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Yuji Ichioka. *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese-American History.* Chang and Eiichiro Azuma. Preface by Eiichiro Azuma. Epilogue by Gordon H. Chang. Asian America Series. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. xxvii + 360 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8047-5147-6.

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Putting the Pieces Together

Yuji Ichioka invented the term "Asian American."

That in itself would justify a place in the annals of history and ethnic studies. Yuji Ichioka also helped assemble and catalog the first major Asian American historical collections, and built one of the most important Asian American studies programs in the country (Chapter 13). This posthumous collection of essays–most of which were selected by Ichioka for a book project similar to his first book, *Issei*[1]–takes a good look at where Ichioka came from as a scholar and activist, and also outlines some of the ongoing issues and directions of Japanese American history. Because these essays span a number of years and were not heavily edited, the book is sometimes repetitious, and there are some unanswered questions. But the issues with which Ichioka was struggling are still very much alive in the literature, except for those where the literature still hasn't quite caught up with him.

Azuma's decision to leave these posthumous writings intact with a minimal editorial hand is reasonable: a great deal of work would have been needed to create a smooth manuscript from these chapters (p. xiii). The decision to translate and include "*Dai nisei mondai*: Changing Japanese Immigrant Conceptions of the Second-Generation Problem, 1902-1941," (chapter two) is indicative: it was clearly the foundation on which many of the other chapters were built, and serves as a good introduction to the book in place of the incomplete one by Ichioka (chapter one), but a great deal of the chapter is repeated–often verbatim–in the other chapters which expand on it (p. xxii). There are also some interesting but undigested footnotes which sometimes extend to several pages in length and add significant context and content (e.g. n. 53, pp. 176-179, and n. 57, pp. 255-256). There are other places where a stronger editorial hand might have been warranted: Ichioka's frequent use of "rabid" as a political descriptor (pp. 23, 40, 98, 187) is perhaps the most egregious example of imprecise language.

The imprecision goes beyond word choice, though. These chapters point in some fascinating directions, but it's a collection of discourses and biographies in search of an argument. If I had to assign a thesis for this collection, it would be about the different effects of nationalism and racism on different generations of transnational communities, particularly about the way in which US racism and Japanese nationalism created anti-assimilationist pressure within the immigrant community, which in turn contributed to Japanese government interventions in the community, which enhanced American racism, ultimately resulting in the Internment. Nothing like this statement is present in the book, though. Both Ichioka and Azuma cite "generations" and "dualism" as the key themes, both of which are reasonably descriptive, but fail to provide much insight into what's happening.

Most scholarship on immigrants uses a generational model. Ichioka is trying to integrate the generational narratives and complicate them by adding the transnational interactions prompted by their distinct political and legal positions. In addition to revising the history of the first generation (*issei*), Ichioka argues that the second generation (*nisei*) was fundamentally different not just because of their greater linguistic facility but because they did not have an experience of life in Japan to draw on. Those that did, especially those who studied in Japan (*kibei*) or went on special tours for nisei (*kengakudan*), were often seen as "bridges" with a special role to play. As US citizens with Japanese backgrounds, nisei were expected to be both "100 percent American" and knowledgeable partisans of Japanese interests: Ichioka considers this "dualism" to be central to the nisei experience. This is greatly complicated by the fact that mainland nisei began to come of age in the late 1920s and 1930s, a period of great international tension between Japan and the US, and the dualism became increasingly untenable as Pearl Harbor approaches. The nisei also had difficulty in

Japan, where they were seen as ignorant, the descendants of undesirables and "adherents of Americanism" (p. 35). This tension between efforts to fully Americanize and efforts to fully Japanize the nisei is carefully described. What's lacking from most of these chapters is a sense of nisei as active agents of their own destinies. Several chapters describe energetic efforts to shift nisei opinion, and solve "the second-generation problem," (chapter 2) but conclude that those efforts were largely unsuccessful (pp. 45, 117-119). Unfortunately, this is one of the areas where the unfinished nature of the work is problematic. Ichioka never explains why these efforts fail or why these historical dead ends are interesting. The focus of this work is culture and politics, though, rather than social or economic history, and the range of discourses is important.

American racism colored everything about Japanese American politics and culture in this period. Everything in this book is about efforts to overcome racism against Japanese immigrants and native-born Japanese Americans, by proving their assimilation, their utility and their patriotism, or by escaping racism by returning to Japan. Ichioka himself describes nisei efforts to find acceptance as "pathetic but fervent" (p.45). Regarding Kazumaro Buddy Uno, the Nisei journalist who worked for Japan during WWII, Ichioka writes "How can the category of a disloyal Nisei have any meaning in a society that overwhelmingly rejected the Nisei on racial grounds? ... Japanese American history ... cannot and must not be an exclusive one of so-called loyal Japanese Americans. In order to fully comprehend the Nisei generation in all its *complexities*, it must become *inclusive*." (p. 171, emphasis in original). In spite of that, Ichioka doesn't significantly complicate the loyal-disloyal dichotomy, but he does open new questions by demonstrating strong pro-Japanese nationalism on the part of the first generation (chapter 8and chapter 9)–material which he himself considered too controversial to publish before the question of internment reparations was settled in the late 80s (p. xxiii). Japanese nationalism then becomes part of the debates around Japanese language and culture schools (chapter 4) and *kengakudan*, the study tours of Japan undertaken by nisei with the express intent of giving them a strong sense of their own origins and positive feelings towards their parents' culture (chapter 3).

