

Why There Are No Asian Americans in Hawai'i: The Continuing Significance of Local Identity

Jonathan Y. Okamura

The term "Asian American" is not commonly used in Hawai'i except by academics and the media. In everyday discourse, the much more frequently used related term is "Oriental," although it tends to be applied primarily to Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans and less so to Filipinos, Southeast Asians, and South Asians. In other contexts, individual Asian American groups will be specified, since there are only four major groups (the first four noted above), rather than a collective term being employed. At the individual level, people in Hawai'i claim to be Chinese, Filipino, Japanese or Korean, as the case may be, rather than Asian American.

Beyond the use of the term, the concept, Asian American is even less recognized and advanced in Hawai'i. There is essentially an unfamiliarity with the political significance of the concept rather than a conscious disavowal of it. There are very few specifically Asian American organizations or social movements in Hawai'i. Communities, cultural activities, and other social processes also tend not to be referred to or identified as Asian American. The newer terms, "Asian and Pacific American" or "Asian and Pacific Islander American," are even less commonly used in Hawai'i despite the presence of several Pacific Islander groups including Native Hawaiians, Samoans, Tongans, and Guamanians.

One of the factors that contributes to the marginality of Asian American identity in Hawai'i is the significance of another panethnic identity that Asian American groups and individuals can affirm, i.e., local identity. This paper reviews various economic and political developments and changes in and beyond Hawai'i during the past decade and assesses their impact on the significance and meaning of local identity. These developments include: substantially increased investment from Japan during the latter half of the 1980s, the tremendous expansion of the tourist industry in the economy of Hawai'i, the continued development of the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty and for recognition of their rights and claims as the indigenous people of Hawai'i, and the widening social cleavage between Japanese Americans and other ethnic groups, particularly Filipino Americans, Native Hawaiians, and haole or white Americans. In very different ways, all of these economic and political developments have contributed to the continuing significance of local identity in Hawai'i. However, it is argued that tourism development and Japanese investment have had the greatest impact on the maintenance of local identity through

their increasing marginalization of Hawai'i's people to external sources of power and control. Continued affirmation of local identity over the past decade represents an expression of opposition to outside control and change of Hawai'i and its land, peoples, and cultures.

Local Versus Asian American Identity

Over ten years ago, an article on local identity and culture in Hawai'i discussed their historical and contemporary sources and accounted for the increasing salience of local identity since the 1960s (Okamura, 1980). In particular, various external social and economic forces of change perceived as detrimental to the quality of life that local people had come to value with living in Hawai'i were specified. These factors included substantial immigration of Whites from the U.S. mainland, increased immigration from Asia and the Pacific, and the tremendous growth in the tourist industry. As a result, it was argued that the notion of "local" had come to represent the common identity of people of Hawai'i and their shared appreciation of the land, peoples and cultures of the islands. Given this commitment to Hawai'i, *local* also had evolved to represent the collective efforts of local people to maintain control of the economic and political future of Hawai'i from the external forces noted above.

On the U.S. mainland during the 1960s, Asian Americans were engaged in a similar movement to develop a panethnic identity and consciousness for themselves (Wei, 1993). However, the concept of Asian American identity has never taken hold in Hawai'i even though there are several Asian American groups that represent significant proportions of the population including Japanese (22.3%), Filipino (15.2%), Chinese (6.2%), Korean (2.2%), Vietnamese (0.5%) and other Southeast Asian (e.g., Laotian and Kampuchean) (Hawaii, 1993:44). Asian Americans collectively comprise a little less than one-half of the state population of 1.1 million. Because of the considerable populations of Japanese, Filipino, and Chinese Americans and the overall structure of ethnic relations in Hawai'i, these groups have not found it necessary to establish and affirm collectively a specifically pan-Asian American identity or movement. Instead, there are separate organizations to represent the interests and regulate the affairs of those groups such as chambers of commerce and statewide ethnic community associations.

The political and economic necessity to develop such a panethnic organization and consciousness prevailed during the pre-World War II period of plantation labor recruitment to Hawai'i. Local identity has its historic origins in this

period based on the common working class background of Native Hawaiians and the immigrant plantation groups including Chinese, Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, Okinawans, Portuguese and Puerto Ricans. Together these groups shared a collective subordinate social status in opposition to the dominant *haole* (white) planter and merchant oligarchy. Over the years, local identity gained greater importance through the social movements to unionize plantation workers by the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) in 1946 and to gain legislative control by the Democratic Party in 1954.

The emergence and significance of local identity can be viewed as ultimately contributing to the nonsalience of Asian American identity in Hawai'i, especially since both movements developed in roughly the same time period, i.e., the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, etc. may lack an appreciation of Asian American identity since they already share another panethnic identity with one another that also includes several non-Asian groups such as Native Hawaiians, Portuguese, and Puerto Ricans. Furthermore, the notion of local is essentially specific to Hawai'i, emerging as a result of its particular social history, whereas Asian American is a much broader category with relevance in communities throughout the United States.

