated into white American society. In Mexican American communities, reformers focused on immigrant women with the hope that changes in the domestic realm would extend into the public sphere.[71] But Asian immigrant homes were imagined as a particularly obstinate stronghold for foreign ways, and Americanization proponents worked to develop new strategies to solve what had become known as the "Oriental Problem."[72] Moreover, as "aliens ineligible for citizenship" and barred from owning land in California and Washington, Asian immigrants were legally restricted from two of the most recognized venues of Americanization—political participation and property ownership.

In Seattle, as in other Pacific Coast locales, social reformers, community organizers, and the population at large concerned with the issue of assimilation focused on second generation Japanese Americans and their unprecedented engagement with American culture. Public schools, which in 1920s Seattle were not legally segregated, served as a regulated and well-supervised institution of Americanization.[73] Most urban Nisei were also likely to have more free time and greater access to commercialized

---

[71] George Sanchez argues that early Americanization efforts target working class men who were identified for programs through their employers. After the 1920s, Americanization efforts were increasingly professionalized and shifted away from migratory work camps and toward schools and home sites. Americanization proponents targeted Mexican immigrant women and they sought to change the domestic life of the Mexican family, believing that it was the lack of American homemaking habits and the patriarchal nature of the Mexican family that presented the major obstacles for Mexican immigrant assimilation. See *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993)

[72] Americanization reformers largely regarded Chinese and Japanese immigrants, particularly the non-citizen first generation, as inassimilable. Liberal racial reformers such as Robert Park and his cadre of Chicago school sociologists figured the Asian immigrant as hopelessly stuck and unable to progress in race relations cycle.

[73] Lee. "Cosmopolitan Identities," 160-203.

leisure than Issei or rural Nisei, which some thought to be a cause for concern. The growing world of youth oriented recreations, from dance halls and movie theaters to social clubs and sororities, fostered a developing adolescent, youth, and heterosexual dating culture in many urban cities.[74] As one Japanese American recalled of his first attempt at dating, "I resolved to get a girl. I reflected for a time upon the best method of attracting her attention. Here it was the value of patronizing the theaters was realized. I thought to myself, like a movie hero. I must do something heroic in order to attract the attention of the opposite sex."[75] For youngsters whose parents and other role models were likely married according to traditional Japanese customs, the movies clued them in about the proper performance of American masculinity. On the flip side, the readiness of the second generation to seek out mates through American, rather than Japanese cultural channels, posed a possible cause for conflict within the family structure where Asian norms prevailed.

Social scientists, in particular, fixated on the issues of generational conflict within Asian immigrant households, racism encountered in the public realm, and intimacy with American culture as factors contributing to the limits of Asian assimilation.[76] A vibrant debate ensued within the new field of urban sociology about

---

[74] On leisure worlds of Nisei girls and women during the first half of the twentieth century, see Valerie Matsumoto. "Japanese American Women and the Creation of Urban Nisei Culture in the 1930s" *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Shirley Jennifer Lim. *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960* (New York: NYU Press, 2006)

[75] William C. Smith. "Changing Personality Traits of Second Generation Orientals in America" *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 33, No. 6 (May 1928) 927.

[76] On the Chicago School of Sociology and the study of the "Oriental," see Henry Yu. *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford UP, 2001)

Asian immigrants and their prospects of becoming American, particularly on the Pacific Coast which was considered the new frontier of race relations.[77] Many, including the still energetic Asian exclusionists, argued that even U.S. born Japanese Americans were still culturally bound to the ways of their ancestors. But others, like Chicago trained sociologist Elliot Mears, responded by foregrounding the complete immersion of the second generation in American culture. "How can an American-born Japanese who is attending American schools, movies, and sporting events…who has American friends, and knows only a few common words of Japanese," he reasoned, "be a supreme worshipper of Nipponese culture and ideals?"[78]

For sociologists, the movies emerged as a notable site of inquiry as they sought to unravel and solve the problem of Asian unassailability. Another Chicago trained researcher, William C. Smith, distributed hundreds of surveys to Japanese and Chinese American youth, querying their interaction with the world of film and entertainment. "To what extent have you been interested in the motion pictures? What sort of pictures did you prefer? When and why did you begin to attend moving picture shows? What was there in them that attracted you? Has any change come over you in respect to the use of your spare time?"[79] Smith worked to understand the unique position of second generation marginality, which he and others theorized as one of being in close proximity with both Eastern and Western cultures but fully belonging to neither. The theme of generational

---

[77] Robert Park. "Our Racial Frontier on the Pacific" *Race and Culture* (Free Press, 1950)

[78] Eliot Grinnell Mears. *Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast: Their Legal and Economic Status* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1928)

[79] William Carlson Smith. "The Second Generation Oriental in America." Preliminary paper prepared for the second general session, Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15-29, 1927.

conflict figured centrally in this theory, to which the consumption of American movies ostensibly contributed. His subsequent question asked: "which of your early aspirations and ambitions were given sympathetic consideration by members of your own home?" The conflict in the family, according to Smith, resulted when the younger generation comes into "contact with the various phases of American life" and "drifts away from the older generation and their Asiatic heritage, not only in speech but in sentiments."[80] This conflict, according to sociologists, "disorganizes" the family life, stunts the assimilation process, and leaves the second generation "maladjusted" and improperly Americanized.

English readers of Seattle's Japanese American community had no shortage of opportunities to consider the vibrant film culture that surrounded them. In her regular daily column called "Across the Silver Sheet," Helen Swan reviewed Hollywood films for the readers of the *Courier*. Her commentaries addressed a Nisei reading public that was conversant in U.S. popular culture and engaged in the project of Americanization. Similar to other columns like the "Dear Deidre" columns that appeared in the San Francisco Japanese American newspaper *New World-Sun*, the film column in the *Courier* instructed the Nisei on the manners and mores of modern American life, yet also offered Nisei a way to carve out some semblance of autonomy.[81] Swan's movie column appeared amongst the announcements of community church activities and an accompanying column called "Etiquette," a survival guide to the tricky world of American manners and politeness. " 'How do you do?' is the correct formal greeting," the column writer Bettie

[80] Ibid.

[81] Valerie Matsumoto. "Desperately Seeking 'Deirdre': Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* Vol. 12 (1991)

Parsons explains. "The fashionable contraction of this is 'How d'do?'"[82] In addition to the introduction of American colloquialisms, the column rehearsed scenarios of proper American courtship: "A gentleman always rises when a lady enters the room."[83] *Courier* writers brought together defining touchstones in the social world of their Nisei readers. The pages of movie reviews and advice literature offered Nisei the cultural knowledge to "pass" as Americans.

The drive for Americanization, particularly the type advocated by the *Courier* and later the JACL, among Japanese stemmed in part from class interests. By the 1920s, papers like the *Courier* thrived to promote the assimilation of the Nisei and advise against the class and ethnic sensibilities believed to be culpable for the racism Japanese Americans continued to face. For second generation Japanese Americans, however, there was also particular pleasure in consuming the wonders of American popular culture. Swan's vivid descriptions and analyses in the *Courier* captured the swirling world of Hollywood images and icons, inviting readers to fantasize about the fictions of American cinema. She reviewed films like *Our Dancing Daughters* (1928), which featured three American flappers in pursuit of men, marriage and upward mobility. The film procured an instant fan-base among legions of young female fans who poured into theaters and over magazines that detailed the rising stardom of Joan Crawford. In her assessment of Crawford, Swan informed her readers that she was the "spirit of rampant youth incarnate" and "the screen's latest candidate for the position of the perfect American flapper."[84]

---

[82] *Japanese American Courier* 17 Nov 1928

[83] *Japanese American Courier* 17 Nov 1928

[84] *Japanese American Courier* 3 Nov 1928

While all of the youth who obsessed about Crawford and her Hollywood entourage participated in a fantasy that would never materialize, Japanese Americans faced serious impediments to even the general aspiration of upward mobility. Despite greater educational attainment and proficiency in English, most Nisei faced considerable barriers in finding employment and rampant racism hindered their opportunities for economic and social mobility. Recognizing many of these barriers, many reformers and elders called for the younger generation to return to the agricultural labor that their parents performed or seek out future prospects overseas. Nevertheless, Hollywood productions provided the possibility of fantasy, pleasure, and negotiated spectatorship that many Japanese Americans pursued with excitement.

Other films like *Docks of New York* (1928), which featured a Russian actress as an unhappily married woman with an unfaithful husband, made into Swans columns. While Crawford was the ideal embodiment of modern American femininity, the Russian actress, Swan explained to her readers, "brought a quality of freshness and of 'something different.'" She possessed a technique "different from that of most American actresses and she [showed] no signs of becoming Americanized as yet."[85] To see a successful foreign actress on the screen may have been a particular pleasure for Japanese Americans, who were never allowed into the ranks of authentic American-ness themselves. Moreover, Swan complimented the "freshness" brought to the film by immigrant "difference," in line with the *Courier's* vision of Americanization that emphasized retaining the valuable cultural traits of the homeland.

---

[85] *Japanese American Courier* 10 Nov 1928

Ultimately Swan's column "Across the Silver Sheet" not only reviewed films themselves, but regularly offered readers a wealth of information about American film culture in the pages of the *Courier*. "One good thing about the talkies," Swan explained to her readers, "they have put the beautiful and dumb movie star, male and female, out of business, and uncovered some really fine talent which heretofore has been allowed to blush unseen and waste its talent on the extra's bench or in the cutting room."[86] By offering commentary, opinions, observations and an abundance of superfluous information well beyond plot lines, Swan's columns invited Nisei readers to be more than spectators to the Hollywood movie. They could be active participants in an American public culture that was increasingly defined by the rise of the movies and its world of celebrity. For Japanese Americans in Seattle, the culture of American films—even when plagued by the persistence of racism—offered possibilities of participation in the public perhaps less restricted than in political or economic spheres.

Duality or Divided Loyalty

In the years leading up to World War II, the roles of Japanese showmen and the their exhibition of moving pictures to immigrant communities along the Pacific Coast drew critical attention far beyond the cohort of disconcerted businessmen, skeptical Issei elders, and eager sociologists. The United States government began to take a greater interest in the lives and activities of a number of Japanese showmen. They began gathering information on individual showmen of Japanese descent and spied on moviegoers to report on the exhibition of films to Japanese immigrant audiences. Indeed,

[86] *Japanese American Courier* 20 Oct 1928

these were uncertain times for many Japanese immigrants in the United States. The Johnson Reed Act of 1924, which ended Japanese immigration, left many in the community feeling hopeless about their prospects in the United States. The arrival of the Sino-Japanese War offered many Japanese immigrants a way to identify with Japan and be recognized as patriots rather than liabilities.[87]

As early as 1920, the American federal government began taking note of leaders in the Japanese immigrant community and in the cultural or political activities that purportedly reinforced allegiances to the Japanese empire. Though seldom discussed in the internment scholarship, the prewar period was a formative time for the U.S. government. The counterintelligence agencies of the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI), the Bureau of Investigation (which later became the FBI under Hoover), and the Military Intelligence Division (MID) were in nascent stages of development. The surveillance of domestic communities represented a major forum for the agencies to organize themselves.[88] When Japan began the occupation of China in 1931, the U.S. governmental ambitions for an "open door" policy in Asia were decidedly threatened. The State Department began to perceive a greater possibility for war and further heightened surveillance of Japanese immigrant communities.

---

[87] With the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, Japanese organizations from all over the United States issued English language pamphlets, sponsored public lectures, and promoted radio programs that disseminated pro-Japan perspectives. Japanese patriots collected considerable money for Japan, prepared gift packets for Japanese soldiers fighting in China, and participated in a range of patriotic cultural activities. See Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Nationalism," 260.

[88] On the development of U.S. counterintelligence and their surveillance of Japanese immigrant communities in California, see Pedro Anthony Loureiro. "U.S. Counterintelligence Against Japan in Southern California, 1933-1941." M.A. Thesis, San Francisco State University (Spring 1987); For a discussion of the international context, see Max Everest-Phillips. "Reassessing Pre-War Japanese Espionage: the Rutland Naval Spy Case and the Japanese Intelligence Threat before Pearl Harbor" *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 2006)

The domestic spying on Japanese in the United States contributed to the pre-evacuation detention of 2,000 Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans in sixteen imprisonment camps operated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. The roundup of these individuals, as Bob Kumamoto argues, robbed the Japanese immigrant community of their leadership.[89] The detainees (who included farmers and fishermen, newspaper editors, Buddhist priests, businessmen, and Japanese language teachers) were the cultural and political crux of the community in the uncertain decade before the Second World War.

Within this context, federal authorities monitored the movie-going activities in the community. In 1935, a government informant attended a gathering of 250 Japanese of Los Angeles to view a moving picture program presented by the Japanese Association in honor of the arrival of an imperial vessel from Japan.[90] These aforementioned celebrations of the Japanese navy grew increasingly common with the escalation of the Sino-Japanese War. Moving pictures from Japan in support of the war effort were also increasingly exhibited in the United States as they became more available.[91]

The moving picture program presented that evening in Los Angeles included a benshi narrator. The informant made particular note that "except for explanatory

---

[89] Bob Kumamoto. "The Search for Spies: American Counterintelligence and the Japanese American Community, 1931-1942." *Amerasia Journal* (1979)

[90] W.T. Tarrant to Chief of Naval Operations, 1 Feb 1935, in O.N.I. Reports RG 38, Box 226. College Park, National Archives.

[91] According to Peter B. High, the public interest in war and the first start of the Sino-Japanese War stimulated the production of the propagandistic war films by four major news organizations in Japan. In 1939, these news organizations merged into the conglomerate Japan Film Company (Nippon Eigasha). War films of this period drew upon newsreels and cinematographic coverage of the Pacific theatre and sought to exhort the virtue's of Japan's imperial project in Asia. See *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year's War, 1931-1945* (Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2003)

interjections, [the benshi] did not extend his remarks beyond the scope of the subtitles." In addition to naval training films and pictures of industries, locomotives, steamships, and railways in Japan, the film program included a comical scenario placing the Emperor Meiji in contrast to the interchangeable leaders of other nations. Images of the vaudeville performer El Brendel donning various hats and making silly facial expressions were, according to the report, included in the film program to illustrate the ineffective and always changing leaders of nations controlled by national assembly or popular ballot.

The moving pictures exhibited in Los Angeles were typical of the "propaganda" films from Japan in the 1930s. These pictures tended to celebrate the imperial mission of Japan in Asia and show the corruption on Japanese society wrought by Western culture. They typically depicted the encirclement of Japan by hostile countries and the need for the nation to protect itself by "saving" Asia from the encroachment of the West. Indeed, these Japanese films presented the war as a crusade tied to Japan's modernity. They dramatized a historically rooted Pan-Asian ideal with the visual stories of the suffering Imperial Army and Sino-Japanese romance.[92]

The federal government in 1941 also identified the Los Angeles based Japanese-American Theatrical Company and the Fuji Theatre as potentially dangerous to national security.[93] First mentioned in the introduction, the Fuji Theatre was opened in 1925 and exhibited both American and Japanese films. In 1926, the theatre brought in a benshi and

---

[92] Gordon Daniels. "Japanese Domestic Radio and Cinema Propaganda, 1937-1945: An Overview" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 2 No. 2 (1982)

[93] U.S., Department of the Navy, Office of Naval Intelligence, "Japanese Tokyo Club Syndicate with Interlocking Affiliations," 24 Dec 1941, in O.N.I. Reports RG 38, Box 222. College Park, National Archives.

began showing Japanese films exclusively.[94] A case history of the Fuji Theatre appears in the O.N.I reports.[95] U.S. authorities used the term "post office" to name the role that these film enterprises served in the Japanese immigrant community. Along with a panoply of seemingly arbitrarily selected cafes, pool halls, restaurants, and lodging houses, the film company and theatre were described by the federal government as places used by the Japanese government to conduct espionage.

From the particular details that the federal government collected on the Japanese showmen, it is easy to see the prominent roles they played in their communities.[96] Government papers noted the affiliations of Japanese movie men with organizations in the community that included the Tokyo Club and the military organization Sakura Kai (Cherry Association), as well as the Japanese Consulate. Though most of the listed affiliations were elite groups, the Alaskan Cannery Workers Union (AFL) and the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union were also included amongst the involved organizations of the showmen.

It is unclear how federal authorities gathered information on the Japanese immigrants profiled in the O.N.I. papers. According to Kumamoto, the Federal Bureau of Investigation gathered most of their data on Japanese in the United States from the records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.[97] Whether O.N.I. derived their

---

[94] Ogihara, "The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans," 85.
[95] It is noted that the influential Japanese immigrant organizations Central Japan Association and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce took over the Fuji Theatre in 1937 because of "vital interest to the community."

[96] The documented individuals from the Japanese-American Theatrical Company (Nichibei Kogyo Kaisha) and Fuji Theatre include: Shunten Kumamoto, Jutaro Narumi, George Hasuike, Yaozo Uyeda, Masataro Kida, Noboru Tsuda, Muneo Kimura, Katsuma Mukaeda, and Reverend Ban Takeshi.

[97] Kumamoto, "The Search for Spies," 60.

data from these records or other sources is unclear. The majority of Japanese movie men profiled by the federal government were classified under the category "Group A," which in the rating system of the United States government designated persons considered the most dangerous and part of the Fifth Column (those involved in military activities). Though no explicit act of espionage was noted in the records, federal authorities described the suspect Japanese showmen as distributing nationalistic Japanese films that portrayed the Japanese expansion in Asia, the strength of the Japanese army, and "Japanese customs as being superior to American."

Amongst the Japanese investigated were showmen from Hawaii. Given the established circuit of migration and trade between Japanese communities in California and Hawaii, showmen were apt to find opportunities in both locales. Part of the Los Angeles cohort documented by federal authorities, Muneo Kimura was a well known benshi who first worked in Hawaii and then joined the Japanese-American Theatrical Company and Fuji Theatre. Born in Japan, he immigrated to Hawaii in 1902 and worked on the sugar plantations. He joined Japanese drama groups in Hawaii and toured the islands as a benshi performer in the 1910s and later became head of Nichibei Kinema. He frequently traveled to Japan to bring moving pictures and theatrical troupes to the United States. Kimura was also an associate of the Hawaii born Sanji Abe who found himself similarly under governmental and public scrutiny in the difficult years of WWII.

Abe was a premiere showman who pioneered the Japanese movie going scene on the Hawaiian islands. As I detail in the latter chapters, Hawaii developed one of the most prolific and dynamic Japanese film scenes outside of Japan during the first half of the twentieth century. This scene drew across urban and rural spaces and, quite often,

converged with the dominating sugar cane industry of the islands. Showman Abe opened the Yamato Theatre of Hilo in 1922 and the Kokusai Theatre of Honolulu in 1941, both of which showcased Japanese films exclusively. He also brought Japanese moving pictures to the many laborers on the island's sugar plantations. In 1939, he leased the sugar plantation owned Ookala Theater for five nights a week. Twice a month he exhibited Japanese pictures and leased trucks from planters to transport sugar cane laborers to the theatre. His attempt to promote Japanese moving pictures to plantation laborers, however, came to an abrupt end when sugar planters relinquished their ties with him and cancelled his lease to their Ookala Theater. Upon receiving the unfortunate news, the outspoken Abe requested the courtesy of allowing him to exhibit Japanese films at least once a month. Recognizing his growing prominence in Hawaii, planters granted Abe his "courtesy" in order to, as one official put it, "*ease out* this gentleman's connection with us."[98]

Abe's persona as internationalist showman was recognized well beyond the Japanese immigrant and planter community. When Abe became president of the International Theatrical Company in 1939, his travels to Tokyo were reported with great enthusiasm in the major Hawaii papers. Headlines like "Sanji Abe Touring Japan" appeared in the *Honolulu Advertiser*.[99] Other news reports made special note that his

[98] L.W. Wishard to Consolidated Amusement Company, 8 Aug 1939, LSC 36/10 Kai, C, Gen Corr, Out 1939. Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives, University of Hawaii at Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection.

[99] *Honolulu Advertiser* 9 July 1940

Japan travels were on the luxury liner Asama Maru and that he was well known in business circles in Japan.[100]

Abe's prominence in his community, his frequent travels to Japan, and in particular his dual citizenship, however, raised considerable alarm and debate when he entered the political world and began a bid for a Republican seat in the Hawaii Territorial Senate. Although Abe was born in Hawaii, his birth was registered by the Japanese Consulate since, at the time, Japanese law based nationality on paternal descent. When Hawaii was annexed to the U.S. in 1898 he was also given American citizenship.

Many American born Japanese, Nisei, held this dual citizenship status.[101] The Japanese government amended the law in 1916 to allow Nisei to renounce their Japanese citizenship. However, male Nisei over the age 17 could only foreswear Japanese citizenship after military conscription. In 1924, the Japanese government abolished automatic Japanese citizenship based on *jus sanguinis* and allowed retroactive renunciation without preconditions.[102] However, many Nisei held onto this dual citizenship well after 1924. In his survey of Los Angeles, Brian Hayashi calculated that between 1920 and 1924 approximately 31.7 percent of Nisei had dual citizenship. He suggests that in 1930 the numbers increased to 44.8 percent.[103] In many cases, Nisei were

---

[100] *Honolulu Advertiser* 20 Aug 1940

[101] In his effort to quell American anxiety over the perceived divided loyalties of Japanese in the U.S., Carey McWilliams notes that many countries other than Japan adhered to policies of citizenship based on blood rather than birth. Most of these laws were based on economics. Countries with large scale emigration stood to lose capital and labor power and thus counted on taxation and repatriation from emigrant citizens. Countries that stressed *jus soli*, citizenship by birth, were largely countries with large scale immigration. See "Dual Citizenship" *Far Eastern Survey* Vol. 11, No. 23 (16 Nov 1942), 231-233.

[102] Ichioka, *The Issei,* 198.

[103] Brian Masaru Hayashi. *"For the Sake of Our Brethren": Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995)

unaware of their Japanese citizenship, an issue that became a major concern for groups like the JACL who sought Americanization.

SANJI ABE

Big Island Senator Recently Under Fire

1.2 Sanji Abe in *Honolulu Advertiser* 3 Aug 1942

In a series of inflammatory articles during the campaign race, the *Honolulu Advertiser* derided Abe's Japanese citizenship. His Democratic opponent William Achi ran a political campaign that included banning dual citizens from running for office and voting. Abe, in turn, obtained expatriation papers from the Japanese consulate in Honolulu. On February 19, 1941 Abe won the Senate race and took his oath of office. However, his term came to an abrupt end when the allegations about his suspicious ties to Japan finally caught up with him.

Just months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941 military authorities raided Abe's Yamato Theatre –which had changed its name with the start of the war to the non-Japanese language Mooheau Theatre-- and found a Japanese flag. Although Abe contended that the flag might have been left by a show troupe and that he had never purchased or owned a Japanese flag, authorities arrested him for violation of General Orders 31.[104] The Japanese flag –found in the first theatre to exclusively exhibit Japanese moving pictures on the Island Hawaii --was burned in front of the Hilo Police Department where Abe worked for two decades.

Before the Board of Officers and Civilians, Abe faced a litany of "divided loyalty" accusations drawn from the lives that he and his family led in Hawaii. His immigrant father made his living as a bootlegger during the Prohibition era. He attended Japanese language school as a youth and sent his six children to those schools. He showed only Japanese-language motion pictures in his theatres. The prosecution also pointed to Abe's frequent visits to Japan and the role he played in promoting cultural nationalism in the Japanese immigrant community.

The Board of Officers and Civilians concluded Abe's trial with a recommendation for internment. According to them, he was a "danger to the public peace, safety and security of the United States." He was interned at the Sand Island Internment Camp and resigned from the Senate two weeks before the opening session. After his release, he never spoke publicly about his detention.[105]

---

[104] "Senatar Abe of Hawaii Charged" *Honolulu Advertiser* 3 Aug 1942; "Sanji Abe: Big Islander Senator Recently Under Fire" *Honolulu Advertiser* 8 Sept 1942

[105] This account of Sanji Abe is drawn from Bob Dye. "The Case of Sanji Abe" *Honolulu* Nov 2002.

Conclusion

For the Japanese showman in the prewar era, the varied roles they played in the immigrant community were circumscribed by the politics of the interwar period and the increased surveillance of Japanese by the United States government. The term "Pacific Theatre" is meant to remind readers that Japanese movie houses, like Japanese immigrant communities generally, were defined during this era by both the Pacific Wars and the U.S. state. The marked appearances of Japanese showmen and the over-documentation of Japanese immigrants in U.S. federal archives are a result of racialization and the concerns of the state during a period when the imperial project of Japan undermined American designs over the Asia-Pacific.

Mostly, the term names the immigrant cultures of Japanese communities in the United States. From the first start of the nickelodeon era, Japanese immigrants were present as exhibitors and spectators. Though their activities were constrained by racial restrictions, a number of showmen managed to operate their own theatres in major urban centers of transpacific migration and settlement like Seattle, Los Angeles, and Honolulu. Financially riskier than other enterprises, and easily associated with other disreputable activities, the moving picture business for many Japanese showmen was a venture on the outskirts of the immigrant economy. As such, some Japanese showmen sought to craft an aura of cultural respectability around movie-going to accommodate the dominant cultural politics of the community. They devised a number of strategies to ensure that the social boundaries of their communities would be reinforced in these public spaces of the theatre. Amongst the community concerns that the showmen sought to mediate were the roles of

women and the second generation in the post-1924 exclusion era. Though the showmen brought their particular vision to bear on the context of exhibition, they could never anticipate the act of reception. While this chapter dealt with the social worlds that the showmen drew upon, the subject of the next chapter addresses in greater depth the various relations that shaped the context of spectatorship.

Chapter Two

Filipinos Positively Allowed: Race, Property, and Dispossession in the Migrant City, 1924-1940s

In 1944, Emil Palermo filed suit in a Stockton courthouse to strip Shigeaki Hayashino of his rightful ownership of several movie theaters under the California alien land laws. Japanese born Hayashino, a well known movie showman, was incarcerated at the Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas at the time his ownership of the theaters came under attack from the heir of the property on which his theatres were built. Every aspect of Hayashino's ownership and administration of the theaters, in addition to intimate details of his own personal background, was scrutinized in front of the court in a case that dragged on for several years, ultimately reaching the California Supreme Court in 1948.[1] Worthy of notice, attorneys for Palermo were particularly interested in who were the actual patrons of the Stockton theaters while under Hayashino's management. "You know, do you not," the attorney queried, "that a very large portion of the business of your Star Theater has always been the Filipino people, has it not?" To this question the usually straightforward Hayashino responded evasively, neither admitting nor denying the large scale Filipino patronage of his theaters. He simply said: "We have many, many kind of trade in that theater."[2]

Hayashino's reticent response surprisingly belies the vigor and enthusiasm with which he and other Japanese businessmen in the Central Valley of California courted

[1] Palermo v. Stockton Theatres, 32 Cal. 2d 43 (1948)

[2] "Stockton Theatres, Inc. v. Emil Palermo," Supreme Court of the State of California, No. 6248. California State Archives, Sacramento, California.

Filipino patronage in the decades leading up to World War II. Hayashino's theaters, which he owned with a board of Japanese trustees, were located in the heart of Stockton's Asian district and thrived throughout the 1930s. They regularly ran extensive advertisements and movie schedules in Filipino papers—and when possible also exhibited productions from the Philippines. Like in many of the Japanese show houses in California, Washington, and Hawaii during the surge of immigration from the Philippines, Filipino spectators constituted a substantial segment of their audiences. In fact, Hayashino's trademark slogan in advertisements for and at his theaters was "Filipinos Positively Allowed," no doubt to ensure his patrons that in his theater they would face none of the discrimination that was commonplace at other venues.

Given this context, why might Hayashino have sought to obscure the scale of Filipino patronage at his theaters with such an ambiguous response in a court of law? What could explain the hesitation that the Japanese showman seemed to exhibit in his elusive answer to the question about the race of his patrons posed by the attorney? What exactly did Hayashino deem unspeakable before the courts and why? This chapter unravels the unacknowledged and often contentious encounters between Japanese and Filipino immigrants during the 1920s to the 1940s. Though disavowed in the official sphere of the court by Hayashino, the daily exchanges and social relations between migrants and amongst settlers from the Pacific formed an important part of the borderland spaces of the American West. As Hayashino's narrative suggests, the relationships between Japanese merchants, Filipino laborers, and white property holders were unpredictable and rapidly changing as the socio-economic climate of California changed in the years leading up to World War II.

In this chapter, I locate the culture of the movies on the Pacific Coast within a circuit of regional migration and overlapping community formation.[3] Focused by a case study of Asian immigrant film culture in Stockton, California from the 1920s to the 40s, the chapter examines the complex social relations that take place amongst diverse immigrant communities whose lives and livelihoods were bound together by shared spaces and interdependent relationships. Kevin Mumford uses the term "interzone" to describe the interracial vice districts that formed in African American communities in Chicago and New York during the early twentieth century. He argues that these districts emerged in relation to the sweeping vice reforms of the era and consequently restructured the sexual and institutional geography of the two cities.[4] I note this term to draw resemblances to what I describe in this chapter as the "migrant city." Notwithstanding regional differences, this migrant city of the Pacific Coast in general and Stockton in particular might be considered an interzone that emerged in relation to a pervasive climate of racial segregation and the property relations that organized the complex relationships of Japanese elites to European and Filipino immigrants. I emphasize these dynamics as particularly salient to the public sphere of the cinema for Asian immigrants on the Pacific Coast.

The first part of this chapter demonstrates that racial segregation shaped the experiences of Asian immigrants at the movies. It also traces the ways that these repressive conditions prompted and mediated the formation of another culture of movie-

---

[3] There are few accounts of the history of movie-going on the Pacific Coast. For one study of California, see George Potamianos. "Hollywood in the Hinterlands: Mass Culture in Two California Communities, 1896-1936" (PhD diss, Univ of Southern California, 1998)

[4] Kevin Mumford. *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia UP, 1997)

going in the migrant city. As such, I recognize the ways that racial segregation meant more than minority exclusion from white spaces. It also meant that diverse immigrant communities found themselves in closer proximity to one another. The latter part of this chapter focuses on the particular context of Stockton, California. I draw out the complex relationship of Japanese immigrant communities to the Filipino migrant world that was taking shape throughout the tumultuous 1930s. I conclude with the court scene and the embattled relationship of Japanese immigrants to property and place.

The Other California

Felix Zamora arrived on the West Coast in the 1920s and, similar to many young men who recently emigrated from the Philippines, worked in the Alaskan canneries during the summer months and then traveled to Washington and California during the remainder of the year. He recalls that after laborious stretches of continual work, he was eager to take time for rest and leisure yet this was especially difficult in the anti-Asian city. "They segregate the Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, colored people and they stay on the balcony," Zamora recounted of his visits to moving picture theatres in the 1920s and 1930s, "and all the white on the first floor." Fed up with the lower class seating, Felix Zamora returned to the segregated theatre one evening to try and take a seat reserved for white patrons only. He dressed up in a sharp suit and walked onto the lower floor of the theatre to, in his words, "feel my luck." Not surprisingly, even with the fine clothes, Zamora was denied the seat and ordered to return to the balcony.[5] Zamora might have

[5] Felix Zamora. Oral History Interview, PNW81-Fil—11Pa, National Pinoy Archives of the Filipino American National Historical Society, Seattle, Washington.

believed that donning a suit and appearing, as he put it, “spic and span,” would make visible an embodied cultural respectability. Neither his ticket nor suit, however, would afford Zamora a seat in the “white only” section. In the Jim Crow theatre, Zamora was dispossessed, and not only of his theatre seat.

