

GAMBLING AT POSTON

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PART I  
BACKGROUND



"How can we control and eliminate gambling effectively and speedily here?" is the most paramount current<sup>1</sup> question discussed seriously among the evacuees at the Colorado River Relocation Center. The public sentiment against gambling was fostered gradually by the church groups and by the evacuee officials, especially since the November incident, and was intensified greatly recently because of several cases of flagrant disregard by the gamblers for other residents. An analysis of the gambling history at Poston presents repetition of many familiar patterns and attitudes of the pre-Pearl-Harbor Japanese communities in California. The Poston situation may be divided into the following stages:

1. Cordoning of "hana" game and poker for small stakes.
2. Organization by a small group of men of commercial gambling houses.
3. Increase in the amount of stakes.
4. Use of intimidation and bribery by the promoters to further their interest.
5. Fear and anxiety of the community residents for a syndicate to gain stronghold. Their increasing resentment against the evil and the abuses.
6. Intensified and increased gambling activity by young people. Alarm by their parents.
7. Public meetings to stamp it out.

These Poston aspects were not uncommon among the Japanese communities in California. The Japanese were usually slow to act until juvenile delinquent cases became alarmingly serious before they could successfully campaign against the professional gamblers. Some of the crusades were successful in stamping out vice groups, while others failed completely. Such campaigns were more successful in the smaller rural



communities, whereas in the larger cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, etc., a syndicate was so well organized because of the corruption of the public officials that the conscientious residents were powerless in crusading. Especially in Los Angeles, the vice syndicate, the Tokyo Club, enjoyed a monopoly, its annual intake aggregating in excess of one million dollars, and wielded a great political influence over the Japanese. Inasmuch as Poston is comprised of the evacuees mostly from Southern California, a brief account of the recent history of gambling in Los Angeles and the surrounding communities shall aid the reader in gaining insight into the gambling condition by the Japanese at this relocation camp.

#### PRIVATE GAMES

The District Attorney for the county of Los Angeles remarked a few years ago, "The Japanese are the best law-abiding people. There are no major crimes among you. Only cases come up for our attention are those of gambling, which, I am sorry to say, are numerous."

As he said, arrests for gambling were frequent in the Japanese community, indicating widespread participation by the Japanese people. It was not uncommon to overhear people talking this or that residence had been raided by the police. Yet despite the arrests the gambling flourished unabated. Let us first present private games, those enjoyed among friends in homes. The common games played in private residences are hana, poker, dice throwing, and mah jong. Among these hana was the most popular game. It is a game the Japanese immigrants brought over with them. Whenever three or four or five Issei were seen together around a table, they were invariably playing hana. In fact, it was not an exaggeration if one had said that the Issei did not know any other device of game but hana. They did not take on American games, but they stuck to the Japanese game as though it were the only game



existing. Especially in the districts where Japanese of the lower class were concentrated one did not encounter any difficulty in locating the game and joining in it. In "boarding houses"<sup>2</sup> for gardeners in the "Tenth Street District"<sup>3</sup> or "Seinan-ku"<sup>4</sup> or in the fishermen's barracks of Terminal Island,<sup>5</sup> men and women were found absorbed in playing the hana game in tobacco-smoke-filled rooms nightly or whenever they could not work due to the inclement weather condition. Their stake varied anywhere from five cents to one dollar a game; that is to say, five cents to one dollar changed hand within five to ten minutes. The victor's spoil for an evening in such games averaged about one dollar for the five-cent game and about twenty or thirty dollars for the one-dollar game. However, it was more common among the gardeners and the fishermen to set the stake at twenty-five cents a game--an evening's haul for the victor being about ten dollars.

As it has been noted, hana was more widely played among the older Japanese of the lower class or of the lower income group. Gardeners, fishermen, older produce men, farmers, migratory farm laborers had especial liking for the game. But who else were there among the Issei in California? Very, very few others. As the census would reveal almost all the Issei in California were engaged either in farming, gardening, fishing, or domestic service. Therefore, it was often correctly expressed that the game had an universal appeal for the older Japanese. Of them, it was more frequently played among the fishermen, the gardeners, and the migratory laborers, because they either lived closely together or had more opportunities to assemble in one place in addition to having frequent idle or unemployed periods. As a corollary, the farmers and the domestics indulged in it only occasionally, since they lived scattered and had less opportunity to assemble together.



In passing, it is interesting to note that in the upper and the middle classes of Japan abstention from the game is strictly self-enforced not only for fear of the police and social criticism, but also, for pride in adhering to the moral standards of the classes. It is only among the lower class people and the people of special groups such as theatrical people and professional entertainers that the game is condoned. And it is from this lower class of Japan that the California Japanese population extracted its largest, if not almost entire, portion.

Then, why is hana so popular among the California Issei? No doubt, there may be many reasons; each student having his own deduction why it is prevalent among the people. The writer, however, believe that the reasons for the popularity can be summarized in the following aspects:

1. Hana is a simple game. It is somewhat like rummy. Its rules are easy to grasp.
2. Only a few players are needed for the game. Two men can play it. It also can be played by as many as seven persons, although it is most usual and best to have four or five contestants.
3. The paraphernalia are inexpensive. It requires a set of cards, which is sold for about twenty-five cents. The set is durable and can be used for days and days, unlike the playing cards which are changed for a new set every hour or so during one poker session.
4. There is an equal chance for every participant. No special skill is necessary after one becomes familiar with the simple technique. Unlike poker, the skill of betting or of bluffing is not needed.
5. The game is comparatively free from cheating. It is an exceptional person who can cheat with hana. It takes years and years of practice before one can cheat with the hana cards, besides laymen regularly avoid to play with these "professionals", whose reputation spreads rapidly in the community.



6. The Issei, since coming over to this country, congregated among themselves and had little social contact with the Caucasians of the community. They failed to absorb the American ways of life, although most of them had been here more than thirty years.

7. Hana playing, "go", "shogi", picture shows in Japanese, etc. are the only means of their recreating. They did not develop appreciation in participation of sports or watching of sports. Baseball was the only game which the Issei took on as spectators with enthusiasm, especially in the twenties. Even this was limited only to the small portion of the population. The Issei could not enjoy American movies due to their inability to understand English, of which one could hear them say defensively, "There is nothing in movies. Kisses and kisses. That's all. A man and a woman get together and they go through all kinds of erotic gestures on the screen. I don't enjoy things like that." Thus the variety of recreation they can enjoy were very limited, indicating that their history of immigration was that of hard struggles and they had very little leisure to themselves.

In contrast with the popularity of hana among the Issei, the game failed completely to permeate among the Nisei. Occasionally young people are seen playing the game, but they are almost always Kibei. With the Nisei, poker was most popular. The young men were meeting together in their friends' homes regularly and were holding "sessions". With the young business and professional men of Little Tokyo, the "market boys"<sup>6</sup> and the fruit stand employees, the "sessions" were more frequent and more regular, since they toiled only for the short union hours daily and had their evenings free, besides they had steady income and were comfortably set economically. With many of them the poker "session" was the basis of a clique and the common ground of their friendship. Some of these cliques held their "meetings" as often as three times a week, each one taking turn and inviting the others to his home. One young man would say to another, say on a street in Little



Tokyo or in the Wholesale Produce Market, "Hey, Joe! At Jimmie's tonight. Eight o'clock."

The size of stake of their game varied from penny-ante-two-bits limit to nickel-ante-table-limit. The former was common among high school boys, who also liked the game and played it behind the backs of their parents. The latter was most prevalent in the older Miei circle; it meant that the minimum of ante is five cents and the chips in his possession are the limit of one betting. The player bought the original chips varying in the amount from ten to twenty dollars, at the beginning of the "session" from the "bank", usually the host for the evening. As the evening progressed, the unlucky ones had to buy more chips with cash again and again from the "bank" and the chips in circulation increased as the game went on. It increased to such an extent that it was not rare among them to see in one single pot ships worth more than seventy-five dollars toward the end of the evening. It was often reported that this or that lucky person went home with a winning of one hundred and fifty dollars or more. However, since such large winnings received publicity out of proper proportion among the clique acquaintances and were talked about more widely than others, it is safer to report that it was more usual in an ordinary "session" to find cash in the amount of twenty to thirty dollars changing hands in one evening.

The poker "session" also served as a social meeting for the middle class Miei. During the evening many gossips concerning their friends and their community were exchanged among them. The host or his wife served refreshments; for the cost of food and the decks of cards the host was generally privileged to take out ten cents or twenty-five cents from the larger pots from time to time. To be called a "charming" or "nice" lady and to avoid being called a "joy-killer" or an "led battle axe" the host's wife had to wait on the guests gracefully with smile, even though she might have condemnation and contempt for her husband for gambling.



It was her duty as a "perfect" hostess to keep her even disposition even if the "meeting" lasted into the early morning hours.

The common kinds of poker played by these people were five-card stud poker, seven-card stud poker, and draw poker. Of these the young Nisei liked seven-card stud poker, as they would say, "the pot gets bigger", while the high school boys enjoyed small five-card stud or draw poker, satisfying themselves with a spoil of one dollar or one dollar and a half for a day.

Along with poker games, "twenty-one" was played sometimes among them, especially among the adolescents; it did not, however, gain popularity and limited only to the extent of "killing time" for one hour or so with a twenty-five cent or fifty cent capital.

In the somewhat same degree of popularity for "twenty-one" in the Japanese community the dice-throwing could also be classed. It was played for the similar purpose of "killing time"; it never gained the widespread favor of hana or poker and was played only occasionally among a small portion of the Nisei. Sometimes the Nisei were seen throwing the dice after the peak business hours in the dark corner of wholesale produce houses or in the wash-room of fruit stands; and it was very rare to see the older Issei indulging in the dice-throwing.

Other games of chance such as Mah Jong and Pin Ball machines had their ups and downs in the scale of popularity. The height of fad for Mah Jong in Los Angeles and its vicinities was in 1925 - 1930. During this period the Chinese game struck fancy of the middle class Japanese like a wildfire and they all began to learn it. Its rules, however, were so complicated and its paraphernalia were so expensive--a set costing about fifteen to thirty dollars depending upon its quality--that many of the beginners dropped out before they could master it. At the end it was mostly the shop owners and the artisans of Little Tokyo and the produce market



owners who kept on with the game. They invited their friends in the evening and played a game or two, as a game would last about one hour and a half to two hours and a half. At this stage of the Mah Jong fad they were intent upon improving their skill and enjoyed it as a form of amusement without having a cash stake. Rivalry of skill and luck was sufficient to satisfy them, although the rivalry within the closed circle of family friends failed eventually to satiate the increasing egotism of their own skill and consequently outside competitions were sought out whenever possible. Such a desire to have competition with unfamiliar players culminated in holding a Mah Jong tournament. The first of the tournaments was held in 1928, and thereafter such a meeting was held monthly or bi-monthly, usually on Sunday. They rented a large reception hall of a Japanese restaurant in Little Tokyo for the occasion, beginning the game early in the afternoon and lasting until nine or ten o'clock at night. Its sponsors customarily charged each player one dollar or one dollar and a half as entry fee, for which they served good dinners in the evening in addition to many prizes offered to the winners. The tournament was given ample publicity well in advance of the date in the Japanese newspapers and always drew a good mixed crowd, often numbering more than one hundred contestants. It always turned out to be a jolly, happy Sunday for the players, enjoying the merry, friendly atmosphere. If one was a winner, he received not only a prize such as a trophy or a fountain pen set but also a mention in the Japanese newspaper articles reporting the tournament.

In spite of the avid indulgence by the business men and the artisans and their wives, Mah Jong playing failed to penetrate either deeply or extensively into the Japanese society. To the farmers or the fishermen, for instance, it was something mysterious; and to the Nisei it was something tedious and foreign. The farmers or the fishermen were too busy with their chores or too impatient to learn the complicated rules. The Nisei desired



"snappier" games. Therefore, it was not surprising at all that support by the select group was not enough and the fad for the Chinese game gradually died down after the peak of 1928-1929.

It was about 1932 when the popularity of Mah Jong playing revived and caught on with new addicts. This time, however, it was not as a form of amusement; but it deteriorated into a device of gambling. In private homes, where it was played formerly only for fun of playing it, the people were betting one-tenth-of-a-cent a point. It meant that the original investment for a game for each player was one dollar, as he was given two thousand points to start with. It also meant that his average winning or loss for a game was about fifty cents to one dollar. As it is always the case, they could not be satisfied long with such a small amount of money at stake. The stake gradually increased to one-fifth-of-a-cent a point and eventually to one-cent a point; that is to say, the original capital increased to two dollars and finally to twenty dollars, and the player's average turn over for a game was anywhere from one dollar or one dollar and a half to ten or fifteen dollars. With the increase of stake the game attracted "bums" and "Hisei undesirables", who were not equipped with either the paraphernalia or place to play. In order to accommodate the need of these men "with too much time and don't know what to do with it", Mah Jong clubs sprang up in Little Tokyo. The purpose of the clubs was to arrange for a foursome and supply the set and a table and to charge a nominal fee, generally fifteen cents per game per player. Some of these clubs were quite respectable and catered the Mah Jong playing middle class Japanese men, as it was convenient to walk in and find the partners for a game anytime they desired, although the Japanese women frowned upon such places. The stake of one-fifth-a-cent a point was most common and larger stakes were not encouraged at these places, as one proprietor remarked, "if they play for too big money, there are always big losers. The big losers can't come back and play some more. I don't want to lose my customers."



At the height, in 1933, there were as many as six Mah Jong clubs prospering in the downtown Japanese section. And it was a rule rather than an exception then that the players were going full blast with the Chinese bamboo blocks as late as two or three o'clock in the morning. But the prosperity for these establishments was of a short duration, as it again failed to draw new converts in a great number and the support by the "hoodlums" and a few respectable men alone was not enough to sustain the intensity of the fad for long. By 1935 all but one of these clubs closed their doors and the game returned to the homes of the middle class Japanese, although they retained the habit of gambling for small stakes. To indicate that the Mah Jong craze in the Japanese community waned rapidly and could not regain its old glory one could say that during 1935 - 1941 there were only two or three tournaments, which did not possess the gayness or merriment of the by-gone days and that there was only one Mah Jong club existing in the city at the time of the evacuation meagerly as a side-business for a pool hall. One could also add that dust and dirt had piled thick on the Mah Jong sets in attics and basements when the Japanese were packing for the Assembly centers.

Like the fate of Mah Jong was the rise and fall of Pin Ball games. The first time that the machines were used as devices for gambling was soon after their appearance in the town in 1932. At the early stage of this gambling, a few men were clustered around a machine and were shooting the balls in the machine one by one, manipulating the handle spring carefully and aiming at the pre-selected pin expertly. Each player bet ten cents and the highest scorer took possession of the dimes in the pot. Soon the stake was hiked up to twenty-five cents and then to fifty cents. Later on, since the manipulating and aiming took time and were tedious, they banged away at once all the ten balls in the machine with one violent stroke. That is, if five boys were playing together and betting fifty cents each, a game was decided within ten minutes and the winner took two dollars and fifty cents in the pot.



A variation of this form - at a faster pace to minimize the time spent for a game - was for a player to take a turn at the machine as before but to put up a certain arbitrary amount of cash, say two dollars, challenging the non-players that he would score a certain total point previously agreed upon between them. The spectators then would "cover" the bet individually or collectively that the player would not score the total. The game was decided within two minutes and money changed hands more rapidly. This form was especially popular with some Nisei business and professional men and "market boys". In extreme cases, when the Pin Ball game was at its peak in 1934, men were betting anywhere from fifty dollars to one hundred and fifty dollars for one game. The writer witnessed these "big games" quite often in the drug store at the corner of San Pedro and East First Streets, right in the heart of Little Tokyo. In one of these "contests", there were about fifteen prominent young business men gathered around a machine. The player was putting up twenty-five dollars and the bet was covered by two men. In addition to this pool, the spectators were betting separately among themselves, some betting fifteen dollars that the player would make the total point and finding a taker in the crowd, another pair betting ten dollars between them, and still another staking twenty dollars. With a single violent bang at the machine by the player, twenty-five dollars changed hands between the player and the two men who had covered the bet, while ten dollars, fifteen dollars, twenty dollars, and so on passed in many separate sets of betters severally. In this single game which lasted less than one minute, cash in excess of one hundred and fifty dollars in aggregate exchanged the owners. At this drugstore it was interesting to observe then that the policeman detailed to the traffic at the street intersection was a busy participant in this crowd.



The "big time" Pin Ball gambling at the drugstore went on ostentatiously everyday for a few months from the early hours in the afternoon to the closing time of the store attracting a good sized, enthusiastic crowd until it suddenly disappeared and small betting games of the former days returned. The story about what had taken place meanwhile was this: The Japanese organized gambling syndicate was alarmed over thousands of dollars "transacted" in the store in a day and evidently its business volume, especially the sale of lottery tickets, dropped. The organization feared the increasing popularity of the competition from the Pin Ball machines in the community that it sent one day a gang of "huskies" to the owner of the store and "warned" him to stop the big stake gambling at his place. There was another place, it was reported, in the wholesale produce district which had been operating a similar gambling and returned to smaller stakes about the same time.

In spite of the fact that the gambling syndicate was alarmed over the machine playing, the fad did not penetrate the Japanese population extensively. It was only confined among the young "downtown crowd" and the "market boys," that is, among the Nisei in their twenties. It utterly failed to catch on with the Issei or with the rural Japanese. It was because of the intense craze among those Nisei who were their profitable clients and loss of prestige to have their monopoly of the gambling business violated that created concern among the syndicate.