The larger political and economic structure of ethnic relations in Hawai'i is the primary factor in the nonemergence of Asian American identity. While the socioeconomic status of Asian Americans in Hawai'i and on the continental United States is generally similar, the former, particularly Japanese and Chinese Americans, wield much greater political power at the state level than do their mainland counterparts. The lesser political power of mainland Asian Americans is indicated by their relative representation in the population. In California, the 2.7 million Asian Americans—including Filipinos (732,000), Chinese (705,000), Japanese (313,000), Vietnamese (280,000), Koreans (260,000), and Asian Indians (160,000)—far outnumber their counterparts in Hawai'i but represent only 9.1% of the California population of 29.9 million (Los Angeles Times, 1990). In the context of much larger White (17 million) and Hispanic (7.7 million) groups and a substantial African American (2.1 million) population, Asian Americans face a much greater need for coalescing their numbers in pursuit of their common political and economic interests than they do in Hawai'i.

Similarly, at the national level the 6.9 million Asian Americans, who together represent a minimal 2.8% of the U.S. population, need to view themselves as a collectivity with shared problems and concerns in relation to the larger dominant society. But in Hawai'i, certain Asian American groups, such as Chinese, Japanese and locally born Koreans, can be considered part of the

dominant society, thus lessening the political and economic relevance of Asian American identity for them.

Local Culture and the Ethnic Rainbow in Hawaii

It is widely believed by both academic researchers and laypersons that ethnic relations in Hawai'i are qualitatively "better" than on the U.S. mainland and in other parts of the world. The multiethnic riot in Los Angeles and violent outbreaks in other cities in April 1992, following the verdict in the Rodney King case, will certainly not go unnoticed by the proponents of this argument. The latter also maintain that "Hawai'i's ethnic rainbow of shining colors, side by side" has valuable lessons to offer to the rest of the nation: "If America's frushtrooping minority populations are to live together in harmony, perhaps they should take a close look at our multicultural test tube" (Yim 1992:B1). One reason advanced for the more tolerant ethnic relations in Hawai'i is the "unique" local culture of the islands, which is a "prime example of the ability of diverse peoples to live harmoniously together" (Ogawa 1981:7). Even Hawai'i's governor, John Waihee, has argued that, "we've tried to call that culture which allows everybody to kind of exchange, go in and out of, enjoy various things. . . in its best sense, local culture. What glues it all together is the native Hawaiian culture" (quoted in Yim 1992: B1).

This view of local culture as the result of "blending, sharing and mixing" processes is not especially insightful (Okamura 1980:122-123). These are highly imprecise and misleading terms that ignore the far more complex political and economic processes that were involved in the development of local culture and identity, in particular the historical oppression of Native Hawaiians and the immigrant plantation groups prior to World War II. Nonetheless, Ogawa (1981:7) has stated that "Hawaii's peoples have created a culture in which everyone feels they can make a contribution, be a part of. It is a culture which provides a sense of shared experiences or 'points of commonality' where people come together and create a mutually beneficial and enriching experience." These points of commonality would include eating certain foods (e.g., plate lunches), the practice of particular customs and habits (e.g., "low keyed" and considerate interactions), modes of entertainment (e.g., ethnic jokes) and shared folklore (e.g., supernatural beliefs). With the exception of social interactions, all of the above common areas are trivial and can hardly serve as the collective basis for a shared culture that is supposed to underlie social relations in Hawai'i.

With regard to ethnic interactions in Hawai'i, an argument could be made that they do involve a certain degree of tolerance and acceptance, at least

compared to the mainland (Kirkpatrick 1987:310). This cultural emphasis, popularized as the "aloha spirit," is very much part of the public code of ethnic relationships in Hawai'i, which maintains that ideally such interpersonal relationships should proceed without reference to ethnic stereotypes or prejudice. However, as noted by Odo, the danger of idealizing ethnic interactions is that it tends to deny the reality of ethnic conflicts. Odo states, "It's kind of a mythology that allows us to cover up bad interethnic, interracial relations" (quoted in Yim 1992:B1). The tradition of tolerance allows for Hawai'i's people to avoid acknowledging and confronting the institutionalized inequality among ethnic groups and the resultant tensions and hostilities that are generated. This, perhaps, is the primary reason for the continued emphasis on the tradition of harmonious ethnic relationships despite evidence and knowledge to the contrary. In fact, it has been argued that the cultural emphasis on tolerance and the presence of ethnic antagonisms are "complementary" rather than contradictory insofar as interethnic ties become even more valued in the context of harsh ethnic stereotypes (Kirkpatrick 1987:310).

