

1 CITIES OF IMMIGRANTS

We are familiar with a map of Hiroshima or Nagasaki that cries “nuclear.” With circles imposed on either city’s layout, growing in size to indicate an increasing distance from the hypocenter, the map immediately brings to mind death, destruction, and an uncanny spread of radiation.¹ We have seen close-up images of the nuclear attacks, too. Whether humans, animals, or buildings, the targets of the nuclear weapons compel us to decode meanings – scientific, political, historical, or moral – that must be hidden somewhere. In the face of the destruction that we now know to be nuclear, we sense ultimacy. Nuclear “annihilation” rings true, as these images suggest an end devoid of new beginnings. Time stops. Everything is wiped out.

I want to look at the map and think about the sound and smell that filled the cities’ streets before the bomb. In my endeavor, I am following many others who have sought to understand what lay beneath the mushroom cloud. A view from below, we might say, juxtaposed against a bird’s-eye view from above. But my purpose here is not to reiterate this juxtaposition, which has come to embody the tension between Japanese and American understandings of the bomb after 1945.² Rather, I want to show how these seemingly oppositional understandings in fact had been converging in Hiroshima and Nagasaki before 1945, by exploring them as cities of immigrants. Certainly, a number of Koreans had been in these cities, some for decades. Contrary to the image of Japan and America separated by the vast Pacific, people traveled across the ocean until late 1941. Even after the war’s outbreak temporarily halted the flow

of people, histories of cross-national connections did not disappear. Indeed, they stayed strong, perhaps even more so because the war threatened to weaken them. And yet, because of the tension between the US focus on how the nation reached the decision to use the bombs and the Japanese focus underscoring how the weapons caused mass casualties on the ground, the history of the “strength of weak ties” has been pushed aside.

If we turn our eyes from the history of weapons and casualties to the history of the cities and their residents, the strength of cross-national ties becomes evident. For instance, we see a number of contrasts between Koreans and Americans in Japan during the war. Koreans in Japan proper had been forced or compelled to come to Japan, a status that distinguished them from Americans in wartime Japan.³ Unlike Koreans who were expected to remedy Japan’s labor shortage at little to no cost to the empire, most Americans in Japan came of their own will or because of their family circumstances, some enjoying a relatively well-to-do status. Koreans were much more likely than Americans to belong to the lowest socioeconomic class. In contrast to their American counterparts, most Korean residences were confined to the least desirable neighborhoods, making their second-class citizenship plainly visible. Americans and Koreans, then, longed for a day of returning home from sharply different positions. But they also shared similarities. They both were outsiders in the cities of immigrants, who sometimes were made to feel as if they must hide their cross-nationality and their assumed loyalty to their homelands. Especially after the Pacific War began, many Americans stopped speaking English; they also refrained from showing any sign of difference, be it the way they ate, dressed, or acted. Koreans who had an option of hiding their Korean heritage – those who were fluent in Japanese – did so, too, to steer clear of discrimination. At the same time, they continued to express their belonging to Korea subtly but surely. The wartime propaganda, military-style training, and total mobilization furthered a broad indoctrination of imperial ideologies in all, including Koreans and Americans. Many remembered, often with irony, how they had felt passionately dedicated to Japanese victory. Most of them children, they absorbed Japanese culture as they grew up. But they also recalled how their sense of belonging to their home countries persisted. Oftentimes, these feelings were expressed in the most mundane ways of daily lives: the language they spoke, the clothes they wore, the food they ate, all sorts

of daily habits, which continued to link Americans and Koreans to their people, their places across the ocean.

One origin of this layered sense of belonging is found in the communities of immigrants that had long predated the war. These communities, American or Korean, had not been fully integrated into those of the Japanese. But they existed side-by-side, becoming familiar sites for the cities' residents. Americans and Koreans had put down their cultural roots in Japan, and their Japanese neighbors, classmates, teachers, and coworkers had noticed them. Americans' and Koreans' layered sense of belonging, fostered by the cities of immigrants, counters the history of the bomb shaped by conflicting national interests. As this chapter illuminates, converging senses of national belonging, too, shaped the history. This chapter also shows how these communities' relationships with the Japanese changed over time, as well as how these relationships continued to vary widely both before and after 1941. Japanese Americans in Japan expressed their belonging to the United States relatively freely before the war. After 1941, these expressions became more muted, although this did not mean that Nikkei shed their belonging to America altogether. Koreans in Japan, by contrast, continued to negotiate their cross-nationality both visibly and invisibly throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Their linguistic similarity to and ethnonational difference from the Japanese created tensions over how they expressed their belonging to Korea. With wartime demands for national loyalty hanging heavily over their heads, immigrants' cross-national ties faced unprecedented impediments. As strong as it was, a layered sense of belonging felt by Koreans and Americans in Japan came into serious conflict with nations that assumed clear boundaries between peoples.

It is crucial to note that Koreans and Americans in Hiroshima and Nagasaki included a number of people whose profiles do not easily fit into those of the most salient casualties of the empire, racism, war, and nuclear weaponry. In the scholarship about the bomb, Koreans who were kidnapped in 1944 in their home villages in Korea, forced to work at a coal mine or steel mill in Japan, suffered the bomb in Nagasaki in 1945, and returned to Korea in 1946, were clearly victimized.⁴ Koreans who were born in Hiroshima or Nagasaki and went to a Japanese military school were affected by the bomb, too, but their victimhood has not generated a comparable sympathy, attention, or scholarship. The same disparity has persisted until recently in the scholarship about

Nikkei during wartime. About 120,000 Nikkei who were sent to the ten concentration camps in the United States and lost their rights, belongings, and opportunities have been one of the most important subjects of Japanese American history. Clearly, these Americans were victims of the war, national hysteria, and racism.⁵ But the same has not been said about Japanese Americans in Japan who endured the bomb. Similar to Koreans who attended Japanese schools, spoke fluent Japanese, and liked Japanese food, these Nikkei have appeared too “Japanese” and seemed to possess a sense of national belonging too dubiously layered.⁶ Though in different ways, both groups found themselves on the peripheries of the nation states. Too often, these groups are left out of the history that features competing national interests, as well as people whose lives were crushed by them, as the chief players of change and continuity.

But these American and Korean people’s experiences as immigrants are not exceptions to history. As their remembering shows, their histories would not have existed if there were no nation states attempting to expand their sovereignty from the late nineteenth century onward. To be sure, people moved across national borders because their leadership wished to use them as tools of internal and external expansion. The Japanese political establishment since the late nineteenth century saw immigration as a way to amplify the nation’s geopolitical influence internationally;⁷ the United States considered cheap laborers from China, then Japan, to be essential for building the country’s agricultural business and industrial infrastructure.⁸ The history of forced migration from the Korean Peninsula to Japan proper has been one of the most keenly discussed subjects of historical inquiry into the Asia–Pacific War.⁹ Equally important, people also moved and settled as a means to provide for family and community, a means that they marshaled inventively from within the confines of empire. As will be shown, Nikkei discovered how they were not racialized in Japan as they had been in America. Koreans in wartime Japan made their Japanese language ability visible and their Korean cultural heritage invisible, so as to counter racism; they did so without losing either. Their decisions as immigrants often contradicted the imperial projects, showing the limit of nations’ ability to wholly regulate individual, familial, and communal ingenuity.¹⁰ Immigrants’ decisions were not independent of national and international conflicts; because of this, their histories elucidate contradictions inherent in national interests. These interests, defined

by imaginary, clear-cut boundaries between peoples, did not jibe with composite feelings of belonging that peoples were capable of possessing. US survivors' cross-national histories should not continue to surprise us; they are part of what led to, and ensued, the nuclear holocaust of 1945.

Americans in Hiroshima and Nagasaki before 1941: Cross-National Ways of Immigrants

Japanese American communities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki had their historical roots in the late nineteenth century. Hiroshima is one of the Japanese prefectures with a long history of sending its residents to Hawai'i and the US mainland. Beginning in 1885, about 600 Hiroshimans went to Hawai'i to complete a three-year labor contract, which they were allowed to extend if they desired. By the mid-1890s, the total number of overseas migrants from the prefecture exceeded 11,000, making Hiroshima the most prolific source of out-migration in Japan.¹¹ Nagasaki prefecture sent its first recorded migrants to a foreign land in 1899, and within ten years or so, the largest portion of the migrants' flow shifted from Hawai'i to the US mainland. At the same time, more migrants began to settle in their destinations permanently or semi-permanently, in effect becoming immigrants of the host societies.¹² People left Hiroshima or Nagasaki for reasons ranging from economic hardship, to entrepreneurship, to draft evasion. There are some indications that, particularly in Hiroshima, the number of tenant farmers rose sharply in the late nineteenth century, prompting many to pursue employment opportunities overseas. The decreased land ownership spurred the rise of public and private programs that assisted overseas migration, offering information about destinations, preparing visas and contracts, and loaning money for outbound travels. They generated a chain of immigrants, inspired by their friends and families who successfully had established themselves across the ocean.¹³ For Japanese expansionists, the frontier of settler colonialism was increasingly comprised of these immigrants from a rural, economically disadvantaged, and uneducated class, although whether they met Japanese political, economic, and intellectual leaders' expectations – that these immigrants embody an image of the “superior” Japanese race – remained unclear.¹⁴ For American capitalists on the West Coast and Hawai'i, these overseas immigrants supplied a crucial labor force for the

booming economy, especially after the Chinese Exclusion Act stemmed the influx of Chinese workers in 1882. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the accumulated numbers of immigrants originating from the prefectures reached 56,000 for Hiroshima and 6,800 for Nagasaki. Among the total of about 230,000 Japanese people who had gone overseas by then, the 56,000 from Hiroshima prefecture constituted nearly 25 percent, followed by Yamaguchi, Kumamoto, and Fukuoka, which made up about 9–14 percent each. Nagasaki’s 6,800 made up about 3 percent, a smaller, yet still significant, proportion.¹⁵ Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Hiroshimans continued to constitute the largest group of Nikkei both in Hawai‘i and the US mainland. The population exceeded 200,000 by 1940.¹⁶

These changes – from sojourners to immigrants, at farther destinations – did not dampen peoples’ back-and-forth travels across the Pacific (see Figure 1.1). Families kept in touch, often through their offspring. Given the prohibitive cost of trans-Pacific travels, immigrants



Figure 1.1 Yuriko Furubayashi’s family on board the *M. Sasama-maru* when they were “going back and forth” between Japan and the United States. The quote is from the author’s interview with Yuriko Furuyabashi, June 21, 2013, and the photo is from the Yuriko Furubayashi papers, circa 1938.

carefully chose times to cross the ocean. Parents' aging, illness, or death were among the main reasons for travel.¹⁷ Sometimes, these occasions prompted them to return to Japan permanently for the combined purpose of caring for the sick, inheriting family property, and settling in retirement. Equally important, many immigrants sent their children back to the old country for a few years of education, in order to ensure that youngsters acquired cultural knowledge about and personal familiarity with Japan. The increasingly discriminatory treatment of Japanese American children at US schools in the first decades of the twentieth century also contributed to a decision to embark on a prolonged family separation. Ties to the old country, immigrants hoped, would prove a resource for those growing up in the inhospitable host society.¹⁸ This led to the presence of a number of younger, *Nisei* (second generation) and *Sansei* (third generation) Japanese Americans, as well as older, *Issei* (first generation) returnees who were Japanese, in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by 1941. Their citizenship status differed mostly because US law prohibited the naturalization of Japanese-born persons. Considered "unassimilable," they were not eligible for citizenship no matter how long they had resided in the United States. In contrast, Hiroshimans tended to describe all of the Issei, Nisei, and Sansei in Japan as "people who came back from America" regardless of their citizenship status.¹⁹ This was an acknowledgement of immigrants as people who belonged to both countries. They could come "back" to Japan after thirty years of living in America; those who had never been to Japan, too, could be "back" in the country because of their family connection. And yet, they were also marked as different, even if they had been born in Japan. Their Japanese could sound different; their dress, too, could stand out as not typically Japanese. Their diet might differ, or even the way they smelled.