Thus the gambling with the Pin Ball machines for the bigger amount of cash was eliminated by the external pressure for the selfish motive, but the machines playing for nominal stakes was flourishing unabated among the young men. With the advent of more complicated, electrically operated machines about 1936 even this practice of competing for the small sums at stake practically disappeared. The boys were satisfied with playing the new electric gadgets without betting and were more intent upon winning the prizes offered by the house. The owner of the machines were also careful to stimulate and



sustain the interest of these boys in them by exchanging the old ones with newer and more and more intricate models from time to time.

Then what was the profit from these machines for the owner of a restaurant or a drugstore, who had the gadget installed in his premises and made it available for players? It was reported that there were two ways of obtaining the use of such machines, which were exclusively owned by two or three syndicates exclusively in Los Angeles most of the syndicate members with whom the writer was acquainted were invariably Jewish. One of the two ways of renting was on a percentage basis and the other was on straight set rental basis. The machine was never sold outright. With the percentage basis the owner and the operator generally split the intake fifty-fifty, although this ratio varied slightly in some cases. With the latter form the monthly rentals varied from twenty to thirty-five dollars. It was said by many operators that it was much more profitable to rent them on the cash basis, as the following figures would reveal. In 1932 a very early, crude model rented for twenty or twenty-five dollars per month. One restaurant owner in Little Tokyo who had such a machine in his place, reported that the average daily gross income was approximately five dollars and fifty cents. That is to say, his net earning from the gadget for one month was one hundred and forty dollars after deducting the rental of twenty-five dollars. The owner of the infamous drugstore at the intersection of San Pedro and East First Streets, who also operated one machine confided once that he averaged about nine dollars daily. It meant that he was earning about three hundred dollars monthly by just letting the boys play the Pin Ball games.

With the introduction of more intricate models and overabundance of machines available for the community, it was true that the operators' intake decreased considerably. Even then the earning was lucrative enough. In 1938



the same drugstore owner reported that he was taking in about ten dollars daily from three machines of different patterns. His net income, it showed, was still in excess of two hundred dollars a month. One restaurant owner in the City Wholesale Produce Market district, who operated two machines, reported about the same time that his monthly net income from them averaged about one hundred fifty dollars. It might be true that the cases cited here are those of extremely profitable establishments. Even if a concession is made to regard these cases to be those of special prosperous ones, it is still quite evident that a monthly profit of thirty or forty dollars from a machine was not at all difficult. It was no wonder that every drugstore owner or restaurant owner was fighting to get new and novel machines and was anxious to attract the pleasure-seeking boys for they took up little floor space and required little attention of shopkeepers.

The Pin Ball machines in Los Angeles went out of existence completely in 1940 when the Bowron administration decided to clean up vice in the city. With a single stroke of the police vice squad gone were the glamorous days for the gadgets. The operators raised their hands in horror and lamented the passing of never-miss profit-making instrument. Of course, they protested vigorously but their protestation fell on deaf ears and was in vain. The prohibition of operation put an end to the source of lucrative extra income and endangered the existence of some of the stores which depended heavily on such earnings. The writer remembers two cases of store closing soon after the incident. Both of these were restaurants in the wholesale produce market district. The owner of one of these said, "I was making the store rent from the machines. Now with these machines gone there ain't enough profit to stay in the business." The other owner complained, "I have been going in the hole ever since these machines were taken out by the police. Why don't those politicians go after big guys. They shouldn't have bothered with those machines. They are alright; they are for clean fun."



Of less importance was contract bridge playing. It was only among a handful of the middle class or college bred Nisei that the popular American game found favor. Although they were enthusiastic adherents and held parties among themselves often, gambling with money was unknown to them generally. They took on bridge playing, it seemed, as a substitute for poker or hana, which was frowned upon by them as cheap. They had been playing the game many years, some known to be playing since as early as 1925, but outside of their circle it failed to spread far. Many Japanese sneered at their bridge playing as trying to be "uppish" or "fashionable."

Therefore, one could say in broad perspective that there were only two means of gambling for money as the privately played games in the Japanese community which held any significance because of its intensiveness, extensiveness, and permanency--namely, hana for the older Japanese and poker for the Nisei. Should the reader comprehend the extravagant grip of these two games over the Japanese people, he has an excellent insight into the unorganized, unsyndicated gambling of the Japanese community in California. Hana and poker were interwoven with the daily life of most of the Japanese to such an extent that they could not feel the moral restraint of violating a penal code and they were playing the games ostentatiously and openly in the sanctum of private homes. When some fellow countrymen happened to visit such a home, the players without any sign of shame kept on with the game and did not make any attempt to conceal it from the intruders. It was not necessary at all to hide the game from other Japanese because the Japanese community as a whole accepted and condoned the hana playing in the greater degree and the poker playing in somewhat less degree as the inevitable and "legitimate" sources of recreation.



## THE ORGANIZED GAMBLING

Every discussion of the organized or syndicated gambling in the Japanese community of California must necessarily be centered around the activities of the powerful Japanese organization, the Tokyo Club. And every discussion of the Tokyo Club, in turn, must be focused upon the activities of the Los Angeles Tokyo Club, which was the main office and the holding company of other Tokyo Clubs in the vast network extending not only throughout the state of California but also into Oregon, Washington, and Utah.

First, let us survey the early history of the organization briefly. One old Issei, who immigrated into America in 1900 as a young boy, reminisced recently about his younger days. He said that he always liked gambling. He said that as soon as he set foot in California he began to migrate seasonally from farm to farm as a harvest helper in company of several Japanese men. He reflected, "of course, we played hana almost every night among ourselves. But that was not enough. You keep on playing one kind of game in the same company and soon you crave for some diversion. One Saturday night some of the boys took me to a chop suey restaurant in a nearby town. We ate a nice dinner and then they took me to the back of the restaurant. There there were some Chinamen and Japanese playing "shoko"<sup>7</sup> and lottery tickets. They taught me how to play "shoko." It wasn't difficult to learn. All you have to do is to place your money on a certain number. The dealer counts the beans and you know within a short time whether you win or lose. I remember I won some money that night. And that was the beginning. I got the habit of going to these joints as soon as I got the pay. Oh yes, I moved from a farm to another, but there was always at least one Chinese gambling joint in a town nearby.



"Remember," he continued, "that was back in 1900's. There was no Tokyo Club then. All our gambling except hana games was done in these Chinese joints. I gave all my pay money to these Chinese; I was young then and never thought of saving. I worked from a payday to next payday and then took the pay-money there and splurged it away. Don't think I was a special case; all the other Japanese I knew were doing the same. We sure were swell customers for these Chinese; they took away all the wages from all of us Japanese. I don't know how many tens of thousands dollars the California Japanese were pouring into the cashes of the Chinese. We sure were suckers. Then a few years after the Earthquake of San Francisco some bright Japanese saw a gold mine in the business and opened a place in the Japanese town of San Francisco. I don't remember if they called it Tokyo Club then or not; but anyway, this was the beginning of the Tokyo Club. It was patterned after these Chinese places; there you could play "soeko," dice games, blackjack, poker, "gahan",<sup>5</sup> or lottery tickets. Yes, I patronized the place whenever I was in San Francisco; and so did other Japanese. They began to do a swell business. Soon the club sent its boys out to other towns in California where Japanese were congregated densely and set up similar joints. We went to these Japanese places now instead of the Chinese gambling houses. You know, it is always nicer to patronize your own people rather than other races. There were lots of Tokyo Clubs all over California one time, but some died out, because of poor business or the opposition from respectable Japanese of the communities, while others survived till today.

"Yeah, the gambling got into my bone," he lamented, "because of gambling I was never able to get married, although I worked hard and earned lots of money. If I had saved those money, I would be sitting pretty now with a nice wife and family. I wouldn't be going around



from farm to farm from season to another like this. And I bet there are many, many other Japanese who are in the same shoe."

"By the way, how about women?" he was asked.

"Women? I am too old and no good any more. Sure, when I was younger, I wouldn't say I didn't visit prostitutes. But there were very few Japanese 'women' then. It had to be with either Chinese or white prostitutes. No, the Tokyo Club had nothing to do with 'women'. Those guys themselves had to visit these whites or Chinese. As I remember there were only two red light joints with Japanese women in California; and they were in San Francisco. These places were privately operated and the Tokyo Club had no interest in them. They are all gone now, though."

As the old man narrated, it is mostly probably true that the first Tokyo Club was established sometime around 1910 as an imitation and a rival of Chinese gambling places. Their games were the same as those found in the Chinese places and their intention was to draw away the Japanese customers from the Chinese. However, it is unfortunate that no account of the history of the activities of the Tokyo Club syndicate could be authenticated, since it was an ultra secret organization and its members and employees were extremely tight-lipped.

It was also true that all Tokyo Clubs set up in the smaller California cities were operated by the men who had been sent out by the San Francisco house. These branches, so to speak, were controlled by the main office in San Francisco until the control was transferred to Los Angeles later. A branch house was evidently sending in at regular intervals the net earnings to the main house after deducting its own operating expense. However, it was not until sometime in the early twenties when the main office moved to Los Angeles that the syndicate was firmly entrenched in the Japanese community and began to wield a great influence over the Japanese, its annual earning exceeding a million dollar mark.



Its existence was still shaky about the time of the World War, as the old reminiscing Issai inferred. Many of the houses opened by the syndicate met opposition from the Japanese residents and some of them closed their doors after a short unprofitable operation. Even in their golden days of the twenties all the attempts of the Tokyo Club syndicate to "muscle" into new and unexploited territories were not successful, especially in the smaller towns, where the united front of public condemnation and vigorous crusading by the leading Japanese was too much for the organized gambling to survive. The writer witnessed in one of these smaller towns a crusade by the residents against the encroachment of such an organized gambling into their community life when the syndicate had opened a branch and began to draw crowds.

It was in Vacaville, California, in 1924. Vacaville, as you know, is situated on the outer rim of the fertile Sacramento Valley. It was a thriving town, being the center of prosperous fruit orchards, which were noted for producing and shipping to the Eastern markets many varieties of fruit at least one month ahead of the orchards in other sections of California; the early appearance of their produce in the markets for the public hunger for novel and different fruits commanded enviable price. And almost all of these favorably endowed ranches were operated by the Japanese, who had settled down in their respective places for many years; their tenancy with one contract usually lasted for four or five years and was generally renewed as long as they wished to stay. These Japanese farmers had made money through the past profitable years and saved; they were, therefore, steady, economically secure people who seldom toiled themselves but merely directed others in their chores on the farms.

Besides these middle class Japanese there were permanent farm helpers who resided on the ranches with the operators all year around, usually drawing set monthly wages; and these, too were steady and stable because of permanency of employment and regularity of income.



As the harvest season approached, which would begin in April and last until October, migratory Japanese laborers flocked into the town from other sections of the state. The season here provided them with abundant opportunities and attractive wages. As the season reached its peak in the summer, the Japanese population in and around the town increased to about one thousand. And as it is always the case wherever Japanese people congregate, there was a sizable prosperous colony of their own in one section of the town, which was composed of <sup>Japanese</sup> shops, restaurants, pool halls, employment offices, and cheap inns, which were supported by and catered more or less exclusively to them.

One day in the spring of 1924 in this colony a gambling house was found, where all the sundry paraphernalia of various devices of gambling had been pretentiously installed. It was whispered among the townfolk that the place was financed by the big Tokyo Club capital. Within a month Japanese, young and old, were passing through its door in droves. Soon some ranchers began to grumble about the house of gambling. They complained because their hired helpers failed to return to the ranches for days and sometimes for a week, should they hit the town on Saturday night when they had been paid for the week. These laborers stayed in town to gamble in the house as long as their money lasted. When they had lost every penny they had, they came back to work; and again they were gone for days after they earned some money. Other ranchers complained more loudly because the harvest work was impaired and was running short of help due to the uncalled-for absence of laborers.

Now, the "leading" citizens, "yushi", of the colony took up the chant, joined enthusiastically by the Christian pastor and the Buddhist priest. "Something must be done, and done quickly," they said. "Let's do something," others said. This chorus of "Something must be done" and "let's do some-



thing" resulted in an emergency meeting of the Japanese Association, a town meeting for the ranchers and the townfolk in the town hall. There the leading citizens got up on the floor and made impassioned speeches in the crowded hall. (For some reason meetings of this sort always draw a big crowd among the Japanese.) One yushi said, "The invasion of organized gambling into our community perils our prosperous industry. The peace-disturbers are keeping our workers away from the orchards. We had depended upon these men for our harvesting; but now with inroad of the vice what is going to become of our crops? Not only these innocent workers are easy prey of the professionals and their future is being destroyed, but our whold existence, life or death of all of us, is challenged and threatened. This situation is of a great concern to us. The house of ill fame must go and go right away."

"Look at those young men who are frequenting the place of vice," shouted another, "They were the exemplary models and the flower of our youngmanhood. They were once dilligent and industrious. They were working hard and saving for the happy day when he would take a wonderful girl as his proud bride to make a blissful home with her. (How often has one heard the plea of model youngmanhood? This was certainly one of the most popular themes or logic of the Issei in the past.) Now, their future is destroyed; our happy dream and anticipation of their bright future have been completely shattered. The gambling is contaminating the innocent and delicate minds of the young Japanese. It is a deplorable condition. I am fearful of the future of our race. Organized gambling must go. We must put a stop to it not only to save those who had been addicted but also those who are yet to come under the diabolic influence. If our race in America is to survive and to pertuate our good name which we had established, we must close the house."

After many speeches of similar themes were made by others passionately and excitedly, someone asked, "What can we do to stop it?"



Many suggestions were offered. One was to contact the men who were known to be gambling in the place and advise them to stay away -- it carried a tone of "or else", meaning that those who refused to abide by the advice would be socially ostracized and made unpleasant to stay in the town. A rancher offered another suggestion; he wanted every orchard operator to make a pledge with him to refuse to hire those who were frequenting the infamous establishment. All present, however, agreed that it was impractical and impossible to close the house forcibly; so these two methods of combating the evil -- social ostracism and boycotting of the gamblers -- were adopted officially by the townhall meeting.

At the close of the meeting which lasted more than three hours a resolution of condemning the organized gambling and those who gamble was passed by the wild eyed throng in excitement and uproar.

What actually took place during the ensuing days was not revealed to the writer, but men passing through the door of the house gradually decreased and ceased to be noticed eventually. Those who had to gamble habitually did go into the place under the cover of darkness, endeavoring not to be seen by any one; and even these became negligible in number as the time went on. Soon afterward, the gambling house closed its door inconspicuously and the Japanese people returned to the old routine of playing hana games for small stakes in the backrooms of the shops, restaurants, and inns or in the workers' barracks.

A similar incident of frustrating an attempt by the Tokyo Club interest to establish its branch was reported by the secretary of a Japanese Association. Let us have his story now.

"It was about six months after I got out of the University of Southern California," he commenced, "I got an offer from the yushi in the Gardena Valley<sup>2</sup> for the job as the secretary of the Japanese Association in that



section. It sounds good when I say the executive secretary, but that was the only employee they had. Their office was located in an old, shabby two by four house. But I took the job, because I couldn't find anything else to do and it paid pretty well -- one hundred dollars a month with rooms and utilities -- that wasn't bad at all -- I was engaged to a girl and had to save as much and as quickly as possible. I moved with my bag and all into my residence, which was composed of two rooms, bath and kitchen in the back of the office. It was back in February of 1928.

"As soon as I had settled in my swivel chair, I had many members of the Association coming into the office with sundry business every day. After all, the Association had the membership of about three hundred Japanese families; that meant about two thousand Japanese, male and female, young and old. It was next to the largest of its kind in Southern California, the largest being the one in Los Angeles. These members were mostly truck gardeners and "haul men."<sup>10</sup> Anyway, this is where I began to work.

"Very soon afterward," he continued, "these Issei farmers were coming to see me about a gambling joint down the street. They complained that lots of Japanese were gambling there every night. Some of them stayed there so late that they couldn't work in the fields the next day. 'And mind you, these men are the fathers of many children,' they said. It seemed that the wives of these frequenters of the gambling house were worried about their play-loving husbands, yet they were powerless before them to do anything about their indulgence. Instead, these women went to their neighbors and sought sympathy for their grievance. Well, as you know, Japanese farmers are altruistic and helpful whenever others are in trouble, often to the point of being 'busy-bodies.' They would say, 'I will tell the Japanese Association to do something about it. What are they doing anyway? Are they asleep?'"



"Other complainants had more selfish motives. They said that some of the 'haul men' with whom their garden products were entrusted for consignment marketing were parking their loaded trucks and were gambling in there beyond the opening hour of the wholesale market, thereby missing the early market hours during which produce would usually sell for higher price. They would also say that it is very easy to cheat the sale price and the weight of the consigned goods, because no one could check up on their transactions. Well, their arguments is that when there is greater temptation to cheat, especially if they had lost in games, they are most likely to cheat. My argument to that would be that if that is the case why don't they tell these 'haul men' face to face themselves; or why can't they change the 'haul man' and consign their produce to some one else. They either haven't got 'guts' or don't want to say anything unpleasant or offensive themselves and want someone else to say it for them. I know they are shy and shoving the buck, but being the new secretary I couldn't tell them so.

