

WAR RELOCATION AUTHORITY
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JAPANESE AMERICANS EDUCATED IN JAPAN

The Kibei

What happened to a boy or girl who grew up for awhile in a California town, then went to school in Tokyo or Kumamoto, and finally returned to the California town? What effect did living and going to school in two such different places have on his speech, his manners and daily behavior, his family and friendship relations, his purposes in life, and his sense of national loyalty? Did such a child grow up to think and act like a Japanese or like an American?

A general answer to these questions is not difficult. The young men and women who straddled these different civilizations were affected in different, and sometimes opposite, ways; some grew up to be like Americans, some like Japanese, some wavered in their thoughts and behavior between the two. What kinds of men and women they turned out to be depended on the age at which they went to Japan, the length of time they spent there, whether they lived in city or country, how well adjusted and happy they were there, how much education they had in the United States before and after they went, how they were received by family and friends when they returned. It also depended on what Japan was like when they were there, whether it was before the Manchurian invasion or after, for the teaching in the schools in Japan has varied at different periods.

These factors have operated in such varying ways that it is more dangerous to generalize, particularly in regard to loyalty, about the Japanese Americans educated in Japan than it is about any other part of the population of the Japanese in America. These persons, called Kibei in Japanese, contain among their number individuals representing the extremes in loyalty and devotion to the ways of Japan and America. There is, however, something which most Kibei have in common. That is conflict within themselves. At some time in their lives, most have found themselves "facing two ways". Some have made clean-cut decisions to go in one direction or another, while others have been pushed by many circumstances in this way or that. The experience of growing up in two cultures has given rise to this common characteristic of the Kibei -- conflict in their personal adjustment.

Definitions of Kibei

The literal meaning of "Kibei" is "returned to America". Literally, therefore, the term could be taken to include any individual who has gone to Japan from America, for however short a time, and

then returned to this country. For the term to be useful in defining a type of person, however, it must be narrowed. Children of Japanese parents in the United States were sent to Japan under two different kinds of circumstances. Many went for brief visits to see relatives or as tourists sight-seeing in their parents' native land. Some went to receive all or a portion of their education there. Those in the former class usually spent no more than from a few months to a year in Japan; those in the latter anywhere from two years to twenty. It is the latter group to whom the term Kibei should apply, if it is to have much use as designating a distinct type of Japanese American. It is such persons whose lives have been influenced in important ways by the stay in Japan.

Japanese Americans use the term Kibei to apply to those educated in whole or in part in Japan. Usage, however, among the second generation Japanese in America (the Nisei) has given a special meaning to the word "Kibei". It is applied to individuals not merely because they have been to school in Japan. It is reserved for those whose behavior is not like that of American youths, young men and women in the Japanese American communities who spoke Japanese among themselves preferably to English and who otherwise behaved in what the Nisei regarded as a "Japanesy" manner. In this usage it set off a group as culturally distinct from the English-using Nisei. These connotations of "Kibei" developed extensively during evacuation and, in the relocation centers, groups of youths were designated "Kibei" regardless of the fact that they included many Nisei who had never seen Japan.

The Nisei usage corresponds more nearly with what most non-Japanese think they are designating when they use the term Kibei: namely, a group which does not behave as American youths behave and which is devoted to Japanese ways of life. However, in the Nisei usage it has no necessary implication of loyalty to Japan.

Reasons for Studying in Japan

Among Japanese families in the United States, a decision to send a child to study in Japan was not uncommon. Strong, in his studies of California Japanese Americans conducted about 1930, found that 665 out of 5,100, or 13 per cent, second generation youths had all or part of their schooling in Japan.^{1/} Strong thought that there had been a decline in the practice of sending children to Japan during the period preceding his study.

A sample of Japanese Americans studied in 1942 indicates that 72.7 per cent of the American born had never been in Japan.^{2/}

^{1/}Strong, Edward J., The Second Generation Japanese Problem, 1934, p.207

^{2/}Figures based on a 25% sample taken at the relocation centers in the summer and fall of 1942. This does not include the Hawaiian groups.

