

# NISEI SPIRIT

THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE 442ND RCT



Army University Press  
US Army Combined Arms Center  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

David F. Bonner

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## Acknowledgments

*In Memory of,  
The men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, 100th Battalion, and  
Military Intelligence Service (1942-1945)*





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## Foreword

David Bonner's *Nisei Spirit* monograph is a professionally written piece addressing one of the most intriguing units in US military history, the 442nd Infantry "Nisei" Regiment of World War II. During my military career I had experiences that support both Captain Bonner's theme concerning the 442nd, and because of those experiences I agreed to write this forward.

I had two experiences regarding the 442nd Infantry Regiment. First, during my tenure as The Judge Advocate General of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Rick Shinseki, was a friend dating back to our time as colonels in Germany. General Shinseki had two uncles who fought with the 442nd, and one of his mentors was former US Senator Daniel Inouye, who as mentioned in the monograph, lost his right arm while winning the Congressional Medal of Honor as a member of the 442nd. I learned several things about the 442nd just listening to my friend and meeting one of his uncles.

My second experience was both unique and revealing. While Judge Advocate General of the Army, I received a request from friends and family of former Staff Sergeant Shiro Kashino asking that I overturn a court-martial conviction dating back to WW II. Staff Sergeant Kashino had volunteered for combat with the 442nd while interned with his family in one of the relocation camps described in the monograph. As David Bonner notes, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team—composed solely of soldiers of Japanese heritage—won more medals for valor during WWII than any similarly sized unit. Shiro Kashino was emblematic of that record. He earned six Purple Hearts for wounds suffered in combat and was awarded the Silver Star and several other awards for heroism.

Unfortunately, during a respite from the fighting in Italy, a fight broke out between members of the 442nd and Caucasian US Soldiers in a restaurant. Military Police were called, and according to the police report, SSG Kashino struck a Military Police Lieutenant during the melee. Subsequently, Shiro Kashino was court-martialed—as was allowed by military law at the time—by a court-martial consisting only of an Infantry lieutenant-colonel. No lawyers, no defense counsel, no witnesses were called. In short, zero due process. Based on the summary written police report alone, Staff Sergeant Kashino was found guilty, reduced in rank to private, and sentenced to six months confinement. In an odd, but probably equitable decision, the court-martial officer offset the adjudged confinement with time Staff Sergeant Kashino had spent in front-line combat, so he never

went to jail. He simply returned to the 442nd as a private, and by war's end he had earned more awards for valor and was promoted again to staff sergeant.

After the war, Mr. Kashino returned to America, married and raised a family, and became a successful small businessman. However, in keeping with the theme of the importance of family and cultural honor described in the monograph, at every reunion of the 442nd Mr. Kashino was deeply troubled by the record of having been court-martialed. Eventually, his army buddies and family gathered sworn affidavits from members of the 442nd who were present during the restaurant fight, all to the effect that Shiro Kashino had not struck the Military Police officer. Armed with that documentation, they petitioned the Army Board for Correction of Military Records, and that Board set aside the punishment imposed by the court-martial. However, although the Board could set aside punishment, and the President can pardon a person convicted by court-martial, only The Judge Advocate General of the Army can overturn a final court-martial conviction. Thus, the appeal came to my desk.

By law, as my Chief of Criminal Law in the Pentagon informed me, an appeal to overturn a final court-martial conviction had to be filed within two years of the conviction becoming final. The Kashino appeal, of course, was far outside that Statute of Limitations. However, in reading the appeal file, I saw that in addition to the military record and documents previously described, Mr. Kashino's friends had finally tracked down the Military Police lieutenant supposedly struck by Staff Sergeant Kashino, and in his sworn affidavit he averred that the only Japanese-American staff sergeant in the room had not struck him, and instead had been the person responsible for assisting the Military Police in restoring order.

To me, the Kashino court-martial conviction was such an obvious miscarriage of justice that I decided to overturn the court-martial conviction despite the (correct) advice of my Chief of Criminal Law concerning the Statute of Limitations. Unfortunately, former Staff Sgt. Shiro Kashino died before my decision, but in my letter to his wife officially overturning the conviction I penned a personal note after my signature: "Your husband was an American hero, and that is how he should be remembered." Apparently, that action was so compelling the Kashino story was picked up by newspapers in Seattle and Honolulu with the story captioned "The Last Battle of Shiro Kashino." To reiterate, Shiro Kashino and his story validate the principal theme of Captain Bonner's monograph.

The hypothesis David Bonner offers in his monograph that cultural connections, understanding of each other, and unit cohesiveness made the 442nd such an effective military unit may seem *sui generis* at first reading. However, based on my 33 years of service, and especially my time as a Field Artillery commander in Vietnam, I think the described attributes are critical to the success of any military unit, and those responsible for unit training paradigms in the Army today will do well to thoughtfully consider this monograph.

Walter B. Huffman

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35th Judge Advocate General of the Army



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## Glossary

*Chukun aikoku*. Loyalty to the sovereign, love of nation.

*Gaman*. Endurance; suppression of anger and emotion.

*Giri*. Japanese social obligations.

*Gunjin Chokuyu*. Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors.

*Gyokusai*. Honorable suicide; banzai charge.

*Haji*. Shame.

*Hawaii Kyoikukai*. Japanese Education Association of Hawaii.

*Ichioku Gyokusai*. Literally “one hundred million shattering like a jewel”; “One Hundred Million [Japanese] for Honorable Suicide”

*Ichioku Tokko*. “One Hundred Million [Japanese] as a Special Attack Force”

*Ie*. Family/household system.

*imonbukuro*. Comfort bags; bags packed with necessities such as soaps and preserved food sent to soldiers in the battle lines.

*Inu*. “dog” or “spy.”

*Issei*. First-generation Japanese immigrants.

*JACL*. Japanese American Citizens League

*Jinchu hokoku*. To demonstrate utmost loyalty in service for the country.

*Kamei ni kizu tsukeru bekarazu*. Never bring dishonor to one’s family.

*Kamikaze*. “Divine Wind”

*Kibei*. Japanese Americans who were educated in Japan and then returned to America. *Kimigayo*. His Majesty’s Reign; Japanese national anthem.

*Kokka Shinto*. State Shinto.

*Kokutai no Hongi*. “Fundamentals of Our National Polity”

*Kokutai*. National essence/polity.

*Kyōiku Chokugo*. Imperial Rescript on Education.

*Kuni no tame ni*. For the sake of your country.

*Meiji no Seishin*. Meiji spirit—emphasis on strengthening national power for self- sustaining.

*NAACP*. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

*Nihonjin Kyōikukai*. Japanese Education Association of America.

*Nihonjin-kai*. Japanese Associations.

*Nikkei*. A Japanese emigrant or a descendant who is not a citizen of Japan. Commonly used in Japan to refer to people of Japanese ancestry who are living abroad as citizens of other countries.

*Nippon Seishin*. Japanese spirit.

*Nisei*. Second-generation Japanese Americans who were US citizens by birth; children of the *Issei*.

*Obon*. Festival that honors the spirits of one's ancestors.

*Sakura*. Cherry blossoms.

*Sansei*. Third-generation Japanese Americans; children of the *Nisei*.

*Senjinkun*. "Field Service Code" or "Instructions for the Battlefield"

*Senninbari*. Literally, "a thousand-person-stitch"; a Japanese waist-band charm created to protect a soldier in the battle.

*Shashin Shuho*. Photographic Weekly.

*Shikata-ga-nai*. "It cannot be helped," or "nothing can be done about it."

*Shimpu*. "Divine Wind."

*Shinto*. "The way of the gods"; ancestral worship.

*Shoganai*. "it is useless to try to do something."

*Shushin*. Moral education; ethics.

*Sonno joi*. "Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarians."

*Yamato Damashii*. Soul of Japan; unchanged loyalty.

## Introduction

*Go For Broke!*

—Motto of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team<sup>1</sup>

On the morning of 7 December 1941, when word went out over the Hawaiian Islands radio stations that the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbor was under attack by forces of the Imperial Japanese Navy, hundreds of men from the 298th and 299th Regiments of the Hawaii National Guard rushed through traffic or on foot to report to their duty stations. What would likely have been a surprising sight to most observers was the fact that most of the men running to take up defensive positions, were in fact themselves Americans of Japanese descent. The *Nisei* (second generation Japanese Americans) who served in the Hawaiian National Guard, along with several thousand additional volunteers from the US mainland, would eventually form what would become the most decorated unit in American military history; the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. While the battlefield achievements of the 442nd are widely known, the story of the unit's formation and its cultural origins are not. The *Nisei* soldiers participated in some of the fiercest engagements of the European Theater of Operations and shared many of the same experiences of other segregated units during the war, such as the Tuskegee Airmen and the Navajo Code Talkers. However, the all-*Nisei* regiment possessed a cultural identity and a sense of purpose that was unique among American combat units at the time.

Although born and raised in the United States, the *Nisei* soldiers of the 442nd RCT were very much a product of both American and Japanese cultural systems that imbued them with a sense of duty to repeatedly volunteer for dangerous missions without hesitation. Instead of focusing primarily on their battlefield accomplishments, this work will examine the significance that Japanese cultural heritage and social values played in the creation of the 442nd RCT. The most important cultural aspect to be examined is that the *Nisei* soldiers were raised by Japanese parents of the *Meiji* period, and how this generation differed drastically from the values of Imperial Japanese soldiers who were products of the *Taishō* and *Showa* periods.<sup>2</sup> It will also evaluate the role that the concepts of “*gaman*” (endurance), “*shikata-ga-nai*” (it cannot be helped), and “*haji*” (shame) had on these men, and how these influenced the sense of duty the *Nisei* soldiers had for their families and community.<sup>3</sup>

The men of the 442nd RCT strongly believed that surrender to the enemy would bring shame and dishonor to their families. Instead of pro-

testing the injustices they found at home, they found loyalty in obedience and submission, and called for the creation of the unique volunteer *Nisei* units. In their eyes, self-sacrifice was a way of demonstrating loyalty and eventually earning the trust of their government. This study will examine the cultural life of Japanese Americans living in the United States prior to 1942, the forced relocation and incarceration of 120,000 Japanese American citizens, and how these events led to the formation of a voluntary unit that ultimately became the most decorated combat regiment of the United States military.

## **Background**

After the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 by the Imperial Japanese Navy, suspicions and rumors began to spread that Imperial sympathizers might be residing among the sizeable Japanese population in the United States. At the time, there were nearly 160,000 Americans of Japanese descent living in Hawaii, and 120,000 living on the US mainland. It was feared by some that Japanese farmers might engage in sabotage missions to blow up oil and gas pipelines under the central Californian fields, or that enemy agents would pass sensitive information back to the Japanese government. The question for many in the US government was, to whom did Japanese Americans owe their loyalty?

Amid the fear of an attack on the US mainland, on 2 February 1942 President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, calling for the forced relocation of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast of the United States. The War Department was authorized to exclude “any and all persons of Italian, German, and Japanese ancestry” from certain “military areas” on the West Coast.<sup>4</sup> However, despite the fact that the Italian and German populations greatly outnumbered the Japanese living in the United States, the order was only enforced on citizens of Japanese ancestry. Residents living within the designated exclusion zone were only given days to collect their belongings, and report to assembly areas for transport to internment centers for the duration of the war. Many of the evacuees were forced to abandon their homes, vehicles, and businesses. A number of protests and legal challenges were launched, but ultimately the Supreme Court ruled that the executive order was within the war powers of the federal government.<sup>5</sup>

In a report that was later published by the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, it was determined that there was “not a single documented act of espionage, sabotage, or fifth column activity committed by an American citizen of Japanese ancestry or by a resident

alien on the West Coast,” but despite these findings, the *Issei* (first generation Japanese immigrants) were considered enemy aliens and therefore ineligible for naturalization and citizenship under federal law.<sup>6</sup> However, the *Nisei* (second generation Japanese Americans) were born in the United States and therefore had full rights as American citizens. Their citizenship also meant that they were subject to the Selective Service draft and were eligible to serve in the armed forces. The Selective Service board reclassified all citizens of Japanese ancestry as 4-C “undesirable aliens” in April 1942.<sup>7</sup> While some *Nisei* who were already in military service were discharged; others were reassigned to postings in the interior of the country.

Facing significant public pressure, both from the Japanese community and from numerous civil rights organizations, The War Department made the decision to allow *Nisei* men to volunteer for the US Army and serve in a segregated unit. In June 1942, Hawaii *Nisei* volunteers as well as men who had previously served in the Hawaii National Guard were assembled into a provisional infantry battalion, which was then sent to the mainland and designated the 100th Infantry Battalion.<sup>8</sup> From the very outset of their training, the 100th posted an outstanding performance record, but senior Army leadership still viewed them with a certain degree of suspicion. This is clear from the fact that they were issued wooden simulated weapons and were assigned to garrison duty to protect communication lines.<sup>9</sup> The men of the 100th grew restless and eventually petitioned the War Department, asking to be assigned to combat duty. Their request was eventually granted and the unit was scheduled for deployment.

In light of the 100th Battalion’s exemplary record, President Roosevelt authorized the activation of a regimental size combat unit that would be comprised of *Nisei* soldiers in both the enlisted and officer ranks. On 1 February 1943 the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was activated at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. The majority of the men were volunteers from both Hawaii and the US mainland. Nearly all of the mainland volunteers came directly from the Japanese internment camps.

### **Task Cohesion versus Primary Group Cohesion**

On 5 July 1944 a soldier of the 100th Battalion named Melvin Tsuchiya wrote a letter to his father with a very sobering account of his experiences during the Battle of Belvedere. He described the loss of close friends, near-fatal experiences, and the realities of shell shock among his fellow soldiers from constant artillery barrages. But despite the tangible dangers of serving on the front line, there were very few reported cases of shell shock among the Japanese Americans of the 100th/442nd RCT. Tsuchiya

wrote, “When you read that a town was taken, or a certain hill was taken, remember that in the process of that accomplishment, lives of fine fellows were lost, and also, that during this accomplishment for the participants, life was a horrifying massacre.”<sup>10</sup>

How did soldiers like Melvin Tsuchiya summon the will to fight and to return to the line every day to face such imminent danger? What made an entire regiment of citizen soldiers muster the resolve to kill their adversaries amid the chaos and trauma of battle? In short, what makes soldiers fight? It is a seemingly straightforward question, and yet it is one that has been debated throughout military history.