"I remember a couple of old men who came to my office and said that their sons were gambling there habitually but they could not do anything to stop it. Should they chide their sons they would revolt and big family squabbles would follow. So these old men wanted me to do something about it. Their primary worry was that these grown up sons were stealing the income from their produce, for which every member of their families had toiled and were squandering it away. But they would say, 'the presence of gambling place in the community is unhealthy for the young mind.'

"You know how they get excited quickly," the secretary continued on, "and how they get heated over such a moral issue. They were clamoring for action, but they all wanted me to do something about it and none of them wanted to take the leadership. I was new in the job and was anxious to



satisfy the members; I didn't want them to criticize behind my back, 'the new secretary we got is incompetent and lazy.' So I called an officers' meeting one evening and consulted the big shots of the Association about what procedure was to be taken. Yes, they readily agreed that the joint must be driven out of the town 'for the sake of the younger generation.' To them their hana playing in the presence of their sons and daughters are all right but not the place with permanent gambling facilities. I was ordered to call a mass meeting of all the members, which meant just about calling all the heads of the Japanese families in the valley. When these people assembled in our Japanese language school hall, we presented the resumé of the situation, which they had already been aware -- stories travel mouths to mouths awfully quick among the Japanese in a hush - hush manner. There were many speeches made in that meeting; you know how they do it -- speeches of flowery words, of the importance of maintaining the moral standard, on the virtuous mission of the older people to guide the young generation, and so on. To you and me these speeches would sound spurious and superficial or make an impression as if they were talking just for oratory's sake. When it reached to the point of determining the definite steps to be taken to curb out the organized gambling, they were stuck. They couldn't suggest any concrete suggestion. Finally, after a long indecisive discussion they selected a committee and asked them to take action."

"The committee met the next day in my office and again couldn't decide what to do and told me to figure out a solution. Yes, they too passed the buck. Well, I had to make good. I contacted a few husky Judo men of the valley and obtained their support for the crusade. With these physical marvels I called on the boss of the gambling house and argued with him why his place should be closed. He half-heartedly consented that he would not do anything to encourage people to come into his place, although he would



not restrain them from doing so. He had been living in the town for some time, although he had some connection with the Tokyo Club syndicate. He said that he liked the community and wanted to live there. He did not want to 'defy the strong public opinion' nor did he wish his family to be looked upon by other Japanese askans.' Our work was half done; something we had been thinking almost impossible was accomplished. So from that night our gang stood vigilantly about fifty feet away from the entrance of the place and stopped every one coming toward it. We told him that we were there to curb gambling and advised him to stay away; some heeded while others went around the house and sneaked in from the back door. We kept on with this for several nights. Meanwhile the news of the vigilantes spread around the community and the people began to rally around. We were encouraged by the public support because we had been afraid how the syndicate men would take our action and fearful of their reprisal; now we were confident that we were safe.

"Well, we were successful in stamping out the organized gambling from our town," he boasted. "The boss of the house confined his activities thereafter to promoting of shows and running of a restaurant. He is still living in the town, but I don't think he will try to run a gambling place anymore, knowing that we will meet a stern opposition from the community. Anyway, I certainly had guts to buck against the racketeers, but those were my younger days and I was now in this job. I wouldn't dare to do a thing like that now."

These cases which have been cited are two of a few instances in which the Tokyo Club syndicate failed in their attempt to extend their control over a new territory because of public opposition. It was, however, more usual for them to succeed rather than fail wherever they had wished to extend their interest; and once they had established it, it was practically impossible to curb them out.



In the golden days of the twenties they held the monopoly of gambling among the Japanese and their far flung network was intrenched firmly in many cities and towns. The main office was located in Los Angeles and the branches were found in San Francisco, San Jose, Sacramento, Stockton, Lodi, Fresno, Watsonville, Salinas, Martinez, and Walnut Grove in the northern part of California and in San Diego, El Centro, and Bakersfield in the southern part. Those in Portland, Seattle, and Salt Lake City enjoyed more autonomous privileges and more loosely connected with the California chain.

The Tokyo Club of Los Angeles was situated on Jackson Street at the foot of Central Avenue in Little Tokyo, occupying a three-story building. The place of business was located on the third floor of the building, three flights of narrow steps leading up directly from the street to the entrance. At this entrance, there was a heavy, thick, impressive door, on which a small opening with its own small door was found. Through this peep hole, a man looked searchingly from the other side as a customer came up the stairs. If the oncoming man was a Japanese the watcher opened the heavy door without a moment's hesitation. Through this door, one went through another door and then into a large smoke-filled, electric-lit hall, where Japanese of every walk of life were found busily absorbed in many kinds of game -- faro, "sheeko," blackjack, dice throwing, poker, "gaham," and lottery, each of these games occupying a neatly arranged area in the hall respectively. It was known that the place opened for its daily business at two in the afternoon and closed sometimes around one, and that about eight o'clock or thereafter every night this hall with about seventy-five feet by one hundred feet floor space was filled with game participants and spectators, numbering at least one hundred or so, not including about thirty employees. At one corner of the hall there was a wire cage like the one seen in a bank, behind which a few men stood. One of these men was a chief



cashier, an important man placed high up in the hierarchy of the syndicate, and he took charge of the huge, massive safe behind the counter, which was reputed to contain cash of at least seventy-five thousand dollars constantly. On one side of the hall there was a dining room and an adjoining kitchen, and there "shaoko-tai",<sup>11</sup> or bums, were regularly fed together with the employees and bona-fide customers free of charge. Amid the crowd several tall men of muscular physique were moving about; they were the 'bouncers' of the house, entrusted with the duty of maintaining peace and order or of bouncing obnoxious or disturbing clients out. Once in awhile these men, too, relieved the dealers and the bankers and took charge of the tables. Although the exact figure was not revealed, it was said by the people in the know that five thousand dollars' worth of "business" was transacted there daily. From this information it was easily conceivable that their profit was enormous and lucrative.

The second floor of the concrete building owned by Tokyo Club was fitted as an auditorium, with a stage and a hall with a seating capacity of about eight hundred. This was called Yamato Hall, which was operated by "Beikoku Kogyo Kaisha," or the American Entertainment Company, a subsidiary of the chain. Stage shows were imported by them from Japan and were staged there, or shows of local talents were put on. The auditorium was also often used for "minshu taikai," or mass meeting, for the Japanese people of Los Angeles in order to fan public agitation for this or that purpose. Frequently, especially in the late thirties, hundreds of Japanese not only from the city proper but also from the towns all over the Southern California assembled for "hoon-kai," or lecture meeting, given by a "meishi," or a noted personage, who was passing through the city from or to Japan. The lecturers included the front-page names -- statesmen, members of the diet, newspapermen, and army and navy officers of Japan. As the cloud of crisis between America and



Japan darkened, the interest of Japanese was intensified in what these men in the know would have to say. Some of the big names attracted such a tremendous crowd overflowing into the street, for whom a public address system had to be installed from the stage. It was in these speeches that the Issei were told that war was certain to come and they should be reconciled to the eventuality. One of the speakers said one, "If war comes, which is only a question of time, don't expect the Japanese government to do anything for you. It is going to come very suddenly. You are not "imin", or immigrants, but "kimin", or forsaken subjects." A naval officer assured the throng on another occasion "Japan is invincible. We have prepared. We are ready." Another commander boasted, "We have been blaked and humiliated by America for many years. When the time comes, we will crush America. We will attack them; we will bomb them." One army captain was reported to have said that Japan would attack Hawaii; "She would capture the Philippines and Singapore."

The contents of the speeches were discussed re-discussed in whispers in the Japanese shops and farms; they reverberated days and weeks from the platform of Yamato Hall into the Japanese community. The warnings and assurances pointed the way for the Issei in the event of war. The student of the Japanese, especially for the period after the outbreak of the war, cannot minimize the important role played by the lectures in Yamato Hall, the second floor of the Tokyo Club building. Many beliefs, convictions, and rumors of the Issei after Pearl Harbor had their origin in these "fight talks."

The tenant of the second floor, Kogyo Kaisha, aside from operating Yamato Hall, was the owner of Fuji Kan, the only Japanese theater in the United States which was showing Japan-made films daily. The theater was located in the heart of Little Tokyo on East First Street and a bright



spot of the Japanese "Great Whiteway." Although the excessive admission of seventy-five cents was charged, old Issei men and women flocked to the theater as they craved for amusement and entertainment of their own culture, which was very limited, if not denied, to them. On Saturdays and Sundays the movie house drew crowds from far and wide and it was not unusual for it to hang "Standing Room Only," or "oiri Manin," signs.

Kogyo Kaisha, in addition to the successful and exclusive operation of the theater, imported the films made in Japan. Some of these films were directly brought from Japan, but more likely most of them were obtained from the Japanese theater chain in Hawaii after they were shown to the island Japanese, as some critical Japanese used to remark, "These are discarded obsolete films which were picked up in Hawaii almost for nothing." Although these pictures might have been obsolete and cheap intrinsically, they were just the same novel and entertaining to the Japanese in California. After the first showing at Fuji Kan, they were taken around for a one "night stand" throughout smaller towns in California, the local Tokyo Clubs promoting and sponsoring these shows. And these shows were invariably profitable both to the promoters and the film owners.

The street floor was leased by the Japanese language newspaper, Rafu Nichibei, or the Los Angeles Japanese American Daily News, until it failed in 1931 when the publishers incurred the wrath of the public and their paper was boycotted due to the mishandling of a labor dispute with the employees. Even during their heydays, the newspaper had difficulty in operating itself profitably, as true with any other vernacular paper,<sup>12</sup> because the fixed expense is enormously high in comparison with the limited possibility in volume for subscribers. It was common knowledge that the Japanese newspaper game was not for money making, but for "social prestige," that is to say, the newspapermen were looked upon with respect and could



wield a great deal of influence over the community. The Rafu Nichibei, too, had more than its share of financial difficulty and was known that their rent was in arrears for many months. This, in turn, created a special obligatory relation between the tenant and the lesser making the paper constantly considerate of the whim of the gambling interest. It was careful not to offend them, although they might not publicly endorse their activities. However, whenever the syndicate or its subsidiary was promoting some "legitimate" undertaking, the paper gave ample space for its publicity.

After the failure of this paper, in about 1935, another Japanese newspaper, San Gyo Nippo, commenced its publication on the ground floor of the building and met the same fate of its predecessor.

Speaking of vernacular newspapers it is important to add that one of the two others in Los Angeles was published by a popular "pro-axis" man, Sei Fujii, who for many years had been the legal counselor for the chain, while the other of the two was operated by a man who had intimate social and business connections with the officials of the gambling hierarchy. One could say, therefore, that the papers did not dare to provoke their wrath and tacitly condoned the existence of the organized gambling for expediency.

"Wasn't there any other group which might impede and oppose the work of the syndicate?" one would ask. The answer to this question is "no." The Japanese religious groups were careful not to mention the name of this organization whenever they preached the evil of gambling. They were willing to condemn the gambling in general as a principle, but were afraid to cite the specific instances of abuses of powerful Tokyo Club. There were good reasons: first of all, it must be stated that the leaders of the hierarchy were more than willing to donate a considerable sum of money for charities and good causes freely and lavishly. It would not be



an exaggeration to say that every church or temple of Los Angeles at one time or another received financial aid from these underground men, although neither side of the transactions was anxious to divulge the names of donors and the amounts. Some churches and temples had to rely on the shady donations in order to complete their new building projects; and the erection of a new church or temple building was undertaken one after another in the twenties as if it were the only right thing for them to do. To them the "bosses" were the ace in hole in pinches, because they could get money easily without any resultant unfavorable publicity.

Secondly, it was very difficult to create public sentiment against the Tokyo Club by any group, religious or political, on account of:--

1. The geographical distribution of the population. The residences of the Japanese were scattered all over the unrestricted zones of Los Angeles, the Boyle Heights, "Virgil Street," "Hollywood," "Central Avenue," "Tenth Street," the Lincoln Height, "Seinan-ku," Sawtelle, etc. Without the aid of newspapers it was impossible to create and unite public opinion.

2. The new steady influx of Japanese into the city. There was a great inflow of Japanese from other parts of the United States since 1920, especially from Seattle and San Francisco, attracted by the purportedly abundant economic opportunities. The community as a whole assumed the metropolitan attitude of *laissez faire* and "mind my own business" and did not have the meddling "we must do something for our neighbor" attitude of small towns, where every one knew what every one else was doing.

3. People coming to the Tokyo Club to gamble from a wide area; from Bakersfield and Santa Barbara in the north to San Diego in the south.

Thirdly, the leading business men of Little Tokyo had some business connections either directly or indirectly with the club itself or the club members. And these men were the political leaders of the Japanese colony, occupying



the official positions of the Japanese Association of Los Angeles. For instance, Sei Fujii, the legal counselor and newspaper publisher, was at one time the president of the Association for some years. A recent president also was closely connected with the chain and took over its subsidiary, the amusement company, when it was in a legal difficulty in 1939. It was no wonder that the political organization was inactive in gambling crusading.

Lastly, instances of intimidation and physical violence by the "strong men" of the Tokyo Club were whispered among the Japanese. These were enough to frighten away the Japanese from risking their own selves in a crusade, which might bring on reprisals. These will be discussed more in detail later.

Because of these factors, the Tokyo Club in Los Angeles had a clear field to prosperity without meeting any serious opposition for their existence from the community.

From the police, too, the Tokyo Club was free of interference, due to the corruption of public officials. They were buying the "protection" from the police through a well worked-out bribery system. It was more likely to be correct, although variously rumored, to conjecture the amount of bribery to be around two thousand dollars a month. With such an unauthorized permission from the vice squad, the gambling place was free from raids. During the successive administrations of Mayor Porter and Mayor Shaw, the police and the underworld were partners in the intricate understanding so that the Japanese gambling organization had no fear whatsoever of arrests and penal punishments. It was true that during these years a few raids on the establishment were made, but they were of a make believe nature. The vice squad, it was said, tipped off the house in advance of such a raid, and when they did actually break into the place, only a score of men were present in the hall, the gambling paraphernalia having been hidden away.



Even though these men were brought before the court after their nominal arrest, they were charged with some minor offence and were freed on small fines. Aside from police "protection", they were doubly cautious in posting a lookout station in the guise of a cigar stand at the street corner several doors away from the building. Its purpose was to signal emergencies such as a raid by some police squad other than that of policemen in the ring.

Thus the force of legal and social sanctions failed with the Tokyo Club in Los Angeles; there was nothing in their way to obstruct them from reaping an enormous profit. Then the question is: how did they make money? What difference was there compared with a gambling place in a Caucasian community?

As it was mentioned in this report previously various games were operated on the third floor of the Tokyo Club building. Of these blackjack, dice throwing, poker, and fare were the same as those found at Caucasian establishments, while "sheeko," "gaham," and lottery were seen in Chinese places. The characteristic difference with the Japanese organization, however, was the extensiveness of lottery ticket sale outside of the premise. A man who was taking charge of the lottery department reported that more than four fifths of the total ticket sale were brought in from streets by their "salesmen." There were usually about five of them, all being Issei beyond fifty years of age, each having his own territory. Three of them were assigned to the Little Tokyo district. They started their rounds every morning about ten o'clock, calling on regular customers in the business town. They also had their "agencies" established in the backrooms of restaurants and soda fountains and called on them at regular intervals on a prearranged time table; the prospective customers had a choice of either waiting for the "salesman" or of leaving their marked tickets and the



premise. Two other salesmen took care of the wholesale produce districts and the wholesale flower market earlier in the morning while these markets were open for business. All these men reported back to the Tokyo Club at half past one in the afternoon and deposited the tickets with the lottery manager and the cash to the cashier.

At two o'clock sharp the drawing was made and the result was known half an hour later. The "salesmen" again walked into the streets with the result sheets and the prizes, if any, and went over the same route which he had visited earlier in the day, giving out the result sheet to each customer and each "agency." In this manner, the interested parties could find out how they lost (most likely than winning) their money. The post mortem discussions were lively among these habitués; their typical expression was, "I could have guessed that the marks would come out this way. Shucks, I missed a chance of making three hundred dollars."

The "salesmen" again early in the evening resumed the same routine for the eight o'clock drawing, and returned to the streets by nine o'clock.

What, then, was the compensation for these lottery ticket sellers? They charged five cents on each dollar from the purchaser and a five percent commission from the house. For an ace salesman in the golden era it was not difficult to sell three hundred dollars' worth of lottery tickets in a day, which meant that his profit was at least thirty-dollars for the day. In addition to these sources of income, they received a bonus from the winners; it was a gambler's ethic to express his appreciation for selling him the lucky ticket by giving the seller a cut of five to ten percent of the winning. The lottery man, then, split this gift fifty-fifty with his "agent" if the ticket happened to be sold at the "agency." This custom might have some connection with their oft expressed statement, "I am lucky if I buy the ticket from so-and-so," or with a superstition that to be generous after



a winning is to preserve that good luck. At any rate, the one who failed to show "appreciation" was looked with askance and regarded as a "cheap bum." On the other side of the ledger for the "salesmen," there were only those expenses paid for gifts such as sacks of rice, kegs of soy sauce, boxes of needles, etc., which were sent at frequent intervals to the "agents." Therefore, one could conceive that lottery ticket selling among the Los Angeles Japanese was a very lucrative business, netting the seller several hundred dollars a month. Consequently it resulted in a keen competition to obtain the franchise from the gambling organization, although posting of cash bond was required and the right commanded a high value of royalty. The writer knew two such lottery men who returned to Japan with sizable sums of money after a few years in the business -- one of them, according to rumors, with fifty thousand dollars.