Of the 27.3 percent who had been in Japan, there were 14.4 percent of the total who had no schooling there, having gone for brief visits only. There were thus 12.9 percent who had received some education there, and the great majority of these, 12.2 percent of the total American born, had three or more years of schooling in Japan. The following table gives more detail:

AMERICAN BORN RESIDENTS OF TEN RELOCATION CENTERS
(Sample of 17,956 Individuals)

Residence and Schooling In Japan	Percent of American Born			
	Total	Under 20 yrs	20-39 yrs	40 yrs & over
Total American Born	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Never in Japan	72.7	86.8	54.1	46.9
No Schooling in Japan	14.4	11.1	18.6	25.8
1-2 yrs Schooling	.7	.3	1.3	.5
3 or more yrs Schooling	12.2	1.8	26.0	26.8
Elementary School	5.6			
Elementary & High School	5.6			
High School	.1			
Other	.9			

Of the Total American Born, 7.8 percent had 3 or more years schooling in Japan, ending in 1930 or later.

Children were sent to Japan for many reasons. The child was usually sent to live with a relative, while receiving a formal Japanese education. Sometimes parents returned to Japan with the child, bringing him up there. Some children later returned to the United States alone. Some parents felt that for success in business and in the professions in the United States, it was essential that an individual have a knowledge of the Japanese language and customs. Also with economic security in mind, some thought that if opportunities were scarce in this country, the combination of an American and Japanese education would fit a son for work in Japan, Manchuria, or some of the Japanese colonies.

Girls were sometimes sent back for another reason. Not only would they learn the traditional moral behavior, but they would find wider marriage opportunities. Some parents were motivated by little more than a sentiment that their children should know the customs of their parents' country of birth. Other parents wanted their relatives to know their children. A few probably felt it was more economical for

them to send their children to Japan to be cared for by relatives. The expense of rearing their children there was much less because American money had high exchange value and relatives would contribute to the children's support. There were probably a few parents who felt guilty about leaving their families in Japan and took this way of making it up.

Reasons for Returning to America

The reasons of Kibei for returning to the United States have varied with individual situations. When they had completed their studies, in the normal course of events many returned to their families. There were some who left their parents in Japan and returned to the United States by preference or to earn some money, planning to return to Japan later. Others wished to escape Japanese military service. (These Kibei may be regarded as ones who had not absorbed the viewpoint taught in Japanese schools. If they had, they would have regarded army service as an honor and a privilege.) Some Kibei returned because they frankly preferred the freedom of American ways to the more rigid Japanese society. Others displayed the normal reaction of an American citizen and returned when the United States State Department in 1940 advised its citizens to leave Japan because of the threat of war.

In Japan many of the Kibei, especially those who had previous education in the United States, were regarded as foreigners. Those who went to Japan during or subsequent to adolescence spoke Japanese with an American accent. Furthermore, their American upbringing made them different in many minor, but to their Japanese associates, very noticeable, ways. Ironically, when anti-American feeling was particularly high there it was not always comfortable for them to remain. Because of such attitudes, many were pleased and relieved to return to the United States. At first glad to return to this country, they almost immediately found themselves under suspicion by federal officers who assumed that schooling in Japan had indoctrinated them as Japanese sympathizers or even agents. Furthermore, they found the Nisei often antagonistic, looking upon them as foreigners and queer. Thus, many found themselves in much the same position in either country, distrusted in Japan because they were Americans, and then suspected again in the United States because they were Japanese.

Pre-Evacuation Social Adjustment

The greater number of Kibei seem to have returned to the United States in their late teens. This was true at all periods and points either to plans for higher education in the United States or decisions to begin their careers in this country. Kibei have been returning to the United States, a few every year, for the past twenty-five years. There are some Kibei who served with the American Army in World War I. There are several hundred Kibei who have during the past twenty years

married and built up businesses and become indistinguishable from their Nisei contemporaries who have never studied in Japan. There are many others, still under twenty-five, who came back during the 1930's and had not yet established themselves with family or business before evacuation. In addition, there is a group, far from a majority of the Kibei, who came back to the United States in 1940 and 1941. These teen age youths came as a result of the imposition of economic sanctions on Japan by the United States. They were urged, as American citizens, by the State Department and other American interests in Japan to return because of the strained relations between the countries and the threat of war. These recent arrivals were caught by evacuation at the very beginning of their readjustment to life in the United States.

