

# Setting the *Scene* in Japanese America: Post–World War II Visions of Transnational Politics and Culture

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March 29, 2021

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(1934 - 2021)



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# Acknowledgments

First, I want to thank my wonderful thesis seminar group and our fearless leader, Dr. Jude Webre. It was a challenging year to complete a thesis and my topic underwent several iterations over the year—thank you all for bearing with me! I have been so grateful for the support, patience, and structure of our class.

I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Kim Brandt, for her insightful comments, which helped me make a jumble of ideas into a cohesive thesis. Thanks also to Professors Greg Robinson and Eric Muller for sharing their expertise with a student to whom they had no institutional ties. Thanks to Professors Mark Carnes, Casey Blake, Julian Gewirtz, Carol Gluck, and Rashid Khalidi for assigning thought-provoking reading and leading excellent discussions that shaped my broader understanding of Cold War culture.

I would like also to thank the family and friends who were with me through this project and through this tumultuous year. Mom, Dad, Kelly, Riley, Grandma, Isabel, Monika, and Sara, thank you for being amazing sounding boards, advisors, and cheerleaders—I will repay you in cookies as soon as possible! Bobby, thank you for always answering my questions and for sharing stories about your interesting life!

Lastly, I would like to recognize the woman who first got me interested in this topic—my grandmother, Kiyō. Thank you for being such a special person—I am so grateful for the time we had together and for your immense influence on my life. I will miss your love for modern art, your sweet tooth, your impeccable style, and the warmth and grace you exuded always. I hope this thesis would have made you proud.

## Introduction

In the fall of 1953, the war that had shaken the world in the decade before was receding in memory. Sugar rationing in the United Kingdom was coming to an end. Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of West Germany, had been to the United States for the first time in April. Japan's first commercial television station, Nippon TV, began broadcasting in August. Even as the nations of the world began to mend from the ravages of World War II, though, a cold war was underway. July's armistice in the Korean War, a war that had tested the limits of the United States' new role as a hegemon, felt hollow, with nearly no territory gained or lost by either side. The Soviet Union announced that it had successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, and the new American president Dwight Eisenhower formally approved the top-secret document NSC 162, resolving to expand the United States' nuclear arsenal to counter the threat of communism.

In the United States, the memory of World War II and the start of the Cold War marred what some claimed was the most prosperous and peaceable moment in recent history. A large stable of pictorial magazines led by *Life*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *Readers' Digest* reflected and shaped a seemingly homogenous mainstream culture, where up to 70 percent of all households with televisions tuned in to watch Lucy Ricardo's antics on *I Love Lucy* each week.<sup>1</sup> Even so, the domestic situation was not quite as rosy as it may have seemed that fall of 1953. Earl Warren, the former attorney general of California, was appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court during the second round of contentious oral arguments in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Edward R. Murrow

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows: 1946 - Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2007), 1679-1698.

and Joseph McCarthy were locked in a media battle over the presence of Communism in the United States.

It was in this climate of consensus and upheaval, of reconstruction and destruction, that *Scene* published its September 1953 issue, including an editorial titled “‘Mokusatsu’ and drifting thoughts.” The editorial’s subject was the assimilation of the magazine’s key demographic, second-generation Americans of Japanese ancestry, known collectively as “the Nisei.”

“No more than 15 to 20 per cent of Japanese-Americans can read, write, or decently speak the language of their parents,” it reported. Why was this? “Americanization and ‘assimilation’ to a great many Japanese-Americans have been synonymous with a total rejection of the ways, the language and all the other things of both major and minor importance that convey the beauty and glory of Japanese culture.”<sup>2</sup> The war slowly receding in national memory was far from over for many Nisei. For this group, World War II had meant forced abandonment of their homes and businesses and imprisonment in internment camps thousands of miles away. The military necessity of this internment, defended in part by the new Chief Justice Warren in his previous role as California attorney general, was based not on documented actions but solely on their Japanese heritage. Could they be blamed for distancing themselves from this heritage?

But even if the scars from the war were not *healed*, according to this editorial, they were *healing*, thanks in part to the metamorphosing alignment of the world’s great powers. “The need for ‘proving’ themselves as Americans and succumbing to what psychologists call ‘over-compensating’ has receded with the favorable change in

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<sup>2</sup> “‘Mokusatsu’ and drifting thoughts,” *Scene*, September 1953, 12.

political relationship between the United States and Japan," the editorial claimed.<sup>3</sup> Just the year before, the United States had ended its occupation of Japan, an occupation that had started as a means of reforming Japanese political ideals to make them more like those of the United States and ended with Japan as the United States' chief ally against communism in Asia. It had also brought thousands of Americans to Japan and ignited a concerted effort to change the perception of the Japanese, who had, just a few years before, been portrayed in the American media as cold-blooded murderers and conniving rats.<sup>4</sup>

"Americans of taste, perception, and Caucasian ancestry have been drooling over the past few years with newly discovered or rediscovered admiration for the sublime and universally desirable aspects of things indigenously Japanese. They are things that war, militarism, and politics have failed to extinguish," the *Scene* editorial claimed.<sup>5</sup> Even if the politics of Japan had needed and continued to need serious reform, it suggested, there were other aspects of Japanese culture worthy of appreciation, and that worthiness reflected well on the Japanese Americans rebuilding their lives and livelihoods in the United States. Thus, where the magazine had previously received complaints about its focus on Japanese culture from Japanese Americans who did not want to be associated with negative connotations of Japan from the wartime period, the Nisei response to *Scene's* coverage of Japan was now "increasingly favorable."

For the editors, reporters, and readers of *Scene*, the closing of one chapter of the United States' foreign relations, one that had been particularly bad for Japanese

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<sup>3</sup> "'Mokusatsu' and drifting thoughts," *Scene*, September 1953, 12.

<sup>4</sup> For more about this transformation, see Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) and Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> "'Mokusatsu' and drifting thoughts," *Scene*, September 1953, 12.

Americans, and the opening of another one, where Japan was of political importance and cultural interest, was an opportunity. Nisei were now presumed to have something valuable, something they would no longer need to minimize—a connection to both Japan and the United States. For *Scene's* non-Japanese audience, the magazine was a valuable source of information on Japan. For its Nisei audience, it was a live demonstration of the unique, if still limited, leverage that Japanese Americans had due to the particular political and cultural circumstances of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

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*Scene* started in Chicago, Illinois in 1949, four years into the seven-year occupation of Japan. The magazine moved to Los Angeles in 1954, and ultimately merged with another publication in 1955, but during its years of operation, *Scene* bore witness to the course of the Korean war, the McCarthy hearings, and the passage of important new civil rights legislation. *Scene* claimed to be the most widely distributed Japanese American publication in the United States during its run, with circulation estimated between 18,500 and 35,000 copies.<sup>6</sup> Despite its importance for the Nisei, *Scene* was also unusual for its reach beyond the Japanese American community. *Scene* estimated that about 1/16 of its subscribers were not Japanese Americans, and it was carried in a number of libraries in areas with few Japanese Americans such as Kearney, Nebraska, Parsons, Kansas, and Americus, Georgia.<sup>7</sup> The magazine also had an international audience, with subscribers in the United Kingdom, Canada, South America, and Japan.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "Help us win more friends for the Isseis, Niseis, Kibeis Sanseis," August 1950, *Scene*, 41.; Larry Tajiri, "Importance of 'Scene' Magazine," *Pacific Citizen*, September 23, 1955, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Corky Kawasaki, "From the Staff," *Scene*, July 1950, 8; "Scene discovers America... and vice versa," *Scene*, October 1950, 38.

<sup>8</sup> Corky Kawasaki, "From the Staff," *Scene*, July 1950, 8.



Figure 1.1. A SCAP staff member reading *Scene* in Japan. “S/Sgt. Blanche Howard and *Scene*,” *Scene*, December 1951, 4. Courtesy of the *Scene* and Nisei Vue Collection, Densho and the Japanese American National Museum.<sup>9</sup>

*Scene* was the brainchild of a group of publishing executives in touch with the cultural zeitgeist—in fact, their firm, Chicago Publishing Corporation, began publishing *Playboy* that fall of 1953—and journalists who had been covering the political situation of the Japanese American community since the 1930s. Back when these reporters and editors had first started, the notion of Japanese Americans as a bridge between Japan and the United States had been a credible one. But as the dean of Japanese American history, Yuji Ichioka, has described, when the relations of Japan and the United States had soured in the 1930s, they had turned to other means of securing

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<sup>9</sup> “*Scene* and *Nisei Vue* Collection” will be hereafter abbreviated as “SNVC.” “Densho and the Japanese American National Museum” will hereafter be abbreviated as “Densho and JANM.”

respect for their community.<sup>10</sup> With the restoration of good relations after World War II, the “bridge” notion had been brought back out for potential resurrection. But this time, perhaps a better analogy would be not with a bridge, but with a ferryman. In the postwar climate, *Scene* suggested that Japanese Americans could influence the flow and texture of the information traveling back and forth between the U.S. and Japan.<sup>11</sup>

*Scene* passed information in two symbiotic directions. Firstly, the magazine presented a curated representation of Japan to the United States. *Scene*’s Japan was culturally and aesthetically rich, with minimalist houses, beautiful ceramics, and artful flower arrangements. Because of this cultural value, Japan was worthy of the attention of mainstream American culture, an interest that could be met by the otherwise sidelined Nisei. In addition to raising the social status of the Nisei, the creation of desire and respect for Japan also had economic benefits for *Scene* and its advertisers, who put the culture of Japan within reach through imported goods and tourism.

However, *Scene*’s Japan was also technologically and politically “backward.” In the foreword to his classic *Orientalism*, Edward Said wrote, “Every single empire in its official discourse has said that it is not like all the others, that its circumstances are special, that it has a mission to enlighten, civilize, bring order and democracy.”<sup>12</sup> In the mainstream media, Japan’s occupation by the United States was couched in benevolent terms—the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers was in Japan to help strengthen democracy and equality in a nation recovering from its perpetuation of militarism and

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<sup>10</sup> Yuji Ichioka, *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma, Asian America (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> This process of selective definition is similar to Eiichiro Azuma’s concept of “racial eclecticism,” which he distinguishes from cultural fusion because what is defined as Japanese is “very specific, highly contrived, and fundamentally a political construct.” Eiichiro Azuma, “Race, Citizenship, and the ‘Science of Chick Sexing’: The Politics of Racial Identity among Japanese Americans,” *Pacific Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (May 1, 2009): 242–75, 246.

<sup>12</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), xxi.

racial supremacy. As Americans who upheld the country's ideals who were also believed to have some inherent understanding of Japan, *Scene's* idealized Japanese Americans could be an example for their brethren in Japan and ferry political information from the United States to Japan. The importance placed on Japan's ability to absorb American values only grew as the warring ideologies of the United States and the Soviet Union became pivotal in the early 1950s. Thus, the *Scene* ferryman paradigm benefitted from the representation of Japan as an underdeveloped nation *that could change*. As a strategic matter, these two flows of information—cultural information from Japan to the United States, political information from the United States to Japan—were not made equally visible, a dynamic I will discuss more in the chapters to come.

*Scene's* ferryman strategy is notable because it incorporated strands of several pre-war political styles, as outlined by Jere Takahashi in his classic *Nisei/Sansei*.<sup>13</sup> The magazine weighed in on the questions swirling in the Japanese American community at the time—should Nisei preserve the Japanese language? Should they live in ethnic enclaves like Little Tokyo in Los Angeles? The varying pre-war political styles that were later married in *Scene* are the subject of Part 1 of this thesis. In Part 2, I will expand further on *Scene's* representation of Japan, and the Nisei's role in that representation, through close reading of the magazine's coverage of Japan. Lastly, in Part 3, I will detail *Scene's* efforts to pass political ideas from the United States to Japan, and how that communication could be used to secure immigration rights and protection from discrimination for Japanese Americans.

The scholar Melani McAlister concluded her book *Epic Encounters* by writing, "if culture is central to the worlds we regard as political and social, it is not only because

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<sup>13</sup> Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

culture is part of history but also because the field of culture is history-in-the-making.”<sup>14</sup> This is very much evident in Japanese American historiography—much of the strategic portrayal of the patriotism of the Nisei that was spread in magazines and memoirs also inflects the early historiography of this postwar period, focusing on the loyalty and lack of bitterness in the Japanese American community. As the internment recedes further into the historical distance, assessing the “purity” of Japanese American patriotism towards the United States seems like a more and more outdated concern. I do not intend to make moral or political judgments on the methods of *Scene*’s proprietors or assert that their outlook was shared by all, only to present one case study of an immigrant group using its transnational connections to negotiate domestic politics and identity formation.

The transnational elements of *Scene*’s paradigm are especially interesting for study today, given significant migratory movements of populations around the world and the symbiotic relationship between domestic and international political concerns. In her 1994 essay, “Left Alone in America,” Amy Kaplan noted two important absences in historiography—“the absence of culture from the history of U.S. imperialism” and “the absence of empire from the study of American culture.”<sup>15</sup> In the intervening years, the study of U.S. cultural imperialism has blossomed, “blurring... the traditional distinctions that have separated analyses of racial and gender formation from the study of U.S. foreign policy.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, this thesis is indebted to the work on transnational Japanese American history done by Eiichiro Azuma and Edward Tang, and more

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<sup>14</sup> Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 276.

<sup>15</sup> Amy Kaplan, “‘Left Alone With America’: The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture,” in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (London: Duke University Press, 1993), 11.

<sup>16</sup> McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 273.

broadly to the study of Cold War cultural diplomacy undertaken by Mary Dudziak, Christina Klein, and Naoko Shibusawa.<sup>17</sup>

The examination of *Scene* is particularly fruitful for this study because of its unique form. Prior treatments of Japanese American roles in US-Japan postwar cultural relations have focused either on literary works or on daily periodicals. However, magazines and journals were especially fertile ground for Cold War cultural diplomacy. Publications like *Time*, *Life*, and *Reader's Digest* were nearly ubiquitous in mainstream culture and were crucial to forming postwar consensus. President Eisenhower even said that “magazines are a leading force for moral and cultural growth in our country and one of the surest guarantees of an informed public.”<sup>18</sup> The influence of the periodical form was powerful enough that the CIA’s Congress for Cultural Freedom worked with dozens of magazines around the world to marshal cultural support during the Cold War.<sup>19</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that *Scene* was among these, but the magazine did use a wealth of forms—editorials, long features, short stories, and photographs—to present its own opinions about the United States’ role in the postwar world order. Additionally, *Scene* is representative of the postwar growth of ethnic pictorial magazines, perhaps best known in the forms of *Ebony* and *Jet*.<sup>20</sup> Such magazines, though considered by some to be too fluffy to be rich political sources, in fact reveal immense amounts about what was accepted and rejected in popular conceptions of the political

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<sup>17</sup> Azuma, “Race, Citizenship, and the ‘Science of Chick Sexing’”; Eiichiro Azuma, “Brokering Race, Culture, and Citizenship: Japanese Americans in Occupied Japan and Postwar National Inclusion,” *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16 (September 1, 2009): 183–211; Edward Tang, *From Confinement to Containment: Japanese/American Arts during the Early Cold War*, *Asian American History and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Joanne P. Sharp, *Condensing the Cold War: Reader's Digest and American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 14.

<sup>19</sup> See Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> *Ebony* and *Jet* were started in 1945 and 1951, respectively.

during the period.

Despite *Scene's* richness, it has largely been underrepresented in scholarship on the transnational postwar period. Aside from a mention of *Scene* in Lon Kurashige's *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict* and a chapter in Shirley Lim's *Feeling of Belonging*, *Scene* has appeared very little in historiography, in part because the magazine's issues have historically been scattered.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to the efforts of the nonprofit Densho and the Japanese American National Museum, 67 of the 73 issues were digitized and made available to the public in 2014. Even so, seven years later, the magazine remains relatively unknown. The examples to which we now turn are only the beginning of the wealth of *Scene's* commentary on the postwar hopes and tensions of the Japanese American community.

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<sup>21</sup> Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 125; Shirley Jennifer Lim, *A Feeling of Belonging: Asian American Women's Public Culture, 1930-1960*, (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 87-120.

## Part I: Pre-War Political Styles

While growing up in Los Angeles in the 1920s and 30s, young Togo Tanaka was often told by his father, “If you believe in history, you know there is no place for you in a country that is dominated by the white race.”<sup>22</sup> The elder Tanaka’s views were not uncommon among the first generation of Japanese Americans, known as the Issei, who were witnesses to an America that passed the Alien Land Laws to prevent Japanese immigrants from establishing their own farms, an America that completely shut its doors to them after the Immigration Act of 1924. While some Issei did hope to assimilate in the US, there were also many Issei like Tanaka’s father, who told his son that if he died in the United States, he wanted his ashes sent back to Japan because he would never feel like a member of American society.<sup>23</sup> For this group, assimilation was pointless and even undesirable.

The Nisei, born and raised in the United States, had different political concerns from their parents. The political styles of the Nisei in the prewar period, as outlined most cogently by Jere Takahashi in his book *Nisei/Sansei*, each posited a different answer to the question, “How do the Nisei fit in America?”<sup>24</sup> Using the figures of Togo Tanaka and Dyke Miyagawa, this chapter will outline the tensions and alliances between the people behind those different answers, tensions and alliances that would indelibly shape the political style of *Scene* after the war.