After the Second World War, three influential studies were published that seemed to encapsulate the key factors in understanding combat motivation among soldiers, which were then distilled into the concept of “primary group cohesion,” (sometimes also referred to as ‘social cohesion’). Published between 1947 and 1949, Brig. Gen. S.L.A. Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*, Edmund Shils and Morris Janowitz’s *Cohesion and Disintegration in the Wehrmacht in World War II*, and Samuel Stouffer’s *The American Soldier* all advanced the idea of primary group cohesion as the major underlying factor to explain why soldiers are able to overcome the mental and physical stresses of combat, and how they are able to perform their duties without breaking down. Fundamentally, the concept holds that the combination of friendship, obligation, and concern for reputation within the group all come together to create loyalties that override one’s own sense of safety or individual well-being.<sup>11</sup> Presumably, the concept of primary group cohesion has existed among combat soldiers since the earliest days of modern warfare. But it was the comparative studies of soldiers in World War II, conducted by military historians and social scientists that gave the concept a strong analytical framework, as well as the terminology to describe it.

In the decades that followed, the concept of primary group cohesion gained traction with many other influential military historians and authors. James McPherson, one of America’s leading Civil War historians, emphasized the importance of group cohesion among Union and Confederate soldiers throughout his book *For Cause and Comrades*. Most well-known for his *Band of Brothers* series, the renowned historian Stephen Ambrose wrote in the introduction to his book *Citizen Soldiers* that “unit cohesion, teamwork, the development of a sense of family in the squad and platoon” were the basis of World War II veterans’ explanations as to how they survived combat.<sup>12</sup>

However, it is not entirely clear that primary group cohesion was in fact the driving force behind combat motivation during World War II. In Samuel Stouffer's primary work, *The American Soldier* (1949), his summary table of 'Combat Incentives' reported that when soldiers were asked, "What was most important to you in making you want to keep going and do as well as you could?" 39 percent of those surveyed responded "ending the task," whereas only 14 percent responded "solidarity with the group."<sup>13</sup> More recently, other military social scientists have raised doubts about the understanding of unit cohesion and the importance placed on primary group cohesion, which developed from these early studies. David Segal and Meyer Kestnbaum argued that "a romantic mythology has grown up around these studies, leading people to suspend critical judgment regarding their methods, incorrectly recall their findings, and overlook subsequent research that has suggested limits on their generalizability."<sup>14</sup>

Although a compelling theory, one of the major problems within the primary group cohesion thesis is the assumption that at its core, combat is somehow a universal experience and that there is a "one-size-fits-all" explanation for how soldiers behave in battle. It fails to take into account the time and place of the conflicts, as well as the combatants themselves. Accepting a broad explanation to account for all motivation in combat would also ignore the considerable ways in which the experience of battle has changed over time, certainly through the influences of technology, tactics, and culture. The various deficiencies in the primary group cohesion theory have forced some social scientists to examine more closely the phenomenon of cohesion among combat soldiers. A strong alternative argument that explains the willingness of soldiers to endure enemy fire, while still maintaining combat effectiveness, is *task cohesion*. There are indeed many examples of combat units that embodied both of these qualities, but a distinction must be drawn between *social cohesion*, the degree to which members of a unit share friendships and enjoy spending time with one another, and *task cohesion*, the degree to which they share a commitment to achieving a common goal.

There are numerous examples of groups that exist with high levels of social cohesion, while at the same time lacking any degree of task cohesion, as is seen in any number of "chummy" but ineffective organizations. Conversely, groups can possess low degrees of social cohesion (with some individuals actively disliking others), while at the same time displaying very high levels of success in achieving objectives. This can often be seen in professional sports teams, musical groups, or collaborative research teams. In the case of combat units, it is task cohesion that appears to be

the critical factor motivating soldiers to face down enemy fire; social cohesion, while useful, is neither necessary, nor sufficient on its own to encourage soldiers to endure the hardships of war. The idea of task cohesion as a key motivator also provides a useful way to consider the strength of the bonds formed among members of a particular combat unit. Through achieving common goals, soldiers are forced to work together, thereby fostering a sense of teamwork and shared purpose.

Another critical factor to overall unit cohesion is the importance of trust and teamwork based on common experiences. This includes training and a shared focus on accomplishing common tasks. The “standard model” of cohesion, as described by Guy Siebold, involves peer (horizontal), leader (vertical), organizational, and institutional bonding, each having an affective component and an instrumental component.<sup>15</sup> He argued, “The essence of strong primary group cohesion, which I believe to be generally agreed on, is trust among group members together with the capacity for teamwork (e.g., pulling together to get the task or job done).”<sup>16</sup> He continues with, “Combat group members try to develop strong bonding as a collective good, at least in part, because it is in their own self-interest for survival to do so.”<sup>17</sup> He concludes that “Mere friendship or comradeship is not the essence of cohesion.”<sup>18</sup>

By examining the origins and formation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, this monograph will demonstrate how the cultural identity of the *Nisei* soldiers, combined with a common purpose, and a shared sense of trust among peers and their leadership, all came together to create a unique *task-oriented* mindset that contributed to the unit’s battlefield success.

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## Chapter One

### The Meiji Education System

#### Meiji Era Emigration

In order to fully understand the Japanese Americans of the early twentieth century, one must examine the cultural values of the Meiji era, and the traditions that the immigrants of that era brought with them. The Meiji Restoration brought an end to the rule of the Shoguns (military dictators) of the Tokugawa era and ushered in numerous political and social reforms, including a resumption of emigration from Japan in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Despite its proximity to the Asian mainland, the majority of Japan's modern emigrants traveled to the Western Hemisphere. By the year 1900, more than half of all Japanese living abroad resided in either the mainland of the United States or Hawaii.<sup>1</sup> Following the so-called "*Gentlemen's Agreement*" between the United States and Japan in 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt decided to drastically reduce the flow of Japanese immigrants to the US, as well as barring further immigration of Japanese from Mexico, Canada, and any in-migration from Hawaii to the mainland.<sup>2</sup> These new restrictions shifted the flow of Japanese emigrants to South American countries, primarily Brazil and Peru.

Modern Japanese emigrants traveled to European-offshoot countries in the Western Hemisphere seeking access to higher-income professions, as well as opportunities to cultivate undeveloped farmland in regions that few people were able, or willing, to occupy.<sup>3</sup> Although the majority of Japanese who settled in the Western Hemisphere were primarily agricultural laborers and farmers, those who emigrated at different periods represented vastly different stages in the cultural evolution of Japan. Noted Japanese historian Yasuo Wakatsuki stated: "If you want to see Japan of the Taishō era (1912-1926) go to Brazil; if you want to see Japan of the Meiji era (1868-1912), go to America."<sup>4</sup> This point was revealed during World War II, when Japanese Americans strongly supported the United States, despite the mistreatment they suffered as prisoners of the internment centers. Conversely, the majority of Japanese living in Brazil, while not entirely escaping exclusionary treatment at the hands of the Getúlio Vargas regime, swore their allegiance to Japan during the war.<sup>5</sup>

Among the immigrant groups of both the United States and Brazil, the decisions of the Japanese were a reflection of the inner values of a people and not just the influence of the surrounding society. The cultural norms and values of Japan itself were substantially different in relation to the

different times that people emigrated. In the case of the earlier Meiji era, Japanese people were very pro-Western and in general pro-American, but in the later Taishō and Showa eras, they were fanatically nationalistic and imperialist. What can account for this drastic shift in social attitudes? The following section will examine the values of the Meiji era's educational system, its influence on *Issei* and *Nisei* Americans of the early twentieth century, and its stark contrast to the later Taishō and Showa era values.

## **Defining the Meiji and Taishō Periods**

Before examining many of the critical events that shaped the Meiji and Taishō eras of Japan, emphasis should be placed on the use of these terms when describing the constituent populations of these two distinct periods. Even though the Meiji era (1868-1912) and Taishō era (1912-1926) can be separated by the death of Emperor Meiji and succession by his son Yoshihito, rarely are historical periods ever clearly delineated by a single event. The early Meiji era was undoubtedly influenced by many of the traditions that carried over from the Tokugawa era of Japan, and many aspects of the Taishō era were simply the culmination of reforms that began during the latter half of the Meiji era. The terms *Meiji* and *Taishō* are therefore not meant to be used as fixed dates, but rather as an attempt to best describe the generational shift that took place during this critical period in Japanese history that ultimately led to the invasion of Manchuria and the cataclysmic Pacific War during the later *Showa* period.

## **A Call for National Conformity**

Following the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Meiji Restoration ushered in a period of rapid modernization and sweeping political reforms in Japan. In 1872, only four years into Emperor Meiji's reign, the first railroad line connected Tokyo to Yokohama. Trains quickly became a modernizing symbol of Japan; meanwhile, major cities gained the use of electricity for the first time, and by 1880 telegraph communications had connected most of the prefectures of Honshu.<sup>6</sup> The newly established Ministry of Finance created a standard currency (the yen) and opened a national banking system to promote savings and attract foreign investment. Once political and economic stability had been achieved, the next step was to establish a national education system.

The Meiji government understood the need to build modern schools throughout the country, but indoctrinating its young population was not its goal at the outset. For more than a decade after the Meiji Restoration, Japan openly embraced Western concepts, and a vibrant, albeit brief period of intellectual enlightenment began. Children received lessons rang-

ing from the scientific method, to European literature, to Western moral philosophy. The United States in particular was often praised by Meiji officials and viewed as a benefactor to Japan for ending its long isolation.<sup>7</sup> Far from restricting or censoring educational materials, Meiji government policy allowed schools to use textbooks that were full of Western social concepts. In fact, in 1873 the Ministry of Education itself published an ethics textbook for primary schools, *Sushin ron (A Discussion of Morals)*, which was a near word-for-word translation of *The Elements of Moral Science*, written by Francis Wayland for philosophy students at Brown University.<sup>8</sup> However, the emergence of The People's Rights Movement in the early 1880s forced the Meiji government to reign in the education system, and authorities began to systematically prohibit the dissemination of books favorable to democracy.

In preindustrialized societies (which Japan certainly had been before the Meiji Restoration) despite the power the governing authorities may have wielded, it was virtually impossible to indoctrinate an entire society. The means of mass communication simply did not exist. The state needed to seize control of the school system to reliably transmit its message. Meiji-era Japan established a compulsory education which increased the mandatory schooling period from three to six years, and by 1900 attained an enrollment rate of more than 90 percent. The single most important act in creating a standardized education system was the Imperial Rescript on Education, issued in 1890. It emphasized an emperor-centered patriotic philosophy and served as the defining statement on public education in Japan until 1945.<sup>9</sup>

## The New Imperial Education

Traditional views of Confucianism continued to have a great influence on the cultural values of the Japanese population in the early days of the Meiji Restoration. The long-held view of the imperial family being descended from the gods, as well as the revival of Shinto tradition also contributed to the creation of a new national identity with the emperor at the center of it.<sup>10</sup> The Imperial Rescript on Education, known as *Kyōiku ni Kansuru Chokugo* (hereafter referred to as *Kyōiku Chokugo*) intended to capitalize on these traditions and practice.

*Kyōiku Chokugo* led to a greater sense of Japanese nationalism and fostered the spirit of *jinchu hokoku* (“to demonstrate utmost loyalty in service for the country”) under the pretext of imperial rescript.<sup>11</sup> Two key concepts contained within the *Kyōiku Chokugo* were *Kokutai* (national essence) and *Shushin* (moral education), would later play critical roles in

preparing both native Japanese boys and *Nisei* American boys to sacrifice their lives for their countries. *Kokutai* in particular conveyed the notion of the State as an individual's extended family, to which they were indebted. This instilled a sense in all Japanese to selflessly sacrifice for their country. The significance is that Japanese emigrants in the United States maintained their cultural traditions and values, including the idea of the State as an extension of the family. Their American-born *Nisei* children naturally inherited their parent's values based on the "twelve values" of *Kyōiku Chokugo*, which ultimately defined their own cultural identity and moral character.

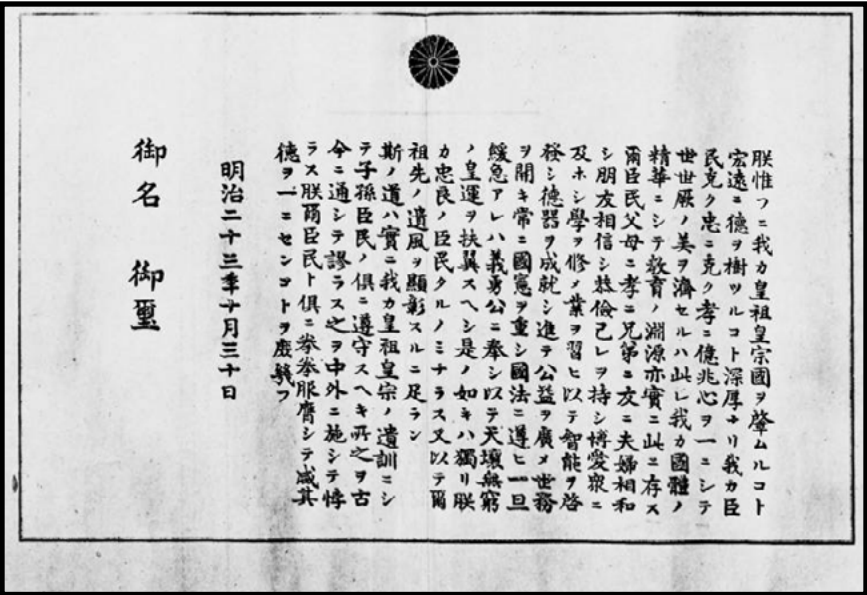


Figure 1.1. Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890. Image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

### Kyōiku Chokugo (Imperial Rescript on Education)

The official English translation of the Imperial Rescript by the Imperial Department of Education is as follows:

Know ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof.

This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education.

Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth.