In some ways the Kibei may be regarded as a new immigrant group. The majority of them had spent their formative years in Japan. They had learned Japanese customs and spoke the Japanese language. They had therefore the usual difficulties of an immigrant in school, in finding jobs, in finding wives and husbands. However, there was another and peculiar factor in their adjustment. They were different not only from the majority of Americans in speech and custom, but they were even different from young people of their own age and of their own stock, the Japanese Americans. As has been pointed out, only a small proportion of the second generation Japanese were sent to Japan; often only the eldest child in a family of several. Thus, the Kibei were a minority group within a minority.

The relation of Kibei to other second generation Japanese and the difference in their relations with parents were important factors in their lives in the United States. These relations have had as much effect on the course they have taken in the United States as has their schooling in Japan.

The returning Kibei came back to various kinds of family situations. A considerable number came back to no family at all. Others came back to the bitter experience of poverty and low social status in a context of racial discrimination. Many others returned to situations better in most ways than those they had left in Japan. The following experience is not untypical of that of Kibei who returned in the prosperous 1930's:

"We came to San Pedro. My father was there (to meet me at the dock). Then we got in the car. I watched him drive, looked at the speedometer, 40-50 miles an hour. How could you go that fast? And all the cars driving along just that fast. Then we got home and they had fixed up my room for me. They had a bureau for me and everything laid out nice there. They had brushes laid out for me and everything so nice. I went over and sat down on the bed, and I went down deep. It was like heaven. You didn't have those things in Japan unless you are very rich."

But even when the introduction was as pleasant as that just described, there were for all Kibei who had spent many years in Japan the troubles of language, of getting along with a family who were almost strangers, and of learning American ways in the schools and out. Family life was more difficult when there were other children in the family who had not been in Japan. The Kibei son was sometimes closer to the parents because of the special pride taken in him as Japanese-educated. The closer relationship between Kibei and parents widened the gulf between Kibei and brother or sister. Resentments against the Kibei member of the family on the part of the other sons were sometimes intense. But more often it was the Kibei member of the family who, as a virtual outsider, nursed resentment. A Nisei has described the family conflict:

[The bad] home adjustment in many instances was overcome by the passage of time, by greater assimilation; but when the boys and girls were past 16 or 18 years of age the family adjustment did not always take place, unless the parents understood the situation and made a special effort to remember the circumstances themselves whenever the bitter or resentful occasion arose. The child in the meantime seemed to have lost that natural attachment to the family and did not seem close to the parents or to his own brothers and sisters.

In school the Kibei teen age youths had a much more difficult time than in the family. Here family affections which helped to soften the differences did not operate. Some Kibei were forced to go to school whether they wished to or not, being of compulsory school age, but the majority wanted to go at first to fit themselves better to make a living in the United States. They experienced the agonies of older youths placed in classes of younger children because of their language handicaps. "When I came over here, I went to school for awhile, and they put me with smaller kids. Little kids all around me. I was tall and didn't like that so much. I didn't go on." The extreme in school experiences is indicated in the following account by a Japanese American who observed Kibei in school at Terminal Island:

They constituted a problem in one of the elementary schoolsBecause by their age (12 to 16), they definitely belonged with the junior and even in some cases the senior high school group. (But) they were lacking in ease of social adjustment and showed a language handicap....(so that they) belonged in the elementary school somewhere from the first grade up through the sixth.

The school principal and teachers immediately protested against placing these "teen" age pupils in with their normally progressing younger children for many reasons: physical size, their various stages of language handicap, and in some instances their advancement mentally in current events, elementary social problems, and fundamentals of arithmetic.

A special group was therefore created composed of Kibei who thus ceased to associate in any normal way with the other students. The observer continues:

As I recall these boys and girls lacked initiative, were shy in oral response, and if sent to the office on an errand, always seemed to come in "two's". Whenever found outside of the classroom, they resorted to conversing in Japanese. They further seemed to be unwilling to accept criticism without the teacher first using a great deal of patience and tact, and their feelings were easily hurt.