"How does a lottery ticket look?" and "what do you do with it?" are the next questions to be taken up. A lottery ticket was about five inches by six inches in size and was made of cheap pulp paper, on the top of which the name of the "company", or brand, appeared. The Tokyo Club of Los Angeles operated four brands, namely, Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe, and Kyoto. In other words, they had four separate lottery drawings successively according to the brand at each drawing time. The purposes of having the four different brands were to give a wider choice to the buyer in selecting his ticket and to get more varied results of drawings in order to increase one's greedy appetite for gambling. It was a well conceived idea on the part of the gambling syndicate, because it could not only increase the business volume but also could give unfortunate lottery players an outlet of consolation and self-pity that it was not his choice of ideographs to be marked which were at fault but his selection of brand of "company." One could often hear "God damn it! I should have bought Tokyo instead of Kobe. Look! I missed a chance for fifty-five dollars." As the result it was common for



many to buy simultaneously tickets of two or more different brands to "safeguard their hunches," especially when they had "lucky dreams." In this case, tickets of different brands were marked exactly alike.

Under the name of brand, eighty Chinese ideographs were printed as shown in the following diagram, each brand printed with ink of different colors; specifically, Tokyo in black, Yokohama in red, Kyoto in purple, and Kobe in green. Each ticket also carried a statement, "Ten thousand dollars limit."

A player received a sheet of this lottery ticket from the "salesman" and with a calligraphic brush and ink he blotted black any nine of these ideographs. The habitual players had definite patterns or conceptions as to which nine characters should be marked. For example, some marked the ticket exactly the same every time he bought it; others held the superstition that if one had dreamed of serpents, of fire, or of running river he should mark it in a certain definite pattern, conventional



for each dream, to be lucky. The Japanese hold a dream of snakes specially as a lucky omen and were willing to wager more money in such a case. The lottery man, then, copied over the markings on another sheet in his presence and handed the copy to the buyer, while retaining the original. The price wagered on each ticket was any multiple sum of thirty-five cents, the minimum being set at one dollar and five cents; then, one dollar and forty cents, one dollar and seventy-five cents, and so on without any limit. To the Japanese a wagering of three dollars and a half was not at all surprising, although one-dollar-and-five-cent tickets were sold most commonly. As the player bet more money, he could win more; the rate of return was calculated so much for each thirty-five cents.

The result was determined by drawings twice a day, as already mentioned. At each drawing time, four separate drawings were made, one for each brand. This was the way the drawing was done: there were eighty square sheets of paper, on each of which one character of the eighty appearing on the lottery ticket was printed, and were placed in a container after they were carefully folded. Out of this container a man picked out twenty pieces, that is, he picked twenty different ideographs. These drawn ideographs were, then, transcribed on lottery sheets by perforating; in other words, the Chinese characters which represented those drawn out of the container were punched out of the sheets. These were called "de gami" or result sheets.

In order to explain how the wagers were rewarded, let us assume that you held a ticket and paid one dollar and five cents for it. You take out the copy of your marking and compare it with the result sheet. In case you find any four of your nine marks correspond with four of those twenty characters punched out of the result sheet, you are paid forty five cents, if five, six dollars and fifteen cents; if six, fifty-five dollars and some odd cents; if seven, three hundred and forty-five dollars; if eight, one



thousand and some dollars; if nine, the limit of ten thousand dollars. (The last two figures never to be verified) However, you need not worry about how to get your winning money if you have hit better than "six marks," because the lottery ticket man will most probably be looking around the town for you so that he will be given a "cut" and will try to make you buy more tickets.

What were the chances of winning? One or two examples will suffice to explain that the chances were slim and the lottery ticket was a one-sided business, all in favor of the house. One Issei said, "I have been buying a one-dollar ticket every day for the last two years, but so far I got back fifty-five dollars twice and six dollars not more than ten times. You would ask why I buy then then, if I knew I would lose the money. Well, it's a habit. Every time I see a lottery man, I feel positive that I will hit it this time. I get an urge from inside of me that I have a good hunch. This is more so when I dream. I follow up the dream for many days thinking "perhaps." Yeah, when I gave up and changed the marking, the marks came out. You often hear people say, "So and so got one thousand dollars" or "He's gotten six spots." Yeah, but, you should ask these guys how much they have lost so far. Now, you would ask why I don't quit. It got into my blood and it's no use to tell me to quit."

Another man said, "I quit the lottery. I don't know how much money I have spent, I bet it's more than five hundred dollars. And only thing I got out of it was one fifty-five-dollar win and several six-dollar ones. You bet, it was hard to quit. Now I buy then only when I had good dreams." It is interesting to note that although he claimed that he had gotten rid of the habit, he was still buying tickets occasionally when he had hunches from his dreams. The tie-up of dreams and the lottery among the Japanese. A great many Japanese held the belief that dreams are never-



to-be-missed guidance in the lottery ticket marking. Common were these expressions such as "I must buy a lottery ticket today, because I dreamt of snakes last night," and "I had a dream last night, I am going to Los Angeles to buy a ticket." To these men, it was no hindrance to travel, say, twenty miles from Terminal Island to Los Angeles.

About 1933, the Tokyo Club instituted another game, on the same order of lottery, to appeal to the greed of the general public. This was called Tomikuji, or Lucky Lot, working on the same principle of "Bank Night." They sold an artistically designed card, each bearing a number, for one dollar. The card buyer was registered and his name was recorded with the syndicate. On this card the rules were printed together with the date of drawing -- twice a year, one in the spring and the other in the fall. The highest prize was cash of ten thousand dollars; the second was two thousand dollars, and so forth down to five-dollar prizes. There were approximately two hundred prizes in all.

As usual agencies were established and salesmen were sent out all over Southern California. And the success of the "sales" campaign was phenomenal due to the novelty of the game and the then economic unrest among the Japanese. The people reported and believed that for the first Tomikuji the syndicate sold at least fifty thousand tickets before the lot drawing time and their net earning was calculated to be around fifteen to twenty thousand dollars.

One day in November of that year the drawing of the first Tomikuji was held pretentiously in Yamato Hall before the general public which filled the hall to capacity. On the stage there was a huge glass container which held small number-containing capsules. After the container had been spun and rotated, a kimono clad girl took out the capsules one by one and handed them over to the judges, who were the representatives



from the local vernacular newspapers. The judges then opened the capsules and announced the numbers contained in them amid cheers and groans of the crowd. Within a few hours after the final number had been drawn from the container, the prize-winning numbers were printed and dispatched throughout the territory. The Japanese newspapers of that evening also carried large advertisements by the syndicate informing the readers that the lot had been drawn and the reports announcing the winning numbers were being distributed; in this connection it should be noted that they carefully avoided to announce the numbers in the advertisements, since it was a fragrant violation of the postal regulation, although they dared to print that the lot drawing had been made.

The second Tomikuji cards were sold again in the next spring for the drawing in May of 1934. And there were a few more drawings in subsequent seasons. As the Tomikuji sale was repeated, the interest of the public gradually waned; the decreased public interest resulted toward the end in failure to pay the advertised prize of ten thousand dollars. The first prize at one time was a little over eight thousand dollars and that at later time was something like six thousand dollars. Meanwhile, there were several instances that the Tomikuji salesmen were arrested, mostly in the outlying towns, while selling the cards. There was one arrest which the writer witnessed in Long Beach in 1925 -- a man who had come all the way from Los Angeles was selling the tickets to the Japanese operators of the stalls in the Municipal Market. He was apprehended by a detective in the act of selling and was taken to the city jail. Afterwards, it was said that the man was fined heavily in court and the fine was paid by the Tokyo Club interest.

Although the exact reason has never been revealed, the sale of Tomikuji was suspended entirely in 1926 never to be revived. There



were many conjectures by the public as to the discontinuance of the lot drawing. Although there were "tall" stories circulated in the community, anyone of the following explanations or a combination of them was more plausible and nearer to the truth:--

1. Decline of public interest in Tomikujii; hence, decrease in the sales volume.

2. Although they were considerably free from police interference in the city of Los Angeles, they experienced a great deal of difficulty with the law enforcement agencies of other towns. This was understandable because there were no "agreements" between the syndicate and the law officers of other towns. As the sales dropped in the city proper, they had to depend more and more upon the "clients" in the outlying districts, which eventually extended as far north as Fresno and Sacramento.

3. Fear of complication with postal regulations.

4. The enormous overhead -- the prize cashes, the commissions to the salesmen, etc. -- was too great in proportion to the net return to the house. They were operating more profitable games.

Indeed, the Tokyo Club of Los Angeles built a tremendous business in a score of years; in retrospect, however, its history reveals more than its share of struggles to sustain the gigantic business in full swing and to preserve the monopoly of gambling and entertainments in the Japanese community. About 1920 the chain was still in a disorganized stage; its headquarters had just moved from San Francisco to Los Angeles, whence the center of the Japanese population was shifting and where the business was increasing at a surprising rate. With this move one Itani was chosen as the president of the Tokyo Club of Los Angeles and with it carried the title of the president of the entire Tokyo Club syndicate, all inclusive of Beikoku Kogyo Kaisha and the Tokyo Clubs scattered all



over the west coast. Befitting the great responsibility and the broad scope of their activity the duty required, this man was of an exceptional executive ability with forcefulness and resourcefulness. As soon as he assumed the office he began to work of consolidating and unifying in one central organization in Los Angeles as the cog and the absolute authority all its holdings and subsidiaries, which had been independently operated and loosely coordinated. He instituted the system of sending out from headquarters a supervisor and an auditor periodically to examine the business activities and records of each branch. He exercised the appointive power vested in him to the full extent, recalling inefficient or corrupt branch employees and substituting them with men of better ability who had been trained at the head office. In cases of insubordination and disobedience he was severe in meeting out the penalty; he sent out his gang of powerful burly men to take care of these rebels in the Chicago gangland manner. In most cases the disciplinary measure stopped at just beating, although some of them were so severely beaten to require hospitalization. In two or three extreme cases, so the grapevine reported, men were actually murdered and their bodies were disposed of so well that even the police detection failed.

In attempts to establish competition to the Tokyo Club activities the men who dared to defy the powerful organization were treated in the same manner. They met the same fate as the balking employees at the hands of gangsters. These drastic actions, in turn, had self-accentuating effect in curbing or stamping out any future attempt at revolt or of competition, since the tales of the use of force and violence agreed with the taste and satisfied the appetite of sensation-loving Japanese. Many stories of punishments were told and retold, and mag-



nified and exaggerated, and again told and retold.

The gangland technique was successful in establishing and maintaining order within the ranks and files of the organization; the attendant publicity, if not actual application, was effective in maintaining and preserving the monopolistic control in the Japanese gambling and amusement fields. It was so effective that the policy was inherited by the succeeding presidents of the syndicate after Itani retired with a reputed bonus of a quarter of million dollars and returned to Japan to live the rest of his life luxuriously.<sup>13</sup> The despotic, ruthless policy, however, at the end worked as a boomerang on the organization bring about its own downfall. Inasmuch as the application of violence in perpetuating its own business was instrumental in creating fear and dread toward the Tokyo Club syndicate and their members among the Japanese in California, a few of such instances as told by the men of the street are recorded in the following paragraphs.

In the early years there were minor beating cases, which were in general confined to disobedient employees and disorderly customers; the club was more concerned and occupied with keeping order within the house itself. One heard that a man was thrown out of the hall of the third floor of the Tokyo Club building in a battered condition, or that the boss of the Lodi branch was deposed of his office after his life had been threatened, or that an employee in the Sacramento house was severely banged up. There was a story of a little more severe case told in the Los Angeles community. It was in 1927 -- one employee was shided by a gang of henchmen for an insubordinate act, but he was arrogant and talked back. Incensed by his sullen attitude, the gang beat him, but due to concussion of the brain or heart failure the victim who had been felled on the floor could not be revived. Perturbed as to the disposal of the



body, the assailants finally decided to carry it in an automobile and sped through the darkness of night. They chose a cliff on the Palos Verdes Hill<sup>14</sup> as the most desirable of all places for the purpose in the vicinity, whence the body was thrown into the Pacific Ocean with a heavy weight attached. It was ironical in that they had chosen the place, albeit unintentional, because within miles of the cliff there were no other residents but Japanese families raising vegetables. This tale fanned out from these farmers and through the grapevines was known to the Japanese community within a short time; in effect, it increased the fear held by the Japanese toward the Club people, having been convinced more than ever that they "meant business" and their order was accompanied with "or else."

After the collapse of the Hoover prosperity, it was more evident that many "big time" games incompatible with the Tokyo Club activities were on the increase and required more attention by the Tokyo Club "goon squad." The case of pin-ball games at the corner drugstore, which has been reported, is a typical example. Several poker games for big stakes which were going on in the backrooms of restaurants were intimidated and busted up. The writer observed one such case one day after midnight in front of a Japanese restaurant in Little Tokyo. As the players came into the street from the place, where it was known that a big stake poker session was operated frequently, three burly men appeared from nowhere in the darkness. It was obvious that they were waylaying them. They approached one of the players and gripped his coat lapels in jujitsu style. One of the waylayers said, "you know what's good for you. Quit the game." The victim was not freed until he had said apologetically, "I am awfully sorry. I won't do it again."



The same procedure was repeated with the next group of men coming out of the house within a few minutes. Within a few days afterward it was heard that the games at the place ceased to exist and even when it was resumed at a much later date it was for small stakes.

A similar case occurred in 1934 involving a man by the name of Kensaku Nadaoka,<sup>15</sup> who attempted to sell sweepstakes tickets competing with Tomikuji. This man Nadaoka was the manager of a jobbing house, which held the exclusive agency right for the Japanese territory of the Lucky Lager beer and the sole agency contract for the continental United States of certain brands of saké manufactured in Hawaii. Some years previously he had been a newspaper man for the Rafu Nichibei, then a seller of some patented therapeutical gadget. He was a sly, shrewd business man, who tried to manipulate capital belonging to some one else and made profits for himself. He was keen and ambitious in seizing any money-making opportunity, although shiftless and impatient. He always dreamed of a get-rich-quick scheme, since he spent more money than he earned. No doubt he had observed the phenomenal sales of Tomikuji and was envious. He searched for a similar scheme and per chance hit upon the sweepstakes tickets sold by a New York underworld organization. He immediately obtained the exclusive concession for the sale in the Japanese community from the Eastern firm and undertook a sales campaign with extensive newspaper advertisements, giving it a Japanese name "Takara Sagashi" or "Treasure Hunt." Within a month, however, he was visited by the "Teppe Gumi"<sup>16</sup> of the Tokyo Club. When he was told to suspend selling of his tickets as they were incompatible with the policy of the Tokyo Club, he argued back that inasmuch as his tickets were issued by a Caucasian organization and the Tokyo Club did not control the Caucasian underworld, he was no reason to discard his scheme. His



reasoning, needless to say, could not convince the gangsters and he was severely beaten in the presence of a few employees who were standing by helplessly. The bystanders could not do anything to aid the manager who was lying on the floor unconscious until the gangsters had left the premise. He was immediately taken to a hospital and the next day the capitalist and owner of the firm went to the Tokyo Club headquarters with a gift -- a case of saké -- to apologize for the "insolent act" of his manager and pledged that they would no longer sell the sweepstakes tickets to jeopardize the prosperity of Tomikaji.

As it has been stated, the maintenance of law and order among the rank and file of the syndicate was successfully administered by the masterful strokes of the first president, Itani. Subsequent to his retirement, the great prosperity and prestige became a source and a factor contributing toward the increase of jealousy and discontent among themselves. The succeeding presidents, who were weaker and less endowed, often had difficulty in coping with insubordination of or rivalry between the employees. The second president, one Yasuda, was being criticized in his back that he was too anxious to amass a fortune for his own personal gain. He was accused of favoritism, patronizing one faction at the expense of another. He was suspected of diverting the money belonging rightfully to the cache of the organization into his personal fund. The discontented elements aligned themselves with the man next highest in command in the hierarchy and the rivalry between the two factions was intensified. One day in 1929 it reached the breaking point; a delegation from the hostile faction demanded the resignation of the president face to face and was refused. A short time afterwards, the newspapers carried the news that Yasuda was murdered with pistol shots by unknown assailants in front of his



residence. Beyond the casual reporting, the papers in unison minimized the news confining themselves only to the facts directly pertaining to the murder itself; none of them mentioned the background of the victim or the probable motives behind the murder. The homicide squad made routine examination and reported the clues were scant. There were no suspects apprehended in so far as public knowledge was concerned and police detection utterly failed. Meanwhile, the funeral for Yasuda was the most elaborate and ornate in the history of the Los Angeles Japanese colony; every notable, dignitary, leading business man, <sup>and</sup> politicians of the colony were eager to express his condolence to the bereaved family. Within a few days after the funeral the murder news disappeared completely from the pages of newspapers as if it had been forgotten. One could accuse also that the detectives lacked zeal and enthusiasm to solve the mystery, which to this day remains as an unsolved crime in the annals of the police department. In contrast, however, stories of the murder were circulated in the community for weeks and weeks unabated with fervor. These stories in general agreed that Yasuda was murdered by the "trigger men" of the rival faction within his own organization. He had a premonition of his imminent danger and had a body guard with him, but this precaution was useless because the body guard himself belonged to the enemy camp and was instrumental in bringing his master into the pre-arranged trap. Another version went as far as to say that the police had been paid off heavily and it was absurd to anticipate the arrest of the assassins. Incidentally, in the ensuing years, the body guard, George Yamato, who had double-crossed his employer, was receiving compensation regularly from the house without performing any noticeable service.



