Dennis M. Ogawa, *Jan Ken Po: The World of Hawaii's Japanese Americans.* Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978. Pp. 183. $3.95, paper.

At one point in *Jan Ken Po,* the author, himself a Japanese-American, speaks of the shared need within the Hawaiian Japanese American population to appear above reproach, as if they lived inside a glass house. The book itself is an effort to describe the people who live inside the house, but to do so indirectly, not by attempting to define Hawaii's Japanese Americans, but by overviewing their values, associations, behaviors, and history. If such an undertaking seems too ambitious for so short a book, perhaps one should consider both the author's purpose and his audience. As Ogawa puts it, "This book is not intended to be totally comprehensive. The intention has been to study an ethnic group living in Hawaii from various perspectives so as to emerge with a clearer understanding of what it means to be Japanese Americans." Further, not only is the book a general introduction to this ethnic group, the language is informal, "without the complexity of academic verbiage," and is clearly geared toward a nonacademic audience familiar with Hawaii.

The title, which is symbolic of the text's contents, is taken from a Japanese children's game similar to the American children's game "Paper, Scissors and Stone." On the islands, this game has developed an Hawaiian pidgin name, "Junk an' a po, I canna show," and adapted American rules. In short, it, like Ogawa's Japanese American, is a cultural hybrid consistent with the stereotype of Hawaii's "melting pot of the Pacific" image. This is not to suggest that Ogawa is unaware of tensions and problems between Hawaiian ethnic groups. To the contrary, the best written section in the book, Chapter Six, "Reaping the Whirlwind," deals with the 1928 murder of Gill Jamieson, son of a wealthy haole (Caucasian) banker, by Miles Fukanaga, a Nisei (second generation) Japanese American. Fuka-

naga's trial, conviction, and death sentence, all of which were completed within two weeks after his arrest, brought to light ethnically differentiated double standards of justice, shamed the Japanese American population as a whole, and shattered the illusion of racial peace and harmony in Hawaii. Nevertheless, the author's contention is that in spite of problems, Hawaii's ethnic mix enjoys a "harmony unprecedented anywhere else in the United States." One reason postulated for this harmony is symbolized in the multi-cultural evolution of the children's game. Like the game's players, Hawaii's ethnic groups win and lose in their interactions with one another. As Ogawa sees it, the lack of consistent hegemony by any one group in Hawaii may be one reason for the amount of intercultural harmony they enjoy.

Jan Ken Po's evolution as a game distinct from its Japanese and American predecessors also symbolizes a dilemma Hawaii's Japanese Americans face: they are not really Japanese or American. Ogawa notes that even Issei (first generation) Japanese, many of whom immigrated to Hawaii at the turn of this century, are not accepted in Japan as being "truly Japanese" because of inevitable changes in language and culture which time and distance force upon people who are separated. Many of Hawaii's Yonsei (fourth generation) Japanese do not speak the language their grandfathers and great-grandfathers brought with them from their homeland. Ogawa further shows that local Japanese find pidgin English, which many of them learn in Hawaii, to be a key factor which disallows them being accepted by mainlanders, even those who are themselves Japanese Americans. Couple these language barriers with Hawaii's physical isolation from Japan and the mainland United States, and it becomes apparent that the group to which Hawaii's Japanese Americans relate is the ethnically mixed island culture. That is, through cultural diffusion, Hawaii's people generally, and its Japanese Americans specifically, have become an essence unto themselves.

Ogawa explains that the ways Jan Ken Po is played demonstrate a wide range of sophistication throughout the islands. Similarly, his book shows varying levels of intellectuality. Some of his comments have statistical backing as when he asserts that Japanese Americans have the lowest rates of divorce, crime, juvenile delinquency and illegitimate births, and have the highest educational achievement of any single ethnic group in the United States. Other ideas are folk beliefs such as his supposed origin of the label "Kotonks" given to mainland Japanese Americans. This term is said to originate from the sound of a coconut hitting a mainland Japanese American's head. Other comments are quite subjective and represent

the author's freedom to draw from his own experiences or, as in the case of a family he creates in Chapter Two, from his imagination.

The topics and techniques for *Jan Ken Po's* chapters also represent a potpourri. Each chapter could be an independent unit, disconnected from all of the others. In Chapter One, "Acting Like One Japanese," Ogawa approaches his subject from a cultural perspective as he discusses the games, songs, food, habits, and generations one might see at a gathering of Japanese at Ken (Kenjin Kai) picnics held in parks and beaches throughout Hawaii. Chapter Two, "How Shame Fo Da Family," is both a hypothetical narrative and a personal comment on the remarkable controlling influences of filial piety, family shame, and community pressures on Hawaii's Japanese Americans.

Chapter Three, "Why Are You so Much Like Me?" is probably the weakest chapter in the book. Its topics are Hawaii's image of personal beauty and the sexual mores of the state's Japanese Americans. Loosely defining conventional island beauty as similar to "models in a clothing store ad," Ogawa's generalities and particulars seem speculative. His comments about ethnic group morals also seem conjectural, and are not supported by evidence.

Giri, the moral obligation to reciprocate what one person gives to another, is discussed in Chapter Four. With great relish, Ogawa tells of the highly formalized manner in which Japanese view gift exchanges. He shows couples determining how much to spend on a friend's wedding by their estimates of how much that friend spent for their wedding. Implying that this ritualized tradition of exchange is expensive and often impractical in an inflationary modern economy, Ogawa pictures himself as one who has been victimized by his wife's moral obligation to purchase at a round robin of plasticware parties.

Chapter Five, "A Legacy of Everlasting Importance," is a brief overview focusing on the historical relationship between Japan and Hawaii which led to the Japanese immigration to the islands. Giving attention to King Kalakaua's overtures to the Emperor Meiji of Japan during his Asian trip of 1881, the chapter explains how "official" friendship between the two countries began. The result of this trip was the eventual ease with which Japanese labor became an economic staple during Hawaii's agrarian years. Eventually, this immigrant group became the largest ethnic bloc in Hawaii, although recently they have been surpassed slightly by the haole population.

The final section, Chapter Seven, from which the book received its title, is unusual because of its lack of comment. Here the author strings

together a number of island ethnic jokes and cultural narratives, many of which are in pidgin dialect. Ogawa notes that these exchanges of language allow local ethnic groups to laugh at themselves and at one another, which results in a lessening of tensions and a greater shared understanding.

In conclusion, one can fairly say that *Jan Ken Po* is worth reading if the audience is interested in viewing Hawaii's Japanese Americans as they are seen by one of their own, What the book lacks in objectivity or research, it makes up for in insight and sensitivity. The writing of *Jan Ken Po* was clearly a labor of love, and that effort paints an entertaining portrait of the people who live in the glass house.

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