Points of view absorbed during their Japanese schooling persisted and influenced their participation in school activities:

During a certain school program, all the school children participated in getting the school yard in order, carrying benches to use for seats, decorating the platform, making scenery, etc. The "regular" children had fun....in the preparations, while the foreign boys and girls resented taking part as well as assisting in the physical preparation. The boys in particular felt that they came to school to study, and that such physical manual labor should be done by some such person as a custodian or even by the teacher, and not by themselves.

Thus, in the home and in the school, the groundwork of maladjustment was laid, and Kibei were set apart from family and from those of their own age. To some this was merely a challenge to work harder at being accepted: "I always tried to go with Nisei, so I would learn the language better." In the Young Buddhists groups in Southern California and elsewhere, there were many Kibei who worked out their adjustment through religious activities. Here they came into association with second generation youths who had not been to Japan, who used English like any other Americans, and who were often willing to accept Kibei leadership in church affairs.

However, it was in the attempt to adjust to the wider community that Kibei met the most serious rebuffs. Outside the church groups, in the field of recreation they were seriously lacking in American skills such as dancing. Inability to participate in such activities often resulted in the formation of their own clubs and recreational groups. As they withdrew from Nisei society, they came to be regarded as a group apart. Some constituted small but definite cliques in most of the Coast cities, with a recreational life regarded as rough, or at least strange, by Nisei. They were shunned and often ridiculed by Nisei. Kibei girls tended to marry Kibei and Issei men rather than Nisei. Among the Kibei men were many bachelors who could find no wives who would take them. They drifted off into their own society, going the way of non-assimilation. The abler found some refuge in jobs with Japanese firms. The less able became casual unskilled laborers, and associated chiefly with Issei migratory workers. Their maladjustment in terms of family, social, and economic life was often extreme.

Another type of Kibei, often having a background of activity for a few years in Christian or Buddhist young peoples groups in the pre-evacuation Japanese community, found a very significant role in the relocation centers. Some of these individuals, in their late twenties, were elected to office in the Temporary Community Councils. They were closer to the first generation parents and were elected as a result of the confidence which the Issei had in them because of their ability to speak and understand Japanese. A number of them continued to be prominent in relocation center affairs, assuming a definite role in the new situation. This role was as liaison between Nisei and Issei in community affairs. Their knowledge of the two languages and differing viewpoints were utilized. They found themselves in useful roles and with new status in the developing community structure. A similar function developed for Kibei in connection with the internal security force, where again the knowledge of Japanese was important. This second type of Kibei, usually devoted to different aspects of both the cultures he knew, found it possible to utilize his divergent background experience and thus to find function and status. They have been an implement of constructive action in the centers.

There are two other types of Kibei whose role in the relocation centers was quite different. One group tended to withdraw from community affairs, partly because of poor knowledge of English and partly because they felt they should assume the proper role of the young man in a Japanese community, deferring thus to their elders. These men and women lived pretty much within their blocks, avoiding contact with the Caucasian administrators and constituting a group apart from those of their own age in their blocks. They often sought jobs in the mess halls, which allowed them to remain aloof from the general community life. They were noticeably Japanese in manner, bowing with the politeness of the Issei and the women deferring publicly to the men in formal Japanese fashion. This led to their being singled out by the first generation parents and pointed to as models of behavior, a fact much resented by the Nisei. These unobtrusive Kibei were usually the older of the more recently returned. A few had married just before evacuation and many of them married in the relocation centers, where they suddenly had a wider choice of mates than they had ever had before.

The fourth type of Kibei is the one who has given his reputation to the whole. These are a mixed group composed of those who had never accepted American ways and those who had not had time to adjust to America because of the recency of their return; also with them were older Kibei who reacted like many loyal Nisei to the evacuation, who were strongly bitter and resentful. Among them, too, were a number of the Hawaiian Kibei, more recently returned from Japan and some with military service there, whose evacuation experiences had been severe.