Without recourse to the notion of a shared or mixed culture, local identity can be seen to derive its significance primarily from structural rather than cultural factors. This structural dimension of local identity is based on the categorical opposition between groups considered local and those considered nonlocal, including haole, immigrants, the military, tourists, and foreign investors. Local is essentially a relative category; groups and individuals are viewed or view themselves as local in relation to others who are not so perceived. From this perspective, local identity is very exclusive rather than all inclusive and serves to create and maintain social boundaries between groups. The political and economic changes described below have heightened the boundaries between local and nonlocal groups and thereby enhanced the salience of local identity.

Japanese Investment in Hawai'i

Clearly, the most dominant economic force in Hawai'i during the 1980s, especially the latter half, was dramatically increased Japanese investment in tourism, resort development, and real estate. Local economists have maintained that virtually all of the economic growth in Hawai'i in the late 1980s was due to Japanese investment and, as a result, the state had experienced its "greatest period of prosperity since the boom years of the 1970s" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (HSB) 1990a:A8). Between 1986 and 1990, Japanese investment in Hawai'i, including purchases of real estate and businesses, totaled more than \$11 billion with well over one-half of this amount in 1989 (\$2.8 billion) and 1990 (\$3.8

billion) alone (*Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser* (SSBA) 1991a:A1). In 1990, Japanese expenditures were divided among hotels and resorts (\$1.52 billion), land (\$919 million), office buildings and other commercial property (\$885 million), residential property (\$413 million), and businesses (\$44 million) (SSBA 1991b:A8). Japanese corporations presently own 65% of the hotel rooms in Hawai'i, more than 50% of the office space in downtown Honolulu, and over one-half of the private golf courses. In addition, Japanese investors purchased about 5,900 higher-priced homes and condominiums valued at \$3.2 billion between 1986 and 1990 and thus own 11% of the total value of real estate in Hawai'i (SSBA 1991a:A9).

The cumulative economic impact of Japanese investment in Hawai'i is evident from estimates of the multiplier effect their expenditures have on the state economy. In 1989 direct and indirect economic activity resulting from Japanese investment and tourist expenditures generated \$9.5 billion, which, by one way of calculation, was equivalent to 45% of the \$21.3 billion gross state product for that year, although not all of the former amount represented original expenditures from Japan (*HSB* 1990a:A1). (Private sector economists laud Japanese investment in overly positive terms. They maintain, for example, that such investment has reduced unemployment and underemployment in the state. It is evident however that the economy of Hawai'i and thousands of jobs are now dependent on a single foreign country). Japanese corporations accounted for the great bulk (86%) of foreign investment in Hawai'i between 1986 and 1989 (*HSB*, 1990d:A1). Of necessity then, economic developments in Japan, especially their economic, business, and financial problems, have to be of major concern to the local economy and population.

The substantially increased Japanese investment in Hawai'i and throughout the world in the late 1980s was due to the specific convergence of several factors in the Japanese financial sector. These factors included the doubling in value of the yen in relation to the U.S. dollar, the tripling of stock-market values, very low interest rates along with an aggressive lending drive by banks, and runaway urban land prices. However, for various reasons including a crash of the Japanese stock market, these factors are no longer present. As a result, Japanese investment in Hawai'i has declined tremendously from the boom period of the late 1980s; for example, Japanese real estate purchases dropped from \$2.9 billion in 1990 to \$328 million in 1992 (*HSB* 1993a:A1). Since 1991, Japan-financed construction projects, particularly resort complexes and hotels, have been stalled or canceled resulting in a downturn in the Hawai'i economy, especially in the construction and tourist industries. These are clear indications of the fundamen-

tal vulnerability of the economy and the local people to unpredictable and uncontrollable forces from outside the Islands.

During the past decade, Hawai'i's people have become increasingly aware of their expanding economic subordination to Japan and Japanese investors. In a statewide survey of Hawai'i's registered voters (n=408) conducted in 1990, 46% of the respondents agreed with the statement that "Hawai'i is on the verge of becoming a colony of Japan," although 52% expressed disagreement (*HSB* 1990b:A8). Two-thirds (67%) of the respondents believe that Japanese nationals "don't care about Hawai'i except as a place to play or make money," and 60% do not "trust the political motives" of Japanese investors. These responses are consistent with the view that Hawai'i already is an economic colony of Japan, especially as a result of tourism investment (Kim 1993:239).

Tourism Overdevelopment

Tourism continues to be the mainstay of the Hawai'i economy representing a whopping 38.3% of the gross state product (GSP) of \$28.6 billion in 1991, far exceeding military expenditures (10.9%) as the second largest contributor to the GSP (*Hawaii* 1993:343). The annual number of visitors currently totals 6.5 million or almost six times the state population of 1.1 million (*Hawaii* 1993:185). On any given day, there are more than 150,000 tourists in the islands who would represent about 14% of the resident population. On the neighbor islands with their much smaller population, the average daily number of tourists comprises substantial percentages of the resident population, e.g., Maui (41%) and Kawai'i (37%) (*Hawaii* 1993:187). However, after years of consistent growth the annual number of tourists to Hawai'i began to decline from its high of seven million in 1990 as a result of the mainland recession and the Persian Gulf War. Visitors from the mainland and Canada have decreased from 4.7 million in 1990 to less than 4 million just two years later, with a consequent decline of \$1.1 billion in visitor expenditures in 1992 (*HSB* 1993b:A1). These are clear indications that the Hawai'i tourist industry has entered the maturation, if not saturation, phase of its development in which such decreases are inevitable (Mak and Sakai, 1992:188).