In 1930 another man, Oku, the boss of the San Francisco branch, was murdered by unknown attackers, who were never detected by the police. Again the vernacular papers failed to report the murder in detail, to which the curious public had no access save through the grapevine. According to information offered by laymen the murder was a repercussion of Yasuda's. Oku was a staunch enemy of Yasuda and was one of the behind-the-scenes men who schemed and arranged his murder. After the event he was discontented and dissatisfied because one Yamawaki was elected to the presidency, for which he had held a secret ambition. Oku's subsequent uncooperative attitude made the position of the men in power precarious, since they had once been the partners in one crime. The murder was accomplished in order to seal the mouth of the insurgent and to eliminate any chance of downfall of the in-group.

Murders of members were the extreme measure of discipline the Tokyo Club resorted to. They were usually more tolerant of violation by a member of their special code of conduct and meted out much milder punishments.

In 1933, a certain Iwanami, a cashier, was charged with tampering with the account books and embezzling the Club fund. In this case, the offender was presented with a gift of a few hundred dollars and was ordered to leave for Japan.

In the same year, there was a more interesting case concerning an employee -- one Isobe. He was a "boulder," about 30 years of age. He was a son of a Shinto priest. A few years previously he had fallen in love with a Nisei prostitute and since then had been living with her without marital status. In the course of time, a child was born between them. For some reason a rift developed between the two; the man began to stay away from home and the wife was seeing a young Nisei



during her husband's working hours. Once it was whispered that she was caught with her paramour and was beaten by her husband; this was followed by another story that they -- the wife and the paramour -- disappeared from the city leaving the child alone in the home. It was variously reported -- some said that they went to Nevada, while others said that they ran away to the East. Speaking from the standard of the syndicate code, Isobe lost "face" in that he had lost his woman to another man and had disgraced the name of the organization. He was given the usual sentence -- an order to leave for Japan with a gift of a few hundred dollars. Recently news was brought back from China that he was doing well in Shanghai as a member of the Japanese police force, after he had joined a nationalistic organization of the city which received orders directly from Japan.

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With the advent of Fletcher Bowron into the Mayor's office, one of his platforms for election, crusading of vice and the underworld, was undertaken vigorously. With the repeated shake-ups in the police department, inefficient or shady officers were either demoted or transferred to other divisions where they would be of no value to the tie-up with the underworld. As a result, many gambling resorts were raided and closed, and even Guy McAfee<sup>17</sup> had to leave the city to seek a haven in Nevada. The Tokyo Club, too, met more interference from the police and it became increasingly difficult to keep the house open. One night a police squad broke in from the skylight of the hall and arrested a sizeable crowd who had no time to seek cover. After this round-up operation was suspended for a long time. When it opened again for business, it was only for a short duration as it was involved in a legal mess from which they could never again disentangle themselves,



marking the final blow to the once glorious existence of the Tokyo Club of Los Angeles. This case is called the State of California vs. Yamatoda, et al.<sup>18</sup>

As one old Japanese has philosophized, "Violence brings more violence. Success in use of violence is tempting for one to use more violence again to solve a difficulty. Eventually the user of violence becomes careless and is doomed," the employees of the Tokyo Club one night in 1939 became careless in the use of force upon an obnoxious player.

There was a truck parked on a street in Little Tokyo for days without any trace of having been moved. The police, when notified by some in the neighborhood, traced its owner to one Namba, whose family revealed that he had left his home for Los Angeles with a load of vegetables about two weeks previously and was missing since then. His family was concerned about his failure to return and had been conducting a search among his acquaintances. The family asked the police now for a further search for the missing man, since the news had been known by the public.

Somehow, a story began to go around the town that Namba had been murdered on the third floor of the Tokyo Club building and his body had been disposed of. The police on the tip-off arrested the employees and their grilling finally produced a few confessions as some of them<sup>19</sup> had turned as state witnesses. It was true, they said, that Namba had been murdered, although accidentally, by the Club employees. The trouble started when he had lost in games several hundred dollars and demanded of the house a donation of a few dollars for traveling expense to return home. When he was refused his request, he became vehemently vociferous and pugnacious. In order to quell him and to restore order in the house, a few hired men rushed to him and "ganged up" on him, some with fists,



one with an abacus, another with a stick. They had no intention of killing him, they protested.

After they were arraigned for the murder charge in the Superior Court of Los Angeles and while they were awaiting trial on bail, this difficulty bred another trouble. One faction within the chain, which was dissatisfied with and had ill feeling toward the then president, Yamatoda, staged a coup d'etat. They kidnapped Yamatoda and took him forcibly across the border into Mexico, although the attempt was frustrated in El Centro and the kidnappers were arrested. These two cases go to show that there no longer existed within the syndicate the unity and harmony which once prevailed; it was, indeed, in a chaotic condition. In due course of time the defendants of both cases were given jail terms, although Yamatoda was successful in "jumping the bail" and escaping to Japan on a tramp freighter.

The remnants of the Tokyo Club made a final desperate attempt in 1940 to reopen the gambling house and were entrapped by the police with whom they were "negotiating" for a term. In this delegation which visited a city hall office, which had been installed with dictaphones, there was one of the leading Nisei attorneys, Carl Iwanaga. Subsequently was disbarred and served sentence for one year after a trial.

At the close of the discussion of the organized gambling activities in the Japanese community the writer wishes to point out again the significance of fear and dread held by the Japanese as a whole toward the Club and its members and resentment toward its abuses although powerless before them. In other words, the Japanese fully realized the evils of the Tokyo Club but were afraid to speak up. They dared to criticize the gambling chain only when they were certain of ample support from the public at large. They were awed and overpowered until the syndicate crumbled from within.



6-9

PART II

THE  
POST PEARL HARBOR  
PERIOD



December 7, 1941:

The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor:

The world was stunned. The Japanese in California were stupefied. True, these Japanese had had the premonition and wished that it would not happen. It did happen! The Japanese become "enemies" overnight. No longer could they remain aloof of the fast changing world events. Every turn of the events had vital effects on them. Their very existence was threatened; they did not know what was to become of them tomorrow. The foundation of their life -- the source of income -- was periled. Americans stayed away from the places of business operated by Japanese; Americans terminated the employment of Japanese. Governmental restrictions were promulgated to curtail the personal liberty of the Japanese in several aspects, for the violations of which many arrests were made. The FBI agents combed every corner of the Japanese community for "saboteurs" and "contrabands" which were reported on the front pages of newspapers in bold type with malicious falsification and paranoid imagination. Public sentiment toward the Japanese in California became worse everyday. Rumors flew far and wide among the Japanese. Wild stories went around thick and fast. A Japanese baby was burnt to death in burning oil by incensed whites, one story said. A young woman was assaulted by a gang of hoodlums, another reported. A young Nisei was stabbed in the back by an unknown assailant, still another rumor had it. The Japanese were frightened in full realization that their physical safety, too, was not secure. Their primary concern was what was to become of themselves and their families. Their paramount worry was what was to become of their business and properties.

The war necessitated revolutionary changes in the mode of living for the Japanese. The anxiety persisted and worry occupied the minds



of Japanese every minute of their waking hours. They were concerned only with one thought -- their security in the future. In this revolutionalized way of life gambling found no place to exist. The Japanese suddenly dropped the perennial habit of gambling. Gone were the hana games from the boarding houses; gone were the poker games from the backrooms of restaurants. People met in the homes of their friends, not to play hana or poker, but instead to talk about the war, about FBI arrests, about the California Japanese, and about their own future.

It was not until the first contingent of volunteer evacuees left for Manzanar that the Japanese people began to gamble among themselves again. They had realized that the evacuation was something of actuality and resigned to the idea that the foundation which the Japanese immigrants had built in scores of years was to be destroyed completely. They were reconciled to the idea that they were to leave for the "concentration camps." It was also true that the people were out of gainful occupation -- some had closed their places of business long ago and others had lost their jobs -- since the vernacular newspapers had been advising the people everyday that the mass evacuation might be ordered tomorrow. "Get ready," the papers said, "the army will not wait for you." They had gotten ready, after selling their properties for any price in panic, and waited for the army order. But the evacuation was a slow process to the Japanese and the army order they were awaiting did not come. They all had too much time and did not know what to do with it. Sources of recreation and amusement were denied to them and the curfew restriction compelled them to remain at home. Only things they could think of doing was to gamble -- hana and poker games were thus resumed in private homes, although for small stakes. (They had no source of income and were afraid to gamble for bigger stakes.) In effect, the revival of gambling was an escape on one hand and a means of "killing time" on the other hand.



As the evacuation orders began to be announced one after another more rapidly, the Japanese reflected, "How am I to spend time in the camp? I must do something to kill time. I am going to make it a 'vacation.'" Thus the stores in Little Tokyo had a big sudden pick-up in the sale of playing cards, hana cards, sets of "go," and of "shogi." For instance, a box of hana cards which contained two packs of cards, was originally selling for seventy-five cents, but within about two weeks due to profiteering it was sold for as high as two dollars and fifty cents. Even at the exorbitant price the people bought them complainingly. They added laughingly, "It's too high if it's ordinary time. But I can't buy these hana cards after I leave Los Angeles for the assembly center. Maybe I will get the money back in the camp." On the eve of the departure with the army escort the Japanese packed the paraphernalia of "go," of "shogi," of Mah Jong, of poker, and of hana. They knew then what they were going to do when they arrived at these assembly or relocation centers.

By the end of April, 1942, information was coming out from the Santa Anita Assembly Center that gambling among the camp residents was going on at a furious pace and that most of the Tokyo Club remnants had moved there en masse. It was this clique, it revealed, that operated "big time" gambling, involving hundreds and thousands of dollars, and that the Caucasians and Japanese police officers were receiving "hush money." Of this the men who were still awaiting the evacuation order to come commented, "It's the same old story."

At the end of May as the last contingent of evacuees from the county of Los Angeles arrived at the Colorado River War Relocation Center, the situation of gambling that existed there was surprisingly different from what they had heard previously in connection with other assembly centers. Unlike other places there was no regular establishment for the purpose of



gambling by the residents of Poston. Whatever gambling was done was confined to only groups of friends and acquaintances; it was done only as a source of recreation. No doubt, many games were going on in different living quarters, but these were played for nominal sums and the games played were limited to hana and poker. It was merely an extension of what they were doing in private homes just prior to the migration. The Poston police, however, had another conception of law enforcement. The police force, then comprised mostly of young men who had reached the majority not long ago, were seen all over the camp carrying crudely made clubs of mesquite tree and proudly showing the arm bands bearing the letter P. Indeed, they made arrests too, but they were limited to gambling cases. They made raids into the apartments where it was known to have gamblers gathered. In groups of sevens and eights they sneaked up to these quarters and broke in through the unlocked doors. The participants, having been taken by surprise, had no time to hide their money or cards and were caught flat-footed. They were then led into the police truck and were taken to the city jail, a twenty feet by twenty-five feet apartment back of the police station, whose address was Block 28, Barrack 1, Apartment A. These raids were not confined to evenings or nights; they were conducted even during the daylight hours. The men who were taken to the jail stayed there overnight and were freed the next day without trial, as there was no machinery to conduct such a trial. It is significant to add that these men were almost always old Issei, who were charged with playing hana games, and Nisei were seldom detained.

The Nisei were known to be playing poker here and there in the camp just as much and as frequently as Issei's hana, but they were clever to play the games unnoticeably in the evenings. Even though these places were raided, the police were satisfied with merely breaking the party up without making



the arrests. The writer observed one of these raids one night, sometime in June of 1942. A group of young Nisei bachelors made it a habit to get together in the evenings in their apartment in Block 45. It was going on for about two weeks until that night. About eleven o'clock six policemen came through the door, which was unlocked, with clubs swinging in their hands. The boys were caught playing. One of the policemen said authoritatively, "Break it up, boys! Break it up!"; the rest of them stood behind this spokesman watching for any emergency. The players collected the chips and cards scattered on the table in silence. As soon as the table had been cleared of the paraphernalia, the spokesman again commanded, "Don't let us catch you again. The next time it means the can," and with the rest left the apartment. For days afterward the boys argued how "the police got wise" to their game. "I bet some Issei joy killers tipped the police," some said, while others contradicted, "No, the police just got the wind of it." Whatever the source of information might have been, it was successful in discontinuing their games for the next two or three months until sometime before the November disturbance.

This was the typical method by which poker games of Nisei were curbed by the police, who refused to take Nisei offenders to the jail. However, in extreme cases in which young men failed to heed and kept on with their playing defiantly, more stringent measures were taken. In one case on the second raid to the same apartment within a week, the raiding squad was headed by Chief of Police Shigekawa, a burly six feet two, two hundred pounder. The chief walked into the apartment and found the same gang of young boys playing poker as usual. The chief chided the boys for not heeding the police order and told them to quit for good. It seems that some of the boys talked back arrogantly and insolently as most Poston boys would do. The quick tempered Shigewa, it was told by one of the police later, did not



wait another moment and swung his fist into the face of this boy and knocked him on the floor. He then hit two other boys and repeated the routine. "He sure beat hell out of them," the reported said, "Chief then said to them, 'You know what's good for you. If I were you, I would remember this.' And we had no trouble from these boys since then."

About this time, the religious workers were alarmed over the gambling condition which was on the upward trend. In order to combat the evil they met several times to discuss feasible countermeasures. The Christian workers and the Buddhist priests met together and decided to endeavor for the cause hand in hand. They made it the subject of their sermons. They issued circulars and distributed them to the residents, which in substance said that gambling was observed all over Poston. "It is increasing everyday; it has become alarmingly grave. Should it remain unchecked, we fear its evil influence upon our young people. No right thinking men can remain aloof any longer. We, therefore, solicit your full hearted cooperation in our earnest effort to curb this evil."

The paper was delivered to every block and then to each apartment, but the reaction of readers was lukewarm in contrast to the serious tone of the statement. Some commented, "Those are small games. They aren't so bad. Let them enjoy themselves; after all we are vacationing here." "They are harmless," others said. Still others said, "We don't want to be involved. Let those church people fight it. It's their business." Another comment was, "It's too hot even to be thinking of such a thing." Many were non-committant and sitting back quietly, and it was only a handful of people who rallied to the cause. To the appeal of the religious groups the Poston people were passive and undisturbed, if not contrary minded.



Meanwhile, reflecting such contrary sentiment of the people, the police department received a protest from some block managers that the police should notify them of intended raids, reasoning that the full authority of the managers over the block residents must be respected. The argument was that the managers would lose "face" if the raids were carried out without their knowledge. True, the reason of the block managers was far fetched, but it only goes to prove that they were hard pressed by the residents' complaints against the police raids of these games. To this the police department was furious and argued their own points, and the bickerings went on for sometime between them without any result and to fade away eventually.

The Temporary Community Council of Poston, too, was cognizant of the gambling situation. Soon after the legislative body was elected by the residents of Poston, it created the Judicial Committee within itself, headed by Seiechi Nomura.<sup>1</sup> The first task of the committee was drafting of the penal code for Poston in order to organize a trial court, the Municipal Court, and to define offenses and their punishments. "Those criminals shouldn't be turned loose after staying in the jail overnight without trial. You have to put teeth in the arrests," Nomura said about that time. There were many crimes committed in Poston everyday which required attention by a judicial body, let alone those gambling offenses. The drafting of the penal code was immediately undertaken by the committee in consultation with the Project Attorney, Ted Haas, and the Legal Department. According to Nomura, they copied the sections which they believed were vital in preserving law and order in the community from the Penal Code of the State of California, "taking out what we want" and modifying the word and the penalties to be adaptable to the existing conditions at Poston. Upon examination of the final draft of the Poston code, a casual observer would receive an impression



that the committee had a preconceived conception as to what offenses were to be included in the code book, because, after all, the California code book of several hundred pages was condensed and abridged into sixteen type-written pages. The Poston code confined itself only to the cases of gambling, of assault and battery, of theft and embezzlement, of forgery and extortion, of intoxication, and of prostitution and other sex crimes. It is very significant that the final draft begins with the sections on gambling on its very first page, indicating where the utmost concern of the committee had been and how much they were worried about gambling in the future. The grave concern on the part of the committee about the gambling offenses is conceivable and understandable as Nomura, the chairman, had been the legal counselor and one of the officers of the Tokyo Club chain for more than ten years and was well versed in their evils and abuses. The sections pertaining to gambling in the code of offenses for Poston in its final draft read as follows:

Section 1. Gambling. Every person who shall deal, carry on, or open, or cause to be opened, or who shall conduct, either as owner, proprietor or employee, whether for hire or not, any game of faro, monte, roulette, lasquet, rouge et noir, rondo, vington, or twenty-one, poker, stud-poker, draw poker, bluff, fan tan, thaw, seven and one-half, chuck-a-luck, blackjack, "panginiki," mah jong, or any similar game whatsoever, played with cards, dice, or any other device, and every slot machine, punch-board, or machine or like character, whether the same be played for money, checks, credits or any other representative of value within the state of Arizona; and every person who shall participate in any of the above enumerated games dealt, carried on or opened or caused to be opened by any other person in the state of Arizona; shall be guilty of misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, is punishable by a fine of not less than one hundred dollars (\$100) not more than three hundred dollars (\$300), or by imprisonment for not more than six (6) months or both such fine and imprisonment.

