

THESIS

"THE JAPANESE" IN COLORADO'S RACIAL DISCOURSE: FEAR, ANXIETY, AND SPECTACLE IN THE
REPORTING OF THE *DENVER POST* DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS (1919-1941)

Submitted by

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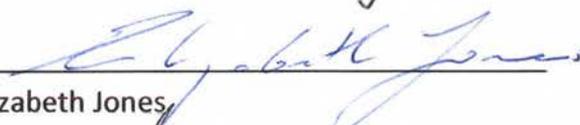
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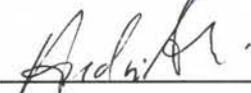
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

“THE JAPANESE” IN COLORADO’S RACIAL DISCOURSE: FEAR, ANXIETY, AND SPECTACLE IN THE REPORTING OF THE *DENVER POST* DURING THE INTERWAR YEARS (1919-1941)

This thesis is comprised of two principle sections. The first two chapters examine the experiences of Japanese immigrants residing in Colorado during the sixty years prior to the onset of World War II. These chapters describe the characteristics of Colorado’s Japanese communities, the circumstances which drew them to Colorado, and the demographic changes the community underwent in the decades preceding the Second World War. The way in which the racial background of these individuals shaped their experiences in Colorado is of central importance to this work. Chapters 1 and 2 analyze the ways in which race intersected with transnational politics, local economic contingencies, and cultural attitudes to influence the responses of Colorado’s Euro-Americans to their Japanese neighbors, profoundly shaping the experiences of Japanese immigrants in Colorado.

The latter half of this work analyzes racial discourses circulating in the *Denver Post* during the interwar years. During the two decades leading up to the Second World War, the *Denver Post* was the predominant regional newspaper and regularly featured articles on Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, Japan, and Japanese culture and society. I argue that the sentiments expressed within the paper were representative of a popular racial discourse that was ultimately essentializing and dehumanizing. The language employed within this discourse lumped together a complex and diverse group of people into the racial category of “Japanese,” attributing to that category a series of essential and universal characteristics. In my

critique of this language, I reveal that this discourse was often multi-faceted and expressed sentiments that varied from fear and anxiety, to awe and fascination. The result was the production of numerous and varied stereotypes which served as representations of the “Japanese” to readers of Colorado newspapers. Regardless of what characteristics it projected upon the “Japanese,” however, this discourse continued to homogenize all individuals of Japanese ethnicity into a singular racial entity, problematically reinforcing the legitimacy of race as a valid means of social categorization in the process. I am critical of such a category and, in this work, seek to demonstrate how the process of constructing a “Japanese” racial identity during the interwar years was in fact a process of othering that contributed to the ease with which negative, vilifying stereotypes were later projected upon Japanese Americans during the Second World War.

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Introduction: Japanese Americans, Japanese Nationals, and Japan in Interwar Racial Discourses

Following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in late 1941, the entry of the United States into the Second World War coincided with a wave of anti-Japanese sentiment that swept across the nation. Published in 1986, John Dower's *War Without Mercy* has explored the character of wartime racial discourses directed at Japanese Americans, the Japanese state, and "the Japanese" as a race. Dower demonstrates that within such discourses, Japanese Americans were implicated as potential associates of Japan on account of their racial heritage. *War Without Mercy* describes the ways in which racial characterizations that essentialized a number of disparate groups into a single category of "the Japanese" had become an integral part of American wartime propaganda. Anxieties and fears mixed with racial prejudice resulted in nationwide expressions of suspicion about the loyalty of Japanese Americans. The federal government's suspicions about the loyalties of Japanese Americans ultimately resulted in the implementation of unconstitutional policies which forcefully relocated Japanese American residents of Pacific Coast states to internment camps.

Although Dower provides us with important insights into the character of wartime rhetoric that racialized, vilified, and dehumanized Japanese Americans, his focus solely upon World War II limits our understanding of the formation and potency of such discourses. His argument that American wartime racial characterizations of "the Japanese" can be explained as particular manifestations of historic Western "patterns of discrimination" is ultimately underdeveloped. With respect to racial characterizations of the Japanese, Dower asserts that "the stereotypes preceded the atrocities...and had an independent existence apart from any specific event...they belonged to webs of perception that had existed for centuries in Western

and Japanese culture.”¹ But Dower does little to develop his claim, drawing a few loose parallels between American wartime racial attitudes, Spanish colonial descriptions of Native Americans, and Aristotle’s Great Chain of Being. In the end, Dower’s work speaks generally about the national unity of anti-Japanese sentiment within the United States during the Second World War and only loosely grounds the existence of such discourses in an ancient tradition of Western discursive strategies that vilified and accentuated difference in other human communities. Dower’s claims raise several questions about the origins of the wartime discourses he analyzed. In what context were Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals understood prior to the onset of World War II? Was race also utilized as a lens to interpret the Japanese state, Japanese nationals, and Japanese Americans during the interwar years? How may have discourses of the 1920s and 1930s informed the discourses of World War II? Determining the extent to which discourses that vilified Japanese Americans became meaningful to broad segments of the American public during the Second World War is difficult. However, it is possible to better contextualize racialized interpretations of Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and the Japanese state that were promulgated in discourses during the war, through a discursive examination of American periodicals during the interwar years.

Historical studies of interwar Japanese American communities have been principally concerned with examining their experiences in the state of California. Scholars of Japanese American history, including Roger Daniels, Kevin Leonard, and Natalia Molina, have communicated the existence of regional and local variability in racial attitudes and challenge the notion that a unified national racial discourse about “the Japanese” and Japanese-Americans

¹ John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p. 14, 73.

existed in the interwar years. All three scholars point to the importance of accounting for regional and local diversity when examining racial sentiments and discourses within the United States. Complicating our understanding of race, they have contrasted the Pacific Coast's local racial attitudes with those expressed by white American's elsewhere and have developed connections between the particular circumstances of the city, state, or region they are exploring, and the national milieu.² However, although these scholars have constructed thoughtful analyses, they have remained fixated upon the urban, rural, and regional milieus of the states of California, Oregon, and Washington. Historians have largely ignored the character of interwar discourses discussing Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and the Japanese state elsewhere in the United States.

As such, the first aim of this thesis is to shed light upon the characteristics of Colorado's Japanese American community, examining their experiences in Colorado during the forty years preceding World War II. Likely a result of the community's small size, Colorado's Japanese Americans, as well as the Japanese American communities of other Rocky Mountain States, have received little attention from historians studying the American West, Japanese American populations, or American race relations. Yet the Rocky Mountain States were home to the second largest concentrations of Japanese Americans within the United States and, aside from New York, they were the only states to boast Japanese American populations of any significance outside the Pacific West Coast. During the first forty years of the twentieth century, Colorado was the most populous state in the Rocky Mountain West, and the state was also host to the

² Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?: Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Changing Face of Racism: Japanese Americans and Politics in California, 1943-1946* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

region's most sizable Japanese American population. More than 2,400 Japanese Americans resided in the state by 1920. By 1940, Colorado's Japanese American population numbered 2,734, and the state hosted over 30% of the entire region's Japanese Americans.³ Japanese-Americans were the state's second largest minority group, falling behind African-Americans. Between 1920 and 1940, the population of Japanese within the state of Colorado peaked at 3,213, comprising roughly 2.5 percent of the nation's total Japanese population.⁴ Although small, these communities played a significant role in the economic development of the Rocky Mountain West and their experiences are an important, yet neglected, component of the broader narrative of Japanese migration to the United States.

However, although shedding light upon the experiences of Colorado's Japanese communities is important, the principle concern of this study is the critical examination of racial discourses directed at that community during the interwar years. This thesis demonstrates that Euro-American residents of the Rocky Mountain West were exposed to racialized interpretations of the Japanese state, Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and Japanese culture and society in the years preceding the onset of the Second World War. I analyze the ways in which these discourses constructed "the Japanese" as a social other. In particular, I

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1942), pp. 16, 17, 88.

⁴ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1920), Table 28.; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1942* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1942), Table 17; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: State Compendium Colorado, 1920* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1920), Tables 1 and 9.; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States: Composition and Characteristics of the Population Colorado, 1920*. (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1920), Table 7; Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado's Japanese Americans From 1886 to the Present* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 28.; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: Colorado, 1940* (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1940), Table 25.

show that, in the two decades prior to the onset of World War II, American newspapers outside the Pacific West Coast also mobilized language that explicated links between Japanese Americans and the Japanese state. Even though Colorado was host to a relatively small Japanese American community throughout the interwar period, local newspapers regularly featured articles and images that exposed contemporary newspaper readers to a multitude of discourses that framed Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state as interconnected with contemporaneous understandings of a “Japanese” race. As John Dower has demonstrated, the problematic language employed in these discourses was, in the context of World War II, employed to vilify Japanese Americans as disloyal associates of Japan on account of their racial background.

In examining racial discourses, this study presents as evidence discriminatory language that was utilized by contemporaries to racialize individuals of Japanese ethnicity. However, the intention of this study is to remain critical of that language and not reproduce its prejudicial assumptions. Here, I will outlay some strategies I utilize in order to clarify my critical distance from sources employed in this study. Whenever this text refers to a particular individual’s use of racially essentializing language about “the Japanese,” quotes are placed around “the Japanese” in order to demonstrate that I do not perceive the term as a valid means of categorization but rather, employ the term only to demonstrate its significance within the context of a historic discourse. When discussing individuals of Japanese ethnicity, this work strives to be as specific as possible in identifying them in relation to a specific social context in order to avoid reproducing a homogenizing racial discourse.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that some of the terms employed in this study remain problematic and are the subject of debate within the scholarly community. For example,

problems arise when one attempts to classify the entire group of Japanese immigrants residing in the United States as Japanese Americans. Among numerous other questions, one must consider whether or not they considered themselves Japanese Americans. Would first generation Japanese immigrants, or *Issei*, who were denied citizenship in the United States throughout this period, have identified as 'Japanese Americans'? The issues of this debate cannot be fully explored here, though readers should be aware of these challenges. Instead, I will here clarify the usage of terms throughout this study so as to prevent any confusion of their use in this thesis. In describing Colorado's Japanese communities during the first decade of the twentieth-century, I principally refer to them as Japanese immigrants or Japanese laborers. Many of the earliest Japanese immigrants to the United States traveled there to work as contract laborers, and it was unclear whether or not they would make the nation a permanent residence or not. As a result, I refrain from referring to them as Japanese Americans, as it is unclear whether or not they had established any meaningful connection with an American identity. However, following the enactment of the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1907, the composition of the community changed as Japanese male immigration into the United States was voluntarily restricted and many Japanese laborers returned to Japan. In the decades that follow, I argue that many of the Japanese immigrants who remained in Colorado demonstrated an intent to live there for an extended period of time (if not indefinitely), and classify them as Japanese Americans as a result of this intent to reside in the United States.

This study utilizes newspapers printed in Denver, to examine regional racial attitudes, sentiments, and discourses, as well as their engagement and exposure to discussions of "the Japanese" at the national level and within other regional settings. The methodology is inspired in part by Amy Sueyoshi's *Race-ing Sex: The Competition for Gender and Sexual Identity in Multi-ethnic San Francisco, 1897-1924*; Jules Becker's *The Course of Exclusion, 1882-1924* (1991);

and Kumiko Takahara's *Off the Fat of the Land* (2003). All three scholars have examined newspapers to analyze racial discourses. Employing similar methodology, this study examines major periodicals published in Colorado including *The Denver Post*, *The Denver Times*, *The Denver Republican*, *the Rocky Mountain News*, and other local papers. The discourses printed in these newspapers suggest that racial identities were not rigidly defined, and that during the 1920s and 1930s, Denver's white-American communities were exposed to inconsistent and diverse racialized depictions of Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals. Colorado's populace was not disconnected from the ongoing discussions of race within the rest of the United States, but local newspaper reporters also produced their own discourses in response to the smaller size of Colorado's Japanese American population.

Even as historians of race relations have under-examined the interaction between Japanese and white Americans in regions outside the Pacific West Coast, historians of Colorado and Denver have overlooked the experiences of the state's Japanese Americans and have not analyzed the character of regional racial discourses directed at these communities. Nevertheless, scholars who have looked at Colorado or Denver through racial or ethnic studies have identified important contingencies which contributed to the formation of a distinct urban culture within Denver that ultimately informed inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations. Janet Worrall's "Labor, Gender, and Generational Change in a Western City," Robert Tank's "Mobility and Occupational Structure on the Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier," and Lyle Dorsett's *The Queen City: A History of Denver*, have all argued that contingencies unique to Denver,

including its status as a rapidly expanding frontier urban center, shaped racial and ethnic dynamics within the city.⁵

Unfortunately, scholarly studies of Colorado's Japanese Americans are limited and the interwar period has been largely overlooked. Russell Endo's "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait" dedicates no more than a few pages to the twenty year period. More developed treatments of the interwar years are presented in Bill Hosokawa's *Colorado's Japanese Americans*; however, Hosokawa's work remains narratively driven and journalistic in nature.⁶ Fumio Ozawa's thesis, *Japanese in Colorado, 1900-1910* (1954), is one of the most substantial examinations of Colorado's Japanese Americans. Ozawa systematically discusses the experiences of Colorado's earliest Japanese American settlers, the majority of whom arrived in Colorado during the first decade of the twentieth century. His work is an important resource and has been informative in the development of this thesis. However, Ozawa's own analyses are focused principally on presenting and discussing the characteristics of Colorado's Japanese American communities. He does offer some insight into race relations, but is more concerned with examining the places where Japanese Americans settled and how they lived, worked, and organized in the state. Although he demonstrates that Japanese communities in Colorado faced discrimination during the first decade of the twentieth century, without studying the thirty years that followed, he problematically concludes that over time, anti-Japanese sentiment in Colorado

⁵ Janet Worrall, "Labor, Gender, and Generational Change in a Western City" *The Western Historical Quarterly* 32 (Winter, 2001); Robert Tank, "Mobility and Occupational Structure on the Late Nineteenth-Century Urban Frontier: The Case of Denver," *The Pacific Historical Review* No. 47 (May, 1978); Lyle W. Dorsett, *The Queen City: A History of Denver*, (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Company, 1977).

⁶ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado's Japanese Americans From 1886 to the Present* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2005), pp. 29, 39.

declined and that “there were no strong or lasting factors that created or sustained anything of an anti-Japanese movement in Colorado.”⁷ His conclusion is little more than a guess, however, as he does not actually examine any historical evidence for the thirty year period between 1910 and World War II, nor is this era an element of his historical inquiry.

Contrary to the assertions of Endo and Hosokawa, this work, like Ozawa’s thesis, reveals that Japanese immigrants were not initially welcomed in Colorado and that responses to the state’s Japanese communities were no less prejudicial and discriminatory than the responses of Euro-Americans in Pacific Coast communities. The existence of a perceptible Japanese population in Colorado facilitated the development of tangible interracial interactions and dialogues between Colorado’s whites and Japanese communities throughout the first forty years of the twentieth century; at the same time, the considerably smaller size of Colorado’s Japanese population, which did not surpass 4,000 prior to World War II, inspired a different series of interracial relations than those that had emerged within the context of the Pacific Coast. As Chapter 1 shows, during the first decade of the twentieth century, Euro-American laborers and members of Colorado’s unions felt economically threatened by Japanese workers entering Colorado. They often expressed anti-Japanese sentiment and local unions put pressure upon state and city officials to remove Japanese laborers from Colorado’s workforce. In turn, state officials attempted to implement discriminatory policies, such as a state-wide ‘quarantine,’ that targeted Japanese workers and prohibited them from entering Colorado. However, since the state’s Japanese population did not expand beyond several thousand, anti-Japanese sentiment directed at Colorado’s Japanese communities was infrequently published in Colorado’s major periodicals in the years following 1910. Unlike Ozawa, however, I do not suggest that anti-

⁷ Fumio Ozawa, *Japanese in Colorado, 1900-1910*, (The Faculty of the Graduate College University of Denver, 1954), p. 111.

Japanese sentiment simply disappeared in the thirty years following 1910. Although the state's Japanese Americans were not frequently the targets of prejudicial discourses, local newspapers continued to circulate essentializing images of Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, the Japanese state, and Japanese culture and society throughout the interwar years. Interwar discourses continued to racialize "the Japanese," and thereby perpetuated the dehumanizing process of social othering inherent to the construction of racial identities.

I argue that depictions of "the Japanese" as a racial community in the *Denver Post* were informed not only by the paper's reporting on local Japanese Americans, but also in its coverage of Japanese nationals, the Japanese state, and Japanese culture and society. Unlike other racial minorities in the United States, Japanese Americans were implicated in broader Euro-American discussions of a Japanese racial community which were informed as much by Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state as they were by understandings of Japanese Americans. The consequences of these discourses were made evident during World War II, when Americans questioned the loyalty of Japanese Americans on account of their racial identities and portrayed them as associates of a belligerent Japanese state. However, wartime discourses were preceded by interwar discourses printed in major American periodicals that also established racially binding affiliations between the Japanese state, Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals. Consequently, this work not only examines the treatment of Japanese Americans in Colorado newspapers, but also the discursive portrayal of Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state within these periodicals during the interwar years.

Discourses that racialized "the Japanese" in Colorado's newspapers were not uniform and exposed readers to a diverse and fluid characterization of "the Japanese" race. Even though

contemporaries may have understood race as an essentialized biological reality, the racial characteristics ascribed to “the Japanese” as a race were rarely consistent or stagnant. Class, gender, national and transnational circumstances, population density, and the actions of the Japanese state all played an important role in shaping these discourses. At times, local newspapers derisively portrayed Japanese individuals as villainous, deceitful, cunning, and sly; yet they were also depicted as Oriental spectacle, where they were viewed as mysterious, beautiful, timeless, and charming. In both contexts, however, race operated as an essentializing framework and these discourses reproduced the differentiating assumptions integral to understandings of racial categorization circulating during the interwar years. Whether viewed as exotic and charming or menacing and dangerous, a diverse community of people was essentialized under the racial category of “Japanese.” This category was employed in Colorado’s newspapers during the interwar years as a signifier of “Japanese” difference from, and inferiority in relation to, white communities.

Gender was especially influential in informing contemporary discourses, as Japanese men and Japanese women became associated with different representations of ‘Japanese-ness.’ Within a gendered discourse, Japanese women frequently served as the representatives of an exotic, beautiful, and odd Japanese culture with which Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans alike were associated. At the same time, Japanese men were most often associated with the militarism of Japan in East Asia and transnational disputes between Japan and the United States.

Japan and the militaristic policies it pursued during the interwar years were also racialized, and articles in Colorado’s newspapers often framed Japan’s activities as motivated by national and racial interests. Japan’s imperial ambitions were understood as a reflection of the

need and desire of the nation and “the Japanese” people to acquire natural resources and space in order to expand the Japanese population. Some contemporary observers viewed the size of Japan’s population as a quantitative measure of the evolutionary reproductive success of “the Japanese” race. In this context, the nation’s actions were not only perceived as an assertion of political power, but also of racial supremacy as the state’s acquisition of natural resources and new territories were also perceived as acts that improved the fecundity of their nation. However, even during periods when fears of the supremacy of “the Japanese” race intensified and tensions between Japan and the United States escalated, depictions of an exotic, romanticized Japan did not dissipate during the interwar years. While the gendered binaries described above were not rigid, they were pervasive, and they allowed for the concurrent promulgation of two seemingly incompatible understandings of Japan and “the Japanese” race within Colorado newspapers.

In sum, through articles, advertisements, and photographs printed in major periodicals, Euro-American residents of Colorado and neighboring states were exposed to discourses that described “the Japanese” as a racial community yet were not uniform in their interpretations of Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state. However, even though such discourses were fragmented, and implicitly evinced the artificiality of discussing “the Japanese” as a race, none openly challenged the legitimacy of understanding “the Japanese” as a racial population. Consequently, contemporary newspaper readers were introduced to a cacophony of discursive voices which framed Japanese culture and society through different interpretive lenses but remained uncritical of racially homogenizing sentiments. Implicated in broader discussions of “the Japanese” race, Colorado’s Japanese Americans were objects of a discourse that associated them with contemporary understandings of Japan, Japanese culture and society, and Japanese nationals. Within the logic of such racial

discourses, the state's Japanese Americans were implicitly identified with a broad array of meanings that contemporaries attributed to "the Japanese" race. The racial category of "Japanese" allowed for Japanese Americans to be linked to the Japanese state on account of their racial background. Analysis of these discourses reveals that Japanese Americans had already been imagined as racial affiliates of the Japanese state in the decades preceding World War II.

Sources: Racial Discourse in the *Denver Post*

The *Denver Post* was the Rocky Mountain West's most widely circulated newspaper and is the principle periodical used by this study to examine racial discourses of the interwar years. During the interwar years, the city of Denver matured into the Rocky Mountain region's most substantial urban center. The city was the publication center of several daily periodicals, including the *Denver Post*, the circulation of which had surpassed the combined circulations of all other Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico newspapers by 1925.⁸ The paper was by far the most widely read paper in the state of Colorado as well as the entire region, serving over a quarter million subscribing customers daily by the 1920s. The paper frequently reported on Colorado's Japanese American communities, Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state, and, because of its wide circulation, is utilized here as a source to analyze statewide public racial sentiment during the prewar era. The *Denver Post* is the primary source from which materials to develop this study have been acquired.

During the 1920s and 1930s, newspapers were an important medium by which information was publicly disseminated. Although the radio had grown in importance by the 1930s, for many Americans, newspapers remained the principle source of information about

⁸ "All circulation records shattered," *Denver Post*, July 27, 1925, p. 1.

local, national, and global events. In the process, newspapers exposed potentially broad segments of the populace to contemporaneous discourses. Jules Becker and Amy Sueyoshi have argued that newspapers may be interpreted as indications of broader public participation in a social discourse. At the very least, the rhetoric in such papers was promulgated to a wide audience of readers who were exposed to its content even if they were not receptive or disagreed with the paper's messages, assertions and conclusions. It is important to recognize that newspapers were commercial enterprises, and ultimately, through their content, had to attract and retain subscribers in order to remain profitable. This process inevitably includes the paper shaping its presentation of information in order to cater to its intended audience. The wide readership of the *Post* indicates that the racial discourses printed within its pages reflected discourses which were tolerable, if not generally accepted, by broad segments of Colorado's populace. At the same time, in reaching such a wide audience, the paper also played a role in framing issues and shaping public opinion within the state.

In his history of the newspaper, William Hornby attributes The *Post's* popularity in the prewar period to its populist style that caught the favor of local consumers of the news. In 1925, the *Denver Post* described itself as a paper "printed by the people for the people."⁹ While the paper may have been popular, Hornby also contends that it was characterized by "sensationalist, isolationist, and occasionally bigoted" reporting during the prewar period.¹⁰ During the 1920s and 1930s, in its day to day reporting, the paper was characterized by a mixture of sensational story-making and more serious journalism. The paper's tendencies to sensationalize were perhaps best represented in its Sunday magazine editions, which frequently

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ William Hornby, *Voice of Empire: A Centennial Sketch of the Denver Post*, (Colorado History Society: Denver, 1992, pp. 3, 11, 20.

published outlandish stories about Japanese American communities that presented interpretations of the Japanese as a racial population. At the same time, the *Post* printed local, national, and international stories without great embellishment, providing readers with access to general news reports.

The paper's reporting on racial and ethnic minorities during the First and Second World Wars has received considerable attention from historians. In their respective histories of the *Post*, Hornby and Bill Hosokawa each discuss the negative propaganda the paper published, first targeting German Americans during World War I, and twenty years later, targeting Japanese Americans during World War II. The paper's language directed at these communities during the context of each respective conflict was wholly unsympathetic, racially or ethnically essentializing, and inflammatory. During World War I, the paper vilified German-Americans and was sharply critical of their loyalties to the United States.¹¹ Twenty years later, as is discussed at length in Kumiko Takahara's *Off the Fat of the Land*, the *Post* was a staunch opponent of the introduction of Japanese American evacuee populations in Colorado, regularly publishing sensational and racialized anti-Japanese articles. The *Post's* prejudicial responses to minority communities affiliated with the side of opposition in both of these wars have received considerable attention from scholars and public historians. However, in their respective histories of the *Post*, Hornby and Hosokawa only briefly treat the character of racial discourses printed by the paper during the interwar years.

Hornby suggests that during the interwar years, the paper was "callous to civil rights," and that the *Post's* toleration of Denver's diverse population was "grudging" at best.¹²

¹¹ Hornby, p. 19; Hosokawa, p. 196.

¹² Hornby, p. 16, 17.

Nevertheless, he notes that, in some instances the *Post* did “[rise] to the occasion,” citing the paper’s public opposition to the policies of Governor Clarence J. Morley, who had been supported by the Ku Klux Klan, as an indication of its ability to occasionally transcend prevailing racial sentiments.¹³ However, his analysis and discussion of race in general is quite brief and ultimately provides few insights into the 1920s and 1930s.

Although Hornby rightly characterizes the *Denver Post* as unsympathetic to Colorado’s racial and ethnic minorities, his work does little to reveal or analyze the discourses that were printed in the newspaper. While racial essentialization was being employed, the newspaper did not vilify any minority group during the interwar years to the extent that it vilified German- and Japanese Americans in the context of war. The *Post*’s discourses were multi-faceted and often attributed multiple, contradictory characteristics to groups that were viewed as racially homogenous. During the interwar years, instead of universally characterizing Japanese as sly, treacherous, deceitful, enemies of the state, the *Post* depicted them in numerous, and often variable contexts, that were influenced by the gender, social class, and nativity of the individual of Japanese origin being described. At the same time, in its general reporting, the *Post* did not express explicit animosity at the ethnic and racial minorities residing within Colorado.

However, the *Post* was far from a progressive publication demanding racial equality, and the paper may best be described as uncritical in its reporting on non-white communities during the interwar years. The *Post*’s reporting on African Americans was comprised of a mixture of relatively detached, fact-based reporting which was contrasted by a more sensational style of journalism that portrayed African Americans as spectacle. Even with the rise of the Ku Klux Klan during the early 1920s, the *Post*’s reporting on African American communities was not

¹³ Hornby, p. 19.

characterized by the publication of explicit anti-African American sentiment. In fact, as Hornby describes, the *Post* eventually came out in opposition to Governor Morley, who was an affiliate of the Klan who sued the paper for libel following its extensive criticism of him.¹⁴ While the paper reported on the activities of the Klan, it also reported on the organization of local African American groups and their efforts to resolve the “race problem” in Colorado. The activism of groups like the Colorado African Colonization society was reported on by the *Post*, which remained disinterested, if not neutral, in its coverage of the organization’s activities.¹⁵

The relative neutrality and lack of adornment with which the *Post* reported on African American civil rights organization was contrasted by the paper’s portrayal of African Americans as racial spectacle. When a group of African American jazz musicians put on a show at the Empress Theater in 1920, the *Denver Post* lauded and praised the performance, writing, “They dance and harmonize as only Negroes know, how to do.”¹⁶ In its review, the paper produced statements which explicitly asserted that African Americans were such exceptional performers as a result of some inherent characteristic that may be attributed to their race. Several years later, the *Denver Post* even opened the balcony of its office in Denver to function as a free venue for a visiting African American jazz band, allowing several hundred Denverites to gather on Champa Street and listen to the performance.¹⁷ Why the *Post* hosted such an event is unclear; however, the *Post*’s willingness to allow an African American group publicly play on its property suggests that the paper did not hold dogmatic reservations against African Americans

¹⁴ Hornby, p. 19.

¹⁵ “Negroes to talk on race problem,” *Denver Post*, March 5, 1920, p. 5.

¹⁶ “Artist at Empress Theater makes Clarinet *sic* talk Jazz,” *Denver Post*, May 4, 1920, p. 12.

¹⁷ “Hundreds flock to hear band concert by ‘Pickaninny’ Players in front of Post,” *Denver Post*, January 17, 1924, p. 10.

and was not uncomfortable publicly hosting African American musicians on its own property. More significantly, despite the paper's apparent acceptance and even praise of certain members of the African American community, racialized language and, more subtly, racial assumptions continued to characterize the *Post's* reporting and understanding of African Americans.

While African American musicians may have been drawing large crowds to local venues, the paper's reporting also indicates that racial divides continued to exist in Denver. When an African American family purchased a home in a Denver neighborhood, the neighborhood's predominantly white residents used threats of violence to push the family out of the community.¹⁸ The *Post* remained wholly unsympathetic to the African American family's plight and uncritically printed the racialized assumptions and statements put forth by the neighborhood's white residents and their representatives, implicitly accepting the inevitability of such outcomes in interracial interactions. The fact that the entry of an African American family into the community would result in the depreciation of homes was uncritically accepted as true by most of neighborhood's white residents and *Post* reporters. Even more concerning was the paper's matter-of-fact presentation of the neighborhood attorney's ominous warning of potentially violent repercussions should the family choose not to depart the community. By not challenging contemporary racial assumptions, the *Post's* uncritical positions implicitly validated the veracity of prejudicial racial assumptions and discourses explicated by contemporaries.

The *Denver Post* was not any more progressive in its coverage of other ethnic and racial minorities. Native Americans were often subjects of curiosity and romanticization, featured as members of a homogenous 'red' race with antiquated customs, values, and beliefs. In some articles, the *Post* explicitly described them as uncivilized. Nevertheless, most reports on Native

¹⁸ "Clayton negroes lower the price ask for home," *Denver Post*, June 1, 1920, p. 9

Americans expressed a degree of fascination with the community as it had been perceived and interpreted by Euro-Americans.¹⁹ The *Post* employed parallel sentiments in its discussions of many East-Asian populations during the 1920s and 1930s.²⁰ Denver's Chinatown, often referred to in the *Post* as "Hop Alley," was featured as a sight of intrigue within the city and the paper regularly drew attention to the foreignness of the customs and people of "Hop Alley."²¹ The city's Chinese Americans were often featured as subjects of exotic spectacle. The paper reported on the Chinese community's New Year's celebrations and Denver's Chinese-American women were regularly displayed in photographs for their exotic beauty.²² As shall be later discussed, the state's Japanese Americans received similar treatment in the *Post*, and they too were often portrayed as representations of exotic spectacle within the periodical.

Undoubtedly, this brief survey of the *Post's* treatment of other ethnic and racial minorities is incomplete and discourses surrounding these populations during the interwar period demand further study. However, it is important to note that the *Denver Post* was not a progressive publication, rarely challenging contemporaneous assumptions about racial identities and often implicitly validating them by remaining neutral, and uncritical, in its coverage on local

¹⁹ "Denver Boy Scouts to Interpret Indian Lore at World Jamboree," *Denver Post*, June 27, 1920, p. 8; "The White Child who became an Indian," *Denver Post*, June 13, 1920, Sunday magazine section; "Sitting Bull's spirit that of Rebel to Last," *Denver Post*, May 1, 1923, p. 18.

²⁰ "Auditorium to be transformed to scene of oriental splendor at Woman's Press Club Ball," *Denver Post*, January 5, 1925, p. 3; "Native Filipino woman studies social conditions in Denver," *Denver Post*, August 22, 1920, section 1 p. 9; "Northside students to give operetta, 'The China Shop,'" *Denver Post*, May 5, 1923, p. 8.

²¹ "Denver Chinatown Retreats for Quiet New Year Eve With Radio and Cross-World Puzzles," *Denver Post*, February 1, 1927, p. 12; "Chinese Resolutions," *Denver Post*, February 10, 1929, section 4 p. 10; "Wrinkled and Withered, Two Chinese, Early State Settlers, Day Dreaming in Hop Alley," *Denver Post*, June 22, 1924, section 1 p. 15.

²² "Denver Chinese Flappers Bob," *Denver Post*, May 22, 1927, section 1 p. 20; "Chinese Beauty," photograph of a young Chinese girl from Denver, *Denver Post*, February 11, 1927, p. 7; "China Maid," photograph of a Chinese girl, *Denver Post*, February 13, 1929, p. 23; "Chinese Girls Take up Jazz instead of Binding Feet as Their Mothers Used to do," *Denver Post*, June 4, 1924, p. 10.

racial issues. During the interwar years, the paper employed racial rhetoric and discourse in its reporting. While the language the *Post* employed in these years was essentializing, racial minorities were more frequently treated as the objects of spectacle rather than the subjects of animosity. On the other hand, during World War I and World War II, the *Post* was fully engaged in producing rhetoric that vilified German Americans and later Japanese Americans, making claims that implicated both populations as enemies of the United States because of a perceived connection—by race or ethnicity—they shared with the nation of Germany or Japan. In the interwar period, however, the *Post's* presentation of Japanese Americans, and the Japanese as a racial community, differed dramatically and was not characterized solely by the malice and suspicion that infused the rhetoric of the Second World War. Interwar discourses were not uniform in their depictions of Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, Japanese culture and society, and the Japanese state. Even though Japan's militarism in East Asia during the 1920s and 1930s inspired rhetoric that developed racial associations between a racialized understanding of the Japanese state, individuals of Japanese heritage, and Japan's militarism, they were complimented by more benign racial discourses that framed Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans as spectacle. This work examines the multi-dimensional discourses to which readers of the *Denver Post* during interwar years were exposed.

Colorado's Japanese Americans and the 'Japanese' in Colorado's Racial Discourse

In sum, this work has two principle concerns. While the examination of racial discourse is central to this thesis, the present work also systematically assesses the characteristics of Colorado's Japanese American population, from the earliest Japanese Americans who settled in the state in the late nineteenth century, to the onset of the Second World War, when the

interment policies of the American War Relocation Authority transplanted thousands of Japanese Americans from the Pacific West Coast to the Granada War Relocation Center.

In the forty years preceding the onset of World War II, Japanese Americans played an important role in the settlement and economic development of the state of Colorado. They often took on some of the most labor intensive jobs, such as railroad construction and mining, for lesser pay than their white counterparts. They became enmeshed in labor disputes within the state, finding work as strikebreakers for local industrialists seeking to thwart the effectiveness of organized labor. Others found work in Colorado's cities, some meeting with relative success as labor contractors, restaurant owners, and retailers. Most Japanese Americans, however, ultimately found work on Colorado's farms, working in agriculture as contract laborers, tenants, and independent landowners. Despite being a small minority in the state, Colorado's Japanese Americans were influential in the state's economic and social development, and deserve greater recognition in historical accounts of the American West.

In chapters 1 and 2, this work analyzes the experiences of Japanese Americans in Colorado from 1886 to 1941, highlighting race relations between Euro-American and Japanese American communities within Colorado. Information about Colorado's Japanese American communities has been derived principally from newspaper periodicals published in the state. However, in an effort to provide a clearer depiction of the Colorado's Japanese American community as a whole, local newspapers are supplemented by government documents, census bureau statistics, literature, government documents, nationally syndicated magazines, and a handful of periodicals published outside the state of Colorado.

The latter half of this thesis analyzes the interwar discourses of Colorado newspapers that featured Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, Japanese culture and society, and the

Japanese state. Although studies of the Pacific West Coast have examined racial sentiments about Japanese emigrants during this period, considerably less attention has been given to the manifestation of such racial sentiments within the national context of the United States, or within other region and local contexts of America. The ways in which communities outside the Pacific West Coast understood the Japanese or Japanese Americans, especially during the interwar years, remains unexplored, and the examination of Colorado provides insight into the ways in which other white-American populations understood and participated in racial discourses about the “Japanese” and Japanese Americans.

The interwar period has been selected for several reasons. Scholars of Japanese American history have tended to overlook the significance of the sixteen years following the enactment of the Immigration Act of 1924. Eiichiro Azuma makes note of this lack of scholarship in his “Politics of Transnational History Making: Japanese Immigrants on the Western ‘Frontier,’ 1927-1941,” where he suggests that the interwar years should be revisited as they “provide a crucial background for the complexities of Japanese American experiences during after the Pacific War.”²³ The Japanese American experience during the Second World War has been studied at length by scholars and several historians have addressed the prewar era, yet their works have commonly concluded with the Immigration Act of 1924—which effectively barred any further Japanese migration into the United States. It is the intention here to contribute to the growing body of literature which has begun to examine the Japanese American experience during the interwar years. However, unlike Azuma’s work, which has focused on the development of Japanese immigrant identities, this work examines the evolution of Euro-American racial discourses during this period, analyzing how they characterized

²³ Eiichiro Azuma, “The Politics of Transnational History Making: Japanese Immigrants on the Western ‘Frontier,’” *The Journal of American History* 89, No. 4 (March 2003): p. 1404.

Japanese Americans, the Japanese as a racial population, and the Japanese state. While scholars like John Dower have given a great deal of attention to American racial ideologies in the context of the Second World War, this work contends that in order to adequately understand the character of wartime and postwar racial discourse, Euro-American rhetoric of the interwar era must be more adequately understood.

Regional and local histories exploring the interwar years, while capable of evincing fragmentation within American racial discourses, also have the potential to create more thoughtful and substantial connections between wartime propaganda and prior discourses and racial attitudes. Racial discourses within Colorado during the 1920s and 1930s were far from uniform, and internal divisions and contradictions existed within the racial discourses of Colorado's white-Americans during this period. Nevertheless, strands of thought within Colorado's public discourse that may have later contributed to the community's receptivity to the wartime propaganda analyzed by Dower were among the plurality of interpretations of Japanese Americans within the community.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine racial discourses printed within the pages of the *Denver Post* during the interwar years. In its analysis of racial discourse, the work narrows its scope, focusing predominantly on Euro-American racial discourses in the two decades which followed the signing of the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. Chapter 3 analyzes the *Post's* reporting on the Japanese state, and discusses the racialization of the state that occurred during the interwar years. As Japanese militarism in East Asia intensified and relations between Japan and the United States degraded over issues of racial discrimination and immigration, contemporary discourses developed racial associations between the Japanese state, Japanese nationals, and Japanese Americans. Chapter 3 examines the character of those discourses and explores how their

rhetoric implicated all members of the Japanese 'race' with the activities of the Japanese state. Chapter 4 investigates the character of interwar discourses which treated Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans as subjects of spectacle. These discourses were often promulgated concurrently alongside language that expressed American fears and anxieties about the militarism of the Japanese state. However, they did not inherently affiliate Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, or Japanese culture and society with the nation-state. Instead, these discourses employed a gendered binary in which Japanese women were treated as subjects as exotic, beautiful, and charming representatives of an exotic Japanese culture while Japanese men were most often, though not always, associated with the political and military activities of the Japanese state.

Chapter 1: Colorado's Prewar Japanese Population, 1879-1910

Chapter 1 examines Colorado's Japanese population from the arrival of the first immigrants to the state in 1879 to 1910. It utilizes a series of case studies to highlight segments of the Colorado's Japanese population, uncovering their economic and social experiences in the state. It also examines the character of race relations between Japanese Americans and white Coloradoans during the early twentieth century. Race, class, and international relations often intersected as they informed discourses produced by Colorado's Euro-Americans that described Japanese Americans as a social "other."

The vast majority of the earliest Japanese Americans to arrive in the state of Colorado did so as contracted laborers, seeking employment in mines, on railroads, and as farmhands. Most were uneducated Japanese men who traveled to the United States without their families in search of work. A second group of educated, middle-class, entrepreneurial Japanese also settled in Colorado. Although they were few in number, many established their own commercial enterprises. A handful of enterprising Japanese Americans became labor contractors themselves, and received commissions for the labor performed by their Japanese American work crews. In their economic success, Japanese American labor contractors were complimented by a number of Japanese American business owners and land owners. Denver served as an important social and economic center for the state's Japanese American community, not only during the first decade of the twentieth century, but over the course of the forty years preceding the onset of World War II. Unlike California and neighboring states in the Rocky Mountain West, Colorado never passed anti-alien land laws which prohibited the Japanese from legally owning property. In Colorado, many Japanese Americans were able to acquire land, and thereby greater degrees of financial autonomy. Nevertheless, even though

the state did not impose institutional barriers excluding Japanese Americans from land ownership, Colorado did implement legislative policies that discriminated against Japanese Americans and the state's Japanese Americans residents faced prejudicial sentiment from Euro-American members of local communities where they settled.

As Japanese Americans began to settle in the state in sizable numbers during the first decade of the twentieth century, they were received with mixed reactions from Colorado's Euro-American denizens. The economic background and social status of different segments of the white population influenced the ways in which they expressed racial sentiment directed at Japanese Americans. The character of their racial assumptions, attitudes, and prejudices was profoundly shaped by their own circumstances and evolved in close relation to the ways in which they encountered Japanese Americans in their daily lives. A uniform discourse about Japanese Americans—one which communicated a coherent "Japanese" racial identity—did not exist. As a racial community, Japanese Americans inspired different responses from Euro-American observers, ranging from anxiety to fascination, and the racialized characteristics attributed to Colorado's Japanese Americans varied. Additionally, Euro-American interpretations of Japanese Americans and "the Japanese" as a race varied not only in relation to the contingencies of the Euro-American participant in the discourse, but also in relation to the gender, economic status, and social background of the Japanese individuals being discussed. Even though the underlying rationale of contemporaneous racial discourses may have implicitly framed all individuals of Japanese descent as participants in a Japanese racial identity, precisely what that racial identity meant was not universally shared by white Americans.

Sustained discussion of racial issues are notably absent from previous studies of Colorado's Japanese American communities. Most studies of Colorado's Japanese American

communities have not been produced by formally trained historians, but rather scholars in other fields or journalists. Individual works that have looked at this community include Colorado journalist Bill Hosokawa's *Colorado's Japanese Americans From 1886 to the Present* (2005), Russell Endo's "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait" (1985), and University of Denver student Fumio Ozawa's 1950s master's thesis, *Japanese in Colorado, 1900-1910*. Their works have expanded our understanding of Colorado's Japanese Americans, but, with the exception of Ozawa's scholarship, they remain principally narrative-driven histories, offer little or no analytical treatment of race relations, and are surprisingly brief in their presentation of the prewar era. While Endo and Hosokawa each suggest (citing Ozawa) that racial discrimination targeted at Japanese Americans was more "benign" in Colorado, neither does much to substantiate their claims.

Furthermore, while Russell Endo, Bill Hosokawa, and Fumio Ozawa have elaborated upon the experiences of Colorado's Japanese American communities, their respective historical inquiries have remained principally focused on the community's presence in the state during the first decade of the twentieth century. Hosokawa and Endo have performed limited primary research on Colorado's prewar Japanese American population, relying heavily upon Ozawa's earlier work and other secondary sources to develop their studies of the prewar period. Because Ozawa focused exclusively upon Colorado's Japanese American community during the years between 1900-1910, the most developed elements of Hosokawa's and Endo's studies of the prewar era are also those that explore the first decade of the nineteenth century.¹

¹ Bill, Hosokawa, *Colorado's Japanese Americans From 1886 to the Present*, (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2005), p. 28, 29; Russell Endo, "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31, no. 4 (1985): 104.

This work differs from the work of Hosokawa, Endo, and Ozawa in that race relations and racial discourses are treated here as the focal point of historical inquiry. Ozawa does dedicate a chapter of his study to an examination of early anti-Japanese sentiment in Colorado. He proposes that during the first decade of the twentieth century, the racial tensions that characterized Japanese American and Anglo American relations along the Pacific Coast were paralleled in Colorado.² Utilizing newspaper sources to highlight instances of anti-Japanese sentiment in the state, Ozawa concludes that discriminatory practices and antipathies directed at the state's Japanese Americans were "not based upon fact, but upon racial prejudice."³ He demonstrates that Colorado's Euro-American communities were divided in their understandings of the state's Japanese Americans, and loosely points to the intersection of race, class, and international affairs in the formation of local discourses directed at Japanese Americans.⁴ However, his analysis of such discourses, their characteristics, and what contingencies may have informed them is limited and not the focal point of his work. In this project, racial discourses promulgated in the state are examined as the central elements of historical study. This work examines racial discourses in an effort to understand how Colorado's Euro-American citizens understood and interpreted their Japanese American neighbors. Furthermore, it extends our knowledge of race relations in the state of Colorado and Colorado's racial discourses temporally, systematically examining the state's Japanese American communities in the thirty years preceding World War II, an era which Ozawa's study has not examined.⁵

² Fumio Ozawa, *Japanese in Colorado, 1900-1910*, (The Faculty of the Graduate College University of Denver, 1954), p. 2.

³ Ozawa (1954), p. 90, 93, 110.

⁴ Ozawa (1954), pp. 94-95, 110-111.

⁵ Ozawa (1954), p. 111.

This project builds upon the scholarship of Hosokawa, Endo, and Ozawa, ultimately enriching and expanding our historical understanding of Colorado's Japanese American communities by contributing new research and utilizing alternative interpretive lenses to examine their experiences. While the principle concern of this work is to address Colorado's Euro-American racial discourses directed at Japanese Americans during the interwar period, it is equally important that the characteristics and experiences of Colorado's Japanese American population are adequately presented. The chapter that follows addresses some of the major deficiencies or gaps highlighted in the works of Hosokawa, Endo, and Ozawa. It systematically examines Colorado's Japanese American population from 1879 to 1910. Cross sections of the population are highlighted through a series of case studies, which strive to relate the experiences of a particular Japanese American individual or group, to a broader segment of the population. Chapter 2 will concentrate upon developing our understanding of the characteristics of Colorado's Japanese American population during the thirty year period between 1910 and 1940—a lengthy span of time that has been underexplored in prior literature. Finally, emphasis upon race relations is notably absent from the works of other writers who have previously studied Colorado's Japanese American communities. Unlike prior studies, this work strives to use lenses that explore racial issues as often as possible, analyzing the role race played in shaping the experiences of Colorado's Japanese American population during the prewar period.

Colorado's Japanese American Population: Census Data and Demographics

Official census data indicate that Colorado's Japanese American population remained small throughout the nineteenth century, numbering only 10 in 1890 and 48 in 1900.⁶ At a time when the state of Colorado had over 500,000 residents, the Japanese American population made up a tiny fraction of the state's populous.⁷ However, Colorado's Japanese American population was likely larger than has been officially recorded in the United States census. Because of the transience associated with contract labor, official census figures may be misleading in that they underrepresented the overall size of the Japanese American population in Colorado because of the census's inability to account for migratory laborers traveling in and out of the state.⁸ At the turn-of-the-century, major mining and railroad projects in the American West brought in contract laborers by the hundreds, even by the thousands. In December of 1899, the Arizona and Pacific and Santa Fe railroad brought in 1,500 Japanese to Arizona from California to lay sections of track.⁹ Even if the size of labor troops in Colorado were a fraction of the size of such large labor crews, they reflect a substantial community of Japanese who had resided in Colorado, but who went unaccounted for in the U.S. census.