Racial segregation accomplished much more than separating “nonwhite” persons from the spaces and activities of “white” persons. Legal scholar Cheryl Harris has suggested that whiteness itself is a form of property and historically acknowledged and protected in American law. She contends that whiteness is a possession that guarantees assets and benefits protected by the judiciary and confers a common premise by those who share in the possession of whiteness: the right to exclude. Racial segregation, as one example, enforces this propertied interest in whiteness through exclusion.[6] Drawing upon Harris’ formulation of whiteness as property, film scholar Robert Allen argues that the seven decade history of racial segregation in American moving pictures theatres not only made the movie-going experience the property of whites but also the act of visiting the movies an exercise of white patron’s property right to whiteness.[7] Thus, the ejection of Zamora from the theatre seat is enabled and justified by his dispossession of whiteness. In no small measure, this dispossession confers for “white” theatre patrons their own possession of whiteness. That is to say, the quotidian experience of sitting in a segregated balcony seat instates and affirms the property interest of whiteness.

---

[6] Cheryl Harris. “Whiteness as Property” *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993)

[7] Robert C. Allen. “Relocating American Film History: The ‘Problem’ of the Empirical” *Cultural Studies* Vol. 20 No. 1 (Jan 2006)

It is important to note that the color line in the moving picture theatre was drawn and reinforced by both *de jure* and *de facto* segregation.[8] The legal segregation of moving picture theatres, moreover, required a conceptualization that divided the "public" from the "private." In New York, New Jersey, and Tennessee, state courts ruled that movie theatres were an exception to civil rights statutes by emphasizing the distinctions between theaters as private enterprises and trains or streetcars as public conveyances which bore a long established common law "duty to serve."[9] That is to say, theatres were not regarded as "public accommodations;" rather they were cast as "private" spaces and immune from the burdens of equal protection. One Tennessee court in 1938 boldly proclaimed that theatre proprietors held the "right to control access or exclusion as complete as that of any private person over his… private theater or place of amusement for his family."[10] The Tennessee court ruling established theatre ownership as a form of private property rights. The ruling, moreover, granted the moving picture theatre protection from intervention by law. It gave the theatre the domestic privacy accorded to the family and the home. In this regard, the law functioned to uphold white privilege by establishing the sanctity of the private domain. Racial segregation in the moving picture theatre, thus, could be justified based on the propertied categories of privacy and domesticity.

---

[8] For a review of racial segregation in American moving picture theatres during the pre-civil rights era, see Douglas Gomery in "Movie Theatres for Black Americans" *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1992); Barbara Stones in "Black Theatres/Black Movies" *America Goes to the Movies: 100 Years of Motion Picture Exhibition* (Hollywood: National Assn of Theatre Owners, 1993); For a discussion of movie theatre segregation in apartheid South Africa, see Garth Jowett "Apartheid and Socialization: Movie-Going in Cape Town, 1943-1958" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 26 No. 1 (March 2006)

[9] For a review of the laws regarding the moving picture theatre as a private enterprise, see Max W. Turner and Frank B. Kennedy in "Exclusion, Ejection, and Segregation of Theater Patrons" *Iowa Law Review* Vol. 32 No. 4 (May 1947)

[10] Tenn. Code Ann. 5262 (Michie 1938) cited by Allen in "Relocating American Film History," 76.

Conversely, California lawmakers did not regard the theatre as a "private" establishment or outside the scope of civil rights and equal protection.[11] California guaranteed equal protection in "places of public accommodation," which explicitly included the movie theatres in 1893 and 1897 statutes.[12] While courts in other states endorsed segregated seating or gave proprietors the right to determine their own seating and admission policies, California courts interpreted the civil rights statutes to limit the rights of proprietors to racially segregate audiences by ticketing or seating.[13] Moreover, in a 1922 theater segregation suit filed by an African American patron, California courts also guaranteed the protection of the state civil rights statutes for all persons who resided in the state regardless of their citizenship status. In a likely nod to the rights of Asian immigrants in California, the court asserted that "Proof that he was a resident of the state entitled plaintiff to maintain the action…and it is immaterial whether or not he was a citizen of the United States, with all the rights implied by such a term."[14] In law, then, all California residents, regardless of race or citizenship status, were entitled to equal rights and protection in all public spaces, including the movie theatre.[15]

---

[11] The sparse scholarship on moving picture theatres and racial segregation largely focuses on the East Coast and the South. For a review of civil rights statutes in California including those relating to moving picture theatres, see Milnor E. Gleaves. "Civil Rights: Extent of California Statute and Remedies Available for its Enforcement" *California Law Review* Vol. 30 No. 5 (July 1942); A brief discussion of movie theatres and segregation of Alaska natives and Filipino cannery workers in Alaska appears in Terrence M. Cole "Jim Crow in Alaska: The Passage of the Alaska Equal Rights Act of 1945" *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 23 No. 4 (Nov 1992)

[12] Cal. Stats. 1893; Cal Stats. 1897

[13] Jones v. Kehrlein (1920) 49 Cal. App. 646, 194, Pac. 55

[14] Prowd V. Gore (1922) 57 Cal. App. 458, 207 Pac. 490

[15] Thus far I have been able to locate only one case from Utah that involves discrimination claims from an Asian movie patron. In 1933, Roque de la Ysla brought suit against Publix Theatres Corp for refusing his seat on the lower floor and requiring him and his three companions to sit on the balcony because they were

Nevertheless, in spite of the formal protections of California law, theatres in California commonly segregated their audiences.[16] Oral histories with Asian immigrants in California and other Pacific Coast cities reveal that the color line was drawn by *de facto* segregation. Based on their testimonials, the separate balcony seating was the most common segregating practice on the Pacific Coast. "Even if the ticket is supposedly for downstairs," one Chinese resident remarked about a Los Angles movie theatre, "they point to the stairs and say upstairs."[17] The demarcation of racial segregation, as this patron indicates, was subtle and could be enforced without even explicit signs. Practices of racial segregation in theatres undoubtedly persisted throughout California yet remained less documented than segregation in other arenas. As such, oral histories represent crucial documentation of the social relations that cannot be apprehended in the records of political and legal histories.

Balcony segregation was most readily practiced in the 1920s era of the picture palace. Commenting on black movie-going in the pre-civil rights South, Allen notes that whereas a balcony was an architectural impossibility for opera houses and storefront theatres, the picture palace theatre literally built racial segregation into the structure of the building. Architectural drawings of southern picture palace theatres show plans for

---

Filipino. He argued that in front of a theater of other patrons he and his friends were "put to shame, great embarrassment, mortification, and humiliation." The Utah courts ruled against de la Ysla citing the rights of the proprietor and the absence of any civil rights law in Utah. De La Ysla v. Publix Theatres Corporation (1933) 82 Utah 598; 26 P. 2d 818

[16] For a review of practices of theatre regulation, see Alfred F. Conrad. "The Privilege of Forcibly Ejecting an Amusement Patron" *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Register* Vol. 90 No. 7 (May 1942)

[17] Eddie Lee, Interview by Jean Wong, Jan. 20, 1979. Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project, Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

"colored" balconies, separate box offices, doorways, and staircases. In North Carolina, where the population was split between whites, African Americans, and American Indians, some theatres even had double balconies and triple entrances to ensure tripartite racial segregation.[18] By the 1920s, this method of segregating black patrons had become so commonplace that the balcony of theatres came to be derisively and popularly known as buzzard roosts, peanut galleries or, most offensively, "nigger heaven." One Japanese immigrant invoked this racialized imagery when he reported his seating on the segregated balcony of a Seattle movie house: "Even when I bought the most expensive seat I was taken to the so-called 'nigger heaven'—the highest and farthest back in the gallery."[19]

In the era of the nickelodeon, most theatres did not have a balcony and racial segregation was implemented by other means. Asian immigrant moviegoers in Los Angeles recall that their admission into theatres was, at times, refused altogether. "Some of the theatres won't sell you a ticket if you are Chinese," one patron relayed. "I have had them tell me they were all sold out and then I would see an American woman come up and they would hand a good seat right out to her!"[20] Daniel Hall similarly recalled that the movie theatre on 6th and Broadway in Los Angeles refused Chinese admission altogether.[21]

---

[18] Allen, "Relocating American Film History," 73.

[19] Sakigake Hideyoshi, interview cited by Kazuo Ito in *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* Trans. Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Japanese Community Services, 1973), 373.

[20] Interview cited by William C. Smith in "The Second Generation Oriental in America." Preliminary paper prepared for the second general session, Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15-29, 1927, 21.

[21] Daniel Hall, Interview by xxxx. Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project, Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles.

In the Central Valley, where Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants comprised large sectors of the agricultural labor force from 1880 to 1940 and settled in the many towns and cities of the region, segregation in moving picture theatres was part and parcel of living in Jim Crow California. In hotels, restaurants, night clubs, Filipinos in Stockton were met at the doors with signs that read "Positively No Filipinos Allowed." Filipino residents of Stockton recall that they were not permitted to cross Main street to the north side where white residents resided. Some moving picture theatres in Stockton partitioned the theatre space to divide white and nonwhite patrons. As one Filipino noted, "Rialto Theatre in Stockton was located on Main Street between Hunter and San Joaquin streets. Here the minorities were segregated. We were always led to sit on the right side of the theatre."[22] Another Filipino of Stockton remarked, "When we went to the theater to see a show we were always ushered to one side. We weren't allowed to sit in the middle of the theater."[23] In some instances, moving picture theatres refused Filipino admission altogether. Johnny Latosa recalls that the Fox Theatre, also on Main Street, hung a sign outside its entrance that read, "No Filipinos Allowed."[24]

Asian districts constituted the other California that formed over and against the pervasive racial segregation of the anti-Asian city. The rooming houses, eateries, bath houses, pool halls, grocers, laundries, etc. comprised part of a migrant city borne from

---

[22] Filipina/os experiences of racial segregation and discrimination in Stockton are well documented in a compilation of oral histories conducted by the Filipino Oral History Project, Inc. See *Voices* (Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project, Inc., 1984)

[23] *Voices* (Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project, Inc., 1984)

[24] The interview with Johnny Latosa, who was President of the organization the Filipino Community of Stockton and Vicinity, Inc., is noted by Carol Hemminger's in "Little Manila: the Filipino Stockton Prior to World War II" *The Pacific Historian* (1980), 28.

racial power, on the one hand, and immigrant survival, on the other. Migrant cities like Stockton, California served as transit points for Asian workers en route to the “factories in the fields.” The city was located at the intersection of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys which divided the Central Valley into, respectively, north and south. City officials and newspapers dubbed the nascent Asian districts of Stockton the “Oriental Quarter.” It was first settled by Chinese immigrants and, by the early 1900s, Japanese immigrants moved into the region just west of Chinatown between Market, El Dorado, and Washington streets. Japanese merchants and proprietors developed downtown Stockton into a thriving district, Nihonmachi, which included rooming houses and residential hotels for the areas’ seasonal labor force, as well as an array of social institutions, eating establishments, and entertainment venues. Filipina/o immigrants settled in Stockton during the 1920s, one block south of Chinatown and Nihonmachi at El Dorado and Lafayette streets.[25]

Filipinos Positively Allowed

> Every American knows how much economic advantage is gained through the very hard labor of our Filipinos in the sun scorched fields of asparagus and strawberries. Such arduous labor explains why after months of hardships, our people come to town and wish relaxation. Of this circumstance merchants and places of amusement avail themselves. However, these dancing places and gambling houses constitute the non ethical mecca of our people (in *The Philippine Examiner*, 1937).

> Countrymen, Save Your Money! Then decide to go home at the earliest boat that leaves for the homeland for there are better chances for comfort and success among your own people than there are in this country (in *The Philippine Examiner,* 1935).

---

[25] For a discussion of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigration and settlement in Stockton, California, see Dawn Mabalon. “Life in Little Manila: Filipina/os in Stockton, California, 1917-1972” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2003).

In the migrant city, merchants relied upon Filipino patronage and recognized the buying power of Filipinos. They knew, as one Stockton resident put it, Filipinos were the "biggest dollar that floated around the Valley."[26] With fewer establishments of their own and racial segregation barring access to other parts of the city, Filipinos frequented the places owned and operated by Chinese and Japanese immigrants. As anti-Filipino violence erupted across the Pacific Coast in the 1930s, these places drew increasing scrutiny --and the sentiment expressed by the Stockton based *Philippine Examiner* newspaper captures the concern over Filipino exploitation in the migrant city. The call for return also alludes to the precarious place of Filipinos in immigrant America as both itinerant laborers and recently "emancipated" subjects from U.S. colonial rule. These concerns expressed by the press resonated for many Filipinos and their political struggles throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Historian Dorothy Fujita Rony explains that the politics and resistance of Filipinos differed from other immigrant and racialized groups because of the context of American colonialism. Before they arrived in the United States, Filipino immigrants were more likely to have obtained English language skills and learned the tenets of American democracy in the colonial education system of the Philippines.[27] As such, benevolent assimilation shaped the disillusionment that Filipinos experienced with racism and labor exploitation in the United States. It also informed Filipino expectations of social equality which ultimately formed the basis for their labor militancy.

---

[26] Mabalon, "Life in Little Manila," 69.

[27] Dorothy Fujita Rony. "Resistance, Return, and Organization" in *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 2003), 145.

In Stockton, California, merchants of the Asian districts attempted to address the social concerns and political sensibilities of Filipino patrons during the tumultuous decade of the 1930s. Moving picture theatres formed a considerable segment of the commercial culture in Stockton. Their address to Filipino spectators can be read in the immigrant press which served as a source of information as well as a public forum for a largely transient and migrant Filipino public.[28] Editors of the Filipino papers encouraged their readers to view their patronage and consumption as a means to "help the cause of Filipinos."[29] Showmen of the movie houses in Stockton sought to mediate the prevailing concerns that shaped and animated Filipino public and political culture. In particular, they promoted a movie-going experience over and against experiences in the anti-Asian city. They addressed Filipino experiences with racism by drawing upon notions of consumer equality and assuring Filipino patrons of "first class" treatment. The theatres in the migrant city, moreover, appealed to notions of self-determination and an emergent politics amongst Filipino laborers during the 1930s and 1940s.

Japanese showmen were amongst the proprietors of moving picture theatres in Stockton. One Stockton survey lists the operation of a Japanese moving picture theatre, Fuji Theatre, as early as 1914.[30] Shigeaki Hayashino and a group of Japanese showmen in 1930 opened a moving picture theatre located in the overlapping Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino district of the city. The Star Theatre (26 E. Market street) was first leased to the

---

[28] For a review of the Filipino press, see Emory S. Bogardus. "The Filipino Press in the United States" *Sociology and Social Research* (1934); Donn V. Hart. "The Filipino-American Press in the United States: a Neglected Resource" *Journalism Quarterly* (Spring 1977)

[29] *The Philippine Journal* 17 Aug 1940

[30] Glenn A. Kennedy. *It Happened in Stockton 1900-1925* (Stockton: Kenco Reproduction Service, 1967)

Japanese proprietors and followed by the opening of the Lincoln Theatre (28 S. El Dorado street) and the Imperial Theatre (19 S. El Dorado street).[31] Hayashino and the Japanese showmen sought, and indeed depended upon, the patronage of Filipinos for their moving picture theatres. In fact, throughout California and in particular the Central Valley, Japanese growers and merchants after 1924 turned to Filipinos as patrons for their businesses and laborers on their farms.

Japanese immigration to the United States was halted in 1924 with the Johnson Reed Act and, consequently, many merchants and growers of the Japanese immigrant community suffered without incoming immigrants from Japan to expend income and provide labor. Filipino immigration to the United States, conversely, surged after 1924 as capital need sought to replace Chinese and Japanese workers. Until 1934, Filipino immigration to the United States was exempt from exclusion due to the status of the Philippines as a U.S. territory under colonial rule. Between 1920 and 1929, over 14,000 Filipinos immigrated to the U.S. mainland via Hawaii while another 37,680 arrived directly from the Philippines. Census figures shows that by 1930 there were 45,000 Filipinos in the continental United States with the overwhelming majority residing in California.[32]

---

[31] Beginning in 1933, the Stockton city directory listed Hayashino Shigeaki as manager of the Lincoln Theatre. In the 1942 city directory, his name no longer appears. However, the theatres under his ownership are listed under the "Motion Picture Theatres" section in the business part of the city directory with no mention of his name. See *Polk's Stockton California City Directory 1933* (San Francisco: R.L. Polk and Co. of California, Publishers, 1933) p. 130; *Polk's Stockton California City Directory 1942-43* (San Francisco: R.L. Polk and Co. of California, Publishers, 1942-43), 496.

[32] Bruno Lasker. *Filipino Immigration to the Continental United States and Hawaii* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1931); H. Brett Melendy. "Filipinos in the United States" *Pacific Historical Review* 43:520-46 (1974)

With their earlier arrival, Japanese immigrants established a presence, albeit limited, in the Central Valley as tenant and independent farmers. In the 1920s, Japanese immigrants outnumbered Italians, Germans, and Portuguese as tenants and owners. Over five thousand Japanese farmers held 361,276 acres of land and produced crops valued at $67 million.[33] Japanese women also immigrated to the United States in substantial numbers and, as Japanese American historians point out, played a major role in the settlement phase of Japanese immigrant history.

Conversely, the majority of Filipinos in the 1920s arrived as single young men between the ages of sixteen and thirty. Pacific Coast states had already passed alien land laws and thus, compared to the Japanese and Chinese, far fewer Filipinos owned property or established their own businesses.[34] The vast majority of Filipinos were transient laborers engaged in a regional migration throughout the American West that circulated from Alaska to California, rural towns and urban cities. During the growing seasons, many Filipinos worked in the agricultural fields of California and Washington or they traveled to Alaska to work in the salmon canning industries. In the winter, when the growing seasons were over, Filipinos migrated into urban centers to work in domestic

---

[33] Lawrence Jelinek. *Harvest Empire: A History of California Agriculture* (San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser, 1979); On Japanese immigrant settlement and agriculture in California, see Valerie Matsumoto. *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993); Chiyo Shimamoto. "The Japanese in San Joaquin County Past and Present" *San Joaquin Historian* (Winter 1982); On Asian immigrants and agriculture, see Cecilia Tsu. " 'Grown in the Garden of the World': Race, Gender, and Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley, 1880-1940" (PhD diss., Stanford Univ, 2006)

[34] Elena S.H. Yu argues that early Filipinos never developed a merchant economy and community formation in the U.S. comparable to Chinese and Japanese immigrants because of the timing of their arrival, their transient laboring, and a Spanish colonialism that undermined a Filipino mercantile class in the Philippines. Los Angeles and Stockton represented the only exceptions in the 1920s and 1930s. See "Filipino Migration and Community Organizations in the U.S" *California Sociologists* (1980)

and service industries.[35] In the migrant city of Stockton, the Filipino population dropped to 1,000 in the winters and rose to 6,000 in the peak of the asparagus season.[36]

In their address to Filipino laborers, merchants mediated conditions of itinerant laboring and migrancy. They sought to appeal to Filipino needs and desires as migratory laborers. "Those who need work come and see me," the Japanese owned Togo Hotel on S. Lafayette informed Filipino laborers, "we help you with the best of kindness."[37] Japanese owned boarding rooms, hotels, lodges, and inns often served as hubs for labor contracting. Leisure places that male migrants frequented such as pool halls and eateries were also major centers for labor contractors as well as labor agitators and union organizers. Similar to other major immigrant presses, notices for unskilled and low wage labor in the seasonal industries of agriculture, cannery packing, etc. comprise a large segment of Filipino papers. Other establishments also addressed Filipino readers as laborers. "Labor day is gone again and not until next year will we again celebrate the day set aside for the working man," an advertisement for a men's store reads, "meanwhile you industrious Filipino friends of mine will keep working and earning money."[38] In his attempt to appeal to Filipino patrons, the proprietor of this shop cast Filipinos and their migrant laboring in the image of the hard working and honest American working class.

---

[35] Dorothy Fujita-Rony. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003)

[36] On Filipinos in Stockton, see Dawn Mabalon. "Life in Little Manila: Filipina/os in Stockton, California, 1917-1972" (PhD diss. Stanford University, 2003); Frank Ramos Perez and Leatrice Bantillo Perez. "Filipinos in San Joaquin County" *San Joaquin Historian* (Winter 1994); Carol Hemminger. "Little Manila: the Filipino Stockton Prior to World War II" *The Pacific Historian* (1980)

[37] *The Philippine Examiner* 15 July 1937

[38] *The Philippine Examiner* 15 Oct 1938

Shop keepers, proprietors, business owners, and merchants sought to appeal to Filipino desires in the consumer and commercial arena. Their advertisements implicitly referenced the anti-Asian city by assuring Filipino patrons of their welcomed patronage. In their address, they sought to appeal to notions of consumer equality and citizenship. Since the majority of businesses in Filipino papers were not Filipino owned or operated, many establishments sought to make these promises stark and explicit. One business on El Dorado street noted "15 Years of Square Dealing with Filipinos."[39] Another establishment publicized that "All Filipino's always cordially treated in our store."[40]

2.1 Advertisement for Japanese owned Star Theatre and Imperial Theatre in *Philippine Examiner* 30 July 1938

---

[39] *The Philippine Examiner* 15 March 1937

[40] *The Philippine Examiner* 30 Oct 1937

The showmen of moving picture theatres in Stockton, too, sought to engage Filipino spectators by making explicit that unlike the theatres of the anti-Asian city, their show houses were, as advertisements for the Japanese owned Star Theatre, Lincoln Theatre, and Imperial Theatre stated, a "favorite of Filipinos" and where "Filipinos Welcome at All Times."[41]

Many advertisements and schedules for moving picture theatres in Stockton were also partially printed in Tagalog as a way to ensure a Filipino address. The Mandarin Theatre on South Center street, the Rialto Theatre on Main street, and the Fox California Theatre on Main street all printed a small part of their advertisements in Tagalog. Most of the Filipino papers, however, were printed in the English language. Filipinos emigrated from different regions of the Philippines and spoke a variety of dialects and the English language was widely promoted under American colonialism. Moving picture theatres sought to inform Filipino patrons of first rate facilities. The Sierra Theatre on Main street promoted air conditioning that made their theatre "always comfortable and cool."[42] Theatres noted first run films, frequent or daily program changes, and double features.

In the 1930s, it is worth noting that advertisements in Filipino papers for the Japanese owned or operated moving picture theatres in Stockton contain the name of the manager. "S. Hayashino, Mgr." appears on all the advertisements for the Lincoln Theatre until the 1940s. The insignia presents the Japanese showman as an impresario of sorts. It also conveys the sensibility of the neighborhood theatre common in the nickelodeon era.

---

[41] *The Philippine Examiner* 15 Oct 1935

[42] *The Philippine Examiner* 30 June 1938

This sense of the local, however, continued to play an important role beyond the nickelodeon era, particularly in smaller towns and cities.

LINCOLN
THEATER
Phone 724
28 S. EL DORADO ST.
STOCKTON CALIF.
S. Hayashino, Mgr.
and
NIPPON
THEATRE
328 L STREET
SACRAMENTO, CALIF.
S. Nakatani, Mgr.
Flipinos Always Welcome
Program Change Every Day With
BEST DOUBLE FEATURES
and
Selected Short Subjects

2.2 Advertisement for Lincoln Theatre and Nippon Theatre in *Philippine Examiner* 30 July 1938

Hayashino's name on the announcement in Filipino papers disappears in the 1940s. As I elaborate later, the Japanese showmen of the Stockton theatres were interned by the federal government and lost their ownership by a dispute over the alien land laws. The absence of the Japanese showman's name also implicitly references the heightened hostility between Japanese and Filipino communities before and after the Second World War.

The advertisements for the Japanese owned theatres in Stockton sought to craft cultural legitimacy by addressing several tenets that most explicitly informed Filipino labor militancy. Throughout the papers, merchants extended expressions of celebration on occasions that marked Filipino self determination. Showman Hayashino wrote a special note to the Filipino public on the anniversary of *The Philippine Examiner*. "Allow me to take this opportunity of extending my most cordial greetings to the Filipino people," the Japanese showman eloquently stated, "May your organ have its continued success as in the past, and thanking you for your continued patronage."[43] In appealing to notions of Filipino self-determination, however, the Japanese showman was conveying more than greetings and gratitude. He was also implicitly referencing Filipino dispossession.

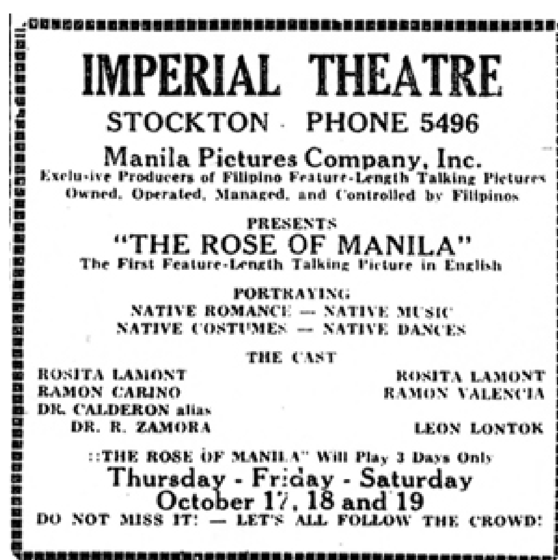
In other ads for their theatres, the Japanese showmen publicized that there were "always good shows at these Filipino Neighborhood Family Theatres."[44] The characterization of the Star Theatre, Lincoln Theatre, and Imperial Theatre as "Filipino Neighborhood Family Theatres" implies a sense of Filipino possession based on patronage and locality. That is to say, Japanese ownership of the theatres is mitigated, and indeed obfuscated, by an emphasis on the place of Filipinos in the theatres as regular patrons as well as the place of the theatres in the heart of the Filipino district in Stockton. This wording is worth noting because the other moving picture theatres in the area, presumably under white ownership, neither invoke this sense of Filipino ownership nor attempt to highlight the locality as explicitly. In framing the theatres as Filipino spaces,

[43] *The Philippine Examiner* 15 Oct 1938

[44] *Philippine Journal* 14 Nov 1940

the Japanese showmen are able to convey a sensibility of proprietorship amongst Filipino patrons that mediated the emergent politics of Filipino radicalism and the actual ownership of the theatres by Japanese showmen.

These terms of Filipino self determination and possession were most explicitly presented in an advertisement for the Japanese showman's Imperial Theatre in 1935. The Stockton theatre presented the exhibition of a Philippine film called "Rose of Manila."[45]



2.3 Advertisement for "Rose of Manila" at Imperial Theatre
in *Philippine Examiner* 15 Oct 1935

This screening in the Japanese owned theatre is the earliest exhibition of a Philippine feature length picture in the United States that I have come across in my research.[46] The ad noted that the film would play at the Imperial Theatre for three days over the weekend

[45] In film catalogues of moving pictures from the Philippines, there is no mention of a film by the name "Rose of Manila." The first film produced in the Philippines bore a similar sounding name "Rose of the Philippines." However, it is unlikely this is the same film. "Rose of the Philippines" was produced in 1909 and released the following year by Carl Laemmele's Independent Moving Picture Company. The total running time of the film was eight minutes.

on October 17, 18, and 19. It does not mention whether the film was presented during the regular daytime and evening hours or during the late night midnight hours, which I discuss in the following section. The ad describes "Rose of Manila" as the "first feature length talking picture in English" and as portraying native scenes of the Philippines. Most prominently displayed at the top of the ad is a note that the Imperial Theatre has received the film from the Manila Pictures Company, Inc. which was, as boldly printed, "Exclusive Producers of Filipino Feature-Length Talking Pictures Owned, Operated, Managed, and Controlled by Filipinos."[47] In these references, it is suggested that while Filipinos may not possess ownership of theatres, or other forms of business and property, they might forge a sense of possession in the form of consumption and production.

In their appeals to social equality and Filipino self determination and possession, Japanese showmen of the moving picture theatres in Stockton sought to mediate a number of conditions that shaped Filipino dispossession in the United States. Most importantly, however, these strategies arbitrated the increased presence of Filipinos in the public and political culture of California. The rise of labor militancy amongst Filipinos profoundly affected Japanese growers and merchants, particularly in the Central Valley. In 1931, hundreds of Filipinos went on strike against Japanese farmers in San Luis Obispo after wage cuts.[48] Japanese celery growers were also hit by labor strikes in 1936 when 1,500 Filipinos walked off the fields and demanded wage increases and union recognition. Japanese growers, in turn, successfully recruited young Issei scabs with the

---

[46] Film scholar Nick Deocampo suggests that the earliest film to make its way to Filipino in audiences in the United States was "Zamboango." It premiered in San Diego in 1936.

[47] *Philippine Examiner* 15 Oct 1935

[48] *Daily Worker* 11 March 1931

assistance of Japanese merchants in Stockton to undercut their strike.[49] In Stockton, Filipinos launched boycotts against Japanese merchants first in 1930 – when Hayashino and the Japanese showman opened their first theatre-- and again in 1936, 1939, and immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.[50] In this context, then, the film culture of the migrant city was informed by not only the exclusions from the anti-Asian city but also the propertied relations that organized racial power in the California Delta and structured the inequities *between* Japanese and Filipino communities.

Filipino Spectators and Homeland Movies

Starting in 1935, Filipino audiences packed into movie show houses of the migrant city to watch the dramatic tales of adventure, rescue, heroism and torrid love unfold in the lands and seas of their native Philippines. Pictures from the Philippine moving picture industry first circulated in the 1930s throughout major hubs of Filipino migration and settlement in the United States. In the first decade of the exhibition of these films, however, Filipino audiences would have to wait until the midnight hour to catch a glimpse of their beloved homeland. The show houses of the migrant city in California often required Filipino spectators to view Philippine films in late night screenings, a common practice of racial segregation in movie theatres throughout the American South. As discussed earlier, racial segregation in the anti-Asian city established the property interest in whiteness. What, then, did racial segregation accomplish in the migrant city? I

---

[49] Eiichiro Azuma. "Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity: Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta" *The Pacific Historical Review* (May 1998)

[50] Mabalon, "Life in Little Manila," 211.

return to the circuit of moving picture theatres, both Japanese and non-Japanese owned, that served Filipino audiences throughout California and in particular in the Central Valley. While the promotion of moving pictures from the Philippines clearly demonstrates the desires of the showmen to attract Filipino patronage, what did the presentation of the films in the midnight hours accomplish? In particular, what set of social relations and boundaries did the segregated exhibition of Philippine films manage in the overlapping and interdependent economic and cultural spaces of Japanese and Filipino communities in California during the 1930s and 1940s?

