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CONSTRUCTING CHINESE AMERICA IN HAWAII:
THE NARCISSUS FESTIVAL, ETHNIC IDENTITY, AND COMMUNITY
TRANSFORMATION, 1949-2005

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the construction of Chinese American identity in Hawai‘i as displayed through the longest-running public Chinese American festival and beauty contest in the United States, the Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant. I address such questions as 1) How does the Festival represent the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i? 2) What roles do Chinese American women play in identity construction? and 3) How is the Chinese American identity defined in the Festival?

In answering these questions, I draw upon scholarship in women’s and gender studies, ethnic and diaspora studies, performance analysis, sociology of the body, the political economy and international politics in Hawai‘i. Through multi-site, multi-media, and multi-language ethnographic and historical research, I argue that the self-representation in the ethnic festival reveals an intricate relationship between perception and self-perception, performing for others and for the ethnic community, gaze and returned gaze, cultural exploitation and cultural preservation, and tradition and invention.

I contend that Americanness and Chineseness both went through the process of creolization and localization in Hawai‘i. Their meanings are defined interactively and are simultaneously defined by the indigenous culture and people of Hawai‘i. The mainstream definition of Americanness in Hawai‘i changed from “whiteness” in the earlier twentieth century to “assimilation” in the mid-twentieth century and then to “ethnic diversity” in late-twentieth century. The meaning of Chineseness experienced five stages of change: invisibility and non-assimilation in the 1910s, Americanization in the 1930s, exoticization in the 1950s–1960s, Pan-ethnicization in the 1970s, and “American multiculturalism” in the 1990s.

My study foregrounds gender in the construction of ethnicity and emphasizes the subjectivity of Chinese American women in the Festival. I explain why the Pageant evolved in the Festival, from being a supporting program, to becoming a major attraction, and to replacing the Festival, over the past 56 years. I also delineate how, under the influence of the Cold War femininity, feminism, and post-feminism, women had different motivations to join the ethnic beauty contest and projected different public images as Chinese beauty queens. My dissertation contributes a Pacific perspective to the study of gendered ethnic identity in the United States.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Hawai‘i, though the youngest state, hosts the longest-running public Chinese American¹ cultural festival and beauty pageant – the Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant – in the United States. This should come as no surprise, since Hawai‘i also hosts one of the oldest Chinese American communities. Chinese first set foot in Hawai‘i in 1789 and began to settle as merchants, shopkeepers, sugar masters, and domestic servants ever since. The majority of Chinese immigrants in Hawai‘i came from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province in Southern China to work as contract laborers on sugar plantations in the 1850s to the 1880s. By the 1890s, most had left the sugar industry and many returned to China. Those who did not go back to China soon formed the largest urban ethnic group² in Hawai‘i. In the 1880s and 1890s, one fourth of Honolulu’s population was Chinese, some of whom came from the continental United States after the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Although the population with Chinese ancestry declined after the passing of Hawaii’s own Chinese Exclusion Act of 1886 and the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, Honolulu still reported the largest population with Chinese ancestry among all major cities of the United States in 1930.³ At 4.7 percent

¹ Residents of Chinese descent in Hawai‘i generally address themselves as “the Chinese,” “local Chinese,” and “the Chinese in Hawai‘i.” However, I refer to them as “Chinese Americans” in my dissertation for theoretical clarity. Most residents with Chinese ancestry in Hawai‘i regard themselves as citizens of the United States, not of Chinese geopolitical centers of Asia, such as mainland China and Taiwan. They take their U.S. nationality for granted rather than ignore it when they call themselves “Chinese.”

² I use ethnicity and related terms, such as ethnic group, ethnic festival, ethnic spectacle, and ethnic beauty contest, to refer to all the immigrant groups in Hawai‘i except Caucasian Americans. I do not treat the Native Hawaiians as an ethnic group in Hawai‘i but as the host group or indigenous group.

³ Tin-Yuke Char, ed. *The Sandalwood Mountains: Reading and Stories of the Early Chinese in Hawaii* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1975).

(56,000 in total) in 2000, the Chinese American population in Hawai‘i was proportionally still the largest Chinese American group among all the states.⁴ From World War II to the 1990s, the group maintained a higher socio-economic status than any other Chinese American community in the United States.⁵ In the 2000s, it remains as well more integrated with other population groups through intermarriage than their counterparts are in the continental United States. Also different from other states, Chinese Americans in contemporary Hawai‘i are predominantly descendants of the pre-1965 immigrants. They comprise over 85 percent of the Chinese American population in Hawai‘i. The Chinese Americans who immigrated from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Southeast Asia after 1965 comprise the other 15 percent of the population. A small number of the more recent immigrant families identify with the older community. The rest, however, remain separate and have formed their own sub-communities. The history of the Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant reflects the community transformation as well as identity reconstruction of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i over the last half a century.

The Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant In 1949, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (henceforth, the Chamber) transformed the family-oriented Chinese Lunar New Year’s celebration into a public spectacle that was named the Narcissus Festival (henceforth, the Festival). It also staged a Narcissus Queen Pageant (henceforth, the Pageant) in the Festival. According to the Chamber, the Festival and the

⁴ 2000 U.S. Census. The 4.7 percent refers to the “Chinese alone” population in 2000 Census. The percentage for the maximum Chinese population in Hawai‘i is 14.1, which indicates the high rate of out-marriage of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i.

⁵ Lawrence Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono: A Social History* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1961), 105. 2000 U.S. Census.

Pageant were intended to stimulate the economy in Chinatown for Chinese American businesses and to introduce Chinese culture to tourists, residents, and especially the younger Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. Other ethnic groups in Hawai'i adopted the same formula for ethnic publicity. In 1953, the Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce organized the Cherry Blossom Festival and Queen Pageant.⁶ In 1959, the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i organized the Miss Philippines-Hawaii pageant. The formula was also adopted by the San Francisco's Chinese Chamber of Commerce to launch the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. in 1958.

After half a century, the Festival and the Pageant continue to be the largest annual Chinese American event in Hawai'i and to serve as a significant venue for the community to foster connections and maintain its bond. With other beauty pageants – such as Miss Chinatown Hawaii and Miss Asian American Hawaii – becoming available and sending their winners to higher levels of competition in the continental United States, the Narcissus Queen Pageant, a local contest, still attracts more contestants and a much larger audience. The majority of the Pageant contestants come from the middle- and upper-middle-class families of the pre-1965 community. The relative popularity of the Pageant among Chinese American contestants lies in its elimination of swimsuit competition and its time-honored prestige in Hawai'i as well as in Asia. Not having to face the public in a swimsuit, contestants are spared of “feeling like being on a meat market.” They receive not only free training in poise, makeup, and speech but also free classes on Chinese history, culture, and arts. The primary award for the queen is to participate in the annual

⁶ Christine R. Yano, “Mixing the Plate: Performing Japanese American Identity on the Stage of the Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Pageant in Honolulu, Hawai'i,” in *The Japanese American Contemporary Experience in Hawai'i, Social Process in Hawaii* series, guest ed. Jonathan Y. Okamura, 41 (2002).

three-week-long Narcissus Goodwill Tour of the Chamber to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China as a “goodwill ambassador.” Other awards include \$11,000 scholarship to Hawaii Pacific University, a courtesy car from a car dealer (e.g. J.N. Chevrolet) for a year, dining and merchandise certificates, as well as jewelry.

The participation of young Chinese American women as contestants keeps the Pageant running and maintains the Festival as the largest annual profit-making project of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The Festival and the Pageant generate sufficient revenue, which ranges from \$15,000 to \$25,000 a year, to cover the Chamber’s expenses for running its Chinatown office and hosting guests from all over the world. In fact, the Festival is so significant to the Chamber that every elected vice-president has to serve as the general chair and run the Festival for a year before he can take office and head the Narcissus Goodwill Tour. To a certain extent, the Festival serves both as the vice-president’s training ground and as his primary community service to the Chamber.