The international component of this book is quite substantial. The list of prominent Japanese–names well-known to historians of modern Japan–actively engaged with emigrant community affairs is striking: industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi, cultural commentator Nitobe Inazo, educator Tsuda Umeko, diplomat-politician Shidehara Kijuro and politician Goto Shinpei. Consuls and ambassadors are frequently mentioned in early Japanese American history, usually as interlopers who interfere with the assimilation process or who sacrifice immigrant group priorities in pursuit of diplomatic ingratiation. This book goes well beyond simplistic narratives and presents Japanese government involvement in the immigrant community in substantial detail, including support for the *kengakudan* trips (chapter 3), active involvement in the Japanese-language school debate (chapter 4), support for scholars and journalists in the community (chapters 5 and 10), military intelligence gathering (chapter 9) and as a recipient of immigrant community largesse (chapter 8). That last deserves a bit more discussion: as the war between Japan and China became more intense in the late 1930s, Japanese immigrant communities became very active–as did most communities in Japan itself–in raising funds to support the military and expressing patriotic support in other ways. This created a great deal of tension, as nisei, organized under groups like the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), were largely uninvolved or actively hostile to issei efforts to engage them in Japan-oriented activities, and American authorities were suspicious of this unassimilated minority. Ichioka is very clear that there is no evidence of espionage, but, the community support of the Japanese conflict in China (chapter 8) and the 1941 Tachibana case (chapter 9) illuminate the close ties between prominent issei and Japanese military and diplomatic personnel, and that these ties could be considered security risks. Ichioka largely avoids the question of internment itself, but there is a short chapter on the death of a community leader in FBI custody during the internment (pp. 258-272).

Though Ichioka espouses a strong transnational and multilingual scholarly position, he is deeply suspicious of Japanese involvement in Japanese American history. Yamato Ichihashi, for example, wrote some of the first substantial works on the issei in North America, but his position at Stanford was effectively bought and paid for by the Japanese government, funneling money through the local community (chapter 10). In addition to being engaged in pro-Japanese public relations, Ichihashi was an elitist who considered most issei to be "far below the accepted social standard" (p. 244) and Hawai'i issei in particular to be "'scums' of Japan" and "undesirable" (p. 249), but he would never articulate such views in his published writings, which were always positive about the effects of Japanese immigration for the US and for Japan and for the immigrants themselves (p. 250). And, in spite of the importance of the transnational perspective in Ichioka's writing, he is very critical of Japanese schol-

ars and scholarship on the subject of overseas Japanese: in addition to their nasty habit of acquiring and archiving relevant materials in closed collections, he sees them as fundamentally uninterested in the community except as an object of study or "as extensions of Japanese society" (pp. 289-292). The overall picture is of a field at war with itself from the very beginning, largely due to the inability of Japanese to permit Japanese Americans to flourish on their own terms, though Ichioka is at least self-aware enough to acknowledge that some disagreements due to different perspectives are "unavoidable" (p. 292).

The focus on the mainland community leaves a significant gap in this analysis: Hawai'i nisei come of age roughly ten to twenty years earlier and are better integrated and less affected by the '30s. Nearly the only mentions of Hawai'i Japanese are the sensational Fukunaga murder (pp. 83-88), Ichihashi's denigration of Hawai'i issei, and John Stephan's research on Japanese invasion plans (pp. 155-156). But the Japanese community in Hawai'i was founded earlier and was as large as that in the continental United States, addressed many of the questions about schooling and Americanism first, and had a nisei generation that was generally older and apparently more active than that on the mainland.[2] It seems odd for Ichioka to treat these questions as though the West coast communities were grappling with them in a vacuum, when his own research shows important connections between these communities (pp. 24, 128). In his defense, the concluding autobiographical essay does cite the Hawai'i-mainland relationship as one which needed examination, along with the position of kibei and more comparative work on Japanese immigrant experiences elsewhere (p. 294).

Despite being an incomplete work, this collection still has a great deal to offer. Ichioka's insights into the state of the field and his efforts to move it in productive directions are worth serious consideration. It also offers a new window on Japanese history, and the relationship between the government and overseas Japanese. Several of these chapters would work very well in immigration or ethnic studies courses, and the whole should be required reading for graduate students and scholars interested in the past or future of Asian American studies.

Notes

[1]. Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*, New York : Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1988.

[2]. For a good overview of the same period, see the early chapters of Franklin Odo, *No Sword to Bury: Japanese Americans in Hawai'i during World War II*. Asian American History and Culture series edited by Sucheng Chan, David Palumbo-Liu and Michael Omi. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

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