The majority of Filipino films that played in the California show houses during the 1930s and 1940s no longer exist.[51] Film scholars note that many of the films produced by the Philippine film industry before the Second World War present a visual language of native and indigenous Philippines. The imaginings of colonial spaces before colonialism are potent signifiers in anti-colonial discourse. As such, how might we understand the exhibition of such films to Filipino movie-going publics in California? How does racial segregation, the viewership of the films at the "midnight ramble," shape film spectatorship? Undoubtedly, discussion of these questions is limited by the absence of the film text. Given the absence of the film, I turn to the Filipino press to map out a partial context for the circulation of the Filipino films and their discussion in community discourse.

[51] There are only five surviving prints of prewar films from the Philippines: Zamboanga (1937), Tunay na Ina (1938), Pakiusap (1938), Giliw Ko (1938), and Ibong Adarn (1941). I have not been able to obtain access to any of these films. For a review of lost early Philippine films, see Nick Deocampo. *Lost Films of Asia* (Manila: Anvil, 2006)

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Philippine films were often exhibited in show houses of the migrant city as a "special screenings" that took place in the after hours of regular first run show times. These late night screenings or "midnight rambles," as they were called, were a common practice of racial segregation in the era of Jim Crow. Film scholars have noted that in small and rural towns, particularly in the South, moving picture exhibitors could not afford to exclude the large African American population altogether. Without a balcony, a feature of most "modern" picture palaces, many small theatres were segregated according to split week policies that offered white and black patrons different days of the week to attend the theatre and "midnight rambles" that offered differing times for attendance. All-black theatres were limited in the South and thus "midnight rambles" and other methods of partitioning a space for black patrons in white Southern theatres were popular throughout the 1930s and 1940s. When film companies started producing "all-black cast" or "race films" in the 1910s, the exhibition of these films were shown in the few all-black theatres and during "midnight rambles" in white theatres.[52] These midnight rambles were pervasive, although not exclusive with, the South, small and rural towns, or African American audiences. An article from the *New York Times* reports that Chinese audiences in 1942 watched moving pictures from China in New York's Chatham Theater on the Bowery between the late hours of 11 o'clock and 1 in the morning.[53]

---

[52] On "midnight rambles," see Barbara Stones. Barbara Stones in "Black Theatres/Black Movies" *America Goes to the Movies: 100 Years of Motion Picture Exhibition* (Hollywood: National Assn of Theatre Owners, 1993), 211.

[53] *New York Times* 11 January 1942

Newspaper advertisements and film schedules in the Filipino press reveal that midnight showings in California show houses where held only with the exhibition of Philippine films. In the Filipino papers that I reviewed, I found no other film screenings

2.4 Advertisement for midnight showing of "Buenavista" and "Sakay" at Sierra Theatre, *Philippine Examiner* 30 Nov 1940

promoted in the midnight hours. In 1940, the Sierra Theatre of Stockton, California premiered "Buenavista" (1939). The advertisement not only announced the production company, Filippine Films Super Production, but also assumed the recognition of celebrity culture amongst the Filipino readership by prominently featuring the names of the popular actors Rosa Del Rosario and Angel Esmeralda. The film was, as the ad noted,

midnight show exclusively playing on Saturday evening.[54] In 1945, the Rialto Theatre in Stockton promoted five "special midnight shows" of five different Philippine films. Tickets for these shows were sold at 11:00 p.m. and, though this might presumably mean an exclusively adult audience, the film schedule includes a price listing for children's

2.5 Advertisement for midnight showings of Philippine films at Rialto Theatre, *Philippine Examiner* 31 May 1945

admission.[55] In addition to Stockton, the Mission Theatre in Sacramento, the West Side Theatre in Delano, and the Liceum Theatre in Fresno held showings of Filipino films at

[54] *The Philippine Examiner* 30 Nov 1940

[55] *The Philippine Examiner* 31 May 1945

midnight only.[56] The Philippine pictures exhibited in California theatres in 1945 were presented by a film exchange called "The Trans-Pacific Picture Co.," which according to all the advertisements, showcased "Pre-invasion Philippine Made Pictures" that were meant to "Remind You of the Beautiful Philippines." Unfortunately, I have uncovered no additional information about this film exchange. The moving pictures presented in the California theatres via this film exchange seem to portray similar thematic concerns. They depict the native lands and cultures of the Philippine before colonialism as a way to, in the words of the film ad, represent "a living monument of our peoples triumph."[57]

Significantly, the Japanese owned and operated Star Theatre in Stockton, which aggressively courted Filipino patronage, also presented Philippine films as "midnight rambles." In 1940, the Star Theatre exhibited "Sakay" (1939) during the midnight hours exclusively.[58] My research indicates that not until the 1950s—a decade later—that Filipino pictures were run on a regular Wednesday night slot at the Lincoln Theatre in Stockton.[59]

It is reasonable to discern that the midnight timeslot of Philippine film exhibitions was economically expedient given the need to serve diverse audiences and the relative paucity of films from the Philippines arriving in the United States. The smaller California cities and towns of Stockton, Sacramento, Delano, and Fresno supported a commercial culture that resembled the Southern town more than the metropolis. However, it is worth

---

[56] *Philippines Bataan Herald* 17 August 1945

[57] *Philippines Bataan Herald* 5 Oct 1945

[58] *The Philippine Examiner* 30 Nov 1940

[59] *Philippine American Mirror* Dec 1953

exploring the role of race in the presentation of Philippine films in the late night hours. As a form of racial segregation, the "midnight ramble" presented more than separate exhibitions for white and black patrons. By structuring black patronage of moving pictures at night, the "midnight ramble" ensured that a black movie-going public would be effaced from white public view.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the presence of young Filipino men in public captured the attention of anti-exclusionists, social reformers, and social scientists.[60] Filipino presence and prowess in public, their proficiency in American leisure and culture, enraged many Americans who identified these acts as overt claims to social equality. Some of the most violent anti-Filipino riots occurred at and over the taxi dance hall which, for racists and exclusionists, came to embody the source of the "Filipino problem": the interracial relations between fallen white women and dangerous and depraved Filipino men. The construction of Filipino "sexual menace" in the public discourse fueled the anti-Filipino movement in the 1930s.[61]

In their operation of moving picture theatres in Stockton, the Japanese showmen sought to mediate the presence of Filipino men in public. Whereas the Mandarin Theatre promoted burlesque stage shows and "girls, comedy, and laughs" with their moving picture shows,[62] Japanese showmen sought to distinguish their several Stockton theatres as legitimate and respectable entertainment venues. In their address to Filipino patrons,

---

[60] On the anti-Filipino riots, see Howard De Witt. "The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict" *Southern California Quarterly* (1979)

[61] For a review of the sexualized racialization of Filipinos during the 1930s and the passing of anti-miscegenation laws, see Leti Volpp. "American Mestizo: Filipinos and Antimiscegenation Laws in California" *UC Davis Law Review* (2000)

[62] *The Philippine Examiner* 1 July 1940

Japanese showmen sought to differentiate their theatres from the “vice” venues that attracted hostility from anti-Filipino racists. A 1936 advertisement in Filipino papers promoted the Japanese theatres in Stockton as “the cleanest and most wholesome Filipino home theatres.”[63] The appeal to cleanliness and domesticity sanitized the theatre space to embody the “safety” of the home place. By distinguishing itself from the heterosocial taxi dance hall or the homosocial gambling den, the moving picture theatre could be read as emptied of the dangers of Filipino male sexuality. The invocation of “home” also clued Filipino bachelors into the theatre’s desirability for proper courtship and familial relations.

In Stockton, the gentrified self-presentation of the theatre space and the relegation of Philippine films to the “midnight ramble” mediated the presence of Filipinos in the public culture of the migrant city. For many Japanese immigrants, the presence of Filipinos in public, while profitable for their businesses, also unsettled the borders of their own communities. In 1930, an interracial marriage between a young Nisei woman and a Filipino man outraged many in the Japanese immigrant community. To the horror of the woman’s family, the “secret affair” started in a pool hall owned by the Nisei’s father. Indeed, Japanese owned establishments in Stockton’s Asian districts not only provided migrants with lodging and leisure, it also increased the places for interracial contact, bringing communities like the Japanese and Filipinos into closer proximity with one another. In fact, the controversy set off the first boycott of Japanese businesses in Stockton as Filipinos recognized that many Japanese shared in white perception of

---

[63] *The Philippine Examiner* 26 Feb 1936

Filipino sexual danger.[64] Eiichiro Azuma argues that the Japanese immigrant community embraced the notion of Filipino "sexual menace" as a means to address the threat of rising labor militancy and undermine Filipino organizing efforts. [65]

FILIPINO SHOW
Parade in California
Philippine Films ★ Talking Pictures
DIRECT FROM MANILA
Consolidated Amusement Co., Ltd., Presents:

IMPERIAL THEATRE
Stockton
Tues., July 5, 6:30-11:30 P.M.
Rosa del Rosario—Normal del Rosario — Carlos Padilla—in
"Sa Tawag Ng Dios"

NIPPON THEATRE
Sacramento
Tues., July 5, 6:00-11:00 P.M.
Mary Walter and Jose Padilla — in —
"Liwayway Ng Kalayaan"

CENTRAL THEATRE
Broadway St., L. A.
Thursday, July 14
Edwardo de Castro — Fely Cuevas — in
"Ang Mahiwagang Violin"

REX THEATRE
Broadway St., Oakland
Mon., July 11, 6:00-11:00 P.M.
Rosa del Rosario and Carlos Padilla — in
"Sa Tawag Ng Dios"

VERDI THEATRE, Broadway St., San Francisco
Saturday, July 9 — 9:30 P. M.
Rosa del Rosario — Norma del Rosario — Carlos Padilla — in
"Sa Tawag Ng Dios"

2.6 "Filipino Show Parade in California," *The Filipino Pioneer* 1 July 1938

The Filipino papers never commented on the relegation of Philippine pictures to the late night and midnight hours. It is difficult to discern the extent to which Philippine

[64] Arleen De Vera. " 'The Tapia-Saiki Incident': Interethnic Conflict and Filipino Responses to the Anti-Filipino Exclusion Movement" *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* Ed. Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1990), 201-214.

[65] Azuma also suggests that Japanese elites found the construction of Filipino inferiority and degeneracy as a means to articulate their own moral superiority, a sentiment that also strengthened their own growing nationalist identities. See "Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity: Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta" *The Pacific Historical Review* (May 1998); See also "Interethnic Conflict under Racial Subordination: Japanese Immigrants and Their Asian Neighbors in Walnut Grove, California, 1908-1941" *Amerasia Journal* 20:2 (1994), 27-56.

pictures were presented as “midnight rambles” when they were exhibited in American theatres. Some of the pictures from the Philippines were brought to California show houses by the film company Consolidated Amusements, a Hawaii based enterprise that supplied American, Japanese, and Philippine pictures to theatres in major centers of transpacific traffic throughout the early twentieth century. The company supplied moving pictures to many of the small town and plantation owned theatres in Hawaii and maintained a branch in Hilo that specialized in pictures from the Philippines. Consolidated Amusements brought “Sa Tawag Ng Dios” and several other Filipino pictures to California in 1938. Dubbed the “Filipino Show Parade in California,” the “talking pictures direct from Manila” were exhibited in Hayashino’s Imperial Theatre in Stockton, Soichi Nakatani’s Nippon Theatre in Sacramento, as well as the Central Theatre in Los Angeles, the Rex Theatre in Oakland, and the Verdi Theatre in San Francisco. These films were not “midnight rambles” and exhibited at regular evening show times.[66]

Though the theatres were not in their ownership nor were the terms of exhibition, the arrival of Philippine pictures and the chance to view them in local theatres undoubtedly stirred great interest and enthusiasm amongst Filipinos in California and across the U.S. “Philippine Pre-War Pictures to be shown in Delano” read one headline in the Filipino papers.[67] In 1938, two Philippine films, “Zamboanga” (1937) and “Sa Tawag Ng Dios” (1934), played in Stockton show houses. According to one review from the Filipino papers, Filipinos in California had much to take pride in with the exhibition of

---

[66] *The Filipino Pioneer* 1 July 1938

[67] *The Philippines Bataan Herald* 16 April 1945

these pictures. These films were noteworthy and revealed that "given the chance and supported by our people, there is no reason why in a few years our home made pictures can not equal the excellent Hollywood productions." The popular star of the two films, Rosa de Rosario (the "golden age" movie queen of the Philippine cinema), was "not without the finesse of a Hollywood star." Filipinos could not only take pride in these Philippine made pictures, they could also relish in the fantasy of film.

> The picture ZAMBOANGA opens with a panoramic glimpse into the exotic scene and customs of the people of Moroland. Romantic shores lined with gracefully waving coconut palms, grass huts, nestling by the serrier sea, sail-boats with their gaudy sails whitening against tropic skies, fanciful brooks echoing the laughter of dusky maidens, semi-naked boys exploring the dreadful depths resting in the bosom of enchanting corals—all this native charm is shown and expressed in poetic language by the commentators' voice.

The vivid descriptive account of the seductive landscape given to Filipino readers shored up a vision of native life before colonialism. "Filipinos should not miss this picture or all Filipino pictures," the writer for *The Filipino Pioneer* surmised, "the wealth of native atmosphere in them is extremely comforting, especially for those who are homesick."[68]

Property Relations and the Japanese Showman

For the Japanese showman, the operation of moving picture theatres was fraught with challenges. In the anti-Asian city, American law codified whiteness and property relations and thus dispossession was as true for the showman as it was for the spectator. As persons of Japanese descent, the showmen were dramatically affected by state legislation prohibiting "alien" property ownership and mass internment during WWII. As

[68] *The Filipino Pioneer* 1 July 1938

the Grace Hong argues, both the Alien Land Laws and the forced incarceration of 120,000 persons of Japanese descent in internment camps were state sponsored forms of dispossession that enforced the property interest of whiteness over and against the exclusion of Japanese immigrants based on race and citizenship.[69] In 1942, Shigeaki Hayashino and the Japanese showmen of the Star Theatre, Lincoln Theatre, and Imperial Theatre in Stockton were forcibly removed to internment camps. While they were incarcerated, the white property owner of the moving picture theatres in 1944 brought suit against the Japanese showmen to abrogate their lease based on violation of the California alien land laws.[70] The case against the Japanese showmen dragged on for several years and reached the California Supreme Court in 1948.[71]

Propertied relations bore undeniable significance to public culture. The law suit against the Japanese showmen constitutes one small segment of the history of state sponsored investment into the propertied interest of whiteness. While codified in law, this dispossession of property rights also structured and, indeed ensured, that the public culture of the migrant city became the property of whites. From 1942 until Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in 1944, the interrelations between racial communities of the

---

[69] Grace Kyungwon Hong. "Histories of the Dispossessed: Property and Domesticity, Segregation and Internment" in *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor* (Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota, 2006); See also " 'Something Forgotten Which Should Have Been Remembered': Private Property and Cross-Racial Solidarity in the Work of Hisaye Yamamoto" *American Literature* Vol. 71 No. 2 (June 1999)

[70] Emil Palermo commenced Action No. 35332 and filed his claim against the Japanese showmen on June 5, 1944 in the Superior Court of San Joaquin County. Unfortunately, the trial transcripts from the case are missing but summaries and partial transcripts of the trial can be found in case files of the Appeal Court and the California Supreme Court as well as secondary literature.

[71] Palermo v. Stockton Theatres, Inc., 32 Cal. 2d 53 (Cal. 1948)

migrant city were significantly shaped by the evacuation of Japanese and the vulnerability of their property. In unraveling a story of property relations and the Japanese showmen in Stockton, California, I show the ways that whiteness as property mediated the sociability and the public culture of the migrant city.

Shigeaki Hayashino was prominent in the Japanese immigrant community of Central Valley California and, in many ways, embodied the tenets of a "self made man." He was part of the first generation that called themselves Issei and left Nara, Japan in 1907. He first arrived in Seattle and, similar to many "fountain pen boys," attended high school and simultaneously worked as a domestic servant in middle class American homes. He arrived in Stockton, California after 1926 and entered the business of the moving pictures. In the time he spent living in Seattle, it is possible that Hayashino acquired the vision or knowledge of moving picture showmanship given the vibrancy of the Japanese film scene in Seattle during the 1920s. In Stockton, Hayashino opened several moving picture theatres, including the Star Theatre, Lincoln Theatre, and the Imperial Theatre, with the partnership of other Japanese showmen. They operated these theatres under the aegis of carefully planned corporate names like Santa Rosa Theatres and Stockton Theatres, Inc.

The decidedly Anglo name of the Japanese owned companies was apt in a strong climate of anti-Japanese sentiment in California. During this time, Japanese proprietors often adopted American sounding names for their businesses as a way to shield themselves from public scrutiny and racism. Guy C. Calden, a lawyer who helped many Japanese immigrants protect themselves against public censure and legal restrictions like

the California alien land laws, aided Hayashino and his theatre business.[72] In addition to the help from his compatriot showmen and white representatives like Calden, Hayashino also sustained his show houses with the support of the Japanese leadership in California. According to records from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, he was a member the Japanese Association which protected the interests of Japanese growers and merchants in the region. He was an officer in Hokubei Butoku Kai (Military Virtue Society of North America) and engaged in immigrant nationalist politics while in the U.S such as donating relief funds and comfort bags to Japan in times of depression and war. Hayashino, the report further noted, never registered his five children for dual citizenship.[73]

In 1942, when Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, Hayashino and his entire board of Japanese showmen were forcibly removed to internment camps. Over 120,000 Japanese Americans were interned as a "military necessity." Evacuees boarded hundreds of trains for destinations throughout the American West and were held in dozens of assembly centers before their placement in one of ten interment camps, what the federal

---

[72] Calden and his law partner Albert H. Elliot published a legal guide in 1929 that was intended for "acquainting alien Japanese residing in the United States with the laws of the country of their adoption." See *The Law Affecting Japanese Residing in the State of California* (San Francisco, 1929); Calden and Elliot were prominent lawyers from San Francisco who helped many Japanese immigrants in the first half of the twentieth century circumvent the California alien land laws by establishing trust agreements and dummy corporations, as well as placing the title of property in the names of American born children of Japanese immigrants. Out of the 30 Japanese farming corporations in Merced County in 1920, 23 of the corporations issued large blocks of stock to the trustees of Albert H. Elliot and Guy C. Calden, who served as attorneys for the Japanese Association of America. See Bill Ong Hing "Rebellious Lawyering, Settlement, and Reconciliation: Soko v. YMCA" *Nevada Law Journal* (Fall 2004); Robert Higgs. "Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture to 1941" *Journal of Economic History* (March 1978); and Brant T. Lee. "A Racial Trust: the Japanese YMCA and the Alien Land Law" *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* (Spring 2001)

[73] Relocation Planning Correspondence 6 Oct 1948. National Archives D.C. WRA Case File. Hayshino Shigeaki. RG 210

government called War Relocation Centers.[74] Hayashino and his wife Tokiyo were interned at the Rohwer Relocation Center in Arkansas. Other Stockton Theatre movie men like Nakatani Soichi were detained at the Jerome War Relocation Center in Arkansas. The Japanese movie men were evacuated to these camps because they agreed to the “loyalty oath” unlike the thousands of “disloyals” who were segregated to Tule Lake.

Unable to manage their theatres or company while detained, Hayashino and his compatriot showmen were advised to sell their theatres. Rather than relinquish their theatres at a loss, however, they placed the management of the company and theatres in the hands of two white associates T.W. Thomas and Mr. Lippert, both of whom received large percentages of the net profits of the theatres. Lippert alone received $1500 per month in management fees, an unprecedented amount for the Stockton Theatre company which paid Hayashino, prior to evacuation, only $150 per month. The fees paid to the white overseers of the Japanese theatres exceeded the profits of the entire company in the years of internment.[75]

Hayashino and the trustees of Stockton Theatres were fortunate compared to many Japanese internees. Notification of evacuation was sudden and required many evacuees to hastily sell their property and possessions at an economic loss. The loss of Japanese owned property, assets, and possessions from evacuation totaled an estimated

---

[74] The scholarship on Japanese American internment is vast. One of the most frequently cited, and indeed seminal, texts is Peter Irons. *Justice Delayed: The Record of the Japanese American Internment Cases* (Middleton: Wesleyan Univ, 1989); For an international perspective on Japanese American internment, see Brian Hayashi. *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2003)

[75] “Stockton Theatres, Inc. v. Emil Palermo,” Supreme Court of California, No. 6248, California State Archives, Sacramento, California.

$400 million. Japanese growers in California, according to estimates by the WRA, suffered an average loss of $13,960.[76] With limited options, Hayashino made cursory arrangements for his theatres with white associates eager to take advantage of the vulnerabilities opened by internment. Japanese lawyers advised many evacuees with urban property holdings to give power of attorney to agents or white friends. Hayashino, however, quickly realized his mistake and contacted in 1944 the Federal Reserve Bank to report the mishandling of Stockton Theatres by T.W. Thomas, who had failed to account for the income received in his operation of Hayashino's theatres.[77] In the handling of evacuee assets, the Wartime Civil Control Authority designated the Federal Reserve Bank (FRB) and created the Evacuee Property Department (EPD) to protect the assets of Japanese internees from profiteers and minimize financial loss. However, as Sandra C. Taylor argues, the FRB and the EPD were ineffectual and largely concerned with expediting the disposal of evacuee property and aiding in the war effort.[78] Edgar Bernhard, representative for the Evacuee Property Department, received Hayashino's letters of concern in 1944 and traveled to Stockton that year to settle the dispute on behalf of the Japanese showmen of Stockton Theatres.

---

[76] The financial losses of Japanese evacuees estimated by the War Relocation Authority in 1946 are cited in Elmer R. Smith's "Resettlement of Japanese Americans" *Far Eastern Survey* 18 May 1949, 117-118.

[77] National Archives D.C. WRA Case File. Hayshino Shigeaki. RG 210

[78] Taylor also notes that months before evacuation, the government closed "enemy owned" banks, leaving many Japanese with little access to financial resources. In Sacramento, officials encouraged city banks to loan money to Japanese on blocked accounts. The Bank of America refused to cooperate. In addition to "protecting" evacuee property, agents of the FRB also oversaw internees' continual payment on insurance premiums and taxes. See "The Federal Reserve Bank and the Relocation of the Japanese in 1942" *The Public Historian* Vol. 5 No. 1 (Winter 1983), 23.

For Japanese immigrants, their dispossession was part and parcel of a climate of racial terror that continued well after Roosevelt rescinded internment in 1944. Resettlement provoked a surge in anti-Japanese violence and agitation. In fact, the California legislature proposed an amendment in 1946 to incorporate the Alien Land Law into the state constitution.[79] The press, anti-Japanese groups, and ordinary patriots were dangerously active during the resettlement period. Newspapers like the *Los Angeles Examiner* and the *San Francisco Examiner* and anti-Japanese organizations like the Native Sons of the Golden West and the Japanese Exclusion League of Oregon campaigned aggressively against the return of Japanese internees. The *San Diego Union Tribune* printed articles prodding Japanese returnees to consider resettling in the Midwest or face retribution in California. The Remember Pearl Harbor League distributed signs that read "We Want No Japs Back Here, Ever" to businesses in the Washington State area.[80] The JACL paper *Pacific Citizen* reported more than forty incidents of violence against Japanese returnees in the first sixth months of 1945.[81] Arson and "night rider" shootings at Japanese residences were widely reported and often received little to no criminal persecution.[82] In January of 1945, a man who attempted to dynamite a Japanese

---

[79] Although it was defeated by California voters, the anti-Japanese bill was supported by politically powerful farm organizations like the Associated Farmers and the California Farm Bureau and many voters of the Central Valley, a region which held greater hostility towards returning Japanese than urban areas. See Kevin Allen Leonard." 'Is That What We Fought For?' Japanese Americans and Racism in California, the Impact of World War II" *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 21 No. 4 (Nov 1990)

[80] Elmer Smith, "Resettlement of Japanese Americans" *Far Eastern Survey* Vol. 18 No. 10 (May 18, 1949), 118.

[81] Leonard, "'Is That What We Fought for?' " 468.

[82] For anti-Japanese racism and resettlement, see Poli and Engstrand, "Japanese Agriculture on the Pacific Coast," p. 362; and Tetsuden Kashima "Japanese American Internees Return, 1945 to 1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia" *Phylon* Vol. 41, No. 2 (1980), 109.

owned building was the first to stand trial for charges against returning evacuees.[83] Several months later another man Levi Multanen received a light probation sentence for emptying his gun into the home of a Japanese American family. The Fresno County judge afforded him leniency because he used a shotgun rather than a high-powered rifle.[84]

As the overseer of Stockton Theatres, T.W. Thomas shared the sentiments of many Central Valley residents who harbored strong feelings against the return of Japanese evacuees. More than withholding income reports, he wanted to ensure that Hayashino and the rest of the Japanese cohort would not reclaim the theatres and return to Stockton. For Thomas, this could be readily accomplished through property dispossession. Thus he guided (and most likely convinced) Emil Palermo to bring legal suit against showman Hayashino and Stockton Theatres, Inc. Emil Palermo had inherited the leased property from his father Angelo who passed away in 1941. He was 31 years of age at the time of law suit and unemployed. For over a decade, he had worked for Stockton Theatre Inc. moving picture theatres as a doorman and ticket attendant.

In 1944, Palermo sought a declaratory judgment against the lease of Stockton Theatres Inc. in the Superior Court of San Joaquin County. Before the court, Palermo argued that the leasing of the moving picture theatres to the Japanese showmen violated the California Alien Land Law which passed in 1913 and defined property rights based on "eligibility for citizenship." Although the law did not name Japanese immigrants for exclusion, the act applied almost exclusively to Japanese immigrants who were legally ineligible for naturalized citizenship. The 1911 reciprocity treaty between Japan and the

---

[83] Leonard, "'Is That What We Fought for?' " 469.

[84] Ibid.

United States guaranteed the citizens of each nation the right to own commercial or residential property in the other nation yet made no explicit mention of agricultural land. Thus the Alien Land Law could target Japanese immigrant agricultural holdings without overtly violating the treaty.[85] In his suit, Palermo argued that given this law and the "alien" status of the Japanese showmen, the lease over his property should be voided because it was illegal and constituted a criminal act. In the local paper, however, he stated that he filed the law suit because he strove to uphold much more than the California law. He believed that the "stigma of the Japanese owned theater would eventually deteriorate the value of the property."[86] Palermo's remark that his property values would be depreciated with Japanese presence reifies the propertied interest in whiteness. That is to say, the value of property is determined, and indeed maintained, by the capital of whiteness.

Evacuee Property representative Edgar Bernhard, investigating on behalf of Hayashino and the internees, suspected the insidious dealings of Thomas. "I was not the last to be suspicious of personal motivation in what Thomas was doing," he wrote to WRA officials.[87] With an impending law suit, Bernhard traveled to Stockton in November 1944 to survey the Star, Lincoln, and Imperial theatres under contestation. He met with Thomas who told him in frank and clear terms what the Palermo suit was about. "It isn't a matter of money with him at all," Thomas relayed to Bernhard, "He just wants

---

[85] For a review of the impact of the Alien Land Laws in California on Japanese immigrant communities, see Robert Higgs. "Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture to 1941" *Journal of Economic History* Vol. XXXVIII No. 1 (March 1978)

[86] "Japanese Lease on Building is Fought" *Stockton Record* 8 June 1944

[87] Correspondence to James H. Terry, Project Attorney, 26 August 1944. WRA Case Files. Hayashino Shigeaki. National Archives D.C., RG 210

to get rid of the Japs—and there is considerable pressure on him from friends and others." Thomas, Palermo, and their supporters believed that "if they could get them out of the theatres they would not come back."[88] The expulsion of Japanese presence "protected" the Palermo property from depreciation and reified the interests of whiteness. For the proponents of Palermo, property dispossession was the means to efface Japanese immigrants from the migrant city. More than capital interest, however, Japanese dispossession ensured that the public culture of the migrant city could be made into the property of whites.

Thomas also cited that among the supporters of the law suit against the Japanese movie men were the many Filipinos who patronized the moving picture theaters. The return of the Japanese movie men to Stockton, according to Thomas, was a "real danger particularly on account of the Philipinos [sic], some of whom had already indicated how they felt by saying, 'That is good to have the Japs coming back—good shooting.'"[89]

For Filipinos, WWII and mass internment brought more than a decade of contentious relations with Japanese immigrant communities to a head.[90] Japan's invasion of the Philippines and China galvanized many Filipinos and Chinese in the United States to rally behind the American war effort and decry Japan's occupation of their own countries. American perceptions shifted to identify the Japanese as the "enemies within"

---

[88] Report filed by Edgar Bernhard, 16 November 1944. WRA Case Files. Hayashino Shigeaki. National Archives D.C., RG 210

[89] Report filed by Edgar Bernhard, 16 November 1944. WRA Case Files. Hayashino Shigeaki. National Archives D.C., RG 210

[90] For a discussion of the impact of WWII on Filipino immigrant communities, see R.T. Feria, "War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants" *Sociology and Social Research* Vol. 31 No. 1 (1946); Dawn Mabalon. "Strikers and Soldiers: War Comes to Little Manila" in "Life in Little Manila: Filipina/os in Stockton, California, 1917-1972," (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2003)

and the Filipinos and Chinese as the "good Asians in the good war."[91] Perhaps most significantly, Japanese evacuation altered the property dispossession of many people of color. In order to minimize the potential impact of internment on California agriculture industries, the Farm Security Administration and the War Department offered special short term agricultural production credit for non-evacuee farm operators to replace interned Japanese growers.[92] Changing Filipino legal status and allowances in the California alien land laws enabled Filipinos to seize the properties and farms of evacuated Japanese growers. As historian Linda Maram notes, "less than a decade after the [Tydings McDuffie Act of 1934], when the United States faced a food shortage due to the military draft and the internment of Japanese farmers, the government reverted to recognizing Filipinos as U.S. nationals." This designation, as Maram contends, freed Filipinos from their "alien" classification and "Filipinos were allowed—indeed, encouraged—to purchase or lease lands, especially those seized from the Japanese."[93] In cities like Los Angeles, many Filipinos and people of color were also able to move into more desirable neighborhoods when Japanese immigrants were evacuated from Los Angeles.[94]

---

[91] For a discussion of Chinese American participation in WWII, see K. Scott Wong. *Americans First: Chinese Americans and the Second World War* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005)

[92] Adon Poli and Warren M. Engstrand. "Japanese Agriculture on the Pacific Coast" *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* (Nov 1945), 359.

[93] Linda Maram, "The War Years: Identity Politics at the Crossroads of Spectacle, Excess, and Combat" in *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles' Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia Press, 2006), 151.