Despite his father’s views, Tanaka was determined to carve out a place for himself in

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<sup>22</sup> Togo Tanaka, interview by James Gatewood, *REgenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era: Los Angeles Region, Volume II.*, December 13, 1997, [http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft358003z1&chunk.id=d0e20788&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire\\_text](http://content.cdlib.org/view?docId=ft358003z1&chunk.id=d0e20788&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text), 430.

<sup>23</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 431.

<sup>24</sup> Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei*; one of the styles Takahashi describes, that of Japanese Americans educated in Japan, is a small proportion of the population and will thus not be addressed here.

the United States. He became involved in journalism while attending Hollywood High School, eventually becoming the paper's editor and being admitted into the city-wide high school honor society. Tanaka then attended UCLA, where he could enroll for just six dollars each semester while also working to support his parents and five siblings. Though he eventually graduated Phi Beta Kappa, Tanaka knew that his best—and possibly only—opportunity to work in journalism would be in the Japanese American vernacular press.<sup>25</sup> Among these newspapers, the most prominent were the *Nichibei Shimbun* in San Francisco and the *Rafu Shimpō* in Los Angeles, where Tanaka started working while still in college.<sup>26</sup>

The Japanese American community was tightly knit, and the journalists in it were no exception. Through his position as editor at the Hollywood High newspaper, Tanaka met Larry Tajiri, an editor at the newspaper of Los Angeles Polytechnic High School who would later go on to edit the Japanese American weekly *Pacific Citizen*.<sup>27</sup> When he began working at the small English language section of the *Rafu Shimpō*, he met many of the colleagues he would work with throughout his life. The section was run by Louise Suski, “the queen bee of the *Rafu*,” who Tanaka eventually joined as co-editor.<sup>28</sup> The staff also included Harry Honda and Tooru Kanazawa, future contributors to *Scene*.<sup>29</sup> It was also during this time that Tanaka came in contact with Dyke Miyagawa, a young organizer for the Congress of Industrial Organizations, or CIO. Although the two had

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<sup>25</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 427.

<sup>26</sup> Eiichiro Azuma. "Nichibei Shimbun (newspaper)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nichibei%20Shimbun%20\(newspaper\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nichibei%20Shimbun%20(newspaper)) (accessed Mar 18 2021); Eiichiro Azuma. "Rafu Shimpō (newspaper)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Rafu%20Shimpō%20\(newspaper\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Rafu%20Shimpō%20(newspaper)) (accessed Mar 18 2021).

<sup>27</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 441.

<sup>28</sup> Patricia Wakida, “Through the Fire,” *Discover Nikkei*, April 23, 2013, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2013/4/23/louise-suski/>

<sup>29</sup> Elaine Woo, “Tooru Kanazawa, 95; Served in Famed WWII Unit,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-oct-13-me-tooru13-story.html>.

differing political views, Miyagawa would later become Tanaka's close colleague at *Scene*.<sup>30</sup>



Figure 2.1. Louise Suski and Togo Tanaka, center and right, at the offices of the *Rafu Shimpo*. WRA no. B-52, War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement. Courtesy of the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Tanaka's answer to the question, "Where do the Nisei fit in America?" initially conformed with the influential notion of the 1920s and early 1930s that Nisei in the United States were a bridge between East and West. Community leaders like Abiko Kyutaro, the publisher of the *Nichibei Shimbun*, believed that the Nisei, with their American upbringing but familial and racial connections to Japan, could help dispel the exclusive and discriminatory practices against people of Japanese ancestry through

<sup>30</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 445.

education and communication.<sup>31</sup> To develop the understanding of Japan that would be necessary to provide this connection, Japanese Americans set up educational institutions in the United States to supplement American public school education. These schools taught Japanese language, history, and cultural mores to Nisei. Additionally, publications like the *Nichibei Shimbun* sponsored “study tours” to Japan for Nisei, during which participants would meet government officials and visit important cultural sites.<sup>32</sup> The English language section at the *Rafu Shimpo*, of which Tanaka was a part, was started two years after the passage of the Immigration Act of 1925 for the express purpose of educating the growing percentage of Japanese who were English-speaking Nisei about Japan.<sup>33</sup>

The stakes of this “bridge” role were heightened by the notion that a “Pacific Era” was dawning, in which the relations between countries on the Pacific Ocean would overshadow the Atlantic order. In 1931, Japan occupied Manchuria, an action declared aggressive by Western countries and decried by the American press, producing tension between Japan and the United States. For the first time, the Japanese government itself bought into the notion of the Nisei as agents to help dispel negative publicity over the Manchurian Incident. Japan’s consulates in the United States began endorsing the Nisei tours to Japan and making financial contributions to English-language Japanese American publications that would reprint Japanese Foreign Ministry press releases.<sup>34</sup>

But as hostilities between Japan and the United States escalated, the “bridge” position became increasingly untenable.<sup>35</sup> As the Sino-Japanese War drew additional

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<sup>31</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 26.

<sup>33</sup> Patricia Wakida, “Through the Fire,” *Discover Nikkei*, April 23, 2013, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2013/4/23/louise-suski/>

<sup>34</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 30.

<sup>35</sup> In a 1939 Gallup Poll, 74 percent of Americans answered that their sympathies were with China in the conflict between China and Japan. *Japan and the Postwar World* (Denver: National Opinion Research

negative coverage from the mainstream press in the United States, some English language sections of the Japanese immigrant press defended Japanese actions in the war. For example, the *Nichibei Shimbun*, with Larry Tajiri at the helm, ran contests in the late 1930s calling for essays justifying Japan's presence in China.<sup>36</sup> James Sakamoto of the *Japanese American Courier* also published articles defending Japan against the accusations of the mainstream press. Although this defense may seem to suggest an allegiance to Japan, Yuji Ichioka argues that many of these writers saw their actions as acts of American patriotism. "In enlightening their fellow Americans about the Japanese side of Eastern affairs," he writes, "they would be fulfilling their civic responsibility as loyal, patriotic Americans."<sup>37</sup> However, many other Americans did not see the situation in these terms, believing that Japanese Americans were loyal to Japan, citizens or not.<sup>38</sup> Nisei were increasingly compelled to take the side of either Japan or the United States. Some did choose to "side" with Japan—one prominent school for Nisei in Japan, called Heishikan, eventually became known as a training ground for Japanese propagandists and intelligence officers.<sup>39</sup> However, a broader swath of Nisei were left to express their allegiance to the U.S. through two other political styles, which Takahashi calls Americanism and progressivism.

The first style, championed by the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), took the view that Nisei could and should become assimilated into the mainstream culture of the United States. The JACL Creed read: "I am proud that I am an American

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Center, 1946), 3.

<sup>36</sup> See "Cash Awards Promised in Joint Nichi-Bei, New World-Sun Event," *Nichibei Shimbun*, December 10, 1937, 1, <https://hojishinbun.hoover.org/?a=d&d=jan19371210-01&e=-----en-10-1--img----->.

<sup>37</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 30.

<sup>38</sup> Seto, Brandon. "Paternalism and Peril: Shifting U.S. Racial Perceptions of the Japanese and Chinese Peoples from World War II to the Early Cold War." *Asia Pacific Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2015). <https://www.usfca.edu/center-asia-pacific/perspectives/v13/seto>.

<sup>39</sup> Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 43.

citizen of Japanese ancestry, for my very background makes me appreciate more fully the wonderful advantages of this Nation. I believe in her institutions, ideals, and traditions; I glory in her heritage; I boast of her history; I trust in her future." Despite the discrimination that Japanese Americans faced, this model Japanese American would "never become bitter or lose faith," pledging to "honor to [America] at all times and in all places... cheerfully and without any reservations whatsoever."<sup>40</sup> In practice, this meant encouraging Nisei to vote and advocating for citizenship for veterans, but also holding conservative social positions to prevent claims that Nisei were "subversive."<sup>41</sup>

After the decline of the bridge role, Tanaka largely seemed to adhere to this style, even becoming the director of publicity for the JACL and recording an official history of the organization.<sup>42</sup> While the *Rafu Shimpo* had initially defended Japan's actions in Manchuria, as tensions between Japan and the US grew, Tanaka and Suski steered the English language section towards a narrative that favored assimilation and patriotism. It was not alone—by the time of Pearl Harbor, Sakamoto's *Japanese American Courier* had completely renounced its policy of deference to Japan, and in its last edition in 1942, Sakamoto told readers that their collective internment should be considered "a patriotic contribution" to the defeat of Japan.<sup>43</sup>

The second style, progressivism, also lauded the patriotic ideals of the United States, but where Masaoka and the JACL advocated for unquestioning loyalty, the progressives, including Dyke Miyagawa, argued that identifying with American values

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<sup>40</sup> Brian Niiya. "Japanese American Creed," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese-American-Creed> (accessed Mar 18 2021).

<sup>41</sup> Cherstin Lyon. "Japanese American Citizens League," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Japanese-American-Citizens-League> (accessed Mar 18 2021).

<sup>42</sup> Brian Niiya. "Togo Tanaka," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Togo-Tanaka> (accessed Mar 18 2021).

<sup>43</sup> James Sakamoto, *Japanese American Courier*, April 24, 1942 quoted in Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 117.

did not mean identifying with the ways they were implemented by the state. Like Tanaka, Miyagawa also studied journalism in college, at the University of Washington. During his time there, he became involved in organizing Filipino and Japanese American cannery workers. He was a crucial figure in getting the Japanese American workers to support the more progressive CIO, despite charges of Communist sympathies engineered by the rival American Federation of Labor (AFL).<sup>44</sup>

Taking place during the first Red Scare, this organizing experience gave Miyagawa his first taste of the conflation of progressivism with Communism—"The only counter possible was to make ourselves familiar, to 'humanize' ourselves and to let people see for themselves that we wore no horns or tails, especially red ones," he later recalled.<sup>45</sup> By contrast, the JACL was critical of the labor movement, and in its 1934 Convention, it resolved that the United States should pass legislation to deport communists. This created a rift between Americanists and progressives. In a 1968 letter, Miyagawa recalled that once while preparing a union leaflet with some friends, he suggested going to the *Rafu Shimpo* to borrow a typewriter. "The guys with me hesitated out of self-consciousness or fear. Maybe Togo Tanaka used to editorialize against unions in those days."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Taxie Kusunoki, "A Tribute to Dyke Miyagawa," *Pacific Citizen*, December 22, 1989, B-1.

<sup>45</sup> Daisho Miyagawa, "Letter to 'Big Bill' Hosokawa, Describing Efforts to Unionize Japanese and Filipino Workers in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s," February 25, 1968, Pacific Northwest Historical Documents Collection, <https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/pioneerlife/id/9594>, 3.

<sup>46</sup> Miyagawa, "Letter to 'Big Bill' Hosokawa," 5.

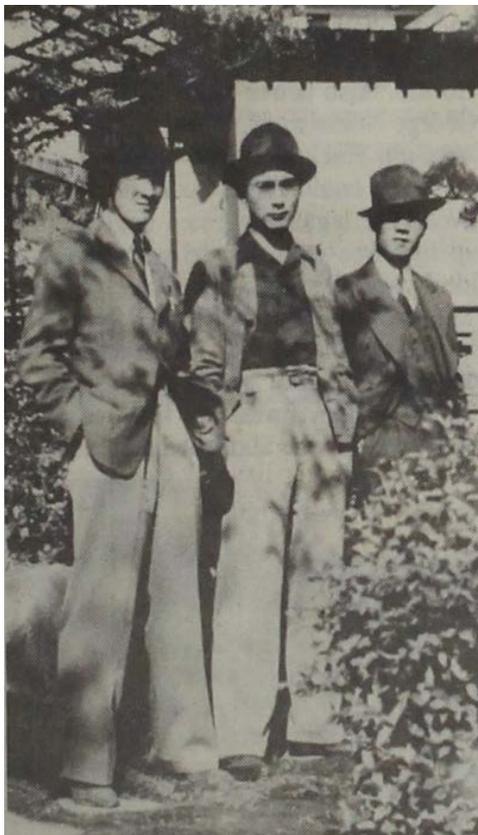


Figure 2.2. Dyke Miyagawa, left, with other union organizers. Taxie Kusunoki, "A Tribute to Dyke Miyagawa," *Gidra*, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition, 1990, 23. Courtesy of *Gidra*, Densho.

Although others characterized Miyagawa's political orientation as "much more radical than that of most Nisei," he was not alone in believing that vocal dissent went hand in hand with patriotism. Founded in 1940, the Japanese American Committee for Democracy was an anti-fascist civil rights group that hoped to strike this balance. Among its members were Larry Tajiri, who had also quieted his assertions of the Japanese American bridge role, Dyke Miyagawa, Tooru Kanazawa from the *Rafu Shimpō*, journalist Eddie Shimano, and acclaimed artist Isamu Noguchi.<sup>47</sup>

This political style also found allies outside the Japanese American community,

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<sup>47</sup> Greg Robinson, "The Unsung History of the Japanese American Committee for Democracy," *Discover Nikkei*, January 11, 2018, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2018/1/11/jacd/>.

particularly with Louis Adamic and his supporters. Adamic was a Slovenian immigrant who, in the tradition of Randolph Bourne and Emma Lazarus, made it his life's work to promote a "trans-national America," where the diversity of immigrants could be recognized and preserved in broader mainstream American culture. Adamic was the editor of *Common Ground*, a magazine that celebrated progressive interpretations of American core values, like democracy and "unity within diversity." The magazine included multiple articles from Japanese American writers before and during the war. Adamic also wrote the influential book *From Many Lands*, which featured the life story of Charles Kikuchi, a Japanese American who later became a sociologist in the internment camps.<sup>48</sup>

Adamic also supported *Current Life*, a magazine started by journalist James Omura aiming to tap "the upper echelon of educators and administrators," who in turn could "could extract a significant measure of tolerance and interest among their students, the future captains of American industries."<sup>49</sup> *Current Life* featured articles on the political and economic situation of Nisei, including on the passage of the Alien Registration Act of 1940, racial covenants in California, and employment bills that affected Nisei domestic workers.<sup>50</sup> The magazine ran for just two years and had low circulation—only about 500 to 1300 per issue—but it was significant as a contributor to the midcentury discourse over multiculturalism.<sup>51</sup>

It should be noted that Americanism and progressivism were not always at odds—

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<sup>48</sup> Matthew M. Briones and Charles Kikuchi, *Jim and Jap Crow: A Cultural History of 1940s Interracial America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 58. Adamic was later targeted by Pat McCarran, the sponsor of the Immigration Act of 1952, for supposed Communist sympathies.

<sup>49</sup> James Matsumoto Omura and Arthur A. Hansen, *Nisei Naysayer: The Memoir of Militant Japanese American Journalist Jimmie Omura*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018), 111-112.

<sup>50</sup> "Alien Registration," *Current Life*, October 1940, 5; "Berkeley Hills Covenant," *Current Life*, April 1941, 2; Gene Gohara, "Domestic Employment," *Current Life*, June 1941, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Omura and Hansen, *Nisei Naysayer*, 111-112.

for example, the JACL Creed was printed in *Current Life*, and the magazine called Tanaka an “outstanding spokesman for Nisei” who was “vitaly concerned with leading Nisei out of the darkness and chaos of confusion and pessimism.”<sup>52</sup> But the betrayals of wartime imprisonment would complicate further alliances between the two camps.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. As rumors of a Japanese attack of the mainland circulated, fear of the Japanese American community swelled. A few days after the attack, Tanaka was arrested at the offices of the *Rafu Shimpo* and held for 11 days with no charges.<sup>53</sup> Miyagawa was also investigated by the Office of Naval Intelligence due to his role as a labor organizer.<sup>54</sup> They were just two of many prominent Japanese Americans who were suspected of aiding the Japanese attack and subsequently investigated.

On February 19, 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, allowing the West Coast to be declared a military zone. 112,000 people of Japanese ancestry were to be excluded from this zone and sent to internment camps in the interior of the country. Confined to dusty and desolate plains enclosed by barbed wire, feelings of ambivalence about the United States that existed before the war fractured the community. While the JACL exhorted Japanese Americans to bear their “sacrifice” proudly and encouraged volunteer service in the war, others refused to swear allegiance to the state that had betrayed them, and some even asked to be repatriated to Japan. Though the pre-war *Current Life* had been on good terms with Masaoka and the JACL, Omura and Masaoka came to blows over the appropriate course for Japanese

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<sup>52</sup> Kenny Murase, “Who’s Who in the Nisei Literary World,” *Current Life*, October 1940, 8.

<sup>53</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 429.

<sup>54</sup> Office of Naval Intelligence, *Japan Tokyo Club Syndicate, With Interlocking Affiliations*, Washington, DC: 1941, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll12/id/18260> (Accessed Mar 18 2021).

Americans during the war, with Masaoka even labeling Omura the “Public Enemy Number One” due to his vocal draft resistance.



Figure 2.3. An American flag hangs over the barracks in Manzanar. Dorothea Lange, Still Picture Records Section, Special Media Archives Services Division (NWCS-S), NAID 538128, 1942. Courtesy of the National Archives.