Yamato Ichihashi's *Japanese in the United States*, a work which briefly examines Japanese American communities in the Rocky Mountain West, has also raised questions about the accuracy of the census. He points to an Immigration Commission report which had

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, Characteristics of the Population: State of Colorado 1940*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1940), p. 694.

⁷ *Ibid*, 694, 695.

⁸ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1942*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO 1940), p. 18.

⁹ "Japanese to Work on a New Rail," *The Denver Times*, December 16, 1899, p. 1.

accounted for 3,000 Japanese employed in agricultural pursuits in the state during the summer of 1909. As Ichihashi rightly points out, this community of Japanese American farm laborers surpassed the size of the total number of Japanese Americans recorded in the state for the 1910 census—which amounted to 2,300 individuals. Furthermore, the labor statistics provided by the Immigration Commission did not even account for the number of Japanese Americans employed in the railroad and mining industries, figures which likely suggest that further upward revision is necessary in any estimation of the size of Colorado’s Japanese American community.¹⁰

Colorado’s permanent Japanese American population as recorded by the census remained relatively small throughout the prewar period; however, strong evidence suggests that the size of the state’s Japanese American population was considerably larger than official figures imply.

What is made clear by the census, however, is that between 1900 and 1910, Colorado’s Japanese American population experienced a period of rapid growth. Prior to 1900, the total population of Japanese Americans in the United States was small, numbering around 2,000. Ozawa suggests that Colorado likely attracted few of the initial Japanese immigrants to the United States because it had “little or nothing to offer the new immigrants...for the state was severely affected by the panic of 1893.”¹¹ The influx of Japanese nationals into the United States did not begin to accelerate until the turn-of-the-century, and in 1900, Colorado’s own Japanese American community experienced a parallel period of growth. Official census records indicate the population increased nearly fifty-fold in the ten year period between 1900 and 1910. In the decades that followed, Colorado remained host to a sizable Japanese American community that continued to grow into the 1930s. Official census data indicates that by 1930,

¹⁰ Yamato Ichihashi, *Japanese in the United States* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times 1969), pp. 168-170.

¹¹ Ozawa (1954), 7.

the second largest concentrations of Japanese Americans by population size were in the Rocky Mountain States. In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, Colorado and Utah each claimed several thousand Japanese American residents. Colorado's Japanese American population was the nation's 6th largest during the 1920s and 30s, and became the nation's fifth largest by 1940. However, prior to the onset of the Second World War the United States Census recorded no more than 3,300 Japanese Americans residing in the state of Colorado. Based on census data, the state's population peaked in 1930 before declining to a little over 2,700 individuals in 1940. By comparison, the nation's interwar Japanese American population had peaked at 130,000, the majority of Japanese Americans residing in California throughout this period.¹²

Railroad and Coal Mine Laborers: Racial Tensions between Unions and Japanese Americans

Many of the first Japanese Americans to arrive in Colorado were male, immigrant, contract laborers who found temporary employment in coal mines and on railroads. Mining and railroad work were labor intensive and at times dangerous, and Japanese Americans performed the same duties that white laborers did, but typically for lower pay. Business owners and managers were willing to hire Japanese Americans largely because they were able to secure their labor at a lower cost. Unions and workers organizations, however, felt threatened by the presence of Japanese American laborers at work sites. Thus, Japanese American contract laborers became embroiled in the class politics of Colorado. They were framed as racial adversaries by white American union men, who refused to incorporate them into their organizations even though they may have shared some common class interests as railroad or mine workers. Instead Japanese Americans were accused of being inassimilable and even threatening; despite their status as working class laborers, they were defined as a racial 'other'

¹² *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, 694, 695; *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1942*, pp. 17-18.

and, in the eyes of Euro-American miners, their racial difference undermined any commonality they may have shared with Colorado's white laborers. In fact, during the early 1900s, Colorado's white unionized laborers were among those in Colorado who most vocally expressed anti-Japanese sentiments, publicly describing Japanese Americans as a threat to their economic well-being.

At the Chandler Creek coal mines of Colorado, a labor dispute unfolded in 1902 that was indicative of the tensions that existed between Japanese Americans and white union men of Colorado. On February 11, 1902, the 175 miners at the Chandler Creek coal mines went on strike. They refused to enter the Chandler Creek mines on account of the Victor Coal Company's importation of 32 Japanese laborers to work in the mine.¹³ The Japanese laborers were brought in from Fresno, California, and Rock Springs, Wyoming, to load cars at the mine. An official spoke in defense of the mine's decision to hire Japanese laborers, explaining that the company had difficulties in employing enough men to load cars and that, as a result, the mine had been running under capacity by nearly 500 tons a day. The company insisted that the newly hired Japanese laborers would not "take the places of any miners." However, union members were unconvinced, and claimed that the hiring of the Japanese was the "first move to displace the miners of the Victor company with Japs."¹⁴ The word "Jap" was a derogatory and racially essentializing term that was employed parallel to 'yellow peril' rhetoric that emerged following the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). In the context of World War II, it was widely disseminated in American propaganda that dehumanized and vilified Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans. The use of this term by the mine's Euro-American

¹³ "Importation of Japanese Causes Strike at Chandler," *The Denver Republican*, February 12, 1902, p. 2.

¹⁴ "Japanese Cause a Walkout of White Miners at Chandler," *The Denver Times*, February 12, 1902 p. 11.

employees in 1902 suggests that the term “Jap” had already acquired currency as a signifier of racial difference in this particular American community several years prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. The Euro-American miners singled out the Japanese laborers immediately as racially different, and their initial response reflected their unwillingness to work alongside these racial “others.” In the absence of any objective or concrete knowledge about the pay or function of the Japanese laborers, members of the union concluded that the Japanese laborers fit into the broader schemes of the Victor Company’s efforts to displace union workers with cheaper Japanese laborers. Their demands for the removal of the Japanese laborers, and their unwillingness to work alongside them, were not only acts of protest against the Victor Company’s policies, but also expressions of prejudicial sentiment directed at the Japanese who were portrayed not only as adversaries, but also as individuals incapable of being assimilated into Euro-American organizations. No plans to incorporate the Japanese laborers into the union were publicly considered, and instead the miner’s demanded the immediate removal of the Japanese Americans.

It is unclear how much sympathy the Chandler miners attracted from the remainder of Fremont County’s approximately 1,500 coal miners. While initially some of the larger labor unions in the region—notably the roughly 400 union men of Rockvale Mine—refused to participate in the strike, within a day several hundred miners had organized at the Chandler school house and held a mass meeting under the banner of the Mine Workers’ union. The miners drew up resolutions demanding the removal of the Japanese laborers and presented them to the mine’s managers. The union members were concerned that the importation of Japanese laborers would lower their wages and a committee was immediately organized to investigate the existence of potential disparities between the labor costs of union members and the Japanese laborers. The following day, high levels of absenteeism at other mines (including

Rockvale) in the area were reported, which suggests that even if some local unions may have denied official support to Chandler's miners, local laborers were willing to act at the individual level to make clear where their sympathies lay.¹⁵ Despite such acts of protests, the company's owners and managers did not appear to take any steps to mitigate the concerns of the unions and Japanese laborers remained employed at the mines. It did not take long for the issue to boil over.

Within a matter of days, Chandler's miners took matters into their own hands, directing expressions of discontent at the Japanese miners themselves. The violent nature of their protests, their unwillingness to incorporate the Japanese miners into their unions, and the racializing language employed by the miners indicates that Euro-American miners understood these individuals as a dehumanized racial 'other.' Unlike mine officials who received formal protests from white miners, the Japanese workers were subjected to threats of violence and ultimately forced out of town. On February 13, 1902, as the Japanese laborers exited the mines following the completion of the workday, they were surrounded by a large crowd of miners "numbering several hundred."¹⁶ The miners made "dark threats" against them and warned them to leave immediately. In order to escape the crowd, the Japanese took shelter in one of the local boarding houses. Later that evening, a crowd of local miners had organized once again, surrounded the local boarding house, become increasingly unruly and even threatened violence against the Japanese miners. The situation became noticeably tense until finally, about an hour before midnight, Chandler officials sent a car to the boarding house to pick-up the besieged Japanese laborers, driving them away from the mine to the local city of Florence without further

¹⁵ "Importation of Japanese Causes Strike at Chandler," February 12, 1902; "Mass Meeting of Miners Requests Discharge of Japs," *The Denver Republican*, February 13, 1902, p. 2.

¹⁶ "The Little Brown Men from Far Cathay Leave Coal Fields," *The Denver Times*, February 13, 1902, p. 2.

incident.¹⁷ Although the Japanese left the mines unharmed, the willingness of the union men to employ violent tactics of intimidation against them reflect the extent to which these Japanese workers were viewed as a social 'other.' Whatever commonality white American laborers may have shared with the Japanese as mine laborers was undermined by racial difference. The union-men did not extend their hands inclusively to the Japanese laborers, but instead lashed out with violence against them when they felt their petitions to the Victor Company were being ignored.

The Japanese laborers did not return to the mines at Chandler and the incident did not end well for Chandler's principally Italian union men. President Chappel of the Victor Coal and Coke company announced that the "[company] was sending the Japanese away at [its] own expense" and that "[the company] will make no more effort to employ them."¹⁸ In what likely was a retaliatory strike against the unions, Chappel further stated that the mines would remain closed for "an indefinite period," potentially as long as six months. He insisted that the company only hired the Japanese because the company was "wholly unable to secure white miners" and that the Japanese were paid "just as much as the white miners."¹⁹

Like the Chandler Mine employees, most of Colorado's Japanese Americans worked under hard conditions performing manual labor and received lower pay than their white counterparts. They led relatively transient lives; their employment for a railroad or mine was precarious and often challenged by local unions. Chandler's unions immediately opposed the introduction of the Japanese laborers at the mine and, within a few days, were successful in

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "Mines at Chandler Will Remain Closed," *The Denver Times*, February 14, 1902, p. 11; "Japs Have Gone But Chandler Mine is Idle," *The Denver Times*, February 14, 1902, p. 2.

¹⁹ "Mines at Chandler Will Remain Closed," p. 11.

driving them out of the community. Less than a week after the Chandler strike, representatives of the union at Waisenburg, Colorado, also voiced their discontent about the presence of Japanese employees at the local Maitland mines. They, too, threatened to strike should the Japanese laborers remain and Colorado newspapers saw the departure of the Japanese as essentially inevitable, reporting that “there is no doubt but that if the miners insist the Japs will have to go.”²⁰ Again, contemporary Euro-Americans, employed the word “Jap” to describe communities of Japanese laborers in Colorado, utilizing racially essentializing language that signified the social difference of these workers.

While race played an antithetical role toward the Japanese, it did not function independently of other variables—notably economic concerns—which distinctly shaped the responses of Chandler’s and Maitland’s miners. Union men publicly demanded the departure of the Japanese laborers, accusing corporate officials of employing at cheaper rates in an effort to undercut their pay. It is doubtful that the white miners had any objective knowledge of the actual pay being received by the Japanese American miners, but they responded immediately to the presence of the Japanese at the mine, demanding their removal. It is difficult to determine whether or not President Chappel of the Victor Coal mine spoke honestly when he publicly asserted that the Japanese in Chandler were being paid the same wages as the mine’s union workers. However, when Japanese laborers were brought to work on other contracts in the Rocky Mountain West, they were typically paid less than their white counterparts. One Colorado newspaper, for instance, estimated that the cost to employ a Japanese laborer was about two-thirds to three-fourths that of a Euro-American worker. Whereas the Union Pacific Railroad typically paid a white worker about \$1.50 a day, they only paid labor contractors a

²⁰ “Jap Miners at Maitland Mines Must Go,” *The Denver Times*, February 18, 1902, p. 1.

\$1.25 per day for each Japanese individual who worked on the railroad. The labor contractor then took a cut of that commission for himself—roughly 10 cents per worker per day—before paying the Japanese laborer the remainder of the money.²¹

Additionally, in a Federal Government study on the influx of Japanese in the United States, Immigration Commissioner Powderly cited the demand for cheap labor as encouraging the continued immigration of Japanese into the United States.²² The report indicates that American business owners were willing to employ non-white laborers at cheaper rates than their white counterparts, hiring them in positions white workers were unwilling to perform or utilizing them to undercut the negotiating power of unions. Ozawa has suggested that despite receiving wages which were lower than their white counterparts, Japanese Americans contract laborers were initially drawn to railroad or mining work because of the ease with which they found employment in these industries.²³ Powderly's statements regarding the high demand for laborers in Colorado and Wyoming affirm Ozawa's conclusions.

At Chandler, the Japanese miners were only employed for a few days, and it is unclear if they ever received any compensation for their work. However, the union's wage inquiry committee and its concerns about cheap Japanese labor and the directness of Chappel's response to their accusations suggests that union members had a considerable fear of the Japanese laborers as a potential extension of corporate power and authority—insofar as they could be used to undermine the solidarity of a unionized workforce. The company's leadership defended itself vigorously against such accusations, highlighting the issue's prominence in labor-

²¹ "Wyoming News," *The Denver Times*, May 14, 1900, p. 3; "Wyoming News," *The Denver Times*, 5 May 5, 1900, p. 5.

²² "Extent of the Influx of the Japanese," *The Denver Times*, May 16, 1900, p. 9.

²³ Ozawa (1954), pp. 31-32.

business relations.²⁴ Significantly, the Chandler Creek unions made no effort to incorporate the Japanese laborers into their organizations, but rather felt immediately threatened by their arrival at the mine. Although no periodicals explicitly comment on why this may have been, their use of racializing language like “Jap” and their unsympathetic attitudes towards the Japanese miners reflect the community’s understanding of the Japanese as a ‘racial other’ incapable of being assimilated into their Euro-American organizations. At the same time, employers who hired Japanese for the purpose of strikebreaking and Japanese contractors who leased out work crews to such employers facilitated the perpetuation of a divide along racial and economic lines. In this context, race became an increasingly meaningful source of self-identification, distinguishing white workers from a racial ‘other’—Japanese laborers. At the same time however, the racial meanings associated with these workers differed between union members, who perceived them as potentially subversive to organized labor, and the employers, who viewed them as a cheap source of labor.

This racialization, if not explicitly acknowledge by the unions, was made apparent within the rhetoric of the newspaper editorials covering the incident. The *Denver Times* referred to the Japanese on several occasions as “the little yellow men,” drawing upon established ‘Yellow Peril’ rhetoric which had been previously utilized principally for “othering” the Chinese.²⁵ Indeed, newspaper editorials did not establish a unique or independent discourse for these Japanese workers, but rather utilized language which associated them as members of an “Asiatic” or “yellow” race. One headline read “Little Brown Men From Far Cathay Leave Coal Fields.”

²⁴ “Mass Meeting of Miners Requests Discharge of Japs,” *The Denver Republican*, February 13, 1902, p. 2.; “Mines at Chandler Will Remain Closed,” *The Denver Times*, February 14, 1902, p. 11.

²⁵ “Japanese Cause a Walkout of White Miners at Chandler,” *The Denver Times*, February 12, 1902, 11; “Little Brown Men From Far Cathay Leave Coal Fields,” *The Denver Times*, February 13, 1902, p. 2.

Cathay is an alternative name for China, yet the article proceeds to discuss the presence of the Japanese at Chandler.²⁶ Mistakenly ascribing the origins of local Japanese Americans to China, the author conflates Chinese and Japanese into a common racial community and, in the process signifies their racial otherness from Euro-Americans.

The Chandler Creek coal mine incident provides insight into the existence of tensions between Euro-American, unionized, working class laborers, and Japanese Americans throughout Colorado. Japanese American contract laborers invoked similar responses from white American workers elsewhere in the state, who felt economically threatened by their presence.²⁷ In this respect, the Chandler Creek incident was indicative of the experiences of Colorado's earliest Japanese settlers, most of whom were male contract laborers employed in mining or railroad work, lead itinerant lives, and faced prejudicial sentiments from Colorado's white Americans. Upon their departure from the Chandler mine, the group of 32 Japanese American laborers were put in the charge of Sam Kee Jones of Pueblo, likely the contractor who had found them work at the Chandler Mine and later found them passage on the Missouri Pacific train to Kansas City, undoubtedly in search of further employment opportunities.²⁸

Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century Colorado's earliest Japanese American communities, like the Japanese at the Chandler

²⁶ "Little Brown Men From Far Cathay Leave Coal Fields," February 13, 1902, p.2.

²⁷ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*, (New York: The Free Press, 1988), p. 113-128; Phil Goodstein, *A People's History of Colorado: Denver from the Bottom Up*, (Denver: New Social Publications, 2003), p. 344. Goodstein and Ichioka each provide some insights into the presence of Japanese American laborers in Colorado. Ichioka's work is more substantial and examines the experiences of Japanese American miners at Rock Springs, Wyoming, and their participation as strikebreakers at the Ludlow Mines in Colorado, which lead to the death of four Japanese miners during the Ludlow Massacre of 1914.

²⁸ "The Little Brown Men from Far Cathay Leave Coal Fields," *The Denver Times*, February 13, 1902, p. 2.

mine, were composed of contract laborers for railroads and mining companies. As Eiichiro Azuma describes in *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, many of the Japanese immigrants to the United States between 1885 and 1908 were single male laborers seeking economic opportunities overseas. Many of them were peasants who had lost their land as a consequence of the development of commercialized agriculture in Japan and were now attempting to find wage-labor abroad.²⁹ For much of this period, Colorado's Japanese Americans, like Japanese American communities elsewhere in the United States, were comprised predominantly of uneducated men who had traveled to the United States without their families in search of work.

The Question of Race and Assimilation: Class Politics and Japanese Americans in Colorado

Organized labor and the actions of union men at particular work sites were not the only challenges facing Japanese American laborers seeking to work or settle in Colorado. Questions surrounding race and assimilation arose at the state level during the early 1900s, as public officials became concerned about the increasing size of Colorado's Japanese American population and responded to unrest among union members. Even though the state's Japanese American population remained relatively small, this group of "aliens" became targets of state-initiated discriminatory policies that attempted to prohibit the entry of individuals of Japanese descent into the state.

As early as 1900, Colorado's public officials expressed concerns about the growing size of Colorado's Chinese and Japanese American laborers, despite the small size of the population reported in the census. In June, Colorado State Labor Commissioner Smith proposed a public

²⁹ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 8-10, 21, 27.

plan to “prevent the importation of Chinese and Japanese coolies into Colorado.”³⁰ The commissioner’s statements corroborate the notion that much of the state’s Japanese American population, even into the early 1900s, remained contract laborers. Smith noted that “as a rule they are engaged by the railroads in grading and construction work, but many of them find employment in the mines and...the field of placer mining.” It is in placer mining, he added, where they “create plenty of trouble.” Referencing events surrounding the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Smith suggested that he wanted to avoid “a repetition of the anti-Chinese crusade inaugurated in Colorado twenty years ago.” However, he revealed particular concern about the impact of introducing such a high volume of laborers upon Colorado’s unions. He estimated that in the six month period between January and June of 1900, over 1,000 laborers of Chinese and/or Japanese descent had arrived in the state and that these workers were “stirring the various labor organizations to action.”³¹

Precisely how many of these laborers were Chinese and how many were Japanese is difficult to discern, and there is likely a degree of exaggeration to Smith’s figures. Following 1890, Colorado’s Chinese population declined notably. While 1,398 Chinese were reported as residents of the state in 1890, the number was cut in half in 1900, and declined even further to 378 by 1910. During the first decade of the twentieth century, however, Colorado’s Japanese American population exploded, growing nearly fiftyfold, from 48 in 1900 to 2,300 by 1910.³² As noted above, contracted labor crews could exceed 1,000 workers in number, and it is possible

³⁰ “Chinese and Japanese Laborers Being Imported Into Colorado,” *The Denver Times*, 20 June 20, 1900, p. 7.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, pp. 694, 695.

that some of the laborers to which Smith alluded remained in Colorado following the completion of the industrial project in which they were involved.

However, in his rhetoric, Smith provided no substantive data of the growing population to which he alluded and his estimation of such a large figure likely reflected his rhetorical strategy to enhance the gravity of the situation. Referring to the anti-Chinese violence that spread throughout Colorado in 1882 (in the context of the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act), Smith spoke almost fatalistically about the potential recurrence of “the bloody scenes of twenty years ago,” implying that should the Asian American population in the state increase, conflict and violence were inevitable and unavoidable. As a high ranking state official, he did not propose a solution for seeking out potential compromises between the Chinese, Japanese, and union laborers, but adamantly insisted that Colorado must prevent the importation of Asian laborers or face internal strife. His rhetoric reflects a political desire to pacify union pressure as expediently as possible; it also clearly demonstrated a popular sensibility that viewed the Chinese and Japanese as essentially different and incapable of being assimilated into Coloradoan working society.

That same month, controversy arose over the issuance of a quarantine by Colorado’s State Board of Health. The quarantine was designed to bar Japanese and Chinese individuals from entering Colorado that had already been in place for some time prior to June of 1900. Precisely how effective it was is unclear. While Commissioner Smith’s assertions about the dramatic influx of Japanese and Chinese in Colorado in the six months preceding June may have been exaggerated, they were not entirely fictitious. Furthermore, his desire to implement an additional policy to limit the entry of Chinese and Japanese individuals into the state reflected the inefficacy of the Board of Health’s quarantine. Clearly Chinese and Japanese laborers

continued to enter the state in spite of the quarantine.³³ The quarantine sparked national and transnational controversy after K. Nabeshima, Japan's diplomat in Washington, became aware of its existence. He wrote immediately to Secretary of State John Hay protesting Colorado's implementation of the practice describing it as a "most unjustifiable discrimination against Japanese subjects."³⁴ Nabeshima threatened to report the matter to the Japanese government if the issue went unresolved. Hay, concerned about the potentially deleterious effects of such an incident upon U.S.-Japanese relations, sent the full correspondence to Colorado Governor Charles Thomas demanding he explain the state's decision and pressuring him to convince the Board of Health "that it is on the wrong track."³⁵

Colorado's Japanese Americans were participants in an ongoing power struggle between business and labor in Colorado. Furthermore, the presence of Japanese Americans in labor disputes occasionally transformed localized clashes into transnational political issues. On the one hand, Colorado's Board of Health, Board of Labor, and Governor were willing to develop and enact policies that explicitly discriminated against Chinese and Japanese American communities in an effort to satisfy the state's union and labor interests. Japanese Americans were the direct targets of an institutional system of racism that sought to limit their mobility and restrict them from participation in the Colorado's economy and society. However, this racialized understanding of the Japanese was directly interwoven, and in fact at some level a product of, economic contingencies that fueled its manifestation.

³³ "Will Remove Japanese and Chinese Quarantine," *The Denver Times*, June 16, 1900, p. 2; "Japan Will Protest Against Colorado Quarantine Regulations," *The Denver Times*, June 21, 1900, p. 7; "Chinese and Japanese Laborers are Being Imported Into Colorado," *Denver Times*, June 20, 1900, p. 7.

³⁴ "Japan Will Protest Against Colorado Quarantine Regulations," *Denver Times*, June 21, 1900, p. 7.

³⁵ "Japan Will Protest Against Colorado Quarantine Regulations," *Denver Times*, June 21, 1900, p. 7

Race became a meaningful form of categorization to union men as they responded to a perceived threat to their economic well-being. They developed a particular racialized understanding of Japanese laborers that framed them as threatening and inassimilable. Their rhetoric exhibited anxieties about the ability of Japanese laborers to undercut their wages and threaten their ability to bargain collectively. Such concerns, however, did not translate into an embrace of Japanese Americans into the existing union structure. The fact that unions made no efforts to incorporate Japanese Americans into their labor organizations suggests that the Japanese were viewed as too foreign, too different, to be allowed to participate in labor organizations alongside Euro-American co-workers. Instead, union laborers demanded the immediate departure of Japanese laborers from work sites, pressuring corporate officials and political representatives in Colorado to prohibit the entry of Japanese Americans into Colorado's labor force. Understandings of racial difference proved more powerful in informing the views of union members than the potential commonality these individuals shared with Japanese Americans as working-class laborers. The state's actions further reflected the prevalence of attitudes that designated the Japanese as racially different, and therefore incompatible and inassimilable. It was their presence in the state, not the violent responses of union men, that was responsible for violent social unrest at sites of labor and economic disruptions. Rather than censuring union-men, who were eligible to vote and wielded some political power, the state attempted to implement discriminatory policies, such as a quarantine, that targeted politically impotent Japanese Americans.

At the same time Colorado's Japanese American became embroiled in the agendas of Colorado's corporate interests, railroad and mining officials, executives, and owners, who sought to utilize the Japanese as a source of cheap labor and as a means of undermining unionization of the work force. Colorado's railroad officials were the first to protest the state's

quarantine, visiting Board of Health Secretary Dr. Tyler in mid-June of 1900 and requesting that the quarantine be lifted. They criticized the quarantine as foolish, and described “the whole action” as “hardly worthy of an intelligent body of physicians.”³⁶ Furthermore, it was an agent of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company who wrote to Count Mutsu of Japan (who later informed Ambassador Nabeshima) of Colorado’s discriminatory quarantine, thereby making the state’s political affairs known to Japanese political officials in anticipation that they would place pressure upon the United States Government.³⁷ Naturally these companies were ultimately pursuing their own interests, but in the process they provided a political counterweight to the voices of Colorado’s unions which sought the expulsion of the state’s Japanese American population. Coupled with an increasingly powerful Japanese state willing to voice its discontent over the mistreatment of Japanese abroad and an American state interested in preserving an amicable relationship with Japan, Colorado’s business leaders propelled Colorado’s small Japanese American population into a focal point of international politics over the quarantine issue. Consequentially, the government of Japan and the United States placed pressure upon the state to revoke its discriminatory practices against the Japanese.

This measure, of course, did not necessarily translate into immediate, tangible results in Colorado. The state chose to drag its feet in discontinuing the policy and Secretary of Health Tyler expressed little concern about U.S.-Japanese relations, stating “[the state of Colorado is] not worrying any about Japan or any other country.”³⁸ Even though the formal quarantine did not appear to impact the immigration of Japanese into Colorado, statewide anti-Japanese

³⁶ “Will Remove Japanese and Chinese Quarantine,” *Denver Times*, June 16, 1900, p. 2.

³⁷ “Japan Will Protest Against Colorado Quarantine Regulations,” *Denver Times*, June 21, 1900, p. 7.

³⁸ “Will Fight it Out,” *The Denver Times*, June 25, 1900, p. 1.

sentiments persisted during the early 1900s. In 1902, in direct response to the Chandler Creek mining incident described earlier, the state of Colorado approved a formal resolution in legislature that affirmed Colorado's support of national policies that should "exclude from this country all of this class of Asiatic labor."³⁹

Ultimately, the willingness of Colorado businessmen to employ Japanese laborers may have provided Japanese workers with some economic opportunities, but it indirectly fueled the development of racial discourses that framed these foreigners as racial others and depicted them as adversaries of white laborers in Colorado. On the one hand, railroads, miners, and other industrials provided them with employment opportunities, seeking them out as a cheap source of labor and facilitating their employment within the state. Some Japanese Americans, like Naoichi Hokasono and other labor contractors, profited from this organization of human resources. However, most of Colorado's Japanese Americans worked for wages substantially lower than those of their Euro-American counterparts. Furthermore, as Japanese laborers filled a particular economic niche which facilitated the needs of business, it inadvertently placed them in an antithetical relationship to unions and labor. This resulted in an environment that facilitated the development of Euro-American discourses about the Japanese which distinguished them as racial others. Union men perceived them as a potential threat to their economic security and viewed them as a homogenous group that should be excluded. The 1900 quarantine was intended to bar *all* Japanese from entering the state, not just those who had come to work as contracted labor. Yet the size of Colorado's Japanese American population continued to grow, and many who entered the state during the first decade of the twentieth century did so not only as industrial workers, but as farmers and entrepreneurs.

³⁹ The State of Colorado, *Session Laws of Colorado* (Denver, Colorado: 1902), p. 181.

Japanese Contracted Farm Laborers, Japanese Tenants, and Japanese Farmers

In the early 1900s, the labor structure under which Japanese were employed in Colorado's agricultural industry often mirrored the labor structure of the railroad and coal mining industries. Japanese populated many of Colorado's farms as contract laborers, most notably in the sugar beet industry which was prominent in many of the Rocky Mountain States including Colorado, Idaho and Utah. Of the 15,000 laborers reportedly working in Colorado's sugar beet fields in 1909, 2,627 were Japanese. The remainder of the work force was predominantly composed of Mexicans, German-Russians, and other Euro-Americans.⁴⁰ At the time, sugar beet farms in Idaho were paying labor contractors roughly \$1 per acre worked by Japanese laborers and wages would likely have been comparable for work done in Colorado. Japanese laborers were sent to local farms as they were needed, and performed much of the difficult manual labor involved in rearing the sugar beet crops.⁴¹ Japanese labor communities were unevenly distributed throughout the state, often varying in size but capable of becoming quite large, even reaching several hundred workers. In 1903, farmers in Rocky Ford, Colorado had employed a relatively small crew of 20 Japanese laborers; during the same season, Greeley, Colorado, employed ten times as many workers, receiving approximately 200 Japanese laborers to harvest sugar beets.⁴²

⁴⁰ H. A. Millis, *The Japanese Problem in the United States: An Investigation for the Commission on Relations with Japan Appointed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), p. 83.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁴² "Plan to Furnish Sugar Beet growers at Greeley with 200 Japanese Laborers. Twenty Employed at Rocky Ford," *The Denver Times*, March 13 1903, p. 5.

In his 1920 work, *The Japanese Problem In the United States*, H.A. Millis, Professor of Economics at the University of Kansas, compiled an extensive report on Japanese in the United States. He did so on behalf of the 'Commission on Relations with Japan' which was organized by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. The report was designed to present "information before the churches and the people of the United States" so that they could form an "intelligent opinion" of the Japanese.⁴³ It often took a sympathetic view of America's Japanese communities, and explicitly stated that it was designed to "contribute to an understanding that shall bring the East and the West into a spirit of sympathy and unity."⁴⁴ While the bulk of the report examined the Japanese communities of California and the Pacific West Coast, Millis did investigate Japanese Americans residing in the Rocky Mountain West, providing insights into the character of the region's agricultural laborers and farmers.

Despite their small numbers, Colorado's Japanese were not always welcome in the state's farm communities. While larger land owners may have seen the Japanese as a "necessary" source of labor, local white farmers did not always respond positively to their presence in the fields.⁴⁵ As in Colorado's industrial industries, other laborers employed by the sugar beet farms expressed discontent about the importation of Japanese laborers and felt economically threatened by their presence. However, in the absence of strongly organized unions, little was done to expel them.⁴⁶ Furthermore, demand for laborers willing to perform

⁴³ H. A. Millis, *The Japanese problem in the United States: AN Investigation for the Commission on Relations with Japan Appointed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920), p. viii.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Millis, p. 81.

⁴⁶ "Beet Sugar Workers Oppose Importation of Japanese," *The Denver Times*, March 26 1903, p. 7.

grueling farm work remained high and shortages of work in the agricultural industry were an infrequent reality. By 1920, the scarcity of such laborers was acutely felt, and Colorado's farm hands could demand between \$2 and \$2.50 per day.⁴⁷

However, Colorado's Japanese also fared reasonably well as independent farmers, emerging as principle growers of certain crops—notably tomatoes and cabbages—for local canning industries.⁴⁸ White farmers and land owners in Colorado were often willing to lease not just tracts of land, but their entire farms to Japanese tenants. Japanese with the means could escape the wage oriented and often precarious life of contractual labor by becoming principle renters of their own properties.⁴⁹ The vast majority of Japanese workers who chose to rent land were married, often with children, which suggests that at least part of the incentive for many of these individuals to own land was driven by family. Prospective Japanese tenants often came into possession of land by presenting themselves as the highest bidders for local property, demonstrating a willingness to pay more to rent a plot of land than other individuals. This willingness was likely drawn out of necessity, as local land owners were probably unwilling to lease their land to Japanese tenants at the rates offered white tenants, and, recognizing this, Japanese tenants bid up the land considerably in order to ensure their acquisition of it.⁵⁰

In his report, Millis suggests that most of the region's white farmers were largely tolerant of Japanese farmers. He does acknowledge that there had initially been widespread opposition to their entry into fruit growing in Western Colorado, but suggests that, at least by

⁴⁷ Millis, p. 85.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

1920, such sentiments had largely subsided. However, it is likely that they were “welcomed as tenants” principally because they were willing to pay considerably higher rents than other potential renters.⁵¹ Unlike California, Colorado never passed an Alien Land Law designed to prohibit the acquisition of land by Japanese Americans and it remained possible for the state’s residents to fully acquire their own farms.⁵² However, as a racial minority, they continued to face challenges from the discriminatory practices of white land owners; they experienced at least moderate success as local farmers. Some became successful enough to hire laborers for their own farms, and in some regions of the state—notably Rocky Ford—Japanese farmers came to dominate particular segments of the agricultural market.⁵³ Unfortunately, the successes of the community had the potential to backfire, as negativity amongst members of the white population often highlighted successful Japanese enterprises as evidence of the Japanese ‘threat’ to the United States, utilizing them as case studies and catalysts to fuel their case for Japanese exclusion. In 1921, Rocky Ford’s Japanese came under the scrutiny of the Japanese Exclusion League of California when Colorado papers reported that “the Japanese have secured control of 85 per cent of the Rocky Ford melon district, and its crop.”⁵⁴ They used the agricultural data to substantiate their case for the exclusion of Japanese from the United States who they viewed as inassimilable and threatening to the livelihoods of white Americans. Yet based on Millis’ extensive reporting, considerable divides existed between the Californian white community’s and the Coloradoan white community’s perceptions of the Japanese. The League’s

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁵² Brian Niiya, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History Updated Edition*, (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1993), p. 71.

⁵³ Millis, p. 87.

⁵⁴ United States Senate, Mr. V.S. McClatchy, Representative of the Japanese Exclusion League of California, *Japanese Immigration and Colonization*, report presented by Senator Johnson, 67th Congress, 1st session, 1921, Document 5, p. 16.

efforts did not appear to capture much attention from the majority of Colorado's residents, receiving only muted acknowledgement in local papers.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, while Colorado's Japanese denizens may not have been as extensively vilified as their counterparts in California, divides perceived on difference in race limited interaction between Japanese and Euro-American farmers. While Miller cited the existence of tolerance among whites for their Japanese neighbors, he acknowledged that the Japanese "live[d] in rather than as a part of [Colorado's agricultural] communities."⁵⁶

1900-1910 The Development of a permanent Japanese American community; growth of Denver's Japanese American population; Local Businesses and Unions

Denver was the economic and social nexus of Colorado's Japanese communities. By the early 1900s, the city of Denver contained as much as one-fifth of the state's Japanese population and became an important hub for the entire state's Japanese community. Contemporary observers, both Japanese and Euro-American, commonly made reference to Denver's "Japanese Colony," which was concentrated around Denver's Larimer, Market, and Blake Streets. Japanese residents of the city met with some success as operators of restaurants, hotels, cafes, and retailers who sold goods to members of the community as well as to Euro-American residents of the city. Many prominent Japanese labor contractors established their businesses within the city, from where they dispatched work crews throughout the state.

In addition to its importance as a center of economic activity, Denver emerged as an important social center for Colorado's Japanese laborers and Japanese American residents. The

⁵⁵ "Japs Will Dominate U.S. in 140 Years Unless They are Barred, Warns Editor," *The Denver Post*, 4 April 1920, p. 14.

⁵⁶ Millis, p. 87.

establishment of the Larimer Street Buddhist Temple in 1917, was indicative of the city's increasing importance as a social gathering site for the community. The temple remained an important feature of social life well into the 1930s, and on important holidays, Japanese from around the state traveled to Denver to participate in religious and social festivities. As Russell Endo points out in his "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait," Denver was an important nexus for the exchange of information within the community. Information was distributed through Japanese language papers like the *Denver Shimpō*, which, first published in 1908, was presumably the first Japanese language newspaper published in Colorado.⁵⁷ Several other Japanese language newspapers followed, including *The Colorado Times*, the *Colorado Shimbun*, and the *Rocky Shimpō*. These papers served the Japanese community throughout the state, providing them with information pertaining to work, the status of individuals and businesses within the community, and general news.⁵⁸ Without these publications, Colorado's Japanese community would likely have been considerably more fragmented. Published out of Denver, these periodicals further evince the city's importance as an organizational site for Colorado's Japanese Americans.

Although male laborers represented the majority of Colorado's Japanese community in the first decade of the twentieth century, the state's Japanese communities were not of economically homogenous backgrounds. As elsewhere in the United States, the predominantly uneducated, and lower-class, Japanese laborers entering Colorado were accompanied by a relatively small number of educated, middle-class Japanese who had met with some financial success in Japan and came to the United States in search of investment opportunities. In fact, as

⁵⁷ Russell Endo, "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31, no. 4 (1985): p. 104.

⁵⁸ Robert Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control*, (Harper and Brothers Publishers: New York, 1922), p. 158-159; Endo, p. 104.

Azuma describes, some turn-of-the-century Japanese ideologues initially envisioned that these entrepreneurial Japanese would function as the sole representatives of Japan to the United States, functioning as living indications of the “superior racial qualities” of the Japanese and serving the commercial interests of Japan by establishing businesses in the United States.⁵⁹ Like elsewhere in the United States, Japanese entrepreneurs represented only a fraction of Colorado’s total Japanese population, but had the financial resources and the knowledge to establish commercial enterprises in the state; most of them did so out of Denver.

While most Japanese laborers were dependent upon contractors to find work, Bill Hosokawa’s narrative driven history, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans*, reveals that some enterprising Japanese in Colorado, most likely those who had been educated in Japan and had access to pre-existing capital, became labor contractors themselves. For example, Naoichi Hokasono came to the United States in 1893 and, within ten years of his arrival, he had become one of the most pre-eminent general labor contractors in Colorado. His contracting business evolved into one of the largest in the state, facilitating labor crews the railways and mines of Wyoming and Colorado.⁶⁰ Yuji Ichioka’s *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (1988) also sheds light on some of the more successful members of Colorado’s Japanese American community. Takazuka Kichizō and Kiyama Teizō jointly established the Oriental Contracting Company of Denver in the early 1900s, and they became the principle contractors for the Rio Grande Railway and the Colorado and Southern Railway. As Ichioka points out, these contractors often shared a common background that distinguished them from other members of the Japanese community. Takazuka and Kiyama had come to the

⁵⁹ Azuma, pp. 20-21.

⁶⁰ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans from 1886 to the Present*, (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2005), p. 32.

United States as student-laborers, learned English, and became familiar with American labor practices. Thus, they were able to function as arbiters between Japanese-Americans and local companies, facilitating the economic activities of both and finding individual success in the process.⁶¹

Other members of Colorado's early Japanese community also met with relative economic success. Among them was Tadaatsu Matsudaira, who is often cited as the first Japanese to have entered Colorado, arriving in the state at some point between 1879 and 1886. Although the precise date of his arrival is uncertain, it is known that he was an employee of the Union Pacific Railroad, and he later became an assistant to Colorado's chief inspector of mines in 1886.⁶²

Dr. J.C. Hara was likely one of Denver's first Japanese medical professionals. Hara, like Matsudaira, Kichizō and Teizō, had been well educated in Japan prior to entering the United States and had come with the hopes of attaining a dental degree so that he could return to Tokyo and practice medicine.⁶³ He graduated from the University of Denver's Dental College in 1898 after two years of study. He traveled across much of the Western United States before settling in Denver and graduating with high honors from the University. However, he became the object of local spectacle after he broke off a relationship with his Japanese fiancé in order to elope with a Caucasian American woman. His former fiancé, also a Denverite, accused him of

⁶¹ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*, (New York: The Free Press, 1988), p. 60.

⁶² Hosokawa, p. 22-24; Brian Niiya, ed., *Encyclopedia of Japanese American History Updated Edition*, (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1993), p. 30; Russell Endo, "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait," *The Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1985), p. 101. The encyclopedia's citation of the 1879 date also points to information found in Endo's work. Endo places his arrival in 1879, Hosokawa places it between 1886-1888.

⁶³ "Jap Dentist's Switch in Love," *The Denver Times*, August 10, 1898, p. 8.

borrowing \$1,200 from her “under promise of marriage.” He spent the money on his education at the University and she demanded he return it after he broke off their relationship.⁶⁴ His love affair made several headlines in the *Denver Times* along with stories about his former fiancé’s efforts to retrieve her money; not long after, he returned to Japan.

An indication of how prevalent Japanese entrepreneurs were in Colorado at the turn-of-the-century is made evident in Suzuki Rokuhiko’s 1909 catalog of the state’s Japanese owned businesses. Suzuki Rokuhiko was a director of the Japanese Farming Company in Denver during the early twentieth century. In an effort to facilitate relations between Japanese business men in the Rocky Mountain West, he compiled a catalogue of Japanese businesses located in Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico. Published in 1909, his compilation essentially functioned as a business directory, providing the addresses, owners, and brief summations of the region’s local businesses. Suzuki also produced a lengthy index which contained over a 100 P.O. Box and regular addresses for Japanese individuals throughout the state. Suzuki had envisioned it as more than just an inventory serving the local Japanese population; he undertook his project, at least in part, so that “the people in the home land can form an accurate idea of conditions in this part of America.”⁶⁵

His directory indicates that a community of Japanese Americans had decided to settle permanently in Colorado and had already established itself in the state by 1909. Suzuki recorded the existence of at least 22 major Japanese-run businesses throughout the state, of

⁶⁴ “Had His Nerve All Along,” *The Denver Times*, August 12, 1898, 8; “Jap Dentist’s Switch in Love,” 10 August 10, 1898, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Rokuhiko Suzuki, with an introduction by Herbert Johnson, *The Development of the Inter-Mountain Japanese Colonies*, (The Denver Shimpō Sha: Denver, 1909), Introduction p. 1. It should be noted that Suzuki’s directory of businesses has no page numbers though businesses of particular states, cities, and towns are catalogued in common sections.

which 17 were located in Denver. However, Japanese American entrepreneurs had found niches for their businesses in a number of the state's towns and cities. Rocky Ford, which was host to a small community of Japanese Americans involved in sugar beet farming, was also home to the Japanese owned and operated Gem Restaurant.⁶⁶ Several businesses had been established in Pueblo including the Momoi Company, the Nippon Supply Company, and the Nippon hotel. In Trinidad, Harry M. Okihiro had established himself as a Japanese Contractor and a proprietor of a local boarding house. Like other Japanese American contractors, he likely hired out labor crews to local railroad and mining industries, his boarding house catering specifically to the local Japanese American contract labor population. Trinidad was also host to the Yamato Supply Company. Suzuki's inventory also lists the presence of Japanese Americans in numerous other cities and townships of Colorado including Cokedale, Morley, Granada, Green Canon Mine, Delagua Mine, Hastings Mine, Lamar, Merino, Las Animas, Ordway, Swink, Ovid, Sterling, Longmont, and Fort Collins.⁶⁷

Of the major businesses located within Suzuki's account, the majority were located in Denver. They were diverse in nature and included the Hotel Fukuokaya managed by H. Tani, T. Endo's The Eastern Tailors Company, J. Yamashita's Carpenter Shop, Dr. T. Shimizu's medical practice, The Japanese Cookey Company, The Denver Noodle Factory, The Hotel Toyo, the Hotel Kumamotoya, the Japanese Hotel, The Tokyodo Watchmaker and Jeweler, and several labor contracting companies including H.N. Hokasono's.⁶⁸ With the exception of Hokasono's contracting business, all of the remaining enterprises were located within a three by three block

⁶⁶ "Plan to Furnish Sugar Beet Growers at Greeley With 200 Japanese Laborers," *The Denver Times*, March 13, 1909, p. 5; Suzuki.

⁶⁷ Suzuki.

⁶⁸ Suzuki.

area east of Denver's Cherry Creek and several blocks north of the state capitol. The neighborhood resided on the northwestern outskirts of Denver's Five Points district, which, by the 1920s, had become a predominantly African American neighborhood.⁶⁹ Larimer Street had the greatest concentration of businesses, followed closely by 19th, 20th, and 21st Streets each of which intersected Larimer. Running immediately parallel to Larimer Street along the northwest were Market Street and Blake Street, each of which also had reasonable concentrations of Japanese American businesses.⁷⁰ Of Denver's nearly 600 Japanese American residents, a great deal of them resided within that neighborhood.⁷¹ As early as 1906, several years before Suzuki's report was published, this area of town—notably Larimer and Market Streets—had already become widely recognized by the general public as a Japanese “colony,” host to several Japanese restaurants and tea houses. Newspaper reports indicate that locals were familiar with the area and that “many Americans patronize[d] [its] restaurants and shops.”⁷² It is reasonable to assume that in addition to the several businesses listed in Suzuki's account, numerous Japanese tea houses, restaurants, and other proprietorships continued to thrive in the area in 1909.

The concentration of so many Japanese American businesses in Denver, many of which served Japanese American communities throughout Colorado, reveal the city's importance as an

⁶⁹ Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project 1993, 94: Five Points Neighborhood*, (Denver: Prepared by Front Range Research Associates for the City and County of Denver, January 1995), Figure 18 Estimated Distribution of the Black Population, 1929, p. 44.

⁷⁰ Suzuki; Phil Goodstein, *Denver Streets, Names, Numbers, Locations, Logic*, (Denver: New Social Publications, 1994), Map of Denver Streets 1908 (within map index, no page number listed).

⁷¹ United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States 1920, Composition and Characteristics of the Population: Colorado* (Washington: GPO, 1920), p. 5. In 1910 the census recorded 585 Japanese residents residing in Denver.

⁷² “Leper Creeps into Denver at Daylight,” *The Denver Times*, October 25, 1906, p. 1.

economic and social nexus for the community. Likely a minority of the city's total population, entrepreneurial Japanese Americans also cohabited Denver with several hundred other Japanese who were likely uneducated and of lesser financial means. They found employment as cooks in local restaurants clerks in retail establishments. The city's Japanese American communities were densely concentrated in a relatively small three block area. Often referred to by local newspapers as the "Japanese Colony," Japanese American residents of Denver were fairly visible members of local life, and were often the subjects of local racializing discourses promulgated by the press.