US survivors' oral histories reveal how a layered sense of belonging importantly shaped what they remember about prewar Japan. Looking back on being a newcomer in Hiroshima in the late 1930s, Kiyoshi Mike Nakagawa thought how the "funniest thing was food." Born in Lodi, California, in 1931, he had been accustomed to both American- and Japanese-style meals because they were served regularly at home. After his parents brought him to Japan in 1938, though, he realized that hamburgers and pancakes were out of reach. He recalled how badly he had missed them in Hiroshima; "I went out and looked at the sunset . . . I thought about the smell of butter that

I used to smell on Sundays [in Lodi]. I looked up, only to see *daikon* radish hanging there to dry. I felt lonely.” The roundness of the setting sun reminded him of buttery American pancakes, highlighting that his Japanese surroundings offered no such thing.²⁰ A memory of missing American food was first to come back, too, for George Kazuto Saiki, born in 1932 in the Mo‘ili‘ili neighborhood in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. His favorite food was pastries that he used to buy at a local bakery near the Ala Moana Beach. After his parents took him to Hiroshima in 1939, there were no more of these goodies. He had to rely on Diamond crackers, made in Hawai‘i, and chocolate kisses, both of which his mother had brought with the family to Japan. Saiki explained: “[In Mo‘ili‘ili] we used to eat those crackers with peanut butter and jelly ... it was guava jelly. [In Hiroshima,] I made a cup of cocoa [from chocolate kisses] and dipped broken pieces of crackers in it. They made my breakfast.” The supplies ran out in a year and half. “That’s when the war started,” recalled Saiki.²¹ Neither Nakagawa nor Saiki disliked Japanese meals; they were used to them because their mothers had regularly served them. But when American food disappeared from the table, they missed it. Their cross-nationality was not about choosing between conflicting options; rather, it was about feeling a layered sense of belonging.

Partly because of the young age of these soon-to-be US *hibakusha*, simple things that made up their daily lives comprised a significant part of their remembering about the years leading up to the war. Too, there were holidays like the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas, which used to come with special meals but were no longer observed.²² Before a severe wartime food shortage struck, though, some Japanese Americans in Japan were able to afford not only typical Japanese food such as dried-and-pickled *daikon*, but also things that made them feel connected to back home. Junji Sarashina was fortunate enough to enjoy meat, cookies, and ice cream bought at the “American store” in his neighborhood in Hiroshima.²³ Tae Alison Okuno recalled how her uncle once bought her an American-style apple pie in a downtown district of Hiroshima called Shintenchi or “The New World.” The uncle who made the purchase was a Japanese military police officer, who nonetheless was persuaded by his niece who insisted: “We ate those in America!”²⁴ Kazuko Aoki’s family regularly bought Carnation milk and Challenge butter from a shop in Hiroshima that sold imported goods. The shop’s owner believed that the family

owned some sort of fancy business, or else they would not be buying these expensive food materials regularly.²⁵ Izumi Hirano and Kazue Suyeishi (both of whom later became leaders of US *hibakusha*'s activism) recalled how their parents enjoyed a cup of coffee in the morning. Suyeishi in particular remembered how her parents had asked their family friends back in Pasadena to send unroasted, green coffee beans. Her parents kept them in a big can, stored in a small shed in their backyard. When the war neared, they asked returnees (traveling from the United States to Japan) to bring coffee with them. The carefully accumulated stock made it possible for the family to maintain its coffee-drinking habit almost through the war.²⁶

These US survivors' remembering makes it clear that they did not let go of their American habits simply because they were in Japan. They were not shy about their ways either, insisting, as did Okuno with her uncle, that they had their preferences. They stood by their love of coffee even though green tea was the favored drink for most Japanese people. Some Nikkei in Japan before the war were indeed relatively well-to-do, a fruit of their success as immigrants in the United States.²⁷ They might have stood out because of their American diet or demeanor, but they were not entirely unfamiliar to people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, either. Indeed, there were stores where Japanese Americans could go to buy steaks, even districts whose names reflected the city's history of sending immigrants overseas. Although the number of Japanese Americans in Nagasaki was smaller than its Hiroshima counterpart, hotels, shops, and restaurants that catered to immigrants from the West had been well established. One of the largest port cities in Japan that had opened its gate to Portugal and the Netherlands in the mid-sixteenth century, Nagasaki by the mid-nineteenth century set aside a designated residential district for its largely British and American population. In the early twentieth century, the district and its surrounding areas celebrated Christmas as an entire community; their residents enjoyed Western recreational activities such as bowling and bicycling.

Food materials from the West, and their smells, were not unfamiliar to the city's residents. Indeed, one of the first Western-style cakes to become popular in Japan, called *kasutera*, was invented in Nagasaki, becoming the city's well-known specialty by the mid-nineteenth century.²⁸ These histories of cultural exchanges that shaped the cities' landscapes likely made it easier for Nikkei to take root. Although Japanese Americans' coffee consumption declined at the

height of the war, its smell came back quickly after the war ended. This was particularly evident in Niho, a neighborhood in the southern district of Hiroshima, which was home to a large number of returnees from Hawai'i. They began to drink coffee again when they reconnected with their friends and families after the war. The unmistakable smell gave the neighborhood the nickname: "The Coffee-Flavored Town of Niho." Evidently, this nickname was used by both Japanese Americans and the city's Japanese residents.²⁹

For Nisei and Sansei children who had not been to Japan before, many things outside of the Coffee-Flavored Town, the New World, or American Village looked or sounded unfamiliar.³⁰ Katie Yanagawa, born in 1937 in Eatonville, Washington, who came to Hiroshima for the first time in June 1941, was perplexed by the sound she heard every day at her new home: "*karang-karong, karang-karong.*" As it turned out, it was the sound of *geta*, wooden sandals that Japanese people wore, and it was made by her neighbors "walking on the pavement" wearing their most ordinary footwear. Yanagawa explained her surprise by comparing these Japanese-style sandals to Western-style shoes: "I had no idea . . . because I wasn't used to it, having a noise like that, because in the United States you wear shoes and you hardly hear the shoes noise at all."³¹ Kenji Takahashi, who was born in Hawai'i in 1926 and came to Hiroshima in 1931, was taken by surprise, too, in his case by *tatami* mats inside Japanese homes. "In Hawai'i they don't have *tatami* floors," he explained. Asked if it was difficult to become accustomed to it, he responded: "It must be so. That's what my mother always told me." In the family story, then, he became a child who found *tatami* difficult. Similar to Yanagawa, Takahashi explained how his struggle had been expected: "We were not accustomed to Japanese ways." Then, he said, amused: "We acted like dumb American kids the first year or two years," suggesting his recognition of how, in typically Japanese settings, Americans might not have seemed adept.³² But soon they learned.

The most frequently mentioned difference between Japanese and American ways was not about floors or footwear. It was a toilet stool, or lack thereof. Born in Redondo Beach, California, in 1927 and coming to Japan in 1939, Hayami Fukino felt fortunate that at least she did not have to use a Japanese-style toilet at home. The reason for the good fortune was that her father, who had come to Japan before her, had "made it [the toilet] American style already." "So we didn't have to

squat. He [her father] was a real handyman,” said Fukino, with no small dose of appreciation.³³ George Kazuto Saiki was not as lucky. “There was no toilet that flushed” in Japan, “so the bathroom stank.” Although he did not complain, his older siblings did not comply without a protest: “Dad, let’s go back to Hawai‘i!” they pleaded.³⁴ So it was that Japanese bathrooms smelled unclean, but Americans had a way to make things feel clean. Kazuko Aoki, a Japanese-born American survivor, recalled how Japanese friends of her American-born older sister Yoneko used to notice the way Yoneko smelled like an American. This was because of the baby powder that her mother put on her daughter after her bath. Because nobody else used the powder, it stood out. Although Aoki’s sister seemed to feel a little embarrassed, the lightheartedness in Aoki’s oral history indicated that the powder-story was something she recalled fondly. Her mother in Japan did not refrain from puffing her daughter with the American powder. For the daughter named after the country of her birth (Yoneko means “child of America”), this seemed only appropriate. For the other daughter, named after Japan (Kazuko, Aoki’s first name, means “child of Japan”), it became part of a cherished family history, connecting Kazuko to America even before she went to the country for the first time after the war.³⁵

Japanese Americans looked like Japanese but were not, and their differences were not missed by their Japanese acquaintances. Mitsuko Okimoto, a US survivor born in Japan in 1931 and thus a Japanese citizen at the time of the bombing (though she later became a leader in US survivors’ activism), recalled “an extremely rich girl” who attended her school in Hiroshima. The girl had “come back from America,” and her family kept turkeys in their yard, which Okimoto regarded as “American-style” as the girl herself.³⁶ James Jeong, a Korean American survivor born in Japan in 1925, remembered Japanese Americans mostly as his father’s good customers. “His business was to trade precious stones, and so he frequented these wealthy people who came back from America to buy their rings,” recalled Jeong.³⁷ In contrast, Kazue Kawasaki, also born in Japan and eleven years old in 1941, remembered the striking novelty of American things with less monetary value. Her neighbor across the street was an old woman, whose grandchild named Miyo came to visit her from Hawai‘i. Kawasaki was fascinated by how “Miyo-chan” (“chan” is a Japanese diminutive) slept in “Western-style clothes,” pajamas that looked entirely different from Kawasaki’s *yukata* sleepwear. Too, Kawasaki

recalled how Miyo-chan had decorated small boxes of sugar, gifts from Hawai'i for her Hiroshima relatives: "I was watching how she put ribbons on the boxes ... she pulled these ribbons, and sure enough, they curled up, *kuru-kuru!* I thought, Ah! Yes, she pulled the ends of these ribbons with her scissors, to make them curl up. I don't even remember her face, but I remember playing with Miyo-chan well."³⁸ Hawai'i left an impression on Kawasaki as sweet as her friend's gift. Instead of seeing the pajamas or the sugar as signs of wealth, Kawasaki followed the contours of the objects with her eyes wide open.

As we will see in Chapter 2, clothes were one of the visible signs of difference that helped US *hibakusha* to find each other after the bomb's explosion. Similar to food, what a person wore became a sign of composite belongings, a clue for survivors to identify loved ones at ground zero. Around the same time that Kawasaki was impressed by her Hawaiian friend's pajamas, in the mid-1930s, Izumi Hirano noticed how his father dressed differently than others in Japan. At the time, his father was raising chickens on his farm, taking advantage of husbanding skills that he had acquired in Hawai'i. He stuck not only to the occupation, but also to the clothing; an American-style overall made of denim, an outfit not worn by Japanese farmers.³⁹ Despite his ordinary line of work, his dress made him seem a bit extraordinary. Pak Namjoo, a Japan-born Korean survivor, remembered "Natt-chan of Shinagawa," her childhood friend in Hiroshima. She was a returnee from Hawai'i living in the Shinagawa district of Hiroshima, and her clothes were "*akanukete iru*" and "*haikara*," complimentary terms meaning "put together" and "modern," respectively.⁴⁰ Natt-chan was different enough to stand out because of her outfits, but also a friend dear enough for Pak to call her by her nickname. If the outfits of Hirano's father and Pak's friend were publicly noticed, other signs of difference were recognized more privately. Hirano's family, for instance, used Western-style bath towels at home. Although they were not likely to be seen or commented on by others, Hirano's remembering uncovers a reason why these household items were noteworthy: his family did *not* use Japanese-style towels, called *tenugui*, thin cloths with no suppleness.⁴¹ Because everyone else was using *tenugui*, his towels looked and felt special. Even if these differences were on public display, however, Japanese Americans before 1941 did not try to hide them. Neither Kawasaki's friend nor Hirano's father thought of dressing in a more Japanese way, showing how "people who came back from America"

openly wore what they were accustomed to. Moreover, the younger Hirano's remembering reveals how an observation about an everyday item could spur a reflection about cultural contingency. For Japanese Americans in Japan in the 1930s, there were moments to notice, times to contemplate. Seeing differences did not push people to exclude; rather, the act of seeing created ripples of thoughts and emotions that gently washed cultural borders. Although Okimoto's remembering about the "rich girl" and Jeong's statement about "those wealthy people" sound mildly critical of Americans' material abundance, many others revealed an easy coexistence of different national belongings in the cities, neighborhoods, and homes. Differences were there, but little effort was made to hide them.