Such fractures were even felt through individual families. “We were a house divided,” said Tanaka, whose family was sent to Manzanar. “My father would join in with the people who were getting short-wave radio broadcast about Japanese war victories in the Pacific, and I was a documentary historian for the War Relocation Authority taking an oath of allegiance to the United States.”<sup>55</sup> Even so, Tanaka’s views seemed to have more texture than his denouncers suggested—according to the well-respected activist Sue Kunitomi Embrey, who knew him in camp, Tanaka “was kind of a loner. He wasn’t with the JAACL group, but he also wasn’t with the progressive group.”<sup>56</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 431. The resentment of Tanaka’s work as a “nosy snooper” for the WRA ultimately jeopardized his safety, and the whole family was transferred out of Manzanar in December 1942.

<sup>56</sup> Diana Meyers Bahr, *The Unquiet Nisei: An Oral History of the Life of Sue Kunitomi Embrey* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 66-67.

The newspapers established in each camp largely downplayed these controversies over assimilation and loyalty in the community. Although they were written and edited by Japanese Americans, all copy was subject to approval by the War Relocation Authority officials. Bill Hosokawa, the editor of *The Heart Mountain Sentinel*, wrote in his memoir that the newspaper “had to give voice to its readers' anger, supporting their demands for justice and providing articulate leadership, but it also had to be cautious about fueling the anger of citizens unjustly imprisoned. Achieving this middle ground was difficult, and the balance often precarious.”<sup>57</sup> Thus, coverage tended to portray Japanese Americans as loyal and benign, making sacrifices for war just like any other American. Although perhaps not the best training grounds for critical journalism, these newspapers did keep prewar journalists working and established connections between journalists that would be important to the formation of postwar publications.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Bill Hosokawa, *Out of the Frying Pan: Reflections of a Japanese American* (Niwot, Colo: University Press of Colorado, 1998), 52.

<sup>58</sup> Miyagawa, for example, worked with Richard Takeuchi at the *Minidoka Irrigator* while in the Minidoka camp from 1942 to 1943. Louise Suski worked on the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* with the JACL stalwart Bill Hosokawa. Patricia Wakida. "Minidoka Irrigator (newspaper)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Minidoka%20Irrigator%20\(newspaper\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Minidoka%20Irrigator%20(newspaper)) (accessed Mar 28 2021); Patricia Wakida. "Heart Mountain Sentinel (newspaper)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Heart%20Mountain%20Sentinel%20\(newspaper\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Heart%20Mountain%20Sentinel%20(newspaper)) (accessed Mar 28 2021).



Figure 2.4. Bill Hosokawa setting type for the *Sentinel*. Tom Parker, War Relocation Authority, Ctrl.#: NWDNS-210-G-E641, NARA ARC#: 539215. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

Although the camp newspapers were generally censored, dissent was published in the few remaining Japanese American publications outside the camps and in sympathetic publications elsewhere.<sup>59</sup> Thus, after internment ended, there was an established network of Japanese American journalists despite the upheaval of forced migration. In the years after the war period, publications that had been shuttered were brought back to life, and several new publications were created as well. The majority of these publications focused on local news and were based in areas with large Japanese American populations.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Japanese Americans who “voluntarily relocated” to inland states were allowed to remain there during the war. Larry Tajiri and his wife Guyo ran the *Pacific Citizen* from Salt Lake City during the war, with columnists like Dyke Miyagawa sending dispatches from inside the camps. Greg Robinson. “Pacific Citizen (newspaper),” *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Pacific%20Citizen%20\(newspaper\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Pacific%20Citizen%20(newspaper)) (accessed Mar 28 2021).

<sup>60</sup> The *Rafu Shimpo* in Los Angeles boasted a readership of 20,000 in the postwar period, and still the Japanese American population there was large enough to support an additional weekly called *Crossroads*. Although many Japanese Americans returned to the West Coast after the war, Chicago, New York, and Denver all had significant Japanese American populations that supported local newspapers. Azuma, “Rafu Shimpo (newspaper),” *Densho Encyclopedia*; Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 45.

After the war, Tanaka started a printing company called Chicago Publishing Corporation (referred to hereafter as CPC), and he and his partners in the venture began discussing the idea for a Nisei magazine. According to Tanaka, “the idea for *Scene* magazine was really Jim Nishimura’s.”<sup>61</sup> In addition to his role with CPC, James T. Nishimura was the proprietor of another successful publishing and mailing company in Chicago, General Mailing Company, and his experience with such magazines likely inspired his interest in creating a magazine like *Scene* for the Japanese American community.

But if its inspiration was partly from magazines like *Time* and *Life*, *Scene* had some other unexpected influences. In the years after the war, Tanaka lived across the street from the University of Chicago’s Stagg Field, where the first artificial nuclear chain reaction took place in 1942. The University had many prominent scientists working on nuclear power, and Tanaka heard about the happenings at the university from his friend William T. Couch, director of the University of Chicago Press. “When you thought back then of the ability of scientists to destroy human life, it was incredible,” Tanaka said in an interview many years later. He clearly took an interest—according to an interview, he “had every issue of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists from the time they started until about 1955.”<sup>62</sup> The interest in starting *Scene*, then, was borne partly out of general Cold War anxieties: “We were absorbed with the idea that here were two countries and two cultures that had gone to war and had engaged in the bloodiest conflict in history. So *Scene* ought to be some vehicle for assuring that the Pacific Ocean would be a peaceful one.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 440-441.

<sup>62</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 446.

<sup>63</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 444.

In May 1949, Chicago Publishing Corporation began publishing *Scene* with Robert Ozaki at the helm as editor-in-chief and James Nishimura as the president.<sup>64</sup> The other partners of CPC took supporting roles, with Allan Hagio as vice president, Tad Uchimoto as treasurer, and Togo Tanaka as an editorial consultant.<sup>65</sup> In November 1949, Tanaka took the position of editor-in-chief.<sup>66</sup> Miyagawa was involved in the initial brainstorming around the magazine and was an editor in New York from the start of the magazine, reaching the top of the masthead when he moved to Chicago in April 1952.

After the war, it was unclear whether the press would continue to be divided among the two Nisei political camps. In many ways, it was, with vitriolic battles waged over issues like Issei citizenship and claims for financial damages. Amazingly though, aside from Jimmie Omura and James Sakamoto, every journalist mentioned so far in this chapter, despite their political differences, wrote or edited for *Scene* magazine at some point during its six-year run. Despite his differences with Dyke Miyagawa, Tanaka said that those involved in the founding of the magazine “were all personal friends. We all knew each other... Anybody whose name appeared on the masthead believed in this.”<sup>67</sup> Perhaps this was in part due to the resurrection of the first political style, with new demands shaped by Americanism and progressivism.<sup>68</sup> Now that US-Japan relations were better, the bridge strategy was once again viable. Japanese Americans had a lot to gain from providing such a link, and also a lot to lose if the relationship went sour.

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<sup>64</sup> As the idea for *Scene* was circulating, a similar magazine appeared, Nisei Vue, with Shigemi Mazawa as its editor-in-chief. However, Nisei Vue proved to be sporadically published and soon folded. Brian Niiya. "Nisei Vue (magazine)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei%20Vue%20\(magazine\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Nisei%20Vue%20(magazine)) (accessed Mar 28 2021).

<sup>65</sup> Masthead, *Scene*, August 1949, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Tanaka initially kept his involvement somewhat low out of fear of losing his position as editor of the American Technical Society's correspondence school. Togo Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 442.

<sup>67</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 445.

<sup>68</sup> See discussion of disagreement between contributors Min Yasui and Bill Hosokawa and conciliatory conclusion, “Segregation vs. Integration,” *Scene*, November 1951, 16.

According to Tanaka, “Our past, our present, and our future welfare depended on there not being another war.”<sup>69</sup>

This is not to say that *Scene* was, without fail, representative of the spectrum of political opinions in the Japanese American community. The positions of *Scene* were still highly contested—the magazine was accused of being too progressive or not progressive enough, too assimilationist or not assimilationist enough, too optimistic or not optimistic enough. Additionally, the magazine’s readership likely underrepresented Nisei of the lowest class status, and despite the presence of a Japanese-language section in some issues, it was not accessible to Issei with limited English ability. But it does suggest that just as the United States’ ideals of democracy and civil rights were defined and shaped by many different political and ethnic minorities, the meaning of those ideals at *Scene* were also shaped by many voices.<sup>70</sup>

Those voices were not only from within the magazine—the readers were also able to voice their support and dissent in the pages of *Scene*. The magazine had a relatively high percentage of the Japanese American population subscribed— between 12 and 23 percent, compared to around 3 percent of the African American population for *Ebony* and 6 percent of the general population for *Reader’s Digest*.<sup>71</sup> On the first several pages of each issue, *Scene* published seven to ten letters to the editor, whose content included comments on previous articles, responses to previous letters, requests for pen pals, searches for lost relatives, questions about Japanese America, and so on. In publishing these letters, *Scene* hoped to make itself a so-called “Nisei Town Meeting.”<sup>72</sup> “We at

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<sup>69</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 445.

<sup>70</sup> Unfortunately, due to the lack of by-lines on most *Scene* articles and of institutional archives, identification of the influence of specific individuals must remain largely speculative.

<sup>71</sup> See Appendix A for calculations.

<sup>72</sup> James T. Nishimura, “Publisher’s Column,” *Scene*, March 1950, 4.

*Scene* think the Nisei reading audience has for too long been unfairly dismissed as 'reticent' or 'inhibited' or 'inarticulate' or 'disinterested,'" wrote the publisher James T. Nishimura, "Your letters to the editor are proving us to be right."

According to *Scene*'s 1952 Statement of Policy, "*Scene* combines the duality of East and West. It is thus in an advantageous position to acquaint Americans with what the peoples of Asia are doing and thinking—and to present an intelligible interpretation of the ideals and civilization of the United States to Asians."<sup>73</sup> The ferrymen were open for business.

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<sup>73</sup> James T. Nishimura and Togo Tanaka, "A Statement of Policy," *Scene*, July 1952, 7.

## Part II: Selling Japan to the United States

In one of the last issues of *Scene* published in Chicago, the month's editorial was titled "A lesson in legs." Accompanied by three smiling women in sashes and bathing suits, the subject of the editorial was the surprising third-place finish of the Japanese representative to the Miss Universe beauty pageant. How had she done it? The answer to this question reveals an essential component of *Scene's* vision of the Japanese American ferryman—*Scene* hoped to create and sustain the depiction of a culturally rich Japan, and in doing so, establish Japanese Americans—and the magazine itself—as valuable sources of information for other Americans whose interest in Japan was piqued. The depiction of Japan's political and technological inferiority will be dealt with briefly in this chapter, and at length in the next.

According to the editorial, Japanese women typically did not finish highly in the pageants because they were "not physically built to conform to the standards applied at the American or European bathing-suited beauty contests."<sup>74</sup> However, Miss Japan, Kinuko Ito "was among the exceptions to the rule," as was the Japanese candidate from the previous year. In a beauty pageant like this one, where judging was based on the response of the audience, the ability to create desire was key to victory. The success of Miss Japan was based on her success at fulfilling a desire—an ability that mimicked those of American advertising mavens. Feminine beauty in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century was often a vehicle used to generate desire for commercial reasons, a desire that the advertisers claimed could be fulfilled by the purchase of a product. According to the *Scene* editorial, the United States' advertising teams were unsurpassed at the production

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<sup>74</sup> "A lesson in legs," *Scene*, October 1953, 12.

of such desire. “What else can explain the inroads that Coca Cola [sic] is making in European countries where wine, not colored sugar water, was for centuries the national thirst-quencher?” it asked. Thus, if the analogy between selling products and winning pageants held, the American strategy for generating desire for a pageant candidate was likely to secure a victory in the pageant.

The editorial sounds like it might be suggesting that Western beauty was superior to Asian beauty. In fact, the author claimed that “Japanese women have an attractiveness that their nation can be proud of,” regardless of the standards of the West. They instead praised the strategic choices of the people picking the Japanese representatives, who had decided to present a Miss Japan who fit “the criteria in force in the West” not because she was necessarily the most beautiful, but because her presentation was the most desirable. What was being conformed to Western standards was not Japanese beauty itself, but its presentation to a Western audience. This was a somewhat twisty version of agency—it suggested that conformity with the West could ultimately be a means of building power and influence.

The production of desire was not solely useful for selling products or winning pageants—it could also be used to “sell” a policy or political alliance. Miss Japan’s win had ramifications far broader than a single bronze medal. The editorial took for granted that Japan’s recovery was “largely dependent upon how she makes out in her relations with the West.” But those relations were not built solely in the political realm—they could also be moderated by social and cultural representations like Miss Japan. According to the editorial, because of her appeal to Western tastes, the 1953 Miss Japan had probably “done more to create a favorable attitude toward Japan than all the pronouncements made by the Japanese foreign office since the V-J Day.” The “leggy lesson” of Miss Japan’s win was that Japan ought to adopt some of the strategies that

were used in the West—to speak its advertising language—to secure its political and economic goals in the United States.

*Scene*'s collaborators were not all that far from the world of “public relations and advertising experts” they described. The producers of *Scene* were experienced publishers—as mentioned before, the magazine was published by Chicago Publishing Corporation, which was also producing *Playboy* and *Art Photography*.<sup>75</sup> A sister company of Chicago Publishing Corporation, General Mailing Services Company, was responsible for packaging and distributing *Life* magazine. Known for being “a slickly assembled package,” *Scene*'s visual style clearly took cues from other commercial publications.<sup>76</sup> The magazine's photographers also took assignments for magazines like *Time*, *Life*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *People*, and many of its layouts were done by Sho Koneko, who went on to direct the art production of *TV Guide*.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Brian Niiya. "Scene (magazine)," Densho Encyclopedia [https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Scene%20\(magazine\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Scene%20(magazine)) (accessed Mar 18 2021).

<sup>76</sup> Bill Hosokawa, "Scene: A Good Gamble," *Pacific Citizen*, October 23, 1953, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Larry Tajiri, "Importance of 'Scene' Magazine," *Pacific Citizen*, September 23, 1955, 8; Bill Hosokawa, "Scene: A Good Gamble," *Pacific Citizen*, October 23, 1953, 8.



Figures 3.1 and 3.2. Covers from *Scene* and *Life* magazine in December 1950. *Scene*, December 1950, 1. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM. *Life*, December 1950, 1. Courtesy of LIFE Magazine Issues on Google Books.

Thus, the purveyors of *Scene* were themselves in a position to “sell” Japan to American audiences, both Nisei and non-Japanese. The portrait of Japan they painted had important ramifications for Japanese Americans. In characterizing the Japanese as comically backward politically and technologically, while still assimilable and in possession of some valuable cultural knowledge, Japanese Americans positioned themselves as brokers for the incorporation of the Japanese into a tolerant, multiracial, American cultural hegemony.

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The tasking of “selling Japan” would certainly not be an easy one. In the years preceding the war, Japan had become the most successful non-Western imperial power,

claiming colonies in Korea, Taiwan, and Manchuria. On an ideological level, the aggression of Japan was contrary to the United States' purported values of multicultural tolerance and equality. Given the reality of inequality in the United States, some scholars have suggested that this explanation of U.S. anger at Japan was not fully sufficient—as scholar Yukiko Koshiro writes, “To American eyes, the worst Japanese war crime was the attempt to cripple the white man’s prestige by sowing the seeds of racial pride under the banner of Pan-Asianism.”<sup>78</sup> In the aftermath of the war, charges of “racial arrogance” were lodged by the administrators of the Tokyo War Crimes Trial, but the evidence considered most infuriating was the purposeful humiliation of Japan’s white prisoners of war, offending the sense of white superiority held, consciously or not, by many white Americans.<sup>79</sup> In any case, hatred of the Japanese was strong in the United States—*Time* and *Life* publisher Henry Luce was even quoted saying, “Americans had to learn how to hate Germans, but hating Japs comes natural—as natural as fighting Indians once was.”<sup>80</sup>

This prejudice was not only a challenge for Japanese Americans to face. As Naoko Shibusawa argued in her book *Our Geisha Ally*, the United States government hoped to end this vitriol once Japan became an ally of the United States. Instead of the imagery of apes or vicious animals that had pervaded media before the war, the Japanese were imagined as children with the potential to acquire liberal values, given the right teacher. Douglas MacArthur even famously compared Japan to a 12-year-old that was still “close enough to origin to be elastic and acceptable.”<sup>81</sup> The claim that the United States

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<sup>78</sup> Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the U.S. Occupation of Japan*, Studies of the East Asian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 17.

<sup>79</sup> Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms*, 20.

<sup>80</sup> “On to Tokyo and What?” *Life*, May 21, 1945, 32. Additionally, in December 1945, 56 percent of the American public believed the majority of Japanese people were “naturally cruel and brutal.” *Japan and the Postwar World* (Denver: National Opinion Research Center, 1946), 8.