Section 1a. Permitting Gambling in House. Every person who knowingly permits any of the games mentioned in Section 1 of this code to be played, conducted, or dealt in any house occupied by such person, is punishable as provided in the preceding section.



As a sidelight, the reader may be interested in the following incident. The Judicial Committee, upon completion of the final draft, sent it to the Bureau of Sociological Research, which the Administration regarded highly then and of which Ted Haas was a staunch supporter,<sup>2</sup> for their advice and recommendation. In compliance with this request Dr. A. H. Leighton and Dr. E. Spicer sent a memorandum recommending the committee to delete the sections pertaining to gambling and prostitution.<sup>3</sup> The reason, in Dr. Leighton's own words, was, "There isn't any use in having laws which you know you can't enforce. The people will be violating them anyway; this reduces their respect toward the entire code." According to Nomura, "Dr. Leighton recommended no restriction whatsoever on gambling and advocated the French system for prostitution. If you take those sections out of the code, there's nothing left." Nomura chucked the Bureau recommendations into the waste-basket and sent it unchanged to Ted Haas, who at the time was attending a WRA regional conference in San Francisco, for final approval. "Well, Dr. Provino<sup>4</sup> saw the draft there and praised that the Poston code is the best among all the codes submitted by the relocation centers," Nomura boasted in his typical Hawaiian accent. The Code of Offenses for Poston was duly approved by the Project Attorney, and later by the Temporary Community Council. The Chairman of the committee since then refers to Dr. Leighton and Dr. Spicer and "those broad minded an-thro-polo-gists."

When the same topic was mentioned by Nomura to a group of his friends some weeks later, one of the listeners said, "Why didn't you recommend to Dr. Leighton to hire one of the wards in the hospital to practice the French system. Well, say, station an examining doctor at the entrance and to install a ticket selling booth as it might be a land-office business. And tell him to get a few girls for nineteen bucks a month." Nomura laughingly retorted, "Yeah! The whole trouble is Dr. Leighton might do it."



In August the machinery of judicial organization was set in motion; the Judicial Committee members were appointed by the Council to become the judges of the Municipal Court of Poston. The first judges were Seiichi Nomura of Block 45, George Inamura of Block 6, and George S. Fujii of Block 28, all being Council members representing their respective blocks. The very first case that came before the court was that of traffic violation, then of hana gambling, and so forth. With traffic violations, the judges gave suspended sentences with a proviso to report weekly to the police department for a certain length of time. With the gambling cases the judges meted out suspended sentences also, the heaviest penalty being "three days suspended." This was indicative of the fact that the police was arresting just the small time gamblers only and not that there was no gambling of bigger scale in Poston at that time. It was not until fifty cases had been disposed of by the judge that a more serious case came up before them -- and this was not of gambling, but a case of private profiteering. It is ironical to point out that the Municipal Court held its sessions in the City Jail and this practice is still continued at present, although one of the present judges abhors the practice.

Although the gambling cases brought before the court were of a minor nature, it could not be said that there was no "big time" gambling in Poston. About the time the court began to function, a story was going around the camp that big gambling was going on day and night in Barrack 13 of Block 54.<sup>5</sup> Barrack 13 was a building where male bachelors were housed, and Block 54 was occupied by the evacuees from Imperial Valley. Upon questioning, a resident of the Block said, "Yeah, there's big gambling going on in that barrack. What they are playing is 'gahan' and they are betting one hundred and two hundred like nothing. I saw it. I wonder where they got that much money. The guys playing out there are all Issei,



most of them from some other blocks. They tell me that some former Tokyo Club big shots of the Valley, who are residing in the northeastern section of the camp, are behind this game. They are playing it in the professional way, charging the house-take."

"Why don't you people do something about it?" he was asked.

"We are kind of scared. Those guys are tough. We don't want to stick our neck out, though the block people are talking resentfully about it."

In September the rumor was rife that the police chief, Shigekawa, was flushing five dollar bills and buying the men in his department ice cream and cigarettes. They said, "He is getting the money from the Block 54 guys."

Simultaneously with this story, the camp residents were told of beatings of boys, who had been accused of being "inu" and FBI informers. It was no wonder that the Block 54 residents were afraid of either informing the police of the gambling house or actually taking the leadership to curb it themselves.

The beatings did not stop just with frightening the block people from any active attempt for prevention of gambling; they also had a great effect upon the police force. Sensing the increasing political power of the Issei and the gravely threatening unrest in the camp, the police became reluctant in making arrests resulting in a rapid decrease in the number of cases brought before the Municipal Court. The laxity of the police in the law enforcement resulted in the further increase of gambling all over the camp. It was at this time that the Block 45 boys, who had been warned and ceased playing, resumed their games. In almost all the mess-halls the crews were seen playing hana games much more publicly than before.

The beatings of "inu" continued and the wave of gambling remained unchecked.



Then, November 18th. It was a coup-d'etat staged by the Issei extremists and the Issei-ish Nisei. They began to demonstrate in front of the police station and the jail for the release of two attackers of the alleged FBI informers. The original crowd numbered about 1,000, but it increased rapidly as the time went on without a concession from the authority. The demonstration continued for days and nights undiminished in its fervor.

When the difficulty between the administration and the administered was settled after a few days' wrangling, it proved one thing conclusively among many others -- the police was powerless, without courage, and sensitive to the dictates of extremists. In other words, they always "checked which way the wind was blowing" before they would undertake anything.

The respect of the residents toward the police waned, and the same proportion gambling games were observable more conspicuously and the players were more brazen. Reports were coming in from the school teachers that Nisei school boys were gathering in many places and were gambling without attending classes. The Community Enterprises reported that their stores were broken in by thieves on several different occasions. They also added that some of their employees, the younger ones, were suspected of pocketing sales money while the stores were crowded with purchasers. One of the Community Enterprises officials lamented, "It's always young kids, who break into the stores or do stealing. The other night, they got into the main canteen<sup>6</sup> and stole a gold wrist watch worth forty dollars and cartons of cigarettes. Oh, those shop liftings are nothing unusual at all; gangs of boys come in and walk out with merchandise -- you watch them next time, one or two of the gang occupy the clerk's attention and the rest swipe the goods. We can't catch them, because we are always busy and short-handed and the store itself is a make-shift affair. Those kids need



money to gamble. And they lose and need more money, so they have to steal some more."

The residents in the northeastern section were telling in January of 1943 that there was a gambling place in Block 8<sup>7</sup> and "their games are sure big." They said that "gaham" was the game and it was run by the same people who operated the Block 54 place. The operation at this new place was so prosperous that they were serving the customers refreshments and drinks of whiskey free of charge. Another rumor had it that similar gambling places were found in the adjoining blocks, Block 4 and Block 14.

Rumors were going around the camp thick and fast. The stories of gambling were lively subjects for the men in idle minutes. Now the tale of the bribing of the police chief had new twists. One of the said, "It's no trouble to buy Shigekawa. He is making a big business for himself." Another said, "Some of the police force are grumbling, because the chief won't give them enough cut." Another reported, "Shigekawa and those old Tokyo Club people are inseparably connected. They are both making lots of money." It was the same situation again -- the tie-up between gambling interests and the police and the community being reluctant to do anything to curb the evil. It was also true that no one in the camp doubted that Shigekawa was being bribed regularly or did he minimize the consequences should the Tokyo Club remnants once establish themselves at Poston; but none of the evacuees was willing to take the initiative. Indeed, they were more than willing to gossip about the resultant evils of gambling and the crimes directly affiliated with gambling in the camp; yet they had an attitude either of laissez faire or of "let George do it." In order to convey the grave condition which existed since the beginning of 1943, a few instances are cited in the following paragraphs.

1. Judge Nomura revealed that young Nisei were losing their govern-



ment or garnishing factory checks in a single night to these professionals in Block 3. As the residents had considerable difficulty in cashing their checks and the house was too glad to do the service, many went there for cashing of their checks, but only to be attracted into gambling themselves. He commented, "Too bad. They lose one month's wages in one night. These young kids haven't got a chance with the Club guys." This comment truly is from the man who should know.

2. The Block 3 organization build a new place for gambling within the block. They dug a basement below two adjoining apartments, about 8 feet deep, made of concrete walls supported by wood beams. It was also installed with electric lights. This was an ultra luxurious palace for Poston and the building materials were obtained free of charge in the typical Poston manner -- stolen government properties "leased for the duration."

3. At the time of the fiasco between The Central Executive Board and The Issei Advisory Board in the beginning of February, the standard bearer of one camp, M. Nagai, sought support from the gambling interests. One of the "professional gamblers" from Los Angeles, one Nakashima, was after N. Mizushima, the leader of Nagai's opposing camp, and broadcast a story himself that he and his gang would beat Mizushima should he not abandon his ill-thought scheme to coup-d'etat the Central Executive Board. This story was enough to intimidate the Issei Board vice-chairman and was responsible for his face-about in his ambition.

4. Games for stakes were prevalent in the Police Department, the Fire Department, and the warehouses.

5. Those houses in Block 4 and Block 14 wanted cement for their walls, too; and some connected with them went over to the Elementary School Adobe Building Project and stole twenty sacks of cement "in the presence of



nightwatchmen" during one night. The next morning the building crew were without cement for their concrete mixer and had to suspend the work for the day until a new load was obtained.

One of the nightwatchmen complained, "When those people come in a gang, you can't do anything. We look the other way and let them steal. Being a Japanese myself, I don't want to arrest fellow Japanese and prosecute them." Indeed, he would not admit that he was afraid.

6. A rumor -- "Chief Shigekawa is drinking whiskey a bottle a day. And you can't buy it for less than nine dollars in the camp, you know."

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The situation of gambling took a sudden and more grave turn in March. Here are the stories which were most rife in Poston Unit I at the time; all these stories were verified to some extent, but the authenticity to the last detail is not vouchsafed.

1. This is the story of a boy from Los Angeles, who was a juvenile delinquent even before the evacuation. He is a son of the principal of the First Japanese Language School (Dai Ichi Gakuen) of Los Angeles, Kohel Shimano, who was interned on December 7, 1941, and now detained in Camp Livingston, Louisiana. He came to Poston with his mother and is now residing in Block 26, the Orange County section. He is about nineteen years old; he quit going to school some years ago without graduating. This boy, Shimano, was the leader of a gang of teen age boys -- some out of school and others still of school age. He and the gang boys were gathering in one room of the Block 26 Recreating Hall and were gambling for money every day from morning to late at night. These young people could not be satisfied completely with their own recreation among themselves and became obnoxious to the residents at large. They were getting rowdy and "corner boyish" in their behavior day by day. One day, in the



classroom of the elementary school next to their assembly room a teacher was having a geography lesson. The teacher said to the pupils, "What city is the capital of Illinois?" Before the pupils had time to answer, the gambling boys across the thin partitioning wall shouted, "Chicago." Shameless they were, because they did not realize that they had made a mistake in geography, let alone obstructing the teacher.

The teacher, an old Caucasian woman, was evidently perturbed by the boys and came over to the wall between the rooms and banging on it shouted, "Stop it! Boys! Stop it!" To this earnest appeal the only response from the other side was wild bangings on the wall.

The teacher was incensed and reported the incident to the Department of Education, which in turn sent an urgent appeal to the manager of Block 26. Manager Morimoto realized that he was powerless to undertake anything all by himself and called an emergency meeting of the block council, composed generally of the yushi of the block. As the minds of Issei would work in such a case, the yushi did not desire to publicize the case or to publicly shame the boy "for the sake of his future." Instead, they chose delegates who went over quietly to his mother and informed her of her boy's activity. The mother's answer was again typical of an old Issei woman; she refused to accept the wrong doing of her boy as gospel truth. Perhaps she did not wish to lose her "face" in front of the delegate. She said defiantly, "My boy? My son of all persons! I can't believe it. It isn't true. It can't be true for my son." It is only she who knew whether she had spoken her real mind or had subterfuged to cover up her own embarrassment.

When the delegates reported back to the block council, they were angry, "With our utmost kindness and sincerity we spoke to her. She does not accept our unselfish motive. Now we must push the case to the limit."<sup>8</sup>



The council members with the block manager, after a lengthy discussion, decided to pass and promulgate a block rule to the effect that no gambling within the block would be tolerated and the room in the Recreation Hall should be cleaned of delinquent boys. As often the case with these block meetings, there was an old man who strenuously and stubbornly objected to the passing of this rule. His argument was, "This is an extreme measure. I can't believe it of Mr. Shimano's son. Even if it were true, it is not entirely his fault; it must be the influence of the boys with whom he associates. We don't know for sure that the boy is really involved with the boys in the room; we don't have evidence to substantiate it. If we pass this rule, it means that we are publicly accusing the boy and his mother without conclusive evidence. Besides, his father is a great educator, who has contributed toward the well-being of our offsprings. We cannot defame the great name of his father." No doubt, the advocate of the dissenting opinion was a friend of Shimano. His stubbornness and insistence further angered the rest. The meeting finally ended with the resignation of the block manager and the members of the council en masse. They said indignantly, "Hell! If you must insist on contradicting our idea, alone which the rest of us have agreed unitedly, we quit. You take over and handle the situation yourself then." This old man took over the duty of the block manager's office for his pride and from defiance.

In April the "corner boys" somehow moved their place of activity to the neighboring block, Block 27.

Incidentally, the Shimano boy was accused of living with a young unmarried girl whose parents are in the Heart Mountain Relocation Center and who was suspected of running away from her parents just prior to the evacuation deadline. Of this, his mother says, "There is nothing wrong between the two. We are just taking care of the girl." Of this Judge



Nomura had an entirely different interpretation, "'Just taking care of the girl'? Hell! When a young boy lives with a girl in a same room what do you have? Why don't they get married and get it over with?" What the judge was accusing was that the boy was violating the sections of the Poston Code of Offenses pertaining to illicit cohabitation and fornication.

Speaking of the block manager, he is working now for the Community Enterprises as a cashier. Recently he remarked, "Boy! I am glad I am not the block manager any more. There are lots of troubles in the block yet. Those Issei sure don't know what they want to do."

(The source of this information -- Manager Morimoto, Judge Nomura, and a resident of Block 26)

2. Rumor -- "Nomura is splitting the bribery money with Chief Shigekawa." (The writer has complete faith in Nomura's honesty and integrity and cannot believe this story to be true.)

3. This is another story of the boy of an internee. The father had some property -- farm equipment, tractor, and such -- left in California under the name of his son, as the Issei generally entrusted their property to their children who possessed American citizenship. After the father was detained by the Federal Government and the family was evacuated, the property was sold by the family and the money was made in the form of a cashier's check in favor of the son, which amounted to something like one thousand dollars. It is quite understandable that his mother sold the property outright and the check was made in her son's name. She evidently was very much concerned over the current rumor that the property belonging to internees would be confiscated and the money belonging to them would be impounded by the government, since the American government was contemplating repatriating them to



Japan. She believed the story in as much as it was passed among the residents with the absolute credence.

One day she found out that the check was gone and was alarmed. She naturally cast her suspicious eyes to her son and questioned him, which brought out the fact that he had taken the check to one of the gambling houses and had lost every bit of it. It was too late and her appeal to the gambling people was of no avail. She was perplexed and indignant. Upon advice of her friends, she took the case to the Executive Board and pleadingly asked the chairman, H. Nagai, "My son has sinned. My son took our money and gambled it away. One thousand dollars for which we sold everything we had in California. That money was taken away by the professional gamblers, to whom he was an easy prey as if taking a 'sucker away from a baby.' We had depended on that money for our post relocation days. Now it's gone! I don't question that my son was at fault. But the blame cannot stop with my son alone, because I am positive that there are similar tragedies involving boys like mine. It is a fault of yours; it is the fault of the community. It is a fault of yours and theirs, because the responsibility of guiding the young and of preserving law and order here rests with you and them. How can you remain calm without doing anything? I beg you to carry out your duty."

By the ardent appeal of the mother, Nagai was moved and promised that he would take immediate action.

(The source of this information -- Nomura, one PTA representative, and the chief cashier of the Community Enterprises.)

4. Another story was told that a boy who had a cashier's check for two thousand dollars swindled it away to the professional gamblers. This tale, however, is very much similar to the one above and may be properly treated as an exaggerated version of the same incident.



5. The chief cashier of the Community Enterprises in a recent interview reported, "Many checks in large amounts are brought in to me for cashing, since there is no other facility in camp. You would be surprised if you knew how big the checks are. It is not unusual to have checks for one thousand dollars in exchange for cash. No, these checks don't come from the urban evacuees; they all come from the former rural residents, among them the Salinas people seem to be richer on the average. It also goes to show how poor the Los Angeles people are and how much hard pressed economically they were before the evacuation. Of course, we can't cash them on sight. At present the daily sale of the canteens for three camps are two thousand dollars, of which only five hundred dollars are in cash. So we send these checks out to Phoenix.

About the middle of March, a Nisei boy, about nineteen years of age, came into my office with a cashier's check pretty close to one thousand dollars and requested cash for it. I said to him, 'How come you have so much money? Where did you get this money anyway? Isn't it funny that you have so much money? If you want this check cashed, you should bring your parent or some responsible person with you.'