So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers. The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may thus attain to the same virtue.<sup>12</sup>

The idea of *Kyōiku Chokugo* was derived heavily from the Confucian teachings of morality, however, the Meiji leaders were careful to draft it with as few words as possible from the original Confucian texts in order to emphasize its Japanese essence.<sup>13</sup> *Kyōiku Chokugo* was drafted by Kowashi Inoue, who was also deeply involved in writing the Meiji Constitution, the Imperial Household Law, and the *Gunjin Chokyu* (Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors).<sup>14</sup> While promoting loyalty and filial piety, it also reinforced the ideas of maintaining military strength and national sovereignty, both of which can trace their influences down to the formations of the Kamikaze Attack Corp and the 442nd RCT in World War II.<sup>15</sup> But unlike the Kamikaze pilots who embraced the concept of *ichioku gyokusai* (One Hundred Million for Honorable Suicide; literally “one hundred million shattering like a jewel”), the *Nisei* soldiers of the 442nd RCT never entertained the idea of utilizing suicide tactics as a combat strategy.<sup>16</sup>

Following the passage of *Kyōiku Chokugo*, courses on *Shushin* took a far more prominent role in school curriculum by promoting loyalty to the Emperor and the nation. The strict moral education was carefully integrated into the compulsory school curriculum, thereby allowing the Meiji education system to play a key role in the formative phase of modern Japan. The “twelve virtues” of *Kyōiku Chokugo* were at the core of Meiji

education and emphasized the traditional sensibilities and character of the Japanese people.

“Twelve Virtues” of *Kyōiku Chokugo*

1. *koko*. Be filial to your parents.
2. *yuai*. Be affectionate to your brothers and sisters.
3. *fufu no wa*. Husband and wife be harmonious.
4. *hoyu no shin*. Trust your friends.
5. *kenson*. Bear yourselves in modesty and moderation.
6. *hakuai*. Extend your benevolence to all.
7. *shugaku shugyo*. Pursue learning and cultivate arts.
8. *chino keihatsu*. Develop intellectual.
9. *tokki joju*. Perfect moral powers.
10. *koeki seimu*. Advance public good and promote common interests.
11. *junpo* Respect the Constitution and observe the laws.
12. *giyu*. Should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State (urging selfless sacrifice during the war)<sup>17</sup>

The “twelve virtues” became the foundation of moral education for schoolchildren with special emphasis placed on both loyalty and filial piety. In a way, the pre-World War II primary school institution played a role in helping reinforce national unity by systematically indoctrinating *Kyōiku Chokugo*.<sup>18</sup> The Meiji education system further established a sense of Japanese nationalism by emphasizing Shinto and Confucian teachings to develop the ideas of *jinchu hokoku* and *chukun Aikoku* (loyalty and patriotism) as the highest form of moral virtue among the people.<sup>19</sup>

### **Shushin (Moral Education)**

Meiji era scholar Yukichi Fukuzawa, the founder of Keio University, first coined the term “*Shushin*,” meaning “*moral science*.”<sup>20</sup> It appeared first in the order of curriculum for compulsory school education, and played an essential role in shaping the moral values of Japanese schoolchildren after its introduction as part of the Education Ordinance amendment of 1880.<sup>21</sup> Following the passage of this amendment, the Ministry of Education commissioned Confucian scholars to write *Shushin* textbooks for schoolchildren, at which time the number of classroom hours dedicated to *Shushin* courses increased by 12 times.<sup>22</sup> The Meiji government sought to create a “Confucian-centered, emperor-revering national morali-

ty,” and provided a standard for primary school moral education textbooks that promoted this sense of virtue.<sup>23</sup> The government finally implemented a national textbook system in 1903 and began compiling primary school textbooks, followed by *Shushin*, Japanese history, geography, arithmetic, and finally a science textbook in 1911.

The first national textbooks published in 1904 contained over 160 virtues and the teaching ratios were as follows:

Morality toward the State (20%)

National obligation such as the public good, promotion of industry, rules of citizenry

*Kokutai*—National Polity/Essence (up to 10%)

Morality on relationship (40%)

Philanthropy, kindness, honesty, warning of not giving others trouble, public ethics

Emphasis on liberty and equality

Personal morality (40%)

Emphasis on discipline, custom, and independence  
Value on learning, knowledge, reason, hard-working, and diligence.<sup>24</sup>

It is worth noting above, that the distribution of lessons in the 1904 *Shushin* textbook places a higher emphasis on the development of personal morality (40 percent), rather than on the morality toward the State (20 percent).

The nature of *Shushin* teachings changed in 1910 however, when the government ordered the Ministry of Education to revise all textbooks to meet the national interests. *Shushin* courses were modified to teach a more emperor-centered sense of nationalism and indoctrinated State Shinto to emphasize the concept of filial piety and loyalty to the emperor over one's parents.<sup>25</sup> This shift also resulted in the new *Shushin* textbooks placing a greater emphasis on the “*ie*” (family and household system). The *ie* constituted the smallest social unit, and each one was expected to devote unwavering support to the imperial institution. The concept of *ie* was derived from Confucian values regarding family, but the system was broadened to extend beyond immediate family matters to define the emperor as head of the family state, or *Kokka* (family nation), and each *ie* was thought to be spiritually related to the imperial house.<sup>26</sup>

The textbooks issued in 1910 gave further emphasis to Confucian ethics and nationalism by integrating *Kyōiku Chokugo*. In so doing, the textbooks for children in grades four through six included the full text of *Kyōi-*

*ku Chokugo*, with additional lessons tailored to each grade level. Teaching materials on militarism were also integrated into lessons on both the *ie* system and nationalism.<sup>27</sup> This new lesson plan resulted in the number of Western historical figures appearing in the 1904 textbook being reduced from thirteen to five in the 1910 edition. In total, 157 virtues appeared on the revised primary school textbooks.<sup>28</sup> In the new national textbook, education on morality toward the State increased by five percent, while personal morality was reduced by five percent. The contents were as follows:

Morality toward the State (25%)

Greater emphasis on *Kokutai*

Integrating *chukun* (loyalty to the sovereign), *aikoku* (love of country; patriotism), and *giyu* (loyalty and courage)

Morality on relationship (40%)

Emphasis on family relationship based on Confucianism

Greater emphasis on *ie* system including ancestral worship and reputation of family

Emphasis on rectitude, repayment, tolerance, and modesty

Personal morality (35%)

Discipline, custom, independence

Value on learning, knowledge, reason, hard-working, and diligence<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, lessons on historically significant figures appeared in *Shushin* textbooks to demonstrate the 157 virtues. From Japanese society and contemporary history, the Emperor Meiji, Kinjiro Ninomiya, and Noboru Watanabe were listed to illustrate examples of diligence, honesty, frugality, ambition, and filial piety; and from the West, Benjamin Franklin was mentioned to demonstrate independence, discipline, and public service, while even Florence Nightingale was named to show philanthropy, compassion, and kindness.<sup>30</sup> The objective of the *Shushin* textbooks was to use the stories of these historic figures as a means of teaching young students how to be filial, loyal, and diligent subjects of Japan.

## **Kokutai (National Essence and Polity)**

The nationalist Mito School developed the *Kokutai* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Its purpose was to promote national consciousness by emphasizing “loyalty to the emperor as a component of the rising nationalist ideology.”<sup>31</sup> The term “*Kokutai*” refers to the Shin-to-Confucian idealization of the nation-state that Japan adopted for itself.<sup>32</sup>

Following the opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, and the rise of Western influence over its people, the *Kokutai* concept slowly began to gain popularity and soon became the driving force behind a movement known as *sonno joi* (“revere the emperor, expel the barbarians”), which eventually ended the rule of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Shoin Yoshida, who was a prominent anti-Western intellectual of the early Meiji period said: “The command of the emperor is the will of the imperial Goddess. That it must be worshipfully obeyed cannot be a subject for argument. If one should meet death while obeying his command, that death is even as life. If one should preserve life by rejecting his command, that life is worse than death.”<sup>33</sup>

The promotion of inviolable relations between the emperor and his subjects enabled the *Kokutai* to establish the emperor as a symbol of Japanese nationalism in the early years of the Meiji Restoration. This sense of nationalism that centered on the emperor helped to consolidate the government’s power and also led the Meiji educational system to become more progressive in nature. The idea of recognizing the emperor with divine or religious elements appealed to a great many of the Japanese people, and the Meiji leaders were eager to take advantage of this new belief system to govern the country more effectively. Moreover, the belief in the emperor’s divinity played a key role in unifying the nation and its people for national interests that led to the campaigns of conquest in Asia.

### **A Shift Toward Militarism**

While Japan continued to prosper through trade and commerce during the latter half of the Meiji era, its military was slowly gaining influence within the government and a more nationalistic fervor was taking hold. In the school system, passive obedience alone to the state was not enough. The Meiji authorities wanted schools to produce citizens who spontaneously and actively supported national policies. During the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) school children were taught to have feelings of contempt for the Chinese, and jingoistic melodies such as the following were often repeated in classrooms: “Chinese corpses were piled up as high as a mountain. Oh, what a grand triumph. Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, Chinka, so stupid and they stinka.”<sup>34</sup>

This led to a more militaristic ideology being introduced directly into the classroom during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905). In Saitama Prefecture, elementary school principals were gathered for an assembly and directed on “topics that should be taught during the present emergency.”<sup>35</sup> The war effort and Japanese patriotism were to be emphasized in

every subject. Ethics teachers were to discuss “the meaning of the imperial edict declaring war,” language classes studied “letters to and from soldiers at the front,” and arithmetic classes were to do “calculations about military matters.”<sup>36</sup> These actions might be dismissed as a brief episode of wartime hysteria, except that Japan now seemed to be engaged in a major conflict every decade, which undoubtedly affected the national consciousness of an entire generation of children at this time.

The permanent shift toward militarism came in 1917 when an *ad hoc* Commission on Education passed a resolution that directly brought military training into the schools. It declared: “Appropriate measures should be quickly implemented...to encourage military training in the schools.” The reasons for it included: “To create a strong and healthy people by improving physiques through physical training and to develop knowledge and skills in military matters and thereby cultivate loyalty by moral discipline, and to lay the foundation for future military training is an essential element of education in Japan today that cannot be slighted.”<sup>37</sup> Numerous objections were raised about these reforms in committee meetings out of fear that Japanese students would eventually be unable to think for themselves, however, these objections were invariably dismissed for the sake of national unity.

## Legacy of Reforms

Japan’s military victories over China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 greatly increased the nation’s prestige at home and abroad. Given China’s size and resources, most Western nations had expected it to prevail, but Japan’s victory demonstrated its ability to modernize, and it established its presence as the leading non-Western power.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, Japan’s victory during the Russo-Japanese War proved to be the high point of Meiji era militarism, as it was the first major conflict in which a non-Western country emerged victorious over a Western imperial power.<sup>39</sup>

The Meiji Emperor died in 1912 at the age of 60 and was still regarded by many of his people as a charismatic and respected figure. During his reign, Japan had transformed itself from a primitive isolated nation into a modern world power. The Meiji Emperor was succeeded by his son, Yoshihito, who became the Taishō Emperor. Unfortunately, the Taishō Emperor did not command the level of respect as a symbolic figure that his father enjoyed. As a child, the Taishō Emperor was afflicted by cerebral meningitis, which very likely impaired his mental faculties for the remainder of his life.<sup>40</sup>

By 1919, the Taishō Emperor was no longer able to carry out his official duties as head of state, and his son, Hirohito, who would later be-

come the Showa Emperor, was named as regent in his stead.<sup>41</sup> Although the Taishō Emperor was unable to play an active role as head of state, this did not hinder the functions of government or slow down the rate of economic and social changes taking place. In many ways, the process of creating Japan's modern identity was completed in the Taishō period. Japan had emerged as a stable, prosperous nation, but many leaders within the government were still anxious to reinforce this sense of national identity through social systems.

The Japanese government was largely able to accomplish this goal through the sweeping reforms made in the educational curriculum and systematic indoctrination of its youth. The Education Order of 1880 began the process of elevating *Shushin* from the lowest position among teaching subjects to the highest, and the increased emphasis on *Kokutai* in the 1910 edition of primary school books further embedded the sense of national ideology. During the Taishō period, strong reactions were seen against liberal movements and some government leaders suggested reforms to develop students' sense of norms through military-style instruction and nationalist ideals. Later, during Japanese Imperial expansion throughout Asia in the 1920s and 1930s, Japanese nationalism became so strong that moral education took on the mission of bolstering Japanese ethnocentric consciousness.<sup>42</sup>

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## Chapter Two

### Japanese in the United States

*The Japanese are the most efficiently and completely organized among the immigrant groups.<sup>1</sup>*

#### Japanese American Social Structures

The *Nisei* of the 1920s and 30s, like so many other second-generation immigrant groups, straddled the divide between their old-world traditions and the cultural values of their birth nation. They effectively lived each day in two different societies, “The home, the language school, and the Japanese Community formed one. Surrounding this smaller world was the rest of America. Much of what the children learned in one society they were expected to forget or disregard in the other.”<sup>2</sup> But despite living day to day in their ethnic enclaves, the allure of assimilation was very strong. From their public school classmates they picked up the nuances of American popular culture: films, music, slang, and team sports. They were also taught the civic culture of America: they learned of The Founding Fathers, the pledge of allegiance, and were imbued with an powerful sense of loyalty to their country.<sup>3</sup> Due to this complex range of influences, this chapter will focus primarily on the social institutions that most directly guided the upbringing of the *Nisei* of this era.

This chapter will examine in detail the roles played by the Japanese language schools, religious institutions, and community organizations that shaped the development of *Nisei* values and beliefs in Hawaii and the mainland United States. Most significant among these were the Japanese language schools, which were the embodiment of nationalism and pride among the *Issei* generation and taught Japanese cultural values to their children. The successes and failures of the Japanese language schools will be addressed and how they formed the educational foundation of the members of the 442nd RCT.

#### The Migration to Hawaii and The Mainland

As a starting point, Japanese immigration patterns to the United States must be examined. The first emigration year, often referred to as “Meiji One,” took place in 1868, when 148 contract laborers went to Hawaii.<sup>4</sup> However, their experiences left a sense of bitterness and distrust, and within a month of starting their work, complaints had been filed with Hawaii’s Board of Immigration both by employers and employees. The reports became so persistent that they eventually found their way back to Tokyo, and

an agent of the Japanese government was sent to investigate. Many of the most dissatisfied workers were sent home at Hawaii's expense, and for 17 years no more contract laborers went to Hawaii.

