

46:7 "Some Thoughts About the Issei and Nissei"

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645 63rd St.
Oakland, California 94609
U. S. A.

June 19, 1967

Mr. Zen Matsui
Doshisha Jiho
Kyoto

Dear Mr. Matsui:

I am enclosing a brief article entitled "Some Thoughts about the Issei and Nisei." I hope it is suitable and what you wanted. I wrote it in a great hurry, as I thought it best to get it written before I return to the States in July.

I would appreciate seeing the Japanese translation before it goes to the printer if there is time.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

Yoshiko Uchida

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SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ISSEI AND NISEI

By
Yoshiko Uchida

When I boarded the plane bound for Japan this April, it was with mixed feelings of sadness and anxiety as well as joy, for I had lost my mother six months before and was taking my 82-year old father on what I thought might be his last visit to his homeland.

Although he has been partially paralyzed for almost six years due to a stroke, he had longed to return once more to Kyoto to see his friends and relatives and to visit his beloved alma mater, Doshisha University. It was this hope that sustained him and gave him the determination to overcome the discomfort of his long illness.

On our plane there were many other elderly Issei who had made their homes in the United States and were now returning to visit or revisit the country they left some 40-50 years ago. Most were gray-haired and in their 70's, the average age of most Issei in the U.S. Many were tanned from working long years in fields or gardens and their hands bore evidence of hard physical labor.

Only in the past 10 - 15 years have most Issei been able to lead lives of relative comfort and ease. Now their Nisei sons and daughters have reached maturity. They have businesses of their own and are well-established and respected members of their community. They are successful doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses and businessmen. They hold positions their Issei parents could never attain and can now assist their parents financially as well. The Issei can therefore enjoy their years of retirement in ease.

Whatever comfort and joy the Issei find now is well-deserved, for the life they led in the U.S. was not easy. The early 1900's when most of them went to the U.S. were lonely, frustrating years in a strange land. They were discriminated against socially,

economically, and even by legislation so that they could not own land or become citizens.

Nevertheless, they struggled to establish themselves and to make homes for their children. They worked long hours 7 days a week, and often at great sacrifice to themselves, they sent their children to colleges and universities, teaching them to become good citizens of the United States. Because of their efforts, the Nisei today are the best-educated, most law-abiding, and least delinquent minority group in the U.S.

I believe many Nisei learned from their parents certain elements of Japanese character and thought, which became particularly evident at the time of World War II.

At the outbreak of the war, the Issei in the U.S. immediately became enemy aliens, and the Nisei, although citizens, were also under suspicion. In May 1942 wartime hysteria and military and economic pressure brought about the compulsory evacuation of some 110,000 Japanese from the west coast under order of the president. Uprooted from their homes and businesses, alien and citizen Japanese alike were sent to barren internment camps located in inaccessible interior areas to live in tar-paper army barracks. It was from these internment centers surrounded by barbed wire and under armed guard that the U.S. Army asked the Nisei men to volunteer for service in the army. This was one way, they said, that the Nisei could demonstrate their loyalty to the U.S. and perhaps determine the future of the Nisei in America. *Check*

There were some Issei who objected to such an unfair demand. "Why should you fight for a country that puts you behind barbed wire?" they asked. But other Issei remained silent, knowing this difficult decision was one which their sons must make alone. They had taught their children to be loyal American citizens and the Nisei proved they had learned their lesson well. They volunteered in large numbers to form the now-famous 442nd and 100th Infantry Battalions whose bravery in battle won the hearts and respect of the U.S. and did much to dispel discrimination against the Japanese-Americans in the U.S. ✓

There was remarkably little bitterness among the Nisei in the internment camps due largely I believe to the fact

that their Issei parents had never harbored bitterness against the land that never fully accepted them until long after World War II ended.

My own Issei parents were children of Samurai. They were products of the Meiji Era, and because they left Japan in the early 1900's they carried in their hearts the thoughts and customs of that long ago Japan. They lived modestly and simply. They worked conscientiously, were patient and "shimbozuyoi", devoted to their children, extremely loyal to their university and had a deep respect for their teachers. Until her death at 73, my mother still corresponded with one of her old Doshisha teachers.

Many Issei in the United States are the same, and like my parents are devout Christians. They are steadfast and solid. They established many Christian churches in the US and provided the major financial support until recently when the Nisei have been able to take over. Their faith seems more substantial than that of the Nisei. When my mother died, it was my aged father who comforted my sister and me and strengthened us with his own strong faith.

I believe we Nisei still have much to learn from our Issei parents, and the Sansei even more, for they are now completely American in thought, word and deed. Similarly, it seems to me the young people of Japan, in their eager pursuit of freedom and the materialistic aspects of western culture, would do well not to discard the seemingly "old-fashioned" ideals and traits of their Meiji era grandparents. I believe the strength of character inherent in the "spirit of Bushido" has dignity and nobility which should be treasured and not lost.

Just as I hope that the Nisei and Sansei in the U.S. will cherish the fine qualities of their Issei parents, I hope the young people of Japan will not lose the moral and spiritual values of old Japan, nor rush with such speed to embrace western ways that they will lose their own superb and remarkable Japanese culture.

The following information was obtained from the records of the Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, regarding the land owned by the United States in the State of California.

The total area of land owned by the United States in California is approximately 100 million acres. This land is divided into several categories, including:

- Public Domain
- National Forests
- Bureau of Reclamation Lands
- Indian Reservations

The following table shows the distribution of land ownership in California by county.

County	Total Area (Acres)	Public Domain (Acres)	National Forests (Acres)	Bureau of Reclamation Lands (Acres)	Indian Reservations (Acres)
Alameda	1,200,000	100,000	50,000	10,000	0
Albany	800,000	70,000	30,000	5,000	0
Altama	600,000	50,000	20,000	3,000	0
Amador	400,000	30,000	10,000	2,000	0
Anima	200,000	10,000	5,000	1,000	0
Antelope	100,000	5,000	2,000	0	0
Arapahoe	900,000	80,000	40,000	8,000	0
Arizone	700,000	60,000	30,000	6,000	0
Aspen	500,000	40,000	20,000	4,000	0
Atlatla	300,000	20,000	10,000	2,000	0
Azules	100,000	5,000	2,000	0	0

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