[94] In Los Angeles, the boom in the wartime economy opened opportunities for African Americans who migrated westward to seek employment in the newly desegregated defense industries. The evacuated Little Tokyo provided many recently relocated African American workers and families with viable solutions for inadequate housing and the de facto segregation and restrictive covenants that closed off other

With the Japanese showmen evacuated and held in internment camps, the moving picture theatres in Stockton continued to run throughout the mid-1940s. In his visit to Stockton in 1944, EPD representative Bernhard noted that the Filipinos attended the show houses "very often and many of them see the same film three or four times." [95] With greater labor migration from Mexico due to the Bracero Program, the Imperial theatre on El Dorado, moreover, began "showing Mexican films entirely in Spanish."[96] A 1945 advertisement for the Imperial Theatre in the *Philippine Examiner* states that Mexican pictures were exhibited from Monday to Saturday and American pictures received only the Sunday slot.[97] Advertisements in the Filipino papers for the Star, Lincoln, and Imperial theaters, however, no longer listed their manager as "H.S. Hayashino," as they had a decade earlier.[98] The names of Thomas or Palermo appeared in place of the Japanese showman.[99] At the height of enthusiasm for the war, advertisements for the new Liberty Theatre graced the pages of Filipino dailies. Placed next to advertisements that read "Bomb Tokyo, Avenge Bataan," the Liberty Theatre enticed Filipino spectators with "a new show everyday" and the assurance "owned by an American citizen."[100]

---

neighborhoods. See Kevin Allen Leonard. *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: Univ of New Mexico Press, 2006)

[95] Report filed by Edgar Bernhard, 16 November 1944. WRA Case Files. Hayashino Shigeaki. National Archives D.C., RG 210

[96] Ibid.

[97] *The Philippine Examiner* 31 March 1945

[98] *The Philippine Journal* 14 Nov 1940

[99] *The Philippine Examiner* 22 March 1943

[100] *The Philippine Record* 9 Sept 1944

2.7 Ink portrait of Shigeaki Hayashino by George Hoshida at Lordsburg Justice Department Camp, New Mexico. Written in black ink below left image: 2004 S. San Joaquin St./ Stockton Calif. Age 52 / Oct. 1 1942. Written in black ink to left of image (In Japanese and English): / Hayashino Shigeaki / Motion Picture Theatre Circuit OWNER. Collection of the Hirasaki National Resource Center of the Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles.

The Japanese showmen were not only absent in the city of Stockton and in the pages of the Filipino press; they were also gone from the court room. Even though Executive Order 9066 was rescinded in December 1944, showman Hayashino was not present at the District Court of San Joaquin County trial. In a statement prepared for the court on April 1945, Hayashino explained that "I have made application to return to California for the purpose of preparing for trial… [however], after mass evacuation was held unconstitutional in the Endow case, I was personally served with an individual exclusion order which excluded me from the West Coast, by reason of which it would be

unlawful for me to enter the State of California."[101] While there is no other mention of the exclusion order, Hayashino stated that he filed a special application to enter California with the WRA Leave Office of the Western Defense Command; however, this travel permit that he requested for attending the trial was disapproved with no given explanation.

Thus, when Judge Marion G. Woodward of the District Court of San Joaquin County entered a judgment on July 11, 1945, Hayashino and the other Japanese showmen neither testified nor attended the trial. Judge Woodward ruled in favor of Emil Palermo by arguing that the California Alien Land Laws were not limited to agricultural property holdings and could be applied to commercial property given the 1940 abrogation of the reciprocity treaty between Japan and United States. Judge Woodward immediately commenced an action to oust Hayashino and the Japanese showmen from possession of the moving picture theatres. The District Court of Appeals, however, overruled Judge Woodward's decision and the case was brought before the Supreme Court of California in 1946.[102] The Supreme Court reached a ruling in 1948 that concurred with the reversal in an opinion judging the alien land laws in California as violating the Fourteenth Amendment and thus unconstitutional. The justices ruled against Emil Palermo and in favor of Hayashino and the Japanese movie men.[103] However, as late as 1953, the

---

[101] "Emil Palermo v. Stockton Theatres, Inc.," Supreme Court of the State of California, No. 5758, California State Archives, Sacramento, California.

[102] "State Supreme Court Will Review Star Theater Alien Land Law Case" *Stockton Record* 11 Nov 1946, 19.

[103] Palermo v. Stockton Theatres, Inc., 32 Cal. 2d 53 (Cal. 1948)

advertisements for the Star Theatre in Stockton make no mention of Japanese showman Hayashino and, instead, listed Emil Palermo as the manager.[104]

Conclusion

Starting in the mid 1920s, Filipino spectators crowded into the moving picture theatres owned and operated by Japanese showmen. These theatres were not pervasive in California nor were they representative of the movie-going experiences in American cities. Rather, they comprised part of the public culture of the migrant city for the many laborers on their way to the "factories in the fields." These experiences of the migrant city formed over and against the pervasive racism that made the culture of movie-going the property of whites. For Filipino spectators, the moving picture theatres in Stockton, California provided a venue to view moving pictures from the Philippines. It also mediated cultural politics and the relationship with Japanese immigrant communities during the tumultuous decades of the 1930s and 1940s. For the Japanese showman, the patronage of Filipinos in their moving picture theatres was crucial given the post 1924 halt to immigration from Japan to the United States.

In this chapter I have emphasized de facto segregation, property relations, and a circuit of regional migration as particularly salient factors in the culture of the movies. What I hoped to foreground is what Grace Hong calls the "histories of dispossession" as pertinent to the public sphere of the cinema for Asian immigrants on the Pacific Coast. Differential access to property rights and possession has significantly shaped the

---

[104] *Philippine American Mirror* Dec 1953

relationships of Asian immigrants to mobility and the spaces of the city. It also shaped the formation of and interrelations within their respective communities. In the next chapter, I turn to rural Hawaii where another scene of the movies unfolds within the immigrant cultures of the transpacific West.

Chapter Three

Social Reform, Plantation Amusements, and the Asian Labor Problem in Hawaii, 1909-1930s

The Asian immigrant visitor to the theatre in Hawaii during the 1920s experienced a movie culture considerably different from the U.S. mainland. The patron was less likely to be denied admission to a theatre or ushered to the segregated balcony. Though exceptions existed, there was a qualitatively different set of social experiences and expectations in a region comprised of a majority of Asian immigrants by the turn of the century. Regional differences also meant that the majority of Asian immigrants were not ghettoized in urban centers and restricted by the anti-Asian city. They did not compete with white workers as their compatriots did on the mainland. For the recently arrived, the Honolulu landing typically gave way to the cane fields and company towns of rural Hawaii. From the mid-nineteenth century, the sugar cane industry dominated the economy of the islands with a majority work force drawn from the successive waves of immigration from China, Japan, and the Philippines.

Consequently, Asian immigrants in Hawaii were as likely to experience the movies in a rural setting as they were in an urban one. For many of these moviegoers, the sugar industry played a major role in the exhibition of moving pictures. This was especially the case after 1909 when sugar officials introduced social welfare on the plantations. Sparked by the labor strikes of thousands of Asian laborers from the cane fields in 1909 and 1919, Hawaiian sugar planters embarked upon a massive program to

reform their plantations. They promoted an agenda of reform that resembled the progressive social reform movement sweeping the continental United States.

As part of these reform efforts, sugar planters introduced moving picture amusements onto the culture of the plantation in an effort to appease the unrest of their predominately Asian male laboring population. This investment consequently shaped an unprecedented film culture that spanned across plantation towns from all five of the Hawaiian islands. In their administration of moving pictures on the plantations, sugar officials expanded a sphere of oversight and control from the cane fields onto the leisure time and space of their laborers. The promotion of the movies projected a planter modernity onto the camps, rural towns, and communities of sugar dominated Hawaii.

This chapter traces the formation of a movie going culture on the Hawaiian sugar plantations throughout a period of planter initiated social reforms from 1909 to 1930s. Historian Gary Okihiro and others have characterized the project of social reform on the Hawaiian sugar plantation as a ruse to produce profits for elite planters and muzzle the dissent of laborers. Sugar planters appropriated social welfare not to uplift the subjugated but rather cultivate paternal affection and discipline laborers.[1] In the years following major organized labor strikes, sugar planters sought to placate their discontented laborers and project a more favorable image of themselves. In rural Hawaii, these desires motivated sugar planters to build venues, hire showmen, and commission theatres to exhibit the moving pictures. Planters also established a censorship bureau and even made their own films. Nonetheless, sugar planter attempts to apprehend the social sphere of

[1] Gary Okihiro. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ Press, 1991), 4.

their laborers were always limited in their reach. Despite their best attempts, planters could never completely manage the cultures of their laborers.

Plantation Reform and the Promise of the Movies

In the 1920s, sugar planter Donald Bowman addressed the consortium of officials, industrialists, and plantation managers of the Hawaiian Sugar Planter Association (HSPA) with a vision of social reform that he believed would distinguish the cane cultivation of Hawaii from the other regions around the world. In contrast to the antiquated labor systems of the Old South and the European colonies, sugar planter Bowman believed that the mission of social welfare on the sugar plantations would place Hawaii at the forefront of a "changing world capitalist system."[2] In the continental United States, the 1880 to 1924 surge in immigration raised enormous concern amongst labor leaders, industrialists, politicians, and ordinary Americans. Already transforming industrial cities from New York to Chicago, these new populations gripped Americans with fear and uncertainty. Could they be incorporated into American society given the vast national, racial, linguistic, and cultural differences that seemingly made up a great and insurmountable divide?

These concerns prompted the Progressive movement and a crusade amongst settlement house workers, civic educators, missionaries, and other liberal social reformers to remold and refashion immigrant newcomers into subjects fit for citizenship. During

---

[2] Donald Bowman. "The Betterment of Industrial Relations" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol. XXV No. 5 (Nov 1921)

and after WWI, these social reform activities were especially heightened.[3] This movement of progressive social reform resonated immensely for sugar planter Bowman. "Throughout the United States a movement for better living and social conditions for the laboring class has developed," Bowman noted for his compatriot sugar planters, "resulting in the building of model settlements where trained social workers are employed to look after the general welfare of workers." Bowman believed that the planters could implement the tactics of progressive social reform into the governance of sugar plantations. In doing so, the planters appeased the laborer and also reinvented themselves. Bowman put this point most starkly for the planter public by quoting Roosevelt: "unless this country is made a good place for all of us to live in, it won't be a good place for any of us to live."[4]

Donald Bowman and the Hawaiian sugar planters were white settlers in the outpost of the American empire. As Okihiro notes, they expropriated Hawaiian land and together with Christian missionaries installed a white planter oligarchy that dominated the Hawaiian islands and paved the way for American annexation at the turn of the century.[5] In 1909 and 1919, major organized labor strikes awakened sugar planters to the dangers of insurrection amongst laborers. For Bowman and sugar planters, social welfare provided the means to discipline labor and, simultaneously, reform their own roles as American capitalists. "We do not want wish the plantation skilled employees to feel that

---

[3] James R. Barrett. "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 79 No. 3 (Dec 1992)

[4] Donald Bowman. "General Welfare Work" *Hawaiian Planters Record* Vol. XXIII No. 3 (Sept 1920)

[5] Okihiro, "So Much Charity, So Little Democracy," in *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945* (Philadelphia: Temple Univ Press, 1991)

[social welfare] is paternal in character," sugar planter Bowman commented, "and that the plantation is handing them out things to create loyalty." Rather, Bowman envisioned social welfare to awaken amongst planters the "duty to the people residing within [their] boundaries." This philosophy also informed the planter perspective on the administration of the moving pictures. Commenting on the role of social reform and the movie-going culture of the plantation, Bowman recalled a request by a plantation social reformer to a local film exhibitor. "Send me no films of society drama, no films that show any shooting or crime, no sex appeal pictures, no comedy showing ladies in tights." Bowman jokingly responded, "what did he left to choose from?" Indeed, Bowman and the planters eschewed the perception of paternalism in their handling of movies for laborers and embraced the tenets of liberal social reform. "It is dangerous to have some local authority decide what is best for our mixed plantation population. I know of no one who could be trusted to assume the moral responsibility for the people who patronized the plantation showhouses," Bowman enumerated, "the people must choose cleaner better films for themselves."[6]

Between 1909 and the 1930s, sugar officials embarked upon a massive program of social reform on the plantations. They supported a battalion of social workers, inspectors, social surveyors, educators, health care workers, nurses, journalists, and plantation managers to care for and reform sugar cane laborers. Reformers descended upon the sugar plantations and the communities that formed in its wake to document daily life, observe eating habits and work routines, laboriously catalogue the racial,

[6] Donald Bowman. "The Betterment of Industrial Relations" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol XXV (Nov 1921)

gender, age, language, and national origin demographics of plantation populations, and produce a wealth of statistics, charts, graphs, surveys, and other scientific methods of calculation and classification. In the late thirties, social workers on the Hawaiian sugar plantations were even invited to participate and enroll in courses in the administration and direction of welfare and recreation at the University of Hawaii. These courses would be taught by settlement house leaders and were intended to allow reformers to meet each other, exchange strategies, and perhaps form an association that would bring together plantations throughout the islands.[7]

The documents of sugar planters show that moving pictures were arranged by planters as entertainment and amusement for laborers on the plantations as early as 1910. Planters in Maui, according to one 1910 report, agreed to pay the traveling expenses of the itinerant showman and provide a theatre if he agreed to exhibit moving pictures free of charge.[8] After the major 1919 sugar strike, which saw a surge in reform activities on the plantation, officials seemed to take greater initiative to integrate the moving pictures into the culture of the plantations. A report by the Social Welfare Committee in 1919 noted that sugar plantations were responsible for not only housing and healthcare but also recreation and amusement for their laborers. “In order that systematized and proper entertainment can be supplied,” the report noted, “each plantation should be urged to

---

[7] “Territorial Conference of Social Work,” 5 Feb 1918, KSC 29/38 Welfare 1938-1940, Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association Plantation Archives. Special Collection, University of Hawai’i, Manoa (Herein referred to as HSPAP).

[8] Cited by Edward Beechert in *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1985), 193.

provide a practical and adequate amusement hall."[9] It is worth noting that the labor agreement with Filipino laborers, drafted after the 1919 strike, makes no mention of this attention to leisure on the plantations.[10] However, sugar officials expended a great deal of resources and time on these programs. They designated a "service worker" for each of their plantations who would "supervise amusement features… such as moving picture theatres, exhibitions, amateur shows, and show by any traveling troupes which may visit the plantation."[11] Sugar officials also circulated questionnaires in 1919 that queried plantation managers on the status of moving picture amusements for their laborers. Officials wanted to know the number of moving picture theatres on the plantation; who ran the theatres; whether the shows were given by the planters or outsiders; how often moving pictures were exhibited; and the price of admission. In one survey, the plantation manager noted that there was one movie house on the plantation and two others for outside camps. Moving pictures were shown two to three times a week for the admission price of 30 cents. The moving picture houses were operated by "a hui of employees."[12]

By the 1920s, many sugar plantations in Hawaii operated their own moving picture theatres or they commissioned the use of theatres owned by local showmen. While I cannot discern the exact number of plantation owned or leased theatres, the records of planters indicate that by the 1920s most of the fifty two plantations with the

---

[9] "Report by Social Welfare Committee," 10 Dec 1919, MKC 1/3 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP;

[10] "Labor Agreement," March 1920, MKC 1/3 Ono C, HSPA Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP.

[11] Donald Bowman to Plantation Managers, n.d., PSC 22/9 Sundry Letters 1920-1923, HSPAP.

[12] "Amusement for Laborers," 25 Jan 1919, KAU 25/1 Haw, C, HSPA, Labor and Stats In & Out 1917-1920, HSPAP.

HSPA were served by at least one theatre. In 1922, the Honokaa Sugar Company ran two motion picture halls, one at the Honokaa sugar mill and another at the Pacific sugar mill. The theater sat 250 people and the average attendance at each screening was 125 adults and 35 children. The pictures were run at each hall once a week, with admission fees of only 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children.[13] The Hawaiian Agricultural Company of Pahala, Hawaii noted in 1920 that in addition to building new single family homes, day nurseries, and an open sewer system, they were erecting a plantation theatre.[14] By 1929, reports from the Social Welfare Committee specifically state that plantation managers were responsible for the “supervision or promotion of moving pictures shows.”[15]

In their project of social reform, sugar planters commissioned a number of film exchanges, distributors, and major companies to service their plantations with moving picture theatres. Honokaa Sugar Company in the 1930s worked with several different film distributors, including Inter-Island Film and Supply Company and Royal Film Company. In 1920, sugar planter Bowman informed managers that the HSPA entered into a non-contract arrangement with the corporate owned Consolidated Amusement Company to supply films to plantation theatres through local distributors.[16] Consolidated

---

[13] Honokaa Sugar Co. & Pacific Sugar Mill to David Horsley, 18 Aug 1922, HSC 23/3 Gen Corr In & Out 1921-1922, HSPAP.

[14] Donald Bowman to Hawaiian Agricultural Company, 26 April 1920, KAU 23/1 Haw, C, HSPA Labor and Stats In & Out 1916-1923, HSPAP.

[15] Social Welfare Committee to James Campaie, 20 March 1929, KAU 23/1 HAW, C, HSPA Labor and Stats In and Out 1916-1923, HSPAP.

[16] Circular Letter No. 5, 10 Nov 1920, PSC 22/9 Sundry Letters 1920-21, HSPAP.

Amusement later operated theatre chains and had strong ties to sugar.[17] Among the directors of the company was A.L. Castle who also headed the Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company, Ewa Plantation Company, Honokaa Sugar Company, and sugar agency F.A. Schaefer & Company.[18] The Hawaii based company supplied a number of Philippine films to show houses in California in the late 1930s and 1940s. Given the large Asian immigrant population in Hawaii, Consolidated Amusement in the 1930s started departments in Hilo that specialized in moving pictures from the Philippines and Japan.[19] Interestingly, the United States Customs in 1934 seized two reels of Japanese moving picture films from Consolidated Amusement. The federal government increased surveillance of Japanese immigrant communities in the pre-espionage decades leading up to WWII. The seizure of films was reported to naval intelligence and described as war propaganda produced by a Japanese governmental agency. The report also noted that Consolidated Amusement established a relationship with the Japanese Consulate to bring moving pictures from Japan.[20]

Undoubtedly the task of bringing the moving pictures to the rural camp towns where laborers resided was not an easy task for showmen or sugar planters. In some instances, the pictures shows were given without a charge. The Olaa Amusement

---

[17] For a brief history of the company, see "Consolidated Amusement Company" by Bob Sigall in *The Companies We Keep: Amazing Stories of Hawaii's Best Known Companies* (Honolulu: Third Printing, 2006); "Theatrical Amusements" *Thrum's Hawaiian Annual* (1943), 131.

[18] William H. Taylor. "The Hawaiian Sugar Industry" (Ph.D diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1935), 197.

[19] Lowell Gist to L.W. Wishard, 21 Mar 1939, LSC 36/9 Kai, C, Gen Corr, Out 1939, HSPAP; "To All Exhibitors of Filipino Pictures," 4 June 1941, LSC 42/18 Consolidated Amusement, HSPAP.

[20] James I. Muir to War Department, 1 October 1934, in O.N.I Reports RG 38, Box 223. College Park, National Archives.

Enterprise reported in 1920 that occasional shows were "free to laborers." "Whenever the business appears fair," Olaa exhibitors noted, "we allow every now and then a free exhibition or performance." When the community needed their theatre or held a benefit concert, Olaa theatres charged nothing and made the shows free to all. In keeping with planter social welfare concerns, show people at Olaa Amusement provided these pictures and performances to laborers as a way to, in their words, "satisfy the community, which satisfaction we too share."[21] Similarly, the Honokaa show houses rarely profited from their low admission fees. It cost $1.50 to get one reel of a "Class A" picture from the Gaiety Theater in Hilo, and combined with expenses for transportation, licenses, taxes, machine operator, hall attendant the theaters barely broke even. But, as Honokaa manager explains, "*even* is all we look for as we are giving these shows not for profit but rather as part of our welfare work."[22] In an industry where profits defined the bottom line, it would be safe to assume that exhibiting films to break even or at a loss served interests beyond the economic.

Managing the Problem of Asian Labor

From the onset, sugar planters sought and indeed depended upon a racialized and gendered labor migration from Asia. In Hawaii, sugar planters imported Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants to supply their labor intensive industry of sugar cane

---

[21] Olaa Amusement Enterprise to A.J. Watt, 22 Jan 1921, PSC 22/9 Sundry Letters 1920-1921, HSPAP.

[22] Honokaa Sugar Co. & Pacific Sugar Mill to David Horsley, 18 Aug 1922, HSC 23/3 General Correspondence In & Out, 1921-1922, HSPAP.

cultivation with productive labor.[23] They believed that once their labor was expended they could be expelled from Hawaii. Yet the instrumental abstraction of Asian immigrants into pliable units for laboring opened a host of problems for planters who needed a stable and year- round labor force to cultivate the sugar cane. Sugar planters turned to the promotion of cheap attractions such as the movies as a way to discipline their predominately single male and non citizen laboring population from Asia. They hoped that social reform would manage their problem with Asian labor.

From the mid nineteenth century, Asian immigrants comprised the principal laboring population on the Hawaiian sugar plantations. Although Native Hawaiians were the first laborers to work in the cane fields, their relatively small numbers and ability to subsist by other means prompted planters to search beyond the islands for labor as their industry rapidly expanded. Sugar planters made early attempts to encourage labor migration from Europe and the United States but failed.[24] They turned their sights to Asia and the earliest labor recruitment came from China. However, federal immigration laws restricted Chinese immigration to Hawaii and thus planters turned to Japan. Between 1886 and 1924, approximately 200,000 Japanese emigrated from Japan to Hawaii. As sugar planters grew increasingly unsettled by Japanese labor, the sugar industry turned their sights to the Philippines. From 1906 to 1930, sugar planters recruited 120,000

[23] On Asian labor and the sugar cane industry of Hawaii, see Ronald Takaki. *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii 1835-1920* (Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii, 1983); John M. Liu. "Cultivating Cane: Asian Labor and the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation System within the Capitalist World Economy, 1835-1920," (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1985); "Race, Ethnicity, and the Sugar Plantation System: Asian Labor in Hawaii, 1850-1900" in *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* Ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1984)

[24] William Russ. "Hawaiian Labor and Immigration Problems before Annexation" *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 15 No. 3 (Sept 1943)

Filipinos to work on the plantations. For planters, the differentiated Asian immigrant population provided a productive labor force dispossessed of white privilege and excluded from citizenship. As sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn points out, the categories of race and citizenship were inextricably linked for sugar planters who often used the terms "citizen" and "noncitizen" interchangeably for "white" and "nonwhite." [25] Sugar planters never perceived their Asian laborers as settlers or potential citizens and their recruitment policies favored young single men. As one report in 1916 suggested, "plantations have to view laborers primarily as instruments of production, their business interests require cheap, not too intelligent, docile unmarried men."[26] Planters perceived single male laborers as abstracted labor available for exploitation and then expulsion. Without families or wives, planters assumed Asian laborers would remain sojourners in Hawaii and return to their own countries when their labor was no longer needed.

In addition, first generation laborers from China, Japan, and the Philippines were excluded from naturalized citizenship by federal law. The Hawaiian Constitution established property ownership and English language literacy as requisites for voting. Thus, by 1910, over fifteen years after their initial immigration, Japanese composed 41.5 percent of the total population in Hawaii yet only 0.1 percent of registered voters. In Hawaii, Asian laborers provided planters with an abundant labor supply and their

---

[25] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Japanese and Haoles in Hawaii" in *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 204.

[26] Cited by Miriam Sharma in "Pinoy in Paradise: Environment and Adaptation of Pilipinos in Hawaii, 1906-1946" *Amerasia* 7:2 (1980), 95.

exclusion from citizenship enabled the white haole and planter elite to retain their political dominance despite their substantially smaller numbers.[27]

Indeed, planters and elites grew increasingly troubled with the numerical dominance of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii. Their increasing settlement in the region and organizing efforts, in turn, unsettled the planters. After the 1909 sugar strike led by Japanese laborers, sugar agents set up an office in Manila to recruit Filipino laborers whom they imagined would mitigate Japanese presence on the plantations and in Hawaii. As a territory of the United States, the Philippines offered ideal recruitment conditions for sugar planters that included exemption from immigration exclusion, already established transportation, and the Americanization of emigrating Filipinos before they even reach American soil.[28] Moreover, the differentiated Asian labor population enabled planters from the onset to discipline laborers with qualitatively different racisms. As Moon Kie Jung notes, sugar planters created a rigid racial hierarchy on the sugar plantations that divided workers. Haoles exclusively occupied the highest professional position and Portuguese, Japanese, and Filipinos occupied positions in descending order of status and power. Salaries, benefits, housing, resources, and chance for advancement were unevenly allocated based on racial categories.[29] Japanese and Filipinos, moreover, evinced a significantly different structural and social place amongst the immigrant and laboring populations in Hawaii. Whereas Japanese immigrants arrived in Hawaii at a time when

---

[27] Glenn, "Japanese and Haoles in Hawaii," 204.

[28] Bruno Lasker. *Filipino Immigration: To Continental United States and to Hawaii* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1931)

[29] Moon Kie Jung. "Race and Labor in Prewar Hawaii" in *Reworking Race: the Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 66.

Japan was rapidly modernizing and engaged in their own imperial project, Filipinos arrived in Hawaii as subjects under American colonial rule. As a rising global power, the Japanese state could, and at times did, intervene on behalf of its citizens abroad. Under United States colonial occupation, Filipinos had no recourse to their national government. The colonial status of Filipinos reinforced their subordination and racialization as inferior. Anti-Japanese racism, in contrast, disrupted the racial hierarchy of the plantations and exacerbated haole fear of Japanese dominance in the Pacific.[30]

With their earlier arrival, increasing settlement, and growing second generation, Japanese immigrants gradually moved out of the sugar cane industry and into other, albeit limited, sectors of the labor market in Hawaii. Filipinos, in contrast, remained overwhelmingly as workers on the sugar plantations. By 1922, the Filipino population on the sugar plantations reached 18,600 and outnumbered the Japanese.[31] By 1930, Filipinos formed 70 percent of the plantation work force while the Japanese constituted only 19 percent.[32] As the largest laboring class on the sugar plantations, Filipinos were largely, though not exclusively, the targets of planter social reform. In the 1920s and 1930s, furthermore, it became clear to sugar planters that these social welfare plans were a necessity on the plantations precisely because Filipino laborers never resolved for planters the problems presented by Japanese insurrection. They only exacerbated them.

As "U.S. nationals" exempt from immigration exclusion, Filipinos needed no visas or permission to go from the Philippines or Hawaii to the continental United States.

---

[30] Jung. "Race and Labor in Prewar Hawaii," 78-87.

[31] Taylor, "The Hawaiian Sugar Industry," 91.

[32] Sharma, "Pinoy in Paradise," 97.

Planters in 1920 issued a memo to Filipino workers concerning the large number of Filipinos from the sugar plantation applying for passage back to the Philippines. "There are so many applications on file," the report stated, "that all the steamer space for the next three or four months at least will be filled by these applicants." Planters urged Filipinos to stay at work until they could be assured a place on the steamships. The labor commissioner to the Philippine government, Francisco Verona, an avid supporter of the sugar planters, also urged his countrymen to stay on the plantations. "Remember the dollar here is worth two pesos in the Philippines," Verona argued, "your family in the homeland needs your help."[33] By 1935, 58,281 Filipinos left Hawaii to return to the Philippines while 18,574 migrated to the continental United States.[34]

The problem of transience plagued planters from the turn of the century. When Hawaii was established as an insular territory of the United States in 1900, the Organic Act outlawed the contract labor system of the sugar industry and ended the restrictions on travel between the islands and the continental U.S.[35] Sugar planters were left with the challenges opened by free wage labor which included, among others, a rise in transience and the debut of labor strikes. To stem out-migration, the legislature in Hawaii passed an act in 1922 that required labor recruiters from the mainland, whom sugar officials

---

[33] "To Filipinos…" 9 Dec 1920, MKC 113 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP.

[34] Sharma, "Pinoy in Paradise," 96.

[35] Only the Chinese were barred from immigrating during this period because of federal exclusion laws in 1882 that prohibited the immigration of Chinese to the United States.

believed to be the principal culprits in their problems with labor transience, to purchase a five hundred dollar license and pay twenty-five thousand dollars in fines for violations.[36]

With the transition from contract to free wage labor, planters also faced the first major labor strikes on the plantations. Between 1900 and 1905, there were an estimated thirty-nine labor actions on the plantations. Much to the detriment of planters, Japanese laborers led the first organized labor strike in 1909 that spanned across plantation camps and entailed over seven thousand Japanese laborers who left all Oahu plantations for three months. At the time of the strike, Japanese workers comprised 64.4 percent of the plantation labor force. Japanese labor organizers raised $42,000 from workers on other islands to support Oahu strikers while the sugar industry had over $2 million to sustain itself during the strike. As I discuss further in the next chapter, the surge in social reforms on the sugar plantations followed the 1909 strike and, most significantly, the 1919 dual union strike. The latter strike is most significant in the Hawaiian history of labor because it brought together, for the first time, Japanese and Filipino workers in a unified demand for higher wages.

To subdue these pending labor troubles, planters adopted policies in 1901 that evicted unruly workers from plantation housing and controlled maximum wages. Their most potent plan to manage the perils of wage labor, however, rested with their efforts of social reform. The agendas of social reform presented planters with inordinate means to ensure laboring without penal or coercive actions. "Plantation police work is best carried out separate from welfare work… and this holds good for getting men out to work in the

---

[36] Edward Beechert. *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1985)

morning," one official explicitly stated. "A better [labor] turnout can best be accomplished by the [welfare] worker."[37]

Hawaiian sugar planters struggled with the transition to free wage labor and the task of maintaining their labor force. They were not unlike the copper mining industrialists who spurred the spread of movie-going to the most remote corners of the British empire. According to historian Charles Ambler, colonial and mining officials in the late 1920s introduced the moving pictures into the mining camps of Northern Rhodesia in an effort to provide "appropriate" leisure for an African work force that was, in their perception, unaccustomed to the temporal and spatial constraints of industrial employment.[38] Similarly, planters hoped that administrating their own forms of leisure, and indeed providing what they deemed as "appropriate," might provide the discipline for a labor force that had greater mobility and increasingly greater means to organize.

Making the Plantation Family

Hawaiian sugar planters envisioned social reform and directed their policies, as well as their promotion of the moving pictures, in familial terms. The majority of the laborers on the sugar plantations were single men from Asia, yet the sugar planters focused social reform on the reproduction of families. Historian Eric Rauchway notes that progressive reformers in the early twentieth century seized upon the idea of family as

---

[37] Circular Letter No. 9, n.d., PSC 22/9 Sundry Letter, HSPAP.

[38] Charles Ambler, "Popular Films and Colonial Audiences: The Movies in Northern Rhodesia" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 106 No. 1 (Feb 2001); For more on film culture in colonial Africa, see James Burns. "The African Bioscope: Movie House Culture in British Colonial Africa" *Afrique & Histoire* Vol. 5 (2006); Brigitte Reinwald. " 'Tonight at the Empire? Cinema and Urbanity in Zanzibar, 1920s to 1960s" *Afrique & Histoire* Vol. 5 (2006)

a means to explain the relations between social elites and the dependent classes in moral terms. Reformers fostered the use of family as an ideal for liberal society and the remodeling of actual families in keeping these ideals.[39] In Hawaii, sugar planters focused reform efforts on the remaking of families and domesticity on the plantations. In doing so, they hoped to project a progressive vision of the plantation family.