The overall social and economic impact of tourism in Hawai'i extends far beyond the physical presence of tourists. Direct visitor-related expenditures totaled \$11 billion in 1991, which represented nearly a doubling since 1985 (*Hawaii* 1993:203). Tourism generated \$6.5 billion in household income and another \$1.2 billion in state and county tax revenues in 1991 which was about

40 % of total tax revenues collected (Hawaii 1993:203). Most significantly for working people, 140,000 jobs are generated directly and 250,000 jobs are created directly and indirectly by tourism, which represents about 40 % of the employment positions in Hawaii'i (Hawaii 1993:204). These generally low pay, low mobility, and low security jobs in the tourist industry are primarily in service and sales work: hotel services (28%), "eating and drinking places" (24%), other retail trade (19%) and other services (13%) (Hawaii 1992:200).

Overdependence on tourism has essentially resulted in a "locked-in economy" in Hawaii'i in which economic diversification becomes increasingly more difficult to develop (Aoudé, 1993). The state economy was recently rated the worst in the nation by U.S. News and World Report, particularly in terms of decline in unemployment, business bankruptcies, and income growth rate (HSB 1992b). A tourism-dependent economy, with its generally low wage and insecure jobs, provides limited opportunities for socioeconomic mobility or even for maintaining a certain standard of living (Okamura, 1992). It is not surprising then that a recent statewide survey (n=419) reported that 81 % of the respondents believe that Hawaii'i is "too dependent" on tourism (HSB 1993d:1E5).

The restricted economic opportunities that result from tourism dependence are compounded by the extremely high cost of living in Hawaii'i, with Honolulu having the dubious distinction as the second most expensive metropolitan area in the nation (HSB 1992a:A1). Housing costs in Hawaii'i also are among the highest in the country and prevent an estimated 80 to 90 % of renters from becoming homeowners. It is estimated that it costs 38 % more to live in Hawaii'i, the so-called paradise tax, than on the mainland (*Honolulu Advertiser (HA)* 1992), a price that local residents have been forced into paying.

Because of the overdependence on tourism, the overall quality of life for Hawaii'i's people is especially vulnerable to worldwide fluctuations in economic activity and to uncontrollable international political events. Recent state budget reductions for government services and programs have been necessitated by a substantial decline in government tax revenues, which have resulted from a slowing down of the economy beginning in 1991, especially in tourism. As a consequence of the economic downturn, unemployment has reached its highest level (5%) in over five years, particularly in the neighbor island tourist industry.

With regard to Japanese investment in tourism, particularly in hotel and resort development, the economy of Hawaii'i has never been as dependent on foreign investment and control. Because Japanese corporations have so heavily invested in hotels, resort complexes, golf courses, and other sectors of the tourist

industry, there is concern for their trend toward "enclave investment." Enclave investment establishes a closed system for the ultimate benefit of investors in which profits flow out from an investment site back to the investors' base. Japanese purchases and development of hotels, resorts, golf courses, restaurants, and shopping centers in Hawaii'i—in collaboration with travel agencies, airlines and tour companies in Japan—comprise all the necessary elements for enclave investment. The result is that profits from Japanese tourism activity return to Japan rather than benefit the local community, aside from the creation of low paying sales and service jobs.

Japanese represent about 25 % of the annual number of tourists to Hawaii'i (HSB 1993c:A1). However, in contrast to the substantial decline in visitors from the U.S. mainland, and Canada in recent years, Japanese tourists have more than doubled in number since 1986 to over 1.6 million in 1992. Like Japanese investment in Hawaii'i in the latter half of the 1980s, this considerable increase also can be attributed to the enhanced value of the yen. While there are considerably fewer visitors from Japan than from the United States, and their average stay of six days is shorter than that of mainland visitors, Japanese tourists spend \$344 a day as opposed to \$141 for their mainland counterparts (Hawaii 1993:197). Japanese tourists contributed \$2.8 billion directly into the Hawaii'i economy in 1991 (compared to \$5.8 billion by American tourists), which represented almost a tripling since 1985 (Hawaii 1993:201). Thus, Japanese tourists have a disproportionate impact on the state economy in relation to their absolute numbers due to their greater purchasing power and also their supposedly greater potential for market growth compared to mainland visitors. Hawaii'i has recently dropped to third place behind Australia and Europe as the destination choice among the ten million Japanese who annually travel abroad. This is another indication of the fickleness of the tourist market that can have disastrous consequences for local working people and their quality of life.