Race Relations in Denver: Entrepreneurial Japanese and Transnational Politics

Racial issues took on a different dynamic in Denver than they did elsewhere in Colorado. Denver was host to a greater concentration of well-to-do and educated Japanese immigrants, who, when faced with racial challenges from the local community, at times appealed to the Japanese state to provide them with political support. During the early 1900s, unlike other racial minorities within the United States, first generation Japanese—principally those of higher social status—had a unique avenue for responding to incidents of discriminatory practice by Caucasian Americans. At a time when Japan was rising as a political and military power internationally, and the United States wanted to preserve peaceful relations with the nation, middle- and upper-class Japanese made appeals to Tokyo in an attempt to influence their social, economic, or political standing within the United States. Representatives of the Japanese government were responsive to the requests of Denver's Japanese entrepreneurs, and often responded by imposing pressure upon the United States Government. In some instances, this escalated Denver's local disputes between labor and capital into affairs of transnational politics between Japan and the United States.

Such was the case when George O'Hara and Harry Hirano, two Japanese American restaurant owners from Denver, filed a petition to the Japanese embassy complaining of their mistreatment at the hands of local unions, drawing the Japanese state and ultimately the American Government into the racial and labor disputes of Denver. It should be noted, however, that not all Japanese were able to make such political appeals. Contract laborers, many of whom were poorly educated, lacked the resources or the knowledge to contact the consulate, and may have even been looked down on by Japanese of higher socioeconomic status, were unable to take advantage of such avenues and socioeconomic divisions within Colorado's Japanese American communities influenced the ways in which they responded to racially discriminatory practices.

Although some Denverites patronized the city's Japanese tea houses and retail establishments, Denver's Japanese entrepreneurs were not always welcomed by the local community. Like Japanese contracted laborers, they became embroiled within the politics of local labor and business interests—notably Euro-American restaurant owners who felt threatened by the success of the Japanese owned eateries and tea houses. And, as with the Colorado quarantine incident, the dispute between Denver's Japanese restaurant owners and local unions evolved into an 'international incident,' as the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Japanese Consulate once again became involved in local politics. In January of 1901 the Restaurant Keepers' Protective Association of Denver declared "war" upon three of the city's Japanese restaurants. They claimed that they could not "compete with the Japanese and do not intend to permit them to gain the hold in Denver that they have on the coast." Six months later a local waiters union cooperated with the Cook's Local Union in a boycott upon three Japanese

restaurants on Larimer Street.⁷³ The dispute made headlines for over a year and escalated into a legal battle that was ultimately resolved in a federal courtroom.

The incident began as members of Denver's local waiters and cooks unions collaboratively boycotted George O'Hara's and Harry Hirano's Larimer Street restaurants. Japanese restaurant owners did not employ union workers, and the union men blockaded the entryways to their restaurants prohibiting customers from entering and interrupting their ability to run their businesses. The unions were concerned that the restaurants employed Japanese and other "non-union cheap labor." As a result, the Japanese owned restaurants could serve meals at 10 to 15 cents a meal, a rate that could not be offered by restaurants who employed union laborers.⁷⁴ They insisted that "at the present cost of supplies...a meal cannot be served for 10 cents unless of inferior food and served by underpaid labor."⁷⁵ Of course, as local papers were quick to point out, the local unions did not permit Japanese to become members and required all members to be American citizens.⁷⁶ O'Hara, owner of two of the restaurants being picketed, employed Japanese cooks and non-union white waiters; the former were unable to enter local unions.⁷⁷ Almost immediately, Harry Hirano filed a suit against the unions claiming \$7,000 in damages and alleging that union members had used force to intimidate both his

⁷³ "Japanese Cheap Eating," *The Denver Times*, January 3, 1901, p. 4; "Boycott Declared on Japanese Restaurants," *The Denver Times*, July 24, 1901, p. 10.

⁷⁴ "Boycott Against Restaurants Raging Fiercely Throughout City," *The Denver Times*, August 29, 1900, p. 2.

⁷⁵ "Labor News," *The Denver Times*, September 6, 1901, p. 12.

⁷⁶ "Boycott Declared on Japanese Restaurants," *The Denver Times*, July 24, 1901, p. 10.

⁷⁷ "No More Boycotts on Restaurants," *The Denver Times*, July 8, 1902, p. 1.

employees and potential customers.⁷⁸ In addition to that action, Hirano took matters a step further and, in cooperation with George O'Hara, petitioned that Japanese consul in San Francisco to intervene in the matter on their behalf.

Unlike in the quarantine incident, in this instance, members of Colorado's Japanese American community were clear beneficiaries of a Japanese state willing to intervene on behalf of its emigrants abroad. The Japanese consul responded quickly to O'Hara's and Hirano's petition, informing the United States district attorney's office and requesting they investigate the incident and additionally, expressing their concerns in a telegraph sent to Denver's Mayor Robert Wright. Wright responded immediately assuring the consul he would "endeavor to see...that residents of Denver receive the full protection entitled them under [the city's] laws, and that citizens of foreign powers receive all the rights and privileges to which they are entitled by treaties with this government." He closed his reply by promising that the "Japanese receive full protection" from the city of Denver.⁷⁹ Wright requested information from the local police and asked them to ensure the local restaurants received proper protection, but ultimately concluded that he could not call off the boycott entirely as the union's activities in boycotting the non-unionized Japanese restaurants did not differ from the ways in which "they usually proceed in boycotting American establishments of the same character."⁸⁰ Of course, they did differ in one crucial respect—most unions prohibited Japanese from entering their organizations, and thereby made it impossible for the Japanese restaurant owners to comply with their demands and halt their picketing unless they fired all of their Japanese employees. Interestingly enough, a few days following the exchange with the Japanese consul, Caspar

⁷⁸ "Japanese Chef Asks for Injunction Damages," *The Denver Times*, July 25, 1901, p. 2.

⁷⁹ "Japanese Boycott May Involve Nation," *The Denver Times*, July 27, 1901, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Wright, President of the Trades Assembly announced that “that the union would allow the Japanese restaurant men to become members if they wish to do so, but it will not permit them to do business unless they do become members.”⁸¹ Precisely what spurred this decision is unclear, but if in fact the Assembly was responding to pressure from the Mayor Wright or the United States district attorney’s office, then the Japanese consul’s intervention in the matter created a potential avenue for resolution of the incident.

However, the boycotts did not cease. George O’Hara and Harry Hirano refused to join the union because they claimed to be “unable to pay the union scale of wages and employed Japanese help.”⁸² It is unclear if they were genuinely unable to or simply refused to do so. In the midst of this incident at least one other union in the city permitted Japanese Americans to participate in its organization. In November of 1901, Denver’s Barber’s Union initiated its first Japanese member.⁸³ At one point, O’Hara had been willing to join the union under the condition that both his white waiters and his Japanese cooks be permitted to participate.⁸⁴ Whether or not Caspar Wright’s statements on behalf of the unions now suggested that they were willing to admit Japanese into their organizations was not specified.⁸⁵ Whatever the case may have been, O’Hara and Hirano did not choose to allow their employees to unionize under the circumstances and the boycott’s continued. In late August, Harry Hirano’s and George O’Hara’s injunctions to prohibit the boycotting outside their restaurants were overturned in a

⁸¹ “Will Admit Japs,” *The Denver Times*, July 29, 1901, p. 2.

⁸² “Boycott Will Be Declared Illegal,” *The Denver Times*, December 11, 1901, p. 1.

⁸³ “Labor News,” *The Denver Times*, November 15, 1901, p. 6.

⁸⁴ “No More Boycotts on Restaurants,” *The Denver Times*, July 8, 1902, p. 1.

⁸⁵ “Boycott Will be Declared Illegal,” December 11, 1901, p. 1.

local court.⁸⁶ The issue at stake was whether or not picketing of the Japanese restaurants was a legal practice. District Judge Carpenter had ruled in this case that the actions taken by the unions in the boycott were legal. George O'Hara chose to appeal the decision in the federal courts, noting that in a similar case the court ruled in favor of the Larimer Street Dry Goods House against the Retail Clerks' union.⁸⁷ The Federal Courts ultimately decided in his favor, ruling that the unions had "used opprobrious language and uttered libels against [O'Hara] and his business" and that calling out his restaurant was "unfair."⁸⁸ The judge ruled in opposition to the unions principally because of their aggressive picketing activities outside the restaurant and their efforts to disrupt O'Hara's business. In the end a compromise was reached in court and O'Hara accepted the dismissal of his case in exchange for a promise from the Cooks' and Waiters union that they would no longer boycott and picket his restaurants.⁸⁹

Like Japanese contract laborers, Denver's Japanese denizens, whether wage laborers or entrepreneurs, encountered discriminatory practices as a result of their racial and ethnic background. Ironically, union members who felt threatened by the 'cheap labor' associated with Japanese and Chinese workers, refused to incorporate these laborers into their organizations—and thereby strengthening the union and bringing greater solidarity to the local workforce—solely on account of what contemporaries perceived as racial difference and inassimilability. However, the incident also reveals that wealth and class had a profound impact upon the ability of members of Colorado's Japanese American community to deal with racial

⁸⁶ "Labor News," *The Denver Times*, August 29, 1901, p. 12; "Boycott Against Restaurants Raging Fiercely Throughout City," *The Denver Times*, August 29, 1901, p. 2.

⁸⁷ "Is Boycott Legal?," *The Denver Times*, December 6, 1901, p. 11.

⁸⁸ "Boycott Will Be Declared Illegal," *The Denver Times*, December 11, 1901, p. 11.

⁸⁹ "No More Boycotts on Restaurants," *The Denver Times*, July 8, 1902, p. 1.

discrimination. Contract laborers working in coal mines or on railroads—generally individuals with limited financial resources, a limited education, and poor competency in English—had few means available to challenge institutional or popular racism. The miners at Chandler were simply forced to abandon their activities and seek work elsewhere. By contrast, O’Hara and Hirano were financially more well to do, more educated, familiar with the English language, and had at least some understanding of the workings of Japanese and American political institutions. They were able to take advantage of a variety of resources including the Japanese Consul and the American legal system, to challenge their own mistreatment within the local community. Due to their actions, what may have been a fairly insulated domestic incident within Denver, escalated into an issue of national importance the ramifications of which could very well impact the international relationship between Japan and the United States. But this was only made possible by the fact that O’Hara and Hirano had the resources, knowledge, and ability to contact the Japanese consul, recognizing its potential to place pressure upon the federal government and thereby influence the outcome of their individual dilemma. While O’Hara and Hirano may have encountered some of the same challenges as Japanese contract laborers, evidence suggests that they were in a considerably better position to meaningfully challenge those problems. Thus it is important to recognize that the Japanese experience in Colorado during the early twentieth century was shaped as much by economics, education, and social status as it was by race.

**Japanese in Denver Public Discourse 1900-1910; Race and Japanese American Relations;
Denver’s ‘Japanese Colony’**

It was not in matters of business alone that Denver’s Japanese population emerged as the subjects of local controversy and racial discrimination. By reporting on the city’s Japanese

community, the local press advanced racial discourses and imagery to the greater populace of Denver, thereby familiarizing them with this ethnic population of the city. At times, these reports were surprisingly thoughtful, even permitting local Japanese to represent themselves within the discourse and providing reflective, if not critical, interpretations of the racial challenges they faced. However, the extent to which local newspaper writers permitted the community to represent itself on its own terms was confined by the parameters of the contexts presented by journalists. It is as subjects of controversy or objects of spectacle that Denver's Japanese most frequently appeared within the local press during this period. O'Hara's and Hirano's reception of so much public attention during the restaurant union dispute may be attributed to precisely this character of journalism. Utilizing the press as a source not only reveals concrete challenges experienced by the Japanese as a racial minority, but also provides insight into the formation and character of the discourse by which Denver's Euro-American majority came to understand, characterize, and define its Japanese neighbors as a racial "other."

Restaurants were not the only Japanese proprietorships to face difficulties in their operations as a consequence of the racial background of their owners, managers, employees, and clientele. In 1906, Japanese ping pong had become a popular pastime among Denver's Japanese and several ping pong parlors had been established within the city by local Japanese. In July of that year the Japanese society of Denver lodged a formal complaint to the fire and police board requesting that local authorities explain their attempts to disrupt the activities of the Japanese ping pong parlors. S. Oka, an owner of a local parlor, reported that he had been harassed by two Denver policemen who had "ordered him to discontinue business."⁹⁰

⁹⁰ "Protest to Fire and Police Board and Ask Whys and Wherefores," *The Denver Republican*, July 7, 1906. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

On the one hand, this incident revealed that local Japanese Americans had become firmly entrenched in Denver, establishing social organizations catering to the tastes of their local community. As O'Hara and Hirano, Oka had been able to acquire the financial resources to establish a local business, and had met with enough success that other members of his ethnic community were considering following in his footsteps and opening parlors of their own. Furthermore, in local political matters, he was able to petition the Japanese society of Denver to appeal to the local government on his behalf.⁹¹ Needless to say, the city's Japanese community recognized the political necessity of social organization as a means of challenging discriminatory practices.

How effective such organization was is difficult to measure. Secretary Theodore McGuide of the police commission replied condescendingly and dismissively to the appeals of Oka and the Japanese Society. He described ping pong as a "woman's game," and mockingly retorted that "[the fire and police board will] have to get a woman to render an opinion concerning its evil influences."⁹² His association of ping pong with femininity undermined the masculinity of the predominantly Japanese patrons who played it, expressing an Orientalist sensibility that associated Japanese (and other 'Orientals') with contemporaneous perceptions of femininity that included weakness and irrationality. In addition, at a time when politics remained an unambiguous component of a public sphere dominated by men, his comments

⁹¹ Hosokawa, p. 76; *Ibid.* Precisely when this organization was formed is disputed. In his master's thesis, Fumio Ozawa dates its formation to 1907. Eiichi Imada, editor and publisher of the *Rocky Mountain Jiho* in the postwar era has placed its organization in 1908. However, *The Denver Republican* article reporting upon Oka's dispute with the police had clearly cited its existence as early as July 1906.

⁹² "Protest to Fire and Police Board and Ask Whys and Wherefores," July 7, 1906. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

simultaneously called into question the political legitimacy of 'effeminate' Japanese as political actors entirely.

Another incident reported in the local press reflects a contemporaneous and equally negative, yet contradictory, racial image of Japanese men expressed by Denver officials. In 1910, Japanese restaurants once again emerged as the subjects of controversy, on this occasion, for the practice of hiring white waitresses. A joint effort by local police and juvenile courts resulted in the enforcement of an order that required all white waitresses "to get out and keep out of Japanese restaurants."⁹³ One officer described the restaurants as "the ruination of white girls."⁹⁴ Suspecting the local Japanese of seducing the young girls and enticing them into sexual affairs, the officer vilified local Japanese men as deceitful manipulators who would play upon the sympathy of local girls. He believed that they seduced the girls by claiming that they were "in need of instruction in the English language" but they wanted the girls for "one purpose only and...will send the girls to perdition."⁹⁵

Fears of interracial relationships between Japanese men and white women were clearly reflected in the rhetoric of the officer and the efforts of the local police to prohibit young girls from finding employment in Japanese owned restaurants. Local officers were quite serious about the injunction and in one incident two young Caucasian women were even arrested

⁹³ "White Waitresses Must Get out of Jap Restaurants," *The Denver Post*, May 7, 1910, p. 2.

⁹⁴ "Lured to Perdition," *The Denver Post*, date unknown, page unknown. Clipping is a component of the Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection in the folder "Japanese Americans 1900-1929." Although the date is unknown, the article appears to speak directly to the issues cited in "White Waitresses Must Get out of Jap Restaurants," and it is likely that the two articles are referring to the same series of incidents making them contemporaneous.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

because they “fell into the hands of the Japanese.”⁹⁶ One clear observation to draw from such reports is the racialization of Japanese men by police officials who profiled them as licentious and menacing figures seeking to corrupt young white American girls. These reports are revealing in another respect, however; they evince a degree of fluidity in race relations within the city of Denver. Not only were Euro-American girls dining in and working for Japanese establishments, they were also in some instances dating Japanese men. Nevertheless, these relationships clearly did not receive broader social approval as is reflected by the implementation of local laws designed to limit interracial interaction. Following their arrest, a Japanese male attempted to visit one of the two Caucasian girls who had been detained by the juvenile court. Undoubtedly frustrated, he was denied access to her in person and was only permitted to leave her a written note.⁹⁷ Yet while the authorities of the juvenile court may have refused the Japanese American an audience with the young woman with whom he may have been romantically involved, *The Denver Post* was sympathetic in its reporting, described the man as “sober, polite, and evidently greatly concerned regarding the welfare of the white girl.”⁹⁸ These articles reveal considerable divisions and fragmentation on the issue of race among the Euro-American population of Denver.

Some adventurous young white women were willing to socialize and form romantic relationships with Japanese American men. In Denver, interracial marriages were not unheard of. In 1910, a young white woman who had married Tom Hachiya, a local Japanese restaurant owner, made headlines in the local press when she had been accused of stealing a kimono from a Japanese neighbor. Alice Rohe, a local columnist, inquired into the woman’s relationship with

⁹⁶ “White Waitresses Must Get Out of Jap Restaurants,” May 7, 1910, p. 2.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

her husband, and their marriage, not the theft, became the centerpiece of the article. Mrs. Hachiya spoke at length of the merits of her husband stating that she “wouldn’t exchange him for the finest American in the world.”⁹⁹ However, she was attuned to the social realities of being involved with an individual of another nationality. Although her family “never objected to [her] marriage,” and in fact were supportive of her relationship, Mrs. Hachiya realized that many observers looked negatively upon their marriage. Apparently strong willed, Mrs. Hachiya dismissed those who might say that she was “in trouble” because she married a Japanese man, retorting that “it isn’t true that Japanese look down on women” and expressing her frustration with white Americans who stereotypically “talk about Orientals.”¹⁰⁰ Her defense of her husband and their relationship reflects the possibility of intrepid individuals to challenge the racial norms of the period. Furthermore, the publication of her interview in the local press suggests that such voices did enter the public discourse, and while they may not have been given serious consideration or embrace by the broader public, they did complicate contemporaneous discourses and at the very least introduced new avenues by which local Japanese Americans could be understood.

On the other hand, the actions of the local police and juvenile courts, and Mrs. Hachiya’s recognition that the many would dismiss the seriousness and legitimacy of her relationship, reveal that the broader public was dismissive of interracial fraternization between Japanese men and white women. Those pursuing interracial relationships faced considerable challenges and the voices of disapproval and opposition were often in the majority. At times,

⁹⁹ “American Woman Arrested for Stealing Cheap Kimono Weeps in Her Cell While She Tells of Alleged Conspiracy to Keep her from her Beloved Japanese Husband,” Jan 12, 1910. Newspaper Unknown. Clipping is a component of the Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection in the folder “Japanese Americans 1900-1929.”

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

partners involved in interracial relationships faced tragic consequences as a result of social pressures. White men who were involved with Japanese women also faced considerable scrutiny. A Denver couple—Marie Kunitomo, a Japanese American woman, and James Lynch, a Denver fireman—were scheduled to be married in June before Lynch called off the wedding under pressure from his friends and family to not marry a Japanese girl. Kunitomo tragically took her own life not long after, leaving behind a poignant suicide note that communicated frankly her frustrations. Speaking incisively about the difficulties facing interracial couples of the period, she wrote: “It was a tragedy of racial barriers and prejudices.”¹⁰¹

As the publication of Mrs. Hachiya’s interview makes clear, in addition to being the subjects of fear and controversy, interracial relationships and Denver’s Japanese community as a whole were as often the centerpieces of spectacle and fascination. While the public may have disapproved of the interracial marriage between a Japanese American man and a white woman—if the quantity of articles examining such relationships is any indication—they certainly did not tire of reading about them. In February of 1910, another interracial couple made the news. On this occasion, *The Denver Times* reported on the failed attempt of Mrs. Carrie Yamada, a South Carolinian native now living in Denver, to murder Sadi Yamada, her Japanese American husband and owner of a nightclub in Cheyenne.¹⁰² In another incident, Harry Nagahaski shot and killed T. Hamatani, a young Japanese man who the press identified as “his

¹⁰¹ “Jap Girl Sends Bullet Thru Broken Heart.” Newspaper, date, and page number unknown. Clipping was a component of the Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection in the folder “Japanese Americans 1900-1929.”

¹⁰² “Detectives Prevent Woman Killing Jap,” *The Denver Times*, February 22, 1910. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

rival in the affections of Ida Miller.” The violent end to the love triangle between two Japanese men and a white American woman once again captured the attention of the Denver public.¹⁰³

As the subjects of spectacle in newspaper reports, Colorado’s Japanese were categorized as foreign, exotic, unusual and bizarre. They were seen as inherently different from the Euro-American community and that difference made them the objects of racial fascination.

Even an event as trivial as a Japanese individual taking a western name could draw the attention of Denver’s papers. For example, when Patrick Yoshikeine arrived at Denver’s Brown Hotel, the hotel’s clerks were astonished to discover that he had an Irish name despite being “pure-blooded Japanese.” He became an instant curiosity at hotel and the hotels patrons and staff wondered “how a man bearing the name of Patrick could be anything but an Irishman.”¹⁰⁴ The media attention awarded this relatively quotidian incident highlights the extent to which Denver’s Japanese population could captivate the interests of the city’s Euro-American residents. However, in their treatment as spectacle and exotic Denver’s denizens clearly set them apart as a community of ‘others.’ As a community they attracted local intrigue because of what contemporaries viewed as strange behavior, custom, or practice, Japanese were also identified as inherently different because of it as well.

Race was an implicit component of almost every article covering Denver’s Japanese population, and often, it was identified as the fundamental force setting this ethnic community apart from the city’s white population. When reported upon within periodicals, Japanese

¹⁰³ “Jap Shoots His Sweetheart and Rival,” *The Denver Times*, February 2, 1909. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

¹⁰⁴ “Japanese with an Irish Name,” *The Denver Times*, July 6, 1902. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

residents of Colorado were always identified by their race—they were not just individuals making headlines, but rather *Japanese* individuals making headlines. The nature of the reporting reflects a sensibility amongst journalists to utilize racial lenses in qualifying Japanese and disseminating racialized reporting throughout the city. In November of 1908, 800 hundred Japanese gathered in Denver to celebrate the Emperor, Meiji (r. 1868-1911). Reports covering the incident treated the Japanese participants as subjects of spectacle. Reporters expressed fascination at the Japanese gathering in their city. The members of the ethnic community were depicted as curiosities and the article expressed awe and intrigue at the festivities—drawing attention to the jiu jitsu matches, boxing events, and the unveiling of the Emperor’s portrait. Nevertheless, reporters made clear that those celebrating the affair did so as members of a Japanese “race,” and that their participation in foreign customs and their membership in a broader Japanese racial community made them inherently different from white Americans.¹⁰⁵ Although that ‘difference’ was capable of taking on multiple meanings—from fascination and intrigue, to respect and love, to derision and corruption—if often remained a barrier that inhibited the formation of mutual humanistic understanding across its divides.

Some members of Denver’s Japanese community were acutely aware of the fact that they may be profiled by the white population as participants in a racial community, and thus took the notion of a racial identity quite seriously. As such they made efforts to not only present themselves as individuals who were assimilating into American society and committed to upholding American social and cultural values, but also strove to reform the Japanese community internally in an effort to dissolve what they perceived to be its negative elements.

¹⁰⁵ “Japanese Celebrate in Denver,” *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver), November 7, 1909. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

At times these efforts were directed at the white public of Denver. In January of 1910, *The Denver Times* received a series of anonymous letters from a local Japanese who described himself as representative of “the majority of the Japanese business men of town.”¹⁰⁶ *The Times* published several of his letters, all of which were sharply critical of a the Toyo Doshi Club, a Japanese gambling den located on Nineteenth Street, in the heart of Denver’s Japanese neighborhood. Concerned that it was negatively impacting the local Japanese community by attracting hard-working but uneducated individuals to wistfully gamble away their earnings, the anonymous letter writer brought the gambling den to the attention of the local press in an effort to have it shut down by local authorities. His letter made an explicit effort to distance himself from the Japanese who were involved with the operation of the den, announcing that he was performing his action as “a citizen of the United States, whose principle motto is ‘Justice, Right, and Liberty.’”¹⁰⁷ The establishment, as he described it, was “spoiling the pure air in which we (emphasis mine) citizens live our life.”¹⁰⁸ He understood himself as a member of the broader American community and, challenging the notion of a racial divide, made an effort to make it as clear as possible that he was acting on behalf of the public welfare of such a community.

His protests met with questionable success. Local authorities chose to do nothing about the gambling den, because, local journalists argued, they were being bribed by its owners. Furthermore, the anonymous writer’s efforts did not necessarily challenge the racial

¹⁰⁶ “Poor Japanese Robbed by Gamblers of Their Own Race at Swell Club,” *The Denver Times*, January 3, 1910, p. 4; “What City Official is Paid for Protection Now Given to Japanese Gambling House?,” *The Denver Times*, January 6, 1910. Source was found in Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection—Japanese American Folder 1900-1930. The page number was not visible on the clipping.

¹⁰⁷ “Poor Japanese Robbed by Gamblers of Their Own Race at Swell Club,” *The Denver Times*, January 3, 1910, p. 4

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

assumptions of the writers for the local press. While they recognized the anonymous letter writer as a “well educated” and “respectable Japanese citizen,” their language remained racialized and continued to reflect prejudicial assumptions about “the Japanese” as a race.¹⁰⁹ It was “with the cunning of their race,” the *Denver Times* reported, that “the promoters of the place have a club organization.”¹¹⁰ A racially essentializing statement qualifying the character of “the Japanese” as a whole was published in the same article as the *Times*’ praise for the anonymous Japanese writer. He and some of his supporters, the paper described, represented “the better element of the subjects of the mikado.”¹¹¹ They did not take this claim a step further and draw the conclusion that a racial understanding of “the Japanese” as a whole would be an unfair and unrealistic assumption, clearly disproven by the internal divisions which have emerged in Denver’s Japanese community over the gambling den issue. Widely understood as scientific reality, the racialized interpretation of society proved exceptionally difficult to discard. Yet, the owners of the Toyo Doshi Club were equally influenced by essentializing racial and ethnic assumptions. They had organized the gambling den as a ‘club’ intentionally so as exclude Denver’s Chinese American population. Only members could enter the gambling house and only Japanese could become members. When asked why they had structured the gambling den as a club one of the officer’s replied “we had only in mind separating our people from the Chinese.

¹⁰⁹ “What City Official is Paid for Protection Now Given to Japanese Gambling House?,” *The Denver Times*, January 6, 1910; “Hall Paid for Protection of Gamblers, Charge Made by Leading Japanese,” *The Denver Times*. Precise date is unknown. Clipping was a component of the Denver Public Library Ethnic Newspaper Clippings Collection in the folder “Japanese Americans 1900-1929.”

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Our people could not get along with the Chinamen and we thought it best to give them a place they would be by themselves.”¹¹²

Conclusion: Japanese Americans In Colorado and the Formation and Their Presence in Local Racial Discourse

This chapter has discussed the origins and character of Colorado’s Japanese community. Japanese arrived in Colorado as early as 1880. The community was not economically homogenous, and class as much as race played a role in shaping the experiences of Colorado’s earliest Japanese settlers. Broadly speaking, the early community may be divided into two groups. The first group was composed predominantly of uneducated, temporary workers who resided in Colorado’s rural areas. Many of the earliest Japanese to arrive in Colorado were contract laborers performing industrial work principally employed by railroads, mining companies, and agricultural laborers who worked in Colorado’s sugar beet industry. The second group was a minority of the state’s total Japanese population and were concentrated principally in the state’s urban areas. These individuals came from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, were often educated, and spoke English. Most were entrepreneurs who started local businesses in major urban centers—notably Denver—or became labor contractors themselves. Others were students seeking to further their education at Colorado’s universities and colleges.

Their experiences within the state varied dramatically and were profoundly shaped by race, which was widely viewed by contemporaries as a biological reality that ascribed innate, homogenizing, and timeless characteristics to human populations as a consequence of their national origins and racial identities. It was generally accepted as a scientific reality that a ‘Japanese race’ existed, and that members of that population shared in certain essentialized

¹¹² *Ibid.*

characteristics—physical, mental, emotional, and otherwise—that unified them within that racial identity. It was with the ‘cunning’ of their race, that local Japanese organized gambling dens; it was as only natural for members of the Japanese race to participate in strange customs such as jiu-jitsu, ping-pong, and Emperor worship; it was due to their race that they were seen as inassimilable and incompatible with local unions and other wage laborers like themselves. At its core, racial identities signified difference and otherness. An individual’s participation within a racial identity was seen as irrefutable, unchangeable and timeless. As a result, racial identities became a source of difference that was extremely difficult to challenge or overturn.

On the other hand, the meanings associated with those identities were themselves not fixed. The meanings attributed to the “Japanese” as a racial ‘other’ were often volatile, inconsistent, and at times in contradiction with one another. During this period, among the state’s Euro-American population, multiple meanings of ‘Japaneseness’ were emerging and evolving in response to numerous other contingencies. The way individuals understood race, and more significantly, particular racial identities, was always in relation to other social, economic, and cultural conditions. Whereas union members may have feared Japanese laborers because they threatened their ability to organize and undercut their wages, Colorado’s industrialists saw them as an invaluable resource, providing cheap labor and capable of threatening the solidarity of local unions. What both sides understood as a racial community came to signify very different elements in their respective discourses, and the ways in which the Japanese were racialized by these two segments of the white population was indicative of the ongoing struggle between labor and business as much as it was of each group’s prejudices and sensibilities against the Japanese. Numerous racial discourses also surrounded Denver’s Japanese. While they were vilified as virile and menacing seducers of white women, they were also described as effeminate because of their participation in ping-pong. In both instances, very

general language was used about the Japanese community as a whole, homogenizing and racializing them even as the rhetoric employed presented two images of the Japanese that appeared strictly at odds with one another. Some members of the white community, notably those involved in interracial relationships, attempted to challenge the prevailing assumptions about “the Japanese” and while their voices may have been relatively few, they too were capable of reaching the broader public through the local press. Far from a clear or coherent racial discourse, the end result was something of a cacophony as numerous were expressed, often not in defense of or opposition to the categorization of the Japanese as a racial group, but rather expressing different versions of precisely what that racial identity meant.

Through this process, Colorado’s population became familiar with a series of different perspectives and interpretations on that Japanese as they were publicized in the local press. The numerous elements of the racial discourse became components of a public knowledge that, while not always active, were easily capable of being recalled under the appropriate circumstances. Thus, while most of the white American population did not necessarily find the elements of the racial discourse surrounding the Japanese meaningful all, or perhaps even most of the time, by being exposed to it in the public sphere they became familiar with the dimensions and characteristics of the language and thus became capable of utilizing it. In the context of race, this process simultaneously broadened and limited their ability to understand and perceive “the Japanese” as anything other than what was discussed in the newspapers. On the one hand, it did not confine them to a single dominant discourse of understanding, allowing multiple avenues of interpretation surrounding “the Japanese” to co-exist. On the other hand, for the vast majority of Colorado’s white population (there were exceptions), the relationship they shared with Japanese immigrants in the state remained one that was inherently divided on account of racial difference. It made no difference which elements of the discourse were used

by members of the white community; when employing them, they still remained engaged in the process of racialization which ultimately made it impossible for them to humanistically understand the Japanese as forming part of their communities.

Chapter 2: Demographic Changes and Colorado's Japanese American Communities

During the Interwar Years (1910-1941)

This chapter examines the characteristics of Colorado's Japanese American communities during the thirty years preceding the onset of World War II. Histories of Colorado's Japanese American communities have largely neglected this period and have consequently overlooked important demographic changes the community underwent in the thirty years following 1910.

The growth of Colorado's Japanese population during the first decade of the twentieth century continued for another twenty years after 1910, peaking in 1930 and exhibiting a decline over the course of the Great Depression era. More significant than such fluctuations in the population's size however, were the dramatic demographic changes the population underwent during this thirty year time span. Several years after the implementation of the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, in which the United States and Japan agreed to a voluntary restriction of Japanese immigrants into the United States, the character of Colorado's Japanese American population underwent a significant demographic shift—one that has gone unacknowledged by the works of Bill Hosokawa and Russell Endo. Over the course of roughly thirty years, Colorado's Japanese population transformed from a community made up predominantly of foreign-born, male, itinerant laborers, to a community composed predominantly of agricultural families in the state of Colorado. Establishing long-term, if not permanent, residence in the United States, the Japanese immigrants who remained in the state following the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907 will be here described as Japanese Americans.

The transformation of the community is reflected in the equalization of the ratio of men to women in the state and the increasing proportion of Japanese Americans residing in Colorado who were classified as native to the United States by the United States Census. At the same

time, the community became increasingly rural in composition. The number of Japanese Americans living in Colorado's urban centers consistently declined from 1910 to 1940, while rural communities showed substantial population increases in every decade leading up to the Great Depression. Colorado did not implement alien land laws like California and other neighboring states. Consequently, Colorado's Japanese Americans were able to legally lease and own agricultural land and an increasing majority of the state's Japanese American residents were residing in rural areas in the years following 1910.

Even as Colorado's Japanese Americans abandoned the state's cities for its farms, the vast majority remained in close proximity to Denver, which remained an important urban center for the community. While Hosokawa and Endo have described the San Luis Valley as an important settlement of Colorado's Japanese Americans, their numbers in the San Luis Valley were limited. Leading up to the onset of the Second World War, the vast majority of Colorado's Japanese Americans remained residents of counties immediately adjacent to or in close proximity of Denver. Denver was the state's largest urban center at the time, and in fact the largest urban center in the Rocky Mountain Region. The city was host to important Japanese American organizations, such as the Market Street Buddhist Temple, and a high concentration of Japanese American businesses. It was also an important commercial market for Japanese truck farmers in the surrounding area, who traveled to the city to sell their agricultural products. During the 1920s and 1930s, Denver served as an economic and social nexus for Colorado's Japanese Americans even as they migrated to rural communities in increasing numbers during these years.

Women and Nativity: Changing Demographics and Social Characteristics within Colorado's Japanese American Communities

There are two important demographic indicators that reflect the increasing number of Japanese Americans in Colorado who chose to permanently settle within the state and establish families there. The first is the increasing number of Japanese American women residing in Colorado during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Like elsewhere in the United States, the earliest American-bound Japanese to arrive in Colorado were overwhelmingly comprised of men. The vast majority were looking for better economic opportunities in the United States, some with the intent to remain permanently, others with the intent to return home with the earnings they've acquired.¹ The occupations which brought many of these immigrants to Colorado during the first decade of the twentieth-century, including mining, railroad work, and farm labor. These occupations were also dominated by men during this period and women were unlikely to be employed as miners or railroad laborers. Furthermore, laborers employed through the contract labor system had little stability in their lives, and the need to remain mobile for the sake of employment provided few opportunities for the Japanese American laborers to establish long-term residences or families within Colorado. As a result, there were very few Japanese American women who settled in the state during the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1910, the United States census recorded only 108 Japanese American women in Colorado; that same year, the state was host to nearly 2,200 Japanese American men.² The ratio of men to women in the state was likely even higher than what these figures

¹ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 28-31.

² United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, Characteristics of the Population: State of Colorado*, (Washington: GPO, 1940), p. 694.

suggest, as the census did not necessarily account for the actual number of itinerant laborers residing in the state.

It was only after the establishment of the Gentleman's Agreement (1907) between the United States and Japan, which effectively barred the further immigration of Japanese male laborers into the United States that women began to arrive in the United States in any large quantities. While the agreement imposed strict immigration prohibitions, Japanese American men already residing in the United States were permitted to bring their wives and children into the United States, which spurred a second wave of migration in the years following 1908.³ Additionally, following the enactment of the agreement, large numbers of Japanese American men began departing the United States, often repatriating to Japan. Between 1908 and 1913, a greater quantity of Japanese Americans—31,777—left the United States than were admitted—30,985. While both men and women were among those departing, it is likely that the vast majority of those leaving were men, as they made up the bulk of the initial immigration. At the same time, the majority of those who entered the United States during these years were married women and children joining their spouses or parents in the United States and Japanese 'picture brides' joining their partners in America.⁴

By 1920 the male/female ratios had moderated dramatically, and the census now reported 868 female and 1,601 male Japanese American residents of Colorado. Over the course of the next two decades these figures continued to come closer into equilibrium with one another. By 1940 there were 1,505 Japanese American men and 1,229 Japanese American

³ Azuma, p. 9.

⁴ H.A. Millis, *The Japanese Problem in the United States: An Investigation for the Commission on Relations with Japan Appointed by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1920), p. 5, 18, 19, 22.

women residing in the state. Whereas there had been 22 men for every woman in 1910, by 1940 the ratio of men to women was far less disproportionate.⁵

Colorado's Japanese American population was clearly impacted by these trends, and the census data cited above affirms the existence of demographic patterns in Colorado that paralleled trends elsewhere in the United States. Just as more Japanese women began settling in Colorado, the state also experienced a decline in the size of its Japanese male population in the years between 1910 and 1920.⁶ It is probable that many of the Japanese women arriving in the state in the decades that followed the passing of the Gentleman's Agreement were the spouses or blood relatives of men who had already settled in Colorado. Conversely, many, though certainly not all, of the young men who departed Colorado were young male contract laborers who chose to leave the state following the passage of the Gentleman's Agreement, likely at least in part because they did not establish significant economic or social roots within the state. Thus, an increasingly large percentage of Colorado's Japanese were represented by married couples and their families. Additionally, Japanese men who brought their families to the United States exhibited the desire to remain residents of the U.S. and the means to pay for the relocation of their families from overseas, it is probable that immigrants who remained in Colorado established meaningful social or economic connections and had some intention of long-term habitation in Colorado.

The second demographic indicator that supports these conclusions is the United State census' record of national nativity. In the decade that followed the enactment of the Gentleman's Agreement, the number of native born Japanese paralleled the expanding size of

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 694, 696.

⁶ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, p. 694.

the female population in Colorado; the number of Japanese Americans born in Colorado and classified as United States citizens grew exponentially in the decade that followed 1908. Since Japanese immigrants were denied naturalization as United States citizens, the growth of the Japanese population native to the United States was reflected by second-generation Japanese Americans, or Nisei, born in the United States, and likely in Colorado. In 1910, only 45 of Colorado's 2,235 Japanese American residents were American nationals. Ten years later, 702—over 28 percent—of the state's 2,454 Japanese American residents were American born. The figure continued to grow, and by 1940, over two-thirds of Colorado's Japanese Americans were American nationals. Much of this growth must be attributed to the increasing number of Japanese American women who entered the state in that years that followed 1908. Previously, because Japanese American women made up a tiny fraction of the Japanese American population, Euro-Americans feared miscegenation and generally disapproved of interracial couples, few Japanese American children were born in Colorado.⁷ As was earlier discussed, interracial couples in Colorado were not unheard of. However, they were few in number and often faced considerable challenges to their relationships from their contemporaries. As a result, it was not until after Colorado experienced a considerable influx of Japanese American women, that Colorado's native born Japanese American population became substantial. Since many of these women were the spouses of men already residing in the state, this data suggests that following the arrival of their significant others, many individuals had the desire and resources to have children and either expand their already existing families, or begin new families for the first time. Over the course of this same thirty year time span, the number of

⁷ Millis, p. 252.

foreign born Japanese Americans residing in Colorado declined by over 60 percent.⁸ Prohibitive immigration barriers were largely responsible for the declines in the foreign born population. First the Gentleman's Agreement of 1908 and later the Immigration Act of 1924—which formally banned any Japanese immigrants from entering the United States—essentially inhibited the foreign born population from increasing in size.

In the years following the Gentlemen's Agreement, the demographic changes undergone by Colorado's Japanese American population also deeply influenced the social characteristics of the community. The migration of substantial numbers of women into the state reunited families with one another and altered the lives of Japanese American men. They were no longer short-term laborers in the United States, far removed from their families, surrounded almost entirely by groups of male peers, and focused principally on economic advance. Those who had brought their families to the United States were redrawn into the immediacy of family life, and, because they decided to resettle their families in Colorado rather than return to Japan, they had chosen to make the United States a long-term residence. At the same time, by 1920 the overall size of Colorado's male Japanese American population had declined by 20 percent and the ratio of men to women in the state continued to approach equilibrium in the decades leading up to the Second World War. The reunion of families from overseas fueled a baby-boom of sorts within the state's Japanese American community and in the years following 1910, Colorado experienced significant increases in the size of its native born Japanese American population. At the same time, the departure of hundreds of men resulted in the predominance of a different cross-section of the male immigrant community that remained, and, coupled with the influx of women, reshaped the character of the population.

⁸ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, p. 694, 696.

Nevertheless, the ratio of men to women remained two to one in 1920, and the number of women in the state remained disproportionately lower than the number of men in the state throughout the prewar period. It is difficult to discern the social status of all of the state's Japanese American men, who continued to outnumber Japanese American women in Colorado. However, it is likely that many of those that remained in the state either remained single or had families which continued to reside in Japan or elsewhere in the United States.⁹

Rural Life: Japanese Americans as Farmers in Colorado

The majority of Japanese Americans who first entered the state were involved in the agricultural sector, often working as contracted farm laborers. Since Colorado did not implement any legislation that prohibited them from owning land, some were able to acquire the necessary financial resources and find willing sellers, were able to take full ownership of agricultural acreage. Those who were able to purchase their own land however, were in the minority. As described earlier, most Japanese American farmers were renters, rather than owners, of land. A report conducted in 1920 by the Commission on Relations with Japan indicates that the majority of the state's Japanese agricultural workers were tenant farmers with one-year leases. Many paid high-rents and, as a whole, they were among the highest bidders for land in the state.¹⁰ While the report suggests that relations between white farmers and Japanese American farmers were generally amicable, racial intolerance persisted in local Euro-American communities. Nevertheless, despite the costs, Colorado's Japanese Americans continued to turn to agriculture to make their livelihoods. In the thirty years that followed 1910, the proportion of the state's Japanese Americans involved in agriculture consistently

⁹ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, p. 694, 695.

¹⁰ Millis, p. 85.

increased while the community's presence in urban areas consistently declined, decade after decade.¹¹

The number of Japanese Americans living in Colorado's urban areas during the prewar period peaked in 1910, even as the state's population continued to rise for the next twenty years. Each census after 1910 reported declines in the urban population, which shrank from 697 at its pinnacle, to 482 in 1940.¹² Over the course of this same period, the number of Colorado's Japanese Americans residing in rural setting consistently increased, from 1,402 in 1910, to 2,675 in 1930. However, the community experienced a decline during the Great Depression decade, shrinking to 2,252 by 1940. Five out of every six—83 percent—Japanese Americans residing in Colorado were classified as residents of rural areas by the United States census in 1930 and Colorado's Japanese American population was the most rural in the nation. In 1940, over 80% of Colorado's Japanese American population was classified as rural; by comparison, only 44% of California's and roughly 50% of Washington's Japanese American communities were living in rural area.¹³

Several reasons may be responsible for the migration of Colorado's Japanese Americans to rural communities. As many as three-fifths of Japanese Americans who migrated to the United States were formerly farmers, and it is probable that agricultural work was an occupation with which many of Colorado's Japanese Americans were at least familiar, if not comfortable.¹⁴ Additionally, the possibility of individual land ownership in Colorado—an opportunity that was

¹¹ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, p. 694-696.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, "United States Summary," p. 98, 99.

¹⁴ Millis, p. 6.

prohibited by alien-land laws in states along the Pacific West Coast and several Rocky Mountain States—was perhaps the strongest factor attracting the state’s communities to agricultural occupations and rural habitation.¹⁵ The promise of opportunity and economic independence through land ownership likely drew many Japanese Americans to Colorado’s rural communities. Land owners, while in the minority, were not uncommon, and in some region’s of Colorado, as many as 1/4 of Japanese Americans owned land.

In 1922, roughly three-fourths of the state’s Japanese American population was concentrated in five Colorado counties. Weld County, just north of Denver, was settled by 720 Japanese Americans—the state’s largest population. It was followed by Denver, with 465 individuals; Adams, with 263 individuals; Otero, with 232 individuals; and Bent, with 104 individuals.¹⁶ Although the Colorado Bureau of Labor reported only 44 Japanese American land owners in Weld County in 1922, it is important to remember that the population figures do not provide insight into the size of the community’s households. It is likely that many of the 44 Japanese American land owners listed represented households, and thus a broader representation of the population should be understood as either being in possession of land, or being a direct relation of family member who was in possession of land. Nevertheless, nearly three times as many of Weld County’s Japanese American residents/families—124—were renters of farms rather than individual property owners.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Consulate-General of Japan, *Documental History of Law Cases Affecting Japanese in the United States 1916-1924*, (New York: Arno Press, 1978), p. 1019-1038.

¹⁶ Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Eighteenth Biennial Report Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics 1921-1922*, (Denver, Colorado: Eames Brothers State Printers, 1922), p. 32-33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

In other counties, the ratios of Japanese American land owners to renters were comparable. In Bent County, there were 29 Japanese Americans who owned a combined total of 5,120 acres of land. The county was host to three times as many renters. In Otero County, they had leased or were owners of lands amount to 3,683 acres and were reported to have met with considerable success farming the region's melons.¹⁸

In his 1967 geographical history of the San Luis Valley published in *Colorado Magazine*, Alvar Ward Carlson cited evidence that suggests at least some Japanese American families migrated into Colorado following the passage of alien-land laws in other states. Between 1920 and 1930, during a ten-year period a when California padded more restrictive alien land laws, and other states in the Rocky Mountain West implemented laws that excluded Japanese Americans from land ownership for the first time, Colorado was one of only eight states to experience migration into its borders.¹⁹ Following the passage of anti-alien land laws in California in 1921, several Japanese Americans migrated to Colorado and the San Luis Valley and the agricultural productivity of the region that followed has been attributed to the establishment of sizable Japanese American communities in the region. After a period of Japanese American migration into the region during the early 1920s, the amount of acreage dedicated to commercial farming in the region expanded sevenfold. In 1923, Carlson reports, only 600 acres of lettuce had been cultivated in the region for commercial purposes. By 1925,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*; United States Senate, Mr. V.S. McClatchy, Representative of the Japanese Exclusion League of California, *Japanese Immigration and Colonization*, report presented by Senator Johnson, 67th Congress, 1st session, 1921, Document 5, p. 16.