The Narcissus Festival has evolved from a four-day celebration in 1950 into a nine-month-long project in recent decades. The Narcissus Queen Pageant grew from an odd component of the ethnic spectacle to an integral part of the Festival and finally to the flagship program of the Festival. Today, the Pageant has become not only a symbol of the Chinese American community but also a symbol of Hawaii’s long tradition of “ethnic harmony.”

In the current era, the queen search committee of the Festival conducts its search for contestants in spring and summer, finding and meeting potential candidates through past and current queens, old and new Festival leaders, friends, colleagues, and even through parties and shopping mall visits. The first program of the Festival is the

orientation held in August at the Hilton Hawaiian Village for the contestants and families, where pictures, *cheongsams*, and a slide show are displayed, introduction is made on the Festival and Pageant's procedures, rules, and requirements, and the "Good Luck Narcissus Queen Contestants" cake is cut and shared. In the four months that follow the orientation, the contestants go through training on poise and makeup skills for different occasions. They also take cultural classes from experts in the community on various Chinese customs and practices, such as martial arts, cooking, calligraphy, paper cutting, Chinese medicine, *mahjong*, and Chinese immigration to Hawai'i. They are required to research, write, and memorize a speech on five topics out of a pool of 80 on Chinese tradition and practices – as preparation for the speech phase of the Pageant.

The Festival officially starts in early November with a reception again at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, where Chamber members, families of the contestants, local news media, and community leaders have the first view of the metamorphosis of the contestants into "graceful, poised, and charming ladies" dressed in uniform Chinese *cheongsam*⁷. Meanwhile, the guests can "savor ethnic Chinese *pupus*" while "socializing in the elegant Tapa Ballroom of the Hilton Hawaiian Village."⁸ In November and December, the contestants make public appearances at major shopping malls on the island of O'ahu to publicize the Festival and to try out their newly-acquired smile, walk, turn, stand, and speech techniques as well as their memorized speeches.

After spending a dozen evenings or weekends in learning the opening-stage group dance and rehearsing their talents, the contestants finally take the Pageant stage to

⁷ Often explained as the "Chinese gown" in the Pageant's *Souvenir Book*, it refers to a style of dress for women that features a high collar, tight fit, side slits, in knee or floor length, sleeveless or full sleeved. It is called *qipao* in North China.

⁸ *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Book* 56 (2005): 55.

compete at three phases of talent, speech, and signature *cheongsam*. At the beginning of the Pageant show, the seven judges for the beauty contest are introduced to the contestants as well as to the audience for the first time in the annual Festival, although the selection of judges began before the kick-off reception. Three days prior to the Pageant, the judges have already interviewed the contestants, at “the beautiful and serene O‘ahu Country Club.” The Pageant, as the climax of the Festival, generally takes place in January, or three weeks before the Chinese New Year.

One week before the Chinese New Year proceeds the coronation ball, a “regal occasion” that is attended by government officials, local dignitaries and celebrities, as well as all the “big-time sponsors” of the Festival. It is held at the Hilton Hawaiian Village, where the new queen is crowned by the governor of Hawai‘i and dances the first waltz with the mayor of Honolulu (as the current governor Linda Lingle is a woman). During the weekend prior to the Chinese New Year, the new queen and her court host the Chinatown Open House, visiting Chinatown stores and meeting the public at the Cultural Plaza’s New Year fair of stage performances and merchandise sale. The month of March features a Narcissus Fashion Show with a formal luncheon, where those Pageant contestants who did not win as well as Pageant women from past years showcase fashion merchandise from local or international designers. The venue is again the ballroom in Hilton Hawaiian Village. Finally, in June and July, the new queen and her court will embark on the Chinese Chamber of Commerce’s Narcissus Goodwill Tour, serving as “goodwill ambassadors” to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China.

The significance of these procedures, routines, and programs lies in four aspects: the prominence of the Pageant in the community Festival, the amount of preparation and

social obligation expected for the Pageant women, the high economic, social, and political status of the crowd at the Waikīkī hotel gatherings, and the degree of community resources and connections the Festival mobilizes. What deserves attention is the convolution of gender politics, ethnicity identification, and class stratification in the ethnic spectacle.

Research Questions and Purposes

The combination of beauty queen and community identity first caught my attention in 1997 when I attended a Chinese American community banquet on behalf of the Mainland Chinese students from the University of Hawai‘i. The banquet was a welcome reception for the officers from the Navy of the People’s Republic of China who were visiting the United States. During the dinner, the Narcissus Queen and Miss Chinatown were treated as dignitaries, who were introduced to the naval officers along side the local community leaders. I later noticed that beauty queens represented the Chinese American community in other public events as well, from the Christmas Parade in Honolulu to the State’s Aloha Festival Parade and King Kamehameha Day Parade. They were also the spokespersons for the community in local TV stations’ broadcast of Chinese New Year Celebration in Chinatown. I began my research on the dynamic relationship between beauty queens and community representation after I learned that the Festival and the Pageant had served as the largest annual community events since 1949 and the beauty queens had traveled over the world as “goodwill ambassadors” of the community. I submitted the initial research as my Capstone Project for the University of Hawai‘i-East-West Center International Cultural Studies Certificate program. Afterwards, I decided to expand it into my dissertation topic because the Festival and the

Pageant can serve as a window to examine the continuous process of identity construction of the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i since World War II.

Using the Narcissus Festival and Queen Pageant as a case study, my dissertation examines the representation and transformation of Chinese American identity in post-WWII Hawai‘i. It explores both the past and present meanings of being Chinese American in Hawai‘i as expressed through the state’s largest annual ethnic community event. My dissertation addresses three major questions: 1) How does the Festival represent the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i in different historical and political contexts? 2) What roles do Chinese American women play in constructing Chinese American identity in Hawai‘i? How do different generations of young women feel about being ethnic beauty queens and contestants? 3) What is the meaning of Chineseness and Americanness as constructed through this annual event in Hawai‘i?

My dissertation looks beyond the stereotyped façade of “Chineseness” and “Americanness” and explores the fluid and multifaceted nature of Chinese American identity and experience. The conventional narrative of Chinese Americans has been filtered, consciously or subconsciously, so as to conform to either an American assimilationist story that reiterates the success of the “American melting pot” or to a Chinese-centric story that glorifies the success of Confucianism. Many scholars in Chinese diaspora studies and Asian American studies challenge these two assertions. They emphasize the existence of various interfaces between Chinese diaspora and the host society and the contingency of both Chineseness and Americanness in changing power dynamics. My dissertation explores the changes in Chineseness and Americanness through different historical periods of post-WWII Hawai‘i and how those changes are

intertwined and convoluted. The meaning of Americanness in Hawai‘i is not only contingent upon national and international politics but upon the events and movements of the local and Native population in Hawai‘i. The meaning of Chineseness is locally shaped and simultaneously defined by American and international politics. Therefore, the meanings of Chineseness and Americanness are defined interactively and both are simultaneously defined by the indigenous culture and people of Hawai‘i.

My dissertation also brings out the multi-class and multi-cultural facets of the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i. Many existing works present a monolithic picture of a contiguous, harmonious, and unified Chinese American community in Hawai‘i which has achieved upward social mobility through hard work and self-reliance. This myth ignores the fact that many of the earliest settlers lived within their small circles and treated other Chinese from different kinships, towns, or provinces with suspicion and even hostility. It obscures the historical legacy of Chinese men’s common law marriage with Native Hawaiian women primarily due to the scarcity of Chinese women. It also masks the fact that the older Chinese American community in Honolulu, as represented by Hiram Fong, the first Asian American Senator, belongs to a different social class from the more recent immigrants of Chinese ancestry from Vietnam and Cambodia who came to Hawai‘i as “boat people,” and the majority of whom are the present-day Chinatown residents and store runners. The former group mainly started as sugar plantation workers and became urbanized and suburbanized middle-class citizens beginning in the early twentieth century, whereas the latter came as urban menial laborers and most remained working class into the second generation. There are also other Chinese American communities that are made up of recent immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, or

Mainland China, who immigrated with enough social and cultural capital and who run their enterprises away from Honolulu Chinatown and the Chinese American community. The diversity and conflicts of the community certainly define the diversity and contestation of Chinese Americanness in Hawai'i.