<sup>81</sup> John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Books,

would “teach” Japan how to be equal is obviously ironic—if assuming the subordinate role of student, who exactly would Japan be equal to? According to scholar Jodi Kim, the occupation, like other projects of “modernization theory,” “purported to disrupt global racial hierarchies by holding out the promise of modernity to all nations but actually worked to reinforce those hierarchies by defining ‘modernity’ itself and controlling the terms under which non-white nations would have relative ‘access’ to it.”<sup>82</sup> The adolescent Japan could grow up, perhaps, but “growing up” would mean growing to look like the United States.

For many of the writers and editors of *Scene*, establishing the possibility of Japanese assimilation was crucial for their own goals in the United States. The subtle difference between racial and cultural identification had been key in the internment of Americans—proponents of internment had claimed that “the Japanese race is an enemy race and while many second and third generation [sic] Japanese born on United State soil, possessed of United States citizenship, have become ‘Americanized,’ the racial strains are undiluted.”<sup>83</sup> For Japanese Americans, who were racially indistinguishable from Japanese, a theory of difference couched in race would prevent them from ever being equal to their fellow Americans. While the internment was based on ancestry alone, throughout the war, internees tried to highlight their *cultural* identification with the US as proof of their loyalty, exemplified in particular by the military service of the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team. Evidence of Japanese American assimilation legitimated the notion that people of Japanese ancestry, which included Japanese

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1993), 303.

<sup>82</sup> Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War*, Critical American Studies Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 107.

<sup>83</sup> Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, *Personal Justice Denied*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 66.

Americans, could grow in the image of the United States. Furthermore, Japanese Americans who had successfully assimilated could provide an important model and mentor for the Japanese of Japan.

While most writers at *Scene* supported this project of assimilation, the America they believed Japan should channel was not the one where white supremacy reigned, but the idealized tolerant and democratic America that postwar propaganda purported the country to be. In this America, though the Japanese might need to assimilate politically, the US could recognize and appreciate the high points of Japanese culture. In a foreword to Takeshi Matsuda's *Soft Power and Its Perils*, John Dower satirizes the insistence of some U.S. policymakers that cultural policy was to be "a two-way street," writing, "the two-way street amounted to a multilane highway on the U.S. side and single lane on the other (accommodating, initially, mostly Japanese 'cultural' products of the traditional, aesthetic sort.)"<sup>84</sup> While there is no doubt that *Scene's* presentation of exchange reaffirmed much of this American policy, perhaps more than other magazines at the time, *Scene* doubled down on the presentation of Japan's cultural products as a means of insisting on a more even cultural exchange. Debates about the direction and breadth of each side of this "two-way street" played out in the most seemingly innocuous articles.

One of the most popular articles in *Scene's* history was called "The Japanese House." Initially published in May 1950, copies of the article remained so highly requested in the years after that it was reprinted in the August 1953 issue. The unsigned article highlighted the beauty of the Japanese house and how its features had been adopted in

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<sup>84</sup> John Dower, introduction to Takeshi Matsuda, *Soft Power and Its Perils: U.S. Cultural Policy in Early Postwar Japan and Permanent Dependency* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2007), xiv.

American modern design.<sup>85</sup> “Glance through a half dozen magazines showing collections of so-called modern houses,” the article proclaimed, “To anyone who has lived or traveled in Japan the appearance of many such houses and their interiors strengthens that belief that for once it is this country, and not Japan, which is the imitator.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, according to the article, the West had actually had a “degenerating influence” on Japanese architecture. The article gave examples of Japanese features that were incorporated into the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, and Charles Eames. But the article’s intervention went further, arguing that the lessons to be learned from Japanese architecture would fall flat if their deeper philosophical implications are not understood—“without realization on the part of the Western architect or designer that the Japanese structure... is an expression of a way of life, attempts to borrow from the design of a Japanese house become meaningless.” In a sense, Japanese architecture’s simplicity and unique suitability to its owners’ needs made it *more* suitable to American ideals than the “unidentifiable conglomerate” of homogeneous American housing developments.

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<sup>85</sup> When reprinted in August 1953, “Behind the Scene” revealed that Richard Takeuchi had written the text. “Behind the Scene,” *Scene*, August 1953, 5.

<sup>86</sup> “The Japanese House,” *Scene*, May 1950, 29.

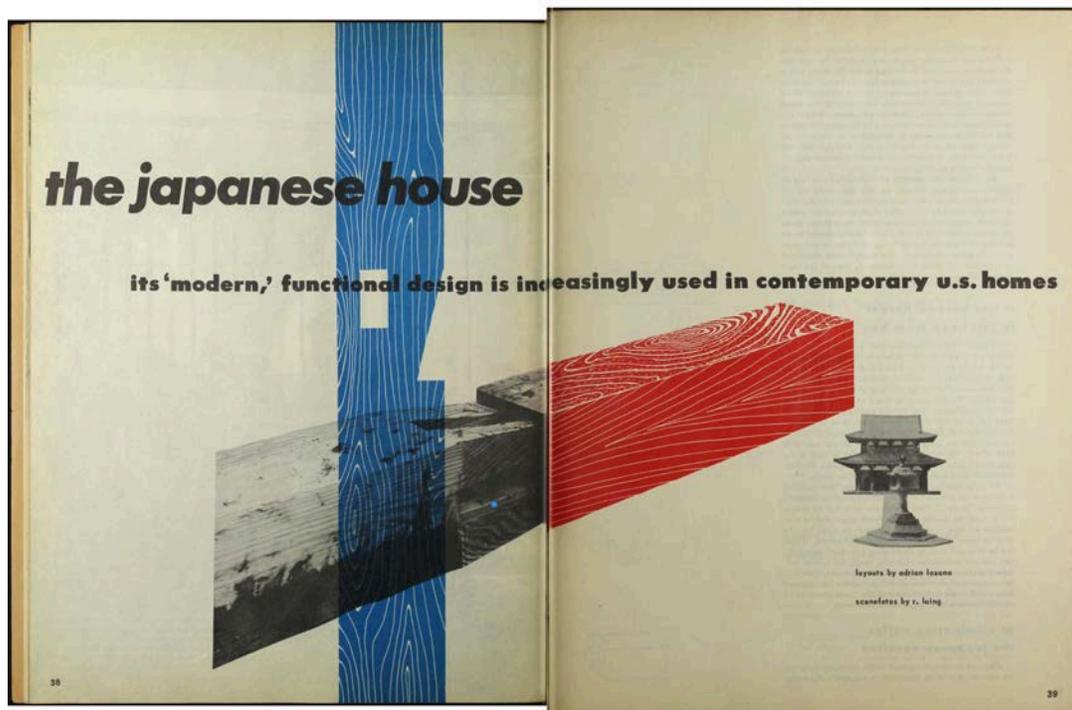


Figure 3.3. "The Japanese House," *Scene*, August 1953, 26-27. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

The cultural richness of Japan was evident in many other articles in *Scene*. For example, the magazine ran an article on the wives of SCAP administrators in Japan who took classes in Japanese arts like fan dancing, flower arrangement, and tea ceremony. According to *Scene*, through these classes, the women were "discovering that Japan is not only a quaint and beautiful country but that its ancient culture has much to offer the materialistic West."<sup>87</sup> Another poignant example was an article in the December 1951 issue which lauded the influence of Japanese art on nineteenth century Western artists. According to the article, artists like Edouard Manet and James McNeill Whistler were inspired by the Japanese brush technique, color harmony, and dimensional simplicity of woodblock prints that began arriving from Japan in Europe after 1850. The article analyzed the widening influence of such artistic features, as artists like Vincent Van

<sup>87</sup> Welly Shibata, "Occupation wives learn Japanese arts," *Scene*, November 1951, 4.

Gogh, Henri Matisse, and Paul Gauguin borrowed elements from Japanese art and also from each other's works. Because the piece linked artistic representation so closely to spiritual expression, it was also a validation of the metaphysics of Japanese culture. It even quoted Van Gogh saying, "If one studies Japanese art... one sees how a wise, philosophic and intelligent man can spend his time studying a single blade of grass. Is it not true religion that is taught to us by the Japanese?"<sup>88</sup> The article concluded, "There is little in 20<sup>th</sup> century art [sic] which does not derive, if not in likeness at least in concept, from 19<sup>th</sup> century [sic] influences of Japanese art."



Figure 3.4. "Japanese Influence on 19<sup>th</sup> Century Western Art," *Scene*, December 1951, 24-25. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

Such coverage demonstrably raised the status of the Japanese in the eyes of non-Japanese Americans who read *Scene*. Take, for example, Joseph Coudert of Cleveland,

<sup>88</sup> "Japanese Influence on 19th Century Western Art," *Scene*, December 1951, 33.

Ohio, who wrote to the magazine in February 1953. Coudert's son had died in the Pacific front during World War II, and he had "had little use for anything Japanese." He described coming across *Scene* in the public library "with some distaste." But as he read an article about ikebana (the art of flower arrangement), it gave him "a new insight into the Japanese people."

"I find it hard to believe that a people that can cultivate the serenity of ikebana can be as harsh and callous as I have conceived them to be," he wrote.<sup>89</sup> In elevating the aesthetic culture of Japan, *Scene* humanized Japanese people for its readers.

For all its cultural beauty, though, the Japan presented in *Scene* was also technologically and politically deficient. Just seven months after the Japanese house article, in the December 1950 issue, another article was printed with a less positive view on Japanese architecture. Called "Japanese house—phooey," the article was written by Harold Buck, a former GI in Japan and a writer for *The New Yorker*.<sup>90</sup> He aimed to "point out some objections of an occidental to the premise that the Japanese house is the ultimate in architectural construction and gracious living." The article went on to complain that the ceilings are low, the walls were thin, and the houses lacked "that great American contribution to civilization," central heating. "After two years, we came to like it, but I think American architects can learn from our misfortune," Buck concluded.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, although there were lessons to be drawn from the *aesthetic* ideals of the Japanese, according to Buck, the comfort and convenience of American technology was ultimately more evolved. This conclusion reinforced the Orientalist notion that Japan's culture was somehow timeless and unchanging, while the United

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<sup>89</sup> Letter from Joseph Coudert, *Scene*, February 1953, 3.

<sup>90</sup> "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, December 1950, 39.

<sup>91</sup> Harold Buck, "Japanese house - phooey!" *Scene*, December 1950, 46-47.

States could offer the benefits of modernity, which included, in the words of one Nisei living in Japan, “the greater happiness of individuals, the scientific curiosity, the cleanliness, [and] the respect for fair play.”<sup>92</sup>

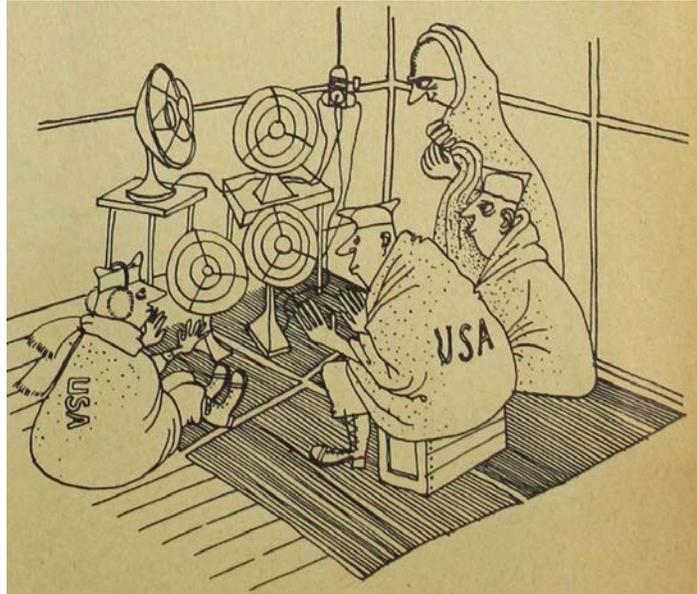


Fig 3.5. Adrian Lozano, “We were toasty until the wiring burned out,” *Scene*, December 1950, 47. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

This assertion of the superiority of American technology and government was peppered throughout the pages of *Scene*. Readers were constantly being reminded that, in the words of one editorial calling for Christmas donations to Japan, “we are immeasurably better off in material well-being than our friends and relatives across the sea.”<sup>93</sup> In another article, the author claimed Japan was first in the world for five things—noise, need for glasses, suicide rate, earthquakes, and tuberculosis.<sup>94</sup> For several years of the magazine’s run, each issue included a column called *Japonica*, which presented paragraph-long vignettes of human interest from Japan that also sent this

<sup>92</sup> Harvey Breit, “Talk With Mr. Tasaki,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1950, 176.

<sup>93</sup> “For A Merrier Christmas,” *Scene*, December 1949, 7.

<sup>94</sup> “Five ‘firsts’ for Japan,” *Scene*, January 1954, 18-19.

message of Japanese inferiority. One, for example, read as follows:

“A Mecca for the ill for many centuries, Tsukiyama temple in Kumamoto prefecture now faces ruin because of a small boy’s illness. The son of Yoshio Suzuki, chief priest of Tsukiyama, rapidly grew worse despite his father’s incantations. In desperation, a physician was called and penicillin given [sic], whereupon the boy recovered in record time. The story leaked out. Pilgrims have stopped coming to the temple.”<sup>95</sup>



Fig 3.6. Adrian Lozano, “Japonica - Modern Magic,” *Scene*, August 1950, 45. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

This example is poignant because of the associations penicillin had with the West at the time. The Allied development and production of penicillin to the armed forces had been one of the great scientific triumphs of the war, earning the scientists who worked on the project the Nobel Prize of 1945. The United States made penicillin available to the public that same year, and mass production of penicillin beginning in Japan in 1946 was done under the guidance of American scientists.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the humiliating invalidation of the priests at Tsukiyama was also a validation of Western medicine. Another example concerned the rule of law:

“Discouraged racing fans of Toyama prefecture have forsaken horses to take up duck racing. Reason: less corruption.”<sup>97</sup>

<sup>95</sup> “Japonica - Modern Magic,” *Scene*, August 1950, 45.

<sup>96</sup> Joichi Kumazawa and Morimasa Yagisawa, “The History of Antibiotics: The Japanese Story,” *Journal of Infection and Chemotherapy* 8, no. 2 (January 1, 2002): 125.

<sup>97</sup> “Japonica - Ducking the Issue,” *Scene*, September 1950, 34.



Fig 3.7. Adrian Lozano, "Japonica - Ducking the Issue," *Scene*, September 1950, 34. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

Sports using fowl were not universally considered silly—in many places, including the United States, cockfighting was or had been a serious site of money exchange. But in this case, the notion of duck racing is clearly comical, made vivid by the googly-eyed cartoon ducks. The silliness of this sport has serious implications for the degree of corruption in horse racing—if the corruption was so bad that people turned to ducks, the ability of law enforcement to regulate corruption must be compromised. One last example depicts a similar level of debauchery in the school system:

"School janitors in the Miyagi prefecture had some stern ideas for teachers on the issue: 'What should be done to improve primary school education?' Sample: Don't drink sake at school. Among other things, the janitors also recommended that young teachers should not indulge in 'loose behavior in front of children.'"<sup>98</sup>



Fig 3.8. "Japonica," *Scene*, September 1954, 5. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

<sup>98</sup> "Japonica," *Scene*, September 1954, 5.

Although some *Japonica* columns reported less embarrassing anecdotes, the majority portray Japan as something of a “wild East,” a place of hare-brained money-making schemes and lighthearted debauchery. By poking fun at the seeming immaturity of the Japanese, the column also had a disarming effect—readers wrote into the magazine lauding *Japonica* as “simply terrific” and “highly entertaining.”<sup>99</sup> If the Japanese were not steely and racially arrogant, but instead bumbling and ultimately innocuous, then the benevolent guidance of the United States’ occupation might be well-received and ultimately impactful.

If, as the Japanese house articles suggested, Japan had some benefits to offer, but was lacking in other areas, what was ultimately best was a syncretic blend that married the best of the two worlds. In the discussion of Japanese architecture, this blend was exemplified by the home of Wesley Oyama, a Nisei living in Tokyo, that was featured in the September 1951 issue. The article makes a subtle reference to Buck’s complaints in its title, “Central heating too: His house blends two cultures.” The architect took “the better points of both American and Japanese architecture and designed a house that was comfortable and yet in harmony with Nippon.”<sup>100</sup> While the aesthetics of the house were largely Japanese, the domestic technology of the house was American, clearly delineating the respective strengths of Japan and the United States. The fact that the home was owned by a Nisei—someone accustomed to the comforts of the United States but assumed to still have an appreciation for the aesthetic principles of Japan—was incredibly symbolically significant. In a tolerant United States, the Nisei would embody the best of their two cultures.

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<sup>99</sup> Letter from Jean Hamaguchi, *Scene*, October 1950, 8; Letter from Kenneth Comstock, *Scene* October 1950, 8.

<sup>100</sup> Bill Hosokawa, “Central heating, too: His house blends two cultures,” *Scene*, September 1951, 24.