¹⁹ Edward K. Strong, *The Second-Generation Japanese Problem*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1934), p. 68.

over 4,000 acres were being used for commercial agriculture.²⁰ Many Japanese Americans arrived in the region due to the promotional efforts of local land companies, who sent representatives to California in the early 1920s with the express intent to recruit Japanese American farmers to settle the region.²¹

For Japanese Americans who could not initially purchase, or even lease, land on their own, other avenues made it possible for them to make a living in agriculture. Some became tenants or hired laborers on farms owned by Japanese Americans.²² Those who were unable to afford land on their own pooled their resources with members of the Japanese American community and purchased or leased land cooperatively. In *Colorado's Japanese Americans*, Bill Hosokawa evinces such a scenario as was it was recorded in the diary of Shingo Nakamura, a Japanese American who arrived in Colorado in 1908. Four years following his arrival, Nakamura leased a local farm with the assistance of three friends in 1912.²³ While he never became a land owner, he met with enough success to eventually lease a farm independently, saved enough money for a return visit to Japan where he married, and later returned to Colorado to establish a family in the United States.²⁴

²⁰ Alavar Ward Carlson, "Rural Settlement Patterns in the San Luis Valley," *Colorado Magazine* XLIV, no. 2 (1967): p. 126-127; United States, National Resources Planning Board, *The Rio Grande Joint Investigation in the Upper Rio Grande Basin in Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, 1936-37* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), iv, p. 304.

²¹ Bill, Hosokawa, *Colorado's Japanese Americans From 1886 to the Present*, (Boulder, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 2005), 120; Russell Endo, "Japanese of Colorado: A Sociohistorical Portrait," *Journal of Social and Behavioral Sciences* 31, no. 4 (1985); Morris Cohen, "Japanese Settlement in the San Luis Valley," *The San Luis Valley Historian* 25, no. 3 (1993).

²² Millis, p. 87

²³ Hosokawa, p. 41, 48, 49.

²⁴ Hosokawa, p. 52.

Rural communities also offered Japanese Americans with relatively greater social independence than urban life. Life in less densely populated regions made Japanese Americans less visible elements of the local social fabric, while simultaneously offering them with a greater variety of options pertaining to where and under what conditions they wished to live. As described earlier, in urban areas like Denver, Japanese Americans were frequently the subjects of spectacle, controversy, and animosity. Most resided within the general vicinity of Denver's 'Japanese colony,' and for many, occupational, economic, and social mobility within the city was limited not only as a consequence of racial discrimination, but also by virtue of their lack of proficiency in English and lack of formal education.

By contrast, Colorado's Japanese Americans residing in rural regions of the state had greater opportunities for economic advance and social mobility. If they had the financial means, Japanese Americans had some freedom in selecting in which rural region they wished to live, what they wished to farm, to what extent they wished to participate in American institutions, and in what proximity they wished to reside to their Japanese-American or Euro-American neighbors. Japanese American communities exhibited variable and inconsistent patterns of habitation and land use. In Otero County, a substantial portion of the Japanese American population was densely concentrated in a relatively small area (roughly 12 square miles) near Rocky Ford. The Colorado Bureau of Labor reported with concern in 1922, that the control of local land by Japanese Americans is "almost crowding out the white pioneers and early settlers" in the agricultural land surrounding Rocky Ford.²⁵ The densely populated Japanese American community found in Rocky Ford however, was not characteristic of the state's rural Japanese Americans as a whole. Elsewhere in Colorado, Japanese Americans did not reside in such close

²⁵ Colorado Bureau of Labor, *Eighteenth Biennial Report Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics 1921-1922*, p. 32.

proximity to one another, perhaps due to the unavailability of land or of personal volition. Dr. H.A. Millis' report to the Commission on Relations with Japan noted that several Japanese "farms [were] widely scattered."²⁶ The 133 Japanese Americans who owned or leased land in Bent County were widely spread out over an area of 108 square miles north of the Arkansas River. In Weld County, Japanese Americans were distributed across an even broader swath of land, establishing or renting farms in an area running over 50 miles north-to-south, from the town of Nunn to the town of Brighton several miles northeast of Denver.²⁷

Because Japanese Americans residing in rural areas were distributed widely throughout the state and at times were far removed from centers of American legal and social authority, they were able to exhibit greater freedom than their urban counterparts in determining to what degree they integrated elements of American life into their own. In a report to the Colorado Bureau of Labor in 1922, the County Superintendent of Schools in Otero County exhibited disapproval with Japanese American parents, writing "The percentage of Japanese children attending school is small. The compulsory education law has no hold on these people and only a comparatively few of the parents manifest any interest whatever in the education of their children."²⁸ By this statement, it may appear that the superintendent had some concern about the education of Japanese American youths, but in the context of the rhetoric that follows, it becomes clear that his initial language was a racially prejudicial remark essentializing and criticizing Japanese for their parenting strategies.

²⁶ Millis, p. 85.

²⁷ Colorado Bureau of Labor, *Eighteenth Biennial Report Colorado Bureau of Labor Statistics 1921-1922*, p. 32.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

In the paragraphs that followed, the Superintendent attributed notable declines in Otero County's schools "entirely to the presence of the Japanese." He was also concerned about the efforts of Japanese Americans "to gain a foothold" in other school districts in the area.²⁹ Paradoxically, while he disapproved of Japanese as parents because of their apparent lack of concern for the education of their children, he was explicitly concerned about the growing number of Japanese youths in the county's schools. Such inconsistencies reveal the underlying arbitrary, and often contradictory, application of racial discourse. They also suggest that more Japanese American parents were interested in sending their children to American public schools than the superintendent's statements imply.

However, Otero County schools did in fact exhibit substantial declines in student population in the years between 1918 and 1922, and they did correlate with the entry of Japanese American youths into the schools. It is highly unlikely that the entirety of the declines may be attributed to the entry of Japanese children into the classrooms, but it appears that at least some Euro-American families withdrew their children from the schools in response to Japanese American students. It is clear, that even in rural areas, Japanese Americans struggled with racial prejudice and discrimination.

At the same time, the superintendent's statements reveal that Japanese Americans residing in these communities had the freedom to decide whether or not their children were sent to school, and the state struggled to impose legal repercussions upon them for violating compulsory education laws. Clearly, several Japanese American families made the decision to send their children to public school. Those who did not however, were not necessarily any less interested in their children's education. Several reasons may have accounted for why some

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Japanese American families in the county decided not send their children to public school: it is possible that they lacked the means to do so, depended on their children to assist in agricultural labor, or chose to educate their children within the family or an alternative community educational setting. While the social dynamics of immigrant education are complex, for the purposes of this study, it is important to recognize that in rural regions of Colorado, Japanese American communities were in some respects removed from state representatives and institutions that may have attempted to impose legal consequences upon them for violating laws.

Despite the increasing number of Japanese Americans residing in rural communities and the consistent, if gradual, exodus for Colorado's urban areas, farmers and agriculturalists did not sever their ties to Colorado's cities. Denver in particular, remained an important metropolitan center for the state's agricultural communities. While the Japanese American population in Denver County shrank during the prewar period, census data suggests that most Japanese Americans remained in close proximity to the city, migrating to the immediately adjacent and predominantly rural counties surrounding Denver. Among the counties that experienced the greatest population growth in the years following 1910 were Weld, Adams, and Arapahoe—each of which lies immediately adjacent to, or within one county of Denver County.³⁰ Other regions of the state experienced notable growth during the latter two decades of the prewar period, including Otero and Bent Counties. Both counties of the fertile Arkansas Valley east of Pueblo and the Front Range, a region that attracted several hundred Japanese American settlers and hosted the state's second highest concentration of Japanese Americans. While it is true, as

³⁰ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, Characteristics of the Population: State of Colorado, p. 745; United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, Characteristics of the Population: State of Colorado (Washington: GPO 1930), p. 316.

Russell Endo and others have suggested, that the San Luis Valley experienced considerable growth during this period, the Japanese American communities in the region remained small relative to the size of other communities in the state, numbering little over 200 individuals by 1930.³¹ The greatest concentration of Japanese Americans remained in close proximity to Denver throughout the prewar period. Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Weld, and Boulder counties accounted for nearly 60% of the state's Japanese American population in 1920. And, even though Denver County's Japanese American population gradually declined in the twenty years leading up to World War II, these counties still accounted for 48% of the state's Japanese American population in 1940.³²

The land in and around these counties was among Colorado's most agriculturally productive and was also one of the state's most densely populated regions. Extensive irrigation systems drew water from the South Platte and its tributaries, providing abundant water supply to sustain the region's principal crop: the sugar beet.³³ The region's Japanese Americans worked in agricultural occupations alongside Euro-American and Mexican American farmers. Throughout the prewar period, agricultural products accounted for the majority of the region's economic output. In 1936, farm crops accounted for 46% of the value of products produced in counties within the South Platte commercial sub-area.³⁴ Several developed railroad and highway routes serviced the counties within the South Platte commercial area and facilitated personal and commercial traffic into and out of Denver. By the 1930s, trucking had become

³¹ *Sixteenth Census of the United States*, p. 745; *Fifteenth Census of the United States*, p. 316.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Elmore Peterson, *A Market Analysis of the Denver Wholesale Trade Territory*, (Boulder, Colorado: University of Colorado, 1936), p. 76.

³⁴ Peterson, p. 76.

increasingly important in commercial transportation and numerous highways, including U.S. 40, U.S. 50, U.S. 85, and U.S. 285, connected Denver to the agricultural communities of Weld, Adams, and Arapahoe Counties.³⁵ In 1930, Highway 85, which connected Denver and Greeley, was reported to be the busiest trucking route in the state, connecting farmers in the region with important commercial markets and major rail routes in Denver.³⁶

Japanese Americans were involved in 'truck farming' as early as 1920. At the age of 23, N. Takashina, a Japanese American resident of Welby, Colorado (Adams County), was successful enough to own his own truck, which he used to drive to cabbages from his farm to markets in Denver.³⁷ Undoubtedly, other Japanese Americans, many of whom were commercial farmers, also took advantage of these important transportation routes. Those residing in the region were not more than a few hours travel away from the Denver metropolitan area. While Japanese Americans may have been migrating out of urban areas and Denver during this period, many remained residents in rural communities within close proximity of the city, which continued to serve as a social and economic center, not only for Colorado's Japanese Americans, but also for Japanese Americans of nearby states like Wyoming and New Mexico.

Japanese Americans in Denver (1910-1940)

Although Denver's Japanese American population was on the decline following 1910, the city's importance as a nexus of Colorado's Japanese American community did not correspondingly diminish. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese Americans residing in

³⁵ Peterson, p. 117-119, 123-126.

³⁶ Peterson, p. 123.

³⁷ "Farm Truck Kills Father of 11, Jap Farmer Held for Inquiry," *Denver Post*, September 15, 1920, p. 1.

Denver remained closely interlinked with Japanese Americans residing in the counties immediately surrounding the city. Rural farmers in the community depended on Denver's commercial markets as a place to sell their agricultural products, and, by living in relatively close proximity to Denver, they remained interconnected with the social and religious activities of Japanese Americans residing in the city. The Buddhist Temple on Market Street remained a religious center for Japanese Americans throughout all of Colorado. Founded in 1907, the Japanese Methodist congregation also served both urban and rural Japanese Americans throughout the prewar period.³⁸ Major Japanese American organizations, such as the Japanese Association of Eastern Mountain States, were also headquartered in Denver and they were coupled by numerous Japanese American businesses of all varieties.

It was in Denver that the Colorado's Japanese American and Euro-American populations resided in closest proximity to one another. During the 1920s and 1930s, Denver's Japanese American community remained concentrated along the 18th, 19th, and 20th Street blocks of Larimer, Blake, and Market Streets. These streets were in the heart of the city's downtown, resided only a few blocks north of the Denver Chamber of Commerce, and bordered several Euro-American neighborhoods as well as the ethnically diverse Five Points neighborhood. As described in Chapter 1, the Japanese American neighborhood was often frequented by Denver's Euro-American residents, who visited its stores and cafes. Japanese American business owners employed Japanese and Euro-American employees and catered to an ethnically mixed clientele. Bordering Five Points on the west, Denver's Japanese Americans shared many connections with the neighborhood. Until 1935, the Japanese Methodist church was within the Five Points

³⁸ R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-1994*, "Five Points Neighborhood," Prepared for City and County of Denver Denver Landmark Preservation Commission and Office of Planning and Community Development, (Denver, Colorado: Front Range Research Associates, 1995), p. 50.

neighborhood.³⁹ Many of the public schools which Denver's Japanese American children attended, resided in, or served youths of the Five Points neighborhood, including the Twenty-Fourth Street School, Cole Junior High School, and Manual Training School.⁴⁰ Colorado's Japanese Americans, as well as Japanese nationals, also attended Denver's colleges and universities. In the process, Denver emerged as not only an important social center for Colorado's Japanese American communities, but also an urban site of interracial interaction.

Buddhism, the Market Street Temple, and Japanese American Communities

First organized in 1916, Denver's Buddhist Church remained an important social center for Colorado's Japanese American community throughout the prewar period and into the present. Reverend T. Ono served as the temple's first priest, serving the Colorado Buddhist community for thirteen years before returning home to Japan in 1929. He was replaced by Reverend Guchoku Ouchi, who led the temple until 1931, when Reverend Y. Tamai took his place and served as the lead priest for the remainder of the prewar period.⁴¹ Located at 1942 Market Street, the Buddhist temple provided an accessible site of religious worship for the Japanese American community in Denver. Furthermore, Reverend's Tamai, Ouchi, and

³⁹ Phil Goodstein, *Denver Streets: Names, Numbers, Locations, Logic*, (Denver: New Social Publications, 1994), map of Denver streets in 1908 originally distributed by 1908 Chamber of Commerce; Simmons, Figure 18, "Estimated Distribution of the Black Population," original map produced by the Denver Interracial Commission; Simmons, Figure 19, "Non-White Households by Block, Denver, Colorado 1940."

⁴⁰ "School Bells Clang," *Denver Post*, September 4, 1929, p. 6; "Little Italian Girl Finds New Hero," *Denver Post*, February 22, 1929, p. 24; "Costumes of Many Countries," *Denver Post*, April 10, 1938, Section 4 p. 12; Students of Manual High School, *The Thunderbolt: Manual Training High School Yearbook 1926*, (Denver: Manual Training High School, 1926), p. 21, 77; Students of Manual Training High School, *The Thunderbolt: Manual Training High School Yearbook 1927*, (Denver: Manual Training High School, 1927) p. 27, 83, 88; Students of Manual Training High School, *The Thunderbolt: Manual training High School yearbook 1925*, (Denver: Manual Training High School, 1925), p. 23.

⁴¹ "Japs Celebrate Arrival of New priest in Denver," *Denver Post*, February 10, 1929, p. 5; "Buddhist Priest is Leaving Soon," *Denver Post*, September 12, 1931, p. 8.

presumably Ono, were each involved in traveling to towns neighboring Denver and providing religious services for Japanese Americans residing in those communities.⁴²

While many of the state's Japanese Americans lived too far away from the temple to attend regularly, during important Buddhist celebrations, such as the annual Festival of Flowers, several hundred Japanese Americans from across Colorado, and some across the stateliness of Wyoming or New Mexico, made the trip to Denver to participate. Each April, hundreds of Japanese Americans gathered in Denver for the Festival of Flowers, which commemorated the birth of Buddha. In 1933, a reporter of the *Denver Post* observed that Japanese from all over Colorado had arrived in "trucks and crowded little cars" to participate in the ceremonies. The festivities however, were not solely religious in nature. Japanese Americans put on plays, wore kimonos, and staged performances of songs and dances in commemoration of the event.⁴³ More than just a spiritual observance, the festivals offered an opportunity for Colorado's Japanese Americans to reconnect with elements of Japanese culture and the Japanese community. Other notable events that drew Japanese American Buddhists to Denver in sizable numbers included the 1926 death of the Emperor Yoshihito and the arrival of Reverend Ouchi in 1929. Ouchi's arrival as the Denver congregation's new priest in 1929 coincided with the completion of \$4,000 worth of renovations to Market Street Temple, and over 250 Japanese Americans attended the two-days of celebrations commemorating occasion.⁴⁴ Though fewer in number, several of Colorado's Japanese Americans also attended the mourning rites held for

⁴² Presbyterian Banner, "Buddhism in Denver," *The Missionary Review of the World* LVIII, no. 7 (1935): p. 253.

⁴³ "Buddhists Will Celebrate Their Christmas," *Denver Post*, April 8, 1925, Section 1 p. 14; "Buddhist Rites Observed by Colorado Japs," *Denver Post*, April 9, 1933, Section 1 p. 16; "Buddha's Birthday," *Denver Post*, April 7, 1935, Section 1 p. 8.

⁴⁴ "Japs Celebrate Arrival of New priest in Denver," *Denver Post*, February 10, 1929, p. 5

Japan's Emperor Yoshihito following his death in December of 1926 and participated in the observation of his funeral two months later in February of 1927.⁴⁵

Whether celebrating annual holidays or participating in periods of mourning, the Denver Market Street Temple demonstrated its importance to communities of Japanese American Buddhists throughout Colorado, serving as a spiritual center and an important gathering place for the state's community. By providing religious services, teaching Sunday-school classes, and observing marriages and funerals, the temple's priests provided an important link between Colorado's Japanese American communities and their traditional cultural practices and religious beliefs. Large annual observances of important religious holidays attracted even those who resided considerable distances away from Denver. This reflected not only the temple's importance as a religious center, but also its significance as a communal gathering site where Japanese Americans scattered throughout Colorado congregated on a perennial basis. Traveling to Denver for annual celebrations like the Festival of Flowers meant more than simply partaking in a religious observance, but also provided Colorado's Japanese Americans with the opportunity to reunite with other members of the community and reconnect and participate in traditional Japanese cultural and ethnic activities. In this way, Denver remained an important urban center throughout the prewar period.

Denver was also an important gathering place for Japanese Americans who were practitioners of other faiths. A Japanese Methodist church was established in Denver in 1907, preceding the organization of the Buddhist church within the city.⁴⁶ Situated out of Denver, the

⁴⁵ "Denver's Japanese Pay Homage to Late Mikado at Service," *Denver Post*, December 27, 1926, p. 21; "Denver Japanese Hold Rites at Church for Late Emperor," *Rocky Mountain News*, December 27, 1926, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Endo, p. 102.

Trinity Methodist Episcopal church was among the more progressive institutions in the state and welcomed diversity. When the church hosted an Inter-Racial Sunday observance in 1933, Japanese American Christians were among the many ethnicities represented at the service.⁴⁷ During the prewar period, however, only small numbers of Colorado's Japanese Americans converted to Christianity.⁴⁸ Much like Colorado's Japanese American Buddhists, those who did convert to Christianity also utilized Denver as an area for religious and social organization. When a Christian fellowship and study conference was organized in 1939, Denver was chosen to host the event. The assembly attracted over 125 Japanese from Colorado and the nearby states of Wyoming, Nebraska, and New Mexico.⁴⁹

Japanese American Businesses, Denver Clientele, and International Markets

In addition to its role as an important religious center for Colorado's Japanese Americans, the city of Denver was also host to secular Japanese American organizations and numerous Japanese American businesses. Japanese American social organizations, such as the Japanese Association of Eastern Mountain States, served communities of Japanese Americans well beyond the city limits of Denver.⁵⁰ The largest metropolis in the region, Denver was also host to the highest concentration of non-agricultural, Japanese American owned enterprises in the state. As has been discussed earlier, Denver had already emerged as an important center of commerce by 1909, and was host to several businesses including the Hotel Fukuokaya managed

⁴⁷ "Inter-racial Sunday to Be Observed with Program at Trinity," *Denver Post*, February 4, 1933, p. 7.

⁴⁸ Hosokawa, p. 58, 59.

⁴⁹ *Presbyterian Banner*, p. 253.

⁵⁰ City Business Directory Association, *City Business Directory*, (Denver: City Business Directory Association, 1922). City Business Directory Association, *City Business Directory for Denver 1924*, (Denver: City Business Directory Association, 1924).

by H. Tani, T. Endo's The Eastern Tailors Company, J. Yamashita's Carpenter Shop, Dr. T. Shimizu's medical practice, The Japanese Cookey Company, The Denver Noodle Factory, The Hotel Toyo, the Hotel Kumamotoya, the Japanese Hotel, The Tokyodo Watchmaker and Jeweler, and several labor contracting companies including H.N. Hokasono's.⁵¹ These enterprises were complimented by several cafes and restaurants operated out of the Japanese 'colony.' By the 1920s, these businesses were joined by an increasing quantity of Japanese owned importers, fine art and furniture stores, and other businesses which likely catered as much to Denver's Euro-American clientele as they did to Japanese Americans. The Tokio Art Shop, the S. Ban importation company, Matsumoto Kiku Ladies' Furnishings, the East-West Gift Shop, the Nippon Art Company, and the Nippon Mercantile Company were among the many businesses listed in city directories in the 1920s.⁵²

The importation, art, and furnishings enterprises likely served ethnically mixed clientele. In the 1920s, segments of Denver's Euro-American communities developed a fascination with the 'Orient' which fueled demand for Japanese products. The characteristics of this fascination and the discourse surrounding it shall be discussed at length in the following chapter. For now it is important to note that, during the 1920s, Denverites built elaborate Japanese gardens on their properties, attended Noh plays in local theaters, bathed with 'Jap Rose Soap,' hosted Japanese tea parties in costume, and wore fashions modeled after traditional Japanese garb.⁵³

⁵¹ Rokuhiko Suzuki, with an introduction by Herbert Johnson, *The Development of the Inter-Mountain Japanese Colonies*, (Denver: The Denver Shimpo Sha 1909), p. 1.

⁵² City Business Directory Association, *City Business Directory of Denver 1922*; City Business Directory Association, *City Business Directory 1924*.

⁵³ "Scenes at 'Rose Acre,' the Beautiful Summer Home of the Liebhardt Family," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, p. 1; "A Jap Noh Play to be Done for M'Dowell Fund," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, Amusement Section p. 1; "Jap Rose Soap" advertisement, *Denver Post*, May 13, 1927, p. 32;

Such an interest in Japanese product is likely responsible for the success of companies like the S. Ban Company, a Japanese American operated importer of Japanese goods located off of Larimer Street. Well established, the company had correspondents in Japan and in other regions of the United States. In 1920, the company had met with enough success in Denver to justify the investment in a \$145 character-based Japanese language typewriter, and hire an expert operator to use it—which involved petitioning the Secretary of Labor for permission to allow the operator, a Japanese native, to immigrate to the United States.⁵⁴ The success of the S. Ban Company, and its willingness to make such costly investments in order to accommodate the demands of its operations, suggests that the company was doing business with a fairly substantial clientele base. While the state’s Japanese Americans may have been clients of the proprietorship, it is unlikely that they were its sole customers. Other Japanese American retail and service industry enterprises, like the Japanese House and Office Cleaning Company and Nippon Art Goods Company, also appear to have served both Japanese American and Euro-American clients.⁵⁵

Some Japanese Americans were also involved in enterprises deemed criminal by contemporaries. During the era of prohibition, several of Denver’s Japanese Americans, as well as Japanese farmers in nearby rural regions, were arrested by local authorities for their involvement in liquor production and bootlegging. In March of 1920, police reported that they

Advertisement for kimonos by Denver Dry Goods Company, *Denver Post*, April 24, 1925, p. 11; “Japanese Tea Party Planned,” *Denver Post*, December 22, 1935, Section 2 p. 4.

⁵⁴ “Unique Japanese Typewriter Installed by Denver Company, Operated by Imported Expert,” *Denver Post*, November 22, 1920, p. 6.

⁵⁵ “A Japanese Bride in Denver Faces Charge of Bigamy,” *Denver Post*, August 24, 1931, p. 8; “Mixup of American Laws and Japanese Religion Lands Buddhist in Jail,” *Denver Post*, September 1, 1931, p. 12; City Business Directory Association, *City Business Directory 1924*. When Shigeo Miyazawa, owner of the Nippon Art Goods Company was involved in a bigamy scandal in 1931, he was recognized by reporters as the general manager of the store in the local press.

confiscated thousands of dollars of whiskey and wine from the Arvada farm of G.M. Nakasugi, just a few miles outside Denver.⁵⁶ A year later, K. Wahakowa, a 37 year old Japanese resident of Denver was arrested for violating prohibitions laws. Police reports indicate that Wahakowa's home, located at 1906 Lawrence Street, had been outfitted with a whisky still and that he had been illegally producing alcohol.⁵⁷ That same year, another Japanese American residing in Denver was arrested after six hundred quarts of rice whisky were seized from his home.⁵⁸ The reasons why Japanese Americans became involved in liquor production and distribution are difficult to discern. It does seem apparent, however, that based on the quantities of alcohol confiscated from the residences described above, that some members of the community were involved in sizable bootlegging operations worth several thousand dollars.

Clearly, however, most of Denver's Japanese American residents were not involved in operating their own businesses, legal or otherwise. As has been discussed earlier, those who were not entrepreneurs likely worked for their business-owning neighbors in some capacity—as waiters and cooks at restaurants, sales clerks in stores, truck drivers, and so on. While it is unclear how many did so, some members of the Japanese American community found employment as servants in the households of wealthy Euro-American Denverites.⁵⁹ The city was also host to a small number of Japanese professionals, including physicians and nurses. Dr. K.K. Miyamoto was a Japanese American doctor with an independent practice 1952 Larimer Street.

⁵⁶ "Fortune in Booze Found in Raid on Japanese Farmer," *Denver Post*, March 21, 1920, p. 1.

⁵⁷ "Jap Seized on Bootlegging Charge, Still is Found," *Rocky Mountain News*, March 7, 1921, p. 2.

⁵⁸ "Rice Whisky is Seized in Raid on Jap's Home," *Rocky Mountain News*, March 13, 1921, Section 1 p. 6.

⁵⁹ "Jap Cook Letters Cake to Jesus from Joneses," *Denver Post*, January 6, 1929, Society Section p. 1; "Jap Murderer Again Applies for Clemency," *Denver Post*, August 18, 1920, p. 11. *Genkyo Mitsunaga, the Japanese American accused of murder was employed as a cleaner in the household of the victim. It appears possible that he was wrongly accused of the crime.

In 1929, Takejia Morishige was a 41 year old resident of Denver who was employed as an orderly at Saint Joseph's hospital, earning a salary of \$90 a month.⁶⁰

Visitors to Denver: Japanese Nationals, Businessmen and Businesswomen, and Entrepreneurs

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Denver emerged as an increasingly important commercial and economic center, not only for the Rocky Mountain West, but also in national, and even global, markets. Over the course of this roughly ten year period, Denver was the site of frequent visitation by investors, Japanese businessmen and women, and representatives of Japanese chambers of commerce. In stark contrast to the reception of Japanese and Japanese American businessmen in the first decade of the twentieth century—which was often marred with the vocal protests of local unions—Japanese nationals exploring investment possibilities in Denver and Colorado received positive coverage in local newspapers and were broadly welcomed by representatives of Denver's Chamber of Commerce and Colorado businessmen.

Japanese women who had met with success in business or had risen to prominence as leaders of social organizations were the recipients of considerable attention. The 1920 arrival of H.S. Toda, a representative of the Suzuki Company, in Denver attracted considerable attention from the local press. The *Denver Post* positively compared Madame Yone Suzuki, the company's owner, to successful industrialists like Morgath and Rockefeller, describing her as a "genius for organization and finance." The paper was fascinated with Suzuki for being a prominent and successful businesswoman at a time when the economic worlds of Europe and the United States remained dominated by men and printed a brief biography of her life on the front page. At the

⁶⁰ "Japanese Doctor Held in Narcotic Law Violations," *Denver Post*, March 27, 1924, p. 22; "Japanese Student of Nursing to Work Among her People in Colorado," *Denver Post*, November 22, 1931, Section 1 p. 11; "Jap Smashes Furniture When Wife Dares to Dispute his Command," *Denver Post*, September 21, 1929, p. 10; "Japan Smashes Italy, Africa Steps in and Good old America Gets the Coin," *Denver Post*, September 10, 1920, p. 5.

same time, the *Post* reported enthusiastically on the company's consideration of Denver "as a desirable trading center between North and South American," expressing optimism at the Japanese company's intention to establish a large branch in Denver.⁶¹ Several years later, similar fanfare was granted Michi Kawai, a prominent Japanese social worker who attended the laying of the cornerstone of Denver's Y.W.C.A. building in 1927. The *Post* described her as one of the "outstanding personalities among the progressive women of Japan," and was impressed with the level of success she had achieved as a woman.⁶²

Japanese businessmen received notably less fanfare in Denver's papers than their female counterparts, nevertheless, their visitations were widely publicized. In 1926, seven Japanese representatives of the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce Business Inspecting Committee toured Denver's industrial centers, met with the Denver Chamber of Commerce, and visited with members of the local Japanese American community at the Market Street Temple.⁶³ Two years later, a group of seventeen Japanese business and professional men visited Denver on their tour of the United States, meeting with the city's chamber of commerce.⁶⁴ In 1930, yet another group of Japanese businessmen, fifteen in number, visited the Mile High City.⁶⁵

⁶¹ "Richest Woman in Japan May Name Denver as one of Trade Centers of Firm," *Denver Post*, April 23, 1920, p. 1.

⁶² "Japanese Women Break Barrier of Business World," *Denver Post*, January 21, 1927, p. 13.

⁶³ "Seven Japanese Visit Denver on Tour of Nation," *Denver Post*, July 3, 1926, p. 8; "Denver Welcomes Japanese Business Men here Making tour of U.S. Industries," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 4, 1926, p. 5.

⁶⁴ "Group of Business Leaders of Japan Pay Denver Visit," *Denver Post*, September 30, 1928, p. 10.

⁶⁵ "Visiting Japanese Editor Finds Conditions 'ideal' in Denver," *Denver Post*, August 18, 1930, p. 7.

Throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Japanese businessmen were frequent visitors of Denver.

What impact this had on Colorado's Japanese American communities is difficult to discern. The visitation of prominent investors and businessmen from Japan reflected Denver's growing relevance as a nationally and globally significant economic center. On occasions, these visitations materialized into concrete economic outcomes. In 1927 for example, the Japanese government purchased a prize herd of cattle which was sent back to Japan to be bred with Japanese herds.⁶⁶ Other visits by Japanese businessmen or government representatives were more observational in nature. Such was the case with a 1924 trip to Denver made by representatives of the Nippon Oil Company and geology professors of the Imperial University of Tokyo. The group remained in Colorado for a week, surveyed the state's oil fields, and observed the production methods of Colorado's refineries—describing them as “the best in the world.”⁶⁷ It is unclear whether or not such a visit produced fostered further economic outcomes. Furthermore, the extent to which any of these exchanges had a material impact on Colorado's Japanese American communities is unknown. In at least one instance, as was described above, members of the visiting party from Japan visited members of the local Japanese American community. Based on the existence of local Japanese American enterprises which was involved in economic exchanges with individuals in Japan, such as the S. Ban company, it is clear that some members of Colorado's Japanese American community were closely interlinked with international markets. Since the vast majority of the community was rural and involved in

⁶⁶ “Jap Officials Buy Prize Herd in Denver for Nippon Ranches,” *Denver Post*, June 28, 1927, p. 7.

⁶⁷ “Japanese Oil Experts are in Denver to inspect possibilities of Shale Beds,” *Denver Post*, June 26, 1924, p. 6.

agricultural labor, it is unlikely that the presence of Japanese businessmen in Denver had a significant impact on their day-to-day economic status.

As political relations between Japan and the United States began to sour following Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and Japan's increasing militarism in East Asia during the 1930s, visitation by Japanese business representatives and professionals were less frequently reported on in the local press—likely because the visitations themselves had become infrequent. Expressions of disapproval over Japan's militarism were at times voiced economically by members of Denver's Euro-American community. In 1937, the Denver Housewives League, which had been organized in 1910 and was composed of roughly 150 members, declared a formal boycott against Japanese-made goods in response to the Japanese invasion of China.⁶⁸ As the war escalated, the prospect of forging business relationships with Japan had become less appealing to some segments of Denver's populace.

Japanese Americans and Education in Denver

As Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals were forging relationships with Euro-American business owners and professionals in Colorado, Colorado's Japanese Americans were attending Denver schools alongside students of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Denver's Twenty-fourth Street School, Cole Junior High School, and Manual Training High School were frequently described by contemporaries as the city's "melting pot."⁶⁹ In the two decades leading up to the

⁶⁸ "Denver Housewives Declare Boycott on all Japanese goods," *Denver Post*, November 11, 1937, p. 11.

⁶⁹ "School Bells Clang," *Denver Post*, September 4, 1929, p. 6.

onset of World War II, Japanese American children were attendees of all three schools and they shared hallways and classrooms with representatives of over 20 other nations.⁷⁰

The diverse communities of these Denver schools were frequently reported on in the pages of the *Denver Post*, and the schools themselves were lauded as sites of assimilation and integration. Japanese American youths were apparently not deemed inassimilable by *Post* reporters, and were often portrayed in the local paper as no different from their American counterparts. In a 1929 article reporting the return to school of Twenty-fourth Street students, all three photographs used by the paper were of Japanese American and white American students socializing in a friendly manner, intimate manner. In one image, a young Japanese girl is pictured standing in line with a diverse group of students, waving in unison and smiling at the camera. The other two images reveal a considerably more intimate degree of association between Japanese American and white American students at the school. In one, two young girls, Mary Horino (Japanese) and Ruth Boscoe (American) are shown with their arms around one another's shoulders, sharing a book at a classroom desk. In another, two young boys are featured, Albert Oga and Karuto Kazumasa, sharing an open lunchbox with what appear to be sandwiches inside.⁷¹

The *Post's* selection of these images to represent the start of the new academic year is intriguing. It indicates that Denver's Japanese American children were not only attending classes with white American students, but also formulating close social relations with their peers. The latter two images discussed both appear to reflect sincere social interactions between Japanese American and white American children. Both images also convey a sense of

⁷⁰ "A Miniature Melting Pot," *Denver Post*, April 9, 1932, p. 13.

⁷¹ "School Bells Clang," *Denver Post*, September 4, 1929, p. 6.

harmonious relations between white American and Japanese American students. They also portray Japanese Americans attending American public schools, wearing American style clothing, reading from an English language book, and sharing an American style lunch with fellow American students.⁷² In another article, a Japanese American boy is featured along with five other youths from the Twenty-fourth Street School. In commemoration of George Washington's birthday, all six students are pictured standing around a blown up portrait of George Washington. The young Japanese boy is dressed in distinctly western clothing, wearing a button up shirt, a tie, and formal slacks. Driving the point home, is a quote from the school's principle that ends the article: "They are all Americans now." Conveying the importance of the celebration in the process of Americanization, the article makes it explicitly clear that, regardless of their racial background, the students are all "young Americans" following their participation in the celebration of George Washington's birthday.⁷³ In its reporting on the Twenty-fourth Street School, and the Japanese American students in attendance at it, the post appeared clearly concerned with conveying the schools effective Americanization of these students. In the process however, the paper also implied that these students could in fact be Americanized, implicitly challenging assumptions about the inability of Japanese Americans to be Americanized as a result of their race.

Messages of successful Americanization were also conveyed in the *Post's* reporting on Cole Junior High School and Manual High School. Again, Japanese American students are portrayed as individuals capable of being assimilated, if not already well on the path towards Americanization. In one image from a 1933 article on Cole Junior High, a young Japanese

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ "Little Italian Girl Finds New Hero," *Denver Post*, February 22, 1929, p. 24.

American girl in Western clothing is shown working alongside three white classmates, tending the school's garden.⁷⁴ In another photo, a young Japanese American boy, again in western garb, is pictured working with an African American student on a project. They, like the rest of their classmates in the article, are building and decorating parchment lamp shades.⁷⁵ No explicit racially qualifying distinctions between the students are made, and the Japanese American youths are simply referred to as students. Again, these images were publicized in the local press and were intended to feature the processes of Americanization underway at these schools, processes from which Japanese American youths were portrayed as not being excluded.

In rural areas, as was discussed earlier, Japanese American students attending local schools caused concerns with county superintendents and, in some instances, pushed white American parents to withdraw their children from local schools. The experiences of Japanese American students in Denver's Twenty-fourth Street School, Cole Junior High School, and Manual High School during the 1920s and 1930s were notably different. Japanese American students of these schools were participating in academic life alongside white American students and students of other ethnic backgrounds. While it is difficult to discern the nature of their social interactions with other students, it is possible to gauge their integration into academic life through their participation in extracurricular activities. In 1935, Eiche Kawamata became lead pitcher of the Manual Training High School Baseball Team and was featured in the *Post* for leading the league in strikeouts; Frances Kido, a Japanese American student who graduated Manual High in 1927 was Editor-in-Chief of the school yearbook, participated on the debate team, and was recognized as an exceptional writer; Yoshiko Ariki and Evelyn Kirimura

⁷⁴ "Springtime's Almost Here," *Denver Post*, March 13, 1933, p. 14.

⁷⁵ "Brightening up the Home," *Denver Post*, April 16, 1933, Section 1 p. 16.

participated in Cole Junior High's theater productions.⁷⁶ While their experiences should not be taken as universal, they are a reasonable indication of the extent to which Japanese American youth's of the prewar period were able to participate as students in the American public school system.

Furthermore, the city's most widely circulated paper, *The Denver Post*, regularly highlighted what it interpreted as processes of Americanization underway at these schools. Readers of the *Post* were exposed to schools that were presented as Denver's 'melting pots,' effectively assimilating all of their diverse elements into a mainstream American identity. In this context, Japanese Americans were presented as individuals who could be assimilated, or in fact, had already been Americanized. While such imagery did not necessarily eliminate racial prejudice or even racialized assumptions, it did present Japanese Americans in an uncharacteristic fashion for the period and possibly challenged social assumptions about the inability of Japanese American communities to be integrated into a broader American national identity.

More concretely, the opportunity to receive an education opened doors for many Japanese Americans youths. Japanese Americans who had the financial means, desire, and met with academic success, whether attending school in Denver or elsewhere in Colorado, did attend Denver's colleges and universities. After successfully completing high school at Rocky Ford in 1929, Kiki Nishimura entered the University of Colorado's school of nursing. She eventually planned to return to Rocky Ford and provide medical advice, education, and

⁷⁶ "Strikeout King of Prep Loop!," *Denver Post*, April 23, 1935, p. 19; Students of Manual Training High School, *Manual Training High School Yearbook 1927*, p. 27; "Far Eastern Questions," *Denver Post*, January 7, 1932, p. 25.

treatment for members of the Japanese American community there.⁷⁷ In this respect, her education had the dual effect of uplifting Nishimura's own socioeconomic status as well as contributing to the improvement of the overall health of Rocky Ford's Japanese American community.

Conclusion

The 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s were a period of gradual transition for Colorado's Japanese American community. During this thirty year period, the community underwent fundamental demographic shifts, becoming composed increasingly of rural families involved in agricultural work. The male contract laborers which composed nearly all of the state's Japanese American population during the first decade of the twentieth century, gradually brought former wives and family members from overseas, married, or left the state. This shift in demographic composition may be attributed to the enactment of the Gentleman's Agreement in 1907, which effectively barred the further migration of male Japanese laborers to the United States but still permitted the families of Japanese individuals already residing in the United States to enter the nation. At the same time, alien land laws passed in other states, including California, likely pushed some Japanese Americans to abandon those states and seek opportunities elsewhere in America. By 1940, the male to female ratio in the state had decidedly balanced out, and while men still outnumbered women, they no longer did so at ratios of over 20:1 as they had during the first several years of the century. This demographic shift also impacted the social character of Colorado's Japanese American community, as it was not until the years following 1910 that Colorado was host to any significant number of Japanese American women. Paralleling this increase in women was an increasingly large segment of the Japanese American population that

⁷⁷ "Japanese Student of Nursing to Work among Her People in Colorado," *Denver Post*, November 22, 1931, Section 1 p. 4.

was native born. By 1920, over 25% of the state's 2,454 Japanese American residents had been born in the United States, indicating that the state's Japanese Americans had begun to start families and have children. Over the course of the next twenty years, due at least in part to restrictive immigration quotes enacted by the United States, the population of foreign born Japanese Americans in Colorado continued to decline.

Also underway during the thirty years preceding World War II was an abandonment of Colorado's urban areas by Japanese Americans. The number of Japanese American's residing in urban areas steadily declined over the course of three decades, and, as it did, the number of Japanese American's residing in rural areas grew. Nevertheless, the majority of Japanese Americans who resided in rural areas remained in close proximity to the city of Denver, residing in Adams, Weld, Boulder, and Arapahoe Counties. These counties were all in close proximity to the city of Denver and were connected to the city by major rail and highway routes. Japanese Americans, many of whom were commercial farmers, depended on these routes to take their agricultural products to markets in Denver.

Despite experiencing declines in the size of its Japanese American community, Denver remained an important social and economic center for Japanese Americans throughout the state. The city was host to social and religious organizations of considerable importance to Colorado's Japanese Americans, including the Market Street Temple, Methodist churches, and the Japanese Association of the Eastern Mountain States. Denver was also a growing metropolis that emerged as an important national and even global economic center. The city remained host to the state's greatest concentration of non-agricultural Japanese American businesses, many of which catered to both Euro-American and Japanese American clientele. The hotels, restaurants, cafes, and mercantile stores of the city's Japanese 'colony' were complimented by a

series of Japanese owned fine art, furniture, and import companies, many of which sold imported Japanese products. During the 1920s and into the early 1930s, Denver also attracted several visits from Japanese businessmen and professionals seeking to make potential investments in the state of Colorado. Increasingly, the mile high city was a site of interethnic social and economic interaction, as Japanese Americans worked for and employed Euro-American workers, attended integrated schools, participated in local social and sporting events, and lived in close proximity to Euro-American neighbors.

As described earlier, the initial responses of Denver's white communities to their Japanese American neighbors was mixed. Unions in particular felt threatened by the presence of Japanese owned and operated businesses that were not using unionized laborers. Eventually however, fears about the presence of Japanese Americans in the city abated, and the racial animosity directed at the community subsided by the 1920s and 1930s. Nevertheless, Japanese Americans remained the subject of local spectacle, and, while the tensions related to labor disputes may have cooled, the majority of Euro-American community continued to identify Japanese Americans as a racial 'other.' The following chapter explores in detail the racial discourses directed at Japanese Americans, as well as "the Japanese" as a racial community, that emerged during the 1920s and 1930s.

Chapter 3: Fear, Anxiety, and Racial Discourse in the *Denver Post*

Chapter 3 examines the ways in which interwar discourses published in the *Denver Post* employed racial rhetoric in their characterizations of the Japanese state. Following the conclusion of World War I, Japan became increasingly assertive politically and militarily in East Asia. As Japan expanded the size of its military and naval arsenals throughout the interwar years, came into conflict with the United States on immigration policies in the early 1920s, and pursued a policy of aggressive imperialism in East Asia during the 1930s and 1940s, the *Denver Post's* reporting on the nation and its leaders was characterized by anxiety and fear as American pundits, journalists, and politicians raised concerns about the military power of the Japanese state. In this context, Japan was framed as a bellicose state and an adversary of the United States. Race emerged in contemporary discourses discussing the Japanese state, and the *Denver Post*, as well as other Colorado newspapers, published reports that racialized the imperialistic activities of the Japan and implicated all individuals of Japanese descent as associates of the government. *Post* discourses depicted Japan's imperialistic policies as racially and politically motivated. Within the frameworks of racial discourses, the state's ambitions in East Asia were understood to be inextricably linked with the success of "the Japanese" race in the context of a Darwinian like global struggle for racial supremacy.

The activities of the Japanese government received an unusual amount of attention in the local press, and the anxieties and fears they aroused in American reporters and statesman were not directed at other nation-states. Despite the fact that Western European nations were involved in the expansion of their militaries and remained committed to preserving their colonial empires during the interwar years, the pages of the *Denver Post* did not print articles exhibiting parallel anxieties about the militarism of other nations until the late 1930s, when Nazi

Germany's militarism in Western Europe accelerated. That Japan's own imperial ambitions paralleled the actions of Western European imperialists, as well as America's own imperial behavior, was not frequently elaborated upon by articles in the *Post*, although the occasional self-conscious political commentator was acute, and bold enough, to make such a comparison. As the recipient of a unique amount of attention in *Post* journalism, Japan and its political and military actions were disseminated to Colorado newspaper readers who became familiarized with a bellicose nation-state. The transnational relationship between Japan and the United States was also featured as a matter of particular importance, as Japan was described as the principle challenger to American political interests in the Pacific and East Asia. Furthermore, Japan was not just depicted as a political threat, but also a racial one, as contemporaneous racial discourses framed Japan as a threat to the social dominance of the white race.

The implication here is not that Japan's militaristic behavior in the East Asia should be excused, but rather that in the *Denver Post*, and other American periodicals, Japan had been singled out for its militarism and imperial expansion even as other nations were involved in behavior similar to Japan's. Japan's behavior was not unparalleled, yet its treatment in the press—which often characterized it as an existential threat to the United States—was without parallel. As they framed Japan as an adversary of the United States, these racial discourses implicitly suggested that Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and, essentially all individuals of Japanese heritage, were collaborators of the Japanese state on account of their shared racial identity. In this context, Japanese Americans were vilified by Californian journalists and politicians, who described them as inassimilable and disloyal. Xenophobic pundits and politicians from California portrayed Japanese Americans as disloyal and untrustworthy, serving the interests of the Japanese state and the Japanese race, and coming to the United States only to expand the size of the Japanese population across the globe and to extract resources from

America and return them to Japan. During the early 1920s, as tensions between Japan and the United States escalated over the passage of more stringent alien land laws in California and the Immigrant Act of 1924, readers of Colorado newspapers were regularly exposed to their opinions, which were featured in the *Denver Post*.

However, Colorado journalists did not produce parallel discourses about Colorado's Japanese Americans, who were not explicitly implicated as associates of the Japanese state or the Japanese race. In fact, Colorado's Japanese Americans were largely absent from the *Post's* coverage of the Japan and its government. While Colorado's Japanese Americans did not emerge as the direct subjects of these discourses, the racial assumptions contained within these discourses that implicitly affiliated all individuals of Japanese descent, including Colorado's Japanese Americans, with the militarism of Japan. Furthermore, although not all of the *Post's* writings on the actions of the Japanese government were couched in racialized terms, columns and reports that racialized its activities went uncontested. No substantive arguments were made against the validity of racial understandings of the state, even if it was not ubiquitous in the paper's journalism. Consequently, racialized discourses opened up the possibility of understanding Japanese Americans as sharing an inherent racial relationship with the Japan and its political and military actions.