Hawaiian Sovereignty and Identity

One of the most significant changes in ethnic relations in Hawaii'i during the past decade has been the further development of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement. Its more recent origins can be traced to the 1970s with the emergence of various politically-oriented Native Hawaiian organizations concerned with protesting land abuses and advocating their rights and claims to a land base (Trask 1984:122). Since then, the movement has developed to include occupations of restricted areas and finally to declarations of sovereignty based on indigenous rights to the land (Trask 1984-85:119).

Trask (1984-85:121) distinguishes the "Hawaiian Movement" from other protest struggles in Hawai'i by its demand for a land base, which follows from the native rights of Hawaiians as the original inhabitants of the islands. Other community struggles, such as those against the eviction of residents of Waiahole and Waikane valleys and Oia Camp, advocated the rights of local people to maintain their cultural lifestyle in their established communities (Okamura 1980:134). However, Trask (1984-85:121) notes that as the 1970s proceeded, the indigenous rights of Native Hawaiians as "historically unique" from the rights of local groups began to be asserted in other community struggles.

During the 1980s several organizations were established to advocate either sovereignty or independence for Native Hawaiians. Perhaps the largest and best organized of these groups is *Ka Lahui Hawai'i* (The Hawaiian Nation), which was formed at an islands-wide constitutional convention in 1987. *Ka Lahui Hawai'i* has over 16,000 members, a formal constitution, elected officials and representatives from each island, and executive and legislative government branches. Its approach to establishing a sovereign nation is to have Native Hawaiians recognized under the U.S. government policy that gives all Native American peoples the right to self-governance (*Ka Lahui Hawai'i* 1991:4). The land base for the Hawaiian nation would include half of the 1.4 million acres of ceded lands presently under state control, the 190,000 acres of land administered by the State Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, and additional lands provided in compensation for the overthrow of the Hawaiian monarchy in 1893 (Trask 1997:255).

In addition to the sovereignty movement, the past decade also has been distinguished by continued expression and affirmation of Native Hawaiian identity, particularly through its cultural revitalization of values, beliefs, and customs. Hawaiian traditional dance, arts and crafts, and music have continued to flourish. Interest has been renewed in traditional health and healing practices and in religious rituals and beliefs. Most importantly, the Hawaiian language, at one time prohibited to be used in the public schools, continues its revival with the establishment of the Punana Leo language immersion schools in which Native Hawaiian children are taught in their own language. These and other similar manifestations represent continued revitalization and articulation of Hawaiian culture and identity, a process that began in the early 1970s as the Hawaiian *renaissance* (Kanahele 1982:25).

The development of the sovereignty movement and the general affirmation of Native Hawaiian identity have implications for local identity insofar as they have undoubtedly influenced many Native Hawaiians to view themselves as Na

Kanaka Maoli, the indigenous people of Hawai'i. As the indigenous people, Hawaiians have native rights to own and control land, to worship, to fish, hunt, and gather natural resources, and other ancestral rights that distinguish them from other local groups. It is not clear what proportion of the Native Hawaiian population considers themselves more as indigenous than as local, but they can claim both identities without contradiction.

Asserting their collective identity as the native people of Hawai'i may create divisions between Native Hawaiians and other local groups, but these divisions are not necessarily absolute cleavages. Many non-Hawaiians have kinship ties with Native Hawaiians through marital relationships. The attitudes toward and the extent of support for Hawaiian sovereignty among non-Hawaiians are presently unknown, but some local groups have expressed support. The Hawai'i chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) introduced and adopted a resolution at their 1992 national convention that called for JACL support for Hawaiian sovereignty.

Cleavage Among Ethnic Groups

Since the 1970s there has been a widening social cleavage between Japanese Americans and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i including Filipinos, haoles, and Native Hawaiians. Native Hawaiians have expressed resentment against Japanese American "racial exclusiveness in social relations and their patronage system" (McGregor 1985:2 cited in Kent 1989:114). Filipino Americans along with haoles have been quite vocal in accusing Japanese Americans of discriminating against them in employment, particularly for state government positions. Filipino Americans (12.9%) and haoles (22.8%) were underrepresented among permanent state employees (excluding Department of Education teachers and University of Hawai'i faculty) hired in fiscal year 1989. Japanese Americans (31.9%) were hired at a much higher rate, proportional, however, to their representation in the Hawai'i labor force (HSB 1991: A4). These hiring imbalances contribute to the widespread perception that Japanese Americans "control" state government employment through favoring their own applicants, thereby discriminating against non-Japanese.

Hostility against Japanese is not a new phenomenon; it has been present in various forms throughout much of their historical presence in Hawai'i. As a result of their participation in the sugar plantation strikes of 1909 and 1920 and their growing American-born population, Japanese encountered tremendous racism and discrimination from the larger society during the 1920s. However,

the more recent antagonism against them differs from previous such expressions insofar as it has been described as an "anti-Japanese backlash" (Kotani 1985: 174; Boylan 1986: 1). The use of this term indicates that the more recent hostility against Japanese Americans is a response to their perceived higher political and economic status and thus to a perceived division between them and other ethnic groups in Hawai'i.

