

wartime conference diplomacy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. These are very well known matters to both scholars and World War II buffs. Apparently, the author was told to broaden her topic, putting her constitutional stress "in perspective" of other events. She should have taken the manuscript elsewhere, for her in-depth account of the differing constitutions that were proposed, the role of Prince Fumimaro Konoe in the effort, and Gen. Douglas MacArthur's personal involvement stands on its own as a fascinating, dramatic tale. It is also the heart and soul of this grand research endeavor.

Whereas other authors have stuck to the general story of occupation government influence in the making of the modern Japanese Constitution, Hellegers details the procedure and accents the Japanese involvement, the off-and-on level of American confusion, the clash of cultures over the meaning of democracy, and the resulting compromise that became a working constitution. Fortunately, she keeps this study away from the easy-to-make, hot-button charges of evil American imperialism. Instead, she unravels a story of lingering wartime animosity and cultural misunderstanding giving way to collaboration, cooperation, and getting the job done. The result is not just a constitution but an important learning experience for two very different cultures and political structures. For anyone who values good research, a good read, and cross-cultural politics, Hellegers's *We, the Japanese People* is a must buy.

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Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990. By Lon Kurashige. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. xxii, 274 pp. Cloth, \$45.00, ISBN 0-520-22742-5. Paper, \$18.95, ISBN 0-520-22743-3.)

Analyzing the Nisei Week Festival in Los Angeles, Lon Kurashige provides an important account of this community institution, which "reveals the false dichotomy between assimilation and ethnic retention" (p. xiii). As the title

implies, his book traces not just the celebrations but also the ever-present conflicts within Little Tokyo, thus contradicting any simplistic view of the assimilation of the community.

Through a beautifully written narrative that integrates individual life stories with more formal documentary research, Kurashige argues that Nisei Week represented more than just a reflection of Japanese American relations with the larger dominant society. It is also a window into understanding how class and gender (but unfortunately not sexuality) evolved across the festival's history.

Kurashige begins by explaining the origins of Nisei Week in 1934 as an economic development strategy for the Little Tokyo ethnic enclave, a vehicle for showing the potential for integration of the Nisei (second generation) and providing a tool of community and social control.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, Nisei Week put forth biculturalism as the dominant ideology of the festival, claiming new ethnic identities emerging from the combination of Japanese and American cultural practices. Increasing interest in catering to the outside white community in the early 1940s provoked the concern with biculturalism, which was a significant move away from the integrationism and social control of the first era. Biculturalism succeeded until the internment crisis of World War II hit Japanese Americans and discontinued the festival temporarily.

Kurashige then follows some of the main actors in the Nisei Week Festival to the internment camp at Manzanar and illustrates the increasing divergences within the community. While interesting, this chapter is less well linked to the overall impact of the festival itself, and the links between the divergences in camp and the way they shaped subsequent Nisei Week celebrations could have been better clarified.

The chapters on the postwar era are the strongest and most interesting part of the book; they take Nisei Week from the postwar era to 1990. Although recognizing Japanese Americans' increasing assimilation in terms of occupational, economic, and educational attainment, Kurashige is careful to point out that there were also increasing tensions around

assimilation such as the rowdies and the radical youth participation in the Asian Power movement.

Instead of ending here, he cleverly traces the impact of the new cosmopolitanism into the present day. In doing so, he reveals how Sansei (third-generation) leaders drew from understandings of awareness of connections to other groups of color (particularly in the wake of the Watts riots in 1965), feminism (in debates over the appropriateness of beauty pageants in 1982), and links internationally with other Asians (for example, the Vietnam War in 1972) and in relation to maintaining ethnic cultural ties.

Kurashige's painstakingly and carefully collected data provide a new wealth of information, which may become the foundation of important new scholarship about Japanese Americans in Los Angeles, particularly after World War II. Kurashige provides a much-needed overview of Japanese American history, but, more important, he updates that history and bravely bares internal community conflicts to problematize past accounts of Japanese Americans as homogenous.

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An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945-1960. By Caroline Chung Simpson. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. xii, 234 pp. Cloth, \$54.95, ISBN 0-8223-2756-2. Paper, \$18.95, ISBN 0-8223-2746-5.)

Since the September 11 attacks, commentators have repeatedly invoked the specter of the internment of Japanese Americans to demonstrate the fragility of constitutional protections. The internment as the great caveat has clearly displaced the once common notion that it was a military necessity. But whereas the decision in *Korematsu v. United States* (1944) has become enmeshed in the curriculum of law schools, scholarly inquiry into how the internment shaped the postwar lives of Japanese Americans and the postwar culture of the nation has been sorely lacking.

Driven by the idea of the internment as a "vacated history" (p. 3), Caroline Chung Simpson's *An Absent Presence* thus arrives in timely fashion. She draws attention to the pivotal years from 1945 to 1960, during which time the popular image of Japanese Americans transformed remarkably from "yellow peril" to "model minority." Simpson analyzes "key instances of 'discourse' about the internment" (p. 8) through five chapters devoted to the trial of "Tokyo Rose," the Hiroshima Maidens project, Japanese war brides, and scholarly and journalistic writings on the internment.

The book's overarching argument has been strongly influenced by the "post-nationalist" critique that is currently popular in American studies. In this regard, it serves to demonstrate the strengths and weaknesses of that approach. At its best, it shows how narrowly defined conceptions of American citizenship have served to marginalize Japanese Americans. By reexamining history from the view of those on the margins, "the stigma of Japanese identity" becomes "a potentially subversive transitional taxonomy of suffering" (p. 114). Deftly situating her analysis of racial discourse within a shifting postwar context shaped by the American occupation of Japan, McCarthyism, suburban domesticity, and racial integration, Simpson reveals how Japanese American history challenges scholars to come to terms with the means by which rigid constructions of race, gender, and national security forced American national identity down an often undemocratic path.

The best works of cultural studies, if not based on primary research, are at least sustained by clever invocation of secondary sources. Although correctly arguing that postwar Japanese American history has been understudied, Simpson tends to ignore the most significant historical research on the Nisei (second-generation Japanese Americans), including that of David Yoo, Jere Takahashi, Gary Okihiro, and Kevin Leonard. While the author's textual analysis of published sources generates some worthy insights, she fails to situate critical elements of that analysis into proper context. For instance, her analysis of resistance at the Tule Lake internment camp does not take into account its special function