Planters identified gender and their laborers non-normative family formation as the major problems that needed their reform. "The chief objection or undesirable character of the Filipino immigration," planters stated in their reports in 1918, "is the low percentage of women." Rather than faulting their own practices and policies, planters suggested that the high rates of transience among Filipino workers had "largely to do with the unrest and wandering habits of these people."[40] Despite their initial policies, sugar planters after 1919 turned their attention towards encouraging the immigration of women from the Philippines. They believed that the potential reproductive labor of Filipinas would balance and remedy the transience and social problems associated with single male Filipino laborers. Although the population of women on the plantations increased, the ratio of men to women remained disproportionately skewed. Of the Filipina/o emigrants arriving in Hawaii between 1928 and 1932, 29,580 were men and 863 were women.[41]

---

[39] Eric Rauchway. *Family and American Reform Politics 1900-1920* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001)

[40] HSPA to James Campsie, 12 March 1918, KAU 25/1, Haw, C, HSPA Labor and Stats In & Out 1917-1920, HSPAP.

[41] Taylor, "The Hawaiian Sugar Industry," 92.

Despite the overwhelming male majority on the plantations, sugar planters emphasized families as the locus of reform efforts. In their administration of the moving pictures, officials noted in 1920 that the "weekly shows were much appreciated by families" and that these amusements should be especially promoted amongst laborers with families because "they are the ones that can be depended upon most for our refining operations and community life." Hawaiian sugar agents in Manila had previously reported that Filipinos with families were being recruited and that these laborers should heed special concern from planters. "If the families that come are not properly looked after and provided for," they noted, "it will result in adverse reports going back and the efforts to get these people to bring women and children will utterly break down."[42]

Social reform aided in planter plans to recraft their male laboring population into workers able to sustain the year-round cycle of laboring that sugar cane growing and processing required. Planters spent considerable energy and resources to not only build better homes but also foster better domesticity. As officials put it, "by giving the worker a house which is attractive, sanitary surroundings, and opportunities for pleasure and recreation, not only a better worker is developed, but a more stable one."[43] In addition, they recommended that plantations "prepare separate houses so that when a married man arrives he can be housed in a suitable way, not put into barrack quarters where his family will be part and parcel of the whole camp."[44] By segregating the families from the single

---

[42] Donald Bowman to Onomea Sugar Company, 1 May 1920, MKC 1/3 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP.

[43] Circular Letter No.9, n.d., PSC 22/9 Sundry Letters 1920-1921, HSPAP.

[44] Circular Letter No. 4, 15 Sept 1920, PSC 22/9 Sundry Letter, HSPAP.

male laborers, planters fashioned boundaries to contain the perceived contagion and danger that single male Asian laborers presented. Single family homes enabled laborers with families to make their living quarters properly private and in contrast to the single male laborers who resided together in barracks. Sugar planter Donald Bowman recommended that "construction of laborers' and semi-skilled married men's quarters be of the one-family single house type, with not less than two bedrooms, situated on a lot of 5,000 square feet… and necessary wash, bath houses, and other sanitary arrangements."[45] Family men were also aided in their domesticity by receiving credits from planters to "equip their quarters with benches, tables, and cooking utensils."[46]

Interestingly, sugar planters even made their own films to craft these gender and familial expectations and manage the perceived problems of the single Asian male laborer. In 1928, the HSPA commissioned the production and exhibition of a two-part moving picture show that attempted to illustrate for laborers the benevolent policy of planter initiated "family reunification." The pictures filmed included the actual arrival of three men who came from Ilocos Norte under the care of the HSPA to join their relatives at the Kahuku plantation on the island Oahu.[47] Another film featured Soledad Sinia, the wife of a sugar cane laborer who crossed the ocean to join her husband in Hawaii. With the passage of his wife and child already arranged, Pedro Antonio agreed to let sugar

---

[45] Circular Letter No. 4, 15 Sept 1920, MKC 1/3 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP.

[46] Circular Letter No. 4, 15 Sept 1920, MKC 1/3 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stat 1920-1928, HSPAP.

[47] J.K. Butler to Plantation Managers, 29 May 1928, MKC 1/7/ Ono, C, HSPA, Circulars 1925-1930, HSPAP.

showmen film. HSPA officials sent movie men from Honolulu to the province of Nueva Ecija in the Philippines where they met Soledad and began their filming.[48]

Planters believed that filming the lives of actual plantation laborers and depicting the Pacific passage would be the best way to illustrate their policy and, in their words, "arouse interest with the familiar scenes." The films were exhibited with a Filipino lecturer who provided in the local dialect the translation and explanation of the English language titles that accompanied the silent film. While prints of the films are not available, planter records include the titles of the films and the commentary that lecturers were supposed to follow when presenting. In the film chronicling the passage of Soledad Sinia, the film begins in Hawaii and with the intertitle: "The Sugar Planters' of Hawaii want good Filipino laborers to have their families with them in Hawaii whenever this is possible." The captions go on to narrate the status of Pedro Antonio as a good worker and the approval he receives from planters to send for his wife and child. Soledad receives word in the Philippines and meets HSPA officials at the docks where she boards the "big President boat." The film, according to planter records, shows the boat arriving in Hawaii, a flash of the Aloha Tower, and a crowd of Filipinos gathered on the Honolulu dock. Laborers gather into trucks where they are driven to the HSPA Immigration Station. Along with other women who have crossed the Pacific in similar circumstances, Soledad meets immigration inspectors at the station and receives approval on her papers. She then boards a train that takes her from Honolulu to the Ewa plantation and, upon her arrival, her husband sees his baby for the first time and offers Hawaiian leis. The film

[48] The film was exhibited on sugar plantations in Ewa, Aiea, Waipaha, Kahuku, Laie, Hilo, and Honolulu. J.K. Butler to Plantation Managers, 23 May 1928, HSC 25/2 HSPA Gen Corr 1923-1928, HSPAP.

ends with the reunited family arriving at their new home on the plantation with the last shot and caption depicting the school on the plantation where the young child will begin her new life in Hawaii.[49]

By chronicling the successful passage of Soledad Sinia across the Pacific and onto the safe domestic quarters of the sugar plantation, the HSPA film presented Filipino spectators with more than a perspective on plantation policies. It also depicted the travels of Soledad as a hopeful narrative of immigration that included family reunification. The last shot of the young child in school signals the promise of the future in Hawaii. There were a number of films from the first decade of the cinema that were made with actual footage of Ellis Island. *Gateway to America* (1912) included shots of the immigration station, boarding houses, and immigrants awaiting processing. Other films depicted the passage to America from Europe and the arrival of new immigrants, their first glimpses of the Statute of Liberty as their ships arrived at Ellis Island. Thanhouser's *Adrift in a Great City* (1914) depicts a similar scenario to the Soledad Sinia film. A young immigrant who saves enough money to send for his wife and child arranges to meet them as they arrive on the pier. In this story, however, the immigrant gets into an accident and leaves his family stranded. Other films like the one-reeler *Emigrant* (1910) and the Laskey Company produced *The Immigrant* (1915) depicted the passage to America starting in the sending country. Both films present the dangers of passage and the hardships that emigrants encountered on the ships and upon their arrival in America.[50]

---

[49] "Captions for Moving Picture…" n.d., HSC 25/2 HSPA Gen Corr 1923-1928, HSPAP; "Draft of Story to be Told with Soledad Sinia Film," n.d., HSC 25/2 HSPA Gen Corr 1923-1928, HSPAP.

[50] Kevin Brownlow reviews these early films depicting immigrant newcomers to America. See "The Foreigners" in *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990)

Undoubtedly, the most popular fictional film that portrayed the Ellis Island immigration story at the time was *Traffic in Souls* (1913). The film opens with "white slavers" soliciting young immigrant girls as they disembarked from the ships at Ellis Island.[51]

In their depiction of immigration to the United States, these film studio productions from the second decade of the cinema presented the immigration narrative as a cautionary and tragic tale. The HSPA produced film of Soledad Sinia, in contrast, traces the passage of Soledad with no account of danger or hardship. The film presents the Pacific passage as a success story with the protection of the family ensured by the sugar industry. Starting with the ships that disembark from Manila to the arrival in Honolulu harbor and the boarding of trucks and trains to the plantation, the presence of sugar officials ensure the safe passage of Soledad across the Pacific and onto the sugar plantation. The Aloha Tower signals the immigrant arrival, the first glance at what travelers arriving at Ellis Island would recognize as the Statute of Liberty. The presentation of Soledad's passage as an immigration tale displaces the colonial labor migration that motivates her departure from the Philippines in the first place. That is to say, the portrayal of immigrant desire and dreams for better life masks the colonial conditions of labor migration. Moreover, the film inserts sugar planters into the immigrant story – and presents to spectators the sugar plantation as the family itself. More than the coming together of Pedro Antonio and his wife and child, the film recalls the familiar immigration narrative to present the reunification of the plantation as family.

---

[51] On the white slavery panic and the popularity of the film, see Lee Grieveson. "Policing the Cinema: Traffic in Souls at Ellis Island, 1913" *Screen* Vol. 38 (1997); Shelley Stamp Lindsey. "Is Any Girl Safe? Female Spectators at the White Slave Films" *Screen* Vol. 37 (1996)

Unruly Laborers, Primitive Publics

For the Hawaiian sugar planters, the allusion to a plantation family profoundly influenced their response to their single male Asian laborers and the program of social reform they implemented after 1909. Commenting on the trouble that unruly laborers presented for sugar planters, one official remarked, "the Filipino is something of an overgrown boy. He requires a certain amount of looking after. A little interest taken by the overseer in charge of his amusements, camp life, will work wonders."[52] Sugar planters cast themselves as head of the plantation family and their laborers as children. Laborers were commonly constructed as children as a mode of capitalist discipline. In the effort to create a docile and pliable work force, sugar planters imagined that the single male laborers who crossed the Pacific and labored on their plantations lacked the ability to adapt to their new environment and learn the necessary discipline to labor in cane fields. In Hawaii, these ideologies of labor and childhood mediated the transition from contract to free wage labor. Sugar planters struggled to regain a control over laborers that was severely unsettled with the abolishment of contract labor and subsequent introduction of organized labor strikes on the plantations.

Sugar planters, however, did not regard all of their laborers as children. As Moon Kie Jung notes, Japanese laborers were often regarded as inscrutable, overly aggressive, and "manly" whereas Filipinos were infantilized as impulsive, savage, and decidedly "unmanly." The perceptual differences illustrate the different racisms towards Japanese and Filipinos. The representation of Filipino "childhood" evinced similarities with the

---

[52] Cited by Ronald Takaki in *Pau Hana*, 103.

colonial representations of native Hawaiians; however, Filipinos were perceived as particularly violent in comparison to the "gentle Hawaiian." This regard for Filipino brutality, according to Jung, derives from the violent war that the United States waged against the Philippines. In the Philippine-American War, almost 250,000 Filipinos were killed and 7,000 American soldiers. Although far less than Filipinos, the death toll of Americans comprised one of the highest casualty rates in U.S. military history. Americans attributed the violence that they waged to the ruthlessness and savagery of the Filipinos themselves. In Hawaii, these perceptions continued to inform Filipino presence. During the 1919 dual union strike, the militant organizing of Filipinos was disarmed by a pervasive perception of social childhood. In analyzing the press coverage of the strike, Jung argues that Filipinos were largely perceived—if at all—as misled followers of the Japanese.[53] The portrayal of Filipinos as immature laborers erased the formative roles they played, and indeed continued to play, in the labor movement in Hawaii. Yet, for sugar planters, it also mediated the threat that Filipinos as militant laborers presented.

The perception of a social childhood amongst laborers, particularly Filipinos, informed the project of reform on the Hawaiian sugar plantations. For planters, the promotion of cheap amusements such as the moving pictures on the sugar plantations comprised a form of organized play. "A very valuable feature is the providing of desirable amusement by the Service worker," one planter commented, "because often there is practically no amusement, or the wrong sort, for the plantation laborer."[54] In the urban environment, progressive reformers regarded organized play as a means to rescue

---

[53] Jung, "Race and Labor in Prewar Hawaii," 78-87.

[54] Bowman to Plantation Managers, n.d., PSC 22/9 Sundry Letter 1920-1921, HSPAP.

children from the "dangers of unregulated capitalism, moral chaos, and alienation created by unrestricted immigration and an unsupervised adolescent street culture."[55] In the camps and towns of the Hawaiian sugar cane plantation, organized play enabled planters to extend discipline beyond the cane fields and into the potentially dangerous and unregulated sphere of immigrant laborers leisure and sociability.

In order to provide the necessary supervision they believed their laborers needed, sugar planters implemented a censorship board to monitor the kinds of films exhibited in the plantation theatres across the Hawaiian islands. For sugar planters and progressive reformers, the cinema was a feature of modern urban life that could potentially unsettle the impressionable and naïve dispositions of "primitive spectators." In their 1919 survey, which was circulated to every plantation manager in Hawaii, planters wanted to know what kinds of pictures were being exhibited for plantation audiences. "Are the pictures," planters queried, "of the usual lurid melodrama style?" In one completed survey, the plantation manager assured officials with a definite no.[56] One year later in 1920, sugar planters established a central bureau that would, according to their officials, "supply all plantations with a class of films that will appeal to the laborer and at the same time be *clean*."[57] Ever mindful of their own benevolence, sugar planters envisioned that the bureau would "meet the ideas of the crowd." It would "not aim to high to begin with,"

---

[55] Dominick Cavallo. *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920* (Philadelphia: Univ of Penn Press, 1981), 1.

[56] "Amusement for Laborers," 25 Jan 1919, KAU 25/1, Haw, C, HSPA, Labor and Stats In & Out 1917-1920, HSPAP.

[57] Donald Bowman to Onomea Sugar Company, 2 Sept 1920, MKC 1/3 Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stats 1920-1928, HSPAP.

planters elucidated, "but gradually build up in educating [laborers] to call for better grade pictures."[58]

Sugar planters proposed the censorship bureau and a class of films deemed "clean" as a means to insulate their laborers. However, these regulations protected not only the laborer but also the planter. As film scholars Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio suggest, moving picture censorship in the teens revolved around notions of childhood as simultaneously vulnerable and dangerous. On the one hand, the onus of liberal reform was crafted to protect children. Their purported lack of maturation, in particular their physical and mental fragility, made them insufficient to properly participate in the public. Their sentimentalized innocence accorded a relation of rescue that reformers seized. On the other hand, the volatile capacities of children made them socially dangerous and thus reformers not only protected children, they also protected the public from children. In reform discourse, childhood was a synecdoche for immigrants, minorities, and women. "America's child," as one proponent of moving picture censorship starkly remarked, "[was] the immigrant of all races."[59] Social reform and "child saving" thus marked the dispossession of the dependent classes from the dominant public sphere. At the same time, it registered the social anxieties over their participation in the alternative public sphere of twentieth century urban amusements.

---

[58] Onomea Sugar Company to Donald Bowman, 23 Jan 1919, MKC Ono, C, HSPA, Labor and Stats 1913-1921, HSPAP.

[59] Roberta E. Pearson and William Uricchio. " 'The Formative and Impressionable Stage': Discursive Constructions of the Nickelodeon's Child Audience" *American Movie Audiences: From the Turn of the Century to the Early Sound Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1999)

In their oversight over the amusements of laborers, sugar planters and movie showmen regularly figured laborers as child-like. They noted amongst each other the preferences of Filipino laborers for action films and popular American pictures. When *Consolidated Amusement Company* wanted to open shows for Filipino laborers on the plantations, the Kaiwiki plantation manager advised them to change their presentation of the Broadway adapted film *Dulcy* (1940). “The film stars Ann Southern and is a delightful picture,” the plantation manager asserted, “but lends itself more to a haole [white] audience… and Filipinos as a rule ‘go for’ double bill action attractions.” Rather than the haole suited film, the plantation manager recommended that the showmen screen a “comedy-action picture, light and frothy with obvious humor, easy to understand… and a big Western production starring John Wayne, a favorite with Filipino audiences.”[60] Other exhibitors also noted that when it came to plantation audiences, “Westerns, action pictures, underworld attractions, and spy and aviation pictures are doing the business, whereas the higher type attractions are passed by unnoticed.”[61]

Accounts of Filipino spectators watching cowboy films reflect the enthusiasm and noticeably emotional reaction to popular films. “When the climax came at the end when the damsel in distress gives a big hug and kiss to her hero who had rescued her from the villains,” one observer recounted, “the Filipino bachelors brought the house down with whistles and stumping of the feet on the wooden floor.”[62]

---

[60] Lowell Gist to L.W. Wishard, 14 Dec 1940, PSC 8/15 AmFac, Cover Letters 1938-1945, HSPAP.

[61] Lowell Gist to L.W. Wishard, 19 Feb 1940, PSC 8/15 AmFac, Cover Letters 1938-1945, HSPAP.

[62] Nagasawa, Francis. “New Years, Japanese Style, in a Hamakua Plantation Village” (Feb 1998), Memoirs of the Hawaii Hiroshima Heritage Study Group, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, May 31, 1998

The reception of cowboy westerns amongst Filipino laborers was not surprising given the immense popularity of the genre amongst diverse audiences across the globe. Their wide exhibition reached every urban theatre and rural mobile cinema not only in Hawaii and the continental United States but also in regions as far from Hollywood as Britain's Central and Southern African colonies.[63] Theatres and show halls serviced by traveling showmen were particularly apt to receive cowboy Westerns. The pictures were relatively cheap and showmen tended to purchase enough of them to enable screenings of two weeks to one month without repeating a film.[64] One showman commented that exhibitors deliberately showcased cowboy films on the weekend in Hawaii when they knew Filipino audiences were likely to attend their theatre.[65] For sugar planters and showmen, however, Filipino's purported film preferences for "low brow" Westerns with simple plotlines, as well as their comportment in the theatres, invariably demonstrated a primitive film spectatorship in need of discipline and reform.

When the cinema debuted in urban theatres across the U.S. and Europe, reports of bedazzled spectators unable to comprehend the "magic" of the moving pictures were widely circulated. Early accounts of the nascent cinema purportedly included stories of terrified spectators dashing out of theatres when seeing moving pictures of an oncoming train, what film scholars call the 'train effect.' Stephen Bottomore suggests that these tales in European cities were often provided by upper class and elite spectators to

---

[63] For a discussion of the popularity of cowboy Westerns in British ruled Central Africa, see James Burns. "John Wayne on the Zambezi: Cinema, Empire, and the American Western in British Central Africa" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 35 No. 1 (2002)

[64] Mark Schwartz. "Moving Pictures on the Move" *Journal of American Culture* Vol. 9 No. 3 (1987)

[65] Lowell Gist to L.W. Wishard, 21 Dec 1940, PSC 8/15 AmFac, Cover Letters 1938-1945, HSPAP.

distinguish primitive reception from the sophisticated and proper spectatorship of modern urban moviegoers. Predictably the "primitive viewers" tended to be rural migrants, foreigners, and working class patrons.[66] Charles Ambler notes that, in fact, African spectators in the mining camps of Northern Rhodesia experienced the rural film shows in similar regards to European audiences at the turn of the century because of the presentation of the films and not because they were naïve. The film scholar Tom Gunning characterizes the earliest films as a "cinema of attractions" meant to amaze audiences with the novelty of motion and spectacle rather than a continuous narrative. Although this genre gave way to the narrative film by 1905, Ambler notes that the movie-going experience of African spectators resembled this genre because the films they watched were often censored and edited by colonial authorities. Films were presented in fragmented form and likely perceived by African audiences, who had limited proficiency in English, "viscerally as a disconnected series of exotic, exciting, and frighteningly pleasurable images and special effects."[67]

The perceived responses of African audiences to the moving pictures had long intrigued white settlers and colonialists who regarded the emotional response of African audiences to films as not only primitive but also dangerous. James Burns notes that, in fact, the popularity of cowboy Westerns amongst African audiences in Rhodesia aroused particular interest amongst colonial whites during the 1940s and 1950s when the cities experienced massive immigration and urbanization. Many blamed the crime and violence

---

[66] Stephen Bottomore. "The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect' " *Historical Jurnal of Film, Radio, and Television* 19.2 (June 1999)

[67] Ambler, Popular Films and Colonial Audiences," 89-90.

in the growing cities on the inability of Africans to cope with modern urban life. The cinema emerged as a central concern during this time by colonial and welfare officials who worried that Africans could not properly patronize the modern institution of the cinema. White colonialists read the perceived enthusiasm of cowboy Westerns amongst African audiences as particularly troublesome. They regarded Africans as impressionable and credulous cinema viewers unable to distinguish the action in the moving pictures as fantasy. Most importantly, their greatest concern was that this primitive spectatorship would mean that Africans "seeing acts of crime or violence on screen … would put them into practice."[68]

In their roles as social reformers, sugar planters, similar to the white colonial and welfare officials of Rhodesia, drew concern over the impact of moving pictures on the purported impressionable dispositions of their Filipino laborers. When the Filipino travelogue *The President's Daughter Surveys Her Native Land* debuted in plantation theatres in 1938, sugar planters had one reservation. "The only possible objection to the film," sugar planters noted, "might be that it would make some of the more sentimental Filipinos homesick." [69] They perceived Filipino laborers as primitive spectators whose reception of the films was volatile rather than reasonable. Moreover, the return migration of Filipinos to the Philippines was a major concern for Hawaiian sugar planters. In the first half the 1930s, departures to the Philippines far outnumbered arrivals to Hawaii,

---

[68] James Burns, "John Wayne on the Zambezi," p. 104-105; see also "Watching Africans Watch Films: theories of spectatorship in British Colonial Africa" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2000)

[69] Chauncey Wightmen to Caleb Burns, 14 July 1936, LPC 13/6 Kauai Planter Assn Corr 1938, HSPAP.

27,862 to 19,513.[70] Also, the 1934 Philippine Independence Act (Tydings-McDuffie Act), consequently, shifted the status of Filipinos to "aliens ineligible to citizenship." Without exemption from "U.S. national" status, Filipinos were subject to immigration exclusion and this dramatically affected Hawaiian sugar planters. Thus, the sentimental and homeland longings of Filipino laborers may have troubled planters given the labor problems presented by the large scale out-migration and diminished in-migration of Filipinos to Hawaii.

Nonetheless, Hawaiian sugar planters in the 1930s encouraged the exhibition of moving pictures from the Philippines. Rather than discourage the amusements or ties to the Philippines, sugar planters promoted them. They supported Filipino observations of Philippine holidays, celebrations, and festivals.[71] Sugar managers were instructed to permit the absence of Filipino laborers on Rizal Day and often participated in holding celebrations.[72] In contrast, sugar planters offered considerably different support for cowboy Westerns and other popular Hollywood films despite their greater accessibility and popularity. What determined the terms of censorship on the Hawaiian sugar plantations? What motivated planters preferences for some movies and attractions over others? As I argue in the following chapter, cowboy Westerns presented Filipino laborers with morality tales of revenge and violence, rugged individualism and American

---

[70] Jung, "Race and Labor In Prewar Hawaii," 87.

[71] Historian Dorothy Fujita Rony notes that because Jose Rizal was a hero against Spanish imperialism, Rizal Day was perceived as a safe holiday for Filipinos to debate nationhood and patriotism without an explicit anti-Americanism. See *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941*, 162.

[72] Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 113.

masculinity. For planters, these comprised a significantly different set of concerns from the Philippine moving pictures and other amusements they deemed appropriate.

In contrast to the cowboy Western, sugar planters were enthusiastic to showcase the five reel Filipino travelogue *The President's Daughter Surveys Her Native Land.* The film was originally produced for exhibition at the World's Fair in New York and the San Francisco Exposition. The playbill for the film was vivid and presented in English and Tagalog. "A Picture Every Filipino Should See," one caption read.[73] As a travelogue, the film presented two hours of images of the Philippines from old folk dances to shots of modern Manila. Miss "Baby" Quezon, the favorite daughter of the President of the Philippines, served as the "travel guide" in the picture. In the five consecutive reels, spectators of the film are taken by Quezon to shoe factories in Manila, rice fields in the countryside, buildings of high government and regions all over the Philippines. Unlike other travelogues, the film included explanatory titles and musical accompaniment and, significantly, did not require a lecturer. As such, the film could be "shown in any clubhouse, auditorium, theater, or open gathering." In the 1930s, the travelogue reached Filipino audiences in Oahu, Molokai, Maui, and the Big Island.[74] Without a lecturer, sugar planters could be assured of the dominant interpretation of film.

Sugar planters received the travelogue and other Philippine films from the *Pan Pacific Union*. The film exchange was incorporated in 1917 and supplied sugar planters with moving pictures throughout the 1930s. It sought to present films to Filipinos that would, by their own accord, "give all Filipinos, especially the children and those who

---

[73] "The President's Daughter…" n.d., HSC 24/9 Gen Corr In & Out, HSPAP.

[74] "Outline of Moving Picture on Philippines," n.d., HSC 24/9 Gen Corr In and Out 1938, HSPAP.

have been away from their native land for so many years the opportunity to get a better understanding of their home country so that they may be proud of their race and color, proud of their responsibility to their nationalism, and so in winning a greater self-respect become more loyal and industrious workers for their employers."[75] The billing for the film exchange assumed the moving pictures encouraged Filipino identification based on race and ethnicity to reinforce loyalty to the plantation. Indeed, for sugar planters, the exhibition of Philippine films placated rather than incited Filipino laborers. Filipino ethnic, racial, or national based identifications were preferable to planters so long as they were constituted over and against class based identifications. That is to say, sugar planters benefited from Filipino laborers identification with the Philippines rather than with the local conditions of Hawaii. Much to the detriment of planters, the latter precipitated the conditions of possibility for class consciousness and interracial affiliations.

[75] Pan Pacific Union to W.P. Naquin, 30 June 1938, LPC 13/6 Kauai Planter Assn 1938, HSPAP.

PROGRAMA FILIPINA
ISLA TI OAHU
ELSA ORIA
The Singing Sweetheart of the Philippines
Supported by
Angel Esmeralda, Prima Vera, Nati Rubi, Soledad Aquino, etc.
PRESENTS
"NASAAN KA IROG"
(WHERE ARE YOU SWEETHEART)
"SADINO AYAN MO AYAT"

The grandest of all musical sensations where you can hear these songs: NASAAN KA IROG, LONESOME, JUGGING-JUGGING, TAMPUAN WITH EVERY BIT OF INSPIRATIONS, HAL-HALINA and many many more song hits from the Philippines.

SHOWING AT THESE THEATRE

PALAMA THEATRE
Martes, October 12
EWA THEATRE
Lunes ,October 18
WAHIAWA THEATRE
Martes, Octobre 19
WAIALUA THEATRE
Sabado, Octobre 16
WAIPAHU THEATRE
Miercoles, Octobre 20

Laglaguipen yo dagitoy nga aldaw a pabuya tapno diyonto mapalabas a di mabuya daytoy a pelikula.

3.1 Program of Philippine films in Hawaii, *Philippine News Tribune*, 9 Oct 1937

3.2 Movie Billing for "Mga Daliring Ginto." In Possession of Author.

From the 1920s, amusements and moving pictures from the Philippines were widely exhibited in Hawaii. Sugar planters perceived Philippine attractions as "appropriate" leisure and thus widely solicited their exhibition for plantation audiences. The Kaiwiki manager in 1940 solicited Mamo Theatre to show the Philippine film *Giliw Ko* (1938) free of charge to laborers.[76] In the 1930s and 1940s, Philippine pictures were exhibited extensively throughout theatres in rural and urban Hawaii. The widely popular Filipino vaudeville troupe the Manila Nifties also toured the Hawaiian islands and performed extensively for plantation audiences. The Filipino troupe was managed by Mr. Jose Bautista and led by the popular singer from Manila, Miss Atang de La Rama, and two actors, Mr. Soto and Mr. Casmiro, known as the "Laurel and Hardy" of the Philippines. In 1927, the troupe performed for plantation laborers on the Island Hawaii. "They have given us two good entertainments here at which they had good houses, and were able to give their audience a good return for their money," the plantation manager noted, "I feel that their show is by no means poorly put on, and that considerable innocent amusement is derived from it."[77] The well received Filipino vaudeville troupe returned to Hawaii in 1936 to perform in theatres across the Hawaiian islands, including in Oahu, Kauai, and the Island Hawaii. "We imported [the] Filipino troupe from Manila," the

---

[76] L.W. Wishard to Mamo Theatre, 5 Nov 1940, PSC 8/15 AmFac, Cover Letters 1938-1945, HSPAP.

[77] Laupahoehoe Sugar Co. to James Campaie, 25 Oct 1927, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

exhibitor commented, "in order to give the Filipino people in Hawaii a little taste of their home product."[78]

The attractions from the Philippines undoubtedly nourished the longings and overseas ties that Filipinos forged across the Pacific. They facilitated an "imagined community" amongst Filipinos who emigrated from different regions of the Philippines, spoke different dialects, occupied different class positions, and, like all nationalities, held different beliefs. In Hawaii, the circulation and exhibition of these films were bolstered by the support of Hawaiian sugar planters because they encouraged the identification of Filipinos amongst each other. From the onset, sugar planters encouraged labor migration from across the different countries of Asia and Europe in part to suppress labor agitation and maintain their own dominance over the cane fields and the islands of Hawaii. As such, the risk to their precarious hold over labor was clear. In 1917, the Hilo Sugar Company designed a "race pride" program that tallied the attendance of Japanese, Filipino, and Portuguese laborers on a board according to nationality. The laborers were prompted to work harder as a means of "race pride" and competition with the other nationalities.[79] From segregated housing barracks to the organization of sport teams and club houses, sugar planters separated laborers along ethnic, racial, and nationality divisions. In doing so, they encouraged laborers' identity in terms that reinforced the rigid racial hierarchy of the plantations. For sugar planters, thus, the exhibition of Philippine films reinforced an identification that made a local identity based on class

---

[78] Consolidated Amusement Co. to L.W. Wishard, 27 Oct 1936, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[79] Takaki, *Pau Hana*, 69.

interests and interracial alliance less tenable. This motivation far outweighed the risk of homeland longings contributing to the out-migration of Filipinos. For sugar planters, laborers ethnic and racial identity foreclosed the social relations and affiliations that they regarded as most dire and dangerous.

Conclusion

Between 1909 and the 1930s, sugar cane laborers were introduced to a program of social welfare that included the expansion of cheap attractions on the plantations. In the many rural towns that formed in the wake of the sugar cane fields, these social reform plans bolstered the exhibition of moving pictures, the building of theatres, and the circulation of amusements from across the Pacific. From the perspective of sugar planters, the promotion of the movies and other forms of recreation placated their restless laborers and enabled the reinvention of themselves as progressive reformers. In the 1920s and 1930s, sugar planters assumed a particularly active role in overseeing the exhibition of moving pictures. In addition to establishing a censorship board, the records of the planters reveal that certain films were preferred over others. Planters commissioned film exchanges to supply their plantation theatres with moving pictures that they deemed appropriate for their presumably naïve and vulnerable laborers. In their promotion of select films, planters sought to mediate the modes of identification that laborers established across ethnic, racial, and nationalist lines.