In the immigrant cities, residents from different national backgrounds mingled, forging a culture of familiarity with divergence. Nurtured over many decades, this culture runs counter to the notion that the bomb brought a prompt destruction to an enemy. Imagined as targeting a single nation or people, the weapon in fact exploded upon a diversity of cultures created by the cities of immigrants. Part of this culture of divergence might have been shaped by the relatively privileged socioeconomic status that some Japanese Americans held in Japan. But many Japanese Americans were not particularly wealthy, making them more like everyone else. Nobuko Fujioka, a Japanese-born American survivor, recalled how some returnees seemed rich while others did not. She also remembered that some of her friends told her that the Nisei were "returnees from America," and that was it. Fujioka herself seemed to hold no particular sentiment about them.⁴² Nisei were not all that foreign, although they might have been just different enough to be commented on. Seiko Fujimoto, another Japanese-born American survivor who was a Japanese citizen in the 1930s, even thought "America prefecture" was where all these Japanese Americans came from.⁴³ It was somewhere afar, but too familiar to be a foreign country. Alfred Kaneo Dote's remembering also accentuated the cultural proximity between Japan and America felt by Nikkei before the war. He recalled how, when he was growing up in Sacramento, California, he used to go to a picnic organized by the Hiroshima Kenjinkai, or the Association for Hiroshimans, an event made possible by the large number of people from Hiroshima residing in the California town. When he came to Hiroshima in 1936 as an eight-year-old, he found that there were many "people who came back from America" in his neighborhood,

including the very people who used to come to the picnics in Sacramento. Surrounded by familiar faces, Dote experienced little difficulty in adjusting to life in Japan.⁴⁴

One thing that emerges from the familiarity is that most Japanese Americans in the 1930s were not worried about being ostracized. Social ostracism was not entirely absent (as will be shown in the next section), but it was a rarity rather than a rule. Hiroshima and Nagasaki embraced both Americans' cultural belongings and Japanese people's familiarity with them. Nikkei's layered belonging was visible, with an expectation that it would be noticed but not rejected. For most Koreans in the cities, the relationship between their assumed Koreanness and the Japanese acceptance (or rejection) of it differed considerably from the Nikkei scenario. Accordingly, their layered belonging took on different kinds of visibility and invisibility in the cities' landscape. Before we make this comparison between Koreans and Americans fully, it is useful to look at how Japanese Americans experienced their schooling in America and Japan differently. Their national, cultural, and racial characteristics were interpreted by their peers, parents, and teachers in strikingly different ways across the Pacific. Perhaps more than streets and neighborhoods, schools were where most American survivors met shifting definitions of who they were and what their cross-nationality meant.

At School: Nikkei Students, Teachers, and Parents

As a public space, the classroom was a site where both cultural conflicts and conciliations arose. Japanese American *hibakusha*'s remembering of their schooling on both sides of the Pacific brings to a sharp focus how they negotiated their race, citizenship, and layered sense of belonging. Many recalled that their schooling in the United States had been diverse in two ways. First, many went to public school on weekdays and Japanese school on Sundays. Some Japanese schools held classes on late weekday afternoons too, so Nisei or Sansei pupils went there after they were let out of public school. The language of instruction in the former was English, Japanese in the latter. While the primary purpose of Japanese schools was language education, they also served as a kind of nursery for working families. Many of them were housed in Buddhist or Christian churches, a safe community space where Japanese American children could stay together while away

from their parents.⁴⁵ Some children did not mind their time at Japanese schools, while others did not like going to an extra school. Secondly, the American public schools that they attended were racially and ethnographically diverse. Junji Sarashina's school in Lahaina in Hawai'i, for instance, consisted of "Japanese, Portuguese, and Caucasian" students. Although the "Portuguese" were white, US survivors remembered them as a separate group because they, too, were children of immigrants. "Whenever they baked bread," said Sarashina, "they used a stone oven, which was outside. They used log wood, and you can smell the aroma one mile away." Although Sarashina did not remember his classmates' faces, he did remember the sweet flavor of the bread more than half a century later. Together with "a lot of Japanese [American] students" like himself, memories like this led Sarashina to say that his school was "all mixed," and harmoniously so.⁴⁶ Francis Mitsuo Tomosawa, also from Hawai'i, recalled a somewhat different, yet equally diverse, student population at his school. Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Hawaiian Americans, and Caucasians made it "cosmopolitan." Although he befriended other Japanese Americans the most, he also had some friends from other racial or national backgrounds.⁴⁷ Similar to Sarashina, Tomosawa suggested a limited amount of interracial interactions that occurred in a relatively non-hostile setting for Nikkei. Racial distinctions were made, but they did not necessarily culminate in racial animosity directed to or by Japanese Americans as far as Japanese Americans were concerned.⁴⁸

Japanese Americans on the US mainland, too, remembered racially or nationally diverse student populations, but many found themselves in a distinctively minority status both numerically and socially. Haakai Nagano, of Orange Cove, California, remembered: "There were very few Japanese Americans, so most of the children attending [my] school were all *hakujin* [Caucasians]." They were "Armenians, Syrians, and maybe even Croatians," Nagano recalled, "but they were all that race," that is, white.⁴⁹ Compared to Tomosawa who enjoyed "cosmopolitan" friendships, then, Nagano found the racial line difficult to cross. Children of immigrants from non-Japanese backgrounds were demarcated by race instead of being seen as fellow newcomers. Hayami Fukino, when she was growing up in California in the 1930s, attended a mostly Japanese American school in a neighborhood where Nikkei families clustered. The era's housing segregation, as well as the immigrant families' desire to stay close, had

created a fair number of Nikkei-heavy neighborhoods across the state. But their large number did not mean that Japanese Americans were socially dominant. As Fukino remembered, “there was few *hakujins*, but we didn’t get along, well, not get along, but did not talk to them too much.” Unsurprisingly, a reason for this lack of interaction was racial segregation: “I remember one swimming pool that said ‘No Japanese,’” recalled Fukino. Racism found a way into a family conversation. When Fukino’s father learned that the first commercial flight would fly from Japan to America, his response was: “Oh, he’s going to get a ticket,” meaning that even an inanimate object could be segregated by race. Although her *hakujin* school teachers were “OK” and did not overtly discriminate, Fukino did not accept their attitude at face value. She said: “You know, you remember those things [about an airplane and a pool],” which brought to the surface how Nikkei were treated differently.⁵⁰ The lesson was that there was more than meets the eye.

Racism seemed no longer a problem after Japanese American children came to Japan. This did not mean, however, that diversity in their schooling ceased to exist. In fact, both dual-schooling and diversity in race and nationality continued to shape Nikkei experiences in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, if more mutedly. The main difference between Japanese and Japanese American children was nationality. This was in contrast to their relationship to children of Korean origin, which, as we will see, was marked by assumed differences in race in addition to nationality. Natsumi Aida, for instance, recalled how there was “a range of students” at her school in Hiroshima: “There were some from Canada, others from Hawai’i,” in addition to those from the US mainland.⁵¹ Fumiko Imai, born in Brazil and coming to Japan in 1933 as a three-year-old, remembered how her mother stood out when she came to Imai’s school for a parent day. “She was wearing a suit and a pair of high heels,” a sign of her family’s foreignness and high standard of living in the eyes of her Japanese schoolmates. In Imai’s remembering, her family’s perceived affluence was the reason why her house was targeted by a thief a few times.⁵² As was the case with some others, a nationality could translate into a socioeconomic class. Japanese Americans’ distinctiveness could alienate, but it could also facilitate. For instance, Aida’s remembering shows how her foreignness was a reason for her to become a target of teasing and, at the same time, a way for her to get out of it. In her oral history, Aida recalled how her classmate smeared *sumi*, a kind of ink used for Japanese calligraphy, on

her back on her first day at a Hiroshima school. Although it is not clear if this act was directed at Aida because she was an American or because she was a newcomer, she felt that the incident highlighted her foreignness: unlike Japanese students, she did not know how to do calligraphy. She felt anxious, and the *sumi* incident only heightened the sentiment. But her foreignness also pushed back the bullying, thanks to cookies that her mother baked. These treats were the reason why her teachers, and eventually her classmates, grew to like her: “When they came over to my house, they enjoyed these cookies. My mother was good at baking them . . . although she did not have enough ingredients [in Japan], she managed to bake cookies and cakes, etc.”⁵³ Depending on circumstances, then, Nikkei students played their foreignness in divergent ways. This was distinct from the classroom that Japanese American students experienced in the United States, especially on the mainland, in which day-to-day interactions between different national groups were infrequent. Even less frequent in America was an opportunity for Nikkei children to test their difference to their advantage. In Japan, such opportunities seemed to spring up.

Indeed, Nikkei students were keenly aware of the meanings of both the differences and similarities that they embodied for their peers, something that remained true throughout wartime. To be sure, their remembering suggests that they experienced their cross-nationality – they looked like Japanese because of the racial sameness, but they also were dissimilar because of their national and cultural backgrounds – in more flexible ways before 1941 than after. This is not surprising, given the sharp rise of hostility against the United States among the Japanese after the war’s beginning. Still, it is important to note Hiroshima and Nagasaki as places that reared a layered sense of belonging in strikingly open-ended ways through the 1930s and, in some cases, beyond 1941. In a way different than schools in America, schools in Hiroshima and Nagasaki continued to accommodate a range of cross-national interactions among their pupils, especially those who were deemed to belong to the same race. This was not only because of the treats like cookies that some Nikkei families were able to offer. According to George Kazuto Saiki, about half of the student population at his school was Japanese Americans.⁵⁴ Kenji Takahashi recalled a more modest number of Nikkei students in Hiroshima: “I could say, in my middle school about 20 percent of what you call the Nisei could speak English . . . This was a private school they put us into, so maybe our school was not

20 percent, maybe 10 percent, but at other private schools, maybe 20 to 25 percent of the Nisei were attending.”⁵⁵ Although these numbers may not be precise, it is striking that most Japanese American survivors remembered that there were others like themselves. Saiki also recalled that not only students but also one of his teachers was Nikkei – “Teacher Shiraishi” from Los Angeles. The teacher took Saiki under his wing, helping him study and making sure that he applied to an appropriate high school. Beside his kindness, the Aloha shirt that Shiraishi wore stayed in Saiki’s remembering as a mark of their shared cultural belonging.⁵⁶ Jack Motoo Dairiki’s uncle was an English teacher at Dairiki’s school in Hiroshima. Trained in England, his uncle’s British accent caused a family disagreement. “When the uncle said ‘This is a dog’ in his British accent,” recalled Dairiki, “I would say ‘It’s not right! It’s a *dog!*’ in an American accent.” Regardless of the discord, the fact that his family member was an English-speaking teacher greatly helped Dairiki’s adjustment to Japan.⁵⁷ No others in Dairiki’s class could speak as fluently in English, not to mention tell the difference between UK and US accents. Some, like May Yamaoka, felt proud to be one of the students fluent in English. As she recalled, one of her teachers, trained at the University of Hawai‘i, asked her to pronounce the word “one,” to serve as a model for others. Although Yamaoka thought “it’s funny” and “felt embarrassed” by the request, the recognition helped her to feel accepted.⁵⁸