Beginning in the 1860s, the Hawaiian economy was increasingly driven by sugar production. Starting from almost nothing in 1840, sugar production grew to more than 4 million tons by the end of the nineteenth century, and double that by 1930.<sup>5</sup> Sugar production brought an increasing demand for plantation laborers, who were recruited from many Pacific Island countries, as well as China, the West Indies, many European countries, and various parts of the United States. But American and European workers were not attracted to the low paying, hard labor jobs of the sugar plantations. Polynesians were not numerous enough to satisfy the labor demand, and Chinese, despite their obsequious nature, were viewed as an economic and civic threat.<sup>6</sup> Thus, a committee of the Hawaiian state legislature recommended "Japanese immigration under proper restrictions should be encouraged as the best partial substitute for Chinese labor in this Kingdom, bringing as it does a class who are willing to adopt Western civilization and who can be incorporated into our system without seriously disjoining it."<sup>7</sup>

By the 1880s, nearly all Japanese immigrants to Hawaii started as plantation workers. Their movement was arranged primarily by Robert Walker Irwin, an American businessman who also served as the consul general for Hawaii. The main force behind this renewed flow of immigration was an economic crisis occurring in Japan. Rising inflation followed by a sudden deflation brought widespread unemployment and social unrest, which provided the Japanese government an incentive to release its growing unemployed labor force.<sup>8</sup>

The "first-year-men," referring to the Japanese workers who came to Hawaii in 1868, had come from the area of Tokyo and Yokohama. Their urban background may have been the primary reason they made poor plantation workers. Irwin noted in a later report that he was seeking "agricultural laborers" and he eventually found them in large numbers in southwestern Japan. The first came from Hiroshima and Yamaguchi prefectures.<sup>9</sup> After the Irwin system came to an end, enough overseas connections existed from these prefectures to continue the migration movement to Hawaii and eventually to the United States.

According to the various types of census data, it appears that Japanese who went to the mainland United States came from less impoverished districts and higher social classes than the immigrants to Hawaii.

Of the males who left Kuga village, mostly for Hawaii, less than half reported their occupation in Japan to be in agriculture, and large portions were in fishing and casual labor.<sup>10</sup> Of the individuals who applied for passports to the mainland US between 1886-1908, in contrast, the primary professions were merchants, students, and laborers (each more than 20 percent of the total), with agriculturalists and fisherman together making up only 14.1 percent.<sup>11</sup>

Year	Mainland US		Hawaii		Total
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
1870	55	100	0	0	55
1880	148	56.1	116	43.9	264
1890	2,039	13.9	12,610	86.1	14,649
1900	24,326	28.5	61,111	71.5	85,437
1910	72,157	47.5	79,675	52.5	151,832
1920	110,010	49.9	109,274	50.1	220,284
1930	138,834	49.9	139,631	50.1	278,465
1940	126,947	44.6	154,905	55.4	284,852

Figure 2.1. Japanese in the Mainland United States and Hawaii, 1870–1940.  
Sources: United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970. Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), series A91-104, p. 14; idem, Nineteenth Census of the United States: 1970. Population, Volume I. Characteristics of the Population (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), pt. 13: Hawaii, table 17, pp. 18–19; Romanzo C. Adams, *The Peoples of Hawaii* (Honolulu: American Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1933), 8–9.

It should not be assumed that at least by American standards Japanese immigrants were well-off during this time period. The cash that each person declared on his arrival ranged from an average of 11 dollars in 1896 to a high of 26 dollars in 1904; but even these small amounts were comparable to those declared by Western Europeans, and greater than those of Eastern and Southern Europeans.<sup>12</sup> The cultural level of Japanese migrants to the mainland US was high. The wage earners who were sampled by the Senate Immigration Commission in 1911 showed that 97.8 percent could read and write Japanese, and of a smaller sample of females the rate was 72.2 percent.<sup>13</sup> The urban residents especially read enough news magazines a political commentary to suggest

a keen interest in current events, both from their native country and the United States. The Senate Immigration Commission further reported, “the Japanese have acquired the use of the English language more quickly and more eagerly than the Chinese, the Mexicans, and some of the European races.”<sup>14</sup>

## Japanese-Language Schools

In all the Japanese immigrant populations, the *Issei* established three types of institutions within their communities; (1) churches or temples, (2) civic organizations, and (3) Japanese language schools.<sup>15</sup> The language schools, first established as early as 1893 in Hawaii and 1902 in the mainland United States, aimed at bridging communications between *Issei* parents and the *Nisei* children.<sup>16</sup> The *Issei* parents, who were products of the Meiji era education system, considered the family as the smallest social unit, and prioritized family solidarity among the highest of Japanese cultural values. In order to reinforce this concept, proper communications between the two generations was essential to maintain family cohesion and traditional Japanese virtues. As the Japanese immigrant community grew, so did the demand for a number of small-scale language schools to accommodate the population of *Nisei* children.

The main objectives of the curriculum were to teach the Japanese language, and to correct disciplinary problems through proper instruction of *Nippon Seishin* (Japanese Spirit).<sup>17</sup> To meet these objectives, the language schools offered lessons on “reading, writing, penmanship, memories, dictation, and speaking” so that the *Nisei* could learn how “to speak Japanese and read the rudiments of the language, perhaps newspapers, and write very simple letters of communications.”<sup>18</sup> However, the first textbooks used were those from the school systems of Japan and proved to be too difficult for instruction in a second language. In addition, they were full of adulation of the Japanese emperor, which stirred a great deal of anti-Asian agitation in the two decades following World War I.<sup>19</sup>

In order to counterbalance this growing sentiment, the language schoolteachers themselves wrote new texts that combined the elements of Japanese with instruction in American democracy. Whether the inculcation of Japanese nationalism was entirely removed, however, continued to be an issue even among the *Issei*. Some believed that since the curriculum had been “revised to meet American ideals and customs... the schools were helping to promote good will and to better relations between Japan and the United States,” while others believed that “Americanization was hindered and Japanese nationalism and culture were perpetuated.”<sup>20</sup>

However, had any skeptics actually visited any of the Japanese language schools at the time, they would have quickly discovered that their suspicions were completely unfounded.

For most *Nisei* children, the language schools actually reinforced in many ways their sense of viewing themselves as Americans, rather than Japanese. Carey McWilliams, a journalist and editor for the California newspaper *The Nation* observed:

The fact of the matter is that these schools were never successful. The typical Japanese youngster spent a precious hour and one-half tossing spit balls at his classmates and calling his teacher names in American slang which she pretended not to understand. Physically he was in school; mentally he was making a run around left end for another touchdown. He was restless. He counted his minutes. At the gong, he dashed to freedom.<sup>21</sup>

In their principal objective, the schools were indeed largely ineffective. Both in Hawaii and the mainland, the schools did a poor job of teaching Japanese.<sup>22</sup> Since many *Issei* spoke little to no English and most *Nisei* learned only the rudiments of Japanese, communication between the generations of a typical Hawaiian Japanese family was often “limited and awkward,” conducted in “a hybrid tongue made up of a smattering of Japanese and island dialect.”<sup>23</sup> In fact, many of the *Nisei* generation spoke no language with great proficiency. Their Japanese was poor, and their English was often well below native fluency.<sup>24</sup>

Despite their failings in language instruction, the schools did prove to be highly effective in their efforts on moral education. According to an analysis of the first six books in this subject used by all the member schools of Hawaii’s Japanese Language Association, the number of pages dedicated to each of the designated topics was as follows:

Filial piety, 42.5; respect for elders, 7; gratitude, 11  
Honesty, 27  
Industry, 23; responsibility, 4.5; reliability, 2.5  
Cooperation, 13.5; friendliness, 8  
Kindness, 13; forgiveness, 7.5  
Courage, 9.5  
Courtesy, 9; orderliness, 3; habits, 3; obedience to rules, 2.5;  
regularity, 2; neatness, 2; punctuality, 1; carefulness, 1  
Self-confidence, 7.5; self-reliance, 5

Public-mindedness, 6.5; school spirit, 3.5; neighborliness, 3

Patience, 6; self-control, 6; perseverance, 5.5

Conscience, 6

Lack of superstition, 5

Creative thinking, 3.5; progressiveness, 3; enthusiasm, 1

Health, 3<sup>25</sup>

Several of the points were elaborated in greater context by the textbooks in the following passage:

Filial piety is...the core of all morality. It is not mere obedience to parents. Giving any cause for worry to parents, even sickness, is being undutiful to them. Gratitude is a phase of filial piety. One should always be grateful to one's benefactors as, for example, teachers, who are thought of as one's second parents.

Courtesy includes such ideas as propriety, politeness, etiquette. There is always a correct way in doing everything—closing a door, passing out a cup of tea, receiving a bowl of rice. In whatever station in life one may be, there is always a definite way, befitting one's position. Courtesy is not mere outward ceremony. Each action or speech is based on respect for the other's feelings, and whatever one does or says must be sincere, for these acts are the expressions of one's personality.<sup>26</sup>

The core values of the Meiji education curriculum are unmistakable in these lesson plans, and yet they take on a curious mix of Western ideals, which are not to be found in traditional Japanese thought. The emphasis on "creative thinking," "progressiveness," and "self-reliance" gave the students a much stronger sense of individualism and personal liberty, much more akin to an American way of life. The emphasis on moral education, derived from the Meiji era concepts of *Shushin* and *Kokutai*, combined with the American ideals of democracy and patriotism created a unique dual identity for the *Nisei* students. Unlike any generation before them, their upbringing was firmly rooted in the traditions of modern Japanese thought and American progressivism.

This dual identity is perhaps the greatest distinguishing factor that separated the American *Nisei* from their counterparts in the Imperial Japanese Armies and Navies during World War II. The men of the 442nd RCT and the Kamikaze Attack Corps were both heavily influenced by the prewar *Shushin* education that emphasized *Kokutai* (emperor-cen-

tered national polity), but the Kamikaze pilots were products of the later Taishō era, and were predominantly educated using the 1910 school textbooks that placed a greater emphasis on militarism and nationalism.<sup>27</sup> This, along with the post-WWI imperialist culture of Japan, enabled the Kamikaze to carry out acts of fanatical loyalty to the emperor through suicide attacks on enemy warships; not driven by a sense of revenge or mad desperation, but largely through a sense of duty to protect their family and countrymen. The *Nisei* soldiers, on the other hand, were driven by their sense of individualism and personal liberty to come home alive, and to secure the freedoms of their families still held in internment. Theirs was an identity grounded in American values but viewed through a lens of Japanese customs and traditions.

## Keeping the Faith

If the public schools were the main form of contact with greater American society, then the ethnic churches and temples provided the *Nisei* with a refuge that was strongly rooted within Japanese America. From the earliest days of migration, religious institutions offered support to Japanese arriving in the United States and provided invaluable social services, community networks, and places of worship. By 1924, migration from Japan to the United States had effectively stopped, but by that time Buddhist and Christian groups had already established a strong presence within Japanese American communities in California and Hawaii.<sup>28</sup> In the years that followed, clerics and lay leaders within the Japanese community faced the difficult task of serving two vastly different generations of people, all living under the same roof.<sup>29</sup> Churches and temples provided a much-needed support system that enabled *Nisei* children to interpret and understand what it meant to be second-generation Japanese Americans.

Rather than fostering a complete assimilation into mainstream American life, religious groups allowed many *Nisei* Buddhists and Christians to build their own unique existence that ultimately reinforced generational and ethnic ties. Spiritual guidance, however, was not the key element in nurturing *Nisei* development, at least not among the men of the 442nd RCT. Rev. Hiro Higuchi, who served as unit chaplain for the 442nd took a census of the religious preferences of nearly 5,000 men in the regiment. The results proved only that “to the average *Nisei*, religion was not very important.”<sup>30</sup> 35 percent “preferred” Protestantism, 13 percent Buddhism, 5 percent Catholicism, and 1 percent Mormonism. 46 percent professed no religion at all.<sup>31</sup> The critical benefit that religious institutions provided to the *Nisei* was a social framework that deepened a sense of community. Through a variety of *Nisei* organizations, parishioners found numerous

opportunities to spend time with each other and to network through local activities. Annual conferences and publications became a staple for both groups and provided opportunities to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing the community.

Although differences existed between the two traditions, more often than not, emerging religious sensibilities revolved around common generational and racial matters. Buddhists and Christians shared deep community bonds, and organized similar kinds of groups and activities, even if largely operating independently of one another. Regular bazaars and celebrations, including the *Obon* and Cherry Blossom Festivals, brought people from the two religions together. It was not uncommon for local Buddhist temples and Christian churches to jointly host community gatherings to promote social interactions.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

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## Chapter Three

### Incarceration and Internment

*Pursuant to the provisions of Civilian Exclusion Order No. 33, this Headquarters, dated May 3, 1942, all persons of Japanese ancestry, both alien and non-alien, will be evacuated from the above area by 12 o'clock noon, P.W.T., Saturday, May 9, 1942.*<sup>1</sup>

The story of the internment camps, once concealed from public view, has in fact become a defining chapter of Japanese American history and the United States. Throughout the decades of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the long-held silence of survivors and government officials was slowly broken by activist groups, journalists, and academics, who fought for redress and reparations. The history of the camps was also captured in detail by numerous museum exhibits, films, academic publications, and oral history projects. The wide range of perspectives, even within individual families, not only demonstrates the significance of this event, but also the complex nature of historical memory by all those who experienced it.

Given the attention garnered by the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II, this chapter is selective in its focus of the war years. Due to the voluminous works that already exist on the subject, this will not be a comprehensive account. Instead, the narrative will continue to examine the cultural issues associated with the *Issei* and *Nisei*, and how they faced the challenges of internment. While nothing could have prepared the Nikkei for incarceration, their cultural history and traditions did serve them in their attempts to cope with life in the camps. An overview of the assembly centers, followed by an analysis of the concepts of “*Gaman*” and “*Shikata-ga-nai*,” will provide a thematic link to the earlier chapters, and finally arrive at the culmination of events that triggered the formation of the 442nd RCT.