However, the efforts of sugar planters to dictate the movie-going experiences of their laborers always yielded unexpected outcomes. In 1939 sugar planters commissioned *World Enterprises* to supply plantations with films their censorship bureau would

undoubtedly rate as *clean*. "Comedy and westerns more than hold the interest of audiences," officials noted, "and it is for this reason, chiefly, we are interested in your service."[80] The company provided one program of "wholesome entertainment features" every week to plantation theatres of the Kekaha Sugar Company in Kauai and Wailua Agricultural Company in Oahu. Each program consisted of a "full length feature, a cartoon or comedy short, or a newsreel, sports, public health, hygiene, travelogue or educational short."[81] Other plantation show houses received civic education, Americanization, and industrial films. In 1928, a joint arrangement with Yale University Press Film Service and the University of Hawaii secured the exhibition of *Chronicles of America*, a program of films purportedly of "outstanding importance in American History." Plantation audiences in Hawaii watched films with riveting titles such as *The Pilgrims* and *Daniel Boone*.[82] These social guidance and industrials films were often showcased alongside entertainment features. In 1927, New Palace Theatre and Empire Theatre in Hilo as well as theatres on the "plantation circuit," as one planter called it, paired their safety features such as *The Outlaw*, which depicting common accidents, alongside regular motion pictures.[83] Unfortunately for planters and their censorship bureau, the "wholesome features" and lessons in American work and living did not

---

[80] Arthur Powlison to World Enterprises, 13 June 1939, KSC Film Service 1939-1940 26/12, HSPAP.

[81] World Enterprises to Kekaha Sugar Co., 1 April 1940, KSC Film Service 1939-1940 26/12, HSPAP.

[82] "The Chronicles of American Photoplays," n.d., HSC 24/1 Gen Corr In and Out 1928, HSPAP; "By special arrangement with the Yale University Press Film Service," 10 March 1928, HSC 24/1 Gen Corr In and Out 1928, HSPAP.

[83] Labor and Saving Devices Committee to R.A. Hutchinson, 14 Nov 1927, LSC 8/10 HSPA Labor and Stats 1927-1929, HSPAP.

captivate plantation audiences. Quite quickly, Kekaha cancelled its movie orders. "Lack of interest," one planter noted, "made us drop the whole thing."[84]

In their reform efforts, sugar planters sought to regulate the aspects of their laborers lives that they regarded as the most elusive. They sought to mold the sphere of leisure for their laborers to manage what evaded their grasp in the sphere of work. The meanings that laborers ascribed to identity and community were amongst the terms that planters believed they could apprehend in their own efforts to craft a social world for workers. As the next chapter will show, these efforts to standardize the social relations of their laborers proved difficult if not impossible.

[84] KSC 26/12 Film Service 1939-1940, HSPAP.

Chapter Four

Dangerous Amusements:
Labor, Sociability, and Asian Immigrant Counterpublics

On November 9, 1919, Japanese laborers crowded into Asahi Theatre of Honolulu to discuss and plot their demands for higher wages and better working conditions on the sugar plantations. The theatre barely held the over one thousand Japanese who attended the theatre that evening. The first to rise to the stage was a nineteen year old Japanese laborer of the Waipahu Plantation. "This is no time," Takeshi Haga vehemently announced before the assembly in the theatre, "to put up with being treated like livestock."[1] The public meeting at the theatre set in motion the first of many events that would lead to a major organized labor strike lasting over five months and including 77 percent of the sugar cane labor force on Oahu plantations. The sugar strike, most significantly, represented the first major attempt at cross racial and dual union labor organizing between Japanese and Filipino laborers. On November 18, only a week after the meeting at the Japanese theatre in Honolulu, Filipino laborers gathered at the Gaiety Theatre of Hilo to listen to Pablo Manlapit, the leader of the Filipino Labor Union.[2] In the following months, Japanese and Filipino delegates prepared a strike declaration and, on the dawn of the first day of February 1920, they joined together to boycott the cane fields.

In rural Hawaii, Japanese showmen crafted a vibrant and extensive scene of public attractions. Their investment in the movies, in the promotion of moving picture

---

[1] Masayo Umezawa Duus. *The Japanese Conspiracy: the Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920* Trans. Beth Cary (Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1999), 50.

[2] Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy*, 49.

shows and in the operation of moving picture theatres, extended and comprised a significant segment of public life for Asian immigrants in Hawaii. As cheap amusements, the moving pictures reached urban audiences in Honolulu and the thousands of immigrant laborers, largely from Japan and the Philippines, who toiled in the cane fields and resided in the many plantation towns across the rural Hawaiian islands. During the period of major organized labor strikes, the theatres offered a place to congregate and a stage whereby speakers like Takeshi Haga and labor leaders like Pablo Manlapit might rally workers. As such, the moving picture scene initiated by Japanese showmen played a civic role in the political history of Hawaii. The film scene that Japanese showmen promoted was amongst the social, economic, and political institutions borne from and anchored by the growing settlement of Asian immigrants in Hawaii.

This chapter chronicles the work of Japanese showmen and their promotion of cheap attractions to plantation laborers in the earliest days of moving picture exhibition in Hawaii until the 1930s. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the role that sugar planters played in fostering a film culture in rural Hawaii, here I draw out another movie-going scene. I argue that this film scene --drawn from the encounters between Japanese showmen, Hawaiian sugar planters, and immigrant laborers -- established an *alternative public sphere*. Miriam Hansen argues that the notion of an alternative public sphere can be discerned in the slippage between the historical and the theoretical. More than a methodological problem in film studies, this relationship marks a heuristic advantage to conceptualizing the possibilities for transformation. “Even if there were no empirical traces of autonomous public formations,” according to Hansen, “they could be inferred from the *force of negation*, from the hegemonic efforts to suppress or assimilate any

conditions that might allow for an alternative (self-regulated, local, and socially specific) organization of experience (my italics)."[3]

This chapter establishes the terms and conditions of an alternative public sphere by drawing out the forces of negation that have functioned to suppress Asian immigrant public life in Hawaii. I seek to establish a relationship between labor and leisure in Hawaii; however, I do not provide empirical evidence that links movie-going to organized labor resistance. As scholars have shown, the attempts to build an organized interracial labor movement in Hawaii prior to World War II were largely unsuccessful. Most scholars agree that a truly transformative working class labor movement did not materialize in Hawaii until after the war.[4] The relations that I draw out in this chapter are focused on the casual exchanges and social encounters around visiting the movies. Though these forms of sociability may not materialize into concrete movements or identities, they nonetheless comprise the broad and complex arena of life and labor in Hawaii. In this chapter, I read against the planter archive to search out the places of planter anxieties and fears. I reveal that, in the midst of increasing antagonism over Japanese presence in Hawaii, showmen of Japanese descent and the immigrant laborers who attended their theatres aroused grave concern among the planter class. These cultural spheres in rural Hawaii were, in short, dangerous amusements.

---

[3] Miriam Hansen. *Babel and Babylon,* 91.

[4] The predominant explanation for the postwar formation of a durable and successful interracial working class movement in Hawaii has been that immigrant laborers realized and overcame the racial barriers that were impeding class consciousness. However, Moon Kie Jung provides another explanation. The arrival of the National Relations Board in 1937 reenergized the longshore unions. The end of the war also collapsed the Americanism as anti-Japanese racism discourse and made it plausible for many Japanese to re-enter the labor movement. Most significantly, as Jung argues, the roots of the postwar working class movement can be located in the rearticulation of race in leftist discourse. Workers were able to recognize the need for interracial alliance through the recognition of the history of "divide and rule" in Hawaii. See *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 189.

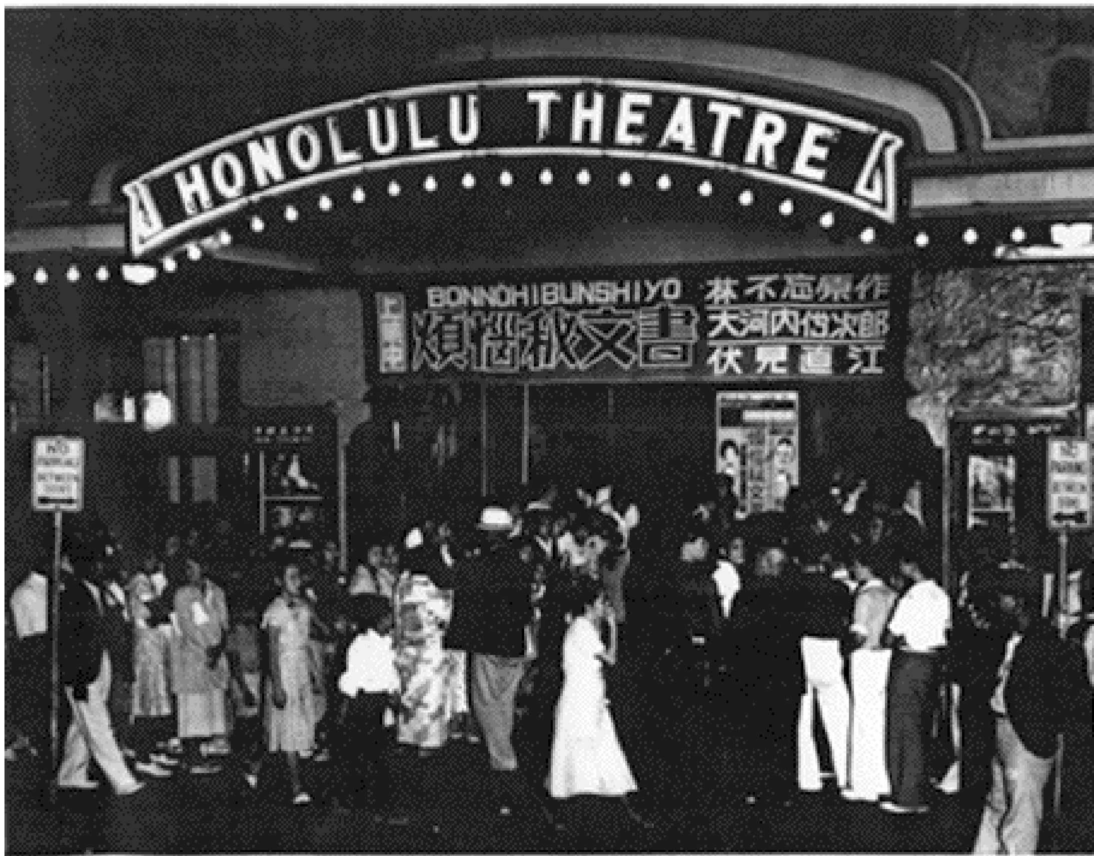
Japanese Showmen, Moving Pictures, and Rural Hawaii

The Hawaiian islands developed perhaps the most vibrant and prolific Japanese film scene in the prewar time period outside of Japan. Although it is difficult to accurately estimate the extent of the work of Japanese movie men, it is clear that Japanese operated movie houses, the exhibition of Japanese films, the promotion of a wide range of moving pictures by Japanese traveling showmen, exhibitors, and suppliers, and the reception of movies by Japanese audiences in Hawaii far exceeded any comparable scene in the continental United States. Before the arrival of the first moving pictures in Hawaii, Japanese showmen had already secured a foothold in the entertainment circuit of the islands. According to theatre historian Nora Conaty, professional touring companies from Japan had arrived in Honolulu to promote Japanese theatrical performances, *shibai*, as early as 1893. Japanese immigration to Hawaii started at the end of the heyday of *kabuki* (known as the theatre of common people) in Japan and thus is likely that Japanese arrivals in Hawaii desired to see these performances in their new surroundings. Performance troupes from Japan toured not only urban Honolulu but also the plantation towns throughout rural Hawaii.[5] In remote regions where there were no theatres, performances were showcased in outdoor venues. Commenting on *shibai* in Hawaii, one observer in 1901 noted that performances were shown in the "front yard

---

[5] Nora Conaty. "The Old *Shibai*: Japanese Theater in Hawaii" *The Hawaiian Journal of History* vol. 38 (2004)

[which had] turned into an auditorium surrounded by gay curtains, and with no roof except the spreading branches of a giant algaroba tree."[6]



4.1 Photograph of the Honolulu Theatre, ca. 1935.
Courtesy of the Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu.

[6] "Japanese Show Their Paces in Native Vaudeville" *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* 2 May 1901

4.2 Photograph of the Honolulu Theatre taken by Pan Pacific Press Bureau. Courtesy of the Hawaii State Archives, Honolulu.

In Honolulu, Asahi Theatre opened in 1899 and it was followed by the Honolulu Theatre in 1904, Nihon Kan in 1920, Toyo Theatre in 1938, and the International Theatre in 1941.[7] Many of these theatres were located in the Aala district, a major hub for Japanese immigrants in Honolulu. Unlike the outlying regions of the sugar plantations,

[7] Lowell Angell. "Theaters in the Aala District" in *A'ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003)

urban transportation made the district accessible for many non-urban residents.[8] The Honolulu Rapid Transit and Land Company (HRT) first operated streetcars in 1901, motor buses in 1915, and trolley buses in 1938. The available public transit system undoubtedly made urban theatres accessible to a greater number of patrons. Regular cash fares were an affordable five cents in 1901 and seven cents in 1924.[9]

In rural Hawaii, where the majority of sugar plantation towns were concentrated, residents were more constrained by their dependence on scarce or economically inaccessible trains, taxis, and privately owned automobiles. Unlike Honolulu, the island Hawaii did not have streetcars or trolleys and, while passenger railways reached the island in 1900, the railway line traveled only from Hilo north through Hamakua and south into Puna. For the daily activities on the island Hawaii, the majority of residents simply walked. Nonetheless, rural towns in Hawaii were as apt to receive moving pictures from Japanese showmen as urban Honolulu. Based on a number of directories, theatre listings, and local publications, I estimate over fifty Japanese owned and operated moving picture theatres in the prewar period served audiences on the islands of Oahu, Hawaii, Kauai, and Maui. A 1937 Japanese business directory indicates a comparable number of urban theatres in Honolulu and rural theatres on the island Hawaii.[10]

Before the arrival of formal theatres, however, many rural residents in Hawaii were first introduced to the moving pictures by itinerant movie showmen. Since many

---

[8] Brian Suzuki. "Aala: Center of Japanese Entertainment" in *A'ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003)

[9] Robert C. Schmitt. *What People Paid to Travel: Hawaii Transportation Costs* (Honolulu: Hawaii Historical Society, 1991)

[10] Kikujiro Clifferd Kondo. *Dr. K.C. Kondo's Classified Japanese Business Directory 1937-1938* (Honolulu: Jigyoka Nenkansha, Showa, 1937)

rural residents were constrained by the paucity of transportation options, showmen had to take their amusements on the road. Japanese showmen were amongst the cadre of traveling exhibitors who moved from one small town to another setting up the moving pictures in open fields and outdoor theatres. In the continental United States, the traveling exhibition regularly supplied rural residents with the moving pictures until the arrival of the nickelodeon theatre in 1907. The introduction of commercial and mass entertainment largely replaced the itinerant showman.[11] In rural Hawaii, however, many small towns did not have nickelodeon theatres as early as 1907. Thus it is possible that traveling showmen retained a place in the movie-going culture of Hawaii for a considerably longer period than their mainland counterparts. There are few records of these early moving picture shows in Hawaii by Japanese itinerant showmen. Many of the shows were promoted by handbills, word of mouth, or by other fleeting means. The shows or the showmen were rarely mentioned in local papers. The oral histories of old time residents of Hawaii, particularly those who lived in rural Hawaii or labored on the sugar plantations, offer invaluable insight into the early movie going world promoted by Japanese showmen.

In Kaua'i, nickelodeon theatres included the Koloa Theatre, a plantation theater operated by Manuel Teves of Koloa Sugar Company, and the Royal Theatre, which was opened in 1939 by Paul K. Naganuma. Consolidated Amusement Company arrived in Kaua'i in the late 1930s and opened theaters in Lihu'e, Koloa, Waimea, and Hanapepe.[12]

---

[11] On the history of traveling film exhibitors, see Charles Musser. *High Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition 1880-1920* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991)

[12] Interview with Eric "Iki" Moir by Warren Nishimoto on April 28, 1987, Koloa: An Oral History of a Kaua'i Community, Center for Oral History Social Science Research Institute, UH Manoa, Sept 1988.

Before the 1930s, then, traveling showmen supplied most of the moving picture entertainment. Japanese showmen were particularly active according to Kaua'i residents. Two Japanese traveling showmen, Sadakichi Iwamura from Koloa and Takase from Waimea, made their rounds to the Kaua'i towns every weekend with their Japanese pictures and benshi. "They come with a tent," Tadao Kawamoto explained, "cover the whole area… to show about once a week Japanese pictures."[13] Similarly commenting on the exhibition of old Japanese films in the New Mill Camp in Kauai, Robert Kunimara noted that Japanese showmen exhibited "in a yard because there was no social hall then… so they put up the canvas around the yard."[14]

Mae Itamura traveled and worked in Maui with the prominent showman Matsuo from Honolulu. She offers a particularly insightful perspective into the work of Japanese showmen and the exhibition of Japanese pictures in Hawaii. The showman, according to Itamura, brought from Honolulu the Japanese silent film, a manual moving picture projector, and film screen. He hired a car and traveled with a camera operator, *benshi*, and Itamura, who collected tickets and assisted the showman. "If that camp had a small theater, we played in the theater," Itamura recalled, "Those days we had lots of small places, you know. Keahau, Pulehu, Kailua 1, Kailua 2, Camp 10, Camp 4, Camp 2." Often, however, there were no theaters or amusement halls and they would set up a viewing space outdoors using borrowed benches to demarcate the walls of a makeshift

---

[13] Interview with Tadao "Barber" Kawamoto by Warren Nishimoto on March 4, 1987, Koloa: An Oral History of a Kaua'i Community, Center for Oral History Social Science Research Institute, UH Manoa, Sept 1988.

[14] Interview with Robert Kunimera by Warren Nishimoto on November 5, 1987, Koloa: An Oral History of a Kaua'i Community, Center for Oral History Social Science Research Institute, UH Manoa, Sept 1988.

theatre space. They typically exhibited Japanese pictures in Maui about twice a month and people came from all over the island. Attendance for one show in Maui was typically one hundred people and included non-Japanese audiences. "Everybody came," Itamura recalled, "Filipinos and all."[15]

Significantly, these itinerant showmen were responsible for bringing silent pictures from Japan and accompanying benshi to residents of rural Hawaii. Exhibition of Japanese films in Hawaii during and beyond the silent film era were regularly presented with benshi. In Japan, the benshi was a significant part of early moving picture exhibition and his original function was to explain to Japanese audiences the unfamiliar contexts and references in Western films. However, the role of the benshi evolved with Japanese films and became regarded by many as an art form of dramatic performance and narration rather than mere explanation. Benshi in Japan drew popular followings and were regarded on par or even greater than the film itself. On advertising posters, he was often more prominently displayed than the film title or movie actors. As such, the same film could be watched in an entirely new way with a different benshi performance. Even after the advent of sound, the silent film remained popular in Japan in part because of the enthusiasm for benshi.[16]

In the United States, the benshi performed throughout Japanese theatres including in California and Washington. In the 1920s, the Japanese-American Film Exchange Inc., based in Los Angeles and San Francisco, distributed Japanese films and contracted

---

[15] Interview with Mae Itamura on June 19180, Stores and Storekeepers of Paia and Puunene, Maui, Ethnic Studies Oral History Project, Ethnic Studies Project, UH Manoa June 1980.

[16] For a review of the origins of benshi in Japanese cinema, see Peter B. High. "The Dawn of Cinema in Japan" *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 19 No. 1 (Jan 1984)

benshi. They employed five benshi including the well known Muneo Kimura from Hawaii.[17] Benshi, however, were perhaps most prominent in Hawaii. According to theatre historian Lowell Angell, the Honolulu Theatre as early as 1904, owned at the time by Chinese proprietors, exhibited Japanese films with a benshi.[18] The demand for their performances and their regular accompaniment with Japanese films far outlived the silent film era. Prior to the Second World War, there was as many as fifteen benshi working in Honolulu and most were tied to a specific local theatre.[19]

In rural Hawaii, where permanent theatres were scarcer and outdoor and mobile theatres were commonplace, the benshi accompanied traveling moving picture showmen. In an interview with Naomi Sodetani, Honolulu benshi Kamesuke Nakahama recalls that he worked for a Honolulu theatre but also traveled to the plantation camp towns. He and the traveling showmen would circulate handbills and drive around the rural camps with a beating drum to attract attention. At times he would stop in the camps and "talk story" with camp residents and laborers.[20] Oahu resident Yuji Irei also recalled that Japanese showmen on the road circulated between the plantation camps with Japanese silent pictures and benshi. They put up a screen outdoors and used an automobile to power the

---

[17] Among the other benshi employed by Japanese-American Film Exchange Inc. were Kenyu Hokutosai, Shugetsu Hiyoshigawa, Namiyemon Tochuken, and Taiyo Kawai. *Pacific Citizen* 15 Oct 1929

[18] Lowell Angell. "Theaters in the Aala District," 35.

[19] Imin, Konyaku. "The Benshi: On Making People Weep." *A Hundred Years of Japanese Life in Hawaii* (International Saving and Loan Association Ltd. All, 1985)

[20] Naomi Sodetani. "Benshi and Me" in *A'Ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003)

moving picture projector. Irei also recalled that there was a fence at the Kahuku plantation and showmen had to secure a permit to enter from the sugar planters.[21]

Cane Culture

This circuit of moving picture attractions set in motion by Japanese showmen was of significant concern to Hawaiian sugar planters as it rivaled the carefully crafted social sphere they promoted. Based on their records, sugar planters made noticeable efforts to observe and document the activities of Japanese showmen in Hawaii. Sugar planters necessarily worked with a number of showmen, theatre proprietors, and moving picture companies to foster a leisure culture on the plantations for their laborers because they possessed an unmatched level of skill and experience at their trade. As discussed in the previous chapter, sugar planters incorporated social welfare into their governance and made the moving pictures a form of organized play worth promoting. As such, planters solicited a good deal of their moving picture arrangements from Japanese showmen who were already well established in the film scene. The presence of Japanese showmen and their culture of moving pictures around the sugar cane plantations and camp towns, however, provoked the suspicions of the planter class. Despite their desire to use their services to supply adequate entertainment for laborers, they increasingly grew unsettled by the Japanese showmen and their world of cheap amusements.

This tension played out most dramatically on the island Hawaii where the majority of sugar companies and plantations were concentrated and also where Japanese

[21] Interview with Yuki Irei by Chandran Bhaskaran on February 15, 1988, Oral History Collection, Joseph F. Smith Library Archives and Special Collections, Brigham Young University Hawaii, La'ie, HI.

settlement was particularly strong. In downtown Honolulu, Caucasian owned businesses constituted the bulk of commerce. On the island Hawaii, conversely, Japanese businesses (inns, grocers, restaurants, shops, etc.) dominated during the early twentieth century. In the major city Hilo, there were three daily Japanese languages newspapers (the *Hilo Mainichi,* the *Hilo Asahi*, and the *Hilo Shinpo*) and seven Japanese language schools, as well as numerous religious and cultural institutions. The first movie house Gaiety Theatre opened on the island Hawaii in 1903 and it was followed by the opening of the first Japanese movie house Yamato Theatre (owned by the aforementioned Sanji Abe) in 1906.[22] I have documented at least twenty one different moving picture theatres on the island owned and operated by Japanese showmen before the Second World War. These numbers, moreover, omit the countless mobile cinemas and informal exhibition spaces that were abound in rural Hawaii.

The fleeting activities of Japanese showmen on the road are not only difficult to document but they were also difficult to regulate. The County of Hawaii in 1909 required a permit from the building inspector of the City of Hilo of persons who operated "stereopticons, moving picture machines and other devices by which pictures or images are thrown upon wall or screen or are produced by light through transparent plate… for which an admission fee is charged." Any person operating a building for similar exhibition was also required to secure a certificate from the building inspector or be held guilty of a misdemeanor charge and pay "a fine of not less than the sum of Ten Dollars nor more than the sum of Two Hundred and Fifty Dollars at the discretion of the court."[23]

---

[22] Opening Program of Hilo Theatre. The Show Parade of All Hawaii. April 25, 1940

[23] Ordinance No. 31, 4 March 1909, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

American missionaries established blue laws in Hawaii during the 19th century.[24] Moving picture exhibitors were required to obtain a special application for showing pictures on Sunday. On the application, exhibitors listed the location and character of the building, the name and character of the films, and agreed to show films that were "of an educational or biblical character."[25]

Sugar planters regularly noted the activities of these showmen who operated shows without an appropriate permit. John Akau was the building inspector on the island Hawaii who regularly investigated the activities of "illegal" showmen and exhibitions, often with the collaborative efforts of sugar planters. In 1926, a Korean showman, Kim M. Shik, was reported for showing "The Miracle of the Jungles" without a license.[26] Akau notified planter officials in 1928 of "pictures shown in your camp by men who have no license… and in houses not permitted."[27] Japanese movie men were frequently investigated and reported by the inspector. Another two showmen, Takaoka from Pahoa and a man by the name K. Kawachi, were reported by Akau in 1935.[28] Much to the dismay of sugar planters and county officials, the expansive and at times transient scene of movie culture on the island Hawaii was difficult to completely control. In the

---

[24] Blue laws in Hawaii were set by American missionaries in response to the perceived rowdiness of American whalers and other merchants from the trans-Pacific maritime trade routes. See John Whitehead. "Hawai'i: The First and Last Far West?" *Asians in America: the History and Immigration of Asian Americans* Ed. Franklin Ng (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 162.

[25] Application for License to Conduct Moving Picture Show on Sunday, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture Houses 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[26] R.A. Hutchinson to County of Hawaii, 23 Aug 1926, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[27] John K. Akau to R.A. Hutchinson, 14 May 1928, LSC 38/4 Kai, C, Gen Corr C-D 1939-1940, HSPAP.

[28] R.A. Hutchinson to County of Hawaii, 21 Oct 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

sprawling landscape of Hawaii's largest island, exhibitors of the moving pictures fostered a cane culture that accommodated yet also eluded sugar planters.

Stanley T. Miyamoto was a showman on the island Hawaii who worked with sugar planters to supply the plantation theatres with moving pictures. He operated the uncannily named Empire Theatre in 1920 as well as a film distribution company that, in his own words, "supplied films to practically every house on the island… with a program that appealed to all classes in general."[29] Many theatre proprietors brought films from Honolulu to their own show houses and then loaned the films out to other theaters for a fee. Miyamoto began working with the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company in 1925 to supply their Papaaloa Theatre with a weekly bill of moving pictures. Miyamoto charged the planters fifteen dollars per night for a complete program of ten reels. A monthly billing for planters averaged one hundred and twenty one dollars. Miyamoto paid the license fee, supplied movie posters to planters, and delivered the films typically by train or bus.[30]

While he supplied mostly popular first-run Hollywood features, he attempted in 1925 to open a film exchange for Japanese pictures. "We shall be of greater service to country theatres," Miyamoto explained to planters, "the aim of our department will be to book these Japanese pictures at a cheaper rate for our country customers and the best at all times."[31] The exhibition of Japanese pictures required the additional expenditure of hiring and lodging a *benshi*. "I am prepared to furnish you the pictures two nights

[29] Stanley T. Miyamoto to R.A. Hutchinson, 19 Feb 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[30] Stanley T. Miyamoto to R.A. Hutchinson, 17 Mar 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[31] Attorney c/o Miyamoto to R.A. Hutchinson, 26 Feb 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

myself," Miyamoto informed planters, "to pay all expenses including license fees including all pictorials for advertising purposes for the sum of $175."[32] Unfortunately for Miyamoto, and for reasons that are unclear in records, planters rejected his offer for a Japanese film program.

Given the dwindling Japanese labor force on the plantations, particularly with greater labor migration from the Philippines, it is possible that planters preferred the exhibition of films that appealed to their majority labor force. However, it is also possible that sugar planters refused the proposal for Japanese moving pictures as a means to mitigate the presence of Japanese in Hawaii. Clearly, the introduction of an exchange for Japanese pictures would have appealed to the many Japanese residents of the region and thus yielded substantial earnings. Sugar planters were invested in promoting the ethnic and racial identification of their laborers as a means to foreclose the possibilities of interracial or class based identifications. With these motivations, sugar planters approved and promoted films from the Philippines. Why, then did sugar planters not endorse Japanese pictures in a comparable manner?

Commenting on the exhibition of Japanese moving pictures in prewar Hawaii, the Honolulu benshi Kamesuke Nakahama remarked that he provided Hawaiian audiences with a means to mediate an imagined and sentimental relation with Japan. He felt that the melodramas were the most popular amongst audiences in Hawaii because they taught audiences about Japanese moral values. His role as the benshi was to draw out the emotions of spectators because, as he explained, "it wasn't a good movie unless the

---

[32] Attorney c/o Miyamoto to R.A. Hutchinson, 26 Feb 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

audience cried and all eyes turned red." Only with this experience, Nakahama believed, "the audience would reaffirm being Japanese."[33] For sugar planters, however, this affirmation of Japanese identity was cause for concern.

In Hawaii, Japanese and Filipinos occupied different social and structural places. The anti-Japanese discourse in Hawaii reflected the anxieties over the perceived dominance of the Japanese on the islands and their perceived ties to modern imperial Japan. The large scale migration to Hawaii provoked substantial concern among nativist and ordinary American alike. Headlines such as "Japanese in Hawaii: White Population Outnumbered Five to One" appeared front page of the *Los Angeles Times* during the initial period of immigration.[34] By the turn of the century, Japanese immigrants constituted forty percent of the majority population of Hawaii. They had increasingly become a settler rather than sojourner community. The Hawaii born generation was 44.5 percent in 1920 and 58.2 percent in 1930. The majority of Japanese were also no longer primarily tied to plantation work. By 1920 there were as many Japanese in non-plantation occupations as there were plantation workers. Only 30 percent of Japanese were working on the plantations by 1928, compared to 76.5 percent of the Filipino population.[35]

This situation was even more stark on the island Hawaii in the 1920s and 1930s. Census reports reveal that Japanese immigrants constituted approximately 48 percent of the entire population of Hilo. Caucasians composed 26 percent in 1920 and fell to 20

---

[33] Naomi Sodetani. "Benshi and Me" in *A'Ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003)

[34] *Los Angeles Times* 9 July 1905

[35] Moon Kie Jung. "Race and Labor in Prewar Hawaii" in *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement* (New York: Columbia UP, 2006), 78.

percent in 1930.[36] For sugar officials, the racialization and dominating presence of the Japanese in the Pacific unsettled the racial hierarchy of the plantations. Rather than encourage the racial and ethnic identification of Japanese, sugar planters sought to contain it. These sentiments were shared by many individuals in Hawaii, including other moving picture showmen.

Adam Baker, son of the last Royal Governor of the island Hawaii, operated the first theatre on the island, Gaiety Theatre. He was a prominent showman who also supplied the sugar plantations and the military camps with films for their theatres. However, Baker found his own amusements faltering with the competition from Japanese showmen like Miyamoto. In 1925, he lost his business with several plantation theatres, including Papaaloa Theatre which started working with Miyamoto. He contacted Robert Hutchinson of the Laupahoehoe sugar plantation to express his frustration with his business losses to the Japanese showmen. Addressing the plantation manager by his first name, an uncommon greeting in planter correspondences that were always exceedingly formal, the showman urged Hutchinson to patronize his own film services. "I believe its nothing but fair that I should get one program there weekly," Baker pleaded, "I could not expect this from the other party as they being Japanese and *blood is thicker than water*."[37]

Miyamoto was not the only one who conducted business with the sugar planters and operated moving picture enterprises that threatened Baker. There were many Japanese showmen on the island Hawaii who often worked together. Many Japanese

---

[36] U.S. Census M.C.G. "Hilo City Racial Composition Principal Groups 1914-1940" cited by Milton C. George in *The Development of Hilo, Hawaii, TH: A Modern Tropical Sugar Port or a Slice Through Time at a Place Called Hilo* (Ann Arbor: The Edwards Letter Shop, 1948), 15.