The presence of other Nikkei, along with teachers and students from places such as Britain, Canada, and Brazil, was part of the cities’ long history of immigration. Immigrants’ sheer number, as well as city residents’ familiarity with “people who came back from America,” made a relatively agreeable coexistence of differences possible. The absence of an assumed racial difference between Japanese and Japanese Americans, too, facilitated their interactions, although their national, cultural, and linguistic differences were abundantly visible. Instead of seeing the lack of racism as a given, however, Japanese American children experienced it as refreshing. The reason for this was that racism shaped many aspects of their families’ lives before coming to Japan. As discussed earlier, most Japanese Americans decided to return or send their children to Japan for family reasons. Often, these reasons were shaped by larger inequalities in America. Some Issei and Nisei parents worried about the future of their offspring in the United States, as hostility rose between America and Japan in the early decades

of the twentieth century. Beyond daily signs of racial discrimination in public spaces, there were legal restrictions that made Issei realize that there might be no future for Nisei and Sansei in America. In 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education established a policy of racial segregation of Asian students, reversed only after the Gentlemen's Agreement was adopted in 1907 to curtail Japanese migration to the United States. In 1913, California passed the Alien Land Law that prohibited "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from buying land or leasing it for more than three years. Both Chinese and Japanese immigrants fell into this category. After the National Origins Quota Act passed the Congress in 1924, all "aliens ineligible for citizenship" again became a target, this time of a law that prohibited Asians from migrating to America. The only exception to this rule was immigrants from the Philippines, then a US colony.⁵⁹ These restrictions found a way into US survivors' remembering. Kenji Takahashi, born in Hawai'i in 1921 and arriving in Japan in 1931, explained the reasons for his family's return to Japan as caring for sick relatives and attending to family affairs. Then, he added another reason: "Because at that time Japanese Americans didn't get too good an education in this country. Also they couldn't get good jobs here so parents sent them to [places like] Hiroshima." If Nisei and Sansei were fluent in Japanese, they might be better off building lives in Japan. Takahashi's reasons for returning to Japan were family-driven, but they were also shaped by racism that extended across the Pacific.⁶⁰

Because of their perception that racism prompted their departure from America, many US survivors found solace in the relative lack of discrimination that they found in schools in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was not complete acceptance; teasing could, and did, happen. But US *hibakusha* remembered their schooling in the 1930s fondly. Unlike American teachers who were "OK" or "good" in the classroom, Japanese teachers were frequently described as "kind" or "very nice."⁶¹ This warmer recognition likely originated from the fact that Japanese teachers' attitude toward American students was not structured by racism or nationalism. Compared to the United States where both the federal and state governments implemented discriminatory policies against Nikkei, the Japanese government in the 1920s and 1930s did not enact specific policies concerning Issei, Nisei, and Sansei residing in the country. Japan determined citizenship as *jus sanguinis*, while America did so as *jus soli*, so all Nisei and Sansei were entitled to dual citizenship. Because Issei were not allowed US

citizenship under US law, they by necessity maintained Japanese citizenship and family registry. This, in turn, helped the registration of Nisei and Sansei as Japanese citizens; all they had to do was register their names in their parents' or grandparents' existing family record, and file at a local bureau. They were not marked as American citizens, although their places of birth made it possible to infer if someone looked into the document. Until the early 1940s, however, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Legal Affairs Bureau did not check their records systematically. The underlying assumption was that the only foreigners were Westerners who held no connection to Japan either *jus sanguinis* or *jus soli*.⁶² Surely, the absence of legal discrimination was not a panacea. By describing Japanese teachers appreciatively, American students showed they did not take acceptance for granted. It was an eye-opening moment when they found that they were not ostracized, although they spoke, acted, or ate differently. Something that seemed unchangeable changed right in front of their eyes; the line between universality and uniqueness became blurred, creating a space for cultural contingency. As we will see in Chapter 2, this kind of revelation – that uniqueness and universality conflict *and* converge – occurred at Hiroshima's and Nagasaki's ground zero, too. That US survivors trace similar experiences in their childhood suggests how they see the bomb as part of the history of immigration, not the other way around. In US *hibakusha*'s remembering, people's history of creating ties across borders was larger than the nuclear weaponry that ignored it.

Acceptance by Japanese teachers made American students' struggle with language somewhat easier. Language was one of the most visible signs of Nikkei's foreignness, something that distinguished Americans from Koreans in wartime Japan. And yet, language came up in both of their rememberings as an essential element of their cross-national experiences, revealing its power to connect as much as separate.⁶³ More fluent in English than in Japanese, many Nikkei children tried to learn, relearn, or unlearn these languages with varying degrees of success. Their efforts added layers to their sense of belonging. Most students not fluent in Japanese resorted to dual-schooling: they learned Japanese from their families after school. Unlike the dual-schooling in America, their learning in Japan was solely in Japanese. Junji Sarashina remembered how this dual-schooling took place out of necessity:

When I first went to . . . grade school, second grade or so, of course, I speak, my English is stronger than my Japanese. So some of the kids said there is a damn nut coming around to school. And it really upset me. . . . So I went back to my mom, and said, gosh, they called me *baka*, dumb nut! . . . So my mother said, alright . . . you got to learn Japanese grammar. So I started to study, she taught me Japanese grammar from the second grade on.⁶⁴

Although Sarashina acknowledged the initial difficulty of fitting in, he recalled that it was only for “the first year.” His teachers “were very kind to [him], tremendously nice and kind.” Indeed, thanks to these teachers’ help and his learning at home, Sarashina was chosen to give a send-off speech for a graduating class three years later.⁶⁵

For others, though, negotiating languages proved more difficult. Like Sarashina, Izumi Hirano acquired fluency in Japanese by speaking the language at home, a more solo process than the communal schooling he had experienced in Hawai‘i. He described the effect of his dual-schooling in Japan: “When I went back to Japan, I spoke Pigeon English and odd Japanese. Then I acquired Hiroshima dialect.” Because his only teachers were his family members, their dialect became part of Hirano’s Japanese. Looking back on this, Hirano sounded slightly regretful that he had never learned standard Japanese.⁶⁶ In a sense, though, this kind of home-schooling in Japan might have been more practical than the language education offered in America. Nikkei children born to Hiroshiman parents could learn a non-Hiroshima dialect at a Sunday school in the United States, as did George Kazuto Saiki, which would later cause them problems in Hiroshima. Taught in Kumamoto dialect in America, Saiki spoke Japanese at schools in Hiroshima, but of course with a Kumamoto accent. Saiki had to learn how to say “mother” and “father” in the Hiroshima dialect, to avoid being laughed at.⁶⁷ Fusae Kurihara, too, remembered her struggle: “I was only five, so I think we used Japanese at home when I was in the United States. But even so, my mother’s younger sister, who took care of me in Japan . . . was saying she couldn’t understand what I was saying. So I think I kind of mixed up Japanese and English.”⁶⁸ One’s speaking could split right in the middle. Others continued to rely on English as they never became fluent in Japanese. Asako Gaudette’s friends fell into this group. As she recalled, they found it particularly difficult to

pronounce English words that had been phonetically translated into Japanese. They could not say *kānēshon*; instead, they said “carnation.”⁶⁹ Thus, dual-schooling in either America or Japan was hardly a solution for all. For those who struggled to fit in linguistically, the beginning of the Pacific War would shine a harsh light on their cross-nationality. For those who acquired Japanese but lost fluency in English, returning home after the war would pose an extraordinary challenge. For many others who fell in between, neither language felt right, contributing to their silence about their experiences as US survivors. Similar to other cultural products such as food and clothes, language embodied different shades of cultural affinity, leading Nikkei to respond to the war and the bomb in various ways.

And yet, it was still the 1930s. Japanese American remembering indicates that there was room for students with a range of linguistic ability and cultural familiarity to find their way. The process of adapting to Japan was not without obstacles, but the promise was that American children would be accepted if they could learn some Japanese ways, too. This did not mean that they had to shed their American habits, though. In contrast to US schooling colored by racial and national distinctions, Japanese schooling allowed American children to hold onto their habits. In a larger sense, this difference suggests the persistence of race in definitions of nationality. When people believed that they belonged to the same race, their difference in nationality did not greatly undercut the possibility of connection, sameness, and equality. When people believed that they belonged to difference races, their difference in nationality became an excuse for enacting racist policies and practices.⁷⁰ Equally important, race as people understood it was not based on biologically determined differences such as skin, hair, and eye color. The experiences of Korean and Korean American survivors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the 1930s elucidate this point.

Koreans in Japan: Visible Community, Invisible Belonging

After Japan’s annexation of Korea in 1910, Koreans began to migrate in considerable numbers to Japanese industrial cities such as Nagasaki, Fukuoka, Osaka, and Hiroshima. Easy access from Shimonoseki, the Japanese port city nearest the southern Korean port of Busan, made these cities reasonable destinations. The Korean migration was driven by Japanese colonial policies. Soon after the annexation,

the Governor-General of Korea initiated a major land survey, aiming to claim any unregistered land as imperial property. Because registering land ownership had not been a universal practice in Korea, many Korean landowners lost their properties. Once claimed by the imperial government, crops from these confiscated farms were shipped to Japan to supplant their food supply, leaving Korean sharecroppers in chronic malnutrition and, in the last years of the war, starvation. Poverty, as well as the lack of educational and occupational opportunities, became prevalent particularly in rural areas, driving many to emerging industrial centers in Korea.⁷¹ Some sought jobs in the Japanese metropole, mostly in coal and steel mines, mills and factories, and construction companies.⁷² The flow of migration became considerably larger after the Japanese Imperial Diet passed the National Mobilization Law in 1938, then again in 1942 and 1944 when the Japanese government began the forced migration of Koreans to Japan proper with the purpose of supplementing the wartime empire's labor force and military, respectively. Before 1938, the number of Koreans in Japan proper was just under 800,000. By 1945, their number exceeded 2,000,000, of which about 50,000 and 20,000 were in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively. This rapid growth of the Korean population was more pronounced in Nagasaki. In Hiroshima, where a considerable number already existed prior to the forced mobilization, Korean communities in 1945 included not only recent migrants but also a substantial number of those who had been born or raised in the city. The history of Koreans who were forcefully mobilized by the Japanese empire after the Pacific War started in 1941, then were victimized by the bomb in 1945, has been central to the scholarship about Korean survivors. Those who had been in Japan for a longer time, in contrast, have been much less studied, suggesting a still-limited attention given to cross-nationality in our historical inquiry.⁷³

Koreans in Japan raised mostly or entirely in Hiroshima or Nagasaki developed a layered sense of belonging, and showed a strong attachment to Korean heritage and Japanese culture. Throughout the 1930s they learned both the Korean and Japanese languages, which stood in contrast to Japanese Americans' education in Japan, which focused solely on Japanese. The proximity between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago made it possible for Koreans to keep close ties to home. Many traveled back and forth frequently, helping to keep their mother tongue largely intact.⁷⁴ During the 1910s

and 1920s, most Koreans in Japan were Korean monolinguals, using limited Japanese only when necessary. By the mid-1930s, however, second generation Koreans in Japan reached 20–30 percent of the population, raising concerns about their unfamiliarity with Korea.⁷⁵ Raising their children in Japan, most Korean parents approached language education with a determination similar to that of Japanese Americans in the United States. The education usually started at home, helping children to be familiar with the parents' mother tongue. Parents also hoped to prepare their children, who lived their daily lives under the Japanese rule, for future days under Korean sovereignty.⁷⁶ Yi Joukjeun, born in Japan in 1928 and still residing there at the time of our oral history in 2013, remembered how his parents made it mandatory that he spoke Korean when conversing with family members:

My father always said to me that, although it is okay to speak Japanese in public, you must speak Korean at home. I did not think of myself as Korean, I thought I was Japanese. So I did not understand why I would want to speak Korean. . . . I just overheard my parents and began to understand a word here, a word there.⁷⁷

Despite Yi's seeming lack of enthusiasm, the vocabulary that he had acquired in his childhood helped him communicate with his relatives when he visited them in the newly independent Korea after the war. His relatives did not think that Yi's Korean sounded authentic, but at least it made their cross-cultural interactions possible.⁷⁸ Such connection and continuity through spoken words, which pieced together the present and the future, were maintained by a strong commitment to language education among first generation Koreans in Japan.