The anti-Japanese backlash resulted from a prevalent negative stereotype of Japanese Americans that they "dominate" Hawai'i both politically and economically. As noted by Odo (1984), this stereotype is based more on a "mythology of AJA power and arrogance" that is partially attributable to various types of mid-level administrative, professional, and clerical occupations they hold, particularly in the public sector. Japanese Americans are especially well-represented in the state Department of Education as school administrators (52%), elementary (63%), and secondary (50%) schoolteachers, and clerical staff (50%) (HSSB 1990c:A3). In those positions, they come into direct contact with a considerable segment of Hawai'i residents and their children, and oftentimes are made to bear the burden of blame for the failures of the long underfunded public educational system.

In the larger economic sphere, contrary to popular misconception, Japanese Americans do not have the highest occupational status in Hawai'i. Chinese Americans and haoles have such status, based on their substantial overrepresentation in professional, management and executive positions (Okamura 1990:5). Japanese American men continue to be well-represented in blue-collar work in Hawai'i where they comprise 36% of construction workers, 40% of mechanics, and 41% of precision production workers. (Kotani 1985:154). Japanese American women constitute 41% of secretaries and 26% of sales cashiers. Given their older median age, Japanese Americans are the largest group in the Hawai'i labor force (although a rapidly declining one with the ongoing retirement of the Nisei second generation), which also contributes to a perception of economic power and employment discrimination against non-Japanese.

The supposed economic dominance of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i is especially absent in terms of corporate power. Of the 50 largest corporations in Hawai'i (based on sales in 1992), only four, i.e., Servco Pacific (no. 12), Tony Management Group (no. 44), Kuukini Health System (no. 45), and Star Markets (no. 46) are owned and controlled by local Japanese Americans (Hawaii Business, 1993). The largest corporations in Hawai'i still include a few of the former "Big Five" companies, i.e., Castle & Cooke (now known as Dole Food,

no. 1) and Alexander & Baldwin (no. 6), along with other multinational corporations. Japanese Americans also tend to be considerably underrepresented among the leading business executives who wield corporate power in Hawai'i through holding multiple directorships in locally-based corporations (Kotani 1985: 172). In essence, as argued by Kent (1989:114),

the AJA elite has never constituted a legitimate ruling class in Hawai'i. Instead, they have skilfully performed a multitude of roles—front men, middle men, mediators, agents, and power brokers—in the service of the authentic ruling class, much of which does not reside in the islands and which prefers invisibility as one element of its power. (emphasis in original)

The real sources of power over the Hawai'i economy are multinational corporations based on the U.S. mainland or abroad, including United Airlines, Torray Clark, Prudential Life Insurance Co., Jardine Pacific in Hong Kong, and Kyo-Ya Co., Azabu Group, Seibu Group and Kumagai Gumi Co. in Japan.

Despite the fallacious nature of the "dominating" stereotype, the backlash and cleavage against Japanese Americans are very real in their consequences. In many ways, Japanese Americans have replaced haoles as the scapegoat group in Hawai'i toward which the hostilities of other ethnic groups, including haoles, are directed. As scapegoats, they may perceive their collective identity and acceptance as local being threatened, especially since the negative stereotypes applied to them, such as "dominating," "arrogant," and "clannish," are clearly nonlocal characteristics.

Japanese Americans, particularly those of the third and fourth generations, have responded to the backlash against them not by reorganizing themselves to maintain their social status or to advance their collective concerns but by downplaying their Japanese American identity. They can be seen as emphasizing the local dimension of their ethnic identity in their appreciation of Hawai'i and its peoples and cultures. In doing so, they reaffirm their social ties with other local groups and to Hawai'i as a special place for them to live, work, and maintain family and friendship bonds. Twenty years ago, Yamamoto (1974:101) argued that the increasing identification of third-generation Sansai Japanese with being local served as a compromise resolution of a developing cultural identity crisis between being Japanese and being committed to Hawai'i and its people. This identity dilemma is still with local Japanese but has been made more problematic by the widening cleavage with other ethnic groups.

In the 1970s, in response to the influx of Philippine immigrants who appeared to pose a threat to their collective identity, local Hawai'i-born Filipinos engaged in a similar process of asserting the local component of their ethnic

identity. Filipino immigrants were perceived by their local-born counterparts as reinforcing derogatory stereotypes that had originated with the predominantly uneducated and lowly employed plantation labor recruits. To emphasize their local identity and to dissociate themselves from immigrant Filipino stereotypes, Hawai'i-born Filipinos engaged in violent conflict with the immigrants and avoided them (Okamura, 1983).