[37] Adam Baker to R.A. Hutchinson, 9 Sept 1927, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

showmen were also prominent members in the same organizations and communities. However, Baker's reference to the blood of Japanese was a common image invoked to describe the enduring ties of Japanese based on unchangeable corporeality. For many Americans, these corporeal ties belied the possibilities of Japanese incorporation into the American polity and served as justification for exclusion. In Hawaii, the 1909 sugar strike led by Japanese immigrants was often described as "blood unionism." Laborers were led to organize based on ethnic and racial allegiances rather than class interests. These perceptions of Japanese corporeality and blood ties were enduring for sugar planters as they dealt with the culture of the movies in the wake of their cane fields.

I want to focus on one story that I believe subtly reveals the fraught relationship between Hawaiian sugar planters and the Japanese showmen who facilitated a cultural sphere in rural Hawaii for the thousands laborers from the sugar cane fields. These latent tensions emerge in the accounts of sugar planters as they dealt with the Japanese showmen. In planter correspondences, sugar officials rarely noted names or events in any considerable depth or breadth. They tended to document the daily operations of their governance. In 1923, however, Nabasuke Tabata sought to build a moving picture theatre that would cater principally to plantation laborers.[38] The proposal elicited a flurry of interchanges between plantation managers, HSPA officials, bankers, the Japanese showmen, and a cadre of lawyers from both sides. By focusing on the story of Tabata, I draw out the troubles that Japanese showmen and their world of moving pictures presented to the rule of the sugar planters.

---

[38] R.A. Hutchinson to T.H. Davies, 25 Oct 1923, LSC Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

Showman Tabata approached Robert Hutchinson, manager of the Laupahoehoe sugar plantation, with a proposal to build a moving picture theatre on the 1/3 acre of land he purchased years earlier. He wanted to erect a building that would house a motor for a film projector and be used for "meetings and movie shows for public benefit." He was ready to invest considerable finances in renovations to make the theatre "fit for holding Japanese performances."[39] Although planters did not know at the time, Miyamoto of the Empire Theatre was one of several Japanese movie showmen working with Tabata to help secure the moving picture theatre near the plantation.

As a Japanese property owner on the island Hawaii, Tabata represented the small minority in the Japanese immigrant community. Despite their numerical majority, most Japanese immigrants were not landowners. In Hawaii, the sugar planters established an unprecedented dominance over the islands and property ownership consolidated and bound together the ruling oligarchy of the islands. By the 1930s, the big five sugar companies that composed the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Association (HSPA) owned nearly all of the sugar plantations in the territory as well as the region's banking, insurance, transportation, utilities and merchandising institutions. During the territory period, almost half of the land in Hawaii was owned by less than eighty individuals.[40] Tabata constituted part of the 18 percent of land and property owned by Japanese

[39] Lease of Papaaloa Theatre, 29 April 1926, LSC Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[40] Sally Engle Merry. *Colonizing Hawaii: the Cultural Power of Law* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000)

immigrants in 1930. According to census reports Caucasians owned the majority 76 percent of land and buildings in Hawaii.[41]

Neither workers on the plantations nor immigrants solely dependent on the oligarchy established by the ruling planters, Tabata composed the smaller elite and merchant community of Japanese immigrant society. His property near the sugar plantation supported not only a moving picture theatre but also a store, photographic studio, dressmaking shop, four car garage, and several private homes. Despite his assurances that the moving picture theatre would comply with plantation policies and introduce nothing that would be "detrimental to plantation interests," sugar planters refuted Tabata's proposal.[42] As a compromise Tabata offered to lease the plantation owned Papaaloa Theater but yet again to no avail with the planters. They were willing to let Miyamoto supply their theatre with moving pictures but they wanted to control the theatre itself. More than dissuading his ownership, however, they regarded Tabata and his cohort of Japanese showman, as one sugar official put it, "a nuisance from the plantation environment that we should take every reasonable means to eliminate."[43]

In the ten years between Tabata's first proposal and his death in 1934, Hutchinson and sugar planters sought to secure the movie theatre and surrounding property from Tabata a number of times, believing that in doing so they might, in Hutchinson's words,

---

[41] U.S. Census M.C.G. "Population and Land Ownership, 1930" cited by Milton C. George in *The Development of Hilo, Hawaii*, 16.

[42] R.A. Hutchinson to Directors of Laupahoehoe Sugar Company, 12 May 1926, LSC Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[43] John E. Russell to R.A. Hutchinson, 23 May 1933, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

"better control the activities of that gentleman which are not altogether desirable."[44] Why was the seemingly benign work of promoting cheap amusements so burdensome for the planters? When considered closely, Tabata's moving picture house proposal uniquely illuminates the texture at play in the Japanese film scene and unravels the seeming coherence of planters control over labor and life in Hawaii. Indeed, as the decade wore on, Hutchinson and others would persist in their attempts to usurp the power and influence of Japanese showmen and their dangerous amusements.

Haole Planters and Film Standards

When sugar planter Robert Hutchinson received the moving picture theatre proposal from Tabata, there were over nine hundred laborers who toiled in the cane fields and resided in the twelve camps of a company town that he managed for the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company. Over 60% of laborers were from the Philippines and over 75% were foreign born.[45] While the majority of laborers for the sugar industries were single young men from Asia, the sugar planters themselves were consistently Caucasian and often descended from missionary families. Similar to the majority of plantation managers on the Hamakua coast of the island Hawaii, Hutchinson was Scottish by descent. Born in 1872 in Edinburg, Scotland, he was educated at the notable Royal High School. He arrived in Hawaii in 1894 and began working for the sugar industry, eventually becoming head overseer of the Laupahoehoe Sugar Company in 1910 and

---

[44] R.A. Hutchinson to John E. Russell, 19 May 1933, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

[45] On the early history of Laupahoehoe and the sugar industry, see Christina R.N. Lothian. *Laupahoehoe.* 1977.

manager in 1915.[46] He was amongst the ruling elite on the island Hawaii. Sugar planters shared close connections to the governing body on the island, particularly the judiciary. In fact, many members of the judiciary were themselves sugar planters. Together, this distinct class and generation, as Sally Engle Merry suggests, "shared the values of capitalism and work, Christian moral reformism, and hierarchical ideas of race and gender of the elites in the local community."[47]

As a major figure in the ruling elite class on the island Hawaii, Hutchinson managed much more than a company town. He shared a white identity that maintained racial privilege and power in Hawaii. The term haole meant "stranger" in the Hawaiian language and referred to any non-native Hawaiian persons. However, the term was consolidated as a racial category in the world of the sugar plantations. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn explains, the categories of haole and non-haole comprised the sharp division in the plantation hierarchy. These divisions established the class distinctions between the small propertied and managerial class and the majority of laborers. Yet, the haole "community" also consisted of diverse Anglo-European immigrants who arrived as laborers or other non-elite classes. Regardless of class status, Anglo-European newcomers were encouraged to consider themselves part of the privileged haole class.

In Hawaii, both race and gender played a crucial role in the "imagined community" of whiteness. Glenn points out that domestic servitude was one way social distance marked the haole identity in distinction from non-haoles. In the 19th and early

---

[46] Nellist, George. *The Story of Hawaii and Its Builders: An Historical Outline of Hawaii with Biographical Sketches of Its Men of Note and Substantial Achievement, Past and Present, who have Contributed to the Progress of the Territory* (Honolulu: Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1925)

[47] Sally Engle Merry. "The Social History of a Plantation Town" in *Colonizing Hawaii: The Cultural Power of Law* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000), 118.

20th century, domestic servants were common place in the homes of sugar planters, elites, and ordinary Anglo-Europeans alike. Based on letters and diaries, Glenn notes that newcomers to Hawaii from modest backgrounds on the mainland often expressed their surprise at their newfound racial privilege. As one school teacher noted when she was provided a maid, "A maid! None of us had ever had a maid… but everyone on the plantation had a maid. It was therefore, the thing to do." The incorporation of domestic servants into the households of Anglo-European newcomers facilitated a colonialist lifestyle that reinforced a social distance from non-haoles and marked identification with an imagined community of whiteness. Unlike the situation in the continental United States, the majority of domestic servants in Hawaii were Chinese and Japanese men, and many of whom also labored on the sugar cane plantations.[48]

Glenn demonstrates the ways that the incorporation of Chinese and Japanese men into the domestic sphere was one means by which social distance established haole identity. Her example foregrounds the racialized and gendered labor of Asian men in Hawaii. Historically, Asian male labor in the feminized realm of domestic work reified a dispossession from the privileged categories of whiteness and masculinity.[49] In Hawaii, this dispossession of Asian men structured racial power and the shared identity and ideology of whiteness. This was especially evident in the racial hierarchy of the sugar

---

[48] Evelyn Nakano Glenn notes that Chinese and Japanese men formed the majority of domestic servants in Hawaii until the late 1920s when Japanese women outnumbered men. See "Japanese and Haoles in Hawaii" in *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 207-215.

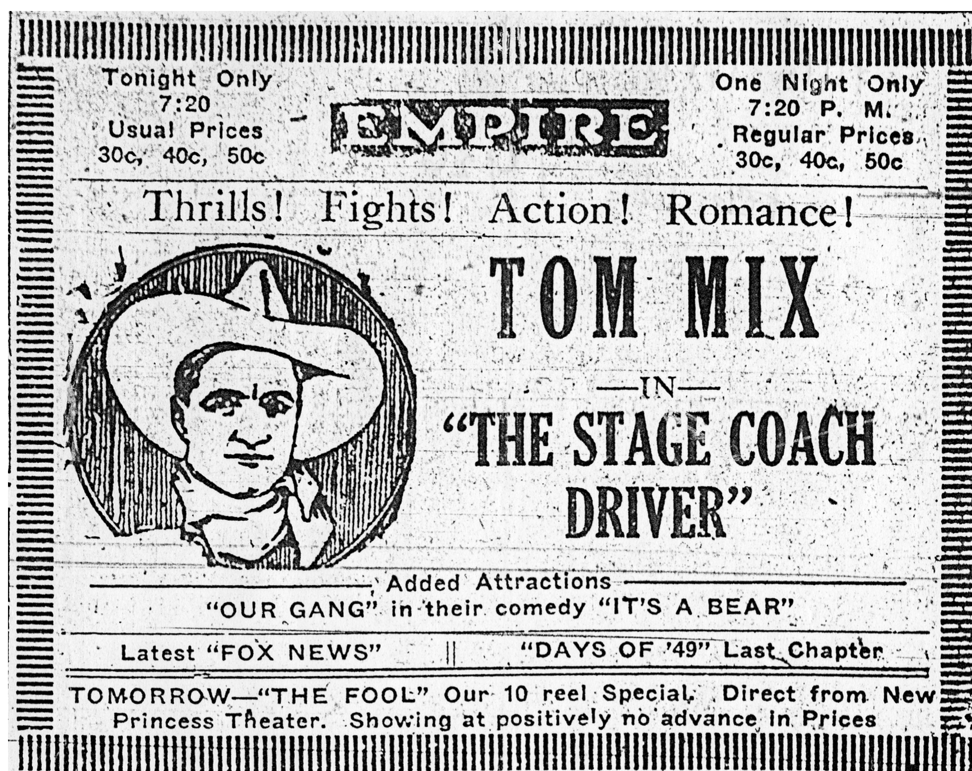
[49] Yen Le Espiritu. *Asian American Women and Men: Labor, Laws, and Love* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2000), 8.

plantations. The subordination of Asian men and masculinity were important ways that sugar planters maintained racial power and enforced their own privilege.

In his dealings with the Japanese showmen and the immigrant laborers who ostensibly patronized the theatres, sugar planter Hutchinson sought to ensure the reproduction of the racial hierarchy. After 1909, the project of social reform was the dominant strategy that planters adopted to ensure the place of their laborers in the rigid order of the plantation. Hutchinson's company town in Laupahoehoe was regarded as an exemplary example of what sugar planters hoped to achieve in their social reform efforts. In their correspondence over the Tabata moving picture theatre proposal, Hutchinson and planter officials first raised objection due to concern over the types of films that may be exhibited to laborers. "The danger would be in him attempting to exhibit moving pictures," as one official put it, "which are not up to the standard which we would like to have shown to the employees of our company."[50]

In 1920, sugar officials created a censorship board to over see the exhibition of moving pictures to laborers. Planters approved moving pictures such as those from the Philippines because they believed that these films reinforced the racial hierarchy of the plantations by encouraging the ethnic and racial identification of Filipino laborers. Yet, how did sugar planters discern which moving pictures were, as Hutchinson put it, "not up to the standard"? I want to suggest that these "standards" comprised more than the attempts to dictate matters of taste and establish the paternalism of planters. They marked

[50] E.H. Wodehouse to R.A. Hutchinson, 26 Oct 1923, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.



4.3 Advertisement for "The Stage Coach Driver" in Stanley T. Miyamoto's Empire Theatre, *Hilo Tribune Herald* 13 Feb 1926

that which sugar planters believed would reaffirm the racial hierarchy on the plantations from what they feared would disrupt it.

Sugar planters and movie showmen noted amongst each other the popularity of western films amongst their laborers, particularly Filipino men. I turn to the western because the genre seemed to represent something that laborers loved. Clearly they were the most popular films of the day and, given their accessibility, widely exhibited in rural Hawaii. Yet, sugar planters still expressed ambivalence over the films. This ambivalence over the reception of the western amongst sugar cane laborers merits discussion particularly since there has been no other genre that has grappled as persistently with the

problem of manhood. The western compelled audiences with an escapist fantasy that in every incarnation addressed the problem of becoming a man. As Lee Clark Mitchell has eloquently argued, it is a peculiarly flexible genre that mapped out the anxieties and conditions from which people wanted to escape. The western registered the most pressing issues of the time yet presented a constant set of concerns over the "making of the man."[51]

There are several features that continually constitute the form of the western, the figure of the cowboy hero, the tale of morality and violence, and the vast openness of the western landscape. The lone cowboy is always a moral figure motivated by personal honor rather than material gain. He turns to violence as a means for his own autonomy and preservation of self. Robert Warshow insightfully noted that the westerner is always depicted as a man of leisure, frequenting the saloon and in possession of horses and guns rather than property or wealth. As such, he is driven by moral rather than material qualities. His employment is open in the western and typically unproductive insofar as labor is performed neither to make a living nor gain achievement. The same is true for violence. "He fights not for advantage," Warshow observed, "but to state what he is, and he must live in a world which permits that statement."[52] For the cowboy in the western, the value of violence is derived from the abstracted concepts of honor, justice, and morality and these are the means for self-transformation.

---

[51] Lee Clark Mitchell. *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film* (Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1996)

[52] Robert Warshow. "Movie Chronicle: The Westerner" in *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre & Other Aspects of Popular Culture* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 141.

Such transformation happens only in the open and vast landscape of the West, the signature mark of the western genre. The “West” in the western is portrayed as a bare and pure landscape that, as Mitchell suggests, matters less as verifiable topography than as space removed from cultural coercion. It is an abstracted utopian setting and, as such, the very place of ideology and where we might locate the pleasures that draw spectators into the dominant messages of the film. Because the “West” is devoid of specificity and portrayed merely as “virgin land,” it can always be represented as a place that accords endless possibility and a sense of freedom. The imagined “West” stands in opposition to the crowded and corrupted urban East. As open, bare, and pure land, the “West” can always be idealized as a place for renewal and self-transformation. As the definitive feature of the western, the landscape is thus the place of action and where men can become men through a reckoning with violence and morality. This is the dominant form of the western genre that structures the legibility of the film in a given time and place.

Though the meanings of the genre are circumscribed by form, the identifications of spectators are never proscribed in determinate ways. Filipino laborers enthusiasm for the western can be read from a spectrum of identifications and disidentifications. Although the cowboy is almost always a white male American hero, Filipino laborers in Hawaii may have found that their own experiences of migration, displacement, and loss profoundly resonated with the cowboy. American “go West” stories were not only widely circulated overseas they were also infused with immigration tales of adventure and discovery. For the many young Filipino men who arrived in Hawaii and the continental United States without families, the lone cowboy and the messages of autonomy and individualism may have most closely resembled their own situations as migratory

laborers with fewer familial obligations than their propertied counterparts. Yet, the pleasure in the western may have also been grounded not in resemblance but in the fantasy life that escapist genres offered. In rural Hawaii, after all, the mobility and freedom of the imagined western frontier stands in stark contrast to the constraints of life on the carefully regulated sugar plantation.

In their efforts to reinforce the racial hierarchy of the plantations, the western was an ambivalent genre for sugar officials in Hawaii because of the ways it replayed the recuperation of masculinity, violence, autonomy, and self-transformation in the wide open expanse of the American West. In Hawaii, the dispossession of Asian men from the categories of whiteness and masculinity were crucial aspects for making haole identity. Might, then, the identification of laborers with the cowboy hero, embodied in the figure of the quintessential white male American, be read as a transgression of the racial boundaries of proscribed masculinity? In the persistent reckoning of manhood, the western genre reinforced notions of rugged individualism. Recall that in the project of promoting social welfare, and in the plantation produced film Soledad Sinia, sugar planters were principally concerned with the reproduction of families and domesticity despite the overwhelming majority of single male laborers on the plantations. They sought to discourage the wandering transience that undermined the productivity of their plantations. More than just planter policy, these efforts were, above all else, the means for planters to craft gender, sex, and class expectations in Asian masculinity. In contrast, the hazards of the western film lay principally in the visual pleasure that, in film after film, rehearsed the making of an autonomous manhood that undermined the subordinate, dependent social roles that sugar planters had carefully constructed for their laborers.

Finally, I want to suggest that sugar planters were most ambivalent about the western because they feared that the tales of American masculinity and rugged individualism presented a vocabulary that their laborers not only enjoyed in the movie house but also recognized in the union hall. When Japanese showman Tabata approached Hutchinson with the proposal to build a movie house, the planters were concerned that the visual pleasures of their movie-going might yield unexpected consequences. For Hutchinson and the sugar planters, these concerns over the seemingly benign activities of the movies were cast in the context of organized labor.

Labor and Sociability

When Hutchinson first received the proposal for a Japanese operated theatre in 1923, he was most immediately concerned with extending regulation beyond the cane fields and into the potentially dangerous and unregulated sphere of immigrant laborers leisure and sociability. For Hutchinson, the exhibition space and the interrelations of laborers were crucial factors as planters debated whether or not to allow the Japanese showman to operate the theater. For planters to engage the proposition, Hutchinson believed they needed to "have control over the general conducting of the house and the possibility of liquor and gambling entering it." Since the Japanese showmen were "fellows in the moving picture game and naturally would make better returns," Hutchinson reasoned that the Tabata proposal might be beneficial to the "whole community." However, he carefully considered the Tabata proposal and in his correspondence to other sugar officials noted specifically that it was critical for "a

meeting place for plantation men [to be] maintained on plantation property."[53] For the planters, the unregulated leisure activities of their laborers posed dangers to their command over the property and territories in, near, or around the plantation. The spaces of leisure—whether in gambling dens or moving picture houses—offered laborers opportune time to mingle with one another off the cane fields and away from their camp houses. In this way, what planters worried over was that these leisure spaces were semi-private spaces for workers to congregate out of the spotlight of planter authorities exposing gazes.

The structure of sugar plantations in Hawaii allowed for a degree of surveillance and control unrivaled in urban centers or even small towns. In governing the Hawaiian plantations, sugar officials adopted a system of welfare capitalism similar to textile, mining, steel, lumber, and cotton industries in the continental United States. Workers typically resided in company towns where living quarters, medical facilities, recreation, and stores were administered by the company. In Hawaii, the company town was crucial for planters who sought to ensure a stable labor force by employing workers year-round rather than seasonally as the case with many other agricultural industries. Since harvest of sugar began in December and ended in July, planters needed to craft ways to ensure that workers remained on the plantations for the following season. Dependent on the sugar company for domicile and basic living needs, planters believed that workers would be bound to the plantations.

---

[53] R.A. Hutchinson to Directors of Laupahoehoe Sugar Company, 12 May 1926, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House, HSPAP.

The domestic quarters in plantation camps were generally segregated by race and ethnicity, and given designations like "Japanese camp" or "Filipino camp." The supervisors typically lived in separate areas a short distance from the camps on a higher ground or divided by roads or other structures to demarcate social distance yet maintain oversight. Planters scrupulously planned and monitored the living arrangements of laborers. While conditions varied with different plantations, single laborers were generally crowded into barracks. As more women and children joined the labor population, male bachelor quarters were isolated from "family" residences. Plantation homes were regularly traversed by inspectors, welfare reformers, housing supervisors, medical personnel, and plantation managers who sought to regulate and reform the domestic and private lives of laborers. One plantation even set to paper explicit rules for sleeping arrangements in the barracks. "No two men shall be permitted," the Waihee plantation report stated, "to occupy the same bed."[54] The domestic quarters of laborers were always subject to planter intervention and planters regularly used housing, which they provided for workers as part of their contract, as a means of labor control. In 1901 they adopted a policy of evicting unruly and recalcitrant workers from plantation housing and camps.[55]

In Hawaii, sugar planters ensured that privacy was as impossible in the plantation homes as it was in the public work sites of the cane fields and processing mills. The possibilities for a private sphere for laborers in Hawaii were always precarious. While

---

[54] Cited by Ronald Takaki in *Pau Hana*, 67.

[55] Edward Beechert. *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii, 1985)

plantation homes and work gangs remained segregated to prevent labor collusion, the movie showhouse presented a range of possibilities for contact and encounter. Despite their best attempts, planter officials could never fully grasp the social or private worlds of their laborers. Indeed, throughout the periods of organized labor strikes in prewar Hawaii, Asian workers congregated and rallied in public parks, at the foot of storefronts, and in the train depots on the outskirts of town. They held meetings in the semi-private spaces of Buddhist temples and the Japanese restaurants and lodging houses where delegates stayed late into the night and the following morning.

Theatres, particularly those that were owned and operated by Japanese showmen, were an apt place of congregation. Japanese organizers held planning meetings and public rallies at the Asahi Theatre in Honolulu a number of times during both the 1909 and 1920 sugar strikes. When labor organizers formed the Higher Wage Association in 1908, a Japanese play depicting the wage disparity between Japanese and Caucasian workers debuted at the Honolulu Theatre to inaugurate the newly formed organization.[56] When striking laborers were evicted from plantation housing, strike camps were set up out in open fields and bare sidewalks, and in vacant buildings and private residences. During the 1924 Filipino led sugar strike, 23 evicted laborers were charged with vagrancy for sleeping in the lobby of a Japanese theatre, which had been used as a provisional strike camp.[57]

---

[56] Nora Conaty. "The Old *Shibai*: Japanese Theater in Hawaii" *The Hawaiian Journal of History* vol. 38 (2004), 134.

[57] John E. Reinecke. *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924-1925* (Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, 1996), 63.

Thus when Tabata's plan to build the movie picture house reached the tables of Hutchinson and planter authorities they understood clearly what was at stake. As one official stated, [and I quote again] "We do not think, for a moment, that the suggestion of leasing the place for 15 years should be considered, as you might have a source of danger right in the middle of your Plantation in case of a strike."[58]

In the anxious, overcautious, and calculated psyche of planters, the moving picture theatre was a migrant public that could encourage, facilitate, and realize a dangerous sociability. Here I am suggesting that when planters raised the red flag on Tabata's movie house, their concern lay principally in the emergent social relations that could be fostered in the theatre. While Japanese and Filipino workers might have encountered one another on the cane fields it was the "privately owned pieces of land near to the Plantation" that alarmed planters because these were the places where "strikers or undesirables could locate in time of trouble."[59] The sociability of the migrant laborers in Tabata's theater troubled planters most dramatically and made it clear that what was most pleasurable about these cheap amusements for spectators was what was most dangerous for planters.

In the end, planter officials refused to lease the moving picture theatre to Japanese showman Tabata. Amongst each other they noted that the Japanese showmen were seemingly unwilling to comply with the preferred terms of the sugar planters. They acknowledged that other Japanese showman Stanley T. Miyamoto, who operated the Empire Theatre and supplied films to many of the show houses in the island, was

---

[58] E.H. Wodehouse to R.A. Hutchinson, 6 May 1926, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[59] E.H. Wodehouse to R.A. Hutchinson, 21 May 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

supporting Tabata. Planters figured that they were working under unfavorable conditions and unlikely to succeed in operating their own theatre. "We think they had better go ahead and see what they can do in a place of their own," sugar officials reasoned, "whatever amount is paid out by laborers for entertainment of this sort is just as liable to go to one place as the other, thus, theoretically, we can say that the income will be divided in two."[60] Sugar officials predicted that the moving picture house operated by Japanese showmen would falter in lieu of their own theatre. Moreover, they slyly added that "we do not think that the Empire Theatre is in a position to put up much money for Moving Picture Houses as we happen to know something about its financial situation."[61] Although sugar planters intently debated the proposal and had a host of specific concerns, they provided no explanation of their refusal to Tabata. In a letter to his lawyer Kango Kawasaki, they simply wrote, "we regret that we feel that we are unable to meet [Tabata] in this matter."[62] Undeterred by the failed negotiations with the sugar planters, Tabata and the other Japanese showmen did build their own theatre and it thrived throughout the 1930s.

Conclusion

From the earliest days of the cinema, the Japanese film scene flourished in Hawaii and spanned from urban Honolulu to the many rural towns near the sugar cane fields. In

---

[60] E.H. Wodehouse to R.A. Hutchinson, 21 May 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[61] E.H. Wodehouse to R.A. Hutchinson, 21 May 1925, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

[62] R.A. Hutchinson to Kango Kawasaki, 27 May 1926, LSC 7/7 Moving Picture House 1923-1930, HSPAP.

addition to building theatres, Japanese showmen often took their amusements on the road to service the many dispersed rural communities in the remote sectors of Hawaii. Consequently, the rural locations and the sprawling network that Japanese showmen established made the film culture in Hawaii difficult to regulate. For sugar planters, this cultural scene of Japanese run amusements ushered in a torrent of fears and anxieties. The presence and prowess of Japanese movie men in navigating this public world of cheap attractions shored up the dreaded fear over Japanese presence and their rising levels of settlement and engagement in the social and political spheres of Hawaii. The frequent patronage of these Japanese run movie houses by Asian migrant laborers, in particular Japanese and Filipino sugar cane workers, intensified planter concerns. They perceived certain films that laborers viewed as potentially disruptive to the racial hierarchy of the sugar plantations. The opportunities for migrant sociability that the movie house provided to laborers also posed indisputable dangers.

Through the fears and anxieties expressed by Hawaiian sugar planters over the presence of Japanese "movie men" and the spaces they fostered, what becomes clear in the context of Hawaii and Asian labor is that the threat to planters extended well beyond the periods of organized strikes. Commenting on civil rights in the Jim Crow South, historian Robin Kelley argues that organized resistance in the workplace and community were not the only sites for black working class opposition. Public and leisure spaces were also critical arenas for black struggle. They provided a place for congregation and at times for direct protest and resistance. Most of the time, however, they simply offered pleasure and respite from the discipline of labor and community. As such, public and leisure spaces are important to political history because they reveal the private and hidden

relations that are formative of public collective action.[63] In Hawaii, sugar planters sought to regulate every aspect of life on the sugar cane plantations. From the spheres of work and housing, planters carefully monitored the spaces and social relations of laborers. Their project of social reform was meant to expand these regulations into the social and cultural sphere of their laborers lives. Despite the inordinate measures of control that planters exerted, however, they could never completely regulate the complex worlds of their laborers. I turn to the spaces and sensibilities fostered in the recess of organized labor strikes to illuminate planter strategies of discipline and regulation. Moreover, I read the places that evaded the grasp of planters as evidence of an emergent counter public that extended beyond the theatre and into the realm of labor.

In the case of the Japanese movie men in Hawaii, however, this public was relatively short lived. With the Depression and the untimely death of the elder Tabata, planter officials realized that the Japanese family was economically vulnerable and moved towards securing the property lease from the bank through debt capital. In a letter to Hutchinson, the representative for the Tabata family pleadingly wrote, "the favor which I am begging you is to allow the payments to be made in reasonable sums, especially when the time is so depressing without any hopeful indication of prosperity."[64] Hutchinson assured the Tabata family that they had "no intention of demanding unreasonable payments" and are "sympathetic and understanding in these depressed

---

[63] Robin Kelley. " 'We Are Not What We Seem': The Politics and Pleasures of Community" in *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994)

[64] Tomekichi Okino to R.A. Hutchinson, 29 June 1933, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

times."[65] However, sugar officials were especially eager to, in their own words, "eliminate the nuisance" that had evaded them for well over a decade.[66] In the most dire and desperate times of the 1930s, the sugar planters offered $6000 for the property that the Tabata family reluctantly put up for sale for $11,000.[67] In 1934, they finally seized the property owned by Tabata. In addition to a number of establishments, the sugar planters acquired possession of a moving picture theatre which they astutely noted in proximate distance from a labor union office.[68]

---

[65] R.A. Hutchinson to Tomekichi Okino, 29 June 1933, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

[66] John E. Russell to R.A. Hutchinson, 23 May 1933, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

[67] R.A. Hutchinson to John E. Russell, 15 May 1934, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

[68] W.A. Anderson to R.A. Hutchinson, 23 June 1934, LSC 4/8 Tabata, HSPAP.

CONCLUSION

In exploring film culture during the first half of the twentieth century, I posited the concept "transpacific West" to mark out the salience of inter-migration and competing national interests in the overlapping community formation of Asian America during this time period. I want to emphasize the importance of these processes for the study of social and cultural life in the years before World War II. As Gunther Peck argues, migrancy prompted a contested process whereby communities could be created despite the dominant perception that migrants lacked community. Yet, migrancy also fomented the possibilities whereby communities might be unsettled and social boundaries blurred.[1] The complexity of these processes might be missed in the exclusive attention to identity and community. Rather than reify these categories and presume their coherence, I ask how attention to transitory transactions and forms of sociability could more aptly illuminate the daily encounters—the collusions and collisions -- that comprised the arena of cultural life in the American West?