Here, it is noteworthy that maintaining Korean language skills was an important means of political and cultural resistance in Korea especially after 1938, when the Governor-General of Korea began to enforce the use of Japanese as an official language of instruction at all Korean schools. In 1939, the Japanese forced Koreans to change their names to Japanese ones, further heightening a sense of urgency among Koreans that they must protect their heritage. Consequently, the number of Koreans fluent in Japanese remained limited in the peninsula even during the final years of the war, making it difficult for the Japanese Imperial Army to recruit Korean soldiers who understood military orders in Japanese.⁷⁹ In Japan proper, however, the relationship

between Korean people and language differed. As long-term residents of Japan, in many cases since the 1910s and 1920s, they were more likely to be fluent in Japanese. For second generation Koreans in Japan such as Yi, Japanese was their mother tongue, and their exposure to the Korean language was limited. Unlike Korean people in Korea, their schooling in the compulsory education system had been always in Japanese. It is also notable that, unlike Nikkei in America in the early decades of the twentieth century, Koreans in Japan did not open a large number of Korean language schools that children could attend after school.⁸⁰ One such school, called Eneigakuin, opened in the mid-1920s in the Kichijima-chō district in Hiroshima, and at its peak the school attracted more than forty students. And yet, the school's finances remained dependent on parental donations, never becoming large or stable enough to collect tuition. Many Korean children worked to help their family income, making it difficult for them to attend school regularly. Moreover, Japanese police officers made frequent visits beginning in the early 1930s, damaging desks and blackboards.⁸¹ But the reason for the relative absence of language schools went beyond financial difficulty and police harassment. Following the annexation, the Japanese government implemented inconsistent, even contradictory, policies of assimilation. After the mid-1920s, the Japanese government generally preferred Koreans to be assimilated, not only culturally but also legally to a degree. After universal male suffrage was introduced in Japan in 1925, Korean male residents of Japan received the right to vote if they had been registered on a family record with a Japanese address more than a year. Japanese schools, including some elite military schools, opened their doors to registered Korean residents, creating a pipeline for upward mobility.⁸²

These policies of assimilation offered some impetus for Koreans in Japan to become fluent in Japanese. Many also felt that hiding their Korean language skills would lead to better opportunities. As we will see, these factors shaped an intricate relationship between visibility and invisibility for Koreans. Unlike Nikkei in Japan who experimented and expressed their foreignness publicly, Koreans in Japan had reasons to keep theirs private. These reasons were particularly relevant to those raised in Japan and adept in Japanese such as Yi. This did not mean, however, that younger Koreans in Japan were uninterested in learning about their Korean heritage. In fact, their desire to understand Korean culture appeared to intensify during the 1930s when discrimination

against Koreans heightened. In their day-to-day interactions with the Japanese, Koreans were often belittled, seen as physically smaller and weaker, mentally impoverished, and racially inferior. Similar to contemporary racism against African Americans in the United States, Koreans in Japan were deemed dirty, loud and coarse in their speech. Outside elite military or political careers, their employment opportunities were limited. Among those employed, the average income hovered at around 40–50 percent of Japanese workers.⁸³ This kind of treatment fueled many Koreans' aspiration to return to an independent Korea at some point in the future, which necessitated that they learn the Korean language.

Indeed, evidence suggests that, despite the absence of language schools, Koreans in Japan during the 1930s taught their children and grandchildren Korean beyond the home; education also occurred in their community, to keep alive the possibility of returning home. Such efforts became critical not only because racism intensified but also because Koreans in Japan became multigenerational and different cultural belongings began to converge. Matsumoto Kisō, a survivor born in Korea who came to Japan in 1932, recalled days in the early 1940s:

My mother and father's Japanese was weak, so they spoke in Korean. My wife came to Japan when she was eight, and her Korean was a little better than mine. So these three talked in Korean. I just listened to them. Also, in my neighborhood, there were ten, twenty tenement houses, barracks, occupied by Koreans. They were of all sorts . . . and back then, they spoke everything in Korean.⁸⁴

Matsumoto's remembering reveals a dual process of learning Korean. First, he would hear it at home; then in his neighborhood, too, though he did not necessarily speak it. This composite education arose because different language skills coexisted in families and communities. As second generation Koreans grew in number, Japanese became their main language of communication; at the same time, as more immigrants from the peninsula arrived in the late 1930s because of the war mobilization, the number of Korean monolinguals increased, too. In this context, teaching Korean by using it in families and communities became of a piece with Koreans' desire to stay connected to their home. The desire was felt not only by adults; it was also passed on to

children. For instance, the significance of young Matsumoto's ability to understand Korean became evident when he discussed his father's occupational history: "My father was a ward mayor when he was in Korea . . . so he was called *kujang*, *kujang* [in Korean] . . . even after he came to Japan."⁸⁵ For Matsumoto, whose Japanese was stronger than his Korean, learning Korean was an act of learning his family history that stretched back to the home he had not seen. In this way, language connected the past to the present.

Equally important, Koreans' sense of national belonging was fostered largely within families and communities visibly separated from Japanese neighborhoods. Before, during, and after the war, Koreans rarely lived in physical proximity to the Japanese. Their belonging to Korea was plainly visible within the Korean districts.⁸⁶ Even when they stepped out of the boundaries, their foreignness was difficult to erase. Unlike some Japanese Americans whose speech signaled their foreignness, long-term Korean residents of Japan, especially those raised in the country, did not face a language barrier. Instead, blunt talk of the "Korean race," as many Japanese politicians, military leaders, and police officers of the time referred to them, demarcated their foreignness.⁸⁷ This mixture of sameness (in language) and difference (in residence and race imposed by the Japanese) offered a ground for Koreans in Japan to negotiate visibility and invisibility in their expressions of cross-nationality in a way strikingly different from Nikkei. Americans often expressed their layered sense of belonging in public, without being criticized for making it visible; Koreans, on the other hand, felt compelled to keep their cross-nationality in private, for fear of being punished by visibly expressing it. The experience of Pak Namjoo, a Korean *hibakusha* born in 1932 in Japan, suggests how Koreans in Japan maintained Korean belonging amid Japanese assimilation policies by balancing visibility and invisibility in private and public spheres. Her father came to Japan in 1929, followed by her mother the next year. Like Matsumoto, Pak lived in the Fukushima-chō in the Nishi district of Hiroshima, an area predominantly populated by Koreans. Also like Matsumoto, Pak emphasized a family history that she could be proud of. Pak's father was able to read and write, despite the fact that he worked as a janitor in Japan.

Her father also encouraged Pak to study hard to become fluent in Japanese, in part to strengthen her pride in being Korean:

My father always told me to study hard, so as not to fall behind the Japanese. If I fell behind, I would not be able to go to an upper-level school; I would also be looked down upon.⁸⁸

At first glance, a Korean student studying hard at a Japanese school seems precisely what the assimilation policies aimed to accomplish. And yet, Pak's experience was more complicated. Seeing that she excelled academically, a handful of Japanese classmates made fun of her by calling her *Chōsen*, meaning "Korean." To counter, Pak mobilized her academic excellence. She responded: "You dumb nuts! Before you poke fun at me, be smart enough to be a class president!" Using her intellectual superiority over the boys, none of whom were a class president, Pak pushed back against the belittlement of her cross-nationality, suggesting how Koreans in Japan used their adoption of Japaneseness outside their community to resist Japanese racism and nationalism.⁸⁹ She did not defend her Korean heritage by speaking in Korean in public; rather, she did so by mobilizing her excellence in Japanese. Inside their families and neighborhoods – in more private spheres – they protected their Korean heritage more visibly, so as to keep ties to their history as immigrants. This sharply differed from how Japanese Americans expressed their cross-nationality. Although they could also be taunted by Japanese bullies as "dumb nuts," as was Junji Sarashina, Nikkei experienced much less tension between their cross-nationality's visibility and invisibility. Their belonging to America flew between public and private spaces in Japan freely in a way not available to Koreans.

Koreans in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were no less determined to protect Korean culture beyond language as part of their cross-nationality than their Japanese American counterparts, although here again, their visibility and invisibility were carefully negotiated. In particular, food offered an opening for finding a place for cross-nationality for Koreans amid the Japanese. Korean and Korean American survivors almost universally remembered the smell of *kimchee*, which stood out at school. Because it was customary for school children to bring lunch from home, lunch boxes became something of a cultural showcase for those whose diet was not typically Japanese. Unlike Americans who proudly introduced their Japanese classmates to homemade cookies, Koreans paid the price for being different. Yi Jougeun recalled:

My mother cooked all meals, and she made *kimchee*, too. You know *kimchee*, which smells very garlicky. So [my classmates]

told me that Koreans smelled bad . . . that they were dirty and smelly. . . . I remember that I took lunch to my school, which had a lunch box warmer [for winter]. It was heated from below by fire . . . so we could eat a warm lunch. But my lunch had *kimchee* in it, and so it started to smell. I was told to take it out of the warmer.⁹⁰

Yi's garlic became a sign of his foreignness, prompting his lunch box's removal from the warmer. Nonetheless, asked what his favorite food had been, his answer was "*miso tchigae*," fermented soybean paste soup flavored with red chili and garlic.⁹¹ To love Korea's cuisine was to be resilient in Japan. Pak's remembering conveyed a similar sentiment. Having *kimchee* in her lunch box regularly, she decided to eat her lunch at home instead of eating with her classmates.⁹² Although this was hard for this strong-willed girl unafraid of talking back to bullying boys, her choice was eased by two circumstances that contained a measure of acceptance of her belonging to Korea. First, her teachers did not prohibit *kimchee* or stop her from leaving the school for lunch. Second, Pak's mother did not offer to do away with *kimchee*. Pak continued to enjoy the condiment thanks to these subtle accommodations.

Pak's remembering, then, illuminates a moment when the cross-nationality of Koreans in Japan found something akin to a balance between visibility and invisibility. Although the residential segregation was strict, it did not foreclose meaningful encounters between Korean and Japanese peoples. School was the prime site of these encounters, which allowed immigrants to forge a sense of layered belonging to Japan and Korea. The process did not culminate in either resistance or collaboration; instead, it highlighted the cultural contingency of both. These encounters took place outside classrooms, too. Pak, for one, remembered fondly the multinational neighborhood in which her family had lived. Unlike the often tense school environment, she recalled how Fukushima-chō residents were all "kind and gentle." Although they included some Japanese, none called her *Chōsen* derogatorily or treated her differently. She speculated if this was because the area was reserved for relatively well-to-do Korean families.⁹³ But these affirmative memories were not strictly class specific. Matsumoto Kisō, who lived in a less desirable neighborhood in the Yojima district of Kako-chō near the Hiroshima city jail, felt fine about eating *kimchee*, not only because his family affirmed it but also

because it was a specialty appreciated by some Japanese, too. Initially, Matsumoto's remembering suggested that he liked *kimchee* simply because his family members liked it:

The elders liked garlic. They would eat well if a dish had garlic in it. . . . There are people who don't eat garlic because it smells. But the value of garlic is in that smell. . . . If there is no smell, then you don't feel that you are eating garlic.⁹⁴

Matsumoto's belief in garlic's goodness was further confirmed when a Japanese customer, a famous actress, came to his father's grocery store. She said that she was ill, and looking for garlic that would help her recovery.⁹⁵ The impact of her visit is evident in Matsumoto's still-fresh memory that, surprisingly, a Japanese recognized the value of Korean things, something that seemed to shift his relationship to the Japanese momentarily a step away from the airless hierarchy that colonial policies demanded. These encounters did not erase the fact of colonialism; instead, they opened a possibility for both Korean and Japanese peoples to make sense of it in their everyday encounters. Matsumoto, then, may be seen as using the visit by the Japanese actress to push back against the belittlement of *kimchee* by the Japanese. Not only his Korean family but also his Japanese customer found it nutritious. Confident in this knowledge, as Pak was in her Japanese, Matsumoto claimed an alternative way of smelling it. The strong, presumably undesirable aroma of garlic as Japanese students and teachers perceived it, did not exist in the Korean neighborhoods. The flavor was everywhere, and it was simply good for you. If you did not smell this way, you were missing the point.