### The Camps

From 7 December 1941 to March 1942, *Nisei* Americans were faced with the uncertainties involved in joining a global conflict. However, unlike most of their fellow citizens, they also stood apart by virtue of their heritage. Reporter Larry Tajiri wrote: “We are Americans by every right, birth, education and belief, but our faces are those of the enemy.”<sup>2</sup> Within 48 hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor, FBI agents had arrested almost 1,300 individuals who were deemed guilty by association; Buddhist priests, Japanese-language schoolteachers, Japanese businessmen, and

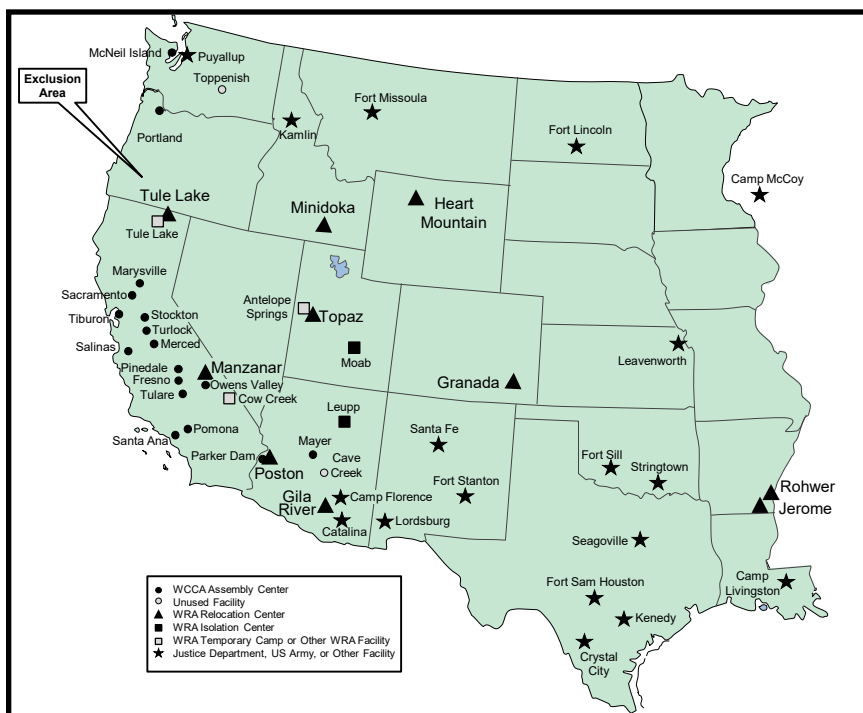


Figure 3.1. Sites in the Western U.S. Associated with the Relocation of Japanese Americans during World War II. Source: Jeff F. Burton, Mary M. Farrell, Florence B. Lord, and Richard W. Lord, *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites*, in *Western Archaeological and Conservation Center, National Park Services, US Department of the Interior*, [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/anthropology74/images/figure1.1.jpg](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/anthropology74/images/figure1.1.jpg) (accessed 4 August 2017).

community leaders.<sup>3</sup> Nikkei were apprehended without charges, denied visitation, and were soon sent off to detention centers. The government also stripped Japanese American communities along the West Coast of key *Issei* figures, which created a leadership vacuum that added to mounting confusion and anxiety.<sup>4</sup>

Over the next 10 weeks, government officials would reach the decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans living along the West Coast; a strategy made possible by President Franklin Roosevelt signing Executive Order 9066 on 19 February 1942. Under the pretense of “military necessity,” the order allowed for designated areas “from which any or all persons may be excluded as deemed necessary.”<sup>5</sup> The succession of territorial gains made by Imperial Japanese forces in the Pacific at the time also fueled the public hysteria that led many West Coast special interest groups to call for the forced removal of Japanese Americans.

In the face of such overwhelming public opinion, Japanese Americans could do little to reverse the impending result of mass incarceration. *Nisei* leaders within the Japanese American Citizens League stepped into the breach and advocated on behalf of the Nikkei community, pledging full cooperation with authorities, in an attempt to prevent the outbreak of riots and public violence. But with no elected officials or public figures of influence, the Nikkei remained powerless in their situation.

### ***Gaman / Shikata-ga-nai***

The strength and resilience with which the Japanese Americans faced internment was truly remarkable. It is curious, however, that 120,000 people could so docilely and willingly accept being branded as traitors by their own country, and then allow themselves to be led to incarceration. When President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, ordering the mass evacuation of Japanese along the West Coast, civil rights organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union, the NAACP, and the Japanese Americans Citizens League protested vigorously, but these were relatively small voices that were drowned out by the overwhelming tide of public opinion. If one combines this with the cultural attitudes of fatalism, the acceptance of adversities, and the traditional bowing to authority, we then begin to understand the bewildering, but adaptive behavior of the Nikkei.<sup>6</sup>

In one of the most famous survivor accounts of internment, *Farewell to Manzanar*, Jeanne Wakatsuki recounted the stoic attitudes among the elders in the *Issei* community regarding the prospect of being imprisoned:

Papa had been the patriarch. He had always decided everything in the family. With him gone, my brothers, like councilors in the absence of a chief, worried about what should be done. The ironic thing is, there wasn't much left to decide. These were mainly days of quiet, desperate waiting, for what seemed at the time to be inevitable. There is a phrase the Japanese use in these situations, when something difficult must be endured. You would hear the older heads, the *Issei*, telling others very quietly, "*Shikata-ga-nai*" (It cannot be helped).<sup>7</sup>

*Shikata-ga-nai* is a phrase that means, "it cannot be helped" or "it must be done." It is an expression of resignation and perseverance in the face of difficult situations that are painful but inevitable.<sup>8</sup> In Western writings, *Shikata-ga-nai* has sometimes taken on a rather negative connotation, as some interpret the lack of reaction to adversity as mere compliance with authority, while others liken it to the French saying of "*c'est la vie*." This is not, however, an accurate interpretation of its meaning among Japanese

people, because it also describes their ability to maintain dignity in the face of unavoidable tragedy or injustice. Moreover, the passive aspect of *Shikata-ga-nai* should not be overstated, since Japanese Americans have always quickly responded to adversity when there is something that *can* be done.<sup>9</sup>

Another concept that is vital to understanding the Japanese American experience during internment is *Gaman* (“enduring the unbearable”), which is a term that first appeared in Japan as a teaching of Zen Buddhism. It is a passive term that focuses on no complaints in the process of working with others.<sup>10</sup> Although defined in a passive sense, *Gaman* also has an active connotation to it, much like *Shikata-ga-nai*. When the Japanese arrived at the ten separate internment camps, nearly all of the living quarters lacked all but the most basic necessities. Former US Senator Norman Mineta recalled, “We had no furniture. All you get is four blank walls and one light bulb in the middle of the room and a black potbellied stove over in the corner ... and cots. That was it!”<sup>11</sup> The Japanese were forced to make do with whatever scarce materials were available to them. Discarded lumber was refashioned into chairs, tables, and closets. Scrap metal became kitchen knives and gardening tools. Little by little, these materials of necessity soon became works of art.

Before long, using only the meager supplies that were available to them, the individuals in the camps were producing intricate woodcarvings, block prints, dresses, and paintings. These works of art would eventually be assembled into an exhibit that would come to symbolize how the Japanese coped with their years of internment. In 2005, *The Art of Gaman* exhibition premiered at the California Museum in Sacramento and has demonstrated how the Japanese were able to bear their experience with patience and dignity.

### **Yes-Yes, No-No**

Despite the deep cultural bonds from which the Nikkei people drew their strength, division within the camps soon became inevitable. These divisions among the internees had sometimes been regional (Californians against those from the Northwest; urban against rural), sometimes religious or political, but most were generational.<sup>12</sup> *Issei* fathers, who were proud of building a life for their families against all odds, were deprived of their familial roles, and they watched many of their sons, some hardly more than boys, being given quasi-administrative duties by camp officials who refused to deal with non-citizens. Tensions finally came to a head over the so called “loyalty questionnaire.” Antipathies between father and son became irreconcilably bitter and split the camp population in two.

In February 1943, with the approval of President Roosevelt, US Secretary of War, Henry Stimson officially opened the military draft to all *Nisei* in the camps. However, they would first be required to complete a military form called "Application for Leave Clearance," issued by the War Relocation Authority.<sup>13</sup> Each resident of the camps was required to complete one of two questionnaires issued: the first for draft-age *Nisei* men, and the second for all others. Based on their answers, the respondents would be deemed as either "loyal" or "disloyal" to the United States.

The key questions in the form for military enlistment were:

27. Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty or wherever ordered?

28. Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any and all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance to the Japanese emperor, to any other foreign government power or organization?<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to imagine how the procedure could have been more inept. The instructions that accompanied the questionnaire were often imprecise and vague, and some of the internees were not sure what they were supposed to do. In addition to this, the Japanese version that was intended for the *Issei* who did not speak proficient English, arrived too late in some camps, while others regarded it as a poor translation and refused to answer.<sup>14</sup> The loyalty portion of the questionnaire also put the *Issei* into an impossible situation. Presented to a first generation Japanese immigrant, who under US law could not become a citizen, Question 28 was in effect a request that he declare himself stateless.

Among the *Nisei* men who answered Questions 27 and 28 in the affirmative, the "Yes-yeses," opted for integration into American society in spite of every injustice they faced through internment. Many of the *Issei* and Kibei elected to answer "no" and were referred to as "No-noes," accepting the designation of "disloyal" that in fact they had been given by the evacuation and internment.<sup>16</sup> As a result of the loyalty questionnaires, those among the "no-no" were shipped to Tule Lake internment camp in northern California that had been redesignated the camp for troublemakers.<sup>17</sup> Those who answered in the affirmative had been strongly encouraged to do so by the urging of leaders within the Japanese American Citizens League who were motivated by securing the rights and freedoms of the Nikkei population. In December of 1942, just two months before the loyalty questionnaire was issued, JACL leaders met in Salt Lake City and

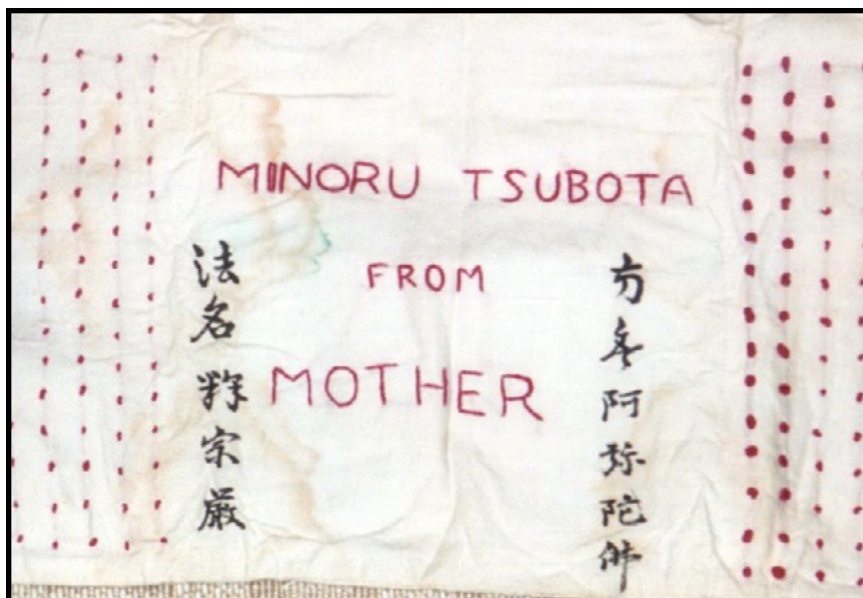


Figure 3.2. *Senninbari* created for Minoru Tsubota, 1943. Photo courtesy of the 442nd RCT digital archives.

passed a resolution pledging *Nisei* to volunteer out of the camps for military service. The Japanese nationalists within the camps denounced the JACL and its supporters as “inu” (Japanese for dogs), but the resolution eventually led to opening to military draft to *Nisei* men from the relocation centers, and ultimately to the formation of the 442nd RCT.<sup>18</sup>

### Support on the Home Front

Although the *Nisei* men who volunteered for service out of the Internment Camps were given a warm farewell by their families, the communities were still divided in their support. Those who were left behind in the camps were faced with the contradiction of supporting their sons to go fight for a country that was simultaneously denying them their freedom and civil liberties. However, most *Issei*, although reluctant as most parents to see their sons go to war, accepted the situation as inevitable. And once deployed to the European Theater, frequent letters and care packages of rice, soy sauce, and other Japanese cooking items contributed greatly to the soldiers’ morale.

But perhaps the most powerful reminder the *Nisei* soldiers had that they were not alone in their fight, was something they carried with them. Before leaving the camps, many *Issei* mothers gave their sons a *Senninbari* (literally “a thousand-person-stitch” indicating a thousand person waist

band). Each of the one thousand stitches was sewn by a different woman, and each was meant to symbolize all of the women of the community who would accompany the soldier into battle.<sup>19</sup> Although the *Senninbari* served as a reminder of the support from one's community, it also served as a reminder to the wearer of his obligation *to that* community. A sense of service and sacrifice was associated with anyone who wore it, which undoubtedly weighed heavily on the minds of the *Nisei* soldiers.

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## Chapter Four

### The 442nd as a Fighting Unit

*The best troops are called upon to do the hardest fighting. Whenever a general finds himself up against a tough proposition he sends for the best troops he has... A man who is being shot at daily has a hard time recognizing it as a compliment when, dead tired, bruised, and battered, he is called upon to make one more effort to risk his life another time—but it is a compliment nevertheless.*

*—Col. Sherwood Dixon, writing to Chaplain Masao Yamada of the  
442nd RCT*

### Background

The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was originally composed of the 442nd Infantry Regiment, the 232nd Combat Engineer Company, and the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. After the arrival of an additional 2,686 Hawaiian *Nisei* at Camp Shelby, Mississippi on 13 April, the *Nisei* volunteers began their training on 10 May 1943.<sup>1</sup> At the conclusion of the war, the 442nd RCT had earned the distinction of being the most decorated combat unit in American military history for its size and duration of service.<sup>2</sup> Some of their most noted achievements are listed in the appendix; however, this chapter will attempt to link the lessons learned by the *Nisei* from their time spent in the Japanese language schools, to their involvement in community organizations, and ultimately to their performance as a fighting unit. Analysis will be done using primary source materials from interviews conducted with the 442nd veterans by the Hanashi Oral History Project, and records from the Go for Broke National Education Center.