The *Denver Post's* reporting on these issues during the interwar years may be broken up into roughly three chronological periods corresponding to Japan's military activities and stand-offs on immigration between Japan and the United States. From 1920 to 1924, Japan's demands for Shantung, disputes with the United States over Yap island, and the passage of stronger alien-land laws in California elevated tensions between the two nations, consequentially raising the frequency with which articles in the *Post* expressing anxiety about a war with Japan were published. In 1924, the passage of the Immigrant Act also fueled tensions between Japan and

the United States. Whereas the act inspired outrage in Japan, it received considerable support in the United States and American pundits and journalists expressed self-righteous support for the implementation of immigrant quotas that effectively barred the entry of all Japanese immigrants into the United States. However, by 1924, the anxieties and fears that were expressed by Americans in the *Post* reporting about Japan had dissipated, and new interpretations of Japan often characterized the nation as weak, childlike, and unthreatening. Tensions gradually eased after 1924, and, although articles expressing concerns about the expansion of Japan's military continued to appear in the newspaper. During the six years between 1924 and 1931, tensions between the two nations had cooled and the quantity of articles expressing fear about the outbreak of war with Japan had also declined. But, as Japan became increasingly aggressive in pursuing its imperial ambitions following the Mukden Incident of 1931, *Post* journalists once again raised concerns about the possibility of war with Japan. Although the discourses of the 1930s were less likely to associate Japanese Americans as racial proxies of Japan, these pundits continued to racialize Japan's activities and the state's militaristic and bellicose characterization became more dominant as warfare in China intensified.

Must We Fight Japan?

Walter Pitkin's *Must We Fight Japan?* (1921), is indicative of American publications which developed associations between the Japanese state and "the Japanese" as a racial population. Pitkin was an academic and a professor of psychology and philosophy at Columbia in the interwar years. In the early 1920s, he embraced the ideas expressed in emerging 'racial science,' which was involved in examining and understanding inherent biological characteristics in racial communities. Pitkin was viewed as an expert on Japan by contemporaries, and in 1922, the nationally syndicated *Literary Digest*, featured excerpts from Pitkin's *Must We Fight Japan?*

in its "Special Japan Edition."¹ Pitkin's work represents a coherent manifestation of interwar discourses that racialized the Japanese state and its activities; it is introduced and analyzed here as a precursor to our analysis of the *Denver Post*, where newspaper reporters, journalists, and pundits expressed sentiments that paralleled Pitkin's, though in briefer, fragmentary ways. Moreover, contemporary readers of the *Post* were likely exposed to some of Pitkin's ideas directly, as the *Post* featured full page advertisements for the *Literary Digest's* "Special Japan Edition" in the early 1920s. With a circulation of nearly a million, undoubtedly the *Digest* had attracted some subscribers in Colorado who in turn came in contact with Pitkin's ideas.

In *Must We Fight Japan?*, Pitkin analyzed the possibility of a future war between Japan and the United States and attempted to devise proposals by which such a conflict may be avoided. He also wrote his work with the intent to inform the American public on the 'realities' of Japan, arguing that "American opinion...has been perverted and tainted by the ignorance of its chief informants, the newspapers, by the misrepresentations of men personally interested in some exploitation, and by the honest enthusiasms and exaggerations of patriots on both sides of the Pacific."² However, his self-proclaimed act of setting the record straight for the public was not so concerned with dispelling popular understandings of race, but rather, debunking characteristics that he felt had been wrongly attributed to the Japanese race. Ominously portending that, "the chances of grave trouble with Japan in the near future are immensely greater than our chances of trouble with Germany were ten years ago," Pitkin listed several political and economic reasons which had strained relations between Japan and the United

¹ "Japan's Seventy Dazzling Years," *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 23.

² Walter B. Pitkin, *Must We Fight Japan*, (New York: The Century Company, 1921), p. vi.

States.³ He even asked readers to place themselves in the position of a Japanese national, pointing out the inequalities that characterize international relations between the 'East' and the 'West.' He encouraged readers to take the "Japanese point of view as far as [they] can," so that they realize why "Japan cannot consider reducing her military forces." His conclusion demonstrated a high degree of identification with "the Japanese," citing anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States and the expansion of the American military as among the causes of strained relations between the two nations and Japan's militarization.⁴ Furthermore, while he refrained from forming a definitive opinion on Japanese American communities of California or the Japanese of Hawaii, he was critical of "Californians who display[ed] agitation over the Japanese 'invasion,'" arguing that they were "suffering from a bad case of facts" in formulating their opinions.⁵

While Pitkin's interpretations of the Japanese were in some respects sympathetic to Japan, in his attempts to dispel the 'myths' of popular discourse, race remained an underlying element of his work. He cited "racial habits of life" among the forces responsible for fueling antagonism between Japan and the United States.⁶ Pitkin viewed Japan's relationship with the United States in the context of Darwinian like state-of-the-world, in which nations, and races, are struggling for power and control of limited resources across the globe.⁷ He also employed racialized terms like 'stock' in his comparisons of "the Japanese" to other ethnic communities, terms which clearly reflect his understanding of racial biology as a source of underlying physical

³ Pitkin, p. 6.

⁴ Pitkin, p. 8, 17, 18.

⁵ Pitkin, p. 198.

⁶ Pitkin, p. v.

⁷ Pitkin, p. vi.

and mental differences between populations.⁸ It was the racial characteristics of “the Japanese,” he argued, which must be attributed to their success over other races.⁹ In his efforts to foster a positive image of Japan and the Japanese, Pitkin was relatively benign in his presentation of the Japanese as a racial community. He assured readers that claims regarding the “superhuman adaptability of the Japanese” are falsehoods.¹⁰ Praising the work ethic of “the Japanese,” Pitkin described in an explicit racial characterization, that “these little yellow men” are “more nearly model laborers” than most Europeans.¹¹ However, Pitkin’s words of praise for the Japanese “yellow men” belie his continued implication in dominant racial discourses. While Pitkin may have desired to elevate contemporaneous discussions about the Japanese state and “the Japanese” race to the ‘academic level’ by insisting that observers use an objective, scientific approach to characterize Japan, he nevertheless remained committed to a racialized understanding of “the Japanese.” The debates he and other contemporaries engaged in were not about the validity of categorizing the human beings according to their racial attributes, but rather, contemporaries debated with one another over what characteristics should be attributed to different racial populations, and implicitly, who had discursive control over the characteristics that should be attributed to different races. Despite Pitkin’s efforts to portray “the Japanese” in a more benign fashion, the grip of contemporaneous racial discourses inevitably colored his writing.

Pitkin’s implication in a racialized understanding of the world is reflected by his response to Lothrop Stoddard’s *Rising Tide of Color*. Stoddard argued that the population of

⁸ Pitkin, p. 211, 231, 332, 485, 489.

⁹ Pitkin, p. 192.

¹⁰ Pitkin, p. 46.

¹¹ Pitkin, p. 191.

non-white races was growing at a faster rate than the white population, which would inevitably result in the unification of the “colored world...against the dominant white man.”¹² While Pitkin challenged Stoddard’s arguments, he made no effort to dismiss the racialized logic presented by Stoddard, implicitly acknowledging that the continued population growth of other races would inevitably lead to a scenario of conflict in which whites were challenged by non-white races. Instead, Pitkin challenged the quantitative analysis presented by Stoddard, arguing that his figures grossly miscalculated the growth of non-white populations and underestimated the growth of the global white population in years to come.¹³ Pitkin insisted that “we need not fear for the position of the white race in the world” because “there is a very good reason to believe that European’s will constitute a larger proportion of the world’s population a century hence than they do at present.”¹⁴ Pitkin’s statements reveal his implication in the dominant racial discourses of the 1920s. Although Pitkin’s racialization of “the Japanese” may be described as sympathetic, it was nevertheless racially essentializing as it interconnected an innate relationship between the Japanese state and all individuals of Japanese ethnicity. By acknowledging Stoddard’s argument about the inherently adversarial character of relations between the white race and other races, Pitkin accepted the validity of Stoddard’s premise even as he suggested that Stoddard’s quantitative data was inaccurate. In effect, Pitkin acknowledged that conflicts between races can and do exist, and that a conflict between the United States and Japan may be rightly interpreted as more than just a conflict between two nation-states, but also as a conflict between two races.

¹² Pitkin, pp. 311-314.

¹³ Pitkin, p. 314, 317, 339.

¹⁴ Pitkin, p. 339.

Further indicative of Pitkin's implication in racial discourse was his support of S.J. Holmes, an academic from the University of California who studied eugenics and miscegenation. Although Pitkin did not write on the issue of miscegenation himself, within his work he published "Shall East Wed West," an article by Holmes, an individual whom Pitkin described as "specially qualified" in his field.¹⁵ Holmes was a cautious advocate of experimentation in eugenics and "race mixture."¹⁶ He argued that study was needed to evaluate the "results of race-crossing," but felt that "race mingling is going rapidly enough as it is, and it would be a part of prudence to study more closely before...adopting the questionable policy of accelerating this process."¹⁷ He added that, "Racial prejudice...has important and valuable functions. It has served to keep races pure. And for a superior race to keep pure is a very important condition for the maintenance of its culture, as well as...its biological inheritance."¹⁸ Explicit within Holmes' ideas—ideas to which Pitkin subscribed—was the notion that there were inherent biological characteristics of populations that distinguished them from other groups.

Holmes suggested that racial antagonism was an essential element of "human nature," and that experiments in "race mixture" would be consequentially difficult to perform.¹⁹ With respect to racial conflict, Holmes discussed at length the "evils of the birth rate."²⁰ For Holmes, and consequentially for Pitkin, races were engaged in a constant conflict with one another, with clearly defined winners and losers. He argued that the "struggle for existence is inevitable," and

¹⁵ Pitkin, p. 481.

¹⁶ Pitkin, p. 489.

¹⁷ Pitkin, pp. 490-493.

¹⁸ Pitkin, p. 497.

¹⁹ Pitkin, p. 495.

²⁰ Pitkin, p. 499.

“supremacy belongs to the race that produces the larger number of babies that grow up.”²¹ The struggle for the production of offspring was inextricably linked with access to resources, the acquisition of new territories, and, often times, war. As a result, “there will be a yellow peril to the white race and a white peril to the yellow race wherever contacts occur.”²² In Holmes’ understanding of race relations, races were not only inherently different as a result of their biological characteristics, but were also inevitably in conflict with one another as they were implicated in a Darwinian evolutionary model of existence. Furthermore, race, for Holmes, was a more fundamental unifying force than other forms of identification, such as nationality, class, or gender. In his model of social affiliation, Japanese Americans shared a closer relationship with all “Japanese,” and implicitly the Japanese state, than they ever could with white Americans or the United States. In such an analytical framework, Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals were characterized as a part of a ‘yellow race’ (which included other Asian ethnicities), and the Japanese state, since it was essentially populated by a homogenous Japanese community, functioned as the political representative of a “Japanese” race. In fact, by virtue of their presence on American soil and their successful reproduction in the United States, Holmes’ logic suggested that “the Japanese” were progressing towards global racial supremacy. While war was not always the process by which racial supremacy was asserted, Holmes asserted that it was one possible avenue to acquire new resources and territories that may contribute to greater reproductive success and, consequently, racial superiority. For Holmes, immigration was framed as another means of racial expansion, and is in effect, paralleled to war as an alternative means of providing members of the same racial community access to new resources that facilitated their reproduction and eventual racial supremacy.

²¹ Pitkin, p. 502.

²² Pitkin, p. 503.

The ideas presented by Pitkin's and Holmes' are important in understanding the racialized relationship between the Japanese state and members of "the Japanese" race as it was expressed in discourses of the 1920s and 1930s. Holmes' ideas, and Pitkin's praise of them, reveal that even discourses that were more sympathetic in their interpretation of the Japanese state and the "Japanese" continued to employ racially essentializing language. By extolling Holmes' work, Pitkin, an individual who in the rest of his writing was fairly sympathetic to Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and the Japanese state, reveals his unwillingness to challenge, and in fact reproduction, of discourses that continued to view race as a biological reality that produced dramatic and essential differences in human populations while simultaneously pitting them against one another as they vied for global supremacy. Additionally, Pitkin's work reveals the centrality of race in the ideas of other contemporaries, such as Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, who explicitly viewed the Japanese as not only incapable of being assimilated, but even as a "racial danger."²³

Must We Fight Japan? reveals the seriousness with which anxiety about the Japanese state, Japanese nationals, and Japanese Americans had entered American discourses. Informing these anxieties were Japanese military expansion and immigration. Contemporary Euro-Americans linked Japanese expansion and immigration into mutually reinforcing endeavors, which inspired popular anxieties not just about the power of the Japanese state, but also raised fears about the supremacy of the Japanese race. Not only were these sentiments expressed by American intellectuals, but they were also published in major American periodicals, including the *Denver Post*, exposing broad segments of the American public to discourses that racialized the Japanese state.

²³ Pitkin, p. 483.

Anxiety and Fear in Characterizations of the Japanese State in the *Denver Post* (1920-1924)

Over the course of the early 1920s, Japan drew the attention of politicians and pundits, whose words published in the *Denver Post* foretold of the inevitability of a U.S.-Japanese war. These ominous predictions were regularly featured in the pages of the *Post* as early as 1920, when U.S.-Japanese relations were strained as a result of escalating anti-Japanese sentiment in California, Japan's demands for control of telegraph cables on Yap Island, America's refusal to join the League of Nations, unbalanced arm's limitations treaties, and Japanese possession of Shantung. Shortly after President Harding took office in 1921, he described the "future relationship between [the United States] and Japan" as "the most pressing international question which will confront his administration."²⁴ There was genuine concern amongst contemporaries that the "loose talk of war" between Japan and the United States may erupt into a full scale conflict.²⁵

During the early 1920s, no other nation received a comparable degree of coverage about the character of its armed forces as Japan did in the pages of the *Denver Post*. Nor were Western European powers, or the United States for that matter, described with the fearful and adversarial overtones which characterized discussions of Japanese armament in the local press. The attention Japan received in the periodical must in part be attributed to disputes between Japan and the Euro-American powers that occasionally erupted into military conflicts in East Asia during the early 1920s. Following the conclusion of World War I, Japan became increasingly assertive as a political state pursuing an expansionist policy in East Asia. Japan's demands for control of Shantung, the right to expand its Navy at the Washington Naval Conference, conflict

²⁴ Robert Small, "Japanese Relations Chief U.S. Question is View of Harding," *Rocky Mountain News*, February 20, 1921, Section 1 p. 1.

²⁵ Small, "Japanese Relations Chief U.S. Question is View of Harding," *Rocky Mountain News*, February 20, 1921 Section 1 p. 3.

with the United States over the possession of Yap Island—an important telegraph cable sight in the Pacific, and Japan’s military aggression in Siberia fueled concerns about Japanese militarism during the early 1920s. However, the extensive coverage afforded Japan in the *Denver Post* must also be attributed to contemporaries who expressed anxieties about the racial composition of the Japanese state. Japan, unlike the United States and Western Europe, was a nation-state that was comprised of a non-white population that had emerged as a political and military force that challenged Euro-American interests and white supremacy in global politics. The state’s military endeavors inspired mixed sentiments from American observers, who were simultaneously fascinated, yet concerned, about the growing military power of Japan.

Reports in the *Denver Post* frequently raised concerns about the military strength of Japan in relation to the United States. Framing Japan in an adversarial and competitive relationship with the United States, journalists made comparisons between the size and strength of the militaries of the two nations. At the same time, Japan was singled out from other nations, receiving a unique degree of attention for the expansion of its military. Anxieties ran especially high when contemporaries perceived Japan’s military strength as approaching, or surpassing, the military strength of the United States. When Japan unveiled two new large battleships in 1920, the *Denver Post* ran an article that simultaneously expressed concern and awe at the size and armament of the Japanese ships. The article provided specifications of length, speed, displacement, and weaponry for both ships and acknowledged that “Uncle Sam’s biggest warship is dwarfed Japan’s newest battle craft.” It expressed wonder at the battleship’s size and capabilities, but also clearly exhibited concerns about the ship’s size in relation to the largest American cruisers. Although it was merely one ship in Japan’s navy, the ship served as a

representation of Japan's naval superiority over the United States, and Japan was framed as a competing nation that was on some level 'out-doing' the United States.²⁶

These anxieties about Japan's militarization reflected the existence of an interpretive double-standard in which Japan (a non-white nation) was depicted as menacing and fearful for expanding its arsenal, whereas the United States and other European powers (white nations) were not assigned parallel attributes for the acquisition and development of their respective militaries. This dualistic reporting is especially evident through continued expressions of anxiety about the size and strength of Japan's military even after Japan had agreed to limit the size of its navy to 3/5ths that of the respective navy's of Great Britain and the United States at the Washington Naval Conference of 1922. Even though Japan agreed to disproportionately limit its naval strength in relation to Great Britain and the United States, articles in the *Post* continued to express concerns about the might of Japan's military, fearing that, if not Japan's navy, then perhaps its air-force might one day "at least equal...that of England or American."²⁷

Japan's announcement that it would expand its navy following America's withdrawal from the League of Nations also inspired concern amongst journalists who characterized the nation and the 'Japanese' as bellicose and warlike. One reporter warned, the "Japanese [are] arming to [the] teeth."²⁸ Parallel concerns were not raised by Americans about Great Britain's naval power, which was by treaty allowed to equal that of the United States. Underlying these fears, was the concern that Japan, as a world power, was somehow different than the European

²⁶ "Japan's Greatest Battleship Under Way at Dockyard," *Denver Post*, April 2, 1920, p. 13; "Japan's Newest Battlecraft Much Larger than Colorado, Uncle Sam's Biggest Warship," *Denver Post*, June 13, 1921, p. 16.

²⁷ "Great Airplane Fleet is New Jap Program," *Denver Post*, January 15, 1922, Section 1 p. 17; "Japs Make Demand for Larger Fleet," *Rocky Mountain News*, December 1, 1921, p. 3.

²⁸ "Japanese Arming to Teeth Since they Decide America has Quit League of Nations," *Denver Post*, November 2, 1920, p. 12.

powers and the United States. Although race was not explicitly introduced as the signifier of difference in these reports, Japan's military programs received a degree of coverage in *Denver Post* that Western European powers were not afforded. The paper's coverage of Japan was distinct, if not unique, and the state was most commonly portrayed as an aggressive and militant competitor of the United States, if not an outright adversary.

The *Post's* coverage of Japan's military expansion in the 1920s was complimented by articles that featured Japanese and American nationals who predicted the inevitability of a war between the two nations. Although representatives from both Japan and the United States vocalized the likelihood of war between the two nations, the way their positions were framed in Colorado's two major newspapers—the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*—differed in relation to their nationality. Whereas American advocates of war were depicted as patriotic citizens standing up to the unreasonable demands and actions of Japan, Japanese statesmen and nationals who expressed bellicose sentiments were depicted as inherently militaristic. The disparate presentation of Japanese and American hawks in the *Post* contributed to the production of a discourse within the newspaper that framed the United States as a compromising victim put under the pressure of an increasingly bullying and bellicose Japanese state.

In November of 1920, the *Denver Post* published a telegram from Wyoming Governor R.D. Carey who demanded that "the United States...call Japan's bluff." He was referring to the signing of a potential immigration treaty between Japan and the United States that would allow Japanese Americans already residing in the United States to be granted citizenship if Japan agreed to bar further emigration of Japanese nationals to America. Carey was critical of the treaty, describing it as an indication of American weakness and felt it was better for the United States to risk provoking a potential conflict with Japan than compromising on the immigration

issue.²⁹ In 1921, Frederick Smith, a foreign correspondent for the *Rocky Mountain News*, one of the *Denver Post's* leading competitors, gave the opinion that Japan was on the warpath. Smith described Japan as the aggressor, and acknowledged no possibility that the United States was in anyway responsible for tensions between the two nations. He described Japan as being in a state of "warlike preparations" and suggested that American visitors to Japan were under surveillance by the government.³⁰

Both individuals presented Japan as an aggressor imposing its will upon the United States and preparing to instigate a conflict. Carey proposed that Japan has presented unreasonable demands on the United States and portrayed Japan as an intimidating bully that has successfully forced the United States to "back down" in the past and was attempting to do so again over the issue of immigration.³¹ Smith is even more explicit in attributing future responsibility for any conflict solely to Japan. He begins his article by posing the question, "Will there be war between the United States and Japan?" Tensions between the two nations were attributed solely to the actions of Japan, and Smith did not raise the possibility that the United States and Japan were mutually responsible for the deterioration of their political relationship. Laying blame on the Japanese, Smith concludes that "there will eventually be a war between the United States and Japan unless the present trend of Japanese affairs is interrupted."³²

²⁹ "Wyoming Governor Advises Nation to Call Japans Bluff," *Denver Post*, November 24, 1920, p. 9.

³⁰ "Japan Preparing for War With U.S., Observers Declare," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 23, 1921, Section 1 p. 14.

³¹ "Wyoming Governor Advises Nation to Call Japans Bluff," *Denver Post*, November 24, 1920, p. 9.

³² "Japan Preparing for War With U.S., Observers Declare," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 23, 1921, Section 1 p. 14.

In both articles, the United States and American citizens were also presented as victims of an aggressive Japan. Carey's rhetoric, presents the United States as a weak-willed state that had been consequentially intimidated by Japan's demands. Smith, on the other hand, describes American tourists and American businessmen as the innocent victims of state's surveillance and censorship policies. While both individuals made ominous predictions about the possibility of a future war between the two nations, they were not presented as bellicose in Colorado's periodicals. Rather, they were depicted as individuals who recognized the United States as a victim that may need to assert itself militarily as a defensive measure in response to an unreasonable or warlike Japan.

By contrast, Japanese nationals who portended of an upcoming war between Japan and the United States were portrayed as instigators of aggression in Colorado papers. When the *Post* or the *Rocky Mountain News* featured Japanese nationals who foretold of the inevitability of a future war with the United States, the papers often portrayed them as unreasonable and militaristic. The critical, and at times threatening, language some Japanese nationals employed against the United States only facilitated their hawkish portrayal within Colorado's publications. In 1920, Marquis Okuma Shigenobu, a former Japanese premier, suggested that Japan would use force against the United States if the nation chose to impose anti-Japanese immigration policies within a treaty.³³ Published in the *Denver Post*, Okuma's words likely fueled the anxieties of Americans who already held suspicions about the militaristic intentions of the Japanese state. That same year, a group of Tokyo University students organized a forum to discuss the question: "Shall Japan fight America?." The students convened this panel to express their concerns about growing anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States and the misunderstanding of Japanese actions in Shantung, Siberia, and Korea. Although the question

³³ "Jap Threatens Force Against U.S. on Treaty," *Denver Post*, November 15, 1920, p. 7.

discussed by the students was very similar to the inquiry made by reporter Frederick Smith just a few months later, a *Denver Post* characterized the students attending the conference as advocates of war and anticipated that the majority of them would express a “bellicose view.”³⁴ Like other Japanese nationals at the time, these students were distressed about anti-Japanese sentiment in the United States and implementation of discriminatory laws directed at Japanese Americans. Yet, even though occasional articles attempted to explain the bellicose sentiments of some Japanese nationals, reporters rarely posited that the United States may have been in some way responsible for underlying political tensions between the two nations, or that the criticisms of Japanese nationals directed at the United States were in any way legitimate. Instead the image of an aggressive, unreasonable, and militant Japan prevailed, and was complimented by discourses that framed the United States as a current, or future, victim of Japanese policy.

Even though articles that portrayed Japanese nationals as bellicose may have dominated the *Post’s* reporting, articles published in the newspaper were not uniform in their characterizations of the Japan. In reality, Japanese politicians and citizens were divided on Japan’s relationship with the United States and these divisions were occasionally evidenced in the *Denver Post*. In 1920, Japanese Premier Hara Takashi was recognized as an opponent of any future war between Japan and the United States and this leading politician worked to cool off heated rhetoric from representatives of both nations.³⁵ Following Japan’s agreement to naval armament ratios presented by Britain and the United States at the Washington Naval Conference, the *Post* published a lengthy statement assuring Japan’s commitment to peace

³⁴ “Jap Students to Debate War with America,” *Denver Post*, November 6, 1920, p. 16.

³⁵ “War with Japan Unthinkable says Ambassador Morris, Who Urges Against Rash Discussion,” *Denver Post*, November 14, 1920, p. 4.

from Japan's senior delegate to the conference, Admiral Baron Buro Kato. Kato assured readers that "[Japan has] never aspired or intended to challenge the security of America," and felt confident that Japan's agreement to the 3:5:5 naval would dispel the "myth" of Japanese militancy.³⁶ The *Rocky Mountain News* also ran articles that reflected widespread popular disapproval of Japan's armament plans among Japanese citizens. A 1921 report featured thousands of Japanese nationals expressing their criticism of the state's military budget at organized mass-meetings in the city of Osaka, clearly presenting internal divisions over the issue of armament to Colorado's newspaper readers.³⁷ Another *Post* article presented Japan as a state internally divided on the issue of military expansion. In 1923, E.R. Egger, a foreign correspondent for the paper, reported on popular disapproval of continued militarization that "the militarists of Japan are stubbornly resisting the growing demand for peace and reduction of the army."³⁸ Reports that evinced internal disagreement on issues pertaining to Japan's foreign relations were considerate of the complexity of Japan's domestic politics. In their reporting, journalists revealed that Japan was perhaps not as warlike as some American pundits had imagined, potentially challenging the portrayal of Japan, and Japanese citizens, as aggressive and warlike that frequently appeared in other contemporaneous discourses.

Nevertheless, the anxiety that characterized the *Denver Post's* reporting on Japan during the early 1920s should not be understated. Japan's portrayal as a militant state dominated discourses, driven in part by Japan's invasion of Siberia, Japan's demands for Shantung, armament conferences, and disputes over Yap Island. Japan's acquisition of Shantung after

³⁶ "Myth of Japanese Militancy Routed by Arms Conference, Declares Admiral Baron Kato," *Denver Post*, January 15, 1920, Section 1 p. 15.

³⁷ "Thousands in Japan Attack Government for Armament Plan," *Rocky Mountain News*, March 14, 1921, p. 1.

³⁸ "Militarists of Japan Fighting Peace Efforts," *Denver Post*, May 6, 1923, cable news page.

World War I was largely viewed with disfavor in the American press and raised concerns about American power in the region and the region's stability.³⁹ Engaged in a violent conflict with Russia over control of Siberia, Japanese atrocities during the war were described in the pages of the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*.⁴⁰ A 1920 dispute between the United States and Japan over the control of telegraph cables on Yap Island also inspired tensions between the two nations.⁴¹ All of these factors contributed to strained relations between Japan and the United States out of which emerged discourses that framed Japan as an inherent, bellicose adversary of America.

California's Alien Land Laws and the Racialization of Japanese Americans, Japanese Nationals, and Japan

While Japanese armament, expansion, and aggression during the early 1920s certainly contributed to the state's portrayal as militaristic in Colorado periodicals, at the heart of the breakdown of relations between the two nations were disputes pertaining to the treatment of Japanese immigrants residing within the United States. Japanese nationals were outraged by the implementation more restrictive alien-land laws in California and proposals for more restrictive immigration policies in the early 1920s. They viewed them as discriminatory practices implemented by the United States that unfairly targeted individuals of Japanese descent and

³⁹ "Jap Position on Shantung Question May Cause China to Quit Arms Conference," *Denver Post*, January 2, 1922 p. 21; "Senate to take up Reservation on Shantung Cession to Japan," *Denver Post*, March 3, 1920, p. 3; "Japan to pursue Shantung course without Wavering," *Denver Post*, March 4, 1920, p. 2; George Blakeslee, *Japan in American Public Opinion*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 146-147.

⁴⁰ "Japs Thru Ruse Take Siberian Towns from Russian Forces, Kill Wounded Left on Field," *Denver Post*, June 6, 1920, cable news section; "Japanese Ruling Vladivostok and its people with High Hand," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 21, 1921, p. 3; "Japs Ignore Pact of U.S. Syndicate with Russ Soviet," *Denver Post*, November 6, 1920, p. 1; "U.S. to Demand Withdrawal of Japanese Troops from Siberia at an Early Date," *Denver Post*, January 3, 1922, p. 6.

⁴¹ "U.S.-Japan Crisis Looms in Dispute over Yap Cables," *Denver Post*, December 10, 1920, p. 6; "U.S.-Japan Treaty Bars Fortifications on Island of Yap," *Rocky Mountain News*, December 13, 1921, p. 1.

Japanese Americans. Many Japanese nationals realized these acts were racially motivated, and understood them as unjust actions that were also an affront to the international prestige and honor of the Japanese state.⁴²

American politicians and citizens were divided on the passage of stronger alien-land laws in California. Residents of California, Washington, and Oregon defended the land laws and, in highly racialized terms, framed Japanese immigrants as a danger to the United States. Elsewhere in the United States, public opinion was mixed and Californian supporters of anti-Japanese legislation often attempted to impress the national importance of the immigration issue. They published articles which were syndicated in newspapers across the United States. In these articles, Pacific Coast politicians and pundits described the “Japanese problem” as a problem that threatened the entire nation and attempted to dispel American critics who portrayed them as sensationalists.

As it became clear that California would prevail in implementing more restrictive land laws, relations between Japan and the United States deteriorated. It was in this context that predictions of war between the two nations were most frequently asserted. Issues pertaining to the treatment of Japanese American immigrants in the United States fueled tensions between Japan and the United States and brought race most visibly to the forefront of American-Japanese international relations during the early 1920s.

California’s proposal to implement a second Alien Land Law in 1920 and to further restrict Japanese immigration to the United States beyond the voluntary measures agreed upon within the Gentleman’s Agreement had a profound impact upon U.S.-Japanese relations and played a major role in their deterioration. California’s proposals received considerable attention from the *Denver Post* and other Colorado newspapers as they evolved into international

⁴² “Jap Threatens Force Against U.S. on Treaty,” *Denver Post*, November 15, 1920, p. 7.

incidents. While California had passed Alien Land Laws in 1913, the 1920 proposal was designed to prevent first-generation Japanese Americans from gaining access to land through their children, who, if born in the United States, were naturalized as U.S. citizens. It also barred individuals ineligible for citizenship in the United States from leasing land in any capacity, whereas the earlier provision had allowed Japanese Americans and other aliens to lease land for periods of up to three years.⁴³ Concurrently, American pundits along the Pacific Coast were vocally advocating a total ban on the immigration of Japanese into America.⁴⁴

As California's proposals moved through the legislative process, Japanese nationals expressed increasing agitation at American policies. Some Japanese nationals voiced their disapproval of the alien-land laws with ominous threats of war. When former Japanese premier Marquis Okuma alluded to Japan's potential use of force against the United States, it was in response to these two incidents, which he viewed as "an act of infidelity to Japanese-American friendship."⁴⁵ American national sentiment, however, did not mirror California's concerns about the influx of Japanese into the United States. Prior to its passage, state department officials attempted to assuage Japanese fears about the California's strengthened land laws. Under-Secretary Davis made public statements in which he had assured Japanese delegates, "that no anti-Japanese legislation in the state of California...will be acceptable to the country at large that does not accord with existing and applicable provisions of law, and, what is equally important,

⁴³ "Californians Keen as to Outcome Tuesday of Anti-Jap Measure," *Denver Post*, November 1, 1920, p 2.

⁴⁴ "Exclusion of All Japanese Demanded in Resolution Passed by War Veterans," *Denver Post*, September 15, 1920, p. 18.

⁴⁵ "Jap Threatens Force Against U.S. on Treaty," *Denver Post*, November 15, 1920, p. 7.

with the national instinct of justice.”⁴⁶ United States Ambassador to Japan, Roland S. Morris, also expressed concerns about California’s proposal and vowed he would work towards making a “peaceful and satisfactory settlement” on the matter.⁴⁷ Despite the assurances of the Under-Secretary and Ambassador Morris, California did eventually implement the Alien Land Laws, though legislation that completely prohibited the entry of Japanese immigrants into the United States was not implemented for another four years.

The *Post*’s reporting on the breakdown of Japanese-American relations over the alien-land law issue was permeated with racial rhetoric as it published the discriminatory and prejudicial language of white Americans residing in Pacific West Coast states. Anti-Japanese sentiment among white Americans residing along the Pacific Coast was strong. They frequently employed language that spoke in essentializing terms of “the Japanese” race, insisted that Japanese Americans were inassimilable, viewed the Japanese immigration issue as a national problem, and insisted that Japanese Americans remained loyal servants of the Japanese state, developing connections between the issue of immigration with Japan’s militancy in East Asia.

An article published in the *Denver Post* featuring the sentiments of Commander J.W. Jones, a representative of the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization of Portland, Oregon, reveals the character of inflammatory, anti-Japanese sentiments which were promulgated across the United States. Jones publicly declared that the “Japanese immigration question was of national scope and not confined to the Pacific Coast.” He saw the dispute over the “Japanese question” as inevitably leading to “international friction unless vigorous steps are taken to allay it.” Jones may have been attempting to be diplomatic when he assured his audience that he

⁴⁶ “State Department Frowns on Alien Land Law in California,” *Denver Post*, November 1, 1920, p. 2.

⁴⁷ “U.S. Ambassador works to adjust Japan problem,” *Denver Post*, September 14, 1920, p. 15.

recognized the “virtues of thrift and industry which character the Japanese race,” but whatever appreciation of the “Japanese race” he may have had, it was insufficient for him to conclude that Japanese Americans and white Americans could coexist in California, Oregon, or anywhere else. He prejudicially concluded, “if the Japanese are not assimilable, those virtues instead of being a contribution to our national character, are a weapon.”⁴⁸ Precisely how such ‘virtues’ may have become a weapon remained unexplained. Nevertheless, Jones’s rhetoric reveals his participation in racial understandings of the Japanese that interconnected Japanese Americans, the Japanese state, and the issue of immigration. Jones attempted to solicit sympathy for his anti-Japanese position by appealing to the national importance of the Japanese American ‘problem’ and framing it as an issue with transnational implications. The logic of the discourse suggested that Japanese Americans were inherently different, incapable of being assimilated, and that their presence in Pacific Coast communities inevitably fueled racial tensions in the region. These tensions drew the disapproval of the Japanese state and deteriorated U.S.-Japanese relations. For Jones, the only viable solution was the complete expulsion of “the Japanese” from the Pacific Coast.

Making parallel claims was University of California President, David Barrows, who, in 1920, gave his support for California’s alien land laws. The *Post* published statements from Barrows, which described Japanese immigration into the United States as an act of hostility that advanced the interests of the Japanese state. Like Jones, Barrows employed inflammatory rhetoric that racialized “the Japanese” and insisted that Japanese Americans could not be assimilated. Implicit within his claims was an understanding of Japanese Americans as inherently affiliated with the ‘Japanese race’ and a militant Japanese state. Barrows took his

⁴⁸ “Exclusion of all Japanese Demanded in Resolution passed by War Veterans,” *Denver Post*, September 15, 1920, p. 18.

interpretation a step further, making an explicit association between the militarism of Japan and the presence of Japanese American immigrants in California. He boldly asserted, “the doom of the United States is the possession of this region by orientals...California is falling into the hands of the Japanese. However, California sees the menace and is united to oppose it.” At the same time, he claimed that agitation of the Japanese state on the matter was merely a ‘smoke screen,’ designed to divert American attention away from Japan’s militarism in East Asia. Referencing Japanese imperialism in East Asia, Barrows described California as an American “frontier” that may still be “possessed” by the Japanese as a result of the presence of Japanese American immigrants in the region. For Barrows, the situation was clear—if something was not done, California may one day become a colony of the Japanese empire. He defended his position against Americans who had described Californians as sensationalists, insisting that the immigration issue had transnational political implications.⁴⁹ For Barrows, the presence of Japanese American’s in California and Japanese militarism abroad were correlating issues, both threatening the political integrity of the United States.

Californian Senator James Phelan made even more explicit connections between the Japanese state and California’s Japanese Americans. Again race played a central role in Phelan’s rhetoric, as he established the relationship between Japanese immigrants and the Japanese state. He described the presence of Japanese immigrants in the state as an “alien invasion...threatening the life of California as a white commonwealth.” Phelan claimed that California’s Japanese exhibited their loyalty to the Japanese state on a regular basis. They participated in emperor worship at Shinto shrines and controlled production of the state’s agriculture. Furthermore, he accused the state’s Japanese Americans of sending their agricultural crops to Japan so that the Japan could “build up Japanese industries to compete

⁴⁹ “Nation is Doomed if Japs Come in, Warns Educator,” *Denver Post*, September 29, 1920, p. 10.

against [the United States] and to build ships which may fight against [the United States].”⁵⁰ For Phelan, war seemed an inevitability if Japanese immigrants were not expelled from California.

By contrast, Colorado journalists reporting on immigration and the alien land laws revealed a degree of ambivalence on the issues. Although the *Post* published the racialized prejudicial rhetoric of Californians who were suspect of all “Japanese” within the United States, no corresponding language was produced by the paper’s editors or columnists about Colorado’s Japanese American communities. Colorado’s Japanese Americans did not receive treatment that paralleled the Japanese Americans populations of California, and neither the *Denver Post* nor the *Rocky Mountain News* published articles calling for the expulsion of these ethnic communities from Colorado.

Nevertheless, some Coloradoan’s expressed their support of California’s land laws and the state’s position on the immigration issue. However, those who explicated their support of California on the state’s land laws and the issue of immigration justified their positions, at least as far as they made public, by arguing that they were advocates of American sovereignty and did not explicitly express fears about “the Japanese” population in the United States. One such individual was Congressional Representative Vaile of Denver, who viewed America’s immigration laws as a sovereign right of the United States. Vaile supported the alien-land law policy and insisted that California had the legal right to pursue more aggressive limitations on immigration into the United States. He argued that individual states had the legal right to implement policies as they saw fit and that, “the [immigration] question must be addressed to our own consciences and our own interests...If we wanted to be so unreasonable we could say

⁵⁰ “Phelan Predicts War over Dispute with Japs on Coast,” *Rocky Mountain News*, February 14, 1921, p. 1.

that no red-headed man should come here.”⁵¹ Vaile’s public support for such legislation was based on his view of the sovereign right of the United States to develop immigration laws as it saw fit—irrespective of whether or not they were discriminatory. Publicly at least, Vaile did not exhibit any personal animosity directly at Japanese American communities of Colorado or California. Far removed from high concentrations of Japanese Americans, Colorado’s Euro-Americans did not appear to replicate California’s racial paranoia about their own Japanese immigrant communities.

What significance then did the publication of anti-Japanese sentiment in Colorado papers carry if the racial language presented was not expressed by Coloradoans and no parallel agitation was directed at Colorado’s Japanese Americans? On the one hand, it reflected the intensity of anxieties about the political relations between Japan and the United States. Disputes over the alien land laws and issues of immigration made headlines almost daily, and articles frequently expressed fears that divisions over these issues may drag the two nations into war. Readers of major Colorado newspapers were exposed to rhetoric that depicted an adversarial relationship between Japan and the United States. At the same time, that rhetoric often exhibited undercurrents of racial discourses, and disputes between the two nations were not merely presented as political disputes between two-nation states, but rather racial disputes between the ‘Japanese race’ and the ‘white race.’ Some Americans insisted that a racial affiliation existed between Japanese Americans and a militant Japanese state, framing Japanese immigrants in California, Washington, and Oregon as inherently connected with “the Japanese race which was politically represented by the Japanese nation-state. Within the parameters of such discourses, Japanese immigrants in California could not be ‘Japanese Americans’ because they could never be assimilated into American society. They were instead “Japanese” who

⁵¹ “Vaile Upholds U.S. Control of Immigration,” *Denver Post*, December 11, 1920, p. 3.

happened to be residing in the United States. They were incapable of being assimilated and, as expressed by pundits like Senator Phelan, they were also extensions of Japan's political and military power abroad. While Japan was in fact involved in aggressive behavior in East Asia during this period, Japanese American communities shared little if any tangible affiliation with the state's militancy and were portrayed as threats to the United States on account of white American racial prejudice. Furthermore, although Colorado journalists did not publicize parallel depictions of the state's Japanese Americans, neither did the *Denver Post* publish articles that challenged the racial sentiments expressed by Californians. Consequentially, even in Colorado, which was far removed from substantial communities of Japanese immigrants, race was sustained as a legitimate and meaningful framework for understanding the relationship between Japan as a political state, Japanese Americans, and, essentially, all individuals of Japanese heritage across the globe. The implications of such a discourse, while not necessarily meaningful to Coloradoan's in 1920 and 1921, provided a contextual framework which allowed for the future possibility of understanding Japanese Americans as associates of the Japanese state on account of their racial identities.

The Immigration Act of 1924

Several years later, tensions between Japan and the United States arose once again as the American Immigration Act of 1924 went through the legislative process. The act implemented a national policy that effectively prohibited the entry of any individuals of Japanese or East Asian descent into the United States. Once again, fears of a potential war arising between Japan and the United States over the issue of exclusion were published regularly in the *Denver Post*. Japanese nationals and Japanese political representatives vocally expressed their discontent with the American law, some going so far as to insinuate the possibility of war between the two nations. Race was implicated in the discussion by Japanese

nationals, who criticized the exclusion policies as racially motivated and discriminatory. However, although race undoubtedly played a role in shaping America's implementation of the Immigration Act, race was not as visibly in the foreground of American public discourse surrounding the act's passage as it had been during the controversy over California's alien land laws. Instead, papers framed the passage of the Immigration Act as a sovereign right of the United States to monitor its immigrant population and protect its economic interests, disavowing race as having played a role in the act's passage. At the same time, newspapers like the *Post* published articles and cartoons that dismissed the seriousness of Japan as a threat, employing racialized depictions of the state that imbued it with childlike, unthreatening qualities.

Shortly after implementing the Immigration Act of 1924, the *Denver Post* published a Japanese pamphlet that openly called for war with the United States and scathingly critiqued America's international behavior as self-serving and hypocritical. Distributed by Kyobashi, a reservist legion in Tokyo, the pamphlet began with a call to arms and proceeded to describe the United States as a self-appointed "dictator." It cited America's invasion of Mexico and annexation of Hawaii and Cuba as evidence of American imperialism and described American claims of justice, humanity, and peace as mere deception.⁵² Furthermore, the pamphlet explicitly invoked race in its discourse, rhetorically asking, "Why are the colored races oppressed and driven out of fertile lands?" The pamphlet asserted that the "world is for people of the world, not for whites alone, and still less Americans."⁵³ The language of the article was highly inflammatory, and was published in the *Post* as an indication of the extent that militarism and

⁵² Roderick Matheson, "'Prepare for War,' Shout Japanese Pamphlets," *Denver Post*, May 27, 1924, p. 24.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

anti-American sentiment had, as the American reporter had described, “[permeated] the [Japanese] people.”⁵⁴

While the pamphlet was framed in the American press as an indication of the militarism of some segments of Japanese society, even more significant was the pamphlet’s use of racial discourse to frame the relationship between Japan and the United States. Japanese writers who employed racialized language participated in reaffirming contemporaneous racial discourses. The pamphlet employed race as a discursive strategy designed to unite non-white populations against whites and express opposition to an American state populated principally by Euro-Americans and politically controlled by whites. In the process, it simultaneously asserted the validity of race as a system of social classification. It is important to recognize that this bellicose ‘race-war’ language well preceded the onset of the Second World War, a period where such racial discourses have received considerable attention from historians like John Dower. The pamphlet’s publication in the *Denver Post* reaffirmed the racial presumptions and prejudices of the paper’s principally white readers. By self-referentially employing racialized language, the Japanese writers of the pamphlet affirmed their implication in racial discourses. In its call for colored races to unite and challenge the white race, the pamphlet definitively called for war along racial grounds, affirming and exacerbating the anxieties of contemporaries about the possibility of a future race war. While it is unlikely that the pamphlet’s original author intended it to be distributed in a major American periodical, its syndication in the *Post* reinforced ongoing discourses that portrayed the Japanese as militaristic and, simultaneously, affirmed the validity of race as an essentializing biological reality that divided human populations.

The article featuring the pamphlet made it clear, however, that such rhetoric characterized the extremes of Japanese discontent with the Immigration Act. By contrast,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

leading Japanese political officials and segments of the Japanese population, although expressing disapproval of the Immigration Act, made sustained efforts to underplay the possibility of war between the two nations. While papers like the *Yomiuri Shimbun* may have been publishing editorials that menacingly asserted that “[Japan] will remember the insult [of the Immigration Act] and take the first opportunity for retaliation,” leading Japanese political figures, such as Viscount Goto, sought to assuage hostilities. Goto insisted that, while many Japanese may be resentful, Japan will “face this grave situation calmly and thoughtfully.”⁵⁵ The Japanese government issued an official statement expressing their “unshaken...opposition to [the] discriminatory legislation against Japan,” but issued no aggrandizing remarks.⁵⁶ In May, Japanese cities were populated by large crowds of protestors vocalizing their discontent with the bill. Nevertheless, some groups expressed hope that Japanese-American relations could be repaired; a group of Japanese students passed a resolution that criticized the bill for jeopardizing “the historic friendship [between Japan and the United States] and [challenging] the Asiatic races,” but, they concluded with an appeal to American youths to reject the passage of such a discriminatory law.⁵⁷ Featuring a photo of Japanese demonstrators in Tokyo, the *Post* reported, “the students of Tokio *sic* have thus far taken a fair-minded attitude toward immigration.”⁵⁸ Even though the *Post* reported on the opposition of Japanese nationals to the Immigration Act, the paper’s representation of Japanese nationals as “fair-minded” contrasted starkly with their representation as bellicose during the early 1920s. In fact, much of the anxiety

⁵⁵ “U.S. Exclusion Law Raises roar of Protest in Japan,” *Denver Post*, April 17, 1924, p. 5.

⁵⁶ “Premier Asks Newspapers to tone down on Comment,” *Denver Post*, May 28, 1924, p. 1.

⁵⁷ “Jap Mass Meetings hear fervid oratory against Exclusion Bill,” *Denver Post*, May 19, 1924, p. 3.

⁵⁸ “Demonstrations in Japan against Exclusion,” *Denver Post*, July 6, 1924, cable news page.

surrounding the potential outbreak of a future war had notably diminished by 1924, even as Japanese nationals were firmly opposed to the Immigration Act.

In part, this transformation in the depiction of “the Japanese” was informed by the rhetoric of Japanese nationals who downplayed the possibility of a war between Japan and the United States. Although fears of a potential war between Japan and the United States had not dissipated entirely, the *Post* frequently published the statements of Japanese government officials and Japanese nationals who dismissed the possibility of any potential for future aggression over the immigration issue. However, the rhetorical shift must also be attributed to a lack of concern about Japan as a potential military threat expressed within the discourse of white American pundits and politicians. This transformation in the depiction of “the Japanese” had more to do with an American sense of confidence about the legitimacy of the immigration legislation and the unlikelihood of Japan to respond with any serious military action.