This strong community attachment existed side-by-side with Koreans' familiarity with Japanese food. John Hong, a Korean American *hibakusha* born in Shanghai in 1926 who came to Japan in 1940, remembered all sorts of Japanese dishes that he had enjoyed. Similar to many Koreans who came to Japan before 1938, Hong's reason for coming was to find educational and occupational opportunities. The son of a successful businessman and a woman descended from an aristocratic family, Hong was fortunate enough to stay well-fed as a student in Nagasaki throughout the wartime. He could study "without worrying about making ends meet," and his meal options were wide:

I ate a lot of fish, but not so much meat. Vegetables were abundant, and a lot of breads, too. I remember eating *an-pan*, *mochi*, and *zenzai*. Also, I had *chanpon* frequently – it was served with pork. It was so delicious! I have it every time I visit Nagasaki. As a matter of fact, I go there every time when there is a school reunion. They let me know. We are all graduates of 1945.⁹⁶

In Hong's remembering, Japanese dishes, particularly *chanpon*, Chinese-inflected noodles for which Nagasaki is famous, connected his past and present. All the dishes he recalled were Japanese and referred to in Japanese. This is partly because he was alone in Japan in his school years, away from his parents in Shanghai. In fact, Hong lived in a dormitory of the commercial high school that he attended in Nagasaki, so he usually ate with his classmates. This communal eating of Japanese food continued even after Hong moved to the Hiroshima Army Weapons School, an elite military institution. As he recalled, he wanted to show that, although a Korean, he was patriotic enough to train himself as one of Japan's future leaders. It was a declaration of the difference *and* the sameness between Korean and Japanese students. Thus, subsequently being invited to school reunions has meant something special for him. Not only his classmates, he recalled, but also "most of [his] friends were Japanese." His first love, too, was a Japanese, a sister of his *chikuba no tomo*, or boyhood chum. Unlike Hong, who left for Hiroshima, she stayed in Nagasaki, where she encountered the bomb just three days after he did in Hiroshima.⁹⁷

Japanese food and friends are bound up in Hong's remembering, bringing back the times they spent together in the same breath as the days when the bombs changed everything. The war that devastated Korea comprised Hong's youth, which may be revisited only by calling up his belonging to Japan. The bombs threw the countries together by indiscriminately destroying both peoples. In this composite of remembering, Japanese discrimination against Koreans accented colonial dissonance. Instances of discrimination were woven into those of nondiscrimination, yet the former protruded in one's remembering like a piece of puzzle that never fit. In Nagasaki, Hong's teachers praised him for his academic excellence, which made him susceptible to bullying. He fought back, and the teacher who called him into his office afterward eventually let him go "because he could see that he [Hong]

had a legitimate reason to fight back.” Hong remembered another teacher in Nagasaki, Mr. Suzuki, who taught *jūdō*, as particularly “good.” In Hiroshima, too, his section commander “treated [him] kindly” although he knew that Hong was from Korea. Even as Hong expressed gratitude for such teachers, he vividly remembered the discriminatory acts of his classmates. They were jealous of Hong’s success; he should have known his place better, they seemed to say. Once, they beat him so badly that Hong could not go to school for a week. “Good” teachers did not intervene.⁹⁸ These daily realities, which unfolded at the schools training the future leaders of the empire, revealed how colonialism was failing its own expectations.

James Jeong, too, recalled a case of colonial dissonance. Although he was frustrated by limited educational opportunities available for Koreans, he also discovered how they could be widened by carefully crafting his interactions with Japanese authorities:

After graduating from an elementary school, I went to a teacher training school. It was commonly assumed that Koreans in Japan could not attend a regular middle school. To apply for a teacher’s school, I only had to submit a record of residence called *koseki shōhon*. My family record, *koseki tōhon* [that would have shown Jeong’s Korean lineage], was not necessary. I had my Japanese name “Okada” on my record of residence, so no one noticed that I was a Korean. You could stay out of trouble if you stayed away from government offices.⁹⁹

Jeong adeptly made his belonging to Korea invisible by taking advantage of Japan’s assimilation policies. The Japanese government in 1939 began to demand that Koreans register their Japanese names and addresses on *koseki shōhon*, so as to promote Koreans’ assimilation into Japanese people, policy, and culture.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, if a student’s Korean origin became known, some Japanese schools would not accept them. But this act of exclusion was not consistently exercised. As Jeong recalled, teachers’ schools did not intentionally exclude based on race or national origin, nor did the commercial school to which he soon transferred, by asking for *koseki shōhon* only. Around the time he transferred, Jeong’s Korean relatives came to Japan, necessitating that he teach them Japanese. Frequently speaking in Korean, Jeong assumed that his teachers and classmates noticed that he was a Korean. Nobody brought it up, however, suggesting that they acted

as if visible signs of Jeong's cross-nationality were invisible at least in public. In a way similar to how Pak's teachers quietly allowed her to eat *kimchee*, Jeong's teachers left him alone, without bringing his foreignness to anyone's attention. Jeong felt that at both schools he was treated well, especially by his teachers.¹⁰¹ Koreans' foreignness and, by extension, their cross-nationality was either visible or invisible in Japan, according to official limits set by the Japanese empire. In their daily lives, however, the line between visibility and invisibility shifted, opening up a space for immigrants to persist in ways that might defy colonial policies.

And yet, Korean students perceived Japanese teachers as merely "good," rarely giving a warmer praise of being "kind."¹⁰² Just as most Japanese Americans assessed their teachers in the United States as "good" but not as "kind" as their Japanese counterparts, Korean students cautiously assessed their encounters with authority. No matter how good teachers might be, they were part of the system that could crush students' opportunities. As Koreans learned of the need to assess either the visibility or invisibility of their cross-nationality, both in their private and public lives, they found little opening for changing the larger structure of inequality. Many days, they could keep it at arm's length. Other days, they were caught by surprise by how precipitous discrimination could be. Although Yi Joungkeun spoke Japanese and went by a Japanese name, he recalled how his foreignness could suddenly be revealed:

Japanese children were dressed neatly but we were poor and could not dress well. Perhaps this was why some adults could tell at a glance, in a second, that we were Koreans. When I went to my girlfriend's house in the countryside to meet her parents, I was stunned; her mother told her, "He may be Korean."¹⁰³

Yi was unprepared for this, and he wondered if the comment was made because of his clothes or his face. He asked his girlfriend: "Do I have a Korean face?" to which she responded: "Maybe so." Although Yi laughed as he recalled this incident decades later, the sway of the sudden intrusion was palpable.¹⁰⁴ Be it face or dress, what seemed invisible could become suddenly visible.

Equally important, Koreans' fear of visibility was intertwined with a pride that prompted assertions of histories as Korean immigrants. To be sure, they wondered if they were indistinguishable from

the Japanese. But they also actively sought to be distinguished as Koreans by the way they ate and spoke, dressing and acting in ways that they believed would advance Koreans' standing in Japan. For instance, after the 1925 law granting Koreans in Japan the right to vote, and especially after voting in Korean letters, *Han'gŭl*, became permissible in 1930, Korean residents began to head to the ballot box in large numbers. In 1932, for instance, *Nagoya shinbun* (Nagoya newspaper) reported: "Korean voters in white clothes have become such a common scene at a polling place."¹⁰⁵ Here, "white clothes" referred to *chōgori*, plain shirt-like clothes typically worn by Koreans. That they went to polling stations in this distinctively Korean outfit meant that their act of political participation was of a piece with their assertion of cultural belonging.¹⁰⁶ Not only in Osaka, where the number of enfranchised Koreans reached 12,000 in the early 1930s, but also in Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Kyoto, where the number remained in the thousands, Korean communities began to enlist candidates of their own. In some cases, Korean candidates made their way into national elections. Some candidates were endorsed by Japanese supporters of assimilation policies, raising questions among some Korean voters about whether they represented Korean interests. Other candidates, however, were Koreans who occupied leadership positions in their communities, such as managers and overseers employed by construction companies. In their campaigns, they often addressed issues of immediate concern for Koreans, including wages, working conditions, and housing.¹⁰⁷

As the 1930s came to an end and the Pacific theatre of the war opened, Hiroshima and Nagasaki continued to be where not only American but also Korean children negotiated their layered sense of belonging. Simultaneously, their schools, homes, and communities began to unravel. When the total mobilization started, the communities of immigrants and their histories, too, had to be mobilized. Their cross-nationality was questioned in a whole new light.

Navigating Race, Nationality, and Belonging during the War

Japanese Americans continued to arrive in Japan after 1941. Their number was smaller than before, their reasons different than their precursors'. Their coming to Japan was a thorny, lengthy process. Nobody shows this better than Minoru Sumida, who was eight years

old when his entire family was forcefully transferred from Honolulu to Yokohama shortly after Pearl Harbor. He explained the ordeal:

In the evening of the day when “Japs” came [to Pearl Harbor], we were imprisoned. . . . The way it seemed to a child was that we were treated as slaves. They had guns pointed at us. . . . We did not eat dinner that night. We were confined in the Japanese Embassy.¹⁰⁸

This was only the beginning. The Sumidas had become hostages, to be exchanged with American hostages taken by the Japanese. Throughout the process, the Sumidas were fed well to ensure that they would be exchangeable. But they were completely deprived of light. After boarding a ship in Honolulu, Minoru Sumida did not see the sun rise until he arrived in Los Angeles. The next leg of the trip was on a train, which transported the Sumidas and a dozen other hostages to a prison in Arizona. After a few weeks of confinement, the Sumidas were transferred again, this time to New York. From there, they boarded a ship again, to be taken to Brazil, where the exchange finally occurred. To avoid the active war zones in the Pacific, the hostages then had to go all the way to the Indian Ocean before reaching their destination. By the time he arrived at Yokohama via Singapore, it was already July 1942. His schooling was further delayed because Japanese schools did not start until the following April.¹⁰⁹ Throughout, Sumida’s birthright as a Hawaiian-born US citizen did not come up.

Another group of Japanese Americans who came to Japan after 1941 consisted of those who renounced their US citizenship after they were sent to the Nikkei concentration camps in early 1942. More than 2,200 Nikkei, mostly Issei with immediate family ties to Japan, requested repatriation to Japan by the year’s end. After the Loyalty Questionnaire was conducted by the War Department and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) in 1943, the number of Nisei who requested expatriation to Japan rose to more than 9,000. Two of the most problematic questions in the questionnaire, questions 27 and 28, asked Nikkei inmates if they were willing to serve in combat duty for the US army, and if they would swear an unqualified allegiance to America and forswear any allegiance to Japan. The questions provoked fear and confusion. Issei had been long excluded from the right to naturalization as “aliens ineligible for citizenship,” so they were concerned that they might become stateless if they renounced their Japanese citizenship.