Conclusion

The continuing salience of local identity can be attributed to various external and internal forces of development and change, discussed above, that gained considerably in their scope and intensity during the past decade. In particular, substantially increased Japanese investment, especially in tourism, and the continued overdevelopment of tourism, have had the greatest impact on the meaning and significance of local identity. In the 1970s, Yamamoto (1979:114) argued that "Being local assumes that while social, cultural, and economic changes are going to move the overall social structure of Hawai'i further away from traditional community, the changes need not entail the total Americanization of Hawai'i's people." However, the decade of the 1980s has resulted not so much in the Americanization of people in Hawai'i but in the ongoing internationalization of the islands through their further incorporation into the global capitalist economy.

Globalization of Hawai'i's economy and other political and economic processes are contributing to the increasing marginalization of Hawai'i's people to external sources of power and control. As a result, local identity has been maintained as an expression of resistance and opposition, albeit unorganized, to such outside domination and intrusion. The designation *Local* continues to represent the shared identity of people in Hawai'i who have an appreciation of and a commitment to the islands and their peoples, cultures, and ways of life, which are perceived as being threatened by external forces of development and change, e.g., tourism and foreign investment. However, while there has been increasing recognition among local people of their peripheral status in Hawai'i, there has not been a resulting collective effort to regain control of political and economic forces in the islands from external sources.

In the late 1970s, such an effort was described as *Palaka Power*, named for the durable cloth used to make the work clothes of plantation laborers, stevedores, and other working-class people in Hawai'i. Palaka Power, or what might be termed local advocacy, sought especially to promote and protect the interests and values of local people during the 1978 State Constitutional Convention;

however, it never developed into an organized social movement. State Representative David Hagino, the principal theorist of the Palaka Power initiative, attributed its failure to the yuppie generation of political leaders currently in power who are more concerned with "gratitiose projects, ostentatious spending and conspicuous consumption" than with social justice and equality (HA 1993: B1).

In his 1989 address at the 18th annual meeting of the Japan-Hawai'i Economic Council in Nagoya, even Hawai'i's governor acknowledged the ongoing process of marginalization of Hawai'i's people.

while there is no doubt that Hawai'i's residents have benefited from an economy that is fueled by dollars from Tokyo, Vancouver, Sydney and Chicago, there is also no doubt that Hawai'i's residents are experiencing a sense of loss—loss of their land to others and, more important, loss of control. (*Hawaii Business* 1990:29)

While the governor may speak about loss of land and control to outside investors, his and previous state government administrations have not done very much to limit those losses and, in fact, have facilitated them through their subsidizing of the tourist industry with taxpayer monies. In typical response to the ongoing slump in the tourist industry, the Hawai'i Visitors Bureau received an additional \$8.5 million from the State Legislature in 1993 so that it could lure tourists from Germany, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and other far flung places to Hawai'i even though its supplementary promotional funding the previous year had not resulted in an increased number of tourists. The lack of political leadership and long-term vision on the part of elected government officials towards the development of an alternative economic future for Hawai'i, at least one not so heavily constrained by tourism and foreign investment, only contributes to the growing feeling of loss of control to outside forces among local people.

The perception of powerlessness among local people to change the economic and political future of Hawai'i is evident in the increasing migration of tens of thousands of island residents to the U.S. mainland each year. This movement of "voting with one's feet" indicates the growing level of dissatisfaction with life in Hawai'i, particularly in terms of the high cost of living, the relative lack of financially rewarding jobs, and the high cost of housing. The mainland migration (excluding military personnel and their dependents) to only four western states (California, Washington, Oregon, and Nevada) has been estimated at almost 11,000 annually (SSBA 1992: B1), while the total civilian movement to the mainland is estimated at 24,740, nearly 2 % of the state

population (Mikius 1992:242) which is a considerable percentage considering the cost of moving to the mainland.

Local identity, while not organized into a viable social movement, will continue in its significance for Hawai'i's people if only because of their further marginalization through the ongoing internationalization of the economy and overdependence on tourism. Because of this overdependence, it may well be too late for the necessary changes to be initiated that can give power and control to the people of Hawai'i.