### “Kotonks” and “Buddha-heads”

Despite their shared Japanese ancestry, *Nisei* soldiers from Hawaii did not initially warm to their fellow *Nisei* from the mainland United States. The Hawaiians derisively referred to the mainland *Nisei* as “Kotonks,” because when a coconut with no meat inside falls to the ground, that is the sound it makes. The Hawaiians joked that if you were to hit a mainland *Nisei* on the side of the head, it would go “kotonk.” The mainlanders, for their part, called the Hawaiians “Buddha-heads” because they thought the Hawaiians looked more Japanese than they did; and adding insult to injury, “Buddha” sounds like *buta*, which is the Japanese word for “pig.”<sup>3</sup>

The Hawaiian *Nisei* had a reputation for being a carefree, gregarious group who loved to gamble. Their motto, “*Ganbare*,” or “*Go for Broke*,” a phrase commonly used in dice games meaning to “risk everything” would soon become the unit’s official motto.<sup>4</sup> The mainland *Nisei* on the other hand were much more reserved. Many of them were preoccupied by thoughts of their family members who had been left behind in the internment camps, as well as the hope that serving with distinction in combat would secure early releases for all internees.

There were in fact many social and cultural differences that strained relations between Hawaiians and mainlanders. While the Hawaiians spoke a somewhat pidgin dialect—an amalgam of English, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Spanish, and Hawaiian—the mainland *Nisei* spoke a more “proper” English.<sup>5</sup> The Hawaiians saw the mainland *Nisei* as somewhat aloof and arrogant. According to Hawaiian 442nd veteran Tadashi Tojo, “They talked too much. They were on the defensive too, because we outnumbered them. But we felt so damned insecure and intimidated because they spoke better than we did.”<sup>6</sup> At Camp Shelby, fights between the Hawaiians and mainlanders became a common occurrence. So frequent and serious were the fights between soldiers that the Army leadership discussed the possibility of disbanding the unit altogether.

It is important to note that at this time, hardly any of the Hawaiian *Nisei* were aware of the internment camps on the mainland. They had no idea that most of the mainlanders who arrived at basic training were coming straight from the relocation centers and had left their families behind. And unlike the mainlanders, who received warm but reluctant support from their communities, the support that the Hawaiian *Nisei* soldiers received from their hometowns and local areas was tremendous. When the 100th Battalion left Honolulu on 28 March 1943, the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce held a farewell ceremony for the 2,686 volunteers in front of the Iolani Palace. The Honolulu Star Bulletin commented:

No scene in Honolulu during World War II has been more striking, more significant, than that at the territorial capitol grounds on Sunday. It was not alone the size of the crowd, somewhere between 15,000 and 17,000, and said by oldtimers to be the largest that ever massed within the gateways to old Iolani Palace...It was, most significantly, the evident pride of the families and friends of these young Americans—their pride that the youths are entrusted with the patriotic mission of fighting for their country and the Allied nations.<sup>7</sup>

In an effort to improve relations among the soldiers, one of the unit's chaplains, Hiro Higuchi suggested to the regimental commander, Col. Charles Pence, a weekend visit for the Hawaiians to one of the internment camps. Colonel Pence agreed and sent a group of the Hawaiians to Rohwer Internment Camp in nearby Arkansas.<sup>8</sup> During the bus ride from Mississippi to Arkansas, many of the Hawaiian soldiers were singing and strumming their ukuleles, wearing aloha shirts and joking about how they were going to dance with the mainlander's "*wahini*" (Hawaiian slang for young girls). However, once they came into view of guard towers and barbed wire fences, their demeanor suddenly changed.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the Hawaiians, like Tadashi Tojo, were unaware of the internment camps until they arrived at Rohwer. "Even now I feel that twinge, all those barbed wire encampments."<sup>10</sup> During the social gatherings of their visit, Tojo could not believe how cheerful and lighthearted many of the young people seemed under such living conditions. Perhaps the most impactful part of this visit was when the Hawaiians saw the camp graveyard. The thought of how many people were uprooted from their homes, brought to a strange place and had died there, was overwhelming to the Hawaiians. "That's when I started to think a little—how these people were American citizens just like us, but they had been treated this way."<sup>11</sup> After the visit to Rohwer, fights between the Hawaiians and mainlanders ceased, and the regiment began functioning as a cohesive unit.

This shift in attitudes, however, should not suggest that tensions between the men suddenly disappeared or that personalities somehow changed overnight. Most of the soldiers still preferred to socialize with others from their own hometown or state. The Hawaiians remained as carefree and gregarious as before, and the mainlanders kept their typical reserved demeanor. Fundamentally, they were the same group of men as before, but instead of viewing each other with doubt or suspicion, they had finally established a sense of trust amongst themselves. They understood the task that lay before them, they identified a common purpose, and they also knew that in order to survive they would have to rely on each other.

## **Training**

Unlike many frontline combat units that fought in World War II, the 442nd RCT went through an extended training period before its deployment to the European theater, which contributed greatly to its success on the battlefield. The first group of *Nisei* volunteers from Hawaii who formed the 100th Battalion, which was later incorporated into the 442nd, were activated in June 1942 but did not see their first combat engagement

until August 1943. The mainland *Nisei* volunteers who formed the first group of the 442nd began basic training in February 1943, and likewise did not deploy until 1944. This crucial period gave them time to build their soldiering skills, gain proficiency as a combat unit, and gain confidence in their ability to work together as a team. Intensive training, however, was only part of the formula to their operational success.

## **Education and Vocational Skills**

One of the greatest strengths of the 442nd was that it brought to its ranks individuals from all types of educational backgrounds. Among its members were men who were already practicing doctors, lawyers, engineers, priests, and schoolteachers. The unit also included many skilled laborers, such as mechanics, plumbers, carpenters, and welders, whose average aptitude test scores were much higher than what was required for acceptance to the Army's Officer Training Program.<sup>12</sup> The 442nd was likely among the most highly educated US Army units of World War II, which undoubtedly helped them adapt to changing situations on the battlefield.

## **Personnel Stability**

In World War II, the US Army utilized a different system of replenishing front-line divisions than the German and British Armies. In many of the protracted European wars of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ranks of most operational combat divisions would eventually be wiped out, but the practice was to keep the divisions on the roster even if their troop strength was only two or three companies. During World War II the German and British armies would at that point withdraw these depleted divisions from the front lines for rest, refitting, and reorganization. American troops on the other hand, once committed to combat, would remain on the line until the end of the war and would have their ranks filled by a steady stream of replacements.

Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George C. Marshall, made the decision to keep American infantry divisions at full troop strength levels by regularly augmenting them with replacements, not in groups of companies, platoons, or squads, but as individuals.<sup>13</sup> The system seemed very promising, as it would allow American divisions to stay on the line continuously while they brought in fresh soldiers. The idea was also that new troops would join veterans who would integrate them into the unit and teach them the tactics of survival in combat. Unfortunately, this did not always work out as hoped. Many of the Army units did not function properly after absorbing new recruits. Due to their inexperience and occasional lack of discipline, the veterans who were ordered to train them often saw new recruits as a liability.

One of the most notable examples of a unit that experienced this was the famed “Band of Brothers” E-Company of the 101st Airborne Division. “For one thing the new guys tended to draw fire, because they bunched up, talked too much, or lit cigarettes at night. For another, veterans just didn’t want to make friends with guys whom they expected to die soon.”<sup>14</sup>

The 442nd RCT however, as a segregated unit, was not subject to the same troop replacement policies as the rest of the US Army. The replacements who joined the ranks of the 442nd RCT were all *Nisei* who came from the same stock and upbringing as the veteran soldiers, and most were coming directly from the same internment camps. When a *Nisei* soldier finished basic training, he already knew exactly to which unit he would be assigned, and very likely had friends or relatives who were already serving. Also, unlike other conventional US Army units, the replacements of the 442nd RCT trained together as a unit before they were deployed, rather than being shipped off on an individual basis. When they arrived and were assigned to their operational companies, fresh recruits were usually met warmly by the senior NCOs who took them under their wing.<sup>15</sup>

### **Rebuilding Trust and Combating Prejudice**

By the time the men of the 100th and 442nd completed training and were preparing to deploy to the European Theater, they were rapidly developing a strong sense of confidence in themselves as individual soldiers, as well as a sense of trust in the group’s own collective abilities. But no matter how much confidence they had in themselves, no combat unit can function properly if it does not trust its leadership and the legitimacy of its mission. The question therefore remained, could they trust their own Army leadership? Could they entrust their lives to a group of officers who may have viewed them with a sense of suspicion and racial prejudice, to say nothing of trusting a government that had fundamentally violated their civil liberties and was still holding many of their family members captive in internment camps without trial or due process? How could they be sure that they weren’t simply viewed as expendable grunts whose lives would be wasted in this war? The two leaders who deserve the most credit in re-establishing trust between the *Nisei* Soldiers and the US military are Lieut. Col. Farrant Turner, Commander of the 100th Infantry Battalion, and Col. Charles Pence, Commander of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Their personal examples and combat leadership not only gained them the respect of their men, but also demonstrated to their superiors that the 442nd could be relied upon for any mission.

Farrant L. Turner was well into his forties when he took command of the 100th Battalion and was affectionately called the “Old Man” of the

unit. A native of Hilo, Hawaii, Turner immediately joined the Army after graduating from Wesleyan University in 1917 and served nine months in France as part of the 66th Regiment during World War I. After his first discharge from active duty, Turner returned to Hawaii and found employment in supplies distribution, while continuing to serve in the Hawaii National Guard.<sup>16</sup> Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Turner was assigned command of the Hawaiian Provisional Infantry Battalion, which consisted of Japanese Americans from the 298th and 299th Infantry Regiments before they were merged into the 100th Battalion. Upon taking command of the 100th Battalion, Turner made what would later become a fateful decision by appointing Maj. James Lovell as his executive officer. A Nebraska native, but a member of the Hawaii National Guard since 1931, Lovell had spent many years working with Japanese Americans, and like his commanding officer he was very protective of them and shared a dedication to their training needs.<sup>17</sup>

During the initial training phase, many of the men in the 100th Battalion noted that Turner's leadership was essential in building a climate of acceptance for his unit. Growing up in Hawaii, Turner had personally witnessed the unfair and sometimes harsh treatment that the *Nisei* endured in their daily lives.<sup>18</sup> He empathized greatly with his men and understood the enormous societal pressure they felt to prove their worthiness as loyal Americans. Knowing this, Turner consistently lobbied for the 100th Battalion to be given a combat role, rather than serving in support positions, as had originally been intended by the 34th Division commander.<sup>19</sup> Turner was also well known for supporting his men in public and would not tolerate any prejudicial language or any overt discrimination in their presence. In one instance, Turner even confronted a superior officer for referring to one of his men as a "Jap."<sup>20</sup> Turner also refused to join the officers club at Camp McCoy since it barred the entry of Japanese American officers. Realizing that Turner's actions not only put him at odds with certain senior officers, but also threatened his social standing, the men of the 100th Battalion knew that he had their best interests in mind with every decision.<sup>21</sup>

A native of Warren County, Pennsylvania, Col. Charles Pence was a burly, athletic individual and a star football player while studying at DePauw University. Pence volunteered for the Army during World War I, and because of his high academic class standing, was awarded his degree a year early in 1917. He gained a reputation as a quiet, steady, capable tactician and was well regarded by his fellow infantrymen.<sup>22</sup> Although Pence did not have the years of experience interacting with Japanese

Americans that Turner had in Hawaii, he had been stationed in China during the Japanese occupation of Manchuria. The Army regarded him as an expert on both the Chinese and the Japanese, and for that reason seemed the obvious choice to command the 442nd Regiment.<sup>23</sup> He made great efforts to get to know his men, and before long he began to observe the growing tensions between the Hawaiians and the mainlanders. One of the many challenges that Pence faced as regimental commander was integrating the 100th and 442nd into a combined unit and managing the social differences between the Hawaiians and mainland Japanese. Pence could see that various subcultures were beginning to form within the unit, which threatened good order and discipline. One of the crucial ways he was able to bring his *Nisei* soldiers together and build on their commonalities was the example mentioned earlier when he arranged for members of the 100th Battalion to visit the internment camps at Rohwer and Jerome. This single act showed the men that they each shared a common purpose when they volunteered.

Pence was equally dedicated to his men on the battlefield, always taking the lead in dangerous missions. During the rescue mission of the “Lost Battalion,” Pence maintained the morale of his men by forcing them to concentrate on re-establishing contact with the soldiers of the 1st Battalion (141st Texas Infantry), rather than dwelling on their mistrust for division commander, Maj. Gen. John Dahlquist, whose orders they viewed as reckless.<sup>24</sup> Tragically, Pence was seriously wounded during the Battle of the Lost Battalion and was forced to relinquish command of the 442nd to his deputy, Col. Virgil Miller. The absence of Pence was a major loss for the men of the 442nd, but for years after the war, veterans of the 442nd praised Pence’s leadership and acknowledged that it was his influence that held the unit together during those critical early days.<sup>25</sup>

### **The 442nd Under Fire**

Any assessment of the 442nd RCT’s combat effectiveness or unit cohesion must include a brief overview of the role it played in the Vosges Mountains Campaign of 1944; specifically, the rescue of “The Lost Battalion.” In September of 1944, after a grueling campaign in northern Italy, the 442nd was re-deployed to France, where it would be attached to the 36th Infantry Division. Upon arriving in Marseille on the 29th of September, the unit received 675 fresh replacements from the States and then traveled 500 miles by train through the Rhone Valley to the German held town of Bruyeres.<sup>26</sup> The German Army placed a heavily fortified garrison in the town because of its strategic location, only 50 miles from the German border. The mission of the 442nd was to retake Bruyeres and

open up the railroad and highway hub for the Seventh Army on its way to St. Die.<sup>27</sup>

The assault on Bruyeres began on the 15th of October and lasted for nine unrelenting days. Once the firing stopped, the townspeople emerged from their homes and shelters to greet their liberators but were stunned by what they saw. Private Stanley Akita said, "They didn't believe we were American soldiers. I don't think they knew what a Japanese looked like!"<sup>28</sup> But the ceasefire did not last long. The Germans launched a counterattack from a hill overlooking the east side of the town. Company H charged up the hill and ended up in a brutal hand-to-hand confrontation that lasted nearly 30 minutes.<sup>29</sup>

The 442nd was then ordered to capture the town of Biffontaine, located six miles to the east of Bruyeres and protected by four steep hills. After another eight days of house-to-house fighting, the 442nd secured the town and was finally pulled off the line for a much-needed rest in the town of Belmont. However, after only two days, the 442nd was called back for what would prove to be their most difficult mission yet. They were ordered to rescue the 1st Battalion of the Texas 141st Regiment; a unit that had been cut off behind enemy lines and whose position was in imminent danger of being overrun.