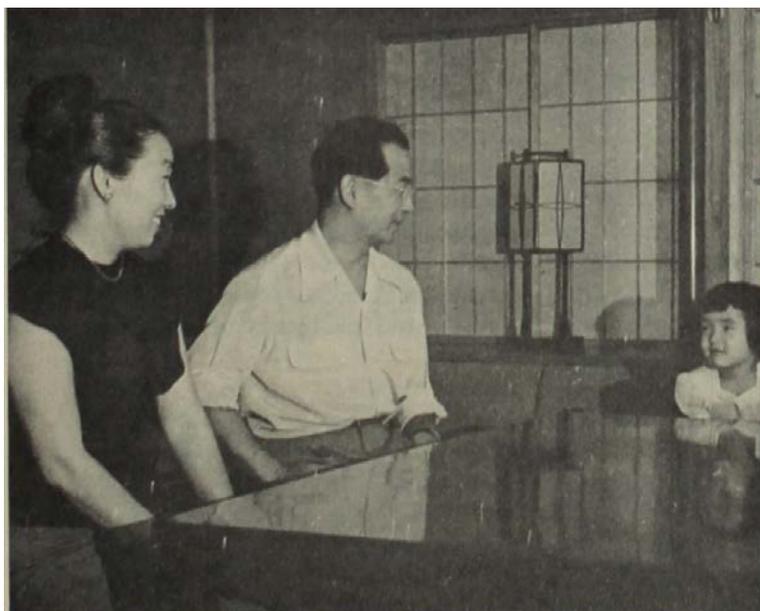


Fig 3.9. Wesley Oyama and his family in their living room. Bill Hosokawa, "Central heating, too: His house blends two cultures," *Scene*, September 1951, 25. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

These Japanese Americans bridging West and East could share the cultural riches of Japan with their fellow citizens of the United States. *Scene* featured many articles about Japanese Americans spreading Japanese culture in the United States, whether that was through a dance school or judo lessons attended by Japanese and non-Japanese alike, performances of traditional Japanese theater, or the publication of Japanese cookbooks for American chefs.<sup>101</sup> As *Scene* disseminated these examples, the magazine was itself demonstrating the cultural bridge role it advocated for. Letters poured in from readers who were using *Scene* to teach about Japan in school classes, or readers who were learning Japanese and wanted to know more about the culture.<sup>102</sup>

Although *Scene* suggested that Japanese Americans had a predisposition to be

<sup>101</sup> See Tom Watanabe, "Judo goes Pan-American," *Scene*, March 1953, 6-8; "Kabuki U.S. Style," *Scene*, March 1950, 20; editorial response to letter from Teresa Kennedy, *Scene*, August 1950, 8.

<sup>102</sup> See letter from Harold Ambor, *Scene*, May 1951, 7; letter from Walter O. Gross, *Scene*, August 1953, 4.

knowledgeable about Japanese culture, their articles on Japanese culture were also addressed to Japanese Americans themselves, so that they could learn more about Japan and would thus be better positioned to play the “bridge” role. For example, *Scene* ran a series of Japanese folktales aimed at the Sansei, the children of the Nisei, so that they (and their parents) could become more familiar with Japanese myths.<sup>103</sup> The editors featured recipes and cookbook recommendations for Nisei who didn’t know how to make Japanese food or lived in areas without other Japanese Americans.<sup>104</sup> In the same editorial with which this thesis began, “‘Mokusatsu’ and drifting thoughts,” the editor lauded the interest in Japan from Japanese readers, writing, “Today, [*Scene* articles on Japan] are consciously and unapologetically addressed to Nisei readers... and the response is increasingly favorable.”<sup>105</sup>

Of course, the notion that a Nisei raised in the United States should be in touch with Japanese visual and aesthetic culture actually bolstered the idea that certain kinds of knowledge were racially inherent, a concern brought up in letters to the editor.<sup>106</sup> One particularly poignant expression of the double standard for cultural knowledge came from a November 1953 response to the Mokusatsu editorial from Mark Maruki, which read, “I usually have lunch at a place run by a man named Pappas. Remind me to ask him if he ever heard of a guy named Aeschylus and if he can read ‘Oedipus Rex’ without the Gilbert Murray translation. If he says no, I’ll hit him over the head with your editorial.”<sup>107</sup>

In any case, *Scene* certainly distanced Japanese Americans from the Japanese

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<sup>103</sup> For example, see “Momotaro,” *Scene*, July 1953 40-43; Hirosuke Hamada, “How Tumbler Went to the Festival,” *Scene*, November 1954, 28-29.

<sup>104</sup> See letter from Max Hanamoto, *Scene*, October 1950, 6.

<sup>105</sup> “‘Mokusatsu’ and drifting thoughts,” *Scene*, September 1953, 12.

<sup>106</sup> See also letter from J.E. Omura, *Scene*, March 1951, 7.

<sup>107</sup> Letter from Mark (Akira) Maruki, *Scene*, November 1953, 4.

technology and politics that they deemed inferior. Take, for example, *Scene's* analogous column to *Japonica* for Nisei affairs. Called *Italics*, the column was an aggregation of quotes from other publications, both vernacular and mainstream, and was usually about the current state of civil rights of Japanese Americans. *Italics* and *Japonica* attempted to “record the pulse beat” of the Nisei and “the average Japanese,” respectively.<sup>108</sup> Such a juxtaposition suggested that while the “pulse beat” of the Nisei was political and engaged in current affairs, the postwar Japanese lacked political maturity. However, this was not inescapable—because technology and politics were not inherent, but could be shared and learned, the better (Western) forms could be employed by anyone—Japanese Americans and Japanese included.

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In addition to social benefits, there was another aspect of *Scene's* “benefits package”—the depiction of Japan as culturally rich also had economic benefits for the collaborators of *Scene* and other Japanese Americans. Eiichiro Azuma has written about the economic incentives of the bridge role for Japanese American translators and chicken sexors in the United States, and the collaborators at *Scene* can be added to that pool of beneficiaries. Every few months, the magazine received and printed letters to the effect that *Scene* had too many advertisements. In nearly every issue of the magazine, multi-page ads advertising tea sets, vases, and rice bowls, allowing readers to purchase pieces of the culture being lauded on other pages. *Scene's* publisher, James T. Nishimura, had an import/export business himself, for which *Scene* advertised (see Figure 3.10).<sup>109</sup> The least subtle of these advertising efforts saw reported feature articles

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<sup>108</sup> “Behind the Scene,” *Scene*, July 1950, 37.

<sup>109</sup> “James T. Nishimura & Co., Inc.,” *Scene*, February 1951, 2.

praising the beauty or efficiency of some product from Japan—a photo contest in the June 1953 issue or a piece on sewing machines in the October 1951 issue, for example—followed by an advertisement for that very product (See Appendix B for more information on *Scene's* portrayal of Japanese manufacturing).

Travel opportunities to the Japanese cities depicted in *Scene* were also advertised. One such advertisement, for a Nisei-run travel agency and car rental service in Tokyo, said of its proprietors, “It was these men who fused modern stateside methods with that of the Far East.” The belief that the Japanese economy would recover based on its export business was an influential one, and perhaps the *Scene* editors thought they were doing their part to help restore Japan’s fragile economy. The travel agency mentioned above certainly thought so, presenting the tourism they brought as a boon for Japan—according to the ad, their services made them “the Nisei corporation contributing the most towards the rehabilitation of post-war Japan.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “Hawaiian Travel Service,” *Scene*, January 1951, 3.

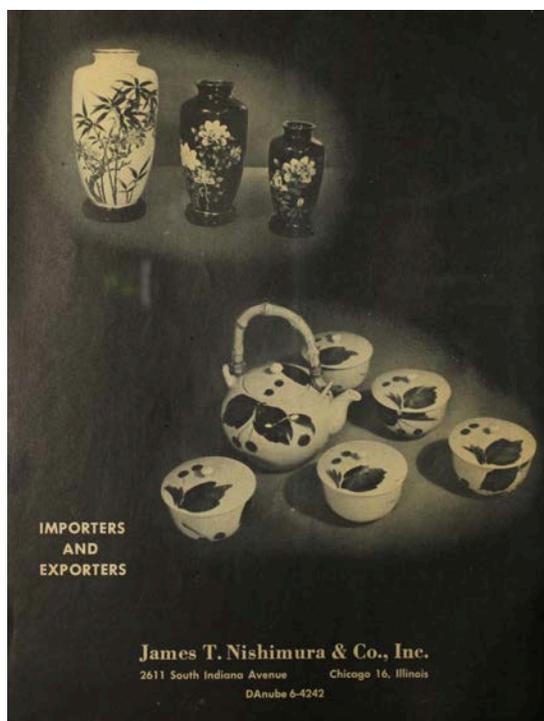


Figure 3.10. An advertisement for Nishimura's import business. "James T. Nishimura & Co., Inc," *Scene*, February 1951, 2. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

*Scene* writers were clearly aware of the misleading representations that contributed to the fetishization of Japanese culture in the United States. For example, one issue featured an article about a group of Japanese beauty queens visiting the United States on a six-week "good will swing [sic]." The *Scene* reporter notes that they were asked to appear only in kimonos while in the United States, despite wearing Western-style clothes at home, which they wrote "rekindled the American notion that Japan is the land of cherry blossoms and charming people."<sup>111</sup>

But *Scene* also reinforced such notions, while downplaying the extent to which they were doing so. Going back to the article about the legs of the beauty queen, this was clear in the positionality of the narrator. If the major parties in this transaction the editorial described were the United States and Japan, what was the vantage point of the

<sup>111</sup> "Three queens' eye view of the U.S." *Scene*, August 1951, 11.

writer and the audience? In the article, the narrators—who refer to themselves as “we”—seem to be separate from both the United States and Japan. They “detect,” they “consider,” they “suggest,” but they were analysts only, not actors. The audience, too, was assumed to be privy to the “sale” of Japan to the US—they “have had to read Japanese ad copy in English”—and may be sympathetic to the sale, having possibly “wincing at Japanese exhibits at some recent international trade fairs.” But they were also positioned somewhat separately from sellers or buyers of Japanese culture.

This editorial sticks out because its tone—that of a detached observer, knowledgeable and hopeful for the “selling” relationship between Japan and the United States that they do not personally take part in—was thoroughly at odds with *Scene*’s own use of the very strategies the editorial describes. I would argue that the reason for *Scene*’s erasure of its own role in “selling” Japan was due to the influence of the political styles of the pre-war period. According to key figures in the pre-war discussion on immigration, including Louis Adamic and Jimmy Sakamoto, the incorporation of one’s culture into that of the United States was not meant to be self-interested. As Sakamoto wrote to Adamic, “Each group can retain the best in their culture which in turn can become the contribution to a new and national pattern of American culture.”<sup>112</sup> The translation of culture from Japan to the United States should, then, not be flaunted as a bargaining chip, but rather borne out of the patriotic interest in building the best possible America. The Nisei hand in modulating information on Japan was erased as much as possible, instead presenting the Nisei as cheerful, but not overeager, sharer of Japanese culture.

Take the example of a passage published in *Scene* in September 1953. “Sometimes it’s

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<sup>112</sup> James Y. Sakamoto to Adamic, October 15, 1940, James Y. Sakamoto Papers, Suzallo Library University of Washington quoted in Ichioka, *Before Internment*, 35.

a pain. Sometimes it makes us feel good," it read, "Anyway, *Scene* has come to be a clearing house [sic] for any and all types of information regarding things Japanese."<sup>113</sup> This seeming reluctance to provide such information seems to be overplayed, though, when one sees the pride *Scene* took in being a "clearinghouse." For example, *Scene* did not let its readers forget the magazine's value as a source of information. When other publications wrote about Japan, like *The New Yorker* and *The Week*, *Scene* consistently flagged the fact that a story on the topic had appeared first in *Scene*. In one such article, the magazine crowed, "All we want to do is push **our** product by letting you know that *Scene* has scored a scoop on the New Yorker. The conductor of *The New Yorker*'s 'Talk of the Town' department led off its August 29 issue with... an embellishment of a Japonica paragraph that appeared in our May issue."<sup>114</sup> Thus, despite its purported reluctance, *Scene* was determined to make its informational utility known.

It should be noted that the information requested of *Scene* was almost exclusively cultural—"Japanese dwarf trees, judo, Japanese recipes, tea ceremony, Japanese gardens, sumo, the abacus, etc."<sup>115</sup> In any case, *Scene* was happy to declare that Japanese Americans had "emerged out of the wartime darkness of the unreasoning rejection of our great cultural heritage." Just as the pre-war proponents of Japanese American "bridges" had asserted, *Scene* claimed that with the end of hostilities between Japan and the United States, "The Pacific Era has arrived." The meaning of that declaration for the politics of Japanese Americans is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>113</sup> "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, September 1953, 5.

<sup>114</sup> "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, November 1953, 5.

<sup>115</sup> "The first hundred years," *Scene*, June 1952, 16.

## Part III: The Dilemma of Leverage

The editorial featured in *Scene's* October 1950 issue noted a concerning problem for the United States—despite its ideals of freedom and democracy, which ought to “wield a genuine revolutionary power,” the United States had “so far failed to match Moscow’s bid for popular support among Asiatics.”<sup>116</sup> The editorial came at a time when the fear of Communism in Asia was rising. Starting in 1946, with George Kennan’s famous “Long Telegram” and then with the announcement of the Truman Doctrine the following year, the United States pursued a strategy of so-called “containment,” according to which the U.S. would intervene and provide foreign aid to prevent other countries from seeking aid from the rival Soviet Union, with the hopes that in return, these countries would support the United States’ bid for global dominance. In the postwar containment paradigm, Japan developed new importance as a “junior partner” against communism in Asia, especially after China “fell” to the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 and as the United States was embroiled in a war of containment in Korea from 1950 to 1953.

Despite today’s perception that Japan was one of the most loyal allies of the United States after World War II, to read the pages of *Scene* would suggest that this alliance was much more precarious, especially after the U.S. Occupation ended in 1952. Throughout *Scene's* run, the editors printed articles articulating the fear of Communism in Asia, with titles like “Asians are in no hurry to die for democracy,” and “Can the West still win in Asia?” and “Anti-Americanism in Japan: an appraisal.”<sup>117</sup> The United States

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<sup>116</sup> “Our Achilles Heel,” *Scene*, October 1950, 26.

<sup>117</sup> Masaru Ogawa, “Asians in no hurry to die for democracy,” *Scene*, July 1953, 20-21; Merle Burke, “Can the West still win in Asia?” *Scene*, April 1950, 13; “Anti-Americanism in Japan: an appraisal” *Scene*, July 1953, 12.

government seemed to share this fear—In the 1950s and 1960s, the CIA spent millions of dollars to prop up the anti-Communist right-wing in Japan, as they did in many other contested areas of the world like Lebanon and Italy.<sup>118</sup>

So why was the United States “losing” Asia? *Scene*’s October 1950 editorial posited one explanation—that it was because of “the singular tragedy of the Western world today— its long tradition of racist thinking.” As described in the last chapter, the justification behind the United States’ occupation of Japan was that the Japanese were politically inferior and needed help developing. But the ideology imbued in this vision for Japan’s future, which included the values of freedom, democracy, and equality, was sometimes embarrassingly at odds with the actions of the United States government, both in Japan and in the United States. According to *Scene*, communists in Asia were telling the populaces of Asian countries that “no person of Asiatic descent is treated with decency in America.”

What was to be done? Perhaps the most important point of the October 1950 editorial was *Scene*’s proposed solution—*Scene* suggested that, based on the essentializing idea that Japanese Americans, in their role as ferrymen, could “model” American-style democracy for the Japanese, Japanese Americans could support state objectives by conveying a positive image of American democracy to those in Asia. However, this position also gave them some domestic leverage—if Japanese Americans conveyed the hypocrisy of the United States, it would undermine the American government’s claim to legitimacy in the Cold War struggle. Other scholars have written about the impact of foreign policy concerns on domestic civil rights during the height of

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<sup>118</sup> Ishaan Tharoor, “The long history of the U.S. interfering with elections elsewhere,” *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/10/13/the-long-history-of-the-u-s-interfering-with-elections-elsewhere/>.

the Cold War.<sup>119</sup> But *Scene* demonstrates an under-explored iteration of this dynamic in the Japanese American community. In the battle of ideology in Asia, *Scene* claimed, “Americans of Oriental descent have a contribution to make far out of proportion with their small numbers.”<sup>120</sup>

*Scene*’s influence in the Cold War power dynamic between oppressed minorities and the government was probably not as significant as they might have had readers believe—there is no evidence to suggest that the national government was truly fearful of what *Scene* might publish or that it actually tried to influence *Scene*’s portrayal of its policies. However, this component of *Scene*’s ferryman paradigm is still worth studying as one strategy for securing political and social influence in a society that has so clearly denied that claim in the past. There were several instances where *Scene* made strategic choices about how to present US actions with these concerns in mind. This chapter will examine a few such instances and the responses to them.

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As Alan Nadel writes in his book, *Containment Culture*, during the height of the Cold War, much of the cultural production in the United States was evaluated in terms of its reflection on the Manichaeian conflict between “democracy,” coded as American, and “totalitarianism,” coded as Soviet. This narrative had the power to “unify, codify, and contain... the personal narratives of its population.”<sup>121</sup> Scholars have shown that cultural depictions of all kinds were imbued with this meaning—whether the

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<sup>119</sup> For similar strategies used by other ethnic groups, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy, Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2011) and Cindy I-Fen Cheng, *Citizens of Asian America: Democracy and Race during the Cold War*, (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

<sup>120</sup> “Our Achilles Heel,” *Scene*, October 1950, 26.