My dissertation also stresses the dynamic roles Chinese American women have played in ethnic identification and the intersection of culture construction and the female body. It illustrates that the female body has been a site through which the meanings of Chineseness and Americanness have been constructed over the past 56 years of the Pageant history. Nationality, "race," ethnicity, class, and femininity are all defined simultaneously in the Narcissus Queen Pageant. My dissertation addresses the problem in contemporary Chinese American studies that academic writings tend to privilege male experience whereas literary writings tend to privilege female experience. It deconstructs this sexual division of representation in academic and literary fields by focusing on women's social and daily experience in cultural representation.

Beyond these primary purposes, my dissertation fills a gap in the history of Hawai'i as well as the history of Chinese Americans. Hawai'i boasts the oldest Chinese American community and is still the largest one in terms of its proportion within the state population. Chinese Americans in Hawai'i have also maintained a higher social status as well as a higher level of social and cultural integration than the majority of the Chinese American population does on the U.S. continent. However, most historical works about them are primarily focused on their survival as plantation workers, farmers, and

merchants in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.⁹ Their history in the twentieth century is largely unwritten, especially for the post-WW II period, when the Islands experienced a new wave of conflicts over American colonization through such events as the Cold War, the Vietnam War, and the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement.¹⁰ In sharp contrast, many works have been written about the Japanese American, Filipino American, and Native Hawaiian experiences in the twentieth-century Hawai‘i. My dissertation is an attempt to enrich our understanding of the more recent history of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i and to examine their identity in Hawaii’s post-WWII context.

Literature Review

A sexual division of representation in academic and literary fields has existed in Chinese American studies since the establishment of the discipline in the 1960s. Early academic studies of Chinese Americans have mainly dealt with the social, economic, and political consciousness of men whereas most literary representations of Asian Americans have focused on the subjectivity and consciousness of women. Aihwa Ong and Sylvia Yanagisako once criticized:

⁹ See Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*; Clarence E. Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese Migrants in Hawaii* (Honolulu: Hawaii Chinese History Center and The University Press of Hawaii, 1980); Yansheng M. Lum, *Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii: Activities and Supporters* (Honolulu: Hawaii Chinese History Center, 1999); Diane M.L. Mark, *Seasons of Light: The History of Chinese Christian Churches in Hawaii*, (Honolulu: Chinese Christian Association of Hawaii, 1989); and Hsien-en Yeh, “An Historical Investigation of Zhongshan Emigration to Hawaii,” *Lucky Come to Hawai‘i*, East-West Center Conference, 1988.

¹⁰ Among the limited few are Qi Chen, “The Acculturation of Chinese Intellectuals in Hawaii: 1894-1959,” (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii-Mānoa, 1997); and Leonard Wong, “Hawaii Chinese: the Americanization Movement,” (M.A. thesis, University of Hawaii-Mānoa, 1999).

Until recently the subject of diasporic Chinese has been marked by a division of gender interest in academic writing, which tends to privilege male experience, ... and literary writings, which privilege female voices.¹¹

This sexual division of representation in academic and literary fields then subsided when a series of work was published on ethnic beauty contests, Asian American women sweatshop workers, factory workers, and domestic workers in the United States.¹² The works on beauty contests, which include the ones written by Judy T.C. Wu, Nhi T. Lieu, and Rebecca C. King on the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Scholarship Pageant, the Vietnamese American *Hoa Hau Ao Dai* contest, and the Japanese American Cherry Blossom Queen Pageant respectively, not only address the social experience and identity practice of women but also explore the identity construction of the community, thus contributing to the fusion of the academic and literary representations of Asian Americans. Bringing ethnic beauty pageants into the foreground for academic scrutiny, Wu, Lieu, and King have exposed clearly the permeation of gender in the construction of ethnicity. They argue that the construction of an ethnic identity is simultaneously a construction of a gendered identity. However, their works still tend to privilege the voices

¹¹ Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Duke University Press, 1999), 370. Examples for male-focused academic writing include Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991) and Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A history of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1989). The female-focused literary representation can be seen with Maxine Hong Kingston, *Woman Warrior* (Vintage Books, 2000); Amy Tan, *Joy Luck Club* (New York: G.P. Putman's Sons, 1989); Fae Myenne Ng, *Bone* (New York: Hyperion, 1993); Jung Chang, *The Wild Swan: Three Daughters of China* (London: Flamingo, 1993).

¹² Rebecca C. King, "The Changing Face of Japanese America: The Making and Remaking of Race in the Japanese-American Community," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1998); Judy T.C. Wu, "Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!': Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant," *Journal of Social History* (Fall 1997): 5-31; Nhi T. Lieu, "Remembering 'the Nation' Through Pageantry: Femininity and the Politics of Vietnamese Womanhood in the *Hoa Hau Ao Dai* Contest," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 25, issue ½ (2000): 127-151; Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Act: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

and perspectives of Pageant and community leaders. Pageant women still lack their own subjectivity and are often quoted only as victims or followers of those leaders. These works also tend to present Asian Americans as “survivors” – as discriminated Americans who are struggling for recognition and fighting for their civil rights. This approach is not sufficient to understand the multi-class and multi-cultural Chinese American community and to reveal the uneven assimilation of different classes into the mainstream society. This approach also fails to define the settler status of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i that is entrepreneurial in nature and competitive against industrial capitalists.

While some scholars have researched beauty pageants and ethnic beauty pageants in the continental United States, hardly any publications can be found regarding beauty pageants in Hawai‘i, where national, racial, ethnic, and gender identity formation takes place in unique ways due to its specific geographical location, indigenous culture, population composition, and colonial history. Only two articles are published on Japanese Americans’ Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Pageant. Christine R Yano’s “Mixing the Plate: Performing Japanese American Identity on the Stage of the Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Pageant in Honolulu, Hawai‘i” and Jonathan Y. Okamura’s “Baseball and Beauty Queens: The Political Context of Ethnic Boundary Making in the Japanese American Community in Hawai‘i” both examine the politics of racial formation, blood quantum, and ethnic identity with the recent change of rules in the Cherry Blossom Festival Queen Pageant to accept American women with “half” Japanese ancestry as contestants.¹³ Yano’s and Okamura’s works not only discuss the identity issues of the

¹³ Both were published in *The Japanese American Contemporary Experience in Hawai‘i*. Jonathan Y. Okamura, guest ed., *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 41(October, 2002). Yano is in the process of publishing a book on the Cherry Blossom Festival.

Japanese American community but also reflect the broader changes in identity politics and ethnic relations in Hawai'i. However, no other research has been published that examines those broader changes through a study of other ethnic institutions, such as the Chinese American, Korean American, or Filipino American beauty contests.

Earlier scholars of beauty contests mostly focused on the Miss America pageant, which involves primarily white contestants, and addressed it only from the framework of women's studies and American popular culture. Such works include Frank Deford's *There she is: the life and times of Miss America*, Armando Riverol's *Live from Atlantic City*, and Robert Lavenda's "Minnesota Queen Pageants."¹⁴ From the mid-1990s, scholars of beauty pageants began to broaden their analytical scope to combine gender analysis with the analyses of race, class, ethnicity, and national identity. Cohen *et al*'s *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power*¹⁵ is a collection of essays that examine beauty contests in fourteen different countries around the world, such as Guatemala, Thailand, Belize, Tonga, Tibet, Moslem Philippines and a 1989 contest for Miss Moscow. These essays explain that beauty contests showcase not only the politics of gender roles but also of dominant discourses of nationalism all over the globe. Sarah Banet-Weiser's *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* powerfully situates the Miss America pageant in multiple systems of culture,

¹⁴ Frank Deford, *There she is: the life and times of Miss America*, rev. ed. (Penguin Books, 1978); Armando Riverol, *Live from Atlantic City: A History of the Miss America Pageant Before, After and in Spite of Television* (Bowling Green, OH: Popular Press, 1992); Robert Lavenda, "Minnesota Queen Pageants: Play, Fun, and Dead Serious in a Festive Mode," *The Journal of American Folklore* 101:400: 168-175.