Nisei, too, feared family separation that might be triggered by renouncing their parents' country of citizenship.¹¹⁰ By 1944, the number of requests for expatriation or repatriation reached nearly 20,000. Of these, about 4,300 were to be deported to Japan.¹¹¹ And of these, 368 individuals were deported before August 1945 under the oversight of the WRA and the Department of State. Given the large number of Japanese in America who hailed from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an estimated quarter to one-third of the 368, about 100, were in either one of the prefectures by 1945.¹¹²

These deportees' trips to Japan were as onerous as the hostages'. Julie Kumi Fukuda, for example, recalled her lengthy travels from 1942 to 1944, during which her Issei husband had answered both loyalty questions with a consequential "no":

I had never been out of California before, until I went to Montana [where I got married in 1942. Then I went to] Manzanar. We went to Arizona to another camp. . . . That was Gila. From Gila we went to Poston Camp, an Arizona camp. From there . . . by train we went clear across the United States to New York. They picked us up by bus, took us out to the boat, and just like that we sailed. On the *Gripsholm*. It's a Swedish liner, motorship *Gripsholm*. . . . From there we went to South America, to Rio de Janeiro. . . . And so we went, we would see Java and Sumatra in the distance as we sailed.¹¹³

The rest of the trip included a stop at Singapore, another at Manila, where her family (which by then included a newborn son) stayed for six months. Her husband worked as an interpreter there, but soon was drafted into the Japanese army. On board a military ship, the Fukudas stopped by Taiwan and, finally, they arrived at Hiroshima in the spring of 1944.

Although she was welcomed by her in-laws who, because of their family connection to the United States, "had like half of it [their house] an American-style," she was not treated in the same way as Japanese Americans were in the 1930s. She noticed, for instance, she was assigned the toughest work:

We farmed every day. Also I got to get up at five o'clock and would have our *misoshiru* . . . and go on, we'd go out and farm, and – oh, and heating the manure, you know. Oh, it was good

thing I was a farmer's daughter. I don't know how I could have survived that. And my sister-in-law's mother and father had an antique shop in Hiroshima city, so they were happy that I was there, because I could farm and their daughter was brought up to be an *ojō-san* [a pampered daughter], so she stayed home and mother-in-law and I worked.¹¹⁴

Similar to Nikkei who arrived earlier, Fukuda struggled with unfamiliar things such as *tatami* and *misoshiru* (miso soup). But her remembering did not center on cross-cultural encounters; instead, she mostly remembered work. No longer was there time to reflect on cultural differences.

Japanese Americans' cross-nationality began to affect them in new ways. Setsuko Kohara, born in 1930 in San Fernando, California, came to Japan in 1940. She recalled how she did not want to wear colorful outfits after the war began. The point was to downplay her belonging to America. "I wanted my clothes to be just like everyone else's," said Kohara. In fact, this was a repeat of what her teacher had told her students, so as to make sure that Kohara would not be bullied at school. "My teacher kindly talked to my classmates," recalled Kohara, to say that she was "the same as everyone." After this lecture, "nobody said anything" about Kohara.¹¹⁵ Although this seemed like a happy ending, the story also conveys how, before being lectured, Japanese students *did* say something about Kohara. This was not an isolated incident. As seen earlier, when May Yamaoka, born in 1929 in Lodi, came to Japan in 1938, her Hawaiian-trained teacher asked her to pronounce English words. But after 1941, such affirmation of cross-nationality ceased to exist. Before, although she was sure that "there were times when they [her classmates] used to laugh at me behind my back," she did not "remember too well about being picked on." Now, with Japan at war against America, her classmates "really started saying *teki, teki*," a Japanese term for "enemy"¹¹⁶ (see Figure 1.2).

Some of the harassment was based on an idea that Nikkei were untrustworthy, suggesting how they became a target of national hysteria and cultural suspicion on both sides of the Pacific. George Kazuto Saiki, who described his school population as half-Nikkei, remembered frequent fights that erupted between American and Japanese students. The Japanese side taunted their American peers as "Yankees" and "spies."¹¹⁷ Their nationality made them American, while their race made them look like perfectly disguised spies. This undue characterization, which



Figure 1.2 Jack Motoo Dairiki in the top-left corner of a photo taken at his school in Hiroshima when he was a newcomer. Dairiki felt that he stood out because of his American “plaid jacket” in the sea of Japanese black school uniforms. Jack Motoo Dairiki papers, 1942.

resembled the hostility against Nikkei that culminated in their mass incarceration in the United States in 1942, shaped Tim Nakamoto’s remembering about Japan, too. Born in Fresno, California, in 1930 and arriving in Japan as an eleven-year-old just months before Pearl Harbor, Nakamoto experienced extreme difficulty at school. Seeing him struggle with Japanese, his classmates taunted: “Here’s a freak guy; he looks like us but can’t speak Japanese.” They decided that his nickname should be “Merican,” a derogatory term for Americans. “Merican,” though, was not the only name assigned. Because Nakamoto helped at his uncle’s business of making dried-and-pickled *daikon* in Kure, Hiroshima, his “hands were yellow all the time from the . . . dye” used for coloring. This prompted his classmates to call him “Yellow Hand,” which was not “very complimentary.” As Nakamoto summarized, he was both “Yellow Hand and Merican” throughout the war. The irony of this dual-naming is that his uncle catered his *daikon* to the Japanese Navy. The condiment

was a luxury, and sailors could enjoy only four slices per day.¹¹⁸ Nakamoto's yellow hand, then, could be seen as a sign of his loyalty to the Japanese empire. But for his classmates, his nationality was a good enough reason to interpret everything as objectionable.

The layered sense of belonging, once met by gentle curiosity and acceptance in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, became reasons for Nikkei to change or hide their ways. Looking Japanese while being American was not safe or intriguing anymore. Masako Kawasaki, a US survivor born in Japan in 1937, realized how "people who came back from America" stopped speaking in English after 1941. Married to a Sansei born in Watsonville, California, who had narrowly escaped the incarceration by leaving America early in 1941, Kawasaki also learned how Nikkei in Japan at that time were frequently checked on by the military police.¹¹⁹ Because their belonging to America had been so visible, it was easy for Japanese authorities to come after Nikkei. The older siblings of Saiki were not fluent in Japanese, so they simply began to speak less in public. But their effort to hide their American traits had only limited success. They were seen as possible spies, as monthly visits by the military police made clear shortly after December 1941. The police's primary interest was a short-wave radio, but they also aimed to intimidate. As Saiki recalled, his house "had *tatami* mats on the floor, but they [the police] came in with their shoes on, so as to show their contempt for us."¹²⁰ The norm was to take your shoes off when entering a house. Once an unfamiliar Japanese artifact, *tatami* had become this Nikkei family's belonging; it felt close enough for Americans to feel humiliated if not treated in a properly Japanese way.

Although Japanese Americans felt a big change of tide, this did not mean that their belonging to America disappeared. What seemed like weak ties showed their persistence, often at unexpected places. Francis Mitsuo Tomosawa, whom we discussed earlier, was a teenager during the war. One day, he was riding a bicycle that his older brother had brought from Hawai'i. It was a hot day, so Tomosawa was shirtless, wearing only a pair of short pants. When he passed by the police station, he was instantly in trouble. "The police chief came out. He was infuriated because I was wearing shorts and riding an American bicycle. . . . He slapped me." Although Tomosawa described the episode as a result of his "child-like carelessness," such persistence of culture could be seen as making a quiet claim of one's national belonging.¹²¹ Tadachi Kohara, too, offered a case in point. A Nisei

born in 1930, Kohara as a young boy loved motorbikes. Having taken one with him to Japan, he would not give up his hobby of tinkering with them. This drew the attention of the Japanese police, but Kohara managed not to be caught. He recalled: “The policemen were on a bicycle [that was slower than my motorbike]. They frequently came to my house and made a fuss about my bike, but they really wanted to catch me when I was on it. They could easily tell which one [was mine] on the street because my bike was red.”¹²² Red was a girl-color in Japan, so a boy on the street on a red motorbike definitely stood out. He had to be an American. Nonetheless, the police could not catch him because he was faster. For a time, Kohara turned Japan’s war-business into a cat-and-mouse game.

This kind of resilience was rooted in the persistence of Nikkei communities, familiar sites in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In contrast to Japanese Americans on the US West Coast, Nikkei in wartime Japan did not experience a mass uprooting of their belonging to America. It was Nikkei’s resourceful use of cross-nationality, as well as the lack of state-sanctioned incarceration, that aided their persistence. Some became streetwise as did Kohara; others learned to find loopholes to protect their rights. Toshiaki Yamashita, born in 1928 near Long Beach, California, was asked to submit proof of his Japanese citizenship when he entered a junior high school. Because of the visibility of Nikkei culture before 1941, his American citizenship by birth had been well known. His Japanese citizenship, in contrast, was not as visible. Although it could be established by his blood and documented by his family record *koseki tōhon*, it was a matter of private choice, not something publicly exhibited. As discussed earlier, a person’s nationality based on family lineage was shown on *koseki tōhon*, while nationality associated with residency was indicated on *koseki shōhon*. This was the reason why some Koreans in Japan, such as James Jeong, could exercise a degree of civil rights using *koseki shōhon*. In Yamashita’s case, it was *koseki tōhon* that was on his side. He submitted this document that showed him alongside his parents, Japanese born in Japan. Instantly, it proved Yamashita’s Japanese citizenship, erasing the question about the other – American – belonging. Meanwhile, the documentation of his US citizenship on his US birth certificate remained intact by staying invisible in Japan. Yamashita kept his dual citizenship through the war.¹²³

As Yamashita's experience shows, extended families of Japanese Americans played crucial roles in protecting Nikkei from wartime persecution. Compared to the earlier years, ties that connected families cross-nationally became more discreet. Still, there were times when Japanese and Japanese Americans claimed their connections outspokenly. When Kazuko Aoki's father, one of the "people who came back from America" in the late 1920s, became highly critical of Japan, his neighbors rushed to protect him. Knowing America firsthand, Aoki's father fiercely questioned the wisdom of Japan's decision to fight America. "No doubt, Japan will lose," he insisted, during a town hall meeting attended by, among others, the police chief. The chief, along with organizers of the meeting, worried that their neighbor's outspokenness might attract unwanted attention from the military police.¹²⁴ Despite everything, they were long-time friends of the Aokis. Izumi Hirano's experience, too, showed the persistence of cross-nationality in Hiroshima. He recalled how, one day at his school, all students from the US mainland and Hawai'i were given an excuse to miss a class. Instead of attending school, they were to go to a lecture given by a Nisei. The lecture was about how there was no reason to be ashamed about being from the United States. "You would not be able to win the war without knowing the enemy," the Nisei man insisted. Thus, "you must feel proud of yourself. Some of you could speak English, and you must think about how to take advantage of it." This overzealous propaganda spurred a strong objection by Issei parents who feared disintegration of the Nikkei community. They cautioned their Nisei children against following the lesson, and students who expressed Japanese patriotism that day came back the following day mute. Only a few pursued a military career at Hirano's school. That Nikkei could speak English did not mean that they were ready to use it to help Japan beat America. In Nikkei's assessment, such use of English would be incompatible with their cross-nationality and Hiroshima's and Nagasaki's histories as cities of immigrants.¹²⁵

Aoki's and Hirano's rememberings illuminate how Nikkei maintained their cross-nationality through the war variously, even as they felt compelled to side with either Japan or America. Many were torn between the two. US treatment of their families and friends across the ocean added a burden to their cross-nationality. The moment the war started, Toshiro Kubota's father began to worry about his friends back in America. "He understood America's segregation, because he

had been in the United States,” explained the younger Kubota.¹²⁶ Although many Nikkei in Japan did not know that their families in America were incarcerated in the camps – the lack of communication made family correspondence impossible – those who did felt it impossible to side with either one of the countries. Born in 1917 in Loomis, California, Yasuko Ogawa had been in Japan since 1921. Partly because she was relatively old by 1941, she recalled the tension provoked by the camp better than most. She heard about the camp from her nephew, who was deported to Japan because he had “refused to serve in the [US] military.” (Most likely, this meant that he answered “no” to the 27th question on the loyalty questionnaire, then applied for expatriation. Answering “no” to the question did not warrant deportation.) He told her that her siblings had been imprisoned, and that there were “rumors that they [Nikkei] were tortured in the camps.” Since she could not communicate with her brothers and sisters, Ogawa had no way of confirming the rumor and continued to worry about their safety. To further complicate matters, her husband served the Japanese Imperial Army, while her father continued to express his outrage over Japan’s “mistake to wage war against such a large, rich country.”¹²⁷ As her families became split across the ocean, her cross-nationality found little room to breathe.