<sup>121</sup> Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narrative, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 4.

blockbuster epics of the Bible, jazz music, or Martha Graham's modern dance.<sup>122</sup>

Depictions of the United States in Japan's popular culture were no exception to the Cold War cultural paradigm. *Scene*, with its appealing photo layouts and accessible articles, was one such site for "translation" of American democracy to a Japanese audience. Based on letters to the editor and *Scene's* own commentary, the magazine had an international audience who looked to *Scene* to understand the United States. For example, *Scene* was carried in the largest bookstore chain in Japan, and Japanese newspapers like Tokyo's *Nichi Nichi Shimbun* reprinted *Scene's* editorials.<sup>123</sup> Almost every *Scene* issue featured letters from its readers in Japan interested in American society and the place of Japanese Americans in it. A student at Waseda University in Tokyo wrote in 1950 that he and others in Japan were curious about "the true situation of Japanese Americans," and for this purpose, *Scene* was "getting to be indispensable."<sup>124</sup> The February 1951 issue featured a letter from a Japanese housewife who was "curious about democracy" requested a pen pal so that she could learn more about "democratic America."<sup>125</sup> One man wrote to *Scene* saying that the magazine was contributing to the impression among residents of Tokyo that Japanese Americans "weren't scorned as the result of the last war."<sup>126</sup> *Scene* was also assumed to have influence on the opinions of Japanese Americans, who might have connections in Japan whose opinions they could shape.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> See McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 43-83; Lisa E. Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy: Promoting America in the Cold War Era* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Victoria Phillips, *Martha Graham's Cold War: The Dance of American Diplomacy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>123</sup> "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, February 1951, 15; "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, August 1950, 46. *Scene's* publisher, James T. Nishimura also invited on several trips to Japan to meet with the heads of Japanese newspapers.

<sup>124</sup> Letter from Hisao Miwa, *Scene*, October 1950, 4.

<sup>125</sup> Letter from Tomi Shimamoto, *Scene*, February 1951, 10.

<sup>126</sup> Letter from Walter Kimura, *Scene*, January 1951, 7.

<sup>127</sup> See "Across the Barriers," *Scene*, February 1952, 12 encouraging readers to write letters spreading a message of "freedom and peace."

Thus, *Scene's* coverage of American democracy was important to actors hoping for the success of the United States in Asia, and Americans dedicated to a positive portrayal of the United States urged *Scene* to feature favorable coverage. For example, a woman from Miami, Florida wrote in saying *Scene's* coverage suggested that Southerners gave "American democracy a black eye before the world." She asked that *Scene* emphasize some of the "kind and decent acts of the South."<sup>128</sup>

This was the leverage of the ferryman—if *Scene* did present the U.S. favorably, minimizing coverage of U.S. hypocrisy, they could potentially win state support for domestic goals like immigration rights for the Issei. If they did not present the U.S. favorably, they might embarrass the state into supporting civil rights for Japanese Americans, but could also run the risk of seeming "unpatriotic," as Japanese American dissenters during World War II had been portrayed. Given the lack of evidence for the potency of this strategy in the eyes of the government, one might question why the editors believed this strategic leverage of dissent would be effective.

The answer is that it had worked before—the strategic question of how and when to dissent was part of the much broader dilemma over loyalty within the Japanese American community described in Part I. The degree to which Japanese Americans were willing to compromise on political ideals had varied widely in World War II. For some, the benefits of compromise were valuable enough to justify the postponement of principles. As Mike Masaoka, director of the JACL, said during the war, "[We have] 'continually cooperated' in the hope that our cooperation would inspire a reciprocal cooperation."<sup>129</sup> A similar dynamic was applied to the postwar struggle for rights into

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<sup>128</sup> Letter from Mrs. Edwin Bassett, *Scene*, May 1951, 7.

<sup>129</sup> JACL, Office of the National Secretary, San Francisco, Bulletin 142, "Re: Test Cases," April 7, 1942. qtd in Daniels, *Asian America*, 222.

which *Scene* entered, where new international concerns complicated the trappings of loyal action. If the role of the “loyal Japanese American” during the war had been to swallow internment without complaint and potentially offer one’s life to the United States by volunteering for the military, the role of the “loyal Japanese American” in the postwar would be to participate in the newly established foreign policy objectives of the US. This new role would draw on the transnational notions of loyalty posited by Jimmie Sakamoto and others in the pre-war period, making it, in some regards, a composite of the Americanist and bridge strategies of the prewar period. On the other hand, just as the progressives had critiqued the United States government before the war, progressives after the war could also draw attention to the United States’ contradictions.

As with the pre-war political styles, each tack had its potential pitfalls. Just as the bridge role had become untenable before World War II, it could become so again if Japan and the United States became enemies. Some worried that the extension of guilt for Japanese imperial aggression that had so afflicted Japanese Americans in World War II might be replicated if Japan became Communist. “If Japan went communist, the Nisei in this country might conceivably be placed in the worst spot they’ve ever been in. And all the good of the recent struggle could be wiped out,” read one article in *Scene*.<sup>130</sup> In the ontological battle being waged, though, the United States desperately wanted allies in their camp, and thus had more of an interest in protecting their fledgling friendship in Japan. Thus, it was in *Scene*’s interest to keep the fear of Communism in Asia heightened, keeping Japanese American bridge role important, while also trying to keep Americans from believing that Japan was unsalvageably Communist.

The positions on portrayal in this debate were not necessarily clearly delineated—

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<sup>130</sup> Togo Tanaka, “Kiyosato – A New England Village in Japan,” *Scene*, October 1949, 54.

the same group might select from a spectrum of rhetorical strategies depending on the situation. Americanists from the pre-war period tended to concede to the state objectives, and progressives tended to fight for ideals over state aims, but as we will see in *Scene*, this was not universally the case. For example, the JACL used both of these strategies, spearheading significant civil rights legislation based on the fulfillment of American ideals while also advocating for continued loyalty to the U.S. government.<sup>131</sup>

Despite the Americanist perspective expressed by some of *Scene's* staff in the pre-war period, *Scene* published many editorials critical of policies in the United States. For example, an editorial in the June 1950 issue critiqued the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the right of the FBI to search the Oklahoma City apartment of George Harris.<sup>132</sup> The editors lauded the right to privacy as "one of the great differences between our democracy" and "totalitarian Russia," and were therefore critical of its erosion in the Harris case. Although internment was still controversial at the time and often avoided as a subject of conversation, the editors also suggested that their experiences of internment made them *more* attached to this American ideal and therefore more likely to speak up when the government violated it—"By hard experience," the editorial read, "[Japanese Americans] cherish that door key deeply for the freedom it stands for."<sup>133</sup>

In another example, *Scene* was adamantly opposed to calls for a loyalty oath at the University of California, as supported by Jack Tenney, head of the Committee on Un-American Activities in the California State Senate. The editors of *Scene* once again used the violation of Japanese American civil rights to prove the extent to which they valued

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<sup>131</sup> See Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice*, New York: W. Morrow, 1982) for defense of JACL's accomplishments.

<sup>132</sup> See *Harris v. United States*, 331 U.S. 145 (1947).

<sup>133</sup> "Editorial," *Scene*, June 1950, 26. For discussion of avoidance of internment in representations of World War II, see Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

the ideal of freedom, writing that their own experience being forced to attest to their loyalty in the internment camps explained why they took an interest in the UC loyalty oath. The editorial compared the perversion of American ideals in both cases—“The loyalty oath for the Niseis [sic] in wartime was put forth as a genuine red-white-and-blue cloak of American patriotism,” it read, “The loyalty oath for the University of California faculty masqueraded in the cloak of anti-Communist respectability.”<sup>134</sup> Both were ultimately a violation of the trust and respect accorded by the principle of due process.

These editorials sent the message that *Scene* would speak out against injustice in the United States, even when it did not affect Japanese Americans directly and even if was in the immediate interest of Japanese Americans to support such injustice, as it could be with anti-Communism. If they were not granted equal citizenship and protected from discrimination in the United States, *Scene* could advocate for American *ideals* to their Japanese audience, but not for the United States’ role in making them a reality. In the words of one Nisei SCAP administrator, “Democracy for Japan, yes! But democracy for America, too!”<sup>135</sup>

The magazine also encouraged readers to recognize their own racial biases and to speak out against racial discrimination.<sup>136</sup> Although some Japanese Americans distanced themselves from Chinese Americans after the Chinese Communist Party established the People’s Republic of China, just as some Chinese Americans had distanced themselves from Japanese Americans during World War II (see Figure 4.1), *Scene* encouraged solidarity, writing, “The bitter, irrational voices of hate that once screamed at the

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<sup>134</sup> “The Loyalty Oath— Weapon of the Witch Hunt?” *Scene*, March 1952, 14.

<sup>135</sup> Letter from James Ito, *Scene*, June 1952, 4.

<sup>136</sup> See “Editorial,” *Scene*, February 1950, 26.

Japanese are now being turned upon the Chinese... It happened to you yesterday, it can happen to your friends tomorrow."<sup>137</sup>

However, this position became complex when the stakes were raised for Japanese Americans, when supporting U.S. objectives despite their hypocrisy would mean immense political gains for the Japanese American community. This was the case in the contentious passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, also known as the McCarran-Walter Act. Introduced by the fervent anti-Communists Senator Patrick McCarran of Nevada and Representative Francis Walter of Pennsylvania, the bill was the first major change to immigration law since 1924. Its measures were immensely controversial. Some seemed to be progressive—for example, it abolished the delineation of a category of immigrants known as “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” which in practice applied only to Asians.

However, the bill also maintained discrimination against Asian immigrants by assigning quotas of 100 immigrants per country and a cap of 2,000 immigrants total per year, less than 1% of the total immigrants arriving in the United States each year.<sup>138</sup> It also instituted a colonial quota that limited immigration from the Caribbean, a provision that clearly targeted black immigrants.<sup>139</sup> The president was given the broad power to suspend these quotas or “impose... any restrictions he may deem to be appropriate” if “the entry of any aliens... would be detrimental to the interests of the United States,” a power that was implicitly meant to be used against suspected Communists.<sup>140</sup> This power was not solely for modulating entrance to the U.S.—the bill

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<sup>137</sup> I.H. Gordon, “Scene in Washington,” *Scene*, February 1951, 12.

<sup>138</sup> Philip Martin, “Trends in Migration to the U.S.” *PRB*, May 19, 2014. [www.prb.org/us-migration-trends/](http://www.prb.org/us-migration-trends/)

<sup>139</sup> Jane Hong, “‘A Cross-Fire between Minorities’: Black-Japanese Relations and the Empire Quota in the Postwar Campaign to Repeal Asian Exclusion,” *Pacific Historical Review* 87, no. 4 (November 1, 2018): 667–701, 671.

<sup>140</sup> Immigration and Nationality Act, 66 Stat. 163 (1952), Section 212(e).

also expanded powers of deportation targeting such accused Communists.<sup>141</sup>

President Truman vetoed the bill on the grounds that it was discriminatory and urged lawmakers to present an immigration policy that would be “fair to all,” that would not substitute “totalitarian vengeance for democratic justice.”<sup>142</sup> On June 27, 1952, the president’s veto was overruled in the Senate, 57 to 26, and in the House, 278 to 113.<sup>143</sup> The *New York Times* editorialized, “This legislation is unfair and unwise. It is hard to understand how so many legislators with fairly good voting records stood for it.”<sup>144</sup> The *Washington Post* called it “profoundly un-American” and claimed it intensified the “underlying exclusionist philosophy which characterized the Immigration Act of 1924.”<sup>145</sup> The bill was opposed by the AFL, the CIO, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, the National Catholic Welfare Council, and a dozen other groups.<sup>146</sup>

Why would the Japanese American community support such a bill? Despite its flaws, the McCarran-Walter Act also promised an immediate and significant benefit to the Japanese American community—after 25 years without the ability to vote or own land, eighty-five thousand Issei stood to gain United States citizenship from its passage.<sup>147</sup> Previous accounts of the bill’s passage have tended to paint Japanese Americans as relatively unquestioning supporters of this bill who ignored the discrimination against progressives and other Asian American groups, particularly

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<sup>141</sup> Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 237.

<sup>142</sup> Veto of Bill To Revise the Laws Relating to Immigration, Naturalization, and Nationality, Pub. Papers 182 (1952).

<sup>143</sup> Murrey Marder, “Veto Killed; Alien Laws Revamped,” *The Washington Post*, June 28, 1952, 1.

<sup>144</sup> “Victory for a Bad Bill,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1952, 18.

<sup>145</sup> “Exclusion Bill,” *The Washington Post*, June 16, 1952, 8.

<sup>146</sup> “What Price Victory?” *Scene*, August 1952, 14.

<sup>147</sup> Diane C. Fujino, “Cold War Activism and Japanese American Exceptionalism,” *Pacific Historical Review* 87, no. 2 (May 1, 2018): 264–304, 265.

Chinese Americans, who were marked as communists.<sup>148</sup> Many people in the Japanese American community were indeed supportive of the bill. JACL leaders Mike Masaoka and Richard Akagi lobbied for the passage of the bill and Akagi testified in favor of the bill before a Presidential Commission. When President Truman vetoed the bill because he could not “strike down the bars that prejudice has erected without, at the same time, establishing new discrimination against the peoples of Asia,” the JACL redoubled their efforts to get Congress to override the veto.<sup>149</sup> In the pages of the *Pacific Citizen*, the press organ of the JACL, the victory was celebrated as a “recognition of [Issei] worth by the country they adopted and called their own.”<sup>150</sup> Commentators credited the JACL with a significant role in the bill’s passage, writing, “a minority group working in the democratic tradition has been able to achieve those goals which it set for itself.”<sup>151</sup>



Figure 4.1. Issei women studying English in anticipation of the repeal of “alien eligibility” for citizenship. Martha Hoday, “Debate on HJR 238,” *Scene*, August 1950, 11. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

<sup>148</sup> See William Tamayo, “Asian Americans and the McCarran-Walter Act,” in *Asian Americans and Congress: A Documentary History*, ed. Hyung-chan Kim (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 337–528. For contrasting perspective, see Fujino, “Cold War Activism and Japanese American Exceptionalism.”

<sup>149</sup> Veto message of President Truman to HR 5678, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, House, Doc. No. 520.

<sup>150</sup> “The Issei Dream Realized,” *Pacific Citizen*, July 5, 1952, 4.

<sup>151</sup> “Masaoka Will Write History of Naturalization Bill Fight,” *Pacific Citizen*, July 12, 1954, 1.

But *Scene's* coverage of the Immigration Act provides a nuanced view of Japanese American attitudes towards the act, which were complicated by tension between desires for Issei citizenship and principles of solidarity. As noted in earlier chapters, the editors of *Scene* had many personal and institutional ties to the JACL, and as the bill circulated in Congress, the magazine published editorials supporting the efforts to win citizenship rights, specifically connecting their establishment and American political success in Asia. One editorial, critiquing the racism of the United States' exclusionist policies, read, "At home, we have yet to confer *legal* racial equality upon the parents of men who died for America—because those parents are of Asiatic descent. Yet, positive action in such a matter as this might well be the first step toward the ultimate defeat of communism in Asia."<sup>152</sup>

This assertion was an interesting blend of pre-war Americanist, progressive, and bridge political strategies—the men who "died for America" did so partly at the behest of Masaoka and his calls for cooperation. However, *Scene* suggested that in order to fulfill its ideals, it was time for the U.S. to recognize that sacrifice by conferring citizenship for Issei. If they did not, it would damage the impression those ideals made in Asia. The editorial concluded, "As a weapon in the psychological warfare against communism in Asia, [equal citizenship rights for Issei] would be equally as potent as any atom bomb."<sup>153</sup> When the bill finally passed, *Scene* lauded the naturalization of the Issei, writing that the law wiped out barriers to "genuine American-Japanese goodwill and understanding" and publishing photos of so-called "Pioneer Night" naturalization celebrations<sup>154</sup>.

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<sup>152</sup> "Equal of Any Atom Bomb," *Scene*, September 1950, 26.

<sup>153</sup> "Equal of Any Atom Bomb," *Scene*, September 1950, 26.

<sup>154</sup> "What Price Victory?" *Scene*, August 1952, 14; "Big Day for Isseis," *Scene*, August 1952, 12.

However, the magazine's celebration was marked by some regret at how the victory had been achieved. Supporting the Immigration Act was not in keeping with the commitments to equality and freedom that *Scene* purported to demonstrate to Japan. In the August 1952 issue, the same one that included celebration photos, *Scene* editors wrote, "The success for JACL-ADC objectives leaves in its wake, for all Niseis [sic], the problem of rebuilding their relations with groups that for 10 years helped in the Nisei struggle to emerge from the setback of mass evacuation." The editorial concluded, "It may turn out that too high a price was paid in 1952."<sup>155</sup> Another editorial, published in December, said that advocates of the bill's passage had "asked us to put blinders to our eyes and cotton to our ears [to] those whose company had comforted us in our years of adversity," and reminded readers of the JACL's promise to help those who suffered discrimination as the result of the law.<sup>156</sup> *Scene's Italics* column was often filled with viewpoints from both sides of the debate—in fact, some of the quotes included in *Italics* that supported the bill were from *Scene* contributors writing in other publications.<sup>157</sup> Still, the collective voice of *Scene* was critical of the act, and it stood nearly alone among Japanese American *publications* in taking that position.