¹⁵ Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, eds., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

struggles for power and control, and discursive fields of practices.¹⁶ Most works since then have stressed the role of beauty pageants in community and national representation, which can be seen in Andrew Russell's "Miss World Comes to India," Rupal Oza's "Showcasing India," and Katarina Mattsson and Katarina Pattersson's "Crowning Miss Sweden."¹⁷

Scholars of Asian American women began researching ethnic beauty pageants in the late 1990s. Judy Wu was the first scholar to emphasize the significance of ethnic beauty pageants in her article "“Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!”"¹⁸ Using Pageant publications, oral histories, and newspapers, Wu does a historical study of the conflict and negotiation over the representation of Chinese American women in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. beauty contest from 1958 to the 1970s. As the first academic work on an ethnic beauty pageant, Wu's article introduces many important concepts, such as the performativity in identity representation, the tourism-oriented cultural representation, the class division of the community, and the contrasting images of the East and the West in identity representation. It also emphasizes the use of various perspectives of the Chinese American community over the definition of Chineseness, the implication of showcasing women's bodies, and the meaning of being an American. Wu's article demonstrates the complexity within the Chinese American community in the San Francisco Bay area,

¹⁶ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageant and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁷ Andrew Russell, "Miss World Comes to India," *Anthropology Today*, 13:4 (1997): 12-14; Rupal Oza, "Showcasing India: Gender, Geography, and Globalization," *Signs* 26:4 (Summer 2001); Katarina Mattsson and Katarina Pettersson, "Crowning Miss Sweden – Construction of Gender, Race and Nation in Beauty Pageants," presented at *Gender and Power in the New Europe*, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference, August 20-24, 2003, Lund University, Sweden.

¹⁸ Wu, "“Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!”" 6.

especially the conflicts and negotiations that take place over the Miss Chinatown America pageant in the late 1960s and 1970s. However, while using the voices from the Chinese American communities in the San Francisco Bay area, Wu's lack of critical analysis of those voices dilutes her argument and even perpetuates some essentialist notions. For example, she does not examine the origin of the pageant and only used the organizers' words of both their need "of assimilation" and "to preserve Chinese culture."¹⁹ She applies such terms as "assimilation" and "preserving their culture" without question and goes on to give examples of Chinese assimilation and quotes a contestant's claim that her trip to San Francisco was "her first glimpse of Chinese life."²⁰

Nhi T. Lieu's "Remembering 'the Nation' through Pageantry"²¹ on a Vietnamese American beauty pageant in California implements a more theoretical analysis on the connection between the construction of femininity and that of ethnicity and nation. She demonstrates that although some aspects of ethnic beauty competitions replicate larger American national and state pageants, they also "articulate alternative cultural practices that counter the dominant discourse."²² Lieu analyzes the symbolic incorporation of the traditional Vietnamese dress for women called *ao dai* into the imagination of a pre-Communist and bourgeois Vietnam as their homeland in the pageant. She then conducts a close reading of a commercially produced video recording of the 18th annual *ao dai* pageant in Long Beach, California in 1995 and looks at how different programs in this pageant construct not only a nostalgic nationalism, but also a diasporic, global Vietnam.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²¹ Lieu, "Remembering 'the Nation' through Pageantry," 127-151.

²² *Ibid.*, 128.

In the construction, young Vietnamese women were transformed into sexualized bodies that represent a Vietnamese culture that is superior to American culture in terms of sexual morality. Their bodies also represent Vietnamese aspiration to enter the American bourgeoisie. Lieu also points out that, as seen in the 1995 pageant show, since a winning female body must represent at the same time a “homeland” with different cultural features and a middle-class community defined by modernization and progress, the result is the reformation of the body and a hybrid beauty for women, sometimes achieved through plastic surgery.

Rebecca Chiyoko King’s dissertation “The Changing Face of Japanese America: The Making and Remaking of Race in the Japanese American Community” also addresses hybridity but examines how racially-mixed Japanese American women challenge the definition and boundaries of race and ethnicity, and how they negotiate the racial rules within a particular community institution – beauty pageants in Honolulu, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. To a certain extent, she goes further than other scholars of beauty pageants to argue that contestants not only perform in certain ways to represent femininity and ethnicity for their community, but can also challenge or reshape the very meaning of femininity and ethnicity as defined by the community, such as when they are racially mixed. King argues so to provide an answer to the Japanese Americans who were facing “high out marriage rates, low immigration, and an aging population.”²³ Using racially-mixed pageant women as her example, she demonstrates that the hope for Japanese Americans was to have their “racially” non-Japanese members reclaim their “loyalty” to the community “culturally” thus enlarging the boundary of the Japanese

²³ King, “The Changing Face of Japanese America,” 1.

American community. To support her argument, King develops Omi and Winnant's racial formation theory. She defines "race" and ethnicity as "distinctive but connected" and the relationship between the two as "two parts... on a continuum and in direct interaction with each other."²⁴ She envisions a multicultural American society in which racially mixed citizens were able to claim loyalty to different groups and thus achieve a universal appreciation of different families, cultures, and communities.

Lon Kurashige, in his *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990*, a thorough study of the Nisei Week Festival from pre-WWII to the contemporary period, also uses Omi and Winnant's racial formation theory. However, he focuses on their concept of "rearticulation" and forms the argument that "the Nisei Week reveals the articulation and rearticulation of Japanese American identity."²⁵ Kurashige convincingly demonstrates that the formation of ethnic identity within the Los Angeles Japanese American community was "a process of turning the dominant languages of race against itself."²⁶ Through the Festival, the community leaders were "reinterpreting racist discourse thereby rearticulating it into an empowering racial identity."²⁷ They fought back the anti-Japanese prejudice and discrimination by "rewiring racism to serve their own collective needs and interests."²⁸ His work fully stresses the agency of Japanese Americans in their identity making by stating that "group identities are not the spontaneous products of social conditions

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁵ Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 9.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

(structures) but are mediated through the repetition of cultural experiences and practices.”²⁹

Furthermore, Kurashige emphasizes the heterogeneity of the ethnic community and clashing interests of different classes in identity construction. In demonstrating this, he creatively uses Bourdieu’s concept of social capital to delineate the discrepancy between the leader’s ethnic prescriptions and those with the lowest degrees of economic and cultural capital. Kurashige also demonstrates the heterogeneity among the pageant contestants of the Nisei Week Festival, which included the generational differences between the pre-War and post-War contestants, the impact of the 1970s’ social movements on Japanese American women, as well as the conflict over the racially mixed contestants.

While all these works provide me with inspirations and insights in understanding ethnic beauty pageants, I also see their limitations in guiding my own analysis. They do not answer two basic questions that concern the Narcissus Festival and Queen Pageant. First, why do young women participate in the Narcissus Queen Pageant? Second, how do I conceptualize the Narcissus Festival and Pageant in relationship to the indigenous Hawaiian culture and Hawaiian people? The first question emphasizes the subjectivity of the pageant women in the production of the Festival and the Pageant. It is my attempt to avoid a re-objectification of them – or a second gaze upon them – in my study of identity expression on the female body. The second question acknowledges the impact of the Hawaiian Movement upon my perception of the history and society in Hawai‘i. It stresses the ongoing process of American colonization in Hawai‘i and the importance to embed

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

my analysis of Chinese American identity construction in the colonial *vis-à-vis* anti-colonial power dynamics.

