

Editor's Introduction

The major theme of this issue originated in a symposium entitled “Will the twenty-first century become another American century?”, held at our annual meeting in June of 1998 at Chiba University. In the final phase of the conference, I as the coordinator asked each panelist if he or she thought that the twenty-first century would belong to America. Jun Sasaki of the Institute for International Trade and Investment talked about NAFTA, showing some skepticism regarding the full blooming of US free trade in the near future. Misako Koike of Tohoku University said that she wanted to watch carefully to see if in future the American theatrical world would be able to respond to the much-discussed loss of civic consciousness. Taizo Yakushiji of Keio University predicted that since China has the capacity to utilize her “soft” power, the twenty-first century may belong to her. Toshihiko Hayashi of Osaka University spoke of his appreciation of the effort involved in building the new European Union system out of past hatred and struggles, and speculated that European countries may rise in the future to a hegemonic position thanks to their abilities stemming from past experiences of colonial management. Hideki Kan of Kyushu University predicted that American liberalism would become a global standard, although not without substantial expression of domestic opposition. No one prophesied the unconditional continuance of American hegemony in the coming century. I am not sure if these panelists would answer in the same way if I asked the same question now, because the U.S. economic performance is currently superb, at least at the macro-economic level. At the same time, I feel almost certain that most of the panelists, as well as readers of the *Journal*, would agree

that the United States will maintain her hegemonic status in world politics and the world economy at least during the first quarter of the coming century.

There are many different opinions in Japan regarding the present military, political and economic status of the United States in the world. Some Japanese intellectuals are worried about another round of cultural Americanization if globalization continues at its current tremendous speed under the leadership of transnational corporations and big finance capital rooted in America. Some would even argue that the proliferation of a pure market economy may jeopardize the distribution of income and may lead to the dissolution of the middle class in America. For nations outside the United States, cultural Americanization may be the least desirable trend, except for the penetration of "market fundamentalism."

In this issue, five articles are dedicated to the main theme of the American century. In his "Reexamining the 'American Century,'" Hideyo Naganuma carefully investigates the relative economic strength of the US, examining GNP, foreign trade, industrial production, etc., as well as military strength, and concludes that the end of World War II was the real start of American hegemony and the American century, or, more appropriately, "America's half-century." Hiroshi Matsushita takes up recent regional integration efforts, especially MERCOSUR (Mercado Comun del Sur, or the Common Market of the South) and NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) in "The First Integrated Wave of Regionalism and Democratization in the Americas: A Comparison of NAFTA and MERCOSUR." Undoubtedly, the enlargement of regional integration has been one of the stabilizing forces of American political economy. There is a difference between the two organizations, as NAFTA is a free trade agreement and MERCOSUR a kind of customs union, Matsushita argues, and while the former promoted the procedural aspects of democracy in Mexico, the latter played the role of buffer against the revival of some military regimes in participating countries.

In "Cold War Perspectives on U.S. Commitment in Vietnam," Hiroshi Matsuoka deals with the preparatory phase of the Vietnam war, including the early Kennedy period. Behind each intensification of political and military intervention in South Vietnam, he finds the Cold War-induced motive of preventing the worldwide Communist intrusion. This must have been one of the most important driving

forces of U.S. diplomacy in Asia. Naoko Sugiyama delves into the scholarship of motherhood in "Postmodern Motherhood and Ethnicity: Maternal Discourse in Late Twentieth Century American Literature." She analyzes the discourse of motherhood in ethnic minority writers such as Toni Morrison, Leslie Marmon Silko, and Maxine Hong Kingston, showing how they illuminate postmodern reality and how it is possible to view the future in alternative ways. Misako Koike explores first how the presence of corporate culture affected New York theaters, and then finds some positive responses to that culture in recent plays by several playwrights, in "Challenges and Hopes for American Theatre in the Twenty-first Century." She expects that American theater will overcome political hazards and acquire deeper and broader dimensions in the coming century.

Writing outside the special theme of this issue, Yujin Yaguchi investigates a photograph taken on the island of Hokkaido during the initial Japanese colonization period of the nineteenth century in "Remembering a More Layered Past in Hokkaido: Americans, Japanese, and the Ainu." He suggests the need for a reconceptualization of the history of U.S.-Japan relations, integrating cultural encounters among Americans, Japanese, and the Ainu. Gayle K. Sato compares two classic literary works, Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg Ohio* and Toshio Mori's *Yokohama, California* in "(Self) Indulgent Listening: Reading Cultural Difference in *Yokohama, California*." She is particularly concerned with the discourse and practice of *amae*, or self-indulgent dependency, in Japanese nisei communities before World War II. Chitose Sato investigates the experiences of female workers in the aircraft industry in southern California during World War II, as well as employers' attitudes towards those workers. She points out that although most of the women workers who were added to the workforce during the war left their jobs after the war years, the wartime reorganization of work processes and the creation of new labor-management policies for women survived thereafter. Masami Usui's "Creating a Feminist Transnational Drama: *Oyako-Shinju* (Parent-Child Suicide) in Velina Hasu Houston's *Kokoro* (True Heart)" attempts to illustrate the cultural transmission of this sad practice, which originated in Japan, into the context of the Japanese family in America, and to evaluate the true spirit and loneliness of Japanese female immigrants through her reading of the drama. Finally, Atsushi Kusano contributes "The Political Influence of Homosexuals in the United States: Their

Pattern of Action and Sources of Power,” in which he analyzes the social and political aspects of homosexual Americans and the gay rights movements in America, focusing on their achievements in federal and local government as well as in corporations. He stresses the organizational strengths of the movement.

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Eiichi Akimoto
Editor

For those who wish to submit a manuscript to the *Japanese Journal of American Studies*:

1. Contributors must be dues-paying members of the JAAS.
2. Contributors are expected to observe our time schedule. They must first submit the title and abstract (about 300 words) by mid-January. We are unable to accept the manuscript without this procedure.
3. The final manuscript (maximum 7000 words including notes) is due early May. The editorial committee will inform each contributor of the result of the selection process by the end of June. If accepted, the paper will be published in June the following year.
4. The fall issue of the *JAAS Newsletter* will carry “call for papers” announcement with exact deadlines and special theme for the forthcoming issue.
5. The JAAS will accept inquiries through email:
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