While American politicians and pundits adamantly defended the implementation of the Immigration Act, they did not concurrently insinuate that a war between Japan and the United States was foreseeable as a result of the act’s implementation. Instead, their rhetoric explicated a sense of political self-righteousness and assuredness, while simultaneously disavowing racial prejudice as a motivating factor in the implementation of the policy. That is not to suggest that forecasts of the possibility of a future war with Japan had entirely dissipated. In April of 1924, one *Post* journalist posited, “just what Japan would do if Japanese should be excluded by law is left to the imagination.”⁵⁹ However, most Americans who discussed the relationship between Japan and the United States, at least as they were portrayed in the *Denver Post*, were generally dismissive of the Japanese nation as a serious military danger and characterized Japan and “the Japanese” as infantile, childlike, and entirely unthreatening.

⁵⁹ “U.S. Senate has Neck bowed on Immigration Measure,” *Denver Post*, April 14, 1924, p. 2.

Racialized caricatures of “the Japanese” published in the *Post’s* political comics frequently depicted Japan as no more than a nuisance to the United States. In one such illustration (Figure 1), a broad shouldered, muscular, and clearly agitated Uncle Sam acts as a stand-in for the United States. The image depicts him in the act of writing legislation in a book titled “Japanese Exclusion Provision” as another individual, wearing a top-hat with the insignia ‘Japan,’ peers through a window in an effort to get the attention of Uncle Sam. The top-hat wearing man is clearly intended to represent the Japanese state, yet he also embodies derogatory racial characteristics attributed to ethnic Japanese by contemporaries. Exaggerated buck teeth and squinted eyes character his facial features, and his fingers are long and effeminate. Within the comic, the Japanese state is portrayed as little more than a child attempting to get the attention of the United States. The top-hat wearing man’s features are almost imp-like and he is nearly half the size of Uncle Sam. Intended to reflect the Japanese state, the top-hat wearing man’s imp-like features and tiny stature convey a sense of weakness and desperation. In broken English, he half-pleas, half-threatens Uncle Sam to, “Better Open Door-me Velly Good Man-Velly Sensitive-get Awful mad, Mebby you Sabby?” Uncle Sam replies, “Wha’cha tryin’ to do, kid? Threaten Me!”⁶⁰ The United States is unmoved and feels unthreatened by Japan’s statements, whose childlike portrayal makes the nation appear harmless. Furthermore, the top-hat wearing man’s broken English and distinct physical features, which contrast starkly with those of Uncle Sam, serve not only as a racialized and derogatory portrayal of the Japanese, but also communicate the sense that they are simply too different to be assimilated into American culture.

The parent-child relationship between Japan and the United States is made even more explicit in another image of Japan that once again features Uncle Sam speaking down to a

⁶⁰ “Wha’cha trying’ to do, Kid? Threaten Me!,” *Denver Post*, April 17, 1924, p. 1

befuddled Japan (Figure 2). In this image, the caricature of Japan is comparable in size to the image of Uncle Sam. Nevertheless, Uncle Sam is clearly the dominant figure in the image as he assertively points his finger at a chubby caricature of a Japanese man rubbing his chin.

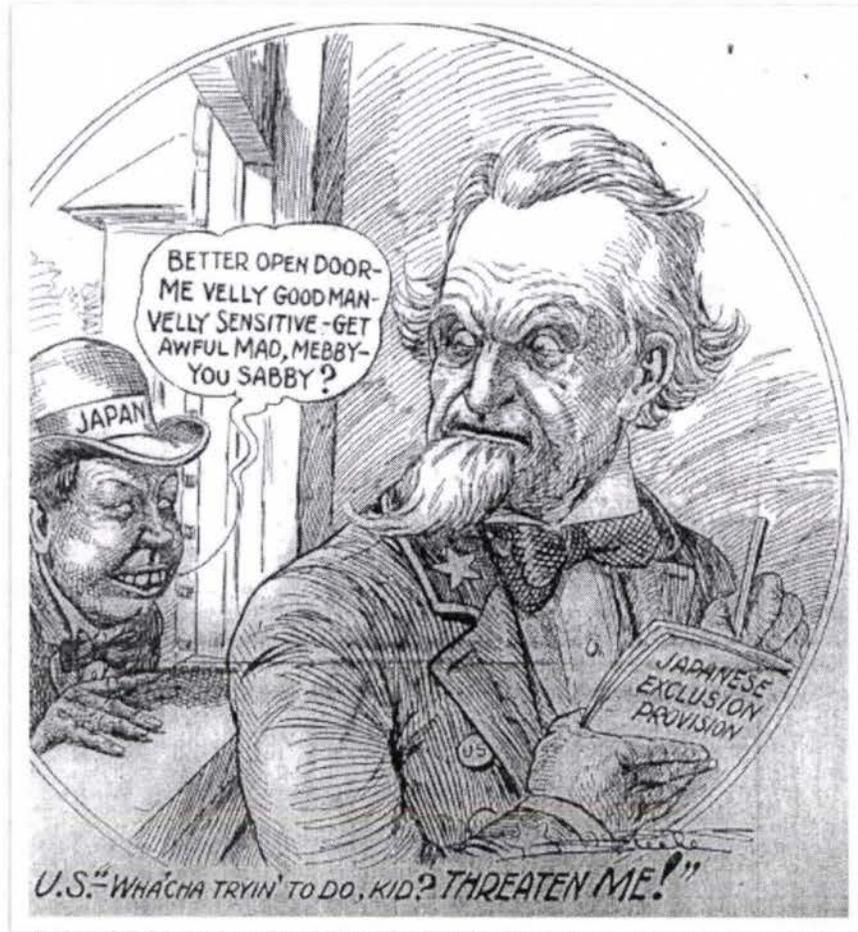


Figure 1

Uncle Sam talks down to the individual in the fashion that a parent might to a child, stating, “You know-and you know that I know-that you’re bluffing! What you need is my business and my friendship! Behave yourself and that’s what you’ll get—see?”⁶¹ The image reflects a clear sense of American self-assuredness and self-importance, as Uncle Sam belittlingly tells Japan to “behave” or risk jeopardizing its relationship with the United States. In reference to threats of Japanese militancy against the United States, Uncle Sam confidently

⁶¹ “Uncle, Stating the Facts,” *Denver Post*, June 25, 1924, p. 1.

asserts that he knows Japan is bluffing, boldly stating that Japan is too dependent on the United States to pursue an aggressive course of action.



Figure 2

Another illustration in the *Post* featured a character representing Japan standing outside the 'door' of the United States, holding a plaque that reads "Kicks from Japan" (Figure 3). He and representatives of other nationalities represent the criticism of other nations directed at the United States for its proposed immigration laws. Inside the home, a white individual wearing a banner labeled "100% American" is depicted placing his hand on the arm of a congressman and

assuring him to pass the legislation regardless of international opinion. In a speech-bubble, the 100% American states, "I'll tell the world, Mr. Lawmaker—we don't need an advice from those fellows on immigration laws for our country."⁶²

All three illustrations reveal a sense of assuredness and self-righteousness in America's enactment of the Immigration Act. At the same time, the portrayal of Japan as a menacing or militant has been replaced by a childlike, non-threatening characterization of the Japanese state and individuals of Japanese descent. Certainly, the *Post's* cartoon illustrations convey an image of Japan that did not play a significant military threat to the United States. Race, however, remained an undercurrent within the discourse, as characterizations of "the Japanese" portrayed them with exaggerated, racially stereotypical attributes. They also employed language and imagery that blurred the line between Japan and all individuals of Japanese descent, establishing connections between a Japanese national and a "Japanese" racial identity.

At the same time, however, American political pundits were openly disavowing the relevance of race as a factor in their decision-making process pertaining to the Immigration Act. Justifying their positions, congressmen walked a paradoxical tightrope where they balanced expressing admiration for "the Japanese" race, but still pursued discriminatory policies against Japanese Americans. In a 1924 expression of his support for the Immigration Act, a Republican Congressman of California publicly stated, "I am an admirer of the Japanese but I admire them most in Japan and not on the Pacific Coast."⁶³ In his statement, the congressmen implied that he did not support the act because of any anti-Japanese sentiment—that is to say, any inherent dislike he had for "the Japanese" race as a whole—but rather, he merely supported prohibiting

⁶² "One Thing He's Sure About, Anyway," *Denver Post*, April 3, 1924, p. 1.

⁶³ "Jap Aim to Colonize U.S. Foiled by Immigration Bill," *Denver Post*, April 6, 1924, Section 1 p. 14.

the entry of further Japanese into the United States. Yet his comments, including his purported admiration of “the Japanese,” reveal his continued reproduction of a racial discourse



Figure 3

that saw “the Japanese” as inherently different and inassimilable on account of their racial backgrounds. Whereas at a distance (in Japan) they could be admired as the objects of Oriental spectacle, in the United States, they were inassimilable and problematic; in both contexts, they were constructed as racial others that were inherently different from, and incompatible with, American (white) society.

Also disavowing the role anti-Japanese sentiment may have played in America's implementation of the act was Secretary of State Charles Hughes who insisted that the Immigration Act was an expression of American sovereignty and that the United States had every right to monitor and control immigration into its borders. In public statements reprinted in the *Post*, he added that the legislation is "entirely compatible with the friendly sentiments which animate our international relations," essentially implying that he saw no reason why the act should tarnish U.S.-Japanese relations and underplaying the discriminatory nature of the law.⁶⁴

Illustrations published in the *Post* conveyed similar messages, as they paralleled American passage of immigration restrictions implemented by the Japanese state and underplayed the role of race in shaping America's policymaking. One such image featured a cordial Uncle Sam speaking across the Pacific Ocean to a group of Japanese statesman (Figure 4). Standing on land marked the United States, Uncle Sam politely extends his hand to the group of Japanese statesman from behind a wall with the insignia "Japanese Exclusion Law." The Japanese officials are dressed in Western garb and stand on a stretch of land marked Japan. Again, the ability of a nation to bar immigrants from entering its borders is illustrated as a sovereign right of not just the United States, but, in fact, all nation-states. The comic takes it a step-further, however, paralleling the Immigration Act to Japan's own restrictive immigration policies. The Japanese officials are positioned behind their own wall, marked "Chinese Exclusion Law." Relations between the two nations are framed as amicable, and disputes over race or predictions of war are notably absent. The leaders of Japan are portrayed as apologetic and understanding rather than aggressive and menacing. As they discuss amongst themselves, they

⁶⁴ "U.S. Reply to Japanese protest on Exclusion Bill is cordial, but firmly behind the Measure," *Denver Post*, June 19, 1924, p. 24.

agree that “there is no doubt that the U.S. wants to be friends with Japan” and that “it is bad policy to insist upon sending our cheap labor where it is not wanted.” Meanwhile, Uncle Sam is depicted cordially as he states, “An economic necessity—nothing personal. You know how it is yourself.”⁶⁵ Again, the Immigration Act of 1924 and the proposal for Japanese exclusion were being framed by contemporaries as justifiable state initiatives designed around economic necessity, not prejudicial racial sentiment. Whether in political discourse or political illustrations, the rhetoric published in the *Denver Post* reflected the efforts of contemporaries to legitimize the Immigration Act and simultaneously disassociate race as a central motivational force behind the exclusion proposals.

Printed in the pages of the *Denver Post*, journalistic coverage of the Immigration Act is significant for two reasons. First, it reveals a perpetuation of racial discourse that continued to link the Japanese state with a contemporaneous interpretation of the Japanese as a racial community. This language, which several years earlier characterized Californian fears of a Japanese takeover of the United States, was, in the context of the Immigration Act, being articulated by both white Americans and Japanese nationals. The way in which Euro-Americans characterized Japan as a state and the Japanese as a race had clearly changed, revealing the fluidity of racial discourses, which were constantly being shaped by external contingencies and developing new characterizations of racial groups even as they professed to be based upon scientific observations that revealed biologically essentializing characteristics of racial populations. As the Immigration Act was debated internally within the United States, the menacing imagery that had characterized Japan and the Japanese several years ago, when tensions between the two nations arose over the passage of California’s alien land laws, was replaced by portrayals of Japan as child-like, disobedient, and agitating to America.

⁶⁵ “As the Japanese Elder Statesmen discuss the Exclusion Law,” *Denver Post*, June 19, 1924, p. 5.

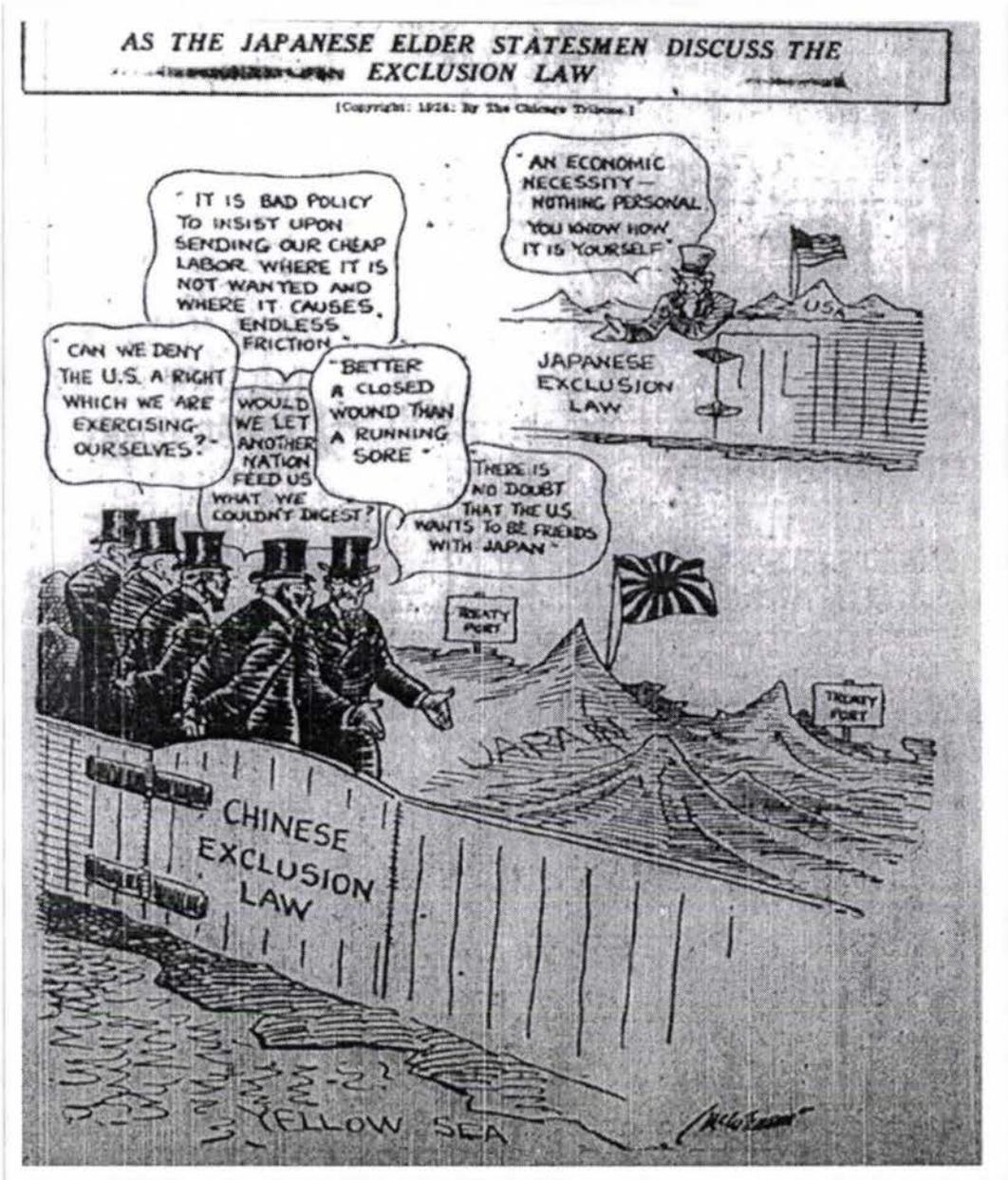


Figure 4

This transformation in language was informed by several factors, including an sense of security and self-assuredness among American proponents of the Immigrant Act, efforts by Japanese politicians and Japanese nationals to underplay the possibility of a military retaliation to the act's passage, and a sense of confidence in the inability or unwillingness of Japan to

deteriorate its economic and political relationship with the United States. The successful passage of the Immigrant Act was perhaps the ultimate expression of American self-assurance. This sense of confidence in American political and military power diminished fears about the power of the Japanese state, and correspondingly about “the Japanese” as a race.

Tempered Anxieties: 1924-1931

The *Post's* reporting on the Immigration Act marked a significant turning point in the character of the newspaper's reporting on the Japanese state. Efforts to frame Japan as an adversarial state persisted, but no longer was Japan portrayed as an adversarial equal to the United States. The non-threatening portrayals of Japan that characterized contemporaneous discourses reflected a shift in American rhetoric about the state that lasted from 1924 to 1931. During this period, the language produced from American pundits in the pages of the *Denver Post* was notably less bellicose than it had in the early 1920s. In the years between 1924 and 1931, growing economic ties between the two nations, the absence of inflammatory incidents between Japan and the United States, and reduced military activity by Japan in East Asia contributed to tempered relations between the two nations. Nevertheless, the *Denver Post* continued to report on Japan's expansion of its navy and Japan's continued demands for a reworked naval treaty that permitted Japan a higher ratio of ships with respect to Great Britain and the United States.⁶⁶ *Post* editorials reveal that concerns remained about the expansion of Japan's navy; however, predictions of a potential war between the two nations had become muted and were notably absent from the majority of reporting on the nation. Articles that featured new Japanese battleships and submarines even expressed subtle admiration at the

⁶⁶ “Japan will ask Bigger Naval Ratio at Conference,” *Denver Post*, November 17, 1929, Section 1 p. 16; “Japanese Navy Announces Plan to build 22 Warships,” *Denver Post*, April 3, 1925, p. 5; “Jap Cruiser demand received coolly in U.S. and England,” *Denver Post*, November 14, 1929, p. 29.

technological advances Japan had made, noting that the nation was now “setting the world’s pace in novelty of design.”⁶⁷

Contrarian opinions that sympathetically discussed “the Japanese” were expressed by some Americans even as tensions between Japan and the United States escalated during the legislative process of the Immigration Act. American businessmen and organizations made efforts to preserve amicable political relations between the nations so that they could sustain their economic relationship. They expressed their disapproval of the legislation and publicly expressed their friendship with the Japanese state and the “Japanese people.”⁶⁸ A *Denver Post* columnist noted that prominent exporters from the United States, individuals who “have spent years of effort and large sums of money in introducing American goods in the Orient,” were outspoken opponents of the immigration legislation. They criticized the discriminatory nature of the policy and argued that it had a detrimental effect at U.S.-Japanese business relations. Ralph Merritt, president of the Sun Maid Raisin Growers association, stated that his business would be hurt “because of the offense given to the Japanese people by the ruthless discourtesy of our politicians.”⁶⁹ In April of 1924, Elbert Gary, chairman of the board of the United States Steel Corporation, expressed his disapproval of the Immigrant Act. Although he felt some form of immigration controls should be implemented, he feared that the American congress would unfairly “prevent entrance to the United States on the basis of race or color.”⁷⁰ He and a group of fellow businessmen and religious leaders sent a telegraph expressing their regrets to the

⁶⁷ “Japan is building Giant Submarines that will cruise for 15,000 Miles,” *Denver Post*, January 23, 1925, p. 32.

⁶⁸ “Big Business Leaders Wire Expressions of Friendship for Japs,” *Denver Post*, July 3, 1924, p. 1.

⁶⁹ “Jap Exclusion and bonus big Trade Factors,” *Denver Post*, May 16, 1924, p. 31.

⁷⁰ “Gary says Discrimination against any other Nation because of Color is Unjust,” *Denver Post*, April 20, 1924, Section 1 p. 3.

American-Japanese society of Tokyo following the act's passage. Addressing Japanese state officials and the Japanese public, they assured them that the recent legislation did not "represent the real feelings of the American people."⁷¹ The United States Chamber of Commerce also expressed its commitment to finding an "amicable understanding" with Japan over the immigration issue.⁷²

While these expressions of friendship may have been financially motivated, the economic co-dependency forged between the two nations over the course of the early 1920s was clearly reflected by the contrarian language expressed by American businessmen. Even as some political illustrations in the *Post* may have framed Japan as an economic dependent—and therefore a subordinate—of the United States, in reality, the business relations of both nations had drawn them into a close economic relationship of which American businessmen were acutely aware.

By the mid-1920s, earlier forecasts of war and aggressive language appeared less and less frequently within the pages of the *Denver Post*. The *Post* published the opinions of American academics and pundits, like Professor Charles K. Leith of the University of Wisconsin, who dismissed the possibility of a future war between the two nations. Leith insisted that a war was highly unlikely, since Japan lacked the natural resources to support a militant engagement with the United States.⁷³ Complimenting such assertions were more benign depictions of Japanese political and military leaders. Although in the 1930s and 1940s, Hirohito oversaw one of the most aggressive and militant periods in Japan's history, upon his initial appointment as

⁷¹ "Big Business leaders Wire expressions of Friendship for Japs," *Denver Post*, July 3, 1924, p. 1.

⁷² "U.S. Chamber of Commerce Will Support Friendship With Japs on Immigration," *Denver Post*, May 9, 1924, p. 40.

⁷³ "Japs lack Steel and cannot make War, says Expert," *Denver Post*, July 30, 1925, p. 1.

emperor, Hirohito made promises of peace and expressed a desire to develop better relations with the United State. Hirohito's initial ascension to the throne was treated with optimism in both the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News*, which foresaw the possibility of improved U.S.-Japanese relations under Hirohito's guidance.⁷⁴

In many respects the passage of the Immigration Act marked a turning point in U.S.-Japanese relations. While initial agitation in Japan over the passage of the Immigrant Act was intense, vocal expressions of disapproval in Japan gradually diminished. At the same time, even as the act remained in the legislative process, discourses printed in the *Denver Post* reflected strands of American sentiment that had come to view Japan as less significant a military threat and more self-assured in the legitimacy of immigrant legislation. The public denials of a potential military conflict between the two nations made by Japanese heads of state only reinforced the sense that Japan did not pose an immediate military threat to the United States. The years that followed the passage of the Immigrant Act were characterized by tempered relations between the two nations, and increasingly less frequent reporting upon Japan as a state within the pages of the *Denver Post*. However, although the Japanese state was less frequently covered by Colorado journalists, Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans remained subjects of the paper's discourse, though as subjects of spectacle and fascination. Their characterization as such shall be discussed in chapter 4.

Renewed Anxieties: Mukden, Manchuria, and Japanese Aggression

The Mukden Incident of 1931, which Japan used as a pretense to invade Manchuria and establish the puppet state of Manchukuo, marked the beginning of a fourteen year period of Japanese militarism in East Asia which did not end until Japan was defeated in World War II.

⁷⁴ "Era of Peace Proclaimed by New Japanese Emperor," *Denver Post*, December 25, 1926, p. 1; "Jap Prince urges closer Friendship with United States," *Rocky Mountain News*, July 8, 1926, p. 11.

International public opinion of Japan gradually deteriorated over the course of this period, as most of the international community refused to recognize Manchukuo as a legitimate state. Because of this, Japan ultimately left the League of Nations in 1933 and pursued a militaristic course as it pushed further into Manchuria and North China. Although the formal start of the Second Sino-Japanese War is commonly associated with the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the Chinese and Japanese were engaged in ongoing fighting from the onset of the Mukden Incident.

Renewed Japanese aggression in East Asia catapulted the Japanese state back into the reporting of the American press and the *Denver Post*. Once again, Japan was portrayed as a militant, warlike state that could potentially threaten the United States. The *Post's* daily reporting on the conflict between China and Japan was complimented by the weekly publication of 'expert' opinions on the developing conflict in East Asia. These articles were published regularly, took up entire pages in the paper's Sunday edition and reflected American concerns over the war, as well as intense fascination over the conduct of the war and the character of the Japanese state and its military. Racialized rhetoric again characterized the *Post's* journalism, as the imperial ambitions of the Japanese state were portrayed as inherently enmeshed in the ambitions of "the Japanese" race.

However, even though the portrayal of Japan as militaristic may have been revived, *Post* reporters were not uniform in the position the United States should take in response to Japan. Initially, journalists, politicians, and pundits did not foresee an imminent conflict arising between Japan and the United States as a result of Japan's aggression in China. Several columns in the *Post* featured the sentiments of those who either advocated American neutrality, or even expressed approval of Japan's actions. In October of 1931, one *Post* writer asserted, "It's a war,

but not our war” insisting that, “the best thing [the United States] can do is not meddle.”⁷⁵

Another *Post* columnist echoed such sentiments in November of 1931. His lengthy article about Manchuria expressed a surprising level of support for Japan’s aggression in the region. The writer concluded, “So far as the United States is concerned, the Manchurian dispute is really none of our business...If Japan can develop and govern Manchuria better than China or Russia, let Japan have it...the modern world belongs to efficient people and efficient governments.”⁷⁶

That same month, the *Post* ran a feature article on Harry O. Palmer, a Republican candidate for governor in Nebraska, who described the Japanese as “the Yankees of the far east.” He advocated Japanese control of Manchuria, viewing it as a better scenario for the United States than a “disorderly Chinese administration, thru which the Red Communist torrent can flow out of Russia to engulf the world.”⁷⁷ Several years later, General Smedley Butler of the United States Marines even defended Japanese aggression in East Asia, arguing, “The Japanese have plenty of precedent for their activities on the Asiatic mainland.” Butler paralleled Japan’s invasion of Manchuria to America’s own incursion in Panama, and argued that the United States “has no right to criticize” Japan for its aggression.⁷⁸

Occasionally, writers carefully examined the complex intricacies of the U.S.-Japanese relationship, which, they argued, made a military conflict with Japan in the near future unlikely. In 1932, Charles Dailey, the *Post*’s correspondent in East Asia, wrote a lengthy article on Japanese invasion of Manchuria, framing Japan’s interests in the region as principally economic. In his column, he expressed that the greatest threat Japan played to the United States was as an

⁷⁵ “U.S. is Ready to Intervene in Manchuria,” *Denver Post*, October 11, 1931, Section 1 p. 5.

⁷⁶ “Russian Rivalry is real Motive for Jap seizure of Japan,” *Denver Post*, November 19, 1931, p. 7.

⁷⁷ “Omaha Lawyers Urges Jap Rule In Manchuria,” *Denver Post*, November 19, 1931, p. 6.

⁷⁸ “General Butler Defends Jap Action in China,” *Denver Post*, April 6, 1933, p. 12.

economic competitor, threatening American markets in China. He pointed out however, that at the same time, the United States is currently involved in financing the Japanese economy and is indirectly contributing to sustaining, and profiting from, the nation's militarism in the process.⁷⁹

Dailey did not propose a course of action for the United States, but instead urged American businessmen to pay closer attention to the economic implications of Japanese aggression in Manchuria. Other columns were characterized by similar ambivalence. One writer posited, "The people of [the United States] have steadily to ask themselves whether their interests in China and the far east are worth a war."⁸⁰

Concerned about its industrial and economic interests in Manchuria, the United States did eventually intervene in the conflict as an arbiter, attempting to find a peaceful resolution between China and Japan.⁸¹ Arbitration produced no results however, and only agitated representatives of the Japanese state. Japan's dissatisfaction with international efforts to broker peace in the region ultimately led to Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations.⁸²

While initial responses to Japanese aggression in Manchuria may have been sympathetic and even supportive of Japan, as the conflict dragged on in East Asia, the *Post's* reporting on the war was increasingly characterized by sentiments of fear and anxiety over Japan's national power. Nevada Senator Key Pittman was quoted by the *Post*, "it was common knowledge that 'the present militaristic government of Japan plans conquest of the entire world.'" China, he

⁷⁹ "Dominance of World Trade is Japanese Goal," *Denver Post*, January 3, 1932, Section 1 p. 6.

⁸⁰ Frank Simonds, "Anglo-American Coercion Policy toward Japan indicates New Tension in Far East," *Denver Post*, December 22, 1935, Section 3 p. 1.

⁸¹ "Three Nations Vie for Riches of Manchuria," *Denver Post*, November 1, 1931, Section 3 p. 1.

⁸² "America's Firm Note to League Resented," *Denver Post*, October 15, 1931, p. 1; "Note to League takes firm stand against Outside Action," *Denver Post*, October 15, 1931, p. 3; "Japs walk out after censure vote by League," *Denver Post*, February 24, 1933, p. 5; "U.S. prepares to join League in Peace Move," *Denver Post*, November 19, 1931, p. 1.

expressed, “was the first move in the Japanese imperialistic program which called for invasion of the west coast of the United States, Mexico, and Southern America.”⁸³ Clyde Pangborn, an American aviator who was arrested in Japan for flying over Japanese military installations, echoed such sentiments, reporting that Japan “has one object in view...to seize the United States.”⁸⁴ In a 1935 syndicated report printed within the *Post*, David Lloyd George, expressed a mixture of concern and reluctant admiration about Japan’s expansion of its military and its growing international power. His comments reflected a racialized understanding of the Japanese and attributed the power of the Japanese state to the character of the Japanese as a race. George wrote, “The Japanese almost more than any people have understood how to convert national sentiment into national power, and national power into national action. This power constitutes their greatness as a people.”⁸⁵ Another journalist foretold of a possible alliance between China and Japan, referring to propagandistic rhetoric employed by Japan that framed its imperialistic actions in East Asia as the expression of a benevolent desire to develop “Asia for the Asiatics.” The reporter rhetorically asked, “Will the yellow peoples united against the whites?” He concluded that such an event was unlikely, but his concerns reflected his implication in contemporaneous discourses that raised concerns over the perceived association between a powerful Japanese state and the challenge it posed to the supremacy of the white race.⁸⁶ As anxieties about Japanese militarism were revived, such claims became an ever-more ubiquitous feature of the *Post*’s reporting. Images of Japan as a fearful, menacing, warlike, and

⁸³ “World Conquest is Jap Objective Pittman Charges,” *Denver Post*, December 20, 1935, p. 14.

⁸⁴ “Pangborn says U.S. vulnerable to Jap attacks,” *Denver Post*, December 9, 1935, p. 8.

⁸⁵ David Lloyd George, “Nippon wants a Navy as potent as her land Arm,” *Denver Post*, January 13, 1935, Section 3 p. 1.

⁸⁶ “Japs and Chinese Align Against White Race in Orient,” *Denver Post*, April 21, 1935, Section 3 p. 2.

racialized state were once again revived in the *Post's* reporting on Japanese aggression in Manchuria during the six years leading up to the onset of the Second Sino-Japanese War.

This sentiment is perhaps best reflected by the words of one *Post* reporter who, in 1932, described the series of conflicts in Manchuria and North China as “a clash of racial and national interests and ambitions.” Discussing Japan’s military actions in Manchuria, his article went on to describe Japan’s interests in expansion motivated by the state’s political ambitions and demand for resources. The author argued that both of these factors were intertwined with the nation’s demand for physical space so that it could distribute its growing population, having been barred from doing so in Canada, the United States, and Australia. Again, the political aspirations of the Japanese state were portrayed as correlating closely with a Social Darwinian struggle for supremacy between the races. Japan’s actions in the region were not just motivated by nation-building, but also by the acquisition of space and resources which would be utilized to expand “the Japanese” population. Once more Japanese militarism was understood to be a racial endeavor as much as it was recognized as a political one. The reporter concluded his article with an assertion of Orientalist authority, demanding readers take his statements seriously because he “[knew] of Japan and Japanese history, psychology, mentality and spirit.” His assuredness led him to conclude that America’s involvement in a “conflict in the east is inevitable.”⁸⁷

While such associations were not universally expressed in the *Post*, as fighting in Manchuria and North China dragged on and the possibility of a military conflict between Japan and the United States was perceived to be more acute, racialized understandings of “the Japanese” and the Japanese state were more frequently published in the paper. At the same

⁸⁷ “Jap Atheism Flag of ‘Rising Sun’ Is Moving Westward,” *Denver Post*, January 3, 1932, Section 3 p. 4.

time, a prominent counter-discourse emerged during the 1930s that questioned the inevitability of a war with Japan, advocated American neutrality, and even made efforts to justify Japanese aggression in Manchuria and China. Even as some contemporaries revived language that framed Japan in an adversarial relationship with the United States, others, motivated by the desire to avoid war or by the presumption that Japanese conquest in the region may even be in America's best interest, were increasingly sympathetic in their rhetoric on Japan.

Furthermore, notably absent from the rhetoric of the 1930s were associations established between Japanese American communities and the Japanese state that had been especially pervasive in the *Post's* reporting on transnational tensions over American immigration legislation. Although Japanese Americans were still implicated in broader discourses that associated them in a racial context, and consequentially, as associates of the Japanese state, they did not emerge as subjects in the *Post's* journalism on the war. Why their connection with the expansion efforts of the Japanese state and the Japanese race was not established is unclear, but it is likely a result of the passage of the Immigrant Act of 1924 which minimized the sense of threat posed by Japanese American communities. Nevertheless, even though contemporary discourse did not directly affiliate Japanese Americans as collaborators of the Japanese state, the racialized understanding of the Japanese state and individuals of Japanese descent allowed for the existence of such an affiliation to exist within its framework of understanding.

Second Sino-Japanese War: 1937-1941

Efforts made by the international community to negotiate peace between Japan and China ultimately failed and Japan continued its militarism in the region. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937, a skirmish fought between Japan and China near the city of Beijing, is recognized as the battle which marks the official start of the Second Sino-Japanese War. In

December of 1941, after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, the United States mobilized against Japan and the Axis Powers, and the military conflicts in East Asia that followed have been understood as regional battles of the broader Second World War.

An increasingly militaristic government in Japan, Japan's alliance with the Axis Powers, continued disputes over naval armament ratios, bellicose rhetoric expressed by Japanese military and political leaders fueled tensions between Japan and the United States. Renewed anxieties about the militarism of Japan were published within the pages of the *Denver Post*. American citizens in East Asia even became unintentional targets of Japanese military aggression and the Japanese attack on the U.S. Panay drew considerable attention from the *Post*, which reported on the experiences of Denver locals serving on the ship when it sank. Even so, sentiments expressed in the paper reveal that many Coloradoans and the broader American public had no desire to engage Japan militarily.

Even as articles on Japan in the *Denver Post* portrayed the state as aggressive and militaristic, the published sentiments of American political officials and citizens reflected a commitment to avoid a future war between the two nations. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt implemented policies that expanded American naval and military armaments, yet he remained committed to a foreign policy of "national and international self-restraint."⁸⁸ While Americans expressed disapproval of Japanese aggression, the majority expressed the desire to curb that militarism through sanctions and negotiations rather than war. A 1938 dispute over naval armament treaties drew proposals from the United States political and military officials that indicated America was willing to limit the tonnage of its battleships if Japan agreed to do

⁸⁸ "U.S. Neutrality in China-Japan War Crisis will be Discussed," *Denver Post*, July 17, 1937, p. 3.

the same.⁸⁹ In response to Japanese bombing of civilian populations, the administration barred Japan from purchasing airplanes or bombs from the United States in 1939.⁹⁰ The actions of the United States reflected the nation's unwillingness to engage the Japanese militarily and to condemn Japanese militarism in East Asia through sanctions.

American efforts to broker a peace in East Asia were understandings of the Japanese state as a nation with which negotiations could be enacted and common ground found without warfare. Not until September of 1940, following Japanese aggression in French Indo-China, did American policymakers publicly announce that they may take measures beyond "diplomatic protest" in response to Japanese belligerence.⁹¹ Just weeks before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, headlines in the *Post* optimistically spoke of a "Pacific truce" and the possibility of avoiding a military conflict between the two nations.⁹²

Even in November of 1941, divisions existed within the Democratic Party over how to proceed in response to Japanese militarism and most politicians continued to voice disapproval of a military engagement with Japan. Less than a month before the events at Pearl Harbor, United States Senator Pepper of the foreign relations committee censured Japanese action in Asia. Alluding to possible military action by the United States, Pepper asserted "if war in the Pacific is the price of resisting the Japanese rampage then war will have to come." He was rebutted by Fellow Democrat, Senator Wheeler of Montana, who insisted that there is no

⁸⁹ "American Building will be guided by answer of Nippon," *Denver Post*, February 5, 1938, p. 1, 3.

⁹⁰ "U.S. Bars Japanese from buying Planes," *Denver Post*, January 9, 1939, p. 1.

⁹¹ "U.S. Considers strong Steps Against Japanese Aggression," *Denver Post*, September 24, 1940, p. 1.

⁹² "NYE Asserts U.S. Can end Crisis easily," *Denver Post*, November 20, 1941, p. 32; "U.S. and Japan now talking of Pacific Truce," *Denver Post*, November 26, 1941, p. 1; "U.S. Demands Japs end ties with Axis Powers," *Denver Post*, November 23, 1941, Section 3 p. 3.

reason in the world why the United States and Japan should go to war.”⁹³ The extent to which some American politicians were willing to make concessions in order to avoid American participation in a war was great. Senator Nye of North Dakota agreed, and felt that Japan and the United States could find a peaceful resolution in East Asia if only the United States “was willing ‘to help Japan save her face’ by agreement to relatively minor concessions for Japan in China.”⁹⁴ The Roosevelt Administration, too, continued to express the desire to establish a peaceful resolution in East Asia, and just weeks before the events at Pearl Harbor, American policymakers offered Japan extensive concessions, including the normalization of trade relations, unfreezing of American credit to Japan, and access to American raw materials in exchange for Japan’s agreement to halt its military expansion and negotiate a peace treaty.⁹⁵

Just as American politicians were divided on the appropriate response of the United States to Japanese militarism in East Asia, so too were *Post* columnists and Colorado denizens. Even as *Post* editorials and letters to the editor expressed outrage at the bombing of the U.S. Panay in 1937, they simultaneously insisted that the United States practice neutrality and avoid entry into a conflict in East Asia. Stationed outside of Nanking on the Yangtze River, the U.S. Panay was a gunboat carrying American embassy officials and United States citizens before it was hit by Japanese aerial bombs in November of 1937. Japanese army officials insisted that the incident was an accident. Even so, the *Post* noted that the incident “materially decreased the

⁹³ “Pepper says Japan must Yield to U.S. Demands or go to War,” *Denver Post*, November 19, 1941, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Denver Post “Nye Asserts U.S. Can End Crisis Easily,” *Denver Post*, November 20, 1941, p. 32.

⁹⁵ “Japan offered access to all Raw Materials,” *Denver Post*, November 21, 1941, p. 1; “U.S. Demands Japs end Ties with Axis Powers,” *Denver Post*, November 23, 1941, Section 3 p. 3.

tolerance in this country of Japan's conduct in China."⁹⁶ Yet the political response of American representatives was surprisingly mixed. Senator Pittman described the incident as an outrage and demanded that Japan punish the officers responsible as an act of good faith. Congressman Knutson of Minnesota demanded that the United States immediately place "an absolute embargo on all shipments to and from Japan." Other elected officials, however, expressed an equal amount of criticism at the American citizens who had remained in war torn China. Senator McCarran harshly rebuked United States citizens who had remained in China after the American government had warned departure from the nation as necessary. Of those who stayed he added, "They are jeopardizing all Americans for their own selfish interests." Senator Shipstead of Minnesota agreed, asking "What were [the U.S. citizens on the Panay] doing over there anyway?" Senator Borah, ranking Republican of the foreign relations committee, asserted "I don't see anything in the situation that calls for drastic action."⁹⁷

Even though two Denver locals were among those stationed on the Panay, the *Denver Post's* extensive coverage of their experiences and the entire Panay incident drew equally mixed responses from Colorado locals.⁹⁸ Although *Post* columnists expressed disbelief at the official Japanese account of the Panay incident and were in general highly critical of Japanese aggression in China, calls for American neutrality were adamantly advocated by *Post* columnists

⁹⁶ "Of Course it was Purely Accidental," *Denver Post*, December 14, 1937, p. 11; "Japanese Army Officer admits machine-gunning Americans," *Denver Post*, December 23, 1937, p. 5; "By Tomorrow he will Admit All," *Denver Post*, December 21, 1937, p. 4.

⁹⁷ "Some Demand Americans get out of trouble Zone," *Denver Post*, December 13, 1937, p. 2.

⁹⁸ "We Regret a Terrible Mistake," *Denver Post*, December 13, 1937, p. 1; "Denver youth aboard Panay," *Denver Post*, December 13, 1937, p. 1; "Leading role in affair taken by Denverite," *Denver Post*, December 13, 1937, p. 1.

in the paper's editorial section.⁹⁹ Shortly after the incident occurred, the *Post* printed an editorial that clearly explicated its opposition to war as it supported the withdrawal of all Americans from China. The column rhetorically asked, "What business do we have anyway keeping American ships and American soldiers in Chinese war zones?" The author framed the war between China and Japan as "no concern of [the United States]," adding with emphasis, "ALL OF CHINA ISN'T WORTH TO US THE LIFE OF ONE AMERICAN (emphasis his)." With assurance, the column asserted "no American in his right mind wants war."¹⁰⁰ Future editorials in the *Post* echoed these sentiments. One column argued, "the sensible course for the United States is to get out of China." The author insisted that Americans who remained in China risked not only their own lives, but entangling the United States in an unwanted war by stressing an already tense political relationship between Japan and America.¹⁰¹

Although *Post* editorialists advocated neutrality, they did not express any sympathy for the Japanese state. As earlier noted, they were highly critical of Japanese aggression in China and, even if they expressed no desire for the United States to engage Japan in a war, they portrayed Japan as a dubious, aggressive, and self-serving nation state which should not be trusted by Americans. As it became clear in the months that followed that the Japanese attack on the Panay was deliberate, bellicose sentiment was more frequently promulgated by the paper. *Post* columnists questioned the ability of Japan to live up to promises to "observe the

⁹⁹ "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 20, 1937, p. 3; "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 24, 1937, p. 3; "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 26, 1937, Section 1 p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 13, 1937, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 14, 1937, p. 2.

inviolability of American life and property in China,” and called for America to build up its naval and military forces in order to thwart any potential threat from Japan.¹⁰²

In the years that followed the incident, editorials printed in the paper advocated America’s right for unrestricted naval armament and criticized Japanese aggression in China.¹⁰³ Yet they continued to express anxieties over the possibility of engaging Japan in a war, and insisted neutrality remained America’s best policy.¹⁰⁴ When Roosevelt ran for a third-term in 1940, the *Post* expressed its opposition to his candidacy almost daily, regularly framing him as a hawk and claiming that he may “decide it is necessary to get [the United States] into war to insure his re-election.”¹⁰⁵ While the *Post*’s charges against Roosevelt may have been unfair, they clearly evinced the paper’s sentiments in opposition to any potential military conflict between the two nations.

Contemporary newspaper readers, whose letters were printed in the *Post*’s Open Forum expressed parallel antiwar sentiments. At the eve of America’s entry into the Second World War, one opinionated letter writer asserted, “[The United States] has no legitimate cause for war with Japan.”¹⁰⁶ Several years earlier, another *Post* reader submitted a letter defending Japanese aggression and comparing it to America’s own military activities during World War I.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, December 27, 1937, p. 2; “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, December 24, 1937, p. 3.

¹⁰³ “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, February 5, 1938, p. 2; “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, February 4, 1938, p. 2; “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, January 8, 1938, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, February 5, 1938, p. 2; “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, February 3, 1938, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ “That’s That,” *Denver Post*, September 28, 1940, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ “No cause for War with Japan,” *Denver Post*, November 30, 1941, Section 3 p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ “In Defense of Japan,” *Denver Post*, August 13, 1939, Section 3 p. 4, *Denver Post* ‘Open Forum.’

More commonly, letter-writers criticized Japan's belligerence in China, yet opposed American military engagement in the region.¹⁰⁸

In the context of the Second Sino-Japanese, the rhetoric of Americans reflected ambivalent and divergent attitudes on how best to deal with Japan's belligerence in East Asia. As in the early 1920s and 1930s, Japan was once again portrayed as a militant state in the dominant discourses presented in the *Denver Post*. However, responses of American politicians and pundits, *Denver Post* editorialists, and *Denver Post* subscribers to Japan's belligerence differed from the discourses of the early 1920s. With considerable consistency, broad segments of the American populace expressed the desire for the United States to remain neutral and not engage militarily in the war in East Asia. Even after the U.S. Panay was attacked and sunk by the Japanese military, comments published in the *Denver Post* revealed that many Americans, though outraged, did not see the event as a cause for the United States to retaliate militarily against Japan. However, *Post* reporting revealed that most Americans disapproved of Japan's aggression in East Asia and the Japan was viewed negatively in American public opinion.

The Racialization of the Japanese State in American Discourse During the Sino-Japanese War

During the Second Sino-Japanese War, contemporaneous discourses once again employed race as they interpreted the actions of the Japan. As American animosity against the Japanese government grew following the Panay incident and reports of atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers against Chinese civilians, contemporaries developed associations between the Japanese state and "the Japanese" as a racialized population. While racial discourse was not ubiquitous in the *Post's* reporting on Japan, when it was manifest, it revealed a perpetuation of

¹⁰⁸ "Man's Inhumanity to Man in China," *Denver Post*, August 13, 1939, Section 3 p. 4, *Denver Post* 'Open Forum.'

essentializing and prejudicial assumptions about “the Japanese” and often alluded to the racial implications of Japanese aggression in East Asia.