Despite their earlier connection of Issei citizenship rights and support for the United States in Japan, *Scene* did try to convince Japanese readers of the exclusionist and hypocritical nature of the McCarran-Walter Act specifically by publishing negative anecdotes of Japanese immigrants affected by it. For example, in November 1953, the magazine published an article about the case of Musei Tokugawa, a well-known Japanese journalist who applied for a visa to the United States to be reunited with his

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<sup>155</sup> "What Price Victory?" *Scene*, August 1952, 14.

<sup>156</sup> "Does the promise mean performance?" *Scene*, December 1952, 16.

<sup>157</sup> See quotes from Min Yasui and Larry Tajiri, "Italics," *Scene*, July 1952, 21.

daughter Akiko. Tokugawa's visa was denied because he was reportedly associated with Communist groups in Japan, a shock to those who knew him in Japan as a conservative. Although Tokugawa was ultimately allowed to explain himself, *Scene* called this ability to defend oneself against the allegations "rare and unusual under the McCarran Act." The editorial concluded, "It does appear that this Act, widely applauded by many U.S. Japanese, has features that should be re-studied where it tends to exclude friends of the United States."<sup>158</sup> The connection of this story, which made headlines in Japan, to the un-American red-baiting happening in the United States was an effort to diminish the act's reputation in the eyes of Japanese readers.

Letters to the editors about the Immigration Act and *Scene's* response to it streamed in for months after the act was passed. There was a mix of reactions—some expressed disgust that *Scene* had published editorials critical of the bill at all, others praised *Scene* for its conscience. Richard Akagi, the associate legislative director who testified at the Presidential Commission, wrote a letter defending the JACL's actions that took up nearly an entire page.<sup>159</sup> Allusions to American ideals were shot through many of the letters. One woman wrote that the bill discriminated "on the basis of color, race, and religion," echoing the language of the Fifteenth Amendment's phrasing, "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."<sup>160</sup> Akagi claimed that progressive groups wouldn't hold the act against the JACL because of their devotion to American freedoms—"Freedom of speech, after all, is but the right to differ."<sup>161</sup> The organization also made use of similar rhetoric that had been used to justify the JACL's support of the internment—cooperate now, protest later, it suggested, promising to offer legal and

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<sup>158</sup> "Justice triumphed despite the law," *Scene*, November 1953, 21.

<sup>159</sup> Letter from Richard Akagi, *Scene*, November 1952, 6.

<sup>160</sup> Letter from Anna Hohri, *Scene*, November 1952, 6.

<sup>161</sup> Letter from Richard Akagi, *Scene*, November 1952, 6.

political aid to those who were negatively impacted by the bill.<sup>162</sup> In a speech after the act's passage, Richard Akagi explained, "We are faced with two alternatives. Either we accept the remedial change offered by the omnibus bill or get no improvements at all in the immediate future, since the Congress of the United States has clearly indicated that the reforms advocated by those opposed to the Walter-McCarran [sic] bill are unacceptable."<sup>163</sup>

Tensions over the proper response to Communism were also evident in some responses. For some ardent anti-communists, the threat of Communism justified unsavory alliances—one reader wrote that working with anti-Semites on the act was not problematic because "the Communists were lined up against it."<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, a reader named Milton Kano sarcastically wrote that in working with McCarran, the JACL had "[identified] itself with the venerable Senator's political marks too," adding, "That's real anti-discrimination... if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."<sup>165</sup> In highlighting the irony of the JACL allying with nativists, Kano prioritized the integrity of American ideals over the strategic benefits of supporting intolerant anti-communists. Thus, the magazine's coverage and the comments from readers projected an ambivalence to the magazine's international audiences, complicating the chipper images of American civil rights projected by other media.

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In addition to the outcome of specific bills or government decisions, the

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<sup>162</sup> "Does the promise mean performance?" *Scene*, December 1952, 16.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in Greg Robinson, "Remembering the McCarran-Walter Act," *Nichi Bei*, July 11, 2013, <https://www.nichihei.org/2013/07/the-great-unknown-and-the-unknown-great-remembering-the-mccarran-walter-act/>.

<sup>164</sup> Letter from Hitoshi Kiyota, October 1952, 3.

<sup>165</sup> Letter from Milton Kano, *Scene*, December 1952, 4.

dissemination of Christian values in Japan also forced *Scene* to make critical decisions over how and what information to ferry to its audiences. In the case of religion, the layered aims of the American occupation were somewhat paradoxical—on one hand, a key component of the idealized American model of democracy was freedom of religion. The Civil Liberties Directive issued by SCAP in October 1945 was meant to secure the freedom of religion in Japan, and the SCAP-directed constitution of 1946 also guaranteed that no religious organizations would be privileged by the state.<sup>166</sup>

On the other hand, though, the policy of containment produced a paradigm of two all-encompassing camps—one camp that was animated by a mixture of capitalism, democracy, and Christian values, and one that purportedly sought to annihilate these values and replace them with “godless” communism. As scholar Okazaki Masafumi points out, many SCAP administrators, not the least of which was Commander Douglas MacArthur himself, were committed to the notion that Christianity would provide “a sure and stable foundation on which to build a democratic nation” in Japan.<sup>167</sup> Many of these administrators supported Christian projects in Japan like the International Christian University, which in the word of Chester Nimitz, Admiral of the U.S. Navy, “a powerful lever in keeping Japan” from becoming “a slave to Communism.”<sup>168</sup>

This vision of Christianity in Japan was more political than cultural. For example, one missionary said that “the two great ideological forces which have thus been locked in battle for the right to fill the Japanese void are Christianity and communism.”<sup>169</sup> This purported rivalry with communism, a political system, suggests that Christianity was

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<sup>166</sup> Masafumi, “Chrysanthemum and Christianity,” 401.

<sup>167</sup> Lawrence S. Wittner, “MacArthur and the Missionaries: God and Man in Occupied Japan,” *Pacific Historical Review* 40, no. 1 (February 1, 1971): 77–98, 82.

<sup>168</sup> “What effect has the Korean war on the International Christian University?” *Scene*, October 1950, 20.

<sup>169</sup> Paul Rusch, “Can the U.S. count on Japan in a war?” *Scene*, February 1951, 22.

seen comparably as a set of political ideals. Indeed, Togo Tanaka wrote in *Scene* that there was a “singular tendency in Japan to identify democracy closely with Christianity.”<sup>170</sup> The governor of the Bank of Japan was even quoted saying, “I am not a Christian. However, I have come to the conclusion that nothing but a Christian philosophy underlying Japan’s democracy will ever put us through.”<sup>171</sup>

The fight for “freedom of religion” was also complicated by the view that the Shinto belief system was a foundation for Japanese imperialist aggression.<sup>172</sup> Identified by the head of the Religious and Cultural Resources Division of SCAP as “the national cult officially sponsored by the government for the purpose of inculcating loyalty and obedience,”<sup>173</sup> Shinto was believed to be the catalyst for whole-hearted and even suicidal commitment of the Japanese to the war effort.<sup>174</sup> It was thus an obstacle to the ability of Americans to shape Japanese politics, giving the SCAP government a less humanist motivation for minimizing the influence of Shinto as much as possible.

Thus, the ability of Japanese Americans to encourage the adoption of Christianity in Japan was a potential contribution to the American state project in Japan. It should certainly be noted that this encouragement was not always solely strategic— there were many Japanese Americans who were firm believers in Christianity on its own terms who hoped to spread the faith in Japan. But *Scene* also did explicitly link the political position of the Japanese Americans with Christianity through the construct of containment.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Togo Tanaka, “Harbinger of Peace,” *Scene*, May 1950, 14.

<sup>171</sup> Togo Tanaka, “Harbinger of Peace,” *Scene*, May 1950, 13.

<sup>172</sup> Okazaki Masafumi, “Chrysanthemum and Christianity: Education and Religion in Occupied Japan, 1945—1952,” *Pacific Historical Review* 79, no. 3 (August 1, 2010): 393–417, 395.

<sup>173</sup> Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers., *Religions in Japan: Buddhism, Shinto, Christianity*, (Rutland, Vt.: C. E. Tuttle Co., 1955), 107.

<sup>174</sup> 44 percent of the American survey respondents believed that the emperor was “the only Japanese god.” *Japan and the Postwar World* (Denver: National Opinion Research Center, 1946), 14.

<sup>175</sup> Unlike the indeterminate shaping of *Scene*’s collective opinions on many other issues, much of this

The magazine gave a significant portion of its coverage over to the discussion and dissemination of “Christian values” in both the United States and Japan. For example, it featured ongoing coverage of a Christian planned community in Yamanishi Prefecture called the Kiyosato Educational Experiment Project (KEEP) and later projects inspired by it. Intended as “testing ground of ‘Christian democracy,’” Kiyosato featured a town hall, vocational school, health center, and experimental farm, and *Scene* encouraged readers to donate to the project on the grounds that it would prevent the spread of communism.<sup>176</sup> Similarly, the magazine encouraged support for the establishment of the International Christian University, a university started by missionaries in Japan that was paradoxically “Christian in every aspect” but also reportedly made “no attempt at regimentation” and sought funding from the Japanese government.<sup>177</sup>

In the December 1949 issue, just the fifth issue to be published, the editors published a feature answering the question, “Will Japan become a Christian nation?” An affirmative response and a negative response were published side by side. The affirmative respondent was Reverend Joseph Kitagawa, the unusual Japanese immigrant who arrived in the United States in the 1940s as a chaplain for a Chicago church. The negative respondent was Percy Whiteing, a white journalist and teacher who lived in Japan for 37 years. Whiteing’s response seemed a bit off-topic, in part because it was excerpted from another work that was not intended to answer the question posed.

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linkage can be traced to Lieutenant Colonel Paul Rusch. After many years as a missionary and a member of the SCAP government, he headed up the Kiyosato project. One of the few non-Japanese Americans working on *Scene*, Rusch was an influential figure at the magazine—he wrote close to a dozen letters and articles about his projects in Japan and served on *Scene*’s advisory board for several years. Tanaka, “Kiyosato,” 51.

<sup>176</sup> Togo Tanaka, “Kiyosato – A New England Village in Japan,” *Scene*, October 1949, 52. For example of calls for donation, see “Kiyosato needs a jeep!” *Scene*, March 1952, 26-27.

<sup>177</sup> Togo Tanaka, “Harbinger of Peace,” *Scene*, May 1950, 13-14.

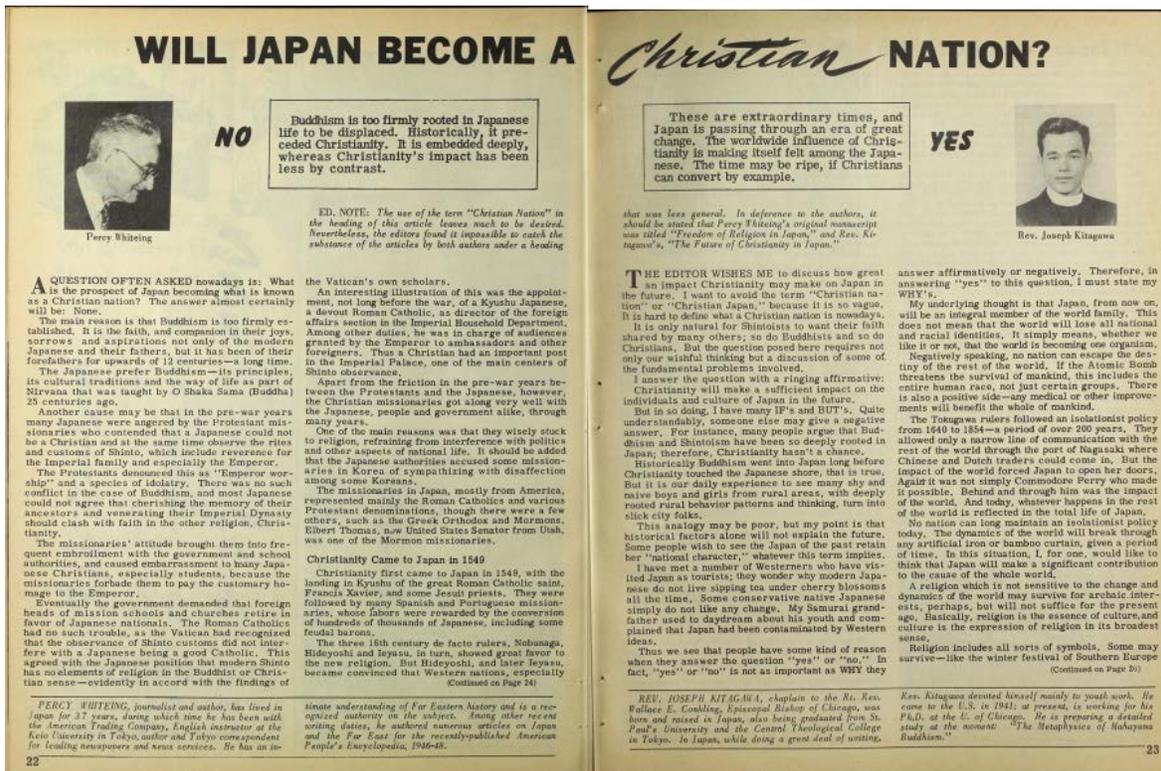


Figure 4.2. “Will Japan Become A Christian Nation?” *Scene*, December 1949, 22-23. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

Kitagawa’s assessment of Christianity in Japan was an affirmation of Japan’s participation in the universalization of “American” values. Kitagawa’s argument began with the containment-era premise that the world was interconnected and that either communism or capitalism would win a global ontological triumph. He wrote, “No nation can long maintain an isolationist policy today. The dynamics of the world will break through any iron curtain or bamboo curtain.” For Kitagawa, “Religion is the essence of culture,” and in this unified world, “a religion of racial, national, or caste group” would not suffice, a clear allusion to Shinto and its association with nationalism.<sup>178</sup> According to Kitagawa, Christianity’s universal appeal would contribute

<sup>178</sup> Joseph Kitagawa, “Will Japan Become a Christian Nation?” *Scene*, December 1949, 23.

to a unified global culture, while also allowing local variations that would make it “richer in quality.”<sup>179</sup>

But not everyone was on board with the dissemination of Christianity in service of American democracy. For one, Christian missionaries did not necessarily have a good reputation in Japan or East Asia more broadly. According to one letter to the editor in *Scene* that cited the example of the opium wars, “Christianity’s adherents in Asia have chalked up an extraordinarily bad record. And I, for one, do not believe that the Japanese or any of the other Asiatic peoples will be attracted to Christianity by the examples of its chief advocates.”<sup>180</sup>

Furthermore, the notion that Japanese Americans would help inculcate American values through Christianity was not necessarily accurate either. It was true that about 20 to 25 percent of Japanese Americans described themselves as Christians, many of whom were attracted by the community networks that coalesced around ethnic Christian churches through women’s clubs, Sunday schools, and other church activities.<sup>181</sup> However, Christianity had not stopped the spread of Japanese nationalism in pre-war communities. According to historian Brian Hayashi, at least among Japanese immigrants in the United States in the pre-war period, “Japanese nationalism and cultural identification with Japan were compatible with the new religion.”<sup>182</sup> Thus, its characterization as an instrument of American interests did not hold in the Japanese American community.

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<sup>179</sup> Kitagawa, “Will Japan Become a Christian Nation?” 43.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from Renzo Yamato, *Scene*, August 1950, 7. Indeed, pre-war missionaries had not been very successful— in 1951, less than 0.5 percent of Japan’s population was Christian. Masafumi, “Chrysanthemum and Christianity,” 394.

<sup>181</sup> Anne M. Blankenship, *Christianity, Social Justice, and the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 7.

<sup>182</sup> Brian Masaru Hayashi, *For the Sake of Our Japanese Brethren: Assimilation, Nationalism, and Protestantism among the Japanese of Los Angeles, 1895-1942*, Asian America (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1995), 7.

Letters to the editors of *Scene* demonstrate that a belief among some that in Christianity was actually at odds with modernity and democracy. One of the most controversial responses to Kitagawa's article on Christianity was that of William M. Hohri, who implored readers to consider their own ability to carry out the tenets and practices of Christianity, which to him were imbued with blind fanaticism and subservience.<sup>183</sup> He wrote, "Could I harm an enemy out of simple duty (deference to a supreme being)? ... Should I not feel utterly ridiculous if, so to speak, a woman washed my feet in expensive perfume? ... The answers to these questions are immediate. And to the general question, 'Can I become Christian?' the answer is obviously negative: Christianity is absurd."<sup>184</sup>

Hohri went further than just denouncing the practices of Christianity based on his own beliefs.<sup>185</sup> He argued that "the ethos of Christianity is dominantly Eastern, much more Japanese than American." According to Hohri, Christianity fostered the same fanaticism and subservience that people associated with Shinto and imperial aggression, just harnessed in a way that was more amenable to Western thought. For one example, he wrote, "By their famous 'Banzai!' war cry we know the Japanese are also capable of a sense of duty and devotion to the transcendent supreme being which we Americans find repugnant but which resembles, in spite of our repugnance, the sacrificial sense of duty of Jesus." He instead placed himself as part of a collective—"we Americans"—for whom unchallenged faith is inimical. This suggested that promoting Christianity, as *Scene* did with their supportive coverage of Christian missionary

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<sup>183</sup> Hohri later spearheaded efforts for redress for Japanese Americans. Martha Nakagawa. "William Hohri," *Densho Encyclopedia* <https://encyclopedia.densho.org/William%20Hohri> (accessed Mar 28 2021).