Works on ethnic beauty pageants often excel in reading the meanings of identity expression but fail to provide subjectivity in women's participation as contestants in the ethnicity-based events. They tend to focus more on the voices of the pageant and community leaders rather than on the voices of the contestants in analyzing identity expression in the community projects. They do not give enough attention to the motivation and goals of young women to join pageants, their perception toward pageants, as well as the cultural and educational background that defines their femininity and "the ideal womanhood." To a certain extent, the problem that was raised by Ong and Yanagisako on the sexual division of literary and academic fields still exists. The study of ethnic beauty pageants still privileges male subjectivity.

I raise the second question in response to the recent radical critique of Asian American's settler status that was developed by intellectuals and activists in Hawai'i. Among these intellectuals, Hawaiian scholar Haunani-Kay Trask provides the first and most radical critique of settlers in Hawai'i:

Modern Hawai'i, like its colonial parent the United States, is a settler society; that is, Hawai'i is a society in which the indigenous culture and people have been murdered, suppressed, or marginalized for the benefit of settlers who now dominated our islands.³⁰

Inspired by Trask's argument as well as the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement that had developed since the 1970s, many Asian American studies scholars began to reflect critically upon the role Asian Americans have played in the colonization of Hawai'i and

³⁰ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 25.

in the history of the United States in general. Ruth Y. Hsu, an Asian American scholar and activist once asserted that, “Asian Americans need to question not only what the American nation-state is doing, but also their own complicity in maintaining and furthering the West’s (neo)colonialist policies”³¹

The development of the radical critique of Asian American settlers is best represented by an anthology that was co-edited by Asian American professors Jonathan Okamura and Candace Fujikane and published as a special issue of the *Amerasia* journal in 2000. Under the title “Whose Vision? Asian Settler Colonialism in Hawai‘i,” the anthology collected 17 essays and articles that challenged the traditional notion of the “melting pot” of Hawaiians and Asians and delineated the contour and content of Asian American complicity in U.S. colonization of Hawai‘i.

None of the works that researched beauty pageants in the continental United States view Asian Americans as settlers of the United States. They all hold an “immigrant perspective,” which designated a “survivor status” to Asian Americans and depicted them as historically discriminated Americans who deserve their “inalienable rights” of U.S. citizens. With Hawaii’s sovereignty movement, Asian Americans in Hawai‘i bear a more salient settler status than their counterparts on the mainland. Native Hawaiians’ resistance against U.S. cultural and political colonization and against Japan’s economic colonization, together with waves of Hawaiian sovereignty movement, has challenged the status and attitudes of Asian settlers more saliently than Native American movements have done in the continental United States. The colonial *vis-à-vis* anti-colonial power

³¹ Ruth Y. Hsu, “‘Will the Model Minority Please Identify Itself?’ American Ethnic Identity and Its Discontents,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 5:1 (Spring 1996), 46.

dynamics in Hawai‘i thus require a more self-reflexive analytical framework for ethnic identity studies and ethnic pageant studies in Hawai‘i.

Theoretical Framework

In examining the construction of Chinese American identity in the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant, I draw upon scholarship from multiple disciplines that include women and gender studies, ethnic and diaspora studies, tourism studies, the political economy of Hawai‘i, and the multilateral relationships of United States, China, Taiwan, and Hawai‘i. I design my study in such a cross-disciplinary fashion so as to find different tool kits to address various facets and venues of the Community, the Festival, and the Pageant.

With the previous scholarship in the above disciplines, I make three major theoretical and methodological interventions. Firstly, I examine the representation of Chineseness constructed by Chinese Americans instead of those constructed in the mainstream American media. Much work has been written on the American conceptualization of Asians and Asian Americans in cinema, literature, and material culture. They include Gina Marchetti’s *Romance and the “Yellow Peril,”* Darrell Y. Hamamoto’s *Monitored Peril*, Robert Lee’s *Orientalism*, Mari Yoshihara’s *Embracing the East*, and Christina Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism*.³² Theories of orientalism and (post)-colonialism in these works have provided useful insights into the cultural reproduction of

³² Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the “Yellow Peril”: Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Robert Lee, *Orientalism: Asian Americans in Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000); Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford University Press, 2002); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

the East-versus-West power paradigm. However, relatively little has been published beyond the literary field on the images of Asians and “the Orient” that are constructed by Asian Americans. Among the available works, the majority focuses on self-representation in the field of cinema and drama. Works that study Asian American film workers include Peter X. Feng’s *Screening Asian Americans*, Chun Hsing and Jun Xing’s *Asian America Through the Lens*, and Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Sandra Liu’s *Countervisions: Asian-American Film Criticism*.³³

My study of identity reproduction focuses on the self-representation in a community cultural festival and beauty pageant, where the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction as well as between front stage and back stage are much harder to define than in Asian American cinema or theater. The literature that has developed in the anthropology of tourism and anthropological studies of ceremonies, rituals, and holidays is particularly useful for designing my own analytical framework. The works that I have benefited the most from include Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger’s *The Invention of Tradition*, James Clifford’s *Routes*, Nick Stanley’s *Being Ourselves for You*, and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s *Destination Culture*.³⁴ These works delineate an intricate relationship between perception and self-perception, performing oneself for others and for one’s own community, gaze and returned gaze, cultural exploitation and cultural preservation, and tradition and invention.

³³ Peter X. Feng, *Screening Asian Americans* (Rutgers University, 2002); Chun Hsing and Jun Xing, *Asian America Through the Lens: History, Representations and Identities* (Altamira, 1998); Darrell Y. Hamamoto and Sandra Liu’s *Countervisions: Asian-American Film Criticism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

³⁴ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, reprint 1992); James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Harvard University Press); Nick Stanley, *Being Ourselves for You: The Global Display of Cultures* (Middlesex University Press, 1998); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Secondly, in deconstructing the sexual division of representation, I not only foreground gender in the construction of ethnic identity but emphasize the subjectivity of pageant women in the community project. I raise the question – Why do young women participate in the Narcissus Queen Pageant? – to stress their own motivations and experiences in the Festival and the Pageant and to avoid re-objectifying them in my study of identity expression on the female body.

The rich literature in American Studies on the changing meanings of femininity and the development of ideal American womanhood in different centuries and decades can help to understand the gender and sexuality culture that contestants drew from in different historical periods. Among the works that focus on the ideal femininity and womanhood after World War II, Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* examines how two dominant yet contradictory images of the 1950s – the notion of domestic tranquility and happiness versus the fears and tensions of the Cold War – led to a retreat of American family life to the privacy and security of the home.³⁵ The era's political insecurities thus coerced women back to the role of housewives after a temporary liberation from the domestic domain during World War II. Susan J. Douglas, in *Where the Girls Are*, chronicles the images of women as represented in the mass media in late 20th-century American culture.³⁶ She suggests that the media is both a liberating and an oppressive force that feeds modern American women with many conflicting images of women. While she asserts that pop culture can have a profound impact on women's self-perceptions, to the extent that they are uncertain of what they want and what society

³⁵ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books 1988)

³⁶ Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (Times Books, 1994).

expects of them, she also stresses that women, by the example of their own lives, have considerably changed the way the media represents them. The literature that documents and examines women's obsession with self-image and the commercialization of the female body in American culture includes Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight*, Naomi Wolf's *The Beauty Myth*, and Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *The Body Project*.³⁷ Other scholars, however, argue that the oppression and coercion of society should not be exaggerated. They stress the fact that it was the 1950s' and 1960s' social environment that nurtured the forerunners of the 1970s' feminist movement. Such authors include Wini Breines in *Young, White, and Miserable*, Joanne Meyerowitz in *Not June Cleaver*, and Ruth Rosen in *The World Split Open*.³⁸

Among the scholars on ethnic beauty pageants, Shirley Jennifer Lim is the one who has provided a direct answer to my first question. In her article "Contested Beauty: Asian American Women's Cultural Citizenship during the Early Cold War Era," Lim asserts that the primary motivation for young women to enter community beauty contest during the Cold War era was "status and power."³⁹ She further explains,

First, ... winning a community event or being featured in a magazine could "crown" the social power of a particular young lady. Second, pageants acted as "GI Bills" for women in that they provided economic incentives... Third, the

³⁷ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (University of California Press, reprint 1995); Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used Against Women* (Perennial, 2002); Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998).