To this the boy answered angrily in a loud tone, "This is a cashier's check made out to me. What's wrong with cashing my own check? Whatta hell! If you don't want to cash it, I will take it to some place else. I can cash it any darn place I please. I will take it to Parker -- they will be glad to cash it for me." And he left the office in a flurry.

"'Cash it in Parker?' Hell! Who's got one thousand dollars in cash on hand in Parker? Besides, how can they trust a young kid like that?" he went on. "A few days afterward, an Issei woman came to see me and said, 'I found out that my son came to you with a check of big sum. When he asked you to check it for him, you refused. I don't know how to thank you



for that, because that check was stolen from me, although it is in his name. You have saved me. I can't ever thank you too much for your kind deed.' Yeah, most likely this kid was hard up with gambling money."

6. A story was told in the northeastern section of the camp that a boy took out forty dollars from his mother's cache, which contained eighty dollars. He lost it in games with his friends. It was told that he thought the stealing of a part of the hidden money would not be detected by his mother.

7. Many thefts of personal properties were reported all over the camp. Even in the section unaffected by professional gambling<sup>9</sup> there were a few instances of theft by young boys. In Quad 6<sup>10</sup> the residents were warned to look out for two boys who are residing in Block 35, both of them about seventeen years of age. They were going into the male latrines and pick-pocketing watches and cash from the trousers of men who were taking showers in the adjoining room. One resident of the block said, "We know those boys are stealing, and stealing for gambling money. Some of the block people approached the parents of these boys and told them of the fact, but they flatly refused to believe the wrong deeds of their sons. So what can we do with these bling parents? The best thing to do is to catch the boys and beat them up. They are afraid of physical pain to themselves, all right. There was one man in our block who could not locate his gold watch, and suspected these boys as the thieves although not certain. Anyway, this man went up to the boys and said knowingly, 'Hey, boys! Give back my watch!' One of the boys reluctantly took out the gold watch from his pocket and said without shame, 'Mister!<sup>11</sup> Was this your watch?' Can you beat that?" The informant was shaking his head in disgust.

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Poston in March of 1948 was a wide-open town. The cases reported in this paper were undoubtedly only a few representatives of abundantly numerous ones throughout the community. The residents were acutely aware of the existing condition and convinced that something should be done to remedy it. Only a few conscientious ones were willing to take upon themselves to do something about it; and these men, too, did not know where to begin. The course they invariably selected was to go to the office of the Executive Board and to accuse the members of negligence and dereliction of their duty and responsibility. In other words, they were shoving the buck to the Executive Board and did not wish to "Stick their neck out."

The Executive Board, too, realized that the condition was grave and serious and getting out of control of authority. Yet they too felt not powerful enough to combat the evils alone. Nagai consulted the president of the Parent Teachers Association, that meek, good-natured Mohri of Block 31. Upon his request Mohri immediately called an emergency meeting of the organization one evening in the latter part of March and the methods of curbing gambling was the topic on the agenda. The chairman of the Executive Board was the first and main speaker, who presented to the body how serious and how grave the condition was in the camp. In his "Pedantic and academic"<sup>12</sup> manner he argued that this was a critical problem for the young generation should the condition remain unremedied. After his speech, the representatives from each block undertook a discussion among themselves about what to be done about the request for cooperation by Nagai. As a whole, the tone of arguments from the floor was apathetic and indifferent. One speaker set forward, "This task is too great. We are not strong enough to take upon ourselves the difficult duty of the crusade."



Another man stood up to accuse Nagai, "This is your job. The Executive Board was created to handle these situations. What you are doing is to shift the responsibility to us."

To this accusation, Nagai pleaded, "We are powerless. We cannot do anything. The whole police force is corrupt and rotten. It is receiving bribery and refusing to cooperate with us."

The same man retorted, "Well, if you are powerless as you say, how can you expect us to be of any value?"

Another one suggested, "The maintenance of law and order of the camp as a whole must depend on the maintenance of law and order within each and every block. Every block must be responsible for the conduct of the block residents. Therefore, it should be called upon such a block to stamp out the gambling within that block."

The fruit of this emergency meeting did not go beyond the fact that each representative would take the problem back to his block and would assist in arousing public opinion against gambling. The constructive and positive aid sought by the Executive Board was never materialized to meet the emergency. Furthermore, many of the delegates failed to fulfill their promise of the meeting and did not report the proceedings of the meeting to "arouse public agitation."

The Executive Board at the same time approached the religious groups. But the Buddhist and Christian workers were only successful in fuffling ripples in a great big pond.

Meanwhile, the attitude of the Police Department was getting to be conspicuously inattentive of the general welfare of the public; it was reported here and there that some policemen were actively soliciting bribes. Another report said that they were disdainful and contemptuous of the conscientious residents, who were endeavoring to obtain public



support in the crusade. They said, "What can they do? Let them try it." Indeed, they were defiant.

Furthermore, the political opponents of Nagai were quick to take advantage of the chairman's dilemma; they accused, "The block in which Nagai resides, Block 3, is the core of the whole difficulty. If he thinks he is the leader of the camp, he should be able to close the house in his own block. How can he ask other people with a straight face to drive gambling out of other blocks when he has failed to do the same with his own?" In about the same vein, N. Mizushima, who took over the chairmanship of the Issai Advisory Board when the former chairman, Kato, had been appointed General Manager of the Community Enterprises and who was a perennial enemy of Nagai, said, "I hear that Nagai is at the back of the whole thing. People are talking that he is making money with the professional people." To the writer it sounded that Mizushima wanted the people to gossip that Nagai was receiving bribery, not that they were actually saying so. It was a projection typical of Mizushima.

In the face of growing criticism against him, Nagai could no longer be sitting in the back seat. It was in the beginning of April that Nagai went over to the underground chamber of his block and demanded that the professional gamblers close the place. He threatened them, "If you don't stop, I will see to it that you would be arrested. It will not stop with your gambling. I will see to it that you would be arrested for stealing government property and using stolen goods for personal gain. All this lumber, cement, and electric wires are stolen government property, I know. Let me tell you now that these offenses are tried in Yuma and not in Pecten."

Nagai's words were enough to intimidate the operators and the house was closed in a few days.



The ice was broken; the first attempt of Nagai was successful. Now the chairman of the Executive Board went before the Temporary Community Council and received their approval to call a conference of block council members to discuss both the gambling and manpower shortage problems inasmuch as the latter was a grave problem facing Poston simultaneously with gambling. He argued that it was vitally essential to create consciousness among residents of the acute existing problems and to obtain the support of the public at large for their solution. In the past the problems discussed in the Community Council sessions were not reported to the block and the people were ignorant of the conditions; there was too much gap between the residents and their representatives, who were regarded as a separate entity as if they were Caucasian "appointees." The members of the council themselves realized that they were remote from the people and endorsed the plan full-heartedly.

As a result, on April 18, the Executive Secretary of the Executive Board, Nobuo Matsubara, sent a memorandum to each block manager.

It read as follows:

Our TCC is planning to sponsor a conference of Block Council members and Block Managers the first of its kind in the history of Poston in the very near future. We were requested by the TCC to submit the names of the Block Council members.

Please assist us by informing us with the following data:

1. Names of the Block Council members.
2. Name of the Block Manager (or Assistant Block Manager if the managership is vacant)

Upon receipt of the names, the Executive Board sent out an invitation to the conference to each block council member in the name of the chairman of the TCC, Franklin Sugiyama. The invitations were written only in Japanese and the English version did not accompany them.



In the April 21 issue of the Poston Chronicle, an article appeared announcing this conference. It read:

#### TCC TO HOLD MEETINGS ON COUNCIL'S POLICIES

Under the auspices of the TCC I, a series of meetings to inform the Block Council of each block on Council's policies will be held starting this Wed. night, April 21, it was decided at the weekly meeting held at Rec. 5.

The Program is to educate the public of the community problems both from the Council's viewpoint and the community's outlook to achieve closer cooperation.

As there are 9 quads, 3 quads at a time will convene at Mess 32, which has been tentatively chosen as the site. The first meeting on Wednesday will be repeated the following Thursday and Friday nights, April 22 and 23, with W. Wade Head expected to speak at the first meeting.

The Japanese section of the same issue carried an article much more detailed:

#### UNITED CONFERENCE OF BOTH LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE MACHINERIES To Be Held For Three Days Under the Auspices of TCC

The mode of living in this center is rapidly changing due to the changes in the WRA policies, which in turn are affected by the changes in the internal conditions of the United States. In order to solve many new problems arising out of these changes, it was believed essential to have better understanding and cooperation of the two machineries, legislative and administrative. (Block Managers, Block Councils, The Executive Board, The Labor Relation Board, the Temporary Community Council, and its Issei Advisory Board) For this reason, it was decided to hold under the auspices of TCC joint conferences for three days beginning the night of this 21st (Wed.) in the Block 32 Messhall. The program is as follows:

#### PROGRAM

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
|   | Chairman: Yasutsugu Kushiya     |
| 1. Address  | TCC Chairman, Franklin Sugiyama |
| 2. Address  | IAD Chairman, Nagisa Misushima  |
| 3. Reports  |                                 |
| (1) The Executive Board -- Masakichi Nagai                                    |                                 |
| (2) The Labor Relation Board -- Hisakichi Nakachi                             |                                 |
| "The Problems We, The Poston Residents, Are Facing At Present."               |                                 |
| (3) The Temporary Community Council -- Frank Fukuda                           |                                 |
| "About the Manpower Commission"   |                                 |
| (4) Speaker from every block representing his Block Council                   |                                 |
| "The Methods and Solution for My Block Problems and Difficulties in the Past" |                                 |



4. Questions and Answers
5. Discussion (Regarding the policies to solve the existing problems)

The issue of April 22 carried an article mentioning something about the gambling condition in camp for the first time in the history of its publication, and even this was confined only to the Japanese section.

Under the headline,

CRUSADE OF GAMBLING IN THE CENTER WHICH IS  
IN ALARMING CONDITION  
Several Proposals Decided by TCC

it carried a short paragraph saying,

TCC I held its regular meeting on 17th at 10 a.m. in the Block 5 Rec. Hall. Besides the plan to hold a joint conference of the legislative and administrative branches, which was reported to you yesterday, they decided as follows:

1. To take steps to curb gambling in camp, which has reached a grave and alarming stage.....

It was not until April 23, that the English section of the Poston Chronicle mentioned gambling for the first time. It was in a short article.

TCC TO CURB GAMBLING

Drastic steps to curb gambling, which has reached alarming proportions in the Unit, will be taken, it was decided at the last TCC I meeting at Blk. 5.

Also during the meeting, a committee consisting of G. Kurata....

The original plan was changed and the joint conference was held in two sessions, dividing the camp into two; otherwise the proceedings were the same as announced in the newspaper. The conference was held in the south wing of the Block 32 Messhall,<sup>13</sup> in which two long lines of mess tables were lined parallel to the walls. On each of these tables, which are big enough to seat eight persons, cards bearing the numbers of blocks, were placed. In the center of one line of tables, the speakers were seated. When the meeting opened at quarter to nine, forty-five minutes behind the scheduled time, almost every seat was occupied by delegates.



These delegates were either Issai or Kibei, although white-haired or bald headed persons were more noticeable.

One should sympathize with the predicament of the first speaker, Franklin Sugiyama, who had to speak in unfamiliar Japanese, as the meeting was conducted entirely in Japanese. He explained with difficulty that there were many problems in camp which could not be solved without the aid of the people present. The purpose of the evening was to acquaint them with the pending problems and the policies of the TCC and the administrative branch.

The second speaker, H. Mizushima, related the necessity of close cooperation between those elected officers and the residents at large; he emphasized that the gap must be eliminated.

With the next speaker the meeting went into the main topic. M. Nagai, the chairman of the Executive Board and the self-styled Mayor of Poston, commenced in his characteristic Japanese oratory, "We are facing a deplorable condition. It is a shameful thing for the flowers of the great East Asia races (Toa Minzoku) -- the Japanese. I am speaking of our gambling habit in Poston..."

"Just because the older people are setting bad examples, the young men are thereby influenced and affected. They are delinquent. They are gambling, neglecting the performance of their rightful duties. When I see them gambling at their tender age, I grieve for their future, since the habit of it should once get into their blood, will be an incurable malignant disease. I grieve for the future of our race in America..."

Then he cited the case of the boy who had wasted away one thousand dollars belonging to his family. "His mother could not stop tears coming in her eyes. I, too, cried with her. She said, 'Now you know what happened. Please do something.' To her I said, 'If we succeed in saving not only your



son but other sons also, the money you have lost is a very cheap price to pay. You should be proud that with that money you have saved our young generation. Let us now undertake the crusade to save our youngmanhood..."

At one stage of his speech, Nagai said, "If a person wins in a gambling game, he does not work because he has made easy money. If he loses, he is angry and irritated; he stays in bed without working. In either way the person who gambles does not desire to work. Gambling makes one lazy and irresponsible..."

After twenty minutes of ardent appeal to the audience, he concluded, "Let us together save and guide the young generation, who has a great promise and a great mission to accomplish in the future. It is not too late yet. It is yet possible to cure the disease these young men are afflicted with at present. With your aid let us curb this gambling evil in this center. We need your unselfish and full-hearted assistance to carry out our great duty."

The remaining speeches, one by Kakachi and the other by Fukuda, were on the manpower shortage problem.

As soon as the delegates had access to the floor, a discussion of the gambling problem was resumed lively. One delegate said, "I heard that the police is receiving bribery from the gambling interests."

Another commented, "I know a certain person who was caught gambling and was put in jail. There he saw the policemen gambling in the police station. This man told me, 'The next time we are thrown into jail, we are taking sets of hana cards and we are going to gamble in jail.' When such a condition exists with the law enforcing agency, how can you expect us to prevent gambling in the camp?"



"I want to offer this incident," a block council member said. "A friend of mine was caught in the act of gambling and was taken before the court and was duly sentenced. On the next day, after about twenty-four hours stay in jail, I saw him in our messhall. I asked him what happened. He said, 'I came home to eat, because they told me to come here and eat. Well, I am not returning to the jail any more.' And he refused to return to serve the rest of his sentence and yet nothing happened to him."

One man stood up and spoke indignantly and accusingly, "Isn't it your duty, Mr. Nagai, to see that the police department performs its duty rightfully? Isn't it the duty of the Executive Board to supervise the activities of the police?"

To this query Nagai spoke evasively, "When the duties and the functions of the Executive Board are interpreted broadly, it may be said that the police department is under our jurisdiction. However, in practice, we are not authorized to supervise the department. It is under a separate authority. On the other hand, the police are arguing that they cannot exercise the police authority to the full extent without public opinion supporting the enforcement. In my estimation, we have the police in camp, but in effect, it is the same as not having any police."

On this attempt of Nagai to shift the blame of inefficiency elsewhere there were comments in whispers in the audience, "What's the use of the Tosei-bu (The Executive Board) if they don't have jurisdiction over the police?" "What's he trying to do anyway?" Or, "Nagai is evading the blame."

Nagai was again put on the defense by another man who asked, "Mr. Nagai, we have heard from you this evening about the deplorable proportions of gambling. But I am sorry to call your attention that you have not said



a word about any concrete and constructive plan to curb the evils. You should at least have some idea as to what you intend to do. Will you let us hear from you what you propose to do?"

Nagai answered this questioner hesitantly, "We do not have any definite plan except that we have asked the Parents Teachers Association and the religious groups to take the initiative. I do believe that the responsibility falls on these people. We must depend on them to take the leadership with our support." At this time the reaction that Nagai was trying to pass the buck to others was rampant among those present in the hall.

When the conference broke up about midnight the delegates went home with the feeling that nothing concrete and substantial had been gained during the evening.

However, the conference was effective in making the gamblers in the camp, especially the professional gamblers, realize that the people were disturbed and were rallying to the righteous cause and that public sanction was about to work upon the corrupt police and selfish gamblers. It was enough to intimidate them and all the gambling houses were closed within a few days after the meeting. It was also true that police warnings were instrumental in the retreat of the gamblers. The reasons for the sudden police vigilance were two fold: First, the police had received the support of public agitation against the gamblers for which they were clamoring; second, the Chief and the entire force were under fire and were accused publicly of their corruption. Nevertheless, there was one exception -- the place in Block 27 -- which the police could not close. It was the place where the young boys of the Shimano gang held their gambling establishment. Rumors had it, although without credence,



that Shigekawa was receiving fifty dollars a day and had been threatened by them, "If we go, we take you with us." At the end, however, this group which defied the Chief's closing order, too, moved away from the block by the pressure of the block residents.

Meantime, in the morning of April 23, the Project Director, W. Wade Head, called into his office Police Chief Shigekawa and the members of the Judicial Commission, Seiichi Nomura and Elmer Yamamoto, a former Los Angeles Nisei attorney. Head explained that cash in the excess of four hundred fifty thousand dollars was to be paid to the Poston evacuees within the next four weeks by the project and demanded the tightening of law enforcement, especially a curtailment of gambling in order to protect the residents.

To the request of Project Director Head, the Police Chief, who was at odds with the Commissioners and was disturbed by current stories of his corruption, pointed his accusing finger at Nomura. He argued, in general substance, that real police enforcement could not be effected without stringent penalties pronounced by the Municipal Court against arrested gamblers. So far, whenever the offenders were brought before the justice, the court was turning them loose with either suspended sentences or probations. The chief especially emphasized that the laxity of the court was responsible for the present situation; this same laxity nullified the effectiveness of the police.