Submitting a letter to the *Post* open forum in 1938, a resident of Denver expressed his anxiety about the militancy of Japan and highlighted five reasons why readers of the paper should be concerned about the nation. In an explicit invocation of race that revealed his perceptions, and corresponding fears, of the correlating power of the Japanese state and “the Japanese” as a race, the letter-writer cited the expansion of the Japanese population as the first, and presumably most important, reason why *Post* readers should be concerned about Japanese militarism. He was concerned that “the occupation of China,” which, would greatly expand “the natural fecundity of the Japanese, as of all Asiatics, will mean the doubling of Japan’s population every twenty years or less. This will mean a population of that race by 1980 of between 200 million and 300 million.”¹⁰⁹ He explicitly connected the power of the Japan to the size of the population of “the Japanese” race. Japan’s aggression in China was framed as more than just a politicized act in which one nation-state engaged another nation-state militarily for the acquisition of resources. It was a move on the part of Japan to acquire resources so that “the Japanese” race could be more fecund. Fecundity and population size were viewed as measures of racial dominance, and the *Post* subscriber portrayed Japan as a threat precisely because through its conquest of China, the nation had the ability to acquire the resources needed to improve the reproductive rate of “the Japanese” race and thereby challenge white supremacy across the globe. In this context, all individuals of Japanese descent, regardless of their position on the Sino-Japanese War or their existential connections to Japan, were implicated in a

¹⁰⁹ “The Menace of Japan,” *Denver Post*, December 11, 1938, Section 3 p. 11, *Denver Post* ‘Open Forum.’

discourse that affiliated them with a Japan that was aggressively pursuing a political policy which was intended to expand the supremacy of “the Japanese” race.

Another letter to the editor exhibited parallel fears about the threat of the Japanese state to the “white man.” The letter-writer argued that America’s policy of neutrality in East Asia was undercutting white racial supremacy, and, that “the Japanese” logically wanted to “break the prestige” of the white races. He went on to suggest that if America failed to stand up to “the Japanese” then it would destabilize race relations, asserting “if we take these insults, if the Japs get away with it, every dark skin who has secretly felt the mastery of the white man yet with envy in his heart, is going to rise up and condemn the bully.”¹¹⁰ Both readers of the *Post* evidenced a potent implication within contemporary racial discourse, interpreting Japanese aggression in East Asia as more than just a transnational conflict between nation-states, but as an attempt by Japan, and “the Japanese” race to expand its racial hegemony. In effect, they perceived the conflict as a war motivated as much by racial interests as it was by national ones. As a result, both writers alluded to broader implications of the Japan’s success or failure in China—not only did Japanese expansion alter the global balance of power politically, but, Japan’s actions in East Asia also had the potential to disturb the social order of race relations worldwide. The extent to which such beliefs permeated the broader populace of Colorado is difficult to measure, however, in printing such articles the *Post* promulgated them to a wide audience with the confidence that they would not necessarily lose subscribers through their syndication.

The *Post* was also involved in the publication of editorials and syndicated articles that expressed racial sentiment in their interpretation of the Japanese government. In one editorial,

¹¹⁰ “Writer thinks U.S. should stand up against Japanese Attacks,” *Denver Post*, December 26, 1937, Section 1 p. 14.

a *Post* columnist printed the anti-Japanese rhetoric of Teddy Roosevelt, praising Roosevelt's assertion that it is America's "vital interest...to keep the Japanese out of our country [the United States], and at the same time preserve the good will of Japan." The author advocated employing similar logic in America's relations with the Japanese government during the Second Sino-Japanese War. He saw the need for America to maintain the upper-hand in the balance of power between Japan and the United States. In order to do so, the United States needed a developed navy "to make sure that Japan is not tempted to undertake the acquisition of any American territory," and, additionally, he argued that "It [was] just as vital to keep the Japanese out of our country now as it was in 1910."¹¹¹ On the one hand, the report portrayed Japan in an inherently adversarial relationship with the United States, where open military conflict may only be deterred through the overwhelming superior military strength of one of the two states. At the same time, the insistence that all Japanese remain excluded from residence within the United States revealed the author's perception of the Japanese as a racial community which cannot be assimilated into American society. Implicitly, the author suggested that individuals of Japanese descent must be kept out from the United States for another reason—because they pose a potential threat as collaborators of Japan's ambitions to acquire American territory. Japan was again framed as an inherently bellicose adversary of the United States, and race was perceived as fueling the antagonism between the two nations. By racializing Japan, and ascribing its militarism to contemporary understandings of a "Japanese" race, the editorial implicated all individuals of Japanese descent as affiliates of the nation's militarism. Within the logic of such rhetoric, the meanings ascribed to Japan in the American press during this period—where the nation was often framed as bellicose, aggressive, reckless, self-serving—could easily be transplanted upon Japanese Americans or Japanese nationals due to their racial identities.

¹¹¹ "That's That," *Denver Post*, February 12, 1938, p. 2.

This editorial's sentiments were paralleled in another column that featured an FBI investigation into the activities of "secret Japanese agents" in the United States. Printed in 1937, the editorial concluded that, because of "the anti-Japanese sentiment which has existed for years in many pacific coast communities and the number of Japanese living in that section, it is virtually certain that espionage has been widespread."¹¹² While the article did not implicate all Japanese-American residents of the Pacific Coast as spies for Japan, it made the assertion that substantial quantities of Japanese Americans were disloyal to the United States on account of their racial background. The reaffirmed the notion that "the Japanese" were inassimilable and that the racial tensions between the Japanese- and white Americans along the Pacific Coast fostered the relationship between some Japanese Americans and the Japanese state. More dangerously, the editorial assumed, without any substantial evidence, that at least some of California's Japanese Americans shared a meaningful connection with the Japanese state that undermined their ability to be loyal American citizens. Several years before World War II, *Denver Post* discourses had already questioned the ability of Japanese American communities to be loyal U.S. citizens and attributed their untrustworthiness to their racial identities as "Japanese."

At the same time, Japanese statesman, military officials, and political representatives were also responsible for reinforcing racial sentiments among white Americans. Employing propaganda that framed their military activities in East Asia as an effort to establish 'Asia for Asiatics,' the Pan-Asian discourse of some Japanese elites corroborated the racial attitudes and anxieties of contemporaneous white observers. In a 1938 interview, Japanese Admiral Nobumasa Suetsugu aroused controversy for his racialized interpretation of Japanese aggression

¹¹² "That's That," *Denver Post*, December 25, 1937, p. 2.

in East Asia. Nobumasa essentially described the conflict in the region as a 'race war,' asserting "The yoke of the white races over the yellow must disappear...the mercantile interests of whites must vanish in the sun of Japan's mission."¹¹³ The publication of such sentiments in American periodicals like the *Denver Post* only affirmed the fears and anxieties of some contemporary American observers. Infrequently expressed by leading Japanese statesman to Western journalists, they were sensationalized by the *Denver Post*. A *Post* editorial described Nobumasa's statements as "racial madness," not for his employment of race in his rhetoric, but for his aggressive disposition against the 'white race.'¹¹⁴ While Nobumasa may have been attempting to challenge white supremacy within contemporaneous racialized systems of understanding of human populations, his rhetoric merely affirmed the validity of such discourses to white American observers.

Conclusion

Racialized interpretations of Japan during the interwar years reflected the extent to which Euro-American observers established connections between Japan's growing political and military power and the supremacy of the Japanese race within a Social Darwinian like struggle for population growth and resource acquisition. Conflicts between Japan, the United States, and Europe in East Asia during the 1920s, immigration disputes between Japan and the United States, and Japan's pursuit of an aggressive military policy in East Asia during the 1930s were not merely framed in a political context, but also a racial one. In dominant discourses of the period, the Japanese state was singled out as a political representation of all individuals of Japanese descent, and individuals of Japanese descent were affiliated as associates of the Japanese state.

¹¹³ "Japan Gives World notice Whites must leave Asia," *Denver Post*, January 4, 1938, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ "That's That," *Denver Post*, January 3, 1938, p. 3.

Within such a framework of understanding, Japanese immigrants residing in the United States were not only portrayed as inassimilable, but also depicted as individuals who, because of their racial identities, potentially endangered the United States on account of their association with Japan.

The extensive coverage afforded Japan's militarism and armament must also be attributed to undercurrents of racialized understanding of the Japanese state. Euro-American observers expounded a discourse that described the Japanese state not only as a political enemy, but also a racial one. Japan's militarism and aggression in East Asia were portrayed as a threat to American economic and political interests in the region; they were also framed as threatening to the supremacy of the white race. Compared to other nations, the Japanese state received an unparalleled amount of coverage in Colorado's papers as it pursued its imperial ambitions. Much of this fascination with the state's actions may be attributed to Japan's status as the only major nation in global politics which was not predominantly populated and politically controlled by the 'white race.' In many respects, Japan's behavior was not unique during this period, as it modeled itself after Western European states which had themselves acquired colonial empires by force. By no means does this make this behavior excusable, but it is important to highlight that the anxiety expressed at the militaristic expansion of Japan during the 1920s and 1930s was not comparably directed at Western European colonial powers.

It is important to note that race was not employed all of the time in the *Post's* reporting on the Japanese government during the interwar years. Frequently, reports on Japan were relatively neutral, fact-based accounts. However, even if race was not ubiquitous to the *Post's* reporting on the Japanese state, it was consistently expressed by rhetoric in the paper throughout the interwar years. Racial discourse need not have been explicitly stated within all

reporting for contemporary readers to have made associations between the Japanese state and “the Japanese” race. The fact that racial associations were made frequently within the paper, that Japan’s military received an unprecedented degree of coverage in local newspapers, and that the *Post* printed no articles that dismissed the validity of pundits who argued that an association between state and race existed, reveals the implicit operation of race at multiple levels within newspaper reporting. Furthermore, it demonstrates that racialized depictions of the Japanese state were promulgated in the absence of any discourse to counter their assertions. The power such a discourse had in shaping the attitudes and understandings of contemporary newspaper readers is difficult to measure, but by reading *The Post* they were exposed to the language of prominent social figures, politicians, writers, and intellectuals who produced racialized discourses of the Japanese state.

Because of the frequency with which such interpretations were expressed, race played an important role in the discourses of American’s which attempted to understand and interpret Japan’s growing assertiveness in East Asia. The rhetoric of Japanese and American politicians, journalists, and nationals reflected the implication of contemporaries in racially essentialized understandings of the world. Even Walter Pitkin, who took a sympathetic view of Japan during the early 1920s, incorporated sustained discussions of race and eugenics into his analyses of the U.S.-Japanese political relations. Within such discourses, race was discussed by contemporaries as a biological reality, one responsible for the distinct characteristics of different human populations.

Consequently, American characterizations of “the Japanese” as a racial population during the interwar years evolved concurrently with parallel discourses about the actions of the Japanese state. Years before the outbreak of the Second World War, readers of the *Post* were

exposed to a Japan that was characterized by militarism, aggression, and its adversarial relationship with the United States. At the same time, they were exposed to discourses that racialized the Japanese state and its political and militaristic actions in East Asia. The assumptions of these discourses explicated the possibility of a future 'race war' between Japan and the United States and frequently attached racial implications to Japanese imperialism. The logical and rhetorical frameworks such discourse provided for understanding the Japanese state and its relationship with "the Japanese" race were easily adapted to formulate the intensely antagonist anti-Japanese racial discourse that appeared in American journalism and public sentiment in the midst of the Second World War.

Chapter 4: Japanese Americans and Japanese Nationals as Spectacle During the Interwar Years

Racial interpretations of the Japanese state published in the pages of the *Denver Post* were conveyed to a large audience of Colorado newspaper readers during the interwar years. Characterizations of the Tokyo government described its military actions in East Asia and its disputes with the United States as politically and racially motivated. Moreover, Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals and individuals of Japanese descent were linked to the Japanese state on account of their 'racial' background. In such racialized discourses, Japanese Americans were implicated in the imperial activities of the Japan and vilified as adversaries of the United States and the 'white race.' Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, regardless of their actual relationships with the Japanese state, were essentialized by these discourses, which implicated them in Japan's militarism.

However, throughout the interwar years, Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and "the Japanese" as a race were not uniformly represented by any single discourse within the *Denver Post*. Even as tensions between Japan and the United States escalated during the early 1920s over the implementation of anti-Japanese legislation in the United States, the *Post* was not narrowly focused on Japan's militarism, and meanings of "the Japanese" race were not framed solely in relation to Japan as a state. Throughout the interwar years, both Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals emerged as spectacle within discourses published by Colorado newspapers. Orientalist fascination characterized the language and rhetoric of these discourses, within which Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans were portrayed in ways that did not reaffirm the anxieties expressed in contemporaneous depictions of the Japanese state. Instead, they were discussed as exotic, romantic, mysterious, timeless and peculiar. Nevertheless, these discourses were equally problematic, as they operated within the

framework of race. Although they attributed a different series of meanings to “the Japanese,” these alternative meanings remained essentializing and reinforced the process of ‘othering’ by portraying them as inherently different and foreign from white populations.

Interwar discourses that treated Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans as spectacle were shaped by class and gender. The subjects of these discourses were almost always members of high-society or the upper-class. While these individuals comprised only a fraction of the total Japanese population, newspapers utilized them as universal representations of Japanese culture and society. Japanese women in particular, were presented as exotic and fascinating representations of Japanese culture. A distinctly gendered discourse emerged within the pages of the *Post*, as masculine imagery and images of Japanese men came to represent the Japanese state, Japan’s militarism, and Japan in the context of U.S.-Japanese relations, whereas, feminine imagery and Japanese women were affiliated with exotic and romantic portrayals of Japanese cultural and social life. This dualism resulted in the co-existence of two compartmentalized discourses about Japan, Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, and “the Japanese” race. Even as political tensions between Japan and the United States intensified, discourses of Japan as a bellicose state were concurrently printed alongside images that depicted Japan as a romantic destination in the Orient. Newspaper reporters often invoked sentiments of fascination with an exotic Japan that was represented by women and feminine imagery. Thus, gendered discourses allowed two nearly opposing portrayals of “the Japanese” race to be published concurrently within the pages of Colorado newspapers. However, both portrayals ultimately employed race in their understandings of “the Japanese,” and consequently, reinforced dominant social discourses that placed non-white races in the position of social ‘other’ that was *different from* and *inferior to* the white race.

Like Japanese nationals, Colorado's Japanese Americans also became subjects of discourses which treated them as spectacle. Although the *Denver Post* may have published inflammatory and vilifying discourses of Pacific Coast pundits and politicians, the paper was relatively benign in its reporting on Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, and Colorado's Japanese American communities. The smaller size of Colorado's Japanese American population likely played an important role in shaping the response of Colorado's Euro-American communities to their Japanese American neighbors. Numbering only several thousands and scattered throughout the state's rural communities, Colorado's Japanese Americans were not the subjects of widespread anti-Japanese sentiment. Articles featuring Colorado's Japanese American communities were, however, frequently printed by the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* throughout the roughly twenty year period between 1919 and 1941. The community received a considerable amount of attention in local papers, which employed parallel gendered discourses in their articles on Colorado's Japanese American communities.

As Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans emerged as the subjects of spectacle during the interwar years, so too did Japanese culture. During the 1920s, wealthy Denverites built elaborate Japanese gardens on their properties, traveled to Japan, attended Noh plays in local theaters, bathed with 'Jap Rose Soap,' hosted Japanese tea parties in costume, and wore fashions modeled after traditional Japanese garb.¹ When local museums acquired new Japanese artifacts or material goods, the *Denver Post* reported on the new additions to their collections. Notable Japanese film star, Sessue Hayakawa, drew considerable attention from the local community when he visited Denver in the 1920s. Advertisements for kimonos and trips

¹ "Scenes at 'Rose Acre,' the Beautiful Summer Home of the Liebhardt Family," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, p. 1; "A Jap Noh Play to be Done for M'Dowell Fund," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, amusement section, p. 1; "Jap Rose Soap" advertisement, *Denver Post*, May 13, 1927, p. 32; Advertisement for Kimonos sold by Denver Dry Goods Company, *Denver Post*, April 24, 1925, p. 11; "Japanese Tea Party Planned," *Denver Post*, December 22, 1935, Section 2 p. 4.

overseas, theatrical reviews, coverage of local museums, and articles on the elaborate homes and parties of wealthy Denverites reflected the extent to which some Coloradoans were fascinated with Japan, as they expressed an interest in not only observing, but also possessing elements of the Japanese civilization they romanticized. Not until the 1930s, when members of the local community expressed their disapproval with Japan's aggression in Manchuria and China, did this general fascination with Japan gradually begin to decline. Nevertheless, local interest in Japanese cultural products was sufficient to sustain several Japanese art and import stores within the city of Denver and continued to fuel demand for travel to the Orient into the years preceding World War II.

Japanese and Japanese Americans as Peculiar, Mysterious, Curiosities

In January of 1922, the *Literary Digest*, a popular American weekly magazine, dedicated an entire issue to an in-depth look at Japan. Nearly a hundred pages in length, the magazine's "Special Japan Section" provided readers with information about the Japanese state, Japanese nationals, and Japanese customs and culture. Undoubtedly, some readers of Colorado's newspapers were exposed to the discourses expressed by the *Digest*, which printed full page advertisements in the pages of the *Denver Post* that boldly proclaimed: "Americans Must Know more About Japan."²

The *Digest* described its efforts as an attempt to "furnish the most comprehensive account and analysis of Japan, the country and the people, that has ever been issued in an American publication...to tell Japan as she is, extenuating nothing and setting down nothing in

² "Americans Must Know more about Japan," advertisement, *Denver Post*, January 6, 1922, p. 17.

malice.”³ Although malice may have been absent from the magazine’s reporting, essentializing references to race and treatments of Japanese nationals and Japanese culture as subjects of spectacle prevailed in the discourse presented by the *Digest*. Japan, Japanese nationals, and Japanese culture were framed as fantastic oddities. Japan’s rapid modernization was described as a “transformation of civilization as miraculous as the change from stage-coach to the passenger airplane.”⁴ This fascination was in part inspired by Japan’s rise to power as a political state, but also by Japanese culture and society, and the assimilation of Western civilization by Japan and Japanese nationals.⁵

Romantically portraying Japan and the Japanese as mysterious, fascinating, and odd, the *Digest*’s lengthy feature on Japan embodied the elements of interwar discourses that treated Japan as spectacle. In Orientalist fashion, the *Digest* described itself as an authority on all things “Japanese.” Japanese art, Buddhism, Japan’s militarization, Shinto, Japanese children, Japanese women, Japanese dining, Japan’s scientists, Japanese forms of entertainment, and countless other aspects of Japanese culture and society were discussed in the *Digest*. The *Digest* saturated its pages with the opinions and observations of dozens of American ‘authorities’ on Japan, individuals who were recognized as experts on the state and turned to for their interpretations on Japan and Japanese nationals. Rarely were Japanese nationals allowed to represent themselves and they were objectified by American experts whose language essentialized a diverse group of people as “the Japanese.”

³ “Japan’s Seventy Dazzling Years,” *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ “Japanese Psychology,” *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 33.

Characterizations of Japan and Japanese nationals printed in the *Digest* starkly contrasted with contemporaneous American discourses that exhibited fear and anxiety about the Japanese state's militancy and imperial ambitions. On the contrary, the *Digest's* reporting framed Japan and the Japanese as "Oriental" curiosities to be observed, and even admired, by contemporary readers. The magazine expressed amazement at Japan's rise to prominence as a commercial power within "the short space of an ordinary lifetime," describing Japan's economic success as "the most romantic fact about Japan."⁶ Articles published in the periodical expressed fascination, rather than fear, at the rapid development and modernization of Japan's military and navy. The *Digest* even drew parallels between Japan's imperialism in the 1920s and the imperial activities of Western European powers at the turn of the century, noting "that if [Japan] has been guilty of imperialistic aggressiveness, she has merely been imitating her Western exemplars."⁷ However, potential similarities between Japan and Europe or the United States were not in the foreground of the *Digest's* feature on Japan. It was the Japan that was inherently different from the West—an exotic, quirky, and romantic Japan—that inspired the majority of the articles printed in the magazine.

At the core of the *Digest's* reporting on Japan was the periodical's lengthy examination of traditional elements of Japanese culture. Even as they acknowledged the rapidity of Japan's modernization, Euro-American interpreters of Japan discussed Japanese culture and society as uniform and timeless. Paul Couchoud was cited for his expertise on Japanese art, asserting, "the art of the art is diffused throughout the people; it has saturated their country and impregnates

⁶ "Japan's Miraculous Commercial Rise," *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 28.

⁷ "Japan as Naval and Military Power," *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 23, 31.

their life with vitality.”⁸ Another columnist expressed fascination at the disciplinary systems implemented in Japanese schools, concluding that Japanese schools were still conducted in the 1920s the way they had “always been conducted.” Although the author recognized that Japan had adopted features of Western education, it was Japan’s commitment to foreign traditions that was at the center of his inquiry.⁹ Geishas, *bushido*, Shinto, Buddhism, Japanese tea ceremonies were all framed as essential elements of Japanese culture that had existed unchanged for centuries. While the intention of discourses examining Japanese culture was to introduce readers to an objective portrayal of Japan, the *Digest’s* reporting was characterized by romanticized interpretations of a timeless Japanese culture and society.

In effect, Japanese culture and society were portrayed as curiosities, to be observed and awed at by American audiences. In a piece on Japanese culture, reporter Julian Street described the Japanese as a people full of “reversed ideas,” an “Asiatic mystery.”¹⁰ His understanding of Japan as “Asiatic Mystery” had two dimensions. On the one hand, it referred to elements of Japanese culture that were the objects of American romanticism and fascination with the exotic—mysterious, yet simultaneously captivating. At the same time, the expression referred to American bewilderment at Japanese customs and practices perceived to be reflections of backwards traditionalism.¹¹ Other articles in the *Digest* echoed such sentiments. In a feature report titled “Odd Folks and Ways in Japan,” the *Digest* conclusively proclaimed that “‘Queer, but cute’ is the American verdict, delivered by an overwhelming majority of plain American

⁸ “The Artistic Sense of the Japanese,” *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), pp. 35-36.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

¹⁰ “Odd Folks and Ways in Japan,” *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

citizens, on Japan and all things Japanese.”¹² All elements of Japanese life—from traditional Japanese art, religion, and philosophy, to quotidian minutia—were transformed into exhibits of peculiarity within the pages of the *Digest*. One writer expressed befuddlement at the Japanese zodiac and Japanese superstitions. Yet even as he expressed uncertainty or unfamiliarity with the customs or practices he was describing, he proceeded to authoritatively explicate their significance to readers. He admitted that he has “only a smattering of [knowledge of Japanese lore],” but proceeded to discuss his interpretations of the Japanese zodiac and Japanese superstitions anyway, insisting that his knowledge “will suffice to show the general tendency of such superstition.”¹³ His haphazard and shallow interpretations of Japanese customs and his conclusion that “superstition of all kinds plays a large part in the daily life of the Japanese masses” disseminated an incomplete, yet essentializing portrayal of Japanese custom that was more concerned with framing it as strange and peculiar than genuinely exploring its attributes.¹⁴

Not only did such rhetoric portray Japan and Japanese culture and society as exotic or backward, but it also “othered” individuals of Japanese descent. Always implicit, and at times explicit, within the treatment of Japan as spectacle was an understanding of essential difference between Euro-Americans and ethnic Japanese. Japanese culture and society were mysterious precisely because they were perceived as inherently different from Western cultures and societies. Even seemingly inconsequential practices were framed as curiosities and signifiers of

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ “Odd Folks and Ways in Japan,” p. 44.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

difference by the magazine. For example, Julian Street's column in the *Digest* awed at Japanese bathing habits, for they bathed in hot baths that "[Americans] could hardly stand."¹⁵

The most explicit characterizations of Japan and the 'Japanese' as "other" were employed in the *Digest's* discussions of the Japanese as a racial population. Race was employed in discussions of the "Japanese" throughout the magazine. Although the *Digest* did not explicitly advocate the anti-Japanese sentiment expressed by contemporary Californian's, it nevertheless referred to the presence of Japanese Americans along the Pacific Coast as a "'rising tide of color' [breaking] against the western frontier of the white race."¹⁶ Race in this context was used as a category of social analysis that explained the inevitability of tensions between white Americans and Japanese Americans residing in close proximity to one another as they did along the Pacific Coast. In other contexts, however, race was utilized as an explanation for an essential, timeless, beauty that Euro-Americans perceived existed in Japanese culture. It was because the Japanese "have so keen an emotion in the face of nature," one columnist described, "that they have such a fine artistic sense. In another racially essentializing statement he asserted, that it was not surprising that such a sentiment for nature existed in Japan, but "its extension to an entire population" was simply "extraordinary."¹⁷ Artistic elements of Japanese culture were identified as the products of an inherent artistic sensibility in which all individuals of Japanese descent participated. The reporter insisted that all 'Japanese' shared these qualities, and they were transformed into objects of spectacle for their perceived racial attributes, which inspired as much intrigue as the foreignness of traditional Japanese art.

¹⁵ "Odd Folks and Ways in Japan," p. 38.

¹⁶ "Japan and the United States," *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 24.

¹⁷ "The Artistic Sense of the Japanese," p. 35.

Race was invoked most explicitly in the *Digest's* feature article on "Japanese" psychology. The article described at length the psychological characteristics that defined "the Japanese" race. This discourse overtly framed "the Japanese" as a racial other, inherently different from white populations. It was this difference, the article made clear, that made it difficult for "the Western mind to form clear estimate of Japan or the Japanese." Although much of the *Digest's* reporting on Japan treated the nation and Japanese culture and society as romantic spectacle, the article exploring the racial psychology of the Japanese identified militarism and aggression as central elements of "the Japanese" race. It described "the Japanese" as "essentially communistic," emotionally repressed, clannish, and militaristic. *Bushido* was cited as evidence of the inherent aggression of the Japanese, describing them as a population "bred to the sword." Japanese patriotism and sentiments of loyalty to communities and individuals were presented as indications of an innate Japanese clannishness. By contrast, whites were described as individualists and "in the main a commercial people" who find "war and its uses...abhorrent."¹⁸ Such discourses were ultimately essentializing and dehumanizing, as they framed all individuals of Japanese descent as universally similar, sharing in the characteristics attributed to "the Japanese" race. They also reinforced an understanding of all "Japanese" as a social other—essentially different from all whites on account of racial identity. Since racial identities were understood as biologically essential and inherited from birth, the differences attributed to "the Japanese" and the white races were implicitly timeless and incapable of ever being overcome.

Far from neutral, the discourses presented in the *Literary Digest* continued to racialize Japan, Japanese nationals, and Japanese Americans. While the majority of the writers featured

¹⁸ "Japanese Psychology—The Soul of Japan," *The Literary Digest* LXXII, No. 1 (January 7, 1922), p. 33.

in the *Digest* did not portray Japan as militant and aggressive or express anxiety and fear in their discourses, they employed racially essentializing language as they characterized Japan and Japanese individuals as romantic curiosities. The discourse effectively highlighted differences between Japanese and Euro-American populations, drawing attention to distinguishing characteristics of Japanese culture and society which were perceived as odd, mysterious, charming, and essentially “Japanese.” The *Digest* portrayed the Japanese state, Japanese culture, and Japanese society as spectacle, to be observed and consumed by American readers. At the same, interpretations of Japan were almost exclusively produced and presented by Euro-American writers, and few Japanese voices were represented in the pages of the magazine.

Japanese Culture and Society as Spectacle Within Colorado Newspapers

Throughout the interwar years, even during periods of heightened tensions between Japan and the United States, Colorado’s newspaper printed articles that mirrored the sentiments expressed in the *Literary Digest* and treated Japanese nationals, Colorado’s Japanese Americans, and elements of Japanese culture as subjects of spectacle. Discussed in an earlier chapter, discourses appearing in the *Post* that framed Japan as militant and aggressive did not reflect the totality of the paper’s reporting on the Japanese state, Japanese nationals, or “the Japanese” as a race. Perennial reports of the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* characterized “the Japanese” as romantic curiosities, paralleling the interpretations of writers published in the pages of the *Literary Digest*. The romantic exoticism attributed to Japanese culture and individuals of Japanese descent were persistently published within Colorado newspapers, even as articles expressing anxiety about Japan’s militarism in East Asia framed individuals of Japanese descent as affiliates of a bellicose state on account of their race.

On the one hand, within such discourses, “the Japanese” were implicated within the militancy of Japan in East Asia and framed as inherently patriotic and loyal, not only to the Japanese state, but also the Japanese race. But concurrent discourses also framed Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans as representatives of a romanticized and mystified Japanese culture. The distinct contrasts between the characteristics attributed the Japanese within these contemporaneous discourses speak to the fluidity and complexity of racialized understandings of “the Japanese” during the interwar years. Colorado newspaper readers were exposed to a dualistic set of meanings associated with “the Japanese” as a racial community. Even as the discourses produced starkly different interpretations of Japan and individuals of Japanese heritage, in each context, assumptions about the inherent biological characteristics conveyed an essentializing ideology which identified individuals of Japanese descent as a racial ‘other.’

Like the *Literary Digest*, the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* often portrayed Japan and Japanese nationals as subjects of oriental splendor and curiosity. Japanese customs and superstitions were frequently described in terse articles within the pages of the *Post*. The *Denver Post* regularly highlighted elements of Japanese culture through brief snippets, photographs, captions, and articles. These articles made little effort to understand Japanese cultural practices, but rather, presented them as subjects of spectacle to be observed for their peculiarity by Colorado newspaper readers. They reinforced contemporaneous understandings of the “Japanese” as inherently different on account of their foreign, and peculiar, practices. For example, one terse article introduced readers to a group of superstitious Japanese merchants in Tokyo who attributed the sequential deaths of five of their peers to the cutting down of a tree in a local neighborhood.¹⁹ The article framed the beliefs and behaviors of these merchants as

¹⁹ “Jap Merchants believe cutting of Tree caused Deaths,” *Denver Post*, November 5, 1922, p. 13.

peculiar oddities that signified the superstitious nature of all “Japanese.” In 1922, another report drew attention to the convictions of Japanese residents of Osaka who interpreted the visitation of storks to their city as good omens.²⁰ Once more, the superstitions of this Japanese community were discussed in brevity and the composition of these articles invited a reading in which the reader was introduced to a foreign, mysterious, and peculiar social practice. The *Denver Post* did not attempt to contextualize these practices or elaborate upon their significance, but rather framed them as odd cultural customs that were indicative of the overall peculiarity of Japanese culture and society. Other writers drew attention to Japanese modes of dress, agricultural practices, and religious traditions. Not uncommonly were the “Japanese” represented by everyday minutia. Reporters examined the most quotidian elements of Japanese life, from Japanese traffic regulations, automobile fenders, and clocks to Japanese superstitions. In one article, a photograph drew reader’s attention to the uniqueness of a Japanese clock face which used Japanese characters instead of roman numerals to indicate hours.²¹ Another featured an image of a young Japanese whaler at work, describing him as a “Jap Jonah.”²² In their brevity, these reports reinforced the mystery and awe surrounding Japanese culture and society, as they did little to explain the contextual significance of Japanese cultural practices and beliefs.

²⁰ “Osaka sees visit of Stork as good Business Omen,” *Denver Post*, August 5, 1922, Section 1 p. 18.

²¹ “Japanese traffic regulations sound queer in English,” *Denver Post*, May 13, 1923, Section 3 p. 14; “Japanese autos must have ‘splash fenders,’” *Denver Post*, March 14, 1920, p. 8; “Sacred Mirror of Japan is put in new Temple,” *Denver Post*, October 2, 1929, p. 12; “Curious Japanese Clock,” *Denver Post*, September 13, 1931, magazine section; “Splash guards protect ankles of Jap walkers,” *Denver Post*, May 29, 1927, Section 3 p. 5.

²² “A Jap Jonah,” *Denver Post*, December 18, 1931, p. 42.

One might ask why these events were merited as newsworthy and published within the *Denver Post*, a regional newspaper principally distributed in the American Rocky Mountain West. It is reasonable to assert that Japanese customs, beliefs, and practices had little or no material impact on the everyday lives of most Coloradoans. While they likely carried little significance to Colorado newspaper readers, stories featuring Japanese culture and society were nevertheless frequently published by the *Post*. As they depicted Japanese culture and society as spectacle, they were published precisely because they drew attention to what many Coloradoans likely would have viewed as unusual, exotic, and extraordinary. These articles were designed to entertain more than they were intended to inform. What made these stories newsworthy was not their ability to provide knowledge *Post* readers, but rather, their ability to awe and amuse them. Portraying the Japanese as curiosities, these reports framed elements of Japanese custom as foreign and exotic. Consequently, newspaper readers were exposed to a discourse that accentuated the otherness of Japan and Japanese nationals.

However, unlike contemporaneous discourses which discussed the militancy of the Japanese state, discourses that framed the Japanese as curiosities did not associate Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, and individuals of Japanese descent with Japan's militarism. Nor did they present the differences between Western society and Japanese culture and society an inherent cause of adversarial relations between Japan and the United States. Instead, the otherness of Japan inspired romantic sentiments among *Post* reporters, whose articles expressed not only inquisitive curiosity, but also charmed adoration with Japanese culture and society. This adoration was directed especially at Japanese women, as well as cultural practices and objects affiliated with Japanese femininity.

Japanese Women as Representatives of a Romanticized Japanese Culture and Society

Japanese women were regularly depicted in the *Denver Post* and, more often than Japanese men, were portrayed as representatives of Japanese culture and society. While the *Post* featured Japanese women as subjects of its reporting throughout the interwar years, it was during the 1920s that such images became most prevalent.

Between 1920 and 1933, the paper frequently published photographs of Japanese women, featuring them for their beauty and their exotic characteristics. Many of these women were members of the upper social class. The subjects of these photographs included the female relatives of Japanese political leaders, the brides of prominent Japanese businessmen, and Japanese film stars. Typically, they were depicted in full body photographs wearing kimonos, with captions drawing attention to their beauty and exoticism. For example, a 1924 photograph described Tomoko Kuni, a princess of the imperial family dressed in an elaborate kimono, as Japan's most beautiful woman. Setsuko Fukushima, the daughter of a prominent Japanese businessman, was also depicted in a portrait wearing a kimono and the *Post* acknowledged her for her abilities in flower arrangement and harp playing, describing those practices as two of Japan's "most highly prized accomplishments."²³ Both women were the sole subjects of their respective photographs, and were featured in intimate close-ups. Dressed in Japanese kimonos and admired for their adeptness in Japanese aesthetic customs, these women were portrayed as spectacles and functioned as representations of an exotic and romanticized Japanese culture and society. The photographs of these women are indicative of a broader discourse within the *Denver Post* which affiliated women and feminine imagery with romanticized interpretations of 'traditional' Japanese society. Not only Japanese women, but also the 'traditional' clothing they

²³ "Japanese tennis star's bride of prominent banker," *Denver Post*, February 16, 1922, p. 7; "Japan's most Beautiful Woman a Bride," *Denver Post*, July 10, 1924, p. 20; "Cherry Blossom Time," *Denver Post*, April 12, 1933, p. 1; "Japan's Clara Bow," *Denver Post*, October 28, 1929, p. 19.

wore and the 'traditional' activities with which they were associated were romanticized and framed as timeless elements of Japanese culture.

Within these discourses, kimonos came to symbolize a uniquely Japanese article of clothing and represented a link to a 'traditional' Japan which existed prior to Japan's interaction with Western European nations. In the pages of the *Post*, Japanese women were far more likely than their male counterparts to be portrayed wearing Japanese kimonos or participating in 'traditional' Japanese activities. Kimonos were designed and worn by both men and women, however, in the pages of the *Post*, they were portrayed almost exclusively as feminine garments. Since only Japanese women were framed wearing kimonos, the garments were feminized and the meanings affiliated with the kimono were transposed upon the Japanese women that were portrayed wearing them. In this respect, Japanese women themselves were portrayed as participants in, and representatives of, a 'traditional' Japanese culture. One report in the *Post* described Japanese women's kimonos as an article of clothing that had not "changed in style or general lines since time immemorial."²⁴ Often admired for their ornate designs and vivid colors, the kimono symbolized Japan's beauty and exoticism, traits which were also implicitly attributed to the Japanese women who wore the garments in the *Post's* journalism.²⁵

The extent to which Colorado newspaper readers were fascinated with kimono's as exotic possessions is perhaps best exhibited in the garment's extensive commoditization during the 1920s. Denver area department store's regularly printed advertisements in the *Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* which featured kimonos among their merchandise. The Joslin Dry Goods Company, the Golden Eagle store, the Denver Dry Goods Company, Strikers Sample

²⁴ "Japanese Kimono suits Mae West," *Denver Post*, December 15, 1935, Section 3 p. 7.

²⁵ "To visit America," *Denver Post*, August 4, 1931, p. 27.

Store, Hedgcock and Jones of Denver, Levis and Son Dry Goods Company, and the Japanese Bazaar were the many department stores that sold kimonos and advertised their wares in Colorado newspapers. These companies marketed and designed their products for female consumers, yet the kimonos sold in department stores varied stylistically and typically Americanized adaptations of the Japanese garments. They were usually depicted as loose, simplistic 'robe' style garments which were advertised to be worn as sleepwear, lingerie, or casual summer-wear depending on the material and design of the kimono.²⁶ Even though they were not precisely modeled after the kimonos worn by Japanese women, the character of the advertisements printed in the post reflects the extent to which the garment was associated with femininity. Furthermore, it reflected the extent to which the kimono came to represent an exotic element of Japanese culture with which consumers in Denver were familiar. Not only was the kimono a powerful representation of an exotic Japan, it was a representation that Euro-American consumers could purchase and possess.

Like the kimono, the Japanese geisha was also depicted as a feminine representation of the exotic within *Post* discourses about Japan. Treated as oriental spectacle, images and articles portrayed geishas as mysterious and beautiful, yet also criticized them for what contemporaries perceived as their affiliation with prostitution. In 1929, the *Post* published a full-page article written by a Japanese correspondent and editors asserted the story revealed "the true status of the storied and much-maligned geisha girl." The writer was a Japanese national who remained

²⁶ Advertisement for the Japanese Bazaar, a Denver area store, *Denver Post*, December 12, 1920, Section 2 p. 12; Advertisement for the Joslin Dry Goods Company (Denver), *Denver Post*, May 4, 1927, p. 9; Advertisement for Hedgcock and Jones, a Denver area store, *Denver Post*, January 7, 1925, p. 8; Advertisement for Strikers Sample Store of Denver, *Rocky Mountain News*, December 11, 1921, Section 1 p. 12; Advertisement Hedgcock and Jones of Denver, *Rocky Mountain News*, January 2, 1921, Section 2 p. 8; Advertisement for Jefferay Company of Denver, *Rocky Mountain News*, December 18, 1921, Section 1 p. 10; Hopper Incorporated (Denver) advertisement, *Rocky Mountain News*, November 11, 1923, Society Section p. 3; Advertisement for Levi's and Sons Dry Goods Store (Denver), *Denver Post*, August 6, 1922, Section 2 p. 9; Advertisement for Joslin's Dry Goods (Denver), *Denver Post*, November 21, 1922, p. 9.

anonymous and expressed opposition to the continued use of geisha houses in Japan, not on account of moral reservations, but rather, because he felt they were economically detrimental to Japan. They were a reflection of postwar extravagance in Japan he asserted, insisting that “The people of the empire...have squandered their hard earned money on foolish pleasures.” He also made an effort to dispel the “erroneous impressions” Westerners held of geishas. He assured readers that the “girls are highly regarded and that there is nothing reprehensible about seeking their society.” The earnestness of his efforts to dispel interpretations of the geisha as a prostitute suggests that such an understanding of the geisha was prevalent among Americans. Whatever the effect of his work may have been upon Colorado newspaper readers, it did little to dispel the *Post*’s own interpretations of geishas which were presented in a series of captions and images encircling the page. Remaining the subjects of romanticized spectacle, geisha girls wearing ornate kimonos were featured in several photographs and captions described them as Japanese beauties of a “traditional type” and the “fairest maids of Japan.”²⁷ In other articles within the *Post*, the lives and experiences of the geishas were further romanticized. When Kiyoko Furuta, a geisha from Osaka, passed away in 1925, an article in the *Post* described her as the “queen of the geishas,” discussed the “fortune” she had amassed, and featured her for her charitable bequest of 10,000 yen for social work in Osaka.²⁸ That an individual Japanese geisha was receiving attention in an American periodical reflected the celebrity-like status geishas had received within the American public.

Like the kimono, the image of the geisha and its association with feminine beauty and oriental splendor resulted in its commoditization. In 1929, the Gensler-Lee Jewelry Company of

²⁷ “Breaking Power of the Gold-Digging Geisha Beauties with Japan,” *Denver Post*, September 29, 1929, magazine section p. 1.

²⁸ “Famous Geisha Girl wills Money to City,” *Denver Post*, July 2, 1925, p. 4.

Denver introduced the “Geisha” engagement ring. Set with a blue-white diamond, two sapphires, and mounted on an 18k Solid white-gold ring, the ring was advertised in the pages of the *Denver Post*, juxtaposed beside artistic renderings of a Japanese geisha wearing a kimono and fanning herself (Figure 5).²⁹ In this context, the beauty and exoticism of the geisha was affiliated with an elaborate and expensive piece of jewelry. Such an association indicates that the image of the geisha was meaningful to contemporary consumers and the extent to which the geisha was glamorized and served as a beautiful and exotic representation of Japan. Advertisements attempted to transmit this exotic quality to the engagement ring, suggesting that the ring embodied characteristics of the mysterious, yet beautiful, orient which could consumers could indirectly possess by purchasing the product.



Figure 5-A.

²⁹ Advertisement featuring the “The Geisha,” a diamond engagement ring sold by the Gensler-Lee Jewelry Company of Colorado, *Denver Post*, February 22, 1929, p. 11.



Figure 5-B.

Even more commonly, however, advertisements in the *Post* employed images of Japanese women who were not distinguished as geishas, yet often wore elaborate kimonos and were depicted for their attractiveness. Several companies which advertised their products in the *Denver Post* during the interwar years utilized artistic sketches of Japanese women in traditional garb to draw attention to their products and stores. For example, the Oriental Art Company of Denver printed advertisements for its store which featured a drawing of a young, attractive Japanese girl wearing an elaborate kimono and holding a paper fan. Within the advertisement, the Japanese woman functioned as a general representation of the entire orient, not just Japan. She embodied the characteristics of beauty and exoticism, smiling warmly and waving as if to welcome customers into the ambiguous oriental scene pictured behind her. She was dressed in traditional Japanese garments as if to invoke a sense of authenticity about the products available at the Oriental Art Company (Figure 6).³⁰ In the context of this advertisement, the Japanese feminine represented the splendor and authenticity of an exotic Japan that could be possessed by Coloradoans through the act of consumption at local department stores.

³⁰ Advertisement for the Oriental Art Company of Denver, *Denver Post*, May 1927, Section 2 p. 2.



Figure 6.

The Hayes Chocolate Company of Colorado used similar images in its advertisements, which featured a young, smiling Japanese woman wearing a kimono, holding a paper fan in one hand and a parasol in the other. Within the Hayes' advertisement, the affiliation between product and oriental imagery is less explicit, yet the Japanese woman is once again a welcoming figure standing before a generic landscape depicting an imaginary scene somewhere in East Asia. In this imaginary scene, the orient is represented by a Japanese woman and is portrayed as a place of splendid beauty as it is juxtaposed behind a box of chocolates. In reference to both the box of chocolates and the pretty Japanese girl depicted in the advertisement is a caption which reads: "Always in Good Taste."³¹ While it is difficult to discern precisely how readers responded to such invocations of Japanese women, once more, the orient was represented by a Japanese girl and was employed by advertisers in an effort to draw the attention of consumers to their products. In stark contrast to discourses that framed the Japanese state as aggressive

³¹ Advertisements for Hayes's Chocolates Company of Denver, *Denver Post*, November 10, 1920, p. 14.

and menacing, these images portrayed Japanese women as participants in, and often the representatives of, a broader oriental world that had exotic qualities and was inherently alluring.

Companies selling beauty products also targeted female consumers by utilizing images of Japanese women and affiliating them as the possessors of an innate beauty. The 'Princess Tokio Wrinkle Home Treatment' was among the many products advertised in the *Post* that purported to enhance feminine beauty (Figure 7). The advertisement in the paper began with a rhetorical question: "Did you ever see a Japanese woman with wrinkles, irrespective of age?" Japanese women immediately became the subjects of spectacle within the advertisement, which depicted them as possessors of universal beauty that they acquired through the use of mysterious oriental practices unknown to Westerners. The advertisement continued, "Never before have Christian women been able to solve the secret of these Oriental beauties, whose faces and forms have been the marvel through ages."³² A facial portrait of a wrinkle-free Japanese woman wearing a kimono complimented the article's claims. Once again, Japanese women were portrayed as beautiful, timeless, mysterious, and even capable of defying aging. Furthermore, they were explicitly essentialized as a uniform population that shared in a common knowledge of anti-aging practices on account of their shared racial identities. All Japanese women were portrayed as being partial to these wrinkle-removing secrets, and consequently, as intrinsically beautiful.

'Jap Rose' Soap was yet another product which was frequently advertised in the pages of the *Denver Post* throughout the interwar years. As was discussed in earlier chapters, the term "Jap" was a racist and derogatory term typically employed by Euro-Americans to speak of

³² "Wrinkles go Quick," *Denver Post*, November 14, 1920, Section 1 p. 17.

“the Japanese” race in a discriminatory manner. Although it was employed in the context of “yellow peril” rhetoric of the Russo-Japanese War and would later be employed to vilify Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals during World War II, in this context, advertisers employed the word to racially commoditize Japanese culture and society. Targeting female consumers, advertisements promised that the product cleansed pores and cleared complexions. Although the use of the word ‘Jap’ in the product’s title suggested the product was of Japanese origin, Jap Rose Soap was in fact made and distributed by the James S. Kirk Company of Chicago, Illinois. However, the company often employed images of Japanese women elegantly dressed in Japanese kimonos within its advertisements. The Japanese women were depicted as symbols of beauty, and the implicit message of the advertisements suggested that if American consumers utilized Jap Rose Soap, they too could be as glamorous, attractive, and desirable as the Japanese women depicted in the advertisements.³³

Advertisements for travel to Japan printed in the *Denver Post* also made extensive use of Japanese women as symbols of the Japan and the orient. During the 1920s and into the early 1930s, travel advertisements and travel reports featured Japan as a major travel destination. Reports of travel writers in the *Post* outlined the merits of visiting the nation and provided readers with advice and recommended tourist attractions. As late as 1935, at a time when Japanese aggression in China had escalated considerably, a *Post* reporter described the Orient—including China and Japan—as an “interesting destination for any traveler,” adding “its beauties

³³ Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, November 6, 1925, p. 27; Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, April 24, 1925, p. 23; Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, April 10, 1925, p. 30; Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, May 13, 1927, p. 32; Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, January 1, 1922, magazine section p. 1; Advertisement for Jap Rose Soap, *Denver Post*, August 13, 1929, magazine section p. 1.