³⁸ Wini Breines, *Young, White, and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); and Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open: How the Modern Women's Movement Changed America* (Penguin, 2001).

³⁹ Shirley Jennifer Lim, "Contested Beauty: Asian American Women's Cultural Citizenship during the Early Cold War Era," in *Asian/Pacific Islander Women: A Historical Anthology*, eds. Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomura (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 191.

grooming process of the pageant...taught young women public poise, polish, and the skills to operate in the public sphere. Fourth, the beauty-pageant contestant or model gained status in her family and community... Fifth, the pageants and magazine profiles functioned as debuts in which young women would be introduced to society as eligible for dating. ... Sixth, the excitement and glamour of being at center stage, like a movie star or royalty, at a time when women had very few opportunities to get public attention, as an incentive.⁴⁰

While Lim's answer is insightful, she does not further elaborate on these motivations of pageant women in the Cold War era. It is sometimes unclear what research methods she used to draw those conclusions – whether it was through secondary literature on beauty pageants, interviews with the pageant women from that era, or other personal and public archives.

Michele Barrett's theory on post-feminism provides an answer to women's sustained interest in beauty pageants after the feminist movement of the 1970s. Barrett defines post-feminism as a response to the perceived lack of femininity in the feminist movement of the 1970s – it was the “popular feeling that a drearily militant feminist politics has been succeeded by a new phenomenon – we can shorthand it as ‘girl power’ – which puts the femininity back into women's sense of identity and aspiration.”⁴¹ The “girl power” refers to the phenomenon that “girls are doing better at school, saucy, girls are not frightened, girls are confident, some are even violent. Girls, now, are the beneficiaries of the battles that feminists once fought: they take for granted their equality with boys – even superiority over boys.”⁴²

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁴¹ Michele Barrett, “Post-feminism,” in *Understanding Contemporary Society: Theories of the Present*, eds. Gary Browning, Abigail Halcli and Frank Webster (Sage Publications, 2000), 46.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 46.

Barrett also traces this popular strand of new feminism developed as a reaction to the feminist political movement of the 1970s. Many women in the 1970s shared the belief that all significant differences between men and women were created in a sexist society and the task of feminism was to bring about a social and economic order that realizes the fundamental equality between men and women. In the 1980s and 1990s, however, the feminist movement was “now seen as attempting to obliterate the difference between men and women in its serious pursuit of the goals of equality.”⁴³ Different from this “equality” model, the post-feminism advocated the “difference” model, which argued that the insistence on equality had understated fundamental differences between women and men. It claimed that these fundamental differences, either as biological or psychological in nature, were always there and were important.

It is the politics of “difference” that provides me not only with an important explanation for the post-feminist interest in beauty pageants but also a connection between the politics of claiming femininity and the politics of claiming ethnicity. Many scholars, from Derrida to Nancy Fraser, have declared that the primary concern of the contemporary century is the issue of “difference.” This politics of “difference” refutes any centrality of American culture and promotes diverse individual and group identities, such as identities in gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and body ableness. The politics of ethnic identity that promotes civil rights for subordinated Americans by asserting their distinctiveness as ethnic groups rather than their success in assimilation is a dimension of the politics of “difference.” In fact, the concept of “identity” serves as an interface that connects the double needs of Chinese American women to explore their difference in

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 46.

cultural identity as well as their difference in gender identity. Barrett's framework that links the claiming of ethnic and gender identity under the politics of "difference" is helpful in understanding how "multiculturalism" works on individuals and groups as the new American hegemony. It is also useful in understanding the agency of those individual and groups in their embracing the hegemony and in their challenging the hegemony from within.

Earlier scholars have also provided the condition that links the claiming of ethnic identity and gender identity. Anne McClintock points out that gendered identity is fundamental to the construction of an "imagined" nation-state because the nation is always regarded as a metaphoric kin group. A sustainable nationalist ideology often needs a patriarchal view of the family and the mother's metaphorical role to raise children and provide domestic service. In the process of abstracting gender roles symbolically, maleness is equated with progress, publicity, power, and centrality. Femaleness indicates passivity, domesticity, purity, and piety. In this symbolic process, women are simultaneously necessary and inferior. They "need" both to be protected and exploited. In her words, "women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency."⁴⁴

Edward Said uses the concept of "orientalism"⁴⁵ to expose the modern global power structure in the Western powers' objectifying and effeminizing "the other" as exotic and erotic. Thomas Hylland Eriksen argues that "sexual stereotyping is in many societies related to ethnicity... Gender imagery is often used to describe ethnic groups as

⁴⁴ Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995).

⁴⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

a whole.”⁴⁶ Often times, the indigenous and/or minority groups and women share structurally similar positions because both are “muted categories.” Both are oppressed and are compelled to use the language of the dominating majority or the patriarchy to express their interests. Neither can define the terms of the language. Both are taught that their specific social identity is “immutable” and “biological,” therefore their subordination “natural.”⁴⁷

While McClintock, Said, and Eriksen decipher the affinity of femaleness and ethnicity either through a patriarchal family structure or through the unbalanced colonial relationship between the West and “the other,” they all emphasize the omnipresence of the imposed identification yet leave little room for the agency of women and other subordinates in constructing their own identity. It is mainly because their paralleling of ethnic identity and gender identity takes the language of “the master” and “the patriarch” as fixed and fundamentally alien to the marginalized. Their framework hardly mentions the possibility that the language can become subversive when it is mastered by the marginalized.

Thirdly, in my analysis of Chineseness, I join the dialogue among scholars of Chinese and diaspora studies since the late 1980s over the question of “what makes Chinese Chinese.” I argue that the “creolization” and “localization” approach suggested by Ien Ang and Allen Chun is an effective way to de-centralize Chineseness and emphasize its contingent meaning in specific contexts. However, I also suggest a more careful examination of the “hybridization” that is also advocated by Ang and Chun.

⁴⁶ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity & Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Sterling, VA.:Pluto Press, 1993), 155.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

Using the Narcissus Festival and Queen Pageant as a case study, I argue that the imbalance of global power does not end with hybridization but often continues in a hybridized body.

Two centralizing views regarding the issues of Chineseness are “the geopolitical China” and “the cultural China.” The former, a rhetoric embraced by different Chinese political centers, argues that such geographic centers as Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, or Beijing are the ultimate authority in defining what is Chinese.⁴⁸ The latter, which is coined by well known Harvard Chinese history and philosophy professor Tu Weiming, challenges the geopolitical discourse by defining a symbolic Chinese universe that is centered around neo-Confucianism.⁴⁹ Tu defines the “cultural China” as the home for a transnational intellectual community who shares not only a “common awareness” but also “a common ancestry and cultural background.”

Two de-centered views have challenged “the geopolitical” and “the cultural China” respectively, criticizing them as “pan-China” ideas that homogenize a center, either political or cultural. Scholars of Chinese ethnic studies, such as Dru Gladney, Louisa Schein, and Ralph A. Litzinger⁵⁰ have contested the idea of “Greater China,” which is one of the geopolitical views and centers Chineseness around Beijing.⁵¹ Using

⁴⁸ Harry Harding, “The Concept of ‘Greater China’: Themes, Variations and Reservations,” *China Quarterly* 136 (1993): 683.

⁴⁹ Tu Wei-ming, ed., *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

⁵⁰ Dru Gladney, ed., *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Ralph A. Litzinger, *Other Chinas: the Yao and the Politics of National Belonging* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000); Louisa Schein, *Minority Rules: the Miao and the Feminine in China’s Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁵¹ Harding, “The Concept of ‘Greater China,’” 683.

such religious and ethnic groups as Muslims, Hui, Uyгур, Yao, and Miao in their case studies, these scholars demonstrate a fluid and interactive meaning of being Chinese in China -- Chineseness for the Han majority is often defined as civilized, sophisticated, modern, and rational by describing the ethnic minorities as exotic, pure, primitive, and emotional. They argue that there is no monolithic Chineseness within China.