On the one hand were those who had never intended to remain in the United States. They were devoted to Japanese ways and had identified their future with Japan. They were patriotic Japanese who wished to behave in this country in a manner which would not jeopardize their

future there. Some of these were disdainful of the Nisei, regarding them as shallow and thoughtless. In some centers there were early movements to "Japanize the Nisei". They came to little because of the majority sentiment against such trend. A few Kibei rose to leadership briefly on such platforms and then retired into frustrated unimportance as the sentiment of the centers swung in a different direction. The followers of such men were mostly the younger Kibei (and also some Nisei) who found relocation center life tiresome and unpleasant and sought any means of asserting themselves and passing their time in an exciting manner. The articulate leaders of this type often had great prestige, as high-ranking Judo men, or ones who spoke authoritatively of Japan's expected future greatness in the Pacific. Their young followers were for the most part peaceful, but they could be persuaded to unsocial acts of various kinds. Some beatings in the centers were carried out by these groups. They were generally disapproved by the peace-loving mass of the center and were looked askance at by the majority of Nisei who saw them as a rowdy and uncontrollable group, and labelled them "Kibei" despite the presence among them of Nisei who had never been in Japan.

The Kibei at Registration. During registration a peculiarly Kibei point of view became apparent. This was expressed at Topaz and Manzanar especially, but was present among other Kibei, particularly of the last two groups mentioned, in all the centers. This was the view that forswearing allegiance to the Emperor, involved in question No. 28, would affect not only themselves but also their relatives in Japan. The following indicates the nature of this view:

We can't say or put down in writing that we forswear allegiance to the Emperor, no matter how we feel about it personally. We have relatives in Japan. If our relatives ever found out that we did this, even if they found out after the war, they could not hold up their heads in the village. If it came out, they would be treated with contempt by all their neighbors and they would have to disown us. We could never go back to that part of the country or secure our rights there.

This was a factor in the refusal of many Kibei to register or to answer "yes" to the loyalty question. They were generally ones who had retained dual citizenship and who often had never planned to remain permanently in the United States. Such Kibei, however, frequently said that they would be willing to be drafted and would serve honorably if it were put on an involuntary basis. The following illustrates this point of view:

A good Japanese citizen will make the best American citizen. If I am here, I must go to war and fight for the United States. I am born here. I must do my very best for my country. I told my girl friend that a long time ago. She

never understand me. If I am a soldier, I told her, and if I am told to bomb Tokio, I do it, but I don't expect to come back. That is how I make it up to my race... There is some fellows think you should wait to get all the citizens right back before going into the army. I don't think so. I say do what the government tells you to do. That is the way you are trained if you are brought up like me in Japan. ...but they say I am crazy.

The result of being required to answer the loyalty question regardless of the dilemma it put them in was twofold. On the one hand, it resulted immediately in gang tactics on the part of some Kibei to interfere with the carrying out of the registration process. It must be said, however, that such demonstrations were never exclusively Kibei and in Tule Lake were definitely not Kibei organized; many Nisei, protesting the registration on other grounds, also joined such force groups.

On the other hand, once registration was over, those Kibei who had answered "no" immediately felt a new insecurity. At Manzanar there were rumors from then on that it would be the Kibei who would be segregated. They felt that the Kibei had been singled out for special retaliatory action by the United States government and expected the worst. Thus a sense of persecution grew up in the centers on the part of the Kibei and contributed still further to the disorganization of those who were already confused and badly adjusted.

This created a group within the centers who became a source of discord, moving steadily in the direction of rebellious action. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that some Nisei joined with the rebellious Kibei, especially relatively unassimilated Nisei from rural districts. They were regarded as violent in their behavior by other evacuees. They seemed unduly belligerent and excitable to Nisei and most Issei. The direction in which they were heading is indicated by what happened when they came together in concentrated lots at Tule Lake after segregation. "This is Japan", became a slogan by which they justified rough treatment of girls and broke up Nisei dances. Young Nisei girls in Tule Lake became afraid to go out at night because of the behavior of these gangs, composed in large part of Kibei. They threatened adults as well, using strong-arm actions, and established an atmosphere in the newly disorganized center which gave them the ascendancy. As one Nisei expressed it, "you certainly have to show a lot of respect for these Kibeis". They used their conception of Japan as a justification for their revolt against restraint of whatever kind.

