## REVIEWS

Dennis M. Ogawa. *Kodomo no tame ni--For the Sake of the Children: The Japanese American Experience in Hawaii.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978. Pp. xxiv, 615, bibliography. $15.00.

Although this book is about history, it is a different kind of history book, for it includes reading selections of a kind not usually found in objective histories. It also has a message for Hawai'i, and by extension, for all multi-ethnic societies. Assembling a surprising variety of primary sources and readings, the book depicts the experience of the Japanese Americans in Hawai'i from the first legendary arrival of shipwrecked sailors to the present. The term experience is a key one. The author has not been content to end with an already striking assortment of readings--editorials from contemporary newspapers, snatches of biography, excerpts of congressional hearings, arguments from controversial pamphlets--he has also offered selections from imaginative literature. Ogawa has found in these selections a way of filling in the element missing from other historical sources: the personal, human context, the everyday flavor of life, the unreasearchable element in history. We can learn about Japanese values such as filial

piety, family obligation, and avoidance of shame from numerous discursive sources. We know the experience in reading a story about a young *nisei* (second generation) who is forbidden by his parents to play with a certain friend, and who cannot understand why but must obey.

To organize these diverse materials, Ogawa has combined two methods of arrangement: thematic and chronological. Each chapter begins with an overview introducing the historical background of the readings to follow and thematic terms such as "Like Waves They Came," "A Generation on Trial," and so forth. While the combination leads to a few problems in assembling the final product, Ogawa's overall goal remains clear. For example, why is the newspaper selection "Will the Island-Born Citizens of Japanese Ancestry Control Hawaii?" placed in the chapter "A Question of Loyalty" rather than in the chapter "Shall the Japs Dominate Hawaii?" Why is the selection "1921 Campaign," which deals with the Reverend Okumura's attempt to get the Japanese to "Americanize," in a chapter about resisting exploitation and discrimination rather than in the previous chapter, "Eiju Dochyaku," which deals with making Hawai'i a permanent home? These questions arise precisely because of the arrangement. Certain contemporary sources that are valuable in portraying the experience of the Japanese do not fit easily into the chronological-thematic pieces that Ogawa offers. But even when the pieces do not fit together, they are successful in covering the extreme variety of factors that influence or are influenced by the progress of interracial relations: cultural values, family organization, labor struggles, religion, intergenerational conflict, language adaptation, and a wealth of others.

Many of the ironies and complexities of ethnic relations--the eddies, turns, and rapids of ethnic progress--are conveyed in the assembled documents. The first Japanese desired racial separation and therefore played into the hands of the plantation elite by making the "divide and rule" labor policy easier. When the Japanese began to respond to prejudice and exploitation, they exhibited prejudice among themselves, particularly the *Naichi* (those from the main islands of Japan) toward the Okinawans. Cultural traits were cried up as good, only to be viewed as undesirable later on. Early expressions of cultural identity through Buddhism, for example, were tempered by the religious themselves as they became viewed as handicaps in the process of assimilation. Bishop Imamura, a Buddhist, pushed the local Japanese to Americanize. The greatest irony is that the war, which made the position of the Japanese more precarious than it had ever been, became the genesis of the greatest gain in economic and political standing.

The selections are also successful in carrying intact, as only contemporary sources can, the flavor of the issues as they were seen, felt, and debated at the time. The meandering opinions of an 1897 almanac writer

capture the mix of local economic, political, and racial fears and end with a plea for closer ties with the US "for the sake of American capital and civilization."

Rather "for the sake of the children" is the message of Ogawa's book. *Kodomo no tame ni* means "for the sake of the children," a theme embedded in several different dimensions in the history that Ogawa presents. First, the book is for the children of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i. As the progeny of a people and culture that have assimilated and been assimilated by the islands and America itself, these generations need a book like this one to remember their own ethnic past, a past rich by any humanistic standards, but a past that was sometimes the price of acceptance in the present. Roughly, the first half of the book illustrates the struggle of the Japanese plantation laborers to survive, to maintain identity, to form a community in the real sense. Their descendants of the third and fourth generations should know their heritage.

Second, the motto answers a question about the deprivations of the early Japanese laborers. "Why did you do it? What made it worth doing?" "For the sake of the children," answered one. The Japanese came to Hawai'i seeking a way out of the poverty or the shame or lack of opportunity they confronted in late nineteenth-century Japan. They found more poverty, long hours of labor, harsh treatment, and no way out for many of them. Here, however, they also lacked the social system and consensus of values that gave such suffering meaning in their homeland. Confronted by many of the problems they thought they had fled and lacking the support system of Japanese culture, many of the *isei,* or first generation, held on in the hope that things would be better for their children. And they were right.

If the first two meanings of "for the sake of the children" are for the Japanese themselves, the third one is for everyone who lives in the multicultural environment of the islands, and for pluralistic societies everywhere. One need not look far to find societies in which things did not get better for succeeding generations of ethnic minorities. Recently, Vietnamese of Chinese ancestry were expelled by the government. What is the difference between the success of the Japanese American in Hawai'i and the Chinese in Vietnam? Through what process does one culture gain a birthright in another so that it can first ask merely to be paid enough to live, then to be represented politically, then finally to share in the governing? The book contains an answer. Ogawa admits to taking the optimistic view of things, downplaying the forces that continually keep the right thing from happening, and ignoring those who want merely to feed their bitterness about how thoroughly the Japanese have moved into positions of power. The fact is that the Japanese Americans made it in Hawai'i.

They made it through their own effort, but also because there were people who were willing to let them make it when they thought conditions were right, who were willing to say "yes" at a few crucial points when "no" was being said over and over again by those who opposed this kind of social progress.

Some people were willing to interpret anything to the discredit of the Japanese Americans. To John F. Stokes, who testified in the congressional hearings on statehood, the very subservience and solicitousness of the Japanese was part of a subtle scheme to gain power while seeming to serve. Such bewildering strategies of prejudice as his will always exist in heterogenous societies. But the results in Hawai'i prove that such strategies do not have to dictate the outcome.

What has, and what will make the difference? For Ogawa, it is a matter of "ethnic optimism," involving value judgments and a commitment to mutual obligation and to posterity itself. The key to future island racial harmony is found for Ogawa in finding "points of commonality" among the races--behavior that is mutually rewarding but which does not require the denial of one's identity or culture. Such behavior is depicted in the strategy of children of outsiders who try to adapt to the local school environment. Ogawa believes that future relations among island groups are in our control. I hope he is right. If there is a flaw in his optimism, it is his downplaying of the negative effects that other factors--growing ethnic alienation and militancy, economic trends, international relations--can have on the delicate processes of cultural harmony. Perhaps we will be free enough of such factors to control our future. Whether we are or not, I applaud him for writing a book that shows past success and which puts the burden of the future squarely where it belongs--on us.

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