Scholars of cultural studies such as Rey Chow, Allen Chun, and Ien Ang criticize Tu's "cultural China" view as a "pan-China" view that has limited much more radical identification of Chinese diaspora.⁵² To them, the concept of "cultural China" demonstrates an "obsession with China" in its attempt to replace the "geopolitical China" and thus "does not occupy a truly peripheral position as all."⁵³ They suggest a de-centered way to study Chineseness that focuses on specific "local interactions" of the Chinese diaspora and emphasizes the formation of Chinese diasporic identity through "creolization" and "hybridization," through "both conflictive and collaborative coexistence and intermixture with other cultures." Like the scholars of Chinese ethnic studies, Ang comes to the conclusion that Chineseness is always contextualized and negotiated:

Chineseness is not a category with a fixed content – be it racial, cultural, or geographical – but operates as an open and indeterminate signifier whose meanings are constantly renegotiated and rearticulated in different sections of the Chinese diaspora.⁵⁴

⁵² Ien Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness? Pushing the Limits of the Diasporic Paradigm," *boundary 2* 25:3 (Summer 1998): 223-342; Rey Chow, "Introduction: On Chineseness as a Theoretical Problem," *boundary 2* 25:3 (Summer 1998): 1-24

⁵³ Ang, "Can One Say No to Chineseness?," 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

Chineseness varies in different contexts and localities. Being Chinese outside China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore cannot possibly have the same meaning as being inside China.

Ang's approach of emphasizing "creolization" and "hybridization" through "local interaction" can fully demonstrate the diasporic articulation of "traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling,"⁵⁵ or the agency of Chinese or any diaspora group in their interaction with other social groups and their identification of themselves in specific locations. This approach, with its emphasis on "local interaction," can avoid the use of orthodox patterns of racial and ethnic politics in continental United States and instead explore the dynamics of the politics in the context of Hawai'i. In particular, this approach encourages a look into the construction of Chineseness within such dynamics as indigenous *vis-à-vis* the settlers, residents *vis-à-vis* the tourists, and locals *vis-à-vis* the *haoles* (a common word used in Hawai'i to refer to Caucasians) instead of Asian Americans *vis-à-vis* the white mainstream society.

Simultaneously, scholars of Chinese ethnic studies emphasize the ethnic as well as the regional diversity of Chinese identity within China. Their studies in turn can reveal how selective and creative Chinese Americans in Hawai'i are when they define Chinese tradition and customs. It reminds us that when Chinese Americans in Hawai'i refer to their Chinese origin they bring themselves into a different symbolic power structure. In this structure, Cantonese is a part of the ethnic majority dominating China's popular culture and exoticizing the ethnic minorities since the 1980s. In the same structure, the

⁵⁵ James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 108.

images of overseas Chinese have gone through a drastic change from discriminated overseas sojourners before the Cold War, to national betrayers during the Cold War, and finally to be viewed as entrepreneurial heroes after the Cold War.

A combination of the two de-centered approaches not only can prevent an “obsession” with any single form of Chineseness but also bring into focus the contingent meaning of Chineseness within different boundaries of nation-states. However, I also criticize the way diasporic and cultural studies sees hybridization as the solution to understanding diaspora identity politics. I will demonstrate through the Pageant’s representation of China and its annual Narcissus Goodwill Tour to China that various meanings of Chineseness coexist and function in various power structures but do not necessarily hybridize or mix. The language of being Chinese in one context does not always translate into another context. Localization of Chineseness does take place, but it does not necessarily challenge the Western mainstream paradigm that equates the West to modernity and the future and the East and the Pacific to tradition and the past. An emphasis on local hybridization in diasporic identity construction may prevent an “obsession” with geopolitical or cultural Chineseness. However, it does not stop the “obsession” with modernity, progress, and the supremacy of American colonial power.

Methodology

To examine congruencies and discrepancies in the construction of Chineseness by the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i over the past 53 years, I have used various methods for my research, including archival and web research, interviews, surveys, video documentation, and ethnographic research. My archival and web research includes data collection from the 53 years of Pageant souvenir books, local English and Chinese

periodicals since the 1940s, related collections from the Hawai'i Historical Society and the Hawai'i Chinese History Center as well as web sites of related topics. I conducted semi-directed interviews with community leaders, Festival organizers, volunteers, Pageant contestants, queen and court members, and judges from the past five decades. I also implemented a survey among the 2002 Pageant audience as well as one of the past queens and contestants. For comparative purposes, I also researched beauty contests that are closely related to the Narcissus Queen Pageant, such as the University of Hawaii's *Ka Palapala* Beauty Contest, Miss Chinatown Hawai'i, Miss Chinatown U.S.A., and Miss Chinese International at Hong Kong.

The bulk of my research is a multi-sited ethnographic research and visual anthropological research. The book *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America* edited by Martin F. Manalansan IV makes an insightful observation that ethnography has never been fully explored as a powerful tool in the study of Asian American communities.⁵⁶ Until the 1990s, the field of Asian American studies has been overwhelmingly dominated by the methodologies in quantitative, historical, literary, and media studies. The same situation can be seen in ethnic pageant studies, which is more influenced by these fields than by feminist studies, which has a strong ethnographic tradition. As a result, hardly any voice is given to the practitioners and participants of the beauty contest. Knowledge about the Asian American experience still has an abstract and distant vantage point and privileges the voices of artistic producers and scholars over the "lived experience" of "common" people. This is partly due to the traditional positivist

⁵⁶ Martin F. Manalansan IV., *Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 2.

methods of ethnographers as distant, omniscient strangers, the ethnography of promoting a lineal human history and a hierarchical order of peoples and cultures, and the colonial role of anthropology in Western imperialism. However, the post-modern turn in ethnography that has emphasized the break between “representation” and “reality,” the power of nuance, and the importance of the partial and particular knowledge can be helpful to understand Asian American experiences.⁵⁷ In particular, George Marcus’s innovation of “multisided and multi-locale ethnography” is helpful in examining the experience and identity of Asian Americans because they are constantly in the process of location, dislocation, and relocation.⁵⁸

My dissertation is an attempt to enrich the methodology for Asian American studies and to incorporate various methodologies for a more nuanced understanding of ethnic identity formation and representation. I performed participant observation of two rounds of the Narcissus Festival and Pageant. I attended the Chinese Chamber of Commerce’s board meetings, Festival executive meetings, the Pageant orientation, the Festival kick-off receptions, public appearances at shopping malls, Pageant rehearsals, and Pageant shows. I observed the judges’ interviews of the beauty contestants as well as most of the classes the contestants attend before the contest, including courses on make-up application, poise, martial arts, Chinese medicine, Chinese history, cooking, *mahjong*, and paper cutting. I also attended many post-Pageant events that involved the Queen and her court, such as the Chinese New Year celebration in Chinatown, the coronation ball,

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵⁸ George Marcus, *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

the fashion show, the cooking demonstration on a local TV station, the city's Chinese heritage month, and the Queen and Court's school visits.

I also performed field observation of the 2002 Narcissus Goodwill Tour to China from June 15 to July 5. I observed how the 2002 queen and her court, none of whom had ever been to China, represented Chinese American in Hawai'i to mainland China. During the tour, I documented how much these young women struggled to make sense of the gap between the images of China that they had been exposed to before the tour and their encounter with China at various stops of their visit. My participation in this tour allowed me to observe how a Chinese American from Hawai'i juxtaposes her role as a tourist and as a "rich relative" going back to her "homeland." The tour further demonstrated how contingent Chinese identity really is. Above all, I used visual anthropological methods in my ethnographic research and collected video footage of full year-round activities for image and interaction analyses, which range from the beauty contestants' training courses, cultural classes, and public appearances to their meetings with central government officials during their trip to China.