Nomura, of course, could not take this accusation with hands down. He retorted that all cases which were brought before the court up to date were minor violations and he could not with a right mind and justice impose heavier penalties. He added, "Don't catch small fries. When you bring big ones, I'll give 'em." Shigekawa, no doubt, understood the hidden insinuation of the judge.



At the end of this conference Head was reported to have said, "I will guarantee all of you that I will give every bit of support for enforcement. I will invoke the authority vested in me by Administrative Instruction No. 84. Just get one witness who will testify that he has seen certain persons play games for money. That's sufficient for me. I will issue a warrant immediately."

W. Wade Head intimated in this statement that he would exercise the full authority granted him by WRA Administrative Instruction No. 84 in making those arrests. The instruction reads in part as follows:

...A police officer may make an arrest without a warrant only of an evacuee who has committed, or is committing an offense in his presence.

The arrest of an evacuee for an offense not committed in the presence of a police officer may be only pursuant to a warrant of arrest issued by the Project Director.

The Project Director may issue a warrant of arrest --

1. On the application of a police officer who makes a signed written statement that he has reason to believe that an offense has been committed and that the person for whom the warrant is requested had committed the offense. The Project Director in his discretion, may require such additional details to be included in the statement as he may believe desirable. When it is urgent that the warrant be issued at the earliest possible moment, the Project Director shall normally not require more than such a written statement by the officer that he believes an offense has been committed and that the person for whom the warrant requested has committed it. When the issuance of a warrant is less urgent, the Project Director shall normally require the statement by the police officer to state briefly why he believes the person for whom the warrant is requested has committed an offense. In any case in which the Project Director finds that the belief of the police officer that an offense has been committed, is clearly unwarranted, he shall refuse to issue a warrant.

2. On the application of any evacuee, any member of the staff of the War Relocation Authority, or any other person within a relocation center, who makes a signed, written statement that he has reason to believe an offense has been committed, setting forth his reasons for such belief, and that he has reason to believe that the person for whom the warrant is requested has committed the offense, setting forth his reasons



for such belief -- except that the Project Director shall not issue a warrant in those cases unless he is satisfied from the statement that there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offense has been committed and that the person for whom a warrant is sought has committed it...

After the conference of joint Block Councils, the circulation of wild stories about Chief Shigekawa was accelerated. One rumor accused the chief of having received at least fifteen thousand dollars as bribery since he came to the camp in last May. Other rumors placed the figure at a smaller amount. Judge Homura's version was also substantiating the story, "I think fifteen thousand dollars are a little exaggerated. I think it's somewhere around nine thousand or ten thousand dollars. He is the guy who put an ad in the Chronicle sometime ago to purchase a tractor. Shigekawa is from Terminal Island and didn't have any money before he came to Poston. Now he's got enough money to buy a tractor for cash. Figure that out for yourself."

The rumors about the Police Chief were somewhat at variance, but they all agreed that he was receiving "protection" money. There was, however, one person who contradicted this story. He was Mizushima, the Issei Advisory Board chairman. He said to his acquaintances, "Shigekawa is a nice boy. I taught him when I was teaching the Japanese language school in Montebello. I don't think he's got any money from the gambling interests. I think it's just talk. His father told me, 'I swear to God that my boy is honest and innocent.'" The listeners immediately repudiated Mizushima, "How can you tell that he didn't take bribe? If you don't pipe down, people will start suspecting that you are with him." The chairman did not have another word, as he was aware that his political position was precarious and that he himself was being suspected by certain elements in the camp of having some connection with the FBI.



On April 26, the Temporary Community Council met with the Legal Department and discussed ways and means of revitalizing and reorganizing the Police Department. The councilmen were particularly concerned about the rampant rumors about the bribe taking police chief. As the first measure, they decided to call in the chief.

On the next day, April 27, the Council called in Chief Shigekawa before the body and recommended him to resign before they would act upon it. He was told, "You'd better save your face. We are going to oust you anyway." Sensing the consequence, Shigekawa immediately tendered his resignation to the Internal Security Officer, Miller, and to the Council.

Seiichi Nomura commented on this resignation, "He'd better get out of camp. That guy made too much promises to the professional guys. They are after him now."

With the resignation of the police Chief, some of the policemen left their jobs one by one; the number remaining in the force was reduced to twelve on April 30. About this some said sneeringly, "these are the smelly guys. The ones left in the department now are honest and around this new force should be formed."

On May 1, the Boston Chronicle printed an article announcing the change of the chief in its Japanese section.

#### RETIREMENT OF CHIEF SHIGEKAWA

Mr. Ota Appointed as the New Chief

Chief Shigekawa, who was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Camp I since his arrival here, decided to retire and tendered his resignation to the Temporary Community Council. The council, having judged his reasons for resignation reasonable and proper, accepted it; subsequently they were searching for the



right person to fill the vacancy and agreed that Assistant Chief Ota was the most logical person, as he is most popular among the police force. As Mr. Ota willingly accepted the appointment which was approved by Project Director Head, he was formally appointed as the new chief.

During the night of May 1, the following mimeographed paper was posted all over the camp -- in the latrines, on the messhall walls, and on the bulletin boards of all the blocks in Unit I.

#### SOMETHING WAS ROTTEN IN DENMARK

Poston was a wide-open town. Commercialized vice and syndicated gambling was flourished, winked at by an official who has been appointed for the express purpose of keeping the lid down on stinking corruption.

Rumors are rife that there was a monthly pay-off for "protection." That only small-time penny-ante games and crap-shooters rolling dice for nickels and dimes were apprehended, while the big controlled games were unmolested.

Of course, this may be just another rumor. But there's the old-time saying that "where there's smoke, there's fire."

It is high time that something be done at once to clean up the corruption in organized crime.

Poston must clean house! Throw out whom would line his pocket with filthy money!

Resignation from a \$19 job is not necessarily means atoned for his sins.

We are ready to drive out this whole stinking mess. Racketeering and dishonesty must go! You know whom we are talking about!

The same mimeographed papers disappeared during the night of May 2. No one in camp could explain this mysterious appearance and disappearance. No one could say with authority who put out this paper and who took it away. The only plausible conjecture was that they were not printed in the Administration Buildings, as the Caucasian superintendent would not allow printing of papers other than those of the project. Besides these machines, the mimeographing can be done in the Chronicle office and the Community Enterprises. In addition, there are two privately owned



mimeograph machines in the camp and to these others -- Christian workers living in the volunteer evacuee section -- the credit of printing and posting of these sheets was given. And the Shigekawa supporters were suspected of being responsible for the disappearance.

On May 4, the Boston Chronicle in its Japanese section reported as follows:

#### SIX COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED

##### Strengthening of the Police Department

As reported, Mr. "Jumbo" Ota was appointed as the Chief when Mr. Shigekawa retired. Now the Temporary Community Council formally announced with the approval of Director Head the appointment of the following persons as the Police Commissioners. It is the duty of these men to act as the advisors to the chief and to be consulted on the policies of the department in maintaining law and order in the camp.

William Fukuda, Masaharu Hane, Frank Kadawaki, Tsuneo Sumida, Setsuichi Masukane, George Fujii

The first person named in the report, William Fukuda is a Nisei who is working in the warehouses. Masaharu Hane and Setsuichi Masukane are both members of the Issei Advisory Board, while Tsuneo Sumida, also an Issei, is the Manager of Block 16. The other Nisei besides Fukuda, namely George Fujii, is a member of the Temporary Community Council.

The condition in camp was getting under control it was an anticlimax by May 5, when the newly organized Police Commission sent a memorandum attached to a notice from the Project Director. The memorandum reads as follows:

To: Block Manager

As you know, it would be much more preferable to prevent the continuance of these evils rather than enforcing stringent penalties after the violations have occurred.

May I ask your cooperation by announcing this at the Mess hall and posting it on the Bulletin Board.

(signed) George S. Fujii  
George S. Fujii, Chairman  
Police Commission



The letter of Wade Head which Fujii referred to in the memorandum reads as follows:

May 5, 1943

NOTICE TO ALL RESIDENTS OF POSTON:

Two prevalent evils existing at Poston have been called to my attention and I am writing this memorandum to you residents to ask your cooperation and assistance in eliminating them.

1. Gambling has become very wide-spread to such an extent that some drastic measures must be taken to curb it. I am sure that all well-meaning, right-thinking residents do not desire this evil to continue. We have rules and regulations against gambling and they will be hereafter enforced by the law enforcement officers and the Judicial Commission. Such rules and regulations are merely a remedy after the crime has been committed.

I am appealing to you all to help prevent the continuance of the practice of this gambling evil. I am sure that you all feel that it would be much more preferable to prevent the continued practice of this evil rather than enforcing stringent penalties after the violations have occurred. Public opinion is one of the strongest weapons that any community can employ in stamping out this continued practice. I ask for your full-hearted cooperation.

2. The other evil to which I am referring is the unauthorized misuse of motor vehicles...

I earnestly solicit your help and assistance in rectifying the two problems herein outlined to you.

Yours very truly,  
(signed) W. Wade Head  
W. Wade Head  
Project Director

The letter of the Project Director was a posthumous warning to the gamblers. The organized and syndicated gamblers could not stand the wrath of the public; the corrupt Police Chief could not bear public censure. Both of these had gone when the letter came out. It was a warning to the residents that the recurrence of the situation would not be tolerated and would be dealt with severely.



As of May 20, the only gambling done in the camp is again hana and poker games for nominal stakes, which are condoned. Even these players are no longer defiant and ostentatious as they were in February and March; they are playing the games secretly under cover avoiding the searching eyes of the vigilant police.

As it happened in California, public opinion was the weapon which spurred the curbing of the gambling evils after a chaotic period. It is a question whether this weapon will be exercised long enough to prevent the recurrence of gambling in the Colorado River War Relocation Center at Poston permanently. This question is yet to be answered in the future.



## NOTES

## PART I

- 1 -

As of April 28, 1945.

- 2 -

Men without dependents in this country and bachelors who were engaged in taking care of the gardens of Caucasian homes were quartered together as boarders in large houses. Each house took care of about 10 - 20 gardeners charging a set fee for room and board. It was one of the profitable businesses for the Japanese.

- 3 -

The area bounded by Ninth Street, Pico Street, Vermont Avenue, and Western Avenue.

- 4 -

The area roughly bounded by Exposition Boulevard, Adams Street, Vermont Avenue, and Western Avenue.

- 5 -

A fishing village across the channel from San Pedro, California, where about two thousand Japanese congregated, comprising about three fourths of the total population.

- 6 -

The employees of Japanese commission houses in the City Wholesale Produce Market and the Terminal Wholesale Produce Market in Los Angeles. The former was commonly referred to as "Ninth Street market," while the latter "Seventh Street market."

- 7 -

A Chinese game. A dealer grabs a handful of beans and puts them in a china bowl. He then takes out the beans by a definite number, say by sixes, until the number of beans in the bowl is the number or less. The winner is decided by the number of beans left in the bowl. The method of betting and the odds are somewhat like roulette.

- 8 -

Another Chinese game similar to domino.



- 9 -

The southwestern suburb of Los Angeles, which included Moneta, Gardena, Torrance, Lomita, Hawthorne, and Compton. It was the center of Japanese truck gardeners.

- 10 -

The Japanese who makes a regular round collecting farm produce on his customers' farms after their working hours. He then takes these vegetables to either one of the two wholesale markets. (In those years, these markets opened for business at 10 p.m.) He parks his truck in his stall in the central courtyard of the market and sells these products. In effect, he serves as a transfer man and as a salesman simultaneously. His fee in the 1920's was 10 per cent commission on the sale price in addition to the flat charge of five cents for a lug and ten cents for a crate. No consignors examined his sales record and it was not difficult for him to report back to the farmers a few cents below the price and to embezzle the difference. This was the most tempting scheme for the "haul men", by which some of them were able to make more money than through legitimate means.

- 11 -

A bum without a source of income. He comes to the gambling house at the opening hour and stays until the closing time. He is fed by the house free of charge. He begs the players for some cash, dimes and quarters; when he succeeds in begging, he gambles it away.

- 12 -

In a recent interview, P. M. Kanno, the former publisher and editor of the Rafu Shimpō, or the Los Angeles Daily News, revealed the following facts:

The Rafu Shimpō had the largest circulation among all the Japanese language newspapers in the United States. It had about 10,000 subscribers. This was the only newspaper in the field which could make both ends meet. At that the net profit above the expense was very meager and negligible. The Nichibei, the Kashi Mainichi, and the Hokubei Asahi had a circulation of about 6,000, about 5,000, and about 4,000 respectively. This was not enough to cover the operating expenses and the papers were always in the red. In consequence, it was not unusual that the rents were in arrears for several months and the wages of the employees were unpaid. It is also important to remember that they had large account payables, especially the paper companies, long overdue. In this way the Zellerbach Paper Co. held mortgages on the Nichibei and the Hokubei Asahi; at the time of evacuation the company was operating the Nichibei after it was foreclosed a few years previously.

Before 1920 it was true that a circulation of 3,000 was considered enough to pay the expenses. But as the international news gained importance and the Japanese subscribers demanded more news, we had to buy the wire service from Japan at first and the UP service



later. This meant rapid increase in the operating cost, and our circulation of 10,000 was barely sufficient to keep the paper going.

- 13 -

This was reported by one of the officers of the Tokyo Club.

- 14 -

The hilly stretch along the Pacific Ocean between San Pedro and Redondo Beach.

- 15 -

He was the central figure of an eviction case in Block 45. The incident is reported elsewhere separately.

- 16 -

It is translated "Rifle Gang" or "Gun Men." A group of burly men who were employed by the Tokyo Club.

- 17 -

The boss of the underworld in Southern California.

- 18 -

Ample materials are available for this case and the kidnapping case that followed. The reader should refer to the Los Angeles Times, the Los Angeles Examiner, and the official record in file in the Superior Court in and for the County of Los Angeles. These cases are mentioned briefly in this paper.

- 19 -

One of these men is now residing in Boston under another name.



## PART II

- 1 -

Seiichi Nomura was born in Hilo, Hawaii, in 1895. He is a veteran of the World War. After the war, he worked in the Navy Yard at Mare Island until he was discharged in 1920. In the same year he came to Los Angeles, and enrolled in the Law School of Southwestern University. Since graduation he has worked for the Tokyo Club as the counselor. He was not admitted to the State Bar.

At present he is the representative from Block 45 to the Community Council, of which he is serving as the acting chairman after Sugiyama left for outside employment in the middle of May. He is also a member of the Judicial Commission and a judge of the Municipal Court.

- 2 -

Ted Haas of ten consulted Leighton and Spicer at the early stage of this project. In fact, Haas participated sometimes in Bureau activities such as the food survey.

- 3 -

Section 19 of the Code of Offenses reads as follows:

Prostitution: No woman shall offer her body for the purpose of prostitution or solicit any man to have intercourse with her, for money, or agree to have carnal intercourse with any man for money. No person, upon any street or sidewalk, or in any room, rooming house, residence, hotel, park or other place, shall solicit any person of the opposite sex to whom he or she is not married, to have sexual intercourse with such person so soliciting.

No person shall resort to any office building or to any room or rooms used or occupied in connection with, or under the same management as any cafe, restaurant, soft drink parlor, liquor establishment or similar business, or to any public park or to any of the buildings therein or to any vacant lot, or to any room, rooming house, lodging house, residence, apartment house, hotel, street, or sidewalk for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with a person to whom he or she is not married.

No person shall cause, procure, induce, persuade or encourage any other person to patronize prostitutes or houses of prostitution; or direct or conduct another to prostitutes or places where prostitutes may be hired or obtained; or offer or agree to provide prostitutes or solicit patronage for prostitutes or houses of prostitution; or take, offer or agree to take another person to any place with knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that such taking, offering or agreeing to take is for the purpose of prostitution, lewdness or assignation.



No person shall resort to any house, room, building, structure or place not mentioned in the third paragraph of this section, for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with a person to whom he or she is not married, in consideration of the payment of, or promise of payment of or the receipt of any lawful money.

No person shall rent, let or assign any room or apartment with the understanding or belief that such room or apartment is to be used by the person or persons to whom it is sold, let, rented or assigned for the purpose of having sexual intercourse with a person to whom he or she is not married.

No driver of any vehicle, capable of being used to transport persons for hire, shall permit any person to occupy or use such vehicle for the purpose of prostitution, lewdness or assignation, with knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that the same is, or is to be, hire, occupied or used for such purposes; nor shall such driver direct, take or transport any person to any building or place, or to any other person, with knowledge or reasonable cause to believe that the purpose of such transporting is prostitution, lewdness or assignation.

- 4 -

Dr. John H. Provine, the War Relocation Authority.

- 5 -

Lyle Kurisaki, who was one of the first to be beaten as an FBI informer, was residing in this block before he left this camp for Denver.

- 6 -

The new double barrack building between Block 28 and the adobe school site.

- 7 -

The block in which M. Nagai, Andy Sugimoto, Frank Fukuda, etc., live. The residents are mostly from the Riverside section.

- 8 -

A typical expression among the Issei:--

- 9 -

In the blocks other than those in the northern section and in the southwestern section there were no regular gambling establishments. Only hana and poker games were played among friends.



- 10 -

Blocks 35, 36, 45, and 46.

- 11 -

--- an affectionate term in addressing a stranger,  
literally meaning "uncle."

- 12 -

The words are of a representative of the Parents Teachers Association.

- 13 -

The description contained in this report is that of the second  
day, April 22.