The 1st Battalion was situated on a hilltop east of Biffontaine. They were under constant enemy bombardment and quickly running low on supplies. The highest-ranking officer that remained in the unit, Lieut. Marty Higgins, made a desperate plea to the 36th HQ over the radio: "Send us medical supplies," "We need rations," "My wounded need plasma."<sup>30</sup> Major General Dahlquist ordered the 442nd to rescue the 1st Battalion at all costs.

On 29 October, the 3rd and 100th Battalions of the 442nd moved through the narrow ridge to the 1st Battalion's position, but there was no room to maneuver and the only option was a frontal assault. Heavy rain and slippery ground slowed their advance; the hill was also covered with booby-traps and hidden machine gun nests. After two days of fighting and almost no gains on the ground, Lt. Col. Alfred Pursall (3rd Battalion Commander) leaped out and shouted, "Okay boys, let's go!" Brandishing his .45-caliber pistol, Pursall charged up the hill directly into enemy fire. Eventually, every man in the 1st Platoon was following behind him.<sup>31</sup> This action later became known as the famous "Banzai Charge," but contrary to popular belief, the men of the 442nd did not actually yell the word *Banzai* as they charged. It was in fact a mix of screams and curse words until they reached the German lines.<sup>32</sup>

On the 30th of October, Company I of the 442nd finally reached the 1st Battalion and rescued its remaining 211 men. The rescue of the Lost Battalion was indeed an historic moment for the *Nisei* soldiers, but it came with a heavy price. The 442nd suffered nearly 800 casualties during this mission. When the 442nd began the Vosges Mountains Campaign a month earlier, its troop strength level was 2,943 men.<sup>33</sup> By the time they were taken off the line on 9 November they had suffered 161 killed in action (including 13 medics), 43 missing in action, and roughly 2,000 were seriously wounded. Their troop levels stood at less than one third of the unit's authorized strength.<sup>34</sup> Immediately following the Vosges Mountains Campaign, in light of the horrifying casualty rates suffered by the 442nd, accusations were made against Major General Dahlquist for negligence of command. Surprisingly, none of the protests came from the surviving *Nisei* soldiers, but rather from the non-Japanese American officers. The complaints reached the attention of Maj. Gen. Lucian Truscott, commander of the VI Corps, who considered relieving Dahlquist of his duties, but there is no official account as to why he ultimately decided against it.<sup>35</sup>

Although the *Nisei* soldiers pressed on for the duration of the war and continued to serve without any protest, the grief felt by so many after the Lost Battalion mission did raise doubts in some of their minds as to why they were being pressed so hard, and for the first time, their stoic nature of *gaman* was shaken. On October 30th, Chaplain Masao Yamada wrote a long letter to his friend Col. Sherwood Dixon, who had commanded the 3rd Battalion while the 442nd was training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi:

The major general is quite concerned and has commanded the 442nd to push. It is quite a strain to go forward, regardless of machine gun nests and their well-prepared defense...The cost has been high. I admire the courage and the discipline of our loyal men...But I am spiritually low for once. My heart weeps for our men, especially for those who gave all. Never had combat affected me so deeply as has this emergency mission. I am probably getting soft but the price is too costly for our men. I feel this way more because the burden is laid on the combat team when the rest of the 141st is not forced to take the same responsibility.<sup>36</sup>

Colonel Dixon was moved by the letter from his friend and was deeply concerned by the loss of so many men in his unit. In his response dated 22 November, Dixon tried to console Chaplain Yamada, and at the same time allay some of his suspicions as to why so much had been asked of his men:

The best troops are called upon to do the hardest fighting. Whenever a general finds himself up against a tough proposition he sends for the best troops he has... A man who is being shot at daily has a hard time recognizing it as a compliment when, dead tired, bruised, and battered, he is called upon to make one more effort to risk his life another time—but it is a compliment nevertheless.<sup>37</sup>



Figure 4.1. Bruyères Sector, France, 12 November 1944. Color Guard of the 442nd RCT stands at attention while citations are read. This was the recognition ceremony ordered by Gen. John Dahlquist. Courtesy of the United States Army Signal Corps. Photo courtesy of the author.

Even though these words must have brought little comfort to Chaplain Yamada at the time, Dixon was indeed right in his observation and many senior officers regarded the 442nd as the “go to” unit for difficult missions. What greater testament to the combat effectiveness of the *Nisei* soldiers than the fact that while in Italy, both Gen. Charles Ryder (commander of the 34th Division) and Gen. Mark Clark (commander of the 5th Army) both specifically requested the 442nd for difficult combat missions, including the assault on the Gothic Line. The 442nd solidified its reputation there and

General Clark acknowledged it, “They demonstrated conclusively the loyalty and valor of our American citizens of Japanese ancestry in combat.”<sup>38</sup>

### **The Flaw of Primary-Group-Cohesion**

There are many elements to the primary group cohesion thesis that would seem to lend it credibility and also make it a fitting description for the 442nd RCT. Since combat histories were first recorded, numerous firsthand accounts from soldiers on the battlefield have been passed down that echo the same sentiment; the idea that they fight primarily for their comrades. It is an intuitively satisfying notion and there is an undeniable emotional appeal to it, one that has been powerfully captured in many works of history and literature. In William Shakespeare’s epic *Henry V*, the young king Henry is found in Act IV rallying his troops on the eve of battle and addresses them as a “band of brothers,” who are united by their shared experiences in combat. The famed Civil War commander, Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain, even wrote in his memoirs that it was for “love, or bond of comradeship,” that drove the men under his command in battle after battle.<sup>39</sup> Powerful testimonials such as these, along with the analytical structure given by historians such as S.L.A. Marshall and Samuel Stouffer would seem to reinforce the narrative.

Despite its pervasiveness, there are some questions that the primary group cohesion hypothesis cannot answer. For example, what factor or combination of factors has enabled soldiers to overcome their fears in combat, even in the face of sustaining overwhelming casualties within their units? In the case of the 442nd RCT, its casualty ratio during World War II was 250 percent. Its highest troop strength level ever was 4,000 men, and by the end of the war nearly 14,000 had passed through its ranks.<sup>40</sup> During the Battle of Bruyeres and the subsequent rescue of the “Lost Battalion,” the 442nd suffered 800 casualties in a three day period in order to save 211 men of the Texas 1st Battalion. What kept the unit together and functional under such extreme conditions? And finally, how would soldiers with such strong emotional ties to their comrades maintain focus on military objectives if for example a friend suddenly suffers a combat wound? What is to keep overall unit cohesion from breaking down because of soldiers mourning for their fallen comrades?

### **Combat Motivations of the Nisei Soldiers**

Trying to identify the specific reasons why any group of soldiers choose to fight is a daunting task. Even with detailed interviews, oral histories, letters and memoirs from the soldiers themselves, we are still only getting anecdotal answers from a relatively small sample of participants

in each campaign. The reasons for fighting are often as varied as each man, and very situational, given the nature of the conflict. However, by utilizing historical methods to examine particular groups of soldiers within the social and cultural framework of their development, it is often possible to construct a reliable understanding of their motivations. In the case of the *Nisei* soldiers of the 442nd RCT, it is indeed possible to construct such a framework.

When listening to the oral histories of the *Nisei* soldiers, it is easy to recognize the vast social differences between some of the men from different parts of the country. If not for their shared ethnicity, one might begin to doubt that some of these men had much in common at all with each other. But after listening closely, a shared culture begins to emerge, as do several common themes about why they joined the army, and what motivated them to fight for their country. Each individual's life story is unique, but they all seem to draw their inspiration from the same place. Only a few reference it specifically, but all express ideas from the Meiji era values that were passed on to them by their *Issei* parents and schoolteachers. These values were the foundational strength that the men of the 442nd RCT relied on when they charged into battle.

The loyalty of Japanese Americans was certainly a concern for the US government from the outset of the war, but for the *Nisei* it was never even an issue. Yoshiaki Fujitani (442nd, MIS) said the following about an event that happened in his home state of Hawaii a year before the attack on Pearl Harbor:

As a young man, I remember the visit of the Japanese plenipotentiary, Mr. Yosuke Yamamoto, Japan's delegate to the League of Nations prior to World War II. In his speech in Hawaii, he emphasized that the *Nisei* were Americans, they should be loyal to America. This sentiment was echoed repeatedly by our religious leaders, Japanese schoolteachers, and our parents. A good *Nisei*, therefore, was first, a good, loyal American.<sup>41</sup>

Ted Tsukiyama (442nd RCT, 522nd Field Artillery) recalled the message that many *Issei* parents imparted to their sons as they left for induction into the army, "*Kuni no tame ni*" (for the sake of our country). "There was never any doubt what that meant to us. The only country we ever knew was America."<sup>42</sup> The *Nisei* soldiers all had unique ways of expressing their devotion to their country and to their home communities, but all can be traced back in some form to one of the "Twelve Virtues" of *Kyōiku*

*Chokugo*, namely “*giyu*” (Should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State).

Another cultural value that was equally important in the minds of the *Nisei* soldiers was “*haji*” (shame). The *Issei* taught the generations of Japanese Americans that followed not only the importance of character and hard work in their daily lives, but also the concept of shame and protecting the family’s honor. Most of the men in other army units came from different parts of the country, and once the war ended many of them would return home and never see their buddies again. But the *Nisei* soldiers, especially those from Hawaii, would return to the same tight knit communities as before. They, along with their parents, brothers, sisters, and close friends would return to the same towns, plantations, churches, and community centers. If they “shamed” themselves on the battlefield, it would mean “shame” for their families for the rest of their lives.

Most of the 442nd veterans who were asked to reflect on their battlefield experiences discussed this concept in one form or another. Lieutenant Daniel Inouye of the 100th Battalion (later US Senator from Hawaii) recalled the story of talking to his men on the morning of their first battle in Italy:

I asked every one of them, “what were they thinking about, last night?” Everyone gave me the same answer in a different way: “I hope I don’t dishonor my family,” “I hope I don’t bring shame,” “I hope that my father is not ashamed of me.” The thought of bringing shame to the family was unbearable!<sup>43</sup>

Many of the *Issei* parents were terrified to watch their sons go off to war, but once their minds were made up, the parents often admonished them not to forget their traditions and values. Nelson Akagi (442nd, 522nd Field Artillery) remembered his father’s parting words... “*Shikari shina-sai* (Be a man) and “*Kamei ni kizu tsukeru bekarazu*” (never bring dishonor to the family). I never thought I’d hear my father tell me that!”<sup>44</sup>

One of the most poignant stories of family obligation came from a letter to Hiromi Suehiro of the 100th Battalion while he was serving in Italy:

I remembered a letter from my mother so I took the letter out. It doesn’t get dark in Italy. At that time, I think it was around 8:00, I could still read it. You know, the letter started out with the usual salutations, everybody’s fine, how are you. You know, so don’t worry about us. She said, “soon you will be fighting the enemy. My son, do not be a coward. Be brave for your father and your family.” And I think that my mother loved my father that much. She knew from the day I volun-

teered that some day she would have to say the words that she said to me in her letter. “Don’t disgrace my husband and your family.” And I said to myself, how can I hurt her by being a coward. So I made a silent vow to her.<sup>45</sup>

The *Nisei* were inculcated with the ethical values that their *Issei* parents brought with them from Japan. In a story for the Saturday Evening Post, reporter Magner White wrote that the *Issei* were “more Japanese than the Japanese themselves because they were anchored by the traditional mores without being aware of the transformations in modern Japan.”<sup>46</sup> The rigorous nature of the Meiji education system enabled Japanese to maintain their unique cultural identity, even while living in other countries. Its cultural essence was passed on to the *Nisei* soldiers and provided them the necessary strength and sense of duty to accomplish their combat objectives.

## Conclusion

The argument of primary group cohesion alone is not sufficient to explain the combat motivations of soldiers. This is not to say that it is either an unimportant or invalid element of overall unit cohesion. Indeed, social cohesion can contribute greatly to boosting morale within any unit, but to re-emphasize the key point from Siebold, “Mere friendship or comradeship is not the essence of cohesion.” But when soldiers have confidence in each other, confidence in their leadership, and a firm understanding in their war fighting capabilities, they will invariably outperform groups that do not have the same commitment to one another.

The men of the 442nd RCT shared a common sense of purpose in their mission, which was also reinforced by other social factors. The period of extended training they received before deploying to Europe gave them the opportunity to develop greater proficiency as a unit, and to establish a deep sense of confidence in each other’s abilities. The leadership examples set by commanders, Colonel Turner and Colonel Pence, also instilled a deep sense of trust between the men and assured them of the validity of their mission. When they set foot on the battlefield, they embraced their duties with a sense of loyalty and obligation that was nearly unheard of within other army units. This, combined with their upbringing, rooted in the values of the Meiji era education system, and the deep sense of commitment to avoid bringing “shame” to their families and communities, is ultimately what motivated them to put themselves in harm’s way in service to their country.

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## Chapter Five

### Coming Home

Nearly a year after the war in the Pacific ended, on 15 July 1946, the men of the 442nd were awarded their seventh Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation by President Harry Truman in a ceremony which took place on the White House Lawn. The unit's official repatriation had been postponed until the president was available to preside over the ceremony personally. Before arriving at the White House, more than ten thousand spectators gathered to watch the regiment march down Constitution Avenue, and many government agencies gave employees time off to watch the event.

