

Masuda Hajimu. "Rumors of War: Immigration Disputes and the Social Construction of American-Japanese Relations, 1905-1913." *Diplomatic History* 33: 1 (January 2009): 1:37. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.2008.00745.x. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2008.00745.x>.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/reviews/PDF/Gabaccia-Hajimu.pdf>

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Masuda Hajimu analyzes an early-twentieth century moment when the "numberless, nameless people of Japan and the United States" became agitated by the possibility of impending war between their two countries (p. 1). Diplomats at the time did not share their sense of looming crisis. While there would be no war between Japan and the United States in the short term, Masuda is right to insist on the importance of this early outbreak of Pacific war fever. His article provides an excellent example of how to write an international history of U.S. immigration and a somewhat less satisfying description of non-state actors seeking influence over the conduct of diplomacy.

Masuda is not the first to point to this moment of international tension or to treat it, at least implicitly, as related to later hostilities. But he is dissatisfied with earlier interpretations that, he argues, attribute popular discussions of impending war to either the "roles of policy makers or the influence of deeply rooted culture" (p. 3). Masuda instead points toward the impact of improved transpacific communications, arguing more specifically that mass circulation newspapers empowered ordinary people to draw their own conclusions about local and international events. International coverage in popular newspapers in Japan and in the U.S. in turn sparked letter-writing, public protests and local legislative campaigns that could make the sentiments of ordinary people known even to the relatively isolated if powerful men who conducted foreign affairs.

To explain why popular expectations of impending hostility rose simultaneously, Masuda points particularly to reactions in the two countries to the Russo-Japanese war of 1905, to the San Francisco school segregation controversy of 1906-1908 and to political debates over the passage of Alien Land Laws on the American west coast between 1908 and 1913.

Few histories of immigration have failed to discuss how school segregation in San Francisco resulted in the so-called Gentlemen's agreement in which Japan agreed to limit emigration of its laborers. Most immigration histories trace the origins of the controversy to domestic causes, especially racialized fears of Asians which may well fall within Masuda's critique of attributing the moment of international crisis to "deeply rooted cultures." The author deserves praise for providing a more internationalized history of this well-known event. Furthermore, by linking events in San Francisco to the Russo-Japanese war, he is better able to explain the timing of the outbreak of controversy over Japanese in the schools. By continuing the story into the politics of alien land ownership and demands for outright exclusions in the years that followed, he not only shows how legislated discriminations continued to roil official U.S. diplomacy but how they continued to arouse public ire in Asia, too. Masuda's carefully de-limited study hints at the far broader benefits of widening the analysis of immigration to consider international influences and consequences. More immigration historians should follow his example.

Many historians of diplomacy will already be better aware of how racialized restrictions and discrimination against Americans of Asian and African descent shaped Pacific relations in the years up to and during World War II and also in the Cold War international conflicts that followed. For such readers, Masuda provokes a detailed case study while also raising broader questions. In 1907, in the midst of controversies over the segregation of Japanese children in San Francisco schools, Elihu Root himself lamented that "the practice of diplomacy has ceased to be a mystery confined to a few learned men...and has become a representative function answering to the opinions and will of the multitude of citizens."¹ The change did not make diplomats such as Root particularly happy. He, and many diplomatic historians since him, preferred to focus on what Masuda calls as the "roles of policy makers."

With his focus on the ongoing war fever of these years, Masuda challenges diplomatic historians to take non-state, popular actors as seriously as Root felt himself constrained to do. While he vividly compares popular reactions to events written by both American and (somewhat fewer) Japanese writers, Masuda is less comprehensive in explaining how or why reports on events in San Francisco traveled more rapidly to Japan than they did to the Washington office of Theodore Roosevelt. Readers of this article will learn much about popular reactions to the popular press (and how Americans in Japan reported home about them). But they will learn surprisingly little about the press reports themselves or about the technologies and networks of communication that allowed increasingly swift transnational reporting. Strangely, Masuda does not consider the role that travelers and migrants themselves played in spreading knowledge of American events to Japan. He does not consider the possibility that mere knowledge of relatives and friends living in the United States could raise nationalist reactions to press reports.

¹ Elihu Root, "Presidential Address at the First Annual meeting of the American Society of International Law," Washington D.C., April 19, 1907," reprinted in Elihu Root, *Addresses on International Subjects* (Boston: Adamant Media Corporation, 2001), 7.

In short, Masuda's article deserves a careful reading. But immigration and diplomatic historians, along with Masuda himself, might want to consider immigrants as numbering significantly among the non-state "numberless and nameless" who pressure powerful officials from below and from afar.

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