My role as a researcher swings within a range between an insider and an outsider, and yet never a total outsider or insider. The fact that I grew up in the North of China instead of the South, that I speak Mandarin instead of Cantonese, and that I live in Hawai'i alone as a foreign graduate student at the University of Hawai'i make me an outsider to the Chinese American community I am researching. Most of this group is third- to seventh-generation Chinese Americans whose families emigrated from Canton Province in China before 1965, and some could even trace their family history in Hawai'i back to early period of the plantation era before the 1900s. Moreover, my research topic

on the role of women in the Festival and the Pageant also makes me an outsider to their community. Most of the community leaders, Festival organizers, Pageant runners, and contestants are aware of, and some are familiar with, the feminist critique of beauty pageants. They suspect that my intent is to criticize them, expose them, and ultimately, discredit them to the larger Chinese American community.

On the other hand, what makes them take me as an insider is my “look” and when they recognize some “good old Chinese virtues” in me, and when they request for my insights into the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i. Some community members told me that when they first saw me at some of their functions, they thought I was “local” or a contestant’s sister because of my dark skin, my clothes, and my English. They said they could tell I was Chinese but I was not from Hong Kong, Taiwan, Mainland China, or Mainland America – I was “too dark” for the women from Hong Kong and Taiwan of my age; my “modern style” clothes and my “accent-free” English did not make me appear to be from Mainland China; and my “casual” attitude and my “mixed” English with pidgin phrases separate me from Mainland Chinese Americans.

Some informants and Festival workers were reluctant to be interviewed at first but then opened up to me after they decided that I still have some “good Chinese virtue.” This concept of virtue manifests itself through supporting myself through my study at the University of Hawai‘i without receiving money from my parents, and returning to China to visit my parents regularly with gifts. Some were indifferent to my research at first but offered to be interviewed after I told them things they did not know about Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. As my research continued over the past five years, I became further involved in various community activities that made me more of an insider. These

activities include volunteering for the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii team in the dragon boat race, offering free tutoring in Mandarin Chinese to the Chamber leaders, giving talks at Chinese American society gatherings, and writing articles for community publications on the history of Chinese Americans in Hawai'i.

Other times, they considered me to be the insider and themselves as outsiders. This happened particularly when I followed their tour to China. Many tour members would come to me, rather than the tour guide, with their questions about China. They also recommended other members to do so, saying that they did not trust the guide who always seemed to paint a rosy picture about China. They wanted "true information" from "a good insider." All these aspects complicated my role as a researcher and theirs as "subject" or "informant." As a result, my research is influenced by all of these factors.

Organization

In Chapter 2, I delineate racial, ethnic, gender, and national identity representations in Hawai'i prior to the Narcissus Festival and Pageant and examine the U.S. colonial legacies and cultural practices that the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii drew from, either consciously or subconsciously, to initiate their own events. The popular cultural festivals and beauty contests in the early twentieth century include the Mid-Winter Floral Parade, the University of Hawai'i *Ka Palapala* Queen beauty contest, the Aloha Week, and the first Miss Hawai'i pageant. In analyzing the impact of these cultural traditions and icons on the shaping of the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant, I focus on such issues as the use of "Island Princess" to represent Hawaiian islands, the bifurcated meaning of Hawai'i as a civilized new American frontier and as a remote paradise, the concept of race and racial harmony as seen in the University

of Hawaii's annual selection of multiple queens representing various racial and ethnic groups, and the significance of having a Chinese American winning the first Miss Hawai'i and the first Miss Congeniality in Atlantic City.

In Chapter 3, I analyze the process of the invention of the Narcissus Festival by contextualizing it within post-WWII local, national, and international politics and social relations. I argue that the repackaging of the annual family celebration of Chinese Lunar New Year into a modern ethnic spectacle of Honolulu Chinatown was a product of modern consumerism, tourist development, urbanization, suburbanization, Americanization, and orientalism. I address the inception of the Narcissus Festival as a quadruple-folded attempt of the middle-class Chinese Americans in Hawai'i – to claim a larger role in state tourism development; to promote Chinese Americans in Hawai'i as a homogenous community; to turn a Western Oriental fantasy into their own cultural capital; and to maintain an ethnic identification in the process of their “Americanization.” This ethnic spectacle also contained a new meaning when the Narcissus Queen Pageant was introduced. While being incorporated into the Chinese New Year celebration, the beauty contest challenged the meaning of Chinese tradition, redrew the boundaries of Chinese culture, and redefined the image of the Chinese American community. Simultaneously, the Pageant also challenged the meaning of Americanness. It was an attempt to decouple Americanness and whiteness as well as modernity and whiteness.

This chapter also reveals the Chinese American community as well as the practitioners of the Festival as heterogeneous groups exerting various interpretations of Chinese culture and Chinese American identity. While presenting the Festival as a site of contestation and negotiation, I demonstrate what alternative discourses of Chineseness

have been repressed or obscured in the creation of an imagined homogeneous Chinese American community.

Chapter 4 focuses on the heyday of the Festival and the Pageant in the 1950s and mid-1960s, when the Chinatown event grew into a territory-wide ethnic spectacle with its fame reaching Asia, North America, Europe, Australia as well as Latin America. I argue that the Narcissus Festival was both a success and a failure. It was a success in terms of the degree of its resource mobilization in Hawai‘i, a new sense of Chinese American community it generated, as well as its influence upon the representation of other ethnic communities in and beyond Hawai‘i. It was a failure because it did not achieve its goal of revitalizing Chinatown community and business. It did little to lessen the double blow that hit Chinatown during the development of Waikīkī and Ala Moana and failed to mobilize any extensive protest against the profit-driven urban renewal project in downtown Honolulu that began in the early 1960s.

Propelled by the fervor for statehood, the heat of tourism development, and incorporated by the Hawaii Visitors Bureau into its tourism promotion campaign, the Pageant in this era had to meet the double expectation for Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i to be both exotic and “American.” An image of “exotic American” was thus represented in the Pageant to convey that Hawai‘i was alluring enough to be the ultimate fantasyland for continental U.S. tourists yet modern and patriotic enough to be the fiftieth state.

I open Chapter 5 with an introduction of the major social movements of the late 1960s to the 1980s, and an analysis on how they exerted a considerable influence upon the creation of the new Pan-Chinese American identity in Hawai‘i. As these changes began to be reflected through the Festival and the Pageant, there developed a new

emphasis on the exploration of family genealogy and of the meaning of Chinese cultural practices. Efforts were made to define a more distinctive Chinese American identity within Hawai'i's "polyglot" society rather than the earlier desire to "blend in." The events in this era became less tourist-oriented and more community focused as compared to the 1950s and 1960s. I then elaborate on the implication of the U.S. rapprochement with the PRC to the Chinese American community in Hawai'i and how the community reacted to the changing dynamics among the United States, mainland China, and Taiwan. I demonstrate how the Festival has provided a significant case through which we can discern the interplay of national and diasporic politics in ethnic identity construction. I argue that the Festival created a primordial and seemingly apolitical ethnic identity as a shield from the nation-state politics between Taiwan and Mainland China.

In Chapter 6, I first delineate the entangled relationship of globalization, localization, and indigenization as well as other major national and international dynamics in post-Cold War Hawai'i. I demonstrate how the Festival leaders experienced and made meaning of the globalization, localization, and indigenization as well as how they resort to the Festival, or the Pageant, as their vehicle to navigate through the clashing forces and to protect the niche that their earlier generations had carved out for Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. I then examine the Festival's new representation of Chinese Americans within the new context. I argue that the permeation of multiculturalism and post-feminism as the new U.S. national culture played an important role in bringing young Chinese American women to the beauty contest. I demonstrate how the pageant under this new hegemony represents the Chinese American community as an integral component of Hawaii's ethnic paradise and Chinese American women as

both feminine and powerful super women. Simultaneously, however, as “no hegemony is ever total,” the Festival leaders conduct other practices that contradict what they claimed. It is those antitheses, which are salient practices in the Festival yet are expected to be unnoticed and taken for granted, that demonstrate