These groups were an end-product of a process which had been going on before evacuation, was intensified in the relocation centers, and reached its maximum in the segregation center. It was the development of a type of behavior which resulted from the straddling of two cultures in such a way as to make a fit impossible in either. It was behavior arising out of being rebuffed repeatedly, of frustration and

lack of status in any society. A portion of the Kibei had reacted in this process in the manner of the third type of Kibei mentioned above -- they withdrew insofar as they could, accepting a limited sphere of action in a society where rebuffs were less possible and where approval of Issei at least could be won. There are many of them still in the relocation centers.

Another portion did not accept the rejection but sought compensations of various sorts. Instead of submitting to the rejection they combated it, found a symbol of solidarity and an aim in their concept of Japan and became aggressively active in the name of that symbol. They have been called the uncontrollables by other evacuees. They became members of goon squads and aggressively asserted themselves against the Nisei and against America, the scene of their most recent rejection. They enjoyed a brief hour in the segregation center, where it was a little longer at least than it had been in any of the relocation centers. They have become now men without a country who will probably find that they have devoted themselves to an ideal that does not exist, namely, a Japan of their own over-heated imaginations, nursed in unhappiness and lack of status in any society.

The Kibei and Administration

A little more than one-tenth of the second generation Japanese Americans have had schooling in Japan. A rough estimate as to their number in the United States would be between 8000 and 9000 persons. The great majority are still in the relocation centers or in the segregation center. If what has been said be accepted, there are at least four kinds of Kibei. Each of these are quite distinct in their relation to the management of projects and in regard to what their futures may be expected to be. They call for very different administrative approaches.

The first type of Kibei mentioned, the conscious-Americans, do not constitute a special problem. They fall into the group of Nisei who are resettling steadily from the centers. Since, however, they have certain characteristics which place them technically in the Kibei class, their major problem is that of leave clearance. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the determination of the Kibei's fitness for leave must not become mechanical. Labels and slogans must not be substituted for careful evaluation in terms of the factors mentioned at the beginning of this paper. There are loyal "1940 Kibei" and disloyal "1930 Kibei". Moreover, the degree of Americanization is by no means directly correlated with loyalty. They are rather distinct qualities, a fact which comes out most clearly in connection with this first type of Kibei, many of whom retain Japanese speech and cultural characteristics. No formula can be used to discover loyalty. On the other hand we can come close to a formula for determining degree of Americanization. If any of the influences which make a Kibei what he

is may be classed as more significant than others, they are the following: the relative amounts of education in the two countries and which preceded the other. These, however, must be recognized only as indicators of degree of Americanization, not of loyalty necessarily.

It is important to recognize that there have been in every center Kibei who have been of immense value to the community. They have smoothed over relations between Issei and Nisei and between Issei and administration. They have been go-betweens and have interpreted one group to the other. These men have for the most part been those of the second class mentioned. A number have left the centers, but there are others who can continue to fill this role. The habit of administrators has been to tend to forget that such cooperative persons are Kibei. It would be well to remember the fact and to seek out and give opportunity to such men for fulfilling this special role.

The two remaining types of Kibei constitute definite problems for the WRA program. It is important to distinguish clearly between the two types. One group has been called the "unobtrusive" Kibei. It is unlikely that many of them will develop into community leaders. They will remain as long as possible in the retirement of block life. They will not respond to relocation and in their planning for the future will go along with the majority of Issei. Yet they are not Issei; they are young and have their lives before them. Poorly or not at all Americanized as they may be, it is nevertheless begging the question to assume that they are destined to go back to Japan or that, if they should, they would fit any better there than they have in the United States. Most of them are out of touch with American life not so much from choice as from language barrier. Many are and have been in the past anxious to surmount that barrier. There is here a special, and an unusually challenging, field for adult education.

Finally, there are the un-Americanized Kibei who are so by conviction and choice. Probably a majority are now in the segregation center. They must be recognized for what they are, regardless of by what process they have been led to their present position. They have demonstrated that they will resort to force to secure their ends. They have shown that they will be the first to join in and support demonstrations against whatever constituted authority exists. They, together with young Nisei of similar outlook, are constant threats to the peace of the segregation center. Methods must be worked out for controlling them. Effective dealing with such individuals may be in terms either of force, of providing activities which give them status in the community, or of appeal to what they regard as Japanese values. Administrators may use the first two methods; the last must be left to Issei and other peaceful Kibei in the context of an organized community.