Figure 7.

hold a particular fascination for younger folk.” When prominent Denverites visited Japan and China and the *Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* both reported on their excursions.³⁴ Readers of the *Denver Post* were bombarded with advertisements from travel companies featuring trips to Japan and other regions of East Asia and Japan remained a destination into the mid 1930s.

The Canadian Pacific Company, the Dollar Steamship Line, the American Oriental Mail Line, the Admiral Oriental Line were among the many shipping companies advertising overseas trips to Japan in the *Denver Post*.³⁵ In these advertisements, images of Japanese women were

³⁴ “Reporter in Japan writes of travels in Far East,” *Rocky Mountain News*, April 8, 1923, Section 1 p. 4; “Italian visitor tells of Japs’ polite Robbery,” *Denver Post*, April 3, 1924, p. 18; “Denver Folk return home after Winter Vacation Trips,” *Denver Post*, April 9, 1935, p. 21; “Talk of no good motoring in Japan based on Ignorance,” *Denver Post*, February 12, 1922, section 3 p. 3.

³⁵ Advertisement for Dollar Steamship Line, *Denver Post*, May 3, 1927, p. 29; Advertisement for Canadian Pacific Steam Ships, *Denver Post*, December 13, 1924, p. 11; Advertisement for American

frequently printed and Japanese women exclusively represented Japan as a destination. The Japanese woman wearing a kimono functioned as an iconic image of Japanese culture and society. The Admiral Oriental Line featured an artistic rendering of a Japanese woman wearing an ornate kimono and wielding an elaborate paper fan (Figure 8). In the background Japanese lanterns are depicted in front of what is likely intended to be the floating Torii gate before the Itsukushima Shrine.³⁶ In this advertisement, the Japanese woman wearing traditional garments is implicated visually as an intrinsic part of Japan and a sight that American visitors could expect to see along their travels through the country. In fact, the woman is the very centerpiece of the advertisement, featured as the principle attraction of Japan. Again, the association is made between Japanese women and traditional representations of Japanese culture and society. The advertisement portrays the Japanese woman as a living representation of Japanese culture, comparable in significance to the Torii gates and the Japanese lanterns. In this context, “the Japanese woman” also became the object of spectacle, treated as a tourist attraction just like the inanimate objects depicted behind her. In other advertisements, Japanese women clothed in kimonos and traditional Japanese garb were portrayed alone and singly represented the exotic appeal of Japan as a travel destination.³⁷

Oriental Mail Line, *Denver Post*, December 3, 1924, p. 20; Advertisement for Canadian Pacific, *Denver Post*, June 24, 1924, p. 14; Advertisement for Canadian Pacific, *Denver Post*, June 10, 1924, p. 17; Advertisement for Admiral Oriental Line, *Denver Post*, March 23, 1924, section 2 p. 10; Advertisement for Canadian Pacific, *Denver Post*, November 24, 1925, p. 21; Advertisement for Admiral Oriental Line and Pacific Mail Company, *Denver Post*, April 3, 1924, section 1 p. 19.

³⁶ Advertisement for Admiral Oriental Line, *Denver Post*, April 3, 1924, section 1 p. 19.

³⁷ Advertisement for Canadian Pacific, *Denver Post*, November 24, 1925, p. 21; Advertisement for Canadian Pacific, *Denver Post*, June 24, 1924, p. 14; Advertisement for Dollar Steamship Line, *Denver Post*, May 3, 1927, p. 29.



Figure 8.

Although they may have reflected the existence of a racial discourse that attributed a different series of meanings to “the Japanese,” dehumanizing illustrations utilized in advertising campaigns of American companies depicted Japanese women as objects to be gawked at and observed. They employed stereotypical interpretations of Japanese women circulating in American media at the time, reinforcing typecast meanings that associated Japanese femininity as closely interlinked with essential elements of a timeless “Japanese tradition.”

However, while interwar *Denver Post* discourses most frequently presented Japanese women as representatives of traditional Japanese culture and society, they were not the sole characterizations of Japanese women that appeared in the paper. Japanese women were occasionally featured wearing Western clothing and dress and featured in the *Post* for their engagement in ‘modern’ or ‘Western’ activities. In 1922, the *Post* featured the arrival of Moto-Ko Otani to the United States. The daughter of a prominent Buddhist priest in Japan, Otani drew

attention from reporters who were fascinated with her announcement to “discard Oriental customs entirely and...live, act, and do just as the American flapper does.”³⁸ Japanese actresses, like Yaiko Mizutani, Hisako Takihana, and Tanaka Kinuyo, were regularly featured in celebrity profiles in the *Post*, wearing the latest Japanese fashions, which included Westernized one-piece bathing suits.³⁹ Like Japanese women featured in traditional kimonos, Japanese stars wearing the latest fashions were also treated as spectacle and featured for their beauty. Yet, they were not featured as representations of Japanese tradition, but rather Japan’s modernization and adoption of Western practices. In 1924, the *Post* printed a photograph of the Meiji Emperor’s three daughters dressed in Western clothing. An accompanying caption asserted, the three sisters were “setting an example in modernization to the rest of the [Japanese] empire.”⁴⁰ Several years later, a Japanese beautician was featured in a photo-profile within the *Post* and described as a “beauty ambassador” to Japan.⁴¹ While these reports featured the contemporary wardrobes and lifestyles of Japanese women, they continued to treat Japanese women as subjects of spectacle. Furthermore, images of Japanese women wearing contemporary clothing or participating in ‘modern’ Japanese life were never utilized in advertisements for consumer products and travel and were less frequently publicized within the page’s of the *Denver Post*. In fact, even when the paper featured Japanese women who were engaged in business, academia, politics, and social services, they too, were depicted wearing kimonos and traditional styles of

³⁸ “Japanese Princess comes to American to learn Flapper Ways,” *Denver Post*, November 2, 1922, p. 5.

³⁹ “Japan’s Clara Bow,” *Denver Post*, October 28, 1929, p. 19; “The Latest in Japan,” *Denver Post*, August 20, 1927, p. 7; “The Rage in Tokio,” *Denver Post*, May 29, 1927, Section 4 p. 10.

⁴⁰ “Sisters of Jap Emperor Wear Occidental Clothes,” *Denver Post*, June 25, 1924, p. 23.

⁴¹ “They’ll get it,” *Denver Post*, October 5, 1929, p. 1.

Japanese dress.⁴² Despite their involvement in modern careers, their portrayal in traditional Japanese clothing reinforced discourses that associated Japanese women with traditional Japanese culture and society.

Japanese Men as Representatives of Japanese Culture and Society

The *Denver Post* did not portray Japanese men through the same interpretive lens or in the same contexts as it did Japanese women. They never served as representatives of Japan within travel advertisements and their images were not employed by advertisers in association with consumer goods. Their portrayal as representatives of traditional Japanese culture and society was rare, and they were most commonly depicted by their associations with the Japanese state and its military and commercial activities. By contrast, during the interwar years, Japanese women were never depicted in affiliation with Japan's military activities and only infrequently were portrayed as commercial representatives of the state and Japanese men served as Japan's principal representatives in these capacities.

When the *Denver Post* featured Japanese men in its reporting, it typically profiled prominent Japanese political and military officials or leading industrialists. In these contexts, Japanese men were often photographed wearing Western-style business garments, commonly dressed in suits and top-hats. They were portrayed as symbols of power and authority in Japan, rather than reflections of a romanticized Japanese culture and society. One reporter described Takimi Mitsui, a leading Japanese industrialist, as the owner of the "industrial dictatorship that

⁴² "Powerful Butterfly," *Denver Post*, May 6, 1927, p. 32; "Woman Made Head of Jap University; First to get Honor," *Denver Post*, July 8, 1924, p. 5; "Jap Birth Control Advocate coming," *Denver Post*, April 22, 1924, p. 17; "Japanese Girl Theology Student," *Denver Post*, March 18, 1924, p. 16.

controls both Japanese political parties,” and “virtually guides the destinies of the mikado’s domain.”⁴³ In another photograph, Japanese Vice-Admiral Sankichi Takahashi is featured posing in front of two large cannons on a Japanese battleship.⁴⁴ When the Japanese state was characterized as aggressive or militaristic in political cartoons, the state, when portrayed by a human figure, was always represented by Japanese men. Caricatures representing the Japanese state were often demeaning, had exaggerated racial characteristics, and portrayed Japanese men as small and childlike. In one such image, a male Japanese soldier with grossly exaggerated slanted eyes and oversized teeth is portrayed tickling a feather under the nose of a muscular, sleeping figure wearing a scarf with the inscription: “God of War.”⁴⁵ Accompanying these cartoons were *Post* features on Japanese militants like General Kiokatsu Sato, who expressed antagonistic sentiments against the United States and warned of the inevitability of a future war between the two nations.⁴⁶

On rare occasions when Japanese men were featured as participants in traditional Japanese cultural practices, they were still affiliated with militarism and warfare within the *Post*. In 1931, Samo Sato, a Japanese national, put on an archery exhibition in Los Angeles, photographs of which were featured in the *Post*. The photograph featured Sato wearing traditional Japanese garments and wielding a long-bow. A caption implicated Sato’s archery as a

⁴³ “Four Big Bosses of Japanese Navy Visit Premier for their Appointments,” *Denver Post*, January 9, 1925, p. 10; “The New Japanese Ambassador and his Family,” *Denver Post*, January 20, 1925, p. 15; “Japan’s Industrial Dictators are its Fabulous Mitsuis,” *Denver Post*, June 13, 1927, section 3 p. 2.

⁴⁴ “Jap Admiral tells why Nippon wants big Navy,” *Denver Post*, January 27, 1935, section 3 p. 1.

⁴⁵ “Look Out—you might wake him up!,” *Denver Post*, February 26, 1933, section 1 p. 4.

⁴⁶ “Japanese General says war with U.S. inevitable,” *Denver Post*, October 16, 1931, p. 1; “America real enemy of Japan, says General Sato,” *Denver Post*, October 25, 1931, section 3 p. 1; “Manchuria belongs to Japan, Sato,” *Denver Post*, November 8, 1931, section 3 p. 1; “Japan would seize Hawaii and bomb U.S. Citizens in event of War,” *Denver Post*, November 15, 1931, section 3 p. 1.

reflection of a longstanding tradition of militarism in Japan stating, "The Japs learned to shoot long before they heard of gunpowder. They have been skilled arches for centuries...[Sato] proved the old bow and arrow will have to be included in disarmament agreements if war is to be banished."⁴⁷ While Sato's performance was being depicted in spectacle as a representation of traditional Japanese culture, it was simultaneously interpreted within the paper as a depiction of an intrinsic Japanese militarism that had extended into the modern day. Ultimately, it served as yet another characterization of Japanese men that affiliated them with the activities of the Japanese state, including Japan's militarism.

Following his ascent to the imperial throne in 1926, Hirohito became one of the most frequent representations of Japanese masculinity in Colorado newspapers. He was the most prominent Japanese male figure and one of the few male individuals of Japan who was associated with elements of traditional Japanese culture and society. Reports exhibited fascination at the deified status of the Japanese Emperor, describing him as a "god incarnate" and discussing the 2,600 year unbroken lineage of the Japanese imperial line, which traced its origins to the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu, with awe.⁴⁸ One report characterized him as a "mysterious sovereign" who represented the "other-world quality of the Japanese state."⁴⁹ His affiliation with the Japanese state and its leadership fueled speculation among contemporary observers about his god-like status and inspired sentiments of curiosity and awe among Western observers. Hirohito served as the masculine representation of a Japanese political system that was distinctly foreign, mysterious, and exotic to Euro-American observers.

⁴⁷ "The Japs learned to shoot long before they heard of Gunpowder," *Denver Post*, October 21, 1931, p. 9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ "Hirohito is Emperor-Deity in Japanese Nation," *Denver Post*, February 2, 1938, section 3 p. 3.

However, despite the fascination reporters expressed with his position as Emperor, Hirohito, like other Japanese men, was often depicted wearing Western garments and participating in the modern activity of managing the Japanese state and its military.

The *Post* also printed alternative interpretations of Japanese men that did not associate them with Japanese politics or militarism. However, even when Japanese men were not associated with Japanese militarism, the *Denver Post* rarely portrayed them as participants in romanticized Japanese traditions. Instead, they were commonly featured as individuals engaged in modern or Western activities. Like Japanese women, male members of Japan's upper-classes were often depicted as subjects of foreign spectacle and featured as celebrities within Colorado's periodicals. Japanese film stars, Japanese athletes, Japanese political leaders, and members of Japan's imperial family were often showcased as celebrities in *Post* photographs and reports. The newspaper regularly featured photographs of male members of the imperial family in Western attire and partaking in Western activities. Count and Countess Asaka, members of the imperial family, visited Colorado in 1925 and made headlines in the *Post*, which reported their golf scores and printed a photograph of them in semi-formal Western attire.⁵⁰ These stories were accompanied by articles of intrigue about the public lives of the Japanese royal family. The relationships, marriages, and tragedies surrounding the family became frequent subjects of spectacle in Colorado newspapers.⁵¹

⁵⁰ "A Rare Picture," *Denver Post*, January 7, 1929, p. 6; "Count and Countess Asaka," *Denver Post*, November 13, 1925, p. 25; "Japanese Prince plans visit to a Ten-Cents Store," *Denver Post*, December 29, 1926, p. 17.

⁵¹ "Jap Prince is Killed With Chauffeur in car crash in France," *Rocky Mountain News*, April 2, 1923, p. 1; "Japanese regent weds Princess in gorgeous ceremony in Tokio," *Denver Post*, January 26, 1924, p. 11; "New rulers of Japan," *Denver Post*, December 25, 1926, p. 2; "Jap royal family writes verse for annual festival," *Denver Post*, March 4, 1923, p. 3; "Court intrigue bared to break love affair of Jap Crown Prince," *Rocky Mountain News*, February 14, 1921, p. 7.

Japan's male film-stars drew equal attention from the local press, and they were featured in the *Post* for their performances, involvement in scandals, and their visitations to the United States.⁵² Accompanying Japanese political figures, film stars, and members of the royal family were Japanese athletes who competed alongside Americans and Europeans in Western sports. Individuals like Rakuzo Asami, a Japanese golfer, Y. Suzuki, a Japanese basketball player, and Ichiya Kumagae, a Japanese tennis star, alongside other Japanese athletes, served as frequent representations of Japanese men within the *Post*.⁵³ Articles in the *Post* often expressed keen interest in the athletic feats and accomplishments of male Japanese athletes, particularly in their adoption of American baseball. A 1920 article reported that the "mikado's subjects are to be congratulated" for their mastery of baseball "to a greater degree than any of the foreign nations."⁵⁴ Like Japan's film stars and prominent politicians, male athletes of Japan were featured in the *Post* in discourses that framed them in a celebrity-like status yet continued to treat them as curiosities due to their ethnic/racial identities.

Depictions of Japan's male athletes, film-stars, and aristocrats printed in the *Post*, reflect distinctions between the characterization of Japanese men and Japanese women in contemporaneous discourses. Rarely depicted in affiliation with elements of traditional Japanese culture and society, Japanese men were pictured in Westernized garments and as participants in Western culture and society. While they remained curiosities and subjects of

⁵² "Jap film star is on a mission tour," *Denver Post*, November 21, 1920, p. 11; "Famous Actor of Japan to Visit America," *Denver Post*, April 18, 1935, p. 22; "Beauty says Jap star is father of her son," *Denver Post*, October 16, 1931, p. 24.

⁵³ "Heavier Golf Pellet makes debut in coast meet Friday," *Denver Post*, December 18, 1931, p. 44; "Meets Basketball Inventor," *Denver Post*, February 9, 1933, p. 16; "Jap golfers start tour of U.S. Sunday," *Denver Post*, April 23, 1935, p. 20; "Jap tennis star gets high rating," *Denver Post*, November 27, 1920, p. 8.

⁵⁴ "Japanese making rapid progress in baseball," *Denver Post*, November 26, 1920, p. 19.

spectacle, within contemporary discourses, they did not represent a romanticized, exotic Japan in the same way that Japanese women did. Featured in advertisements for consumer products and travel, Japanese women served as representations of a romanticized Japanese culture and society.

The differences in the gendered characterizations attributed to Japanese men and Japanese women during the interwar years were significant for two principle reasons. First, they reflect that racial discourses could operate at multiple levels, presenting concurrent, yet often contradictory meanings to a particular “racial population.” In this case, Colorado’s contemporary newspaper readers were exposed to a discourse that romanticized Japanese culture and society, depicting Japanese women as exotic cultural spectacles to be admired and commoditizing objects affiliated with Japanese femininity. These characterizations of Japan, Japanese nationals, and Japanese culture and society existed concurrently with rhetoric that framed the Japanese state as militant and aggressive and affiliated it with Japanese nationals along racial grounds. In this context, gender operated as a means of compartmentalizing two series of meanings of “the Japanese” race, and allowing them to operate in tandem. The gendered discourse affiliated Japanese men and Japanese women with different interpretations of Japan and Japanese nationals. Japanese men were most commonly depicted as figures of political or military authority, closely affiliated to the Japanese state and its actions, including its militarism. On the other hand, Japanese women often served as representatives of idyllic understandings of Japanese culture and society, admired for their exotic beauty and allure.

Social class played an important role framing each gendered discourse, as only members of the Japan’s upper classes were regularly featured as subjects of newspaper reports in the *Denver Post*. Published concurrently throughout the interwar years, two distinct, in many

respects opposing, understandings of Japan and Japanese nationals coexisted. Epitomizing this gendered understanding of Japan and Japanese nationals was a 1938 *Denver Post* feature on Japan in its Sunday photography section. Titled “Birthplace of Blossoms—and Bombs,” the two page collage featured photographs and captions that portrayed Japan in two distinct forms. The photographs portrayed Japan as the subject of exotic spectacle, romantically depicting geishas, idyllic Japanese landscapes, Japanese girls wearing kimonos and holding parasols, and scenes of Tokyo life. At the same time however, the captions accompanying the photographs explicitly referenced Japan’s militarism and aggression in East Asia, sharply contrasting the romantic photographs. One caption expressed admiration for the art of flower arrangement, asserting that the Japanese “love of flowers...amounts to a national passion.” The same caption concluded, “Yet these same people now are busy raining death and destruction on neighbors who love beauty, too.” Another caption juxtaposed the romantically depicted young Japanese girls in kimonos with the experiences of women in countries Japan was invading, reminding readers not to forget the “refugee snapshots of the homeless women in China.” Yet another caption expressed admiration for the Japanese fan dance even as it highlighted Japanese air raids. It read, “The Geisha girls were cutting the air with these same intricate movements for centuries before planes and propellers were invented.”⁵⁵

Such interpretations reflected the perpetuation of a gendered, dualistic understanding of Japan and Japanese nationals well into the late 1930s. Even as Japan’s invasion of Manchuria and China fueled tensions between Japan and the United States and inspired militaristic understanding of Japan and Japanese nationals, concurrent discourses in Colorado periodicals continued to romanticize the nation and the Japanese as beautiful and exotic. However, race

⁵⁵ “Birthplace of Blossoms—and Bombs,” *Denver Post*, February 6, 1938, Sunday Photography Section.

continued to operate within both of these discourses, and it is important to recognize that they remained essentializing and reproduced the assumptions inherent to racial ideology. Whether treating Japanese women as the objects of Oriental spectacle, or men as the representatives of a belligerent Japan, “the Japanese” remained the subjects of racializing rhetoric that constructed them as inherently different from American (white) observers. Moreover, these discourses continued to essentialize individuals of Japanese descent—a complex, diverse, and heterogeneous community of individuals—under the homogenizing racial category of “the Japanese.”

Japanese Americans as Subjects of Spectacle

While Colorado’s Japanese American community during the interwar years was relatively small, they were made publicly visible through regular, if not frequent, reports published within the pages of the *Denver Post*. Although the *Post* published discourses which implicated the state’s Japanese Americans as associates of the Japanese state due to their racial identities, it did not publish articles which explicitly vilified the state’s Japanese Americans or expressed fear and anxiety about their presence in Colorado. Instead, like Japanese nationals, Colorado’s Japanese Americans were often treated as spectacle by local newspapers. They were typically depicted as peculiar curiosities, exhibits of oriental splendor or beauty, and local oddities. Yet the *Post*, particularly in its coverage of local schools, also portrayed Japanese American youths as individuals capable of being assimilated into American society and welcomed industrialists from Japan as potential investors in Colorado’s economy. Furthermore, the *Post*’s reporting provides insight into the fascination Colorado’s Euro-Americans held for Japanese culture and society, revealing the contexts in which Denver residents encountered not only Japanese Americans, but also Japanese nationals, Japanese theater, Japanese art, Japanese

artifacts, Japanese clothing, and other representations of Japanese culture and society in their daily lives.

As has been earlier discussed, the *Post* was an advocate of Denver schools which were involved in Americanizing and integrating ethnic minority students. It regularly featured Denver's Twenty-fourth Street School, Cole Junior High School, and Manual Training School in its pages, highlighting them as fine examples of the processes of Americanization at work. These schools were the most ethnically diverse in Denver and were often described as the city's 'melting pots.' Japanese Americans, and students of dozens of other ethnicities, including Euro-Americans, were in attendance. Through photojournalism, these students were often portrayed as representations of Americanization at work, and regardless of their racial background, all were framed as capable of being assimilated into mainstream American life. Even so, Japanese American children continued to function as representations of the foreign and exotic within these schools. While they may have been depicted as a part of the 'melting pot,' they were as often portrayed as representatives of a foreign and exotic Japan that was represented by feminine elements of Japanese culture. On days where schools celebrated multi-culturalism, Japanese tradition and authenticity were most commonly represented by young Japanese girls wearing kimonos in the *Post's* photojournalism. One article featuring two female Japanese middle school students wearing kimonos and participating in a school production of the "Japanese New Year Ship." In an accompanying caption, the writer described the kimono as the "authentic costume" of Japan. Another article featured a young Japanese girl wearing a kimono for a multi-cultural celebration at her elementary school.⁵⁶ While the kimono was in fact a traditional article of Japanese clothing, discourses about Colorado's Japanese Americans were

⁵⁶ "Far Eastern Questions," *Denver Post*, January 7, 1932, p. 25; "Costumes of many Countries," *Denver Post*, April 10, 1938, Section 4 p. 12.

once again depicting it as an exclusively feminine garment. Seemingly innocuous portrayals of Japanese American youths participating in cultural festivities at Denver schools, continued to reinforce broader discourses that depicted Japanese cultural traditions in affiliation with Japanese women and Japanese femininity.

The perpetuation of feminized understandings of Japanese tradition and authenticity within Colorado's public schools are further explicated in the 1925 school yearbook published by Denver's South High School. That year, the yearbook employed a theme of world travel and student photographs were featured parallel to sketches and brief summaries of several dozen different nations from around the world. Each image features the "Aeronaut," the school's mascot, visiting a nation and a caption providing a stereotypical characterization of the country. The Aeronaut's visit to "Barbarous Asia" included a stop "With the Heathen Chinesee *sic*" and a stopover in Japan, "The Land of Cherry Blossoms." The Japanese state was represented by Mount Fuji, a pagoda, a torii gate, and two Japanese girls wearing kimonos and wielding Japanese parasols. Japan was described as "quaint" and "picturesque." The highlight of the Aeronaut's trip to the "charming paradise" that was Japan included a visit to a Japanese garden, where "Smiling kimono-clad girls glided back and forth among the flowers bringing tea and dainty cakes to us."⁵⁷ Although the yearbook did not feature any depictions of Japanese Americans, its romanticized characterization of Japan reflects the pervasiveness of gendered interpretations of Japan's exoticism. Japanese American girls, when featured in the *Denver Post* in Japanese kimonos served to reinforce associations between Japanese women and Euro-American understandings traditional or authentic Japanese culture and society.

⁵⁷ The students of South High School (Denver), *The Aeronaut Encircles the Globe*, South High School Yearbook 1925 (Denver: Published by the students of South High School, 1925), p. 5, 43, 44, 48 .

Such affiliations were reflected in the *Denver Post's* coverage of Denver's Market Street Temple. During the interwar years, the city's Japanese Buddhist Temple was often featured in the newspaper and functioned as an important communal center for Colorado's Japanese American communities. The *Post* frequently reported on the activities of the temple and the participation of Colorado's Japanese Americans in religious observations and holidays. Efforts to understand Buddhism were at times surprisingly detailed, and the *Post* featured lengthy articles describing the history of Buddhism and the significance of particular holidays. Articles in the newspaper expressed intrigue and fascination at the customs and festivals of Japanese Buddhism. While the temple's priests and all of its participants were the subjects of spectacle within the *Post*, Japanese American women served as the predominant representatives of Japanese culture, society, and tradition. During holidays and special events that attracted hundreds of visitors to the temple, the paper's photojournalism typically featured representations of Japanese femininity.⁵⁸ When Colorado's Japanese Americans celebrated the arrival of a new priest, the photographs profiling the arriving and departing temple priests were dwarfed by two large images featuring Japanese American women dressed in kimonos, wielding paper fans, and performing with traditional Japanese instruments. The caption described the images as "a Japanese fantasy."⁵⁹ A celebration of the Buddha's birth, the Festival of Flowers was an annual holiday which attracted the regular attention of *Post* reporters. On these occasions, Japanese culture was again represented by images of femininity, and Japanese American girls were commonly depicted as celebrants of the event alongside the temple's

⁵⁸ "Buddhists will celebrate their Christmas April 8," *Denver Post*, April 5, 1925, section 1 p. 14; "Buddhist rites observed by Colorado Japs," *Denver Post*, April 9, 1933, section 1 p. 16; "Buddha's Birthday," *Denver Post*, April 7, 1935, section 1 p. 8; "Japs celebrate arrival of new priest in Denver," *Denver Post*, February 10, 1929, p. 5.

⁵⁹ "Japs celebrate arrival of new priest in Denver," *Denver Post*, February 10, 1929, p. 5.

priest.⁶⁰ Paralleling discourses about Japanese nationals and the Japanese state, the rhetoric employed by the *Post* to discuss Japanese American communities reflected the prevalence of gendered understandings of Japanese culture and society.

The relationships and interactions between Japanese men and women were often featured as spectacle within the paper. The weddings of Japanese American individuals often drew the attention of local reporters, and brides wearing kimonos were described as beautiful and “picturesque.”⁶¹ Portrayals of Japanese American couples were not always so benign, however. A 1929 marital dispute between a Takejila Morishige, a Japanese American hospital orderly, and his wife was featured in the *Denver Post*. Morishige’s behavior was depicted as spectacle and interwoven within broader discourses about the “orient” and the Japanese as a racially uniform population. The dispute between the couple occurred because, Morishige asserted, his wife “refused to do [his] bidding...American ideas of some life were beginning to steal into her mind. She dared to talk back to me—she must be sorry for it.”⁶² Describing Morishige’s decision to break the household’s furniture, the *Post* reporter framed Morishige’s actions as an oddity and a peculiar, yet “wrathful outburst” that is difficult to understand for Western observers. The reporter contextualized the incident as a reflection of the family’s implication in ‘oriental culture.’ He began the article with a quote he attributed to the Buddha, which read “He who brings food and shelter to his mate and offspring is like our king in his home.” In his interpretation of the quote, the journalist asserted, “Thousands of years ago

⁶⁰ “Buddha’s Birthday,” *Denver Post*, April 7, 1935, section 1 p. 8; “The Festival of Flowers,” *Denver Post*, April 9, 1933, section 1 p. 16.

⁶¹ “Japanese Wedding Celebrated Here,” *Denver Post*, March 22, 1920, p. 5; “Japanese groom figures in Denver’s first 1929 wedding,” *Denver Post*, January 1, 1929, p. 5.

⁶² “Jap Smashes Furniture When Wife Dares to Dispute his Command,” *Denver Post*, September 21, 1929, p. 10.

when the orient first knelt before the idol in the image of Buddha this law had been written into the holy book of that faith.” More than just the outburst of a disgruntled Japanese American husband, Morishige’s behavior was indicted as a reflection of a timeless oriental tradition that persisted into the contemporary period and subjugated Japanese women to Japanese men.⁶³ Morishige’s own language facilitated this interpretation, he having stated, that since he had “always maintained a good reputation and a comfortable home for his family, Japanese custom supports him in his stand.”⁶⁴ In this instance, Morishige—a Japanese man—represented elements of traditional Japanese culture, and his Japanese American wife was featured as adopting “American ideas.” However, the Japanese culture Morishige represented was not romanticized by the *Post*, but rather depicted as unreasonable, backwards, and aggressive. Its values were also framed as antithetical to American values, which presumably had been adopted by Morishige’s wife. Morishige’s complaints about his wife’s Americanization were depicted as petty, and his Japanese American wife portrayed as a victim of a traditional Japanese culture that had caused her and her seven children to flee “from the house in terror.”⁶⁵ The report insinuated the incompatibility of Japanese and American culture, and implicated Japanese American men as individuals clinging on to backwards ‘oriental’ traditions.

This representation of Japanese American men and their implication in Japanese culture was complimented by portrayals of male members of Colorado’s Japanese American community that did not associate them with the Japanese state. Unlike in discourses which framed male Japanese nationals as affiliates of the Japanese state, Colorado’s Japanese American men, more frequently than in any other context, were framed as curiosities and oddities. A Japanese

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

American cook employed by a white American Denver couple was featured in the news when he baked a cake with the inscription, "To Jesus Christ from the Joneses." The cake was baked for the local Christian church he attended, and the seemingly inconsequential event made headlines in the *Denver Post* society section. The paper expressed charmed admiration of his adoption of Christianity and the unusual way in which he expressed his Christian faith.⁶⁶ Another local report featured a local Japanese company's acquisition of a typewriter capable of writing in Japanese characters, expressing fascination at the exotic device and the specially trained Japanese national who was brought to Denver from Japan to use it.⁶⁷

However, discourses which framed Japanese American men as charming curiosities also invoked derogatory and belittling language in their characterizations. Not uncommonly were Colorado's Japanese American men portrayed as small, weak, and effeminate. The reporter describing Morishige's aggression also explicitly described his small features, printing his precise height and weight recorded by the police in the pages of the *Post*.⁶⁸ Although not a Colorado resident, a visiting Japanese American billiard player was described by the *Rocky Mountain News* as the "midget" of the cue world.⁶⁹ Diminutive understandings of Japanese men were also visually depicted. Accompanying an article on women's jewelry written by a local editorialist was a particularly derogatory depiction of a Japanese man. The illustration features an American woman in a jewelry store interacting with a Japanese American salesman who is

⁶⁶ "Jap Cook Letters Cake 'To Jesus' From Joneses," *Denver Post*, January 6, 1929, p. 1.

⁶⁷ "Unique Japanese typewriter installed by Denver company, operated by imported expert," *Denver Post*, November 22, 1920, p. 6.

⁶⁸ "Jap Smashes Furniture when Wife Dares to Dispute his command," *Denver Post*, September 21, 1929, p. 10.

⁶⁹ "Young Japanese billiard star will play in Colorado towns this week," *Rocky Mountain News*, January 29, 1923, p. 6.

attempting to sell her a necklace. The Japanese man is depicted as nearly half the white female customer's size.⁷⁰ Comparable images of Japanese American women were not printed in the *Post*, and the smaller size associated with the Japanese as a race informed American discourses that emasculated Japanese men and portrayed them as tiny and effeminate.

Although the *Denver Post* published characterizations of Japanese American men that were demeaning, Colorado's Japanese American communities were not the targets of vilifying racial discourses. The anti-Japanese sentiments that were pervasive in California were not paralleled in Colorado during the interwar years. At the turn-of-the-century, race fueled tensions between Japanese American and Euro-American residents of Colorado, but by the 1920s, the state's relatively small population of Japanese Americans diminished the anxieties surrounding their presence in the state. Discourses in the most widely circulated newspaper in Colorado, the *Denver Post*, most commonly portrayed Colorado's Japanese Americans as spectacle, and did not indict them as threatening or menacing.

Conclusion

Articles and advertisements printed in the *Post* during the interwar years suggest that despite Japan's military activities in East Asia and expressions of concern from Pacific Coast pundits about the growing Japanese American population, Denverites and Coloradoans continued to express an orientalist fascination with Japanese culture and society. Colorado's Euro-American residents became familiarized with Japan, Japanese nationals, and Japanese culture through discourses conveyed in major newspapers, but also through state museums, theatrical productions, films, literature, and other mediums. Exhibits featuring Japanese artwork and Japanese culture were regularly featured at major exhibition sites in Denver,

⁷⁰ "Women and Jewelry," *Denver Post*, May 6, 1924, p. 18.

including the Denver Art Museum, the Denver Public Library, and the Colorado Museum of Natural History.⁷¹ Denver department stores and specialty boutiques sold Japanese kimonos, Japanese artwork, and imported products of Japan. Theatrical performances of *Madame Butterfly* were performed in Denver theaters and Tamaki Muira's portrayal of Cho Cho San in the operatic opening of the production at the San Carlo grand opera received rave reviews.⁷² Members of Denver high society were especially enamored with Japan, hosting elaborate Japanese tea parties, putting on private productions of Japanese Noh plays for wealthy donors to art societies, and designing expensive and elaborate Japanese gardens on their properties.⁷³ At the same time, prominent Japanese nationals, principally businessmen and politicians, drew considerable attention from local newspapers when they visited Colorado. While Japanese, Japanese nationals, Japanese Americans, and Japanese culture and society inspired fascination from Euro-American audiences for their foreignness and exotic characteristics, they were, on some level, not very foreign at all to Colorado residents. Treated as the subjects of spectacle in local discourses, Japanese culture and society were conveyed to the state's denizens who, on a day-to-day basis, encountered interpretations and representations of Japan, Japanese nationals, and Japanese Americans.

⁷¹ "1,700-Year-Old Japanese God Brought to Denver," *Denver Post*, January 27, 1935, section 1 p. 12; "Mead presents art valued at \$160,000 to Denver Museum," *Denver Post*, November 19, 1937, p. 1; "Japanese color prints are being displayed at Denver Public Library," *Denver Post*, June 6, 1920, p. 4; "Colorado Museum Gets rare prehistoric Japanese relics," *Denver Post*, December 11, 1938, section 1 p. 13.

⁷² "Tamaki Miura Charms as 'Madame Butterfly' in Grand opera offering," *Denver Post*, January 6, 1922, p. 14; "Junior Italian society to play 'Madame Butterfly,'" *Rocky Mountain News*, December 11, 1921, section 1 p. 12.

⁷³ "A Jap Noh Play to be Done For M'Dowell Fund," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, amusement section p. 1; "Japanese tea party planned," *Denver Post*, December 22, 1935, section 2 p. 4; "Scenes at 'Rose Acre,' the beautiful summer home of the Liebhardt family," *Denver Post*, September 5, 1920, section 1 p. 20.

Prevailing discourses treated Japanese culture and society as the subjects of spectacle, portraying Japanese customs, practices, and beliefs as odd, peculiar, and curious. During the interwar years, the *Denver Post*, produced a gendered discourse that affiliated Japanese men and Japanese women with different dimensions of Japanese culture and society. Japanese women were most often affiliated with romanticized understandings of an exotic, beautiful, and traditional Japanese culture. Class also informed these discourses, as Japan was represented principally by its social elites. Female relatives of Japanese political leaders, Japanese movie-stars, and Japanese public figures were the most common subjects of newspaper discourses. They were often portrayed wearing traditional garments, participating in elements of traditional Japanese culture, and admired for their beauty. Travel advertisements for Japan exclusively utilized Japanese women as human representatives of the Japanese state, yet in the process, Japanese women were objectified as they were paralleled with inanimate cultural attractions. Images of Japanese women were also utilized in newspaper advertisements attempting to attract consumers to their products. Local department stores published advertisements in the *Denver Post* featuring consumer products, such as kimonos, modeled after traditional Japanese garments or utilizing Japanese fabrics. However, these products were directed at female consumers and were associated with Japanese femininity. The Japan that was romanticized by contemporary Euro-American observers was effectively a feminized Japan, represented by Japanese women and Japanese femininity.

Male Japanese nationals on the other hand, while also featured as subjects of spectacle within the *Denver Post*, were assigned a different set of meanings and associations in the discourse. They were typically affiliated with power and authority within the Japanese state or the Japanese economy. They were almost universally portrayed wearing Western garments and were rarely associated with elements of traditional Japanese culture and society.

Advertisements for travel or consumer products in the *Post* did utilize their images in affiliation with their products or in attempts to draw travelers to Japan. Like Japanese women, Japanese men who were subjects of *Post* reporting were principally members of the social upper class. While they were often represented for their associations with the Japanese state, including its militarism, more benign representations of Japanese men were also published. Japanese film stars, athletes, and male relatives of the royal family were the subjects of curiosity and spectacle in *Post* discourses, acquiring a celebrity-like status.

Gendered discourses interpreting Colorado's Japanese Americans exhibited parallel themes. Colorado's Japanese American women were also linked to beauty, exoticism, and traditional or 'authentic' Japanese culture. Unlike Japanese nationals, Japanese American men were not associated with the Japanese state; instead, they were often emasculated and treated in demeaning terms as oddities.

Significantly, even though these discourses reveal that the meanings associated with race were flexible and capable of projecting disparate and contradictory assumptions upon racialized communities, the underlying assumptions of race—as a producer of inherent biological difference—remained unchallenged in discourses that treated “the Japanese” as the objects of exotic spectacle. On the contrary, these discourses reproduced the fundamental logic of race as they continued to essentialize “the Japanese” into a homogenous community with a universally shared, timeless, and ultimately artificial cultural heritage. In the process, they validated the existence of race as a legitimate means of understanding human populations.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, stereotypical and racialized images of the U.S. wartime enemy emerged in discourses published in American periodicals. As John Dower's *War Without Mercy* demonstrated, American periodicals represented both Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals as members of a distinctly "Japanese" race. In this context, "the Japanese" were depicted as the polar opposite of Americans—homogenized into a uniform population that embodied values and beliefs that were inherently contradictory to American ones; dehumanized in political cartoons that portrayed them as primitive, violent, and apelike; and vilified as inherently evil. These stereotypical images were widely circulated during the war years, and were a component of dominant discourses that 'othered' both Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals. Kumiko Takahara's *Off the Fat of the Land* (2003), reveals that the anti-Japanese sentiment expressed in nationally circulating periodicals like the *New York Times*, the *Reader's Digest*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*, was also being printed in the pages of local periodicals in Colorado, like the *Denver Post*. Takahara analyzes the *Post's* reporting on Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, drawing attention to the *Post's* anti-Japanese 'campaign' during World War II. The newspaper vocally criticized the establishment of a relocation camp in Colorado, expressed strong jingoistic sentiment, produced racially stereotypical images of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans, described Japanese Americans as "Japs," attributed animalistic characteristics to them, and aggressively supported proposals to pass anti-Japanese legislation in Colorado. In many respects, the *Post's* rhetoric mirrored that of the language being produced at the national level and Takahara, like Dower, demonstrates how racial discourses homogenized a diverse group of people into the singular racial category of "Japanese."

This thesis has contextualized the wartime discourses Takahara and Dower have both explored, demonstrating that they did not emerge out of thin air during World War II, but rather that they were in fact an offshoot of racial discourses that were operating throughout the interwar period. Even in the state of Colorado, host to only a small community of Japanese Americans, major newspapers, such as the *Denver Post*, regularly printed articles that exposed a broad audience of state newspaper readers to “the Japanese” race. Articles covering Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, reports on Japanese culture and society, advertisements for ‘traditional’ Japanese products, and reports on the activities of the Japanese government were frequently published in the *Denver Post*. These reports reproduced contemporaneously circulating racial discourses that homogenized diverse communities of Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and all individual of Japanese ethnicity into a single racial community. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Colorado newspaper readers were exposed to discourses that identified “the Japanese” as a racial population and a social ‘other.’

This is significant, insofar it exposes that the logic, language, and prejudicial assumptions of racial discourses that vilified Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals during World War II were already in wide circulation well before the events at Pearl Harbor. During the interwar years, Coloradoans were exposed to derogatory and essentializing terms like “Jap” in newspaper advertisements and articles. Prewar discourses printed in the *Denver Post* already framed Japan’s aggression in East Asia, the nation’s military armament, and Japanese immigrants in the context of a Social Darwinian racial struggle for global supremacy. The possibility that a future ‘race war’ would likely materialize between Japan and the United States had been portended by both American and Japanese pundits and politicians as early as the 1920s. Furthermore, although the *Denver Post* did not explicitly vilify Colorado’s Japanese Americans, the anti-Japanese sentiments of Californian pundits were printed by the newspaper. Consequently,

newspaper readers were exposed to rhetoric that not only described Japanese Americans as inherently different and inassimilable, but also suggested that Japanese Americans were inextricably associated with Japan, the Japanese government's militarism in East Asia, and all Japanese nationals on account of their racial background. As John Dower has demonstrated, World War II discourses later mirrored this logic, employing it to justify the internment of Japanese Americans who were identified as disloyal enemies of the United States solely on account of their ethnicity. But the insidious discursive frameworks that made such vilification possible during World War II were already in place during the interwar years. Although more research must be conducted to further establish more direct causal connections between interwar and wartime discourses, I suggest that the circulation of racial discourses in the 1920s and 1930s contributed to the ease with which Euro-Americans later accepted the validity of the premises of discourses that vilified the "Japanese" in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor.

Biologically deterministic assumptions about race were a central component of discourses that othered the "Japanese" during the interwar years. The process of racialization dehumanized individuals of Japanese descent, ignored the complexity of a diverse human community, and narrowed the range of possibilities in which that community could be imagined. Rather than looking at individuals of Japanese ethnicity as a complex group of people with different interests, ideas, and experiences, racial discourses homogenized the entire population by constructing an imagined, and artificial, community of "Japanese" who shared essentializing biological characteristics that defined not only their physical appearance, but also their psychological, mental, and social characteristics.

Multiple segments of Japanese society and different elements of Japanese culture informed the portrayal of the "Japanese" as a racial community in the *Denver Post*. Not only

were racialized representations of the “Japanese” in the *Denver Post* informed by the presence of Japanese Americans in Colorado, they were also shaped by race relations between Japanese Americans and white Americans elsewhere in the United States, the actions of the Japanese government in East Asia, transnational disputes with Japan over the issue of immigration, Japanese nationals visiting the United States, Japanese culture and society, and the relationship between American consumers and Japanese material culture. Contemporaneous understandings of the “Japanese” as a race were informed by all of these factors. The differences between Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, or contemporary and traditional Japanese culture, were papered over by the *Post* as journalists and editors attempted to amalgamate the cultural and social diversity of a complex ethnic community under the umbrella of a singular racial identity.

However, internal diversity within the Japanese ethnic community did result in the production of multiple interpretations of ‘Japanese-ness’ among American observers. The process of constructing the ‘other’ was an ongoing one, just as the process of constructing the ‘self.’ Throughout the interwar years, seemingly contradictory characteristics were attributed to the “Japanese” concurrently and the meanings attributed to ‘Japanese-ness’ in the *Denver Post* evolved in relation to external contingencies. As tensions between Japan and the United States over the issue of immigration escalated during the early 1920s, newspaper reports expressed anxiety about Japan’s militarization and its more assertive role in the international world. Japan was portrayed as a menacing bully, and the “Japanese” as aggressive, militaristic, and inassimilable. Concurrent discourses on Japanese culture, however, continued to express fascination with Japan as a representation of the exotic, mysterious, and beautiful Orient. Gender played an important role in these discourses, allowing Euro-American observers to compartmentalize their interpretations of Japanese culture and society in relation to feminine

and masculine representations of Japan. Japanese women and, what contemporaries perceived as elements of Japanese femininity, functioned as the representatives of a foreign, yet charming and enticing Oriental society. On the other hand, Japanese men most commonly served as the representatives of Japan's entry into modernity, which was depicted as closely interconnected with Japan's militarization and aggression in East Asia. This dualistically gendered portrayal of the "Japanese" persisted into the late 1930s. Yet even though the respective discourses identified different characteristics as inherently "Japanese," in both contexts, Euro-American observers employed rhetoric that was racially essentializing and reinforced an understanding of the "Japanese" as a homogenous population.

In effect, although the characteristics attributed to the "Japanese" racial identity by white observers varied, the underlying premise that race was a valid system of human categorization never came into question. While contemporaries may have debated what characteristics should be attributed to the "Japanese" race, they did not raise the possibility that the "Japanese" race was an artificial and problematic construct itself. Even superficially 'benign' characterizations of Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals, which treated them as subjects of Oriental spectacle, were in fact insidious, ultimately participating in the construction of the "Japanese" as social other and reinforcing dominant racial discourses. These frameworks narrowed the range of possibilities in which individuals of Japanese ethnicity could be discussed, making it difficult, if not impossible, for contemporary newspaper readers to imagine a non-racial individual. In the process, individuals of Japanese ethnicity faced the challenge of being affiliated or represented by the meanings attributed to the "Japanese" race in spite of their individuality. At the same time, the debates over what it meant to be "Japanese" in Colorado (and elsewhere in the United States) were largely internalized within the white community, thereby muting the subjectivity of individuals of Japanese ethnicity who may have attempted to

negotiate the way they were being represented in American society. Even though interwar discourses attributed variable, often contradictory, meanings to the “Japanese,” whatever variability may have been assigned to the community reinforced the construction of social difference: whether they were portrayed as militaristic and aggressive, or the subjects of exotic spectacle, the “Japanese” were identified as immutably different from white Americans.

The discourses printed in Colorado newspapers during the interwar years reinforced the legitimacy of race as a means of social classification and, in doing so, Colorado newspapers facilitated the persistence of a discursive framework that was essentializing and othering. Although the meanings attributed to the “Japanese” race were not static or uniform, the process of racialization was perpetuated. In turn, the dehumanizing and discriminatory assumptions of racially deterministic ideologies continued to dictate Euro-American understandings of individuals of Japanese ethnicity. These discourses undermined the ability of contemporary Euro-Americans to look at individuals of Japanese ethnicity as individuals at all. Instead, interwar discourses integrated a diverse community of individuals into a single (and artificial) racial population. The associations established by these discourses between Japanese Americans, Japanese nationals, and the Japanese state continued to operate in the war years. During World War II, Japanese Americans were depicted as enemies of an American (white) nation solely on account of their racial backgrounds, revealing how the racial assumptions that allowed contemporaries to universally romanticize the “Japanese” could just as easily facilitate discourses that universally vilified that same population. However, this thesis has demonstrated racial discourses are always problematically essentializing, artificial, and differentiating, and that the expressions of anti-Japanese sentiment which the media and the American government used to legitimize the internment of Japanese Americans during the war had already been imagined during the interwar years.

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