For many younger Nikkei, the beginning of the war meant the end of the money, clothes, and food that their parents in America had been sending them. Often, this created a resentment among their Japanese guardians. As food shortages worsened in Japan, bitterness intensified. Born in America and immediately sent to Japan in 1930, Miyoko Igarashi’s loneliness heightened whenever she thought of her parents back home in the United States. In Japan, she lived with her relatives who constantly reminded her that she was not one of them. Her grandparents were “strict,” and her aunt’s face turned “stern” when talking to Igarashi. “My parents went [back] to America, abandoning their child. ‘Abandon’ might sound too blameful, but that’s what I thought,” said Igarashi.¹²⁸ Although Nikkei in Japan might have escaped incarceration, their layered sense of belonging became increasingly stifled in Japan. Children left without parents in effect became stateless. The distinction between cross-nationality and statelessness became ever more slight. As the space for visible expressions of cross-nationality narrowed, it transformed into an invisible statelessness.

Tim Nakamoto, born the same year as Yamamoto and nicknamed “Yellow Hand” and “Merican” since 1941, thought that he had nonetheless become a Japanese patriot. Apparently, the wartime propaganda had an effect. But when the US bombing of Japan started, his cross-nationality came back powerfully. Initially, Nakamoto sounded like he was simply recalling an air raid by B-29s:

Toward the tail end [of the war] there were several large vessels . . . anchored . . . in . . . Kure Bay. And my uncle had a house on a hillside that overlooked the whole bay, so it was just like watching the San Francisco Forty-Niners playing football, you know. . . . That’s where the planes would circle just over my uncle’s house, you know, *z-zuhh* [*makes flying noise*]. You could see the pilot’s face. And three of them just went straight down into that battleship and dropped bombs. The next thing you see are big clouds. When it cleared, just the mast was sticking up. To me that was the most exciting thing that I have ever witnessed in my life.¹²⁹

The interviewer, surprised by Nakamoto’s observation that the Kure bombing “was more than the atomic bomb on Hiroshima,” asked “which side were you rooting for?” Nakamoto’s response revealed a sense of dispossession:

You know, when people ask me that, it’s hard to figure, really, which side I was on. Maybe I wasn’t, I don’t know. Maybe I was at a point where I didn’t care which side, really, because nobody cared for me.¹³⁰

Without a family or community that claimed him on either side of the Pacific, there was nothing for him to feel attached to. This was one way in which cross-nationality shaped Nikkei experiences before they were affected by the bomb.

The number of Koreans who came to Japan after 1941 far exceeded that of Nikkei, prompting an expansion of the cities’ Korean communities. For one thing, the expansion meant the influx of Koreans into the existing residential areas designated for Koreans. As James Jeong’s remembering has already shown, older immigrants assisted newcomers, helping them to learn language and find employment.¹³¹ Kwak Chae-young, who migrated from Korea to work at a pharmaceutical company in Hiroshima in 1944 because of his former

neighbor's enthusiastic recruitment, recalled how women in the old Korean district had frequently fed him. Their kindness made him conclude that the neighborhood was a home away from home.¹³² A much larger number of post-1941 migrants, however, found residence outside of the old Korean communities. In 1939, mining and construction industries in Japan began to aggressively recruit Korean laborers. By 1942, the Japanese government reorganized the recruitment system to make it more efficient. The Japanese method of "recruitment" became saturated by blatant deception, intimidation, and coercion, bringing an estimated 1.1 million laborers to Japan proper by 1945. A similar escalation of forced migration occurred in the military. From 1939, a considerable number of Korean laborers were in fact enlisted into the Imperial Army and Navy, serving as military porters. In 1944, the Japanese government began to conscript Koreans, despite a concern that they were unwilling to join the Japanese military or incapable of understanding Japanese. The desperate shortage of soldiers in the final years of the war pushed Japanese leaders to shed the concern, placing nearly 150,000 Koreans on the war's front. Most laborers, porters, and soldiers were given living quarters apart from the older Korean communities, mostly shacks and bunkhouses hurriedly built near their workplaces. Thus, many, if not most, Korean people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki lived within the city limits where factories and construction sites clustered. The residential areas for Koreans who had come to the cities in the 1920s and 1930s, too, were within the cities' densely populated areas, though their communities had more urban facilities such as restaurants, grocery shops, and clothing stores. Regardless, both of the areas lived in by Koreans were to be most severely affected by the bomb because of their proximity to the hypocenter.¹³³

Korean immigrants who came to Japan after the late 1930s were paid (if at all) far less than the Japanese, and they were assigned to the most dangerous work. Safer, less arduous tasks were taken on by Japanese laborers. Korean workers' situations were comparable only to those of American prisoners of war. Kim Tong-il, a Korean *hibakusha* in Korea who had come to the Fukahori shipyard in Nagasaki in 1944, remembered how American prisoners-of-war had been brought to the shipyard along with Korean laborers. Although "Koreans worked alongside with Koreans only" as a rule, American POWs joined a task when "it was the toughest kind." In Kim's assessment, this was because Japanese overseers were afraid of "killing" Koreans by overworking

them. By letting Koreans share danger with Americans, the Japanese reduced the chance of losing the Korean workforce.¹³⁴

These encounters between Americans and Koreans were not limited to factories. Francis Mitsuo Tomosawa, for instance, recalled a troubling encounter with Korean students at school. Born in Japan and fluent in Japanese, these Korean students' hostile attitude – they “verbally abused” Tomosawa – at first surprised this Hawaiian boy. Tomosawa had anticipated that he might be teased by Japanese students, but not by Koreans. One day, their bullying seemed ready to escalate into physical violence. A group of Korean students awaited Tomosawa by the school's gate, planning to “knock and kick him down hard.” Thanks to his friend who told Tomosawa of their plan, he escaped the grim prospect. Tomosawa went to his teacher, who came out with him and scolded away the Korean students. By considering this incident side-by-side with the bullying of Koreans by the Japanese in the 1930s, it becomes clear that, by the early 1940s, racial and national tensions in the immigrant cities ran unprecedentedly high. The more the Japanese empire attempted to assimilate immigrants by the use of force, the less plausible assimilation became. Discord erupted everywhere, and colonial dissonances became a daily occurrence. Tomosawa observed: Korean students “learned to discriminate because the Japanese government discriminated against them. . . . Because they had been bullied by Japanese kids, they wanted to discriminate against American children.”¹³⁵ The discord was not conducive for Nikkei children to “take advantage of” their cross-nationality so as to benefit the Japanese empire.

The increasingly aggressive assimilationist treatment of Koreans rendered their hope for liberation all the more urgent. Kim Tong-il took hope in the words of his coworker, who sounded certain that Korea would be freed soon. The man was a newcomer from Chungch'ōngdo province in Korea, offering Kim much-needed stories of hope from home. Still, Koreans in Japan did not simply sever their belonging to Japan.¹³⁶ Kwak Chae-young, for one, received sushi and *mochi* from his Japanese coworkers at the pharmaceutical company, in addition to the meals given by the women in the old Korean neighborhoods. “Kind people were kind,” recalled Kwak. “Because of the [Japanese] government's policy, they [my coworkers] thought, we [Koreans] had been taken from a foreign country to work in Japan. . . . Some of my female workers felt sorry for me” and brought him food.

The memory of kindness remained vivid after Kwak went back to Korea after 1945.¹³⁷ Pak Namjoo, too, felt torn by her cross-nationality, perhaps more so than Kwak because she stayed in Japan after the war. Her story about her younger brother dying of tuberculosis toward the end of the war involved two contrasting interactions with the Japanese:

There was nothing we could do for him, so we were waiting for him to die. At that time, we were not allowed to fully light our room. . . . We were supposed to cover the ceiling light with a black cover [so that American bombers would not locate Japanese houses]. . . . Our light must have been too bright. My parents were watching their son die, and we were crying. Then, they came in, without taking their shoes off. They kicked my father, yelling: “You Korean spy!”¹³⁸

“They” were members of a wartime neighborhood group called *kei-bōdan*, whose responsibilities included ensuring that houses were unlit after dark.

Hearing the noise, another one of Pak’s neighbors came to her house:

Mr. Kiyozaki Masayuki, who used to be the chief of the *kei-bōdan*, came and yelled at them: “This family is facing an emergency, their son is dying. You cannot do what you are doing to them.” So they left, without saying a word. [Mr. Kiyozaki] then asked us: “Please forgive them . . . it is a time of emergency for them, too.”¹³⁹

If Mr. Kiyozaki, also Japanese, had not intervened, “I would have felt resentful and I would have been hurt,” said Pak. Nonetheless, the incident became unforgettable. Pak chose to stress how she escaped resentment rather than the resentment itself.¹⁴⁰ For a Korean who was born in Japan and stayed in Japan after the war, a story of resentment could be harder to share than a memory of overcoming it. Equally important, all existing oral histories of Korean and Korean American survivors are conducted by Japanese interviewers. No known collection of Korean remembering recorded by Korean persons is publicly available today, likely limiting the range of cross-nationality that interviewees might express.¹⁴¹ Perhaps for this reason, too, most Korean *hibakusha*’s remembering joins resentment with attachment, pushing them toward both Japanese and Korean peoples.

Koreans who went to America after the war, too, showed a persistent capacity for cross-nationality. John Hong, as before, felt comradeship with his classmates at the Hiroshima military school. On August 6, 1945, they were getting ready for a trip to Osaka, scheduled to take place later that day. They had completed school, and were to receive graduate training at an iron factory in Osaka. Hong recalled the day in his interview in 1991, in Alameda, California:

Outside . . . I was polishing my shoes. Then, my friends all came out to do their shoes, and I told them, “Leave them there.” So I took some pairs, telling them “I can do your shoes, you guys do something else.” So with many pairs of shoes, I sat down comfortably and kept on polishing them.¹⁴²

His friends, “all Japanese,” thanked Hong for his generosity. Strikingly, this scene of comradeship is what Hong remembered at the moment of the bomb’s explosion. Of course, it is possible to see in this story a successful case of Japanese wartime indoctrination, even an embodiment of national betrayal by a Korean. Hong’s interviewer was a Japanese American, which might have made him feel that he should say something nice about the Japanese. An American citizen at the time of the interview, Hong’s recollection might also be seen as his insistence on cross-nationality as an immigrant. When I met Hong in 2011, he repeated a slightly different version of the same story. The memory lived on for twenty years, side-by-side with the memory of mistreatment by his Japanese classmates.



Taken together, US survivors’ memories do not fit the dominant understanding of one nation fighting another, one dropping the bomb from above on the enemy below. But survivors’ memories continue to underpin the cities’ residents’ experiences of the bomb, suggesting that the history of the bomb cannot be separated from the people it immediately affected. If we keep them separate, we risk perpetuating a myth that Americans used the bomb to attack the Japanese. The people under the mushroom cloud included those who did not belong to a single state – those who possessed a layered sense of belonging that persisted through the war. Americans continued to express their cross-nationality through language, diet, and habits well into the 1940s. By making their cultural

heritage visible and invisible inventively, Koreans in Japan kept ties to Korean culture at the same time as they adopted certain Japanese ways. Their cross-national ties were not strong in the sense of influencing political or military decisions made by nation states. These ties did not change racist and nationalist policies, either. But this does not mean that the layered belonging in Hiroshima and Nagasaki deserves a continuing neglect in history. Indeed, convergence, as well as conflict, between cultures may be seen as a fact about any population that nuclear weapons destroy. As the next chapter shows, nuclear weapons did not obliterate the history of immigration in the cities, either. Instead, the bomb brought the strength of weak ties into sharp focus, making it a both uniquely and universally remarkable experience for US *hibakusha*.