Standing in the pouring rain during the ceremony, President Truman reviewed the soldiers and proudly watched the Honor Guard display the regimental colors. He addressed them directly by saying:

You fought for the free nations of the world... You fought not only the enemy, you fought prejudice, and you have won. Keep up that fight, and continue to win—to make this great Republic stand for just what the Constitution says it stands for: the welfare of all the people, all the time. Bring forward the colors.<sup>1</sup>

Three months later on 15 October 1945, Colonel Miller, then commander of the 442nd Regiment received a letter from Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes who wrote:

The members of the combat team have made a magnificent record of which they should be proud. This record, without doubt, is the most important single factor in creating in this country a more understanding attitude toward people of Japanese descent. The goal for which they strove, acceptance for their families and themselves as loyal Americans is being achieved.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, everyday life was not so simple after the war, and prejudice was still a reality for most Japanese Americans.

Despite proving their loyalty to their country on the battlefield and earning the respect of the President of the United States, life was still difficult for many of the *Nisei* upon returning home, especially for those on the West Coast. Many arrived home to find their houses and shops rented out to new tenants. Others were greeted with open hostility in the streets and found it

difficult to find work. Yet the *Nisei* veterans faced these challenges with the same resilience as they did internment and combat in the European Theater. They were determined to make up for lost time and took advantage of all the opportunities that were available to them. Daniel Inouye repeatedly acknowledged: "The biggest advantage for us was the GI Bill. It made possible the dramatic postwar rise of the Japanese Americans, and it changed politics in Hawaii."<sup>3</sup> Many of the *Nisei* were able to attend colleges, professional schools, and pursue careers that would never have been available to their *Issei* parents. While it was difficult for most families to make ends meet immediately after the war, the *Nisei* were able to become doctors, lawyers, architects, dentists, scientists, engineers, and public officials.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Nisei Soldiers**

During its three years of active combat service, the 442nd RCT suffered 4,419 casualties.<sup>5</sup> In total the unit received nearly 18,000 medals and citations, of which 9,486 were Purple Hearts. For its sacrifice the unit earned the unofficial nickname the "Purple Heart Battalion."<sup>6</sup> It therefore seems only appropriate to begin this final section with a soldier who exemplified the courage and sacrifice of his unit. SSgt. Shiro Kashino, whose story was mentioned in the Forward of this text, received six Purple Hearts before he was discharged. Following the heroic Vosges Mountains campaign, Kashino and his platoon were stationed in the southern French region of Cote d'Azur for rest and recovery. While sharing a round of drinks at a local dance hall with his men, a fight broke out between men of another company and when the military police arrived to break up the scuffle, Kashino and several other bystanders were rounded up in the confusion. After sitting in the stockade for four days while awaiting trial, Kashino was released and sent back to his unit for duty on the Gothic Line. Once victory in Europe was declared, Kashino was ordered to stand trial by Court Martial for the dance hall fight, and on 10 May 1945 he was found guilty for disorderly conduct and reduced in rank to private on his permanent record.<sup>7</sup>

Years later at a 442nd reunion in 1983, many of Kashino's friends heard him re-tell the story of his Court Martial and began a concerted effort to have his conviction overturned and his rank of staff sergeant restored. For more than ten years, members of the 442nd slowly tracked down records and contacted witnesses who were present at the incident. After being denied several times, in August 1996, the Army Board for Correction of Military Records notified Kashino that a favorable ruling had been reached in his case. His fines were remitted, and his rank of staff sergeant would be restored. However, the conviction on his record could only be overturned by the Judge Advocate General of the Army. This fi-

nal appeals step was yet another long, arduous process and sadly Shiro Kashino died on 8 June 1997, five days before the final appeal reached the desk of the Judge Advocate General. But on 15 December 1997, Kashino's widow, Louise, received the following letter from the Judge Advocate General's office:

Based on the entire file and information provided in all documents submitted with this appeal, I have determined that there is 'good cause' in the interests of justice to consider this appeal even though it was not filed within the statute of limitations. Mr. Kashino's appeal is granted and his court-martial conviction is set aside.

(signed) Walter B. Huffman, Major General, US Army, The Judge Advocate General

(Handwritten footnote)

*Your husband was an American Hero—and that is how he should be remembered.*<sup>8</sup>

Nelson Akagi was only 19 years old when his family was forced to sell their property in Lindsay, California for pennies on the dollar and relocate to a sugar beet farm in Parker, Idaho in order to avoid being sent to the internment camps. After returning from the war, Nelson resumed his studies at the University of Utah and took up work as a machinist at Alliant Techsystems (ATK), where he worked until his retirement in 1987. He continued to work on his farm until 1995 when the family decided to develop the land. Nelson later donated significant portions of the newly developed land to the city of Draper. In honor of his generosity and lifelong service to the community, many streets and parks on the land now bear the names of his family. ("Akagi Lane," "Nashi Lane," "Hana Court").<sup>9</sup>

George "Joe" Taro Sakato was one of the smallest men in the 442nd and always had to march 'double-time' to keep up in formation. He often had to rely on other members of his squad to help him carry his pack when marching uphill and even so "I'm always the last one up that hill."<sup>10</sup> And yet despite his stature, on 29 October 1944, Sakato made a one-man assault up a hill in Biffontaine where he killed 12 German soldiers and took four prisoners. For this act of heroism Sakato was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which was later upgraded to the Medal of Honor, given to him at a White House ceremony on 21 June 2000.<sup>11</sup> After the war, Sakato returned home to Denver, Colorado and took a job with the US Postal Service where he worked for 27 years. After his retirement, Sakato became involved with veterans support groups and regularly gave lectures at high

schools about his World War II experiences. Always humble, whenever asked why he was awarded the Medal of Honor he responded, “How I got the medal, I don’t know. Others deserve this much more.” After his death in 2015, the Denver Stockyards Post Office, where he worked for the majority of his 27-year career was renamed as the “George Sakato Post Office Building” in his honor.<sup>12</sup>

Minoru “Min” Masuda was pursuing a graduate degree in pharmacology at the University of Washington until his studies were interrupted by the war, and he was shipped off to the Internment Camps with his wife Hana. Min volunteered to serve in the 442nd as a combat medic, and during the rescue of the Lost Battalion he served on the frontline, treating the wounded for three straight days without relief.<sup>13</sup> After the war, Masuda returned to Seattle where he completed his PhD in physiology and biophysics. He joined the faculty of the School of Medicine at University of Washington and taught until his death in 1980. His field journal and correspondences with his wife during the war were later published into a book titled *Letters From the 442nd* in 2008.<sup>14</sup>

First Lieutenant Daniel Inouye was severely wounded during an attack on the Gothic Line on 21 April 1945. While leading an assault up a heavily fortified ridge in San Terenzo, Italy, Inouye was first wounded in the gut by a sniper round. Refusing to retreat and determined to take out the machine gun nest that had his unit pinned down, Inouye continued to charge up the hill until he was close enough to use his final grenade. While his arm was in motion to throw it, a German soldier stood up and fired a rifle grenade which exploded into Inouye’s right elbow.<sup>15</sup>

I looked at my hand, stunned! It dangled there by a few bloody shreds of tissue, my grenade still clenched in a fist that suddenly didn’t belong to me anymore. Then I tried to pry the grenade out of that dead fist with my other hand. At last I had it free. The German was reloading his rifle, but my grenade blew up in his face.<sup>16</sup>

Inouye spent weeks recovering in a field hospital, but after several failed operations, eventually lost his right arm. For his actions that day, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, which was later upgraded to the Medal of Honor. Due to the loss of his arm, Inouye abandoned his plans to one day become a surgeon and opted instead to go to law school at George Washington University on the GI Bill. When Hawaii achieved statehood, Inouye won a seat in the US House of Representatives and in 1962 was elected as the first Japanese American to the US Senate. A position he held until his death in 2012.<sup>17</sup>

Young Oak Kim, the only Korean American to serve in the 100th or 442nd, arrived at Camp Shelby, Mississippi in February 1943, as a newly-minted second lieutenant fresh out of Officer Candidate School. When Lt. Col. Farrant Turner offered to have him transferred to another unit out of fear that “Koreans and Japanese don’t get along,” Kim flatly refused by saying, “You’re wrong. They’re American, I’m American, and we’re going to fight for America.”<sup>18</sup> Kim also knew that serving in the 100th Battalion would be his only chance to command troops in combat and that any other unit would likely assign him to an insignificant clerical job. Kim distinguished himself in combat and by the end of the war he was the most decorated soldier in the 442nd. After the war, Kim re-enlisted, serving 30 years on active duty and retiring as a colonel in 1972. Following his military career, he became involved with the Japanese American community and was one of the founders of the *Go For Broke Educational Foundation* as a tribute to the *Nisei* soldiers of World War II.<sup>19</sup>

## **The Men They Followed**

In one of the 100th Battalion Command Staff journals, the following entry was made shortly after Lt. Col. Farrant Turner was relieved of his duties because of wounds sustained in combat:

Colonel Turner’s relief was a cruel blow to the officers and men. In sixteen months he had organized, trained, and led the 100th in combat, exemplifying the highest qualities of a leader. Ever-mindful of the welfare of his troops when they were committed, his thoughts were first and always for them.<sup>20</sup>

Turner returned home to Hawaii in May 1944 and resumed his job at Lewers and Cooke. After the war many of the men in the 100th Battalion would stop by to see him and Turner was still eager to help ‘his boys’ in any way he could. When 100th vet Tad Kanda returned to Hawaii and asked Turner for a job reference, Turner set him up for an interview at his company. Later, when Turner called and asked Kanda about the interview, Kanda said the personnel manager informed him that there was a different wage scale for non-white employees. Kanda said he found out later that Turner went straight to the personnel department and the “fur flew.”<sup>21</sup> In 1953, Turner was appointed to the position of Secretary of the Territory of Hawaii by President Eisenhower, a position he held until 1958. In 1959 he was appointed manager of the Honolulu office of the Small Business Administration but died within a year of taking that position.<sup>22</sup>

Charles Pence was severely wounded during the rescue of the Lost Battalion and was medically evacuated at the end of October 1944. Al-

though his successor, Col. Virgil Miller, was a capable leader and well regarded by his men, the loss of Pence was nonetheless a significant blow to the unit. Pence eventually recovered from his wounds and instead of seeking a medical separation, decided to remain in the Army. He was later promoted to brigadier general and served as Chief of Staff of the Alaska Defense Command until his retirement in 1952. After settling in Columbus, Georgia he became president of The National Bank of Fort Benning and served in that position until his death in 1961. His funeral was attended by many veterans from the 442nd, and his eulogy was delivered by one of his former junior officers, US Senator Daniel Inouye of Hawaii.<sup>23</sup>

## **Summary**

Despite their common Japanese ethnicity, the men of the 442nd represent a wide and diverse range of individuals. In addition to the tensions between the Hawaiians and mainlanders, differences also remained between young men who grew up in rural communities as opposed to cities; Northern Californians and Southern Californians; and college educated versus non-educated. Yet a shared tradition of cultural and community values united these men far more than anything that divided them. In addition to their extraordinary record of heroism on the battlefield, perhaps the most lasting legacy that the 442nd RCT will leave for future generations is to serve as an example of how a group of citizen soldiers can be transformed into an effective combat unit with proper training, support from their local communities, and a shared sense of purpose.

In conclusion, the men of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team demonstrated how a military unit with a shared purpose and a shared identity could be formed into one of the most effective fighting forces in history. This is not meant to imply that only military units of a common ancestry can achieve this level of success. Some of the most renowned combat units in history were comprised of men from various creeds and ethnic backgrounds. But like the 442nd, they shared a common purpose, a sense of self, and absolute trust in one another.

## **\*Final Note from Author**

Proud soldiers form the core of any successful military organization. When skillfully used by commanders, unit history can be a valuable resource in fostering a strong sense of pride in the members of a company, battalion, regiment, or other component. The study of unit histories can be compared to genealogy, and just as knowledge of one's ancestry often brings a sense of pride in one's forefathers, knowledge of a unit's past can help develop a deeper sense of *esprit de corps*. Many of the famed units

from World War II have expansive written histories, but one of the most neglected aspects in these historiographical assessments is the cultural origins of the soldiers. Even among other racially segregated units such as the Tuskegee Airmen, or the Navajo Windtalkers, their ethnic groups had already long been assimilated into American society and held common beliefs and traditions. The 442nd RCT however, is a unique study in unit history because it is perhaps the only unit in the modern American military whose members represent the merging of two different cultures.

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**Appendix A**

**Decorations Received by the 100th and 442nd Regimental  
Combat Teams**

<b>Number Awarded</b>	<b>Decoration</b>
21	Congressional Medal of Honor
52	Distinguished Service Cross*
560	Silver Star**
28	Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of second Silver Star
7	Presidential Unit Citation (highest award for combat units)
1	Distinguished Service Medal
22	Legion of Merit Medal
15	Soldier's Medal
4000	Bronze Star
1200	Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of second Bronze Star
9486	Purple Heart (Wounded and Casualties)

Number Awarded	Decoration
12	French <i>Croix de Guerre</i>
2	Italian Cross for Military Merit
2	Italian Medal for Military Valor

\* Including 19 Distinguished Service Crosses upgraded to Medals of Honor in 1 June 2000.

\*\* Including one Silver Star upgraded to a Medal of Honor in 1 June 2000.

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## About the Author

David F. Bonner is a graduate of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps Program at Texas Christian University and served as an ICBM Combat Crew Officer at the 319th Missile Squadron at F. E. Warren AFB, Wyoming. He has an MBA from the University of Wyoming and earned his master's in history from the University of Edinburgh. He is pursuing a PhD in history from the University of Edinburgh. Bonner is an active member of the Japanese American Citizens League and the Go for Broke Veterans Foundation and has published with the Army University Press on the 442nd Regimental Combat Team as part of its *Large Scale Combat Operations* book series.



The majority of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team during World War II consisted of second-generation Japanese Americans, or *Nisei*. An enduring sense of duty instilled by their families and a tight-knit network of *Nikkei* communities in the United States shaped the combat motivations of the Nisei soldiers. Author David Bonner examines this strong cultural identity, paired with the task cohesion and primary group cohesion theories, as it forms a framework for achieving a better understanding of small-unit effectiveness. This is a story of unparalleled fortitude in the face of adversity, ranging from prejudice in the rear to seemingly overwhelming odds on the frontlines.



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