By taking such an approach, we can see, as Peck puts it, boundaries are not always self-evident. Moreover, while these terms might not materialize into explicit political and social movements, or in identity and community, Vivek Bald suggests that we might look to these relations to reveal the interchanges and transformations that occur in the overlap of multiple migrations. Such an approach also decenters the

---

[1] Gunther Peck. "Mobilizing Community: Migrant Workers and the Politics of Labor Mobility in the North American West, 1900-1920" in *Labor Histories: Class, Politics, and the Working Class Experience* Ed. Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, and Bruce Laurie (Urbana: Univ of Illinois, 1998), 174-200.

overdetermined focus on "homeland" in conceptions of diaspora to foreground the overlapping histories in the places of migration and settlement.[2]

Most significantly, the designation "transpacific West" names an analytical category which engages and unsettles framings of nation and nationhood. Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron mark out a grammar for the history of North American borderland-frontiers. "Instead of straightforward conquests," they write, "the history of North American borderland-frontiers has been rewritten to emphasize the accommodations between invaders and indigenes and the hybrid residuals of these encounters."[3] Too often, as Julie Greene points out, scholars of U.S. empire and imperialism focus on colonial officials and governmental leaders. Who possess agency, Greene asks, in the view of these scholars?[4] Absent from these studies are labor and class distinctions as well as transnational approaches that reach beyond the nation. Adelman and Aron, conversely, suggest that scholars of the North American West might come to apprehend the complex interplay of the nations and empires by reframing our understanding of *frontiers* and *borderlands*. They define frontiers as a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders were not clearly defined. They also suggest that the concept of borderland must be understood by the power politics of territorial hegemony. Borderlands thus must be defined as a place for contested

---

[2] Vivek Bald. "Overlapping Diasporas, Multiracial Lives: South Asian Muslims in U.S. Communities of Color, 1880-1950" *Souls* 8 (4) 2006

[3] Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron. "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 104 No. 3 (June 1999)

[4] Julie Greene. "The Labor of Empire: Recent Scholarship on U.S. History and Imperialism" *Labor: Studies of Working-Class History of the Americas* Vol. 1 No. 2 (2004)

boundaries between colonial domains and intercolonial and intercultural relations.[5] These terms mark out the mode by which to engage the dynamics and interrelations that comprise the contested territories of the U.S. West.

I draw upon these insights from the historiography of labor and migration in the North America frontier-borderlands as a way to cast the complex arena whereby Asian immigrants participated in the growing worlds of mass culture, leisure, and the movies. When the cinema and movie-going was introduced into American culture at the turn of the century, the nation was teeming with social transformation, mass immigration, and an unprecedented growth in American cities. Most accounts of the history of the cinema focus on east coast metropolises such as New York and Chicago and the film-going experiences of European immigrants. Historical studies of the cinema tend to center American filmmaking and, consequently, the consolidation of national cinemas. In my examination of the film culture of Asian immigrant communities in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century, I brought together several localized sites of study, from Seattle and Stockton to the rural towns of the Hawaiian islands. Rather than enforce the consolidation of the cinema as a national form, my approach charts the incongruities and heterogeneities that shaped the varied social arenas formed by the cinemas of the twentieth century. When audiences entered a movie house in Hawaii in the 1920s they were as apt to find Hollywood films as they were to see pictures from Japan and the Philippines. What might this scene in the far flung islands of the Pacific mean for an American filmic culture that many scholars have described in predominately

---

[5] Adelman and Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” 815.

national terms? Might a consideration of the cinema and the culture of movie-going from a different set of localities, and in particular from the region of the transpacific West, heed the call to provincialize the "American" in American cinema?

In the decade after World War II, the lives of Asian Americans and Asian immigrants in the United States were dramatically changed. In the immediate aftermath of internment, Japanese immigrants relocated to dispersed regions of the United States in part due to the efforts of resettlement programs in 1944. Less than half of internees returned to the Pacific coast. The federal government repealed Asiatic exclusion laws as a means to mediate the changing geopolitical relationships with China and Japan and project a global image of liberal democracy in the Cold War era. Many Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the United States were also actively engaged in projects to promote their own "American-ness." These efforts coincided with the nation's project of racial integration and converting the once "enemy within" into a symbol of postwar recovery and redemption. The notion of a model minority, that which most scholars locate most clearly as an ideological formation that managed the spectre of civil rights and black-white relations of the 1960s, might be apprehended in the postwar national reconciliation of the dilemma of Asian, and in particular Japanese, immigrants as citizens.[6]

Such was the national stage when the benshi Nakahama Kamesuke returned to the theater in the late 1940s. The dozens of movie houses and theatres that screened Japanese films in Hawaii were closed down during the war. However, Japanese showmen of the

---

[6] Ellen D. Wu. "Race and Asian American Citizenship from World War II to the Movement" (Ph.D diss, University of Chicago, 2006); Caroline Chung Simpson. " 'Out of an obscure place': Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s" *differences* 10.3 (1998)

Hawaii Nichibei Film Company, many of whom were directly targeted for surveillance by the federal government prior to the outbreak of the war, returned to the show houses after the war with films from Japan that were either hidden from authorities or retrieved from the collection confiscated by the government. In fact, Muneo Kimura, mentioned in the first chapter, took a number of trips to California to locate government confiscated Japanese films. These films, along with benshi, returned to show houses in postwar Hawaii. As one observer noted, the crowds of people standing in line for double-priced tickets was *unbelievable.*[7]

[7] Naomi Sodetani. "Benshi and Me" in A'ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii (Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center, 2003)

Bibliography

Archives

Bishop Museum, Honolulu, HI.
Photo Collection

Brigham Young University, La'ie, HI, Joseph F. Smith Library Archives, and Special Collections
Oral History Collection
HSPA Filipino Labor Records (1906-1949)
Records of the Kahuku Sugar Plantation (1893-1976)

California State Archives, Sacramento, CA
Supreme and Appellate Court Collections

Filipino American National History Society, Seattle, WA, National Pinoy Archives
Oral History Collection

Haggin Museum, Stockton, CA, Library/Archives
Stockton Theatres

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles, CA, Seaver Center for Western History Research
General Photo File

Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI.
Memoirs of the Hawaii Hiroshima Heritage Study Group

National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD
Record Group 38 Office of Naval Intelligence Records

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
Record Group 210 War Relocation Authority Case Files

Seattle Public Library, Seattle, WA.
Seattle Collection

Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA.
Record Series 1802-E5 Board of Theatre Supervisors

University of Hawaii, Manoa, HI, Manoa Library Hawaiian Collection
Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association Plantation Archives
Newspaper Clipping File

University of California, Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Library, Special Collections
Southern California Chinese American Oral History Project

University of Washington, Seattle, Washington, Special Collections
Elmer Ogawa Papers
Theatre Owners of Washington, Northern Idaho, and Alaska

Newspapers

Hawaii Shokumin Shimbun (HI)
Hawaii Sunday News (HI)
Hawaii Plantation Chronicle (HI)
Japanese American Courier (WA)
Japanese American News (CA)
Japan-California Daily News (CA)
Kona Echo (HI)
Nippu Jiji (HI)
North American Times (WA)
Pacific Citizen (CA)

Commonwealth Times (CA)
Commonwealth Chronicle (HI)
Filipino Pioneer (CA)
Filipino Observer Spokesman (CA)
Filipino Eagle (CA)
Filipino Community News (WA)
Little Manila Times (CA)
Manila Post Herald (CA)
New Filamerican (HI)
Orientale (WA)
Philippines News Tribune (HI)
Philippines Bataan Herald (CA)
Philippine Commonwealth Chronicle (HI)
Philippines Herald Tribune (CA)
Philippine Examiner (CA)
Philippine Journal (CA)
Philippine Record (CA)
Philippine American Mirror (CA)
Philippine American Observer (CA)

Daily Post Herald (Hilo, HI)
Hilo Tribune Herald (HI)
Honolulu Advertiser (HI)

Los Angeles Times (CA)
Moving Picture World
Pacific Commercial Advertiser (HI)
Seattle Daily Times (WA)
Stockton Record (CA)

Oral Histories

Florence Eng, interview with Ron Chew, November 15, 1990.

Chris Menslaves, interview with Carolina Koslosky, Feb 10 & 11, 1975.

Yuki Irei, interview with Chandran Bhaskaran, February 15, 1988.

Eddie Lee, interview with Jean Wong, Jan. 20, 1979.

Eric "Iki" Moir, interview with Warren Nishimoto, April 28, 1987.

Tadao "Barber" Kawamoto, interview with Warren Nishimoto, March 4, 1987.

Robert Kunimera, interview with Warren Nishimoto, November 5, 1987.

Mae Itamura, interviewer unknown, June 1980.

Yuki Irei, interview with Chandran Bhaskaran, February 15, 1988.

Francis Nagasawa, interviewer unknown, May 31, 1998.

Other Sources

Bowman, Donald. "The Betterment of Industrial Relations" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol XXV (Nov 1921)

------. "Camp Improvements" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol. XXX No. 1 (Jan 1926)

------. "General Welfare Work" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol. XXIII No. 3 (Sept 1920)

------. "Housing the Plantation Worker" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol. XXII No. 4 (April 1920)

------. "Plantation Rehabilitation" *Hawaiian Planter's Record* Vol. XXII No. 6 (June 1920)

Calden, Guy C. and Albert H. Elliot. *The Law Affecting Japanese Residing in the State of California.* San Francisco, 1929.

Kondo, Kikujiro Clifferd. *Dr. K.C. Kondo's Classified Japanese Business Directory 1937-1938*. Honolulu: Jigyoka Nenkansha, Showa, 1937.

Nellist, George. *The Story of Hawaii and Its Builders: An Historical Outline of Hawaii with Biographical Sketches of Its Men of Note and Substantial Achievement, Past and Present, who have Contributed to the Progress of the Territory*. Honolulu: Honolulu Star Bulletin, 1925.

Ogawa, Elmer. "Movie Influences Spread Wide Among Young Generation" *Japanese American Courier* (14 Jan 1928)

Polk's Stockton California City Directory 1933. San Francisco: R.L. Polk and Co. of California, Publishers, 1933.

Smith, Jared G. *Plantation Sketches: A Record of Hawaiian Industries as They Appeared to an Itinerant Journalist in 1923: published in the Columns of the Advertiser*. Honolulu: The Advertiser Press, 1924.

Unpublished Dissertations, Theses, and Papers

Akagi, Roy Hidemichi. "The Second Generation Problem: Some Suggestions Toward Its Solution." New York: Japanese Students Christian Association in North America, 1926.

Lee, Shelley Sunn Hee. "Cosmopolitan Identities: Japanese Americans in Seattle and the Pacific Rim, 1900-1942." PhD diss., Stanford University, 2005.

Liu, John M. "Cultivating Cane: Asian Labor and the Hawaiian Sugar Plantation System within the Capitalist World Economy, 1835-1920," PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1985.

Loureiro, Pedro Anthony. "U.S. Counterintelligence Against Japan in Southern California, 1933-1941." MA thesis, San Francisco State University, 1987.

Lothian, Christina. Laupahoehoe. 1977.

Mabalon, Dawn. "Life in Little Manila: Filipina/os in Stockton, California, 1917-1972." PhD diss, Stanford University, 2003.

Potamianos, George. "Hollywood in the Hinterlands: Mass Culture in Two California Communities, 1896-1936." PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1998.

Serna, Laura. " 'We're Going Yankee': American Movies, Mexican Nationalism, Transnational Cinema, 1917-1935." PhD diss, Harvard University, 2006.

Smith, William Carlson. "The Second Generation Oriental in America." Preliminary paper prepared for the second general session, Institute of Pacific Relations, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 15-29, 1927.

Taylor, William H. "The Hawaiian Sugar Industry." PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1935.

Tsu, Cecilia. " 'Grown in the 'Garden of the World': Race, Gender, and Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley, 1880-1930." PhD diss, Stanford University, 2006.

Wu, Ellen D. "Race and Asian American Citizenship from World War II to the Movement." Ph.D diss, University of Chicago, 2006.

Books and Articles

Adelman, Jeremy and Stephen Aron. "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 104 No. 3 (June 1999)

Allen, Robert C. "Manhattan Myopia: or, Oh! Iowa!" *Cinema Journal* 35 No. 3 (Spring 1996)

------. "Relocating American Film History: The 'Problem' of the Empirical" *Cultural Studies* Vol. 20 No. 1 (Jan 2006)

Ambler, Charles. "Popular Films and Colonial Audiences: The Movies in Northern Rhodesia" *The American Historical Review* Vol. 106 No. 1 (Feb 2001)

Anderson, Joseph and Donald Richie. *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982)

Angell, Lowell. "The Theaters in the Aala District" in *A'Ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro. Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003.

Azuma, Eiichiro. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*. Oxford: Oxford UP 2005.

-----. "Interethnic Conflict under Racial Subordination: Japanese Immigrants and Their Asian Neighbors in Walnut Grove, California, 1908-1941" *Amerasia Journal* 20:2 (1994)

------. "Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity: Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta" *The Pacific Historical Review* (May 1998)

Bald, Vivek. "Overlapping Diasporas, Multiracial Lives: South Asian Muslims in U.S. Communities of Color, 1880-1950" *Souls* 8 (4) 2006

Barrett, James R. "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930" *The Journal of American History* Vol. 79 No. 3 (Dec 1992)

Beechert, Edward. *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History.* Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1985.

Bogardus, Emory S. "The Filipino Press in the United States" *Sociology and Social Research* (1934)

Bonacich, Edna. "Asian Labor in the Development of California and Hawaii" *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Laborers in the United States before WWII* Ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

Bottomore, Stephen. "The Panicking Audience? Early Cinema and the 'Train Effect' " *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 19.2 (June 1999)

Bonnell, Victoria E. and Lynn Hunt. "Introduction" *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Bowser, Eileen. *The Transformation of Cinema 1907-1915.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.

Brownlow, Kevin. *Behind the Mask of Innocence.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

Burns, James. "The African Bioscope: Movie House Culture in British Colonial Africa" *Afrique & Histoire* Vol. 5 (2006)

-----. "John Wayne on the Zambezi: Cinema, Empire, and the American Western in British Central Africa" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* Vol. 35 No. 1 (2002)

-----. “Watching Africans Watch Films: theories of spectatorship in British Colonial Africa” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 20, No. 2 (2000)

Carby, Hazel. *Race Men.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998.

Cavallo, Dominick. *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880-1920.* Philadelphia: Univ of Penn Press, 1981.

Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History.* Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991.

-----. “Asian American Historiography” *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 65 No. 3 (Aug 1996)

Chin, Doug. *Seattle’s International District: the Making of a Pan-Asian American Community*. Seattle: International Examiner Press, 2001.

Clark Mitchell, Lee. *Westerns: Making the Man in Fiction and Film.* Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1996.

Cole, Terrence M. “Jim Crow in Alaska: The Passage of the Alaska Equal Rights Act of 1945” *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 23 No. 4 (Nov 1992)

Conaty, Nora. “The Old *Shibai*: Japanese Theater in Hawaii” *The Hawaiian Journal of History* vol. 38 (2004)

Conrad, Alfred F. “The Privilege of Forcibly Ejecting an Amusement Patron” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review and American Law Register* Vol. 90 No. 7 (May 1942)

Daniels, Gordon. “Japanese Domestic Radio and Cinema Propaganda, 1937-1945: An Overview” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 2 No. 2 (1982)

De Witt, Howard. “The Watsonville Anti-Filipino Riot of 1930: A Case Study of the Great Depression and Ethnic Conflict” *Southern California Quarterly* (1979)

De Vera, Arleen. “ ‘The Tapia-Saiki Incident’: Interethnic Conflict and Filipino Responses to the Anti-Filipino Exclusion Movement” *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West* Ed. Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger. Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1990.

Dower, John. *Japan in War and Peace.* New York: The New Press, 1993.

Duus, Masayo Umezawa. *The Japanese Conspiracy: the Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920* Trans. Beth Cary. Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1999.

Dye, Bob. "The Case of Sanji Abe" *Honolulu* (Nov 2002)

Engle Merry, Sally. *Colonizing Hawaii: The Cultural Power of Law.* New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2000.

Enstad, Nan. *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Century.* New York: Columbia UP, 1999.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Women and Men.* Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2000.

Eustace, Nicole. "When Fish Walk on Land: Social History in a Postmodern World" *Journal of Social History* vol. 37 no. 1 (Fall 2003)

Everest-Phillips, Max. "Reassessing Pre-War Japanese Espionage: the Rutland Naval Spy Case and the Japanese Intelligence Threat before Pearl Harbor" *Intelligence and National Security* Vol. 21, No. 2 (April 2006)

Ewen, Elizabeth. "City Lights: Immigrant Women and the Rise of the Movies" *Signs* (Spring 1980)

Feng, Peter X. *Identities in Motion: Asian American Film and Video.* Durham: Duke UP, 2002.

Feria, R.T. "War and the Status of Filipino Immigrants" *Sociology and Social Research* Vol. 31 No. 1 (1946)

Frank, Dana. *Purchasing Power: Consumer Organizing, Gender, and the Seattle Labor Movement, 1919-1929.* New York: Cambridge UP, 1994.

Fass, Paula. "Cultural History/Social History: Some Reflections on a Continuing Dialogue" *Journal of Social History* vol. 37 no. 1 (Fall 2003)

Friday, Chris. "Asian American Labor and Historical Interpretation" *Labor History* Vol. 35 Issue 4 (Fall 1994).

Friedman, Andrea. *Prurient Interests: Gender, Democracy, and Obscenity in New York City, 1909-1945.* New York: Columbia UP, 2000.

Fuller, Kathryn. *At the Moving Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture.* Washington: Smithsonian, 1996.

Fujita-Rony, Dorothy. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919-1941.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Gaines, Kevin. *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century.* Chapel Hill: Univ of North Carolina Press, 1996.

George, Milton C. *The Development of Hilo, Hawaii, TH: A Modern Tropical Sugar Port or a Slice Through Time at a Place Called Hilo.* Ann Arbor: The Edwards Letter Shop, 1948.

Gleaves, Milnor E. "Civil Rights: Extent of California Statute and Remedies Available for its Enforcement" *California Law Review* Vol. 30 No. 5 (July 1942)

Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.

-----. "The Dialectics of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1905-1940" *Feminist Studies* 6 No. 3 (Fall 1980)

Glickman, Lawrence. "Inventing the 'American Standard of Living': Gender, Race, and Working Class Identity, 1880-1925" *Labor History* Vol. 34 Issue 2-3 (1993)

Gomery, Douglas. *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States.* Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Greene, Julie. "The Labor of Empire: Recent Scholarship on U.S. History and Imperialism" *Labor: Studies of Working-Class History of the Americas* Vol. 1 No. 2 (2004)

Grieveson, Lee. "Policing the Cinema: Traffic in Souls at Ellis Island, 1913" *Screen* Vol. 38 (1997)

Hansen, Miriam. Miriam Hansen. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991.

-----. "Early Cinema: Whose Public Sphere?" in *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* Ed. by Thomas Elsaesser with Adam Barker. London: British Film Institute, 1990.

Harris, Cheryl. "Whiteness as Property" *Harvard Law Review* 106 (June 1993)

Hart, Donn V. "The Filipino-American Press in the United States: a Neglected Resource" *Journalism Quarterly* (Spring 1977)

Hayashi, Brian Masaru. *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004.

-----. *"For the Sake of Our Brethren": Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995.

Hemminger, Carol. "Little Manila: the Filipino Stockton Prior to World War II" *The Pacific Historian* (1980)

Higgs, Robert. "Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture to 1941" *Journal of Economic History* (March 1978)

High, Peter B. *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Year's War, 1931-1945.* Madison: Univ of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

-----. "The Dawn of Cinema in Japan" *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 19 No. 1 (Jan 1984)

Hong, Grace Kyungwon. *The Ruptures of American Capital: Women of Color Feminism and the Culture of Immigrant Labor.* Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota, 2006.

-----. " 'Something Forgotten Which Should Have Been Remembered': Private Property and Cross-Racial Solidarity in the Work of Hisaye Yamamoto" *American Literature* Vol. 71 No. 2 (June 1999)

Ichioka, Yuji. *The Issei: the World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924.* London: The Free Press, 1988.

-----. "A Study of Dualism: James Yoshinori Sakamoto and the *Japanese American Courier*, 1928-1942" *Amerasia Journal* 13 (1986-1987)

-----. "Japanese Associations and the Japanese Government: A Special Relationship, 1909-1926" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 46 No. 1 (August 1977)

-----. "Japanese Immigrant Nationalism: The Issei and the Sino-Japanese War, 1937-41" *California History* (1990)

Imin, Konyaku. "The Benshi: On Making People Weep." *A Hundred Years of Japanese Life in Hawaii.* Honolulu: International Saving and Loan Association Ltd. All, 1985.

Irons, Peter. *Justice Delayed: The Record of the Japanese American Internment Cases.* Middleton: Wesleyan Univ, 1989.

Ito, Kazuo. *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America* Trans. Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard. Seattle: Japanese Community Services, 1973.

Jowett, Garth. "Apartheid and Socialization: Movie-Going in Cape Town, 1943-1958" *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* Vol. 26 No. 1 (March 2006)

Jung, Moon Kie. *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Interracial Labor Movement.* New York: Columbia UP, 2006.

Kashima, Tetsuden. "Japanese American Internees Return, 1945 to 1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia" *Phylon* Vol. 41, No. 2 (1980)

Kelley, Robin. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class.* New York: Free Press, 1994.

Kimmonth, Earl. *The Self Made Man in Meiji Japanese Thought: From Samurai to Salary Man.* Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1981.

Kiyomizu, Ellen. "Kokusai: 60 Years of Asian Films" *International Examiner* 15 Nov 1980

Kumamoto, Bob. "The Search for Spies: American Counterintelligence and the Japanese American Community, 1931-1942." *Amerasia Journal* (1979)

Kurashige, Lon. *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990.* Berkeley: UC Press, 2002.

Lasker, Bruno. *Filipino Immigration to the Continental United States and Hawaii.* Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1931.

Lee, Brant T. "A Racial Trust: the Japanese YMCA and the Alien Land Law" *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* (Spring 2001)

Lee, Robert. *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture.* Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999.

Leonard, Kevin Allen." 'Is That What We Fought For?' Japanese Americans and Racism in California, the Impact of World War II" *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 21 No. 4 (Nov 1990)

Leonard, Kevin Allen. *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II.* Albuquerque: Univ of New Mexico Press, 2006.

Lim, Shirley Jennifer. *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960.* New York: NYU Press, 2006.

Limerick, Patricia Nelson. "Common Cause? Asian American History and Western American History" *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* Ed. Gary Okihiro, Marilyn Alquizola, Dorothy Fujita Rony, and K. Scott Wong. Pullman: Washington State Univ Press, 1995.

-----. "Disorientation and Reorientation: The American Landscape Discovered from the West" *Journal of American History* 79 (December 1992)

Lindsey, Shelley Stamp. "Is Any Girl Safe? Female Spectators at the White Slave Films" *Screen* Vol. 37 (1996)

Liu, John M. "Race, Ethnicity, and the Sugar Plantation System: Asian Labor in Hawaii, 1850-1900" in *Labor Immigration Under Capitalism: Asian Workers in the United States Before World War II* Ed. Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich. Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1984.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics.* Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Maram, Linda Espana. *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles' Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s.* New York: Columbia UP, 2006.

Marchetti, Gina. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction.* Berkeley: UC Press, 1994.

Matsumoto, Valerie. *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1993.

------. "Desperately Seeking 'Deirdre': Gender Roles, Multicultural Relations, and Nisei Women Writers of the 1930s" *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* Vol. 12 (1991)

------. "Japanese American Women and the Creation of Urban Nisei Culture in the 1930s" *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Mason, William H. and John A. McKinstry. *The Japanese of Los Angeles.* Los Angeles: California Bicentennial Publication, 1969.

McWilliams, Carey. "Dual Citizenship" *Far Eastern Survey* Vol. 11, No. 23 (16 Nov 1942) p 231-233

Mears, Eliot Grinnell. *Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast: Their Legal and Economic Status.* Chicago: Univ of Chicago Press, 1928.

Melendy, H. Brett. “Filipinos in the United States” *Pacific Historical Review* 43:520-46 (1974)

Miyamoto, Frank. *Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle*. Publications in the Social Sciences II, no. 2. Seattle: Univ of Washington, 1984.

Monroy, Douglas. “ ‘Our Children Get So Different Here’: Film, Fashion, Popular Culture, and the Process of Cultural Syncretization in Mexican Los Angeles, 1900-1933” *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* Vol. 19 No. 1 (Spring 1988)

Mumford, Kevin. *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century.* New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

Musser, Charles. *The Emergence of the American Cinema: The American Screen to 1907.* Berkeley: Univ of California Press, 1990.

-----. *High Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition 1880-1920.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1991.

Nomura, Gail. “Asian American Frontiers” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women’s Studies* Vol. 17 No. 3 (1996)

-----. “Significant Lives: Asia and Asian Americans in the History of the U.S. West” *The Western History Quarterly* Vol. 25 No. 1 (Spring 1994)

Odem, Mary. *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885-1920.* Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1995.

Ogihara, Junko. “The Exhibition of Films for Japanese Americans in Los Angeles During the Silent Film Era” *Film History* 4:2 (1990)

Okihiro, Gary. *Cane Fires: The Anti-Japanese Movement in Hawaii, 1865-1945.* Philadelphia: Temple Univ Press, 1991.

Ong Hing, Bill. “Rebellious Lawyering, Settlement, and Reconciliation: Soko v. YMCA” *Nevada Law Journal* (Fall 2004)

Park, Robert. “Our Racial Frontier on the Pacific” *Race and Culture.* New York: Free Press, 1950.

Peck, Gunther. “Mobilizing Community: Migrant Workers and the Politics of Labor Mobility in the North American West, 1900-1920” *Labor Histories: Class,*

Politics, and the Working Class Experience Ed. Eric Arnesen, Julie Greene, and Bruce Laurie. Urbana: Univ of Illinois, 1998.

Peiss, Kathy. *Cheap Amusements: Working Women and Leisure in Turn-of-the-Century New York.* Philadelphia: Temple Univ Press, 1986.

Perez, Frank Ramos and Leatrice Bantillo Perez. "Filipinos in San Joaquin County" *San Joaquin Historian* (Winter 1994)

Poli, Adon and Warren M. Engstrand. "Japanese Agriculture on the Pacific Coast" *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics* (Nov 1945)

Puette, William J. *The Hilo Massacre: Hawaii's Bloody Monday August 1st, 1938.* Honolulu: Univ of Hawaii Press, 1988.

Rauchway, Eric. *Family and American Reform Politics 1900-1920.* New York: Columbia UP, 2001.

Re/Collecting Early Asian America: Essays in Cultural History Ed. Josephine Lee, Imogene L. Lim, and Yuko Matsukawa. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2002.

Reddy, Chandan. "Home, Houses, Non-Identity: Paris is Burning" in *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity* Ed. Rosemary George. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998.

Reinecke, John E. *The Filipino Piecemeal Sugar Strike of 1924-1925.* Honolulu: Social Science Research Institute, 1996.

Reinwald, Brigitte. " 'Tonight at the Empire? Cinema and Urbanity in Zanzibar, 1920s to 1960s" *Afrique & Histoire* Vol. 5 (2006)

Ruiz, Vicki. "The Flapper and the Chaperone: Historical Memory among Mexican-American Women" *Seeking Common Ground: Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States* Ed. Donna Gabaccia. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992.

-----. " 'Star Struck': Acculturation, Adolescence, and the Mexican American Woman, 1920-1950" *Building With Our Hands: New Directions in Chicana Studies* Ed. Adela de la Torre and Beatriz Pasquera. Berkeley: UC Press, 1993.

Russ, William. "Hawaiian Labor and Immigration Problems before Annexation" *Journal of Modern History* Vol. 15 No. 3 (Sept 1943)

Sanchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.

Sawada, Mitziko.“Culprits and Gentlemen: Meiji Japan’s Restrictions of Emigrants to the United States, 1891-1909” *The Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 60, No. 3 (Aug 1991)

Schmitt, Robert C. *What People Paid to Travel: Hawaii Transportation Costs.* Honolulu: Hawaii Historical Society, 1991.

Shwartz, Mark. “Moving Pictures on the Move” *Journal of American Culture* Vol. 9 No. 3 (1987)

Shah, Nayan. *Contagious Divide: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown.* Berkeley: Univ of California, 2001.

Sharma, Miriam. “Pinoy in Paradise: Environment and Adaptation of Pilipinos in Hawaii, 1906-1946” *Amerasia* 7:2 (1980)

Shimamoto, Chiyo. “The Japanese in San Joaquin County Past and Present” *San Joaquin Historian* (Winter 1982)

Sigall, Bob. *The Companies We Keep: Amazing Stories of Hawaii’s Best Known Companies.* Honolulu: Third Printing, 2006.

Simpson, Caroline Chung. “ ‘Out of an obscure place’: Japanese War Brides and Cultural Pluralism in the 1950s” *differences* 10.3 (1998)

Smith, Elmer. “Resettlement of Japanese Americans” *Far Eastern Survey* Vol. 18 No. 10 (May 18, 1949)

Smith, William C. “Changing Personality Traits of Second Generation Orientals in America” *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 33, No. 6 (May 1928)

Sodetani, Naomi. “Benshi and Me” in *A’Ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro. Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003.

Standish, Isolde. “Mediators of Modernity: ‘Photo-interpreters’ in Japanese Silent Cinema” *Oral Tradition* 20/1 (2005)

Stewart, Jacqueline. *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity.* Berkeley: UC Press, 2005.

Stones, Barbara. *America Goes to the Movies: 100 Years of Motion Picture Exhibition.* Hollywood: National Assn of Theatre Owners, 1993.

Strong, Edward K. *Japanese in California.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1933.

Sueyoshi, Amy. " 'Mindful Masquerades': Que(e)rying Japanese Immigrant Dress in Turn-of-the-Century San Francisco" *Frontiers* Vol. 25 No. 3 (2004)

Suzuki, Brian. "Aala: Center of Japanese Entertainment" in *A'ala: the Story of a Japanese Community in Hawaii* Ed. Michael M. Okihiro. Honolulu: Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, 2003.

Suzuki, Masao. "Success Story? Japanese Immigrant Economic Achievement and Return Migration, 1920-1930" *The Journal of Economic History* Vol. 55., No 4 (Dec 1995)

-----."Selective Immigration and Ethnic Economic Achievement: Japanese Americans before World War II" *Explorations in Economic History* 39 (2002)

Taylor, Sandra C. "The Federal Reserve Bank and the Relocation of the Japanese in 1942" *The Public Historian* Vol. 5 No. 1 (Winter 1983)

Taylor, Quintard. *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era.* Seattle: Univ of Washington Press, 1994.

-----. "Blacks and Asians in a White City: Japanese Americans and African Americans in Seattle, 1890-1940" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Nov., 1991)

Turner, Max W. and Frank B. Kennedy. "Exclusion, Ejection, and Segregation of Theater Patrons" *Iowa Law Review* Vol. 32 No. 4 (May 1947)

Voices (Stockton: Filipino Oral History Project, Inc., 1984)

Volpp, Leti. "American Mestizo: Filipinos and Antimiscegenation Laws in California" *UC Davis Law Review* (2000)

Warshow, Robert. *The Immediate Experience: Movies, Comics, Theatre & Other Aspects of Popular Culture.* New York: Atheneum, 1975.

Whitehead, John. "Hawaii: the First and Last Far West?" *The Western Historical Quarterly* Vol. 23 No. 2 (May 1992)

Wong. K. Scott. *Americans First: Chinese Americans and the Second World War.* Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005.

Yoo, David K. "Read All about It: Race, Generation, and the Japanese American Ethnic Press, 1925-41" *Amerasia Journal* 19 (1993)

Yu, Elena S.H. "Filipino Migration and Community Organizations in the U.S." *California Sociologists* (1980)

Yu, Henry. *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America.* New York: Oxford UP, 2001.