<sup>184</sup> Letter from William Hohri, *Scene*, February 1950, 4.

<sup>185</sup> Interestingly, Hohri later became a very active member of the United Methodist Church and much of his redress activism was done in concert with the UMC. This could be interpreted as a change of heart or perhaps evidence of the social rather than religious nature of Nisei church involvement.

projects like Kiyosato and the International Christian University, was inimical to the American ideal of freedom of speech and thought. Hohri's view was not completely marginal—in the May issue, the editors reported that 9 of the 21 letters received in response to Hohri's letter were favorable to his position.<sup>186</sup>

While *Scene* editors seemed committed to the multicultural, tolerant version of American democracy that they advocated for elsewhere, they were not completely immune to the Red-Scare-esque hardening of binary ideology. However, as demonstrated by Hohri and others, just as *Scene* held the United States government accountable for their ideological hypocrisy in the case of the McCarran-Walter Act, *Scene* readers were not afraid to point out *Scene's* lapses. Perhaps it is a testament to the magazine's ultimate adherence to the values they professed that these dissenting letters, were, in fact, printed. In any case, the commentary by editors and readers of *Scene* on American political ideals and their applications were a key component of paradigm of the Japanese American ferryman.

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<sup>186</sup> Editor's response to letter from H. Nishiyama, *Scene*, May 1950, 8.

## Conclusion

On Friday, September 9, 1955, journalist Henry Mori noted in the *Pacific Citizen* that *Scene* was merging with the Los Angeles magazine *Fortnight*, signaling “an end to an all-English Nisei magazine, which held up the longest among such publishing ventures attempted by persons of Japanese ancestry.” There was a mournful tone to Mori’s announcement. “The future of any Nisei magazine business appears gloomy,” he wrote, “We will probably not see another one in our generation.”<sup>187</sup>

Indeed, there are nearly no other examples of similar publications for almost two decades after *Scene* ended. According to Togo Tanaka, it had always been “a labor of love” rather than a money-making enterprise.<sup>188</sup> Part of the problem that *Scene* faced was one described by Mori in the editorial—although *Scene* prided itself on its varied audience, much of the appetite for such a magazine was from the Japanese American community. With what Tajiri called “the limited Japanese American market,” the costs of producing the magazine were not offset by its sales, even to a sizable proportion of the Japanese American population. Even after the magazine was sold to Jaffe Publications and moved to Los Angeles in 1954, it limped along through that final year until it was ultimately shuttered.<sup>189</sup>

In addition to its problems finding a market for the magazine, the importance of the Japanese ferryman fell out of view in the latter half of the 1950s. After fall of Diem Bien Phu in Vietnam and the establishment of domino theory, the focus on Asia shifted towards shoring up Vietnam. Debates over Communism in Japan was far from over—

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<sup>187</sup> Henry Mori, “Scene Magazine Ends,” *Pacific Citizen*, September 9, 1955, 7.

<sup>188</sup> Tanaka, *REgenerations Oral History Project*, 441.

<sup>189</sup> Brian Niiya. “Scene (magazine),” *Densho Encyclopedia*  
[https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Scene%20\(magazine\)](https://encyclopedia.densho.org/Scene%20(magazine)) (accessed Mar 21 2021).

for example, in 1960, millions in Japan participated in protests against the revision of the 1950 Security Treaty with the United States, also called Anpo, whose provisions committed Japan to supporting the United States in potential wars of containment.<sup>190</sup> But public attention in the United States was no longer focused on Japan.

As they had before the war, Japanese Americans looked to other political styles in the hopes that they would be more effective. As the civil rights movement developed in the African American community, Japanese Americans began to work in concert with other domestic minorities, shifting the focus away from their foreign policy instrumentalism.<sup>191</sup> The later development of the field of Asian American studies complicated essentialized visions of Asian American participation in American society, resisting defined roles for Asian Americans based solely on their ethnicity.

However, for the brief moment after the end of the war and before the Cold War turned its focus to Vietnam, *Scene* developed one potential paradigm to assert the value of Japanese Americans in postwar American society. In the strategic depiction of a culturally valuable Japan to which Japanese Americans had a racialized connection, *Scene* conferred value on Japanese Americans as ambassadors of Japanese culture for an interested American public. At the same time, *Scene* established the political inferiority of the Japanese, while also suggesting their potential for political assimilation, a dynamic that empowered Japanese Americans as interpreters of democracy from the United States to Japan. *Scene* hoped to leverage this key role in Cold War foreign policy to bolster their claims in the struggle for civil rights in the United States. This ferryman paradigm was indelibly shaped by pre-war political styles, the wartime definitions of

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<sup>190</sup> Nick Kapur, *Japan at the Crossroads: Conflict and Compromise after Anpo* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018).

<sup>191</sup> See Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*.

loyalty, and the postwar conflicts over political concessions, making an important thread for a holistic understanding of Japanese American identity formation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

While students of history looking back today can certainly be saddened or angered by the fact that members of the Japanese American community felt the need to “prove themselves” at all, the study of such strategies still offers valuable insight into the ways that ethnic communities tried to create space for themselves in a white-dominated United States. In developing the paradigm of the ferryman, *Scene* produced a role that only Japanese Americans could fill, even if it relied on essentializing tropes about the culture and politics of Japan and limiting conceptions of racial difference.

Though the magazine itself is understudied, the themes that *Scene* dealt with continue to be important today. The role of immigrant groups in the foreign policies of their adopted nations is arguably as, or even more, important today than it was during *Scene*'s era, and diaspora and transnational studies continue to dissect and evaluate that role. Despite some facets of its portrayal of Asians and Asian Americans that would be considered reductionist by cultural theorists today, *Scene* fundamentally provided a unique space for representation and celebration of Asian Americans that was unusual in the white-washed popular culture of the 1950s. It was, in many ways, a precursor to magazines like *Gidra* in the 1970s, *A Magazine* in the 1990s, and *Banana* today, which all focused on carving out spaces by and for Asian Americans.<sup>192</sup> As one Nisei reader wrote in August 1950, describing the value of *Scene* for her own life and sense of self, “I’ve always wanted to see a magazine with a distinctly Nisei flavor... *Scene* has done it.”<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> See Camille Bromley, “How magazines made Asian America,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, July 9, 2019, <https://www.cjr.org/analysis/how-magazines-made-asian-america.php>.

<sup>193</sup> Letter from Masao Ekimoto, *Scene*, August 1950, 8.

## Appendix A: Readership Calculations

Calculations of *Scene's* readership rate based on the assumptions that the circulation was between 18,000 and 35,000 readers<sup>194</sup>, 15/16 of readers were members of the Japanese American community,<sup>195</sup> and the Japanese American population of 1950 was 141,768.<sup>196</sup> Calculations of *Ebony's* readership rate based on the assumptions that *Ebony* had 500,000 subscribers in 1951,<sup>197</sup> and the African American population was 15 million in 1950.<sup>198</sup> I was not able to find out what percentage of *Ebony* subscribers were African American, so the estimate may be high. Calculations of *Reader's Digest's* readership rate are based on the assumptions that the magazine had 9 million subscribers in 1950<sup>199</sup> and the U.S. population was 152 million in 1950.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> "Help us win more friends for the Isseis, Niseis, Kibeis Sanseis," August 1950, *Scene*, 41.; Larry Tajiri, "Importance of 'Scene' Magazine," *Pacific Citizen*, September 23, 1955, 8.

<sup>195</sup> Corky Kawasaki, "From the Staff," *Scene*, July 1950, 8.

<sup>196</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Asian and Pacific Islander, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States: 1940 and 1950, 2002. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>

<sup>197</sup> "Ebony Mag Nears 500,000 Mark," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 19 July 1951.

<sup>198</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, United States - Race and Hispanic Origin: 1790 to 1990, 2002. <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf>

<sup>199</sup> "Reader's Digest ." St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture. *Encyclopedia.com*. (March 16, 2021). <https://www.encyclopedia.com/media/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/readers-digest>

<sup>200</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. Population of the United States, Territories, Possessions, 1790 to 1950, 1952. <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1950/population-volume-1/vol-01-04.pdf>

## Appendix B: “Timeless Culture” and Japanese Industry

The promotion of products in *Scene* was not *exclusively* bound to cultural products—ads for banks, soy sauce, cameras, and sewing machines, most located or produced in Japan, were also common. These manufactured goods were seen by many as the key to Japan’s recovery, and *Scene* advertised for them heavily.<sup>201</sup> But such notions do complicate the assertion that *Scene* depicted Japan as *only* as technologically backward. Before the war, the camera industry had been dominated by German companies. However, after the war, Japanese camera companies were able to rebuild more quickly than German ones. In 1951, photographers for *Life* passing through Japan bought Nikon lenses for their cameras and were shocked at their high quality.<sup>202</sup>

Not everyone agreed that Japan’s goods were of high quality—*Scene*’s June 1954 issue featured an editorial calling for Japanese manufacturers to stop producing “junk” commercial products, and “apply their traditional artistic standards.”<sup>203</sup> This perspective conformed more with the notion that Japan is strongest in the cultural and artistic realms. In the economic interests of Japanese postwar recovery, though, it was perhaps more strategic not to rely solely on labor-intensive cultural products. Thus, *Scene* also encouraged the purchase of Japanese manufactured consumer goods. In this appendix, I will detail one example that illustrates the conflicting urges to portray a “timeless culture” and to encourage Japanese industry.

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<sup>201</sup> See Aaron Forsberg, *America and the Japanese Miracle: The Cold War Context of Japan’s Postwar Economic Revival, 1950-1960*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) for more about American foreign policy interest in Japanese postwar recovery.

<sup>202</sup> “Worldwide Recognition of Japanese Products,” One Minute Story, Nikon, March 18, 2021, [https://www.nikon.com/about/corporate/history/oneminutestory/1950\\_nikkor/](https://www.nikon.com/about/corporate/history/oneminutestory/1950_nikkor/).

<sup>203</sup> “Japan’s ‘Modern,’” *Scene*, June 1954, 20.

In June 1953, *Scene* ran a photo contest as a celebration of the centennial of Commodore Perry's arrival in Japan. More than 500 photographs were submitted by Japanese photographers in Japan. The winning photographs were displayed in the Chicago Public Library, where the exhibit purportedly received 1,000 visitors per day during its run.<sup>204</sup> *Scene* clearly hoped the contest would encourage people to buy Japanese cameras—after the feature revealing the winning photographs, the magazine included three pages of advertisements for Japanese cameras. As such, the technical prowess of the cameras was lauded in order to sell them, but this was kept separate from the depictions of Japanese *people*.

The team of judges was led by a Japanese American named Harry Shigeta. Although born in Japan, Shigeta was an ideal image of a patriotic, assimilated Japanese American. Born Kinzu Shigeta in 1887, he had wanted to come to the United States from a young age. "I heard of a wonderful country far beyond the sea where the miracles of the modern civilization were a daily occurrence," he told one interviewer, "I decided then and there that I would reach that land."<sup>205</sup> Shigeta arrived in the United States on his own at age 15. He quickly changed his name to Harry and began learning English. He built a reputation as an inventive commercial photographer and ran a photography studio in Chicago for many years.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> "Behind the Scene," *Scene*, July 1953, 5.

<sup>205</sup> Willard Morgan, "Still life," *The Complete Photographer*, 1943, iv.

<sup>206</sup> Christian A. Peterson, "Harry K. Shigeta of Chicago," *History of Photography* 22, no. 2 (June 1998): 183–98.



Figure B.1. The first-place winner. Mitsuhiro Shinoda, "Window," *Scene*, June 1953, 24. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.



Figure B.2. The second-place winner. Shigeo Yanagisawa, "Fisherman," *Scene*, June 1953, 28. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.



Figure B.3. The third-place winner. Koyo Hosoe, "In Search of Pasture," *Scene*, June 1953, 29. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.



Figure B.4. The other third place winner. Koyo Gyotoku, "Basking," *Scene*, June 1953, 30. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.

The relationships of power in this contest are interesting to consider with the

framework of the ferryman—the contest involved Japanese photographers depicting Japan, judged by a Japanese American for consumption by Americans. The winning photographs were all pastoral shots that emphasized a seemingly archaic but aesthetically pleasing way of life. The woman in the first photograph gazes through the window of a wooden house, not unlike the ones Harold Buck complained about. In the second photograph, a peasant with a straw hat is captured throwing out a net, and in the bottom left, herders are seen guiding a line of sheep through the snow. These two images suggest a connection with the land, far from the scenes of sterile laboratories of the Manhattan Project or slick offices of Madison Avenue ad men associated with midcentury “progress.” The wooden toy and the cotton robes of the man in the fourth photo also enforce the image of Japanese pastoralism. In his comments on the photograph, Shigeta notes the elements that “bespeak the rural life.” According to Shigeta, “One can almost smell the odor of the good earth.”<sup>207</sup> While the winning photos are certainly beautiful, they also reinforce the notion of Japan as a timeless, pastoral country. As shown by the photographs below, not all of the images submitted had similar subject matter, and Japan was certainly not universally pastoral. But the pastoral images were the ones selected as ideal depictions of Japan for the readers of *Scene* and the visitors to the Chicago library exhibit.

The winning photographers were praised for their aesthetic judgment—in his commentary on the photos, Shigeta lauded many of the same uses of line and form that are praised in the article about Japanese art and the West. This, then, was a recognition of aesthetics that is implicitly Japanese. However, the *subjects* of the photographs that

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<sup>207</sup> Harry Shigeta, “First Award,” *Scene*, June 1953, 25. This phrase echoes the title of Pearl Buck’s account of Chinese village life, published in 1931, and a winner of great acclaim and sympathy from the United States.

received awards affirm the notion of Japan as less modern than the United States.

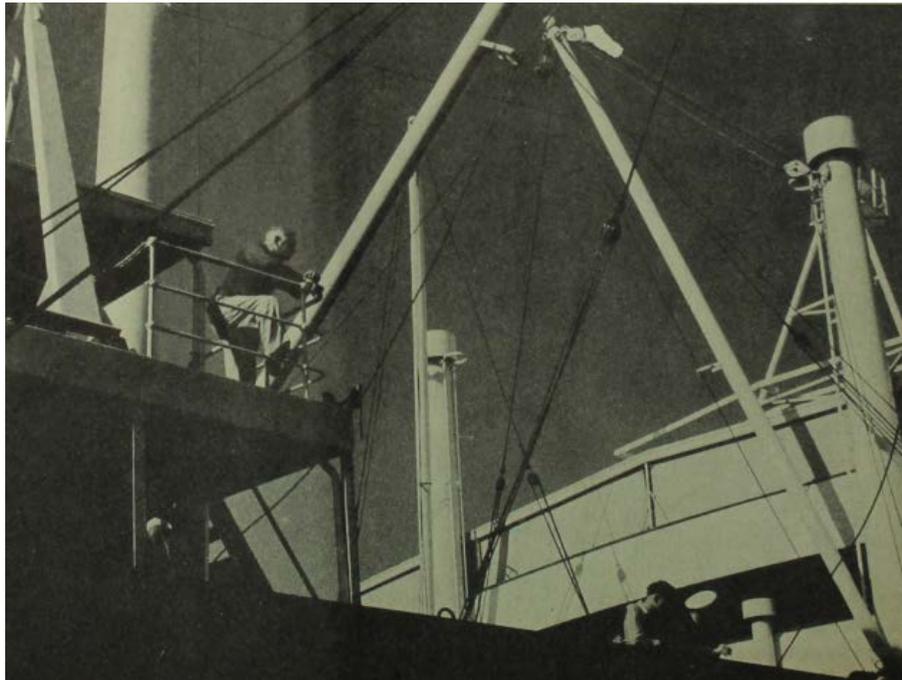


Figure B.5. A submission to the Scene contest that did not win a prize. Kenro Nagura, "Seamen," *Scene*, April 1953, 36. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.



Figure B.6. Another submission to the *Scene* contest that did not win a prize. Tsuna Inouye, "Cover," *Scene*, June 1953, 7. Courtesy of SNVC, Densho and JANM.



Figure B.7. Forty-five cameramen photographing the Japanese cabinet. "Cameramen at PM's Residence," AP Images, ID 541217011. Courtesy of the Associated Press.



Figure B.8. A photo of Tokyo taken in March 1955. "Night Photoflash from Radio Tokyo," AP Images, ID 550326038. Courtesy of the Associated Press.

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For ease of reference, I have included here only works that are referenced multiple times or otherwise contributed substantively to the content of the thesis or my thinking about the topic. I have left out sources that are used solely for context on the broader time period or subject.

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