References

- Aoudé, I.G. 1993. "Tourist Attraction: Hawaii's Locked-in Economy." In P. Manicas (ed.), *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*. Pp. 218-235. New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.
- Boylan, D. 1986. Interview in *Hawaii Herald*. "Japanese Americans and Elections '86." September, pp. 1, 5, 12.
- Hawaii Business* 1990. "The Japaning of Hawaii." January.
- _____. 1993. "The *Hawaii Business* Top 250." August.
- Hawaii. Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT). 1992. *The State of Hawaii Data Book 1991*. Honolulu: DBEDT.
- _____. 1993. *The State of Hawaii Data Book 1992*. Honolulu: DBEDT.
- Honolulu Advertiser* 1992. "Paradise Tax Highest Ever, But May Start Falling." September 25.
- _____. 1993. "Another View: Much Endures." April 4, pp. B1, B4.
- Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 1990a. "Japanese Money Fired Isle Growth." April 11, pp. A1, A8.
- _____. 1990b. "Half Believe State Nearly a Japan Colony." April 25, pp. A1, A8.
- _____. 1990c. "Most Education Jobs Held by 1 Racial Group." August 16, pp. A3.
- _____. 1990d. "Investors Fear Backlash in Islands." November 20, pp. A1, A8.
- _____. 1991. "Judiciary Tallies its Ethnic Hires." August 2, pp. A4.
- _____. 1992a. "Mastering Isles High Living Cost Takes Scrimping." August 11, pp. A1.
- _____. 1992b. "Isle Economy is Rated Worst." September 16, pp. D1.
- _____. 1993a. "Japanese Investing Falls 80%." March 18, pp. A1.
- _____. 1993b. "Spending by Tourists Shows Sharp Decline." May 8, pp. A1, A8.
- _____. 1993c. "HVB Report Full of Facts on Tourists." May 15, pp. A1.
- _____. 1993d. "Isle Residents Don't Want to Foot the Bill on Tourist Promotion." June 16, pp. E1, E5.
- Ka Lahui Hawaii* 1991. "Ka Lahui Hawaii: The Sovereign Nation of Hawai'i." A Compilation of Legal Materials for Workshops on the Hawaiian Nation.
- Kanahale, G.S. 1982. "The New Hawaiians." *Social Process in Hawaii*, 29-21-31.
- Kent, N.J. 1989. "Myth of the Golden Men: Ethnic Elites and Dependent Development in the 50th State." In *Ethnicity and Nation-building in the Pacific*. Pp. 98-117. Tokyo: The United Nations University.
- Kim, K. 1993. The Political Economy of Foreign Investment in Hawai'i. In P. Manicas (ed.), *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*, Pp. 236-245. New York: McGraw Hill, Inc.
- Kirkpatrick, J. 1987. "Ethnic Antagonism and Innovation in Hawaii." In J. Boucher and D. Landis (eds.), *Ethnic Conflict: International Perspectives*, Pp. 298-316. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Kotani, R.M. 1985. *The Japanese in Hawaii: A Century of Struggle*. Honolulu: The Hawaii Hochi, Ltd.
- Los Angeles Times* 1990. May 11, pp. 5.
- Mak, J. and M. Sakai 1992. "Tourism in Hawai'i: Economic Issues for the 1990s and Beyond." In Z.A. Smith and R.C. Pratt (eds.), *Politics and Public Policy in Hawai'i*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- McGregor, D. 1985. The Hawaiian Perspective on Japanese in Politics and Business. Unpublished paper.
- Mikius, W. 1992. "Outmigration." In R.W. Roth (ed.), *The Price of Paradise: Lucky We Live Hawai'i?* Honolulu: Mutual Publishing.
- Odo, F. 1984. "The Rise and Fall of the Nisei." *Hawaii Herald*, August-November (six part series).
- Ogawa, D.M. 1981. "Dialogue: What is Local?" *Humanities News* 2(1):1, 7.
- Okamura, J.Y. 1980. "Local Culture and Society in Hawai'i." *Amerasia* 7(2):119-137.
- _____. 1983. "Immigrant and Local Filipino Perceptions of Ethnic Conflict." In W.C. McCready (ed.), *Culture, Ethnicity and Identity*, Pp. 241-263. New York: Academic Press.
- _____. 1990. "Ethnicity and Stratification in Hawaii." *Operation Manong Resource Papers*, No. 1. Operation Manong Program, University of Hawai'i.
- _____. 1992. "People of Color in Hawaii's Ethnic Rainbow." Paper presented at Annual Conference of the Hawai'i Sociological Association, Honolulu, Hawai'i, March 21.

- Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser* 1991a. "Japan Investors Pull Back After Record Haul in 1990." November 24, pp. A1, A9.
- _____. 1991b. "Japanese Investment in Hawaii During 1990." November 24, pp. A8.
- _____. 1992. "Moving to Mainland: Trail of Plastic Hints at Growing Migration." April 19, pp. B1.
- Task, H.K. 1984-85. "Hawaiians, American Colonization and the Quest for Independence." *Social Process in Hawaii*, 31:101-136.
- _____. 1992. "Kupa'a 'Aina: Native Hawaiian Nationalism in Hawai'i." In Z. A. Smith and R. C. Pratt (eds.), *Politics and Public Policy in Hawai'i*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Wei, W. 1993. *The Asian American Movement: A Social History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Yamamoto, E. 1974. "From 'Japanese' to Local: Community Change and the Redefinition of Senses Identity in Hawaii." Senior thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Hawaii.
- _____. 1979. "The Significance of Local." *Social Process in Hawaii*, 27:101-115.
- Yim, S. 1992. "Hawaii's Ethnic Rainbow: Shining Colors, Side by Side." *Sunday Star-Bulletin & Advertiser*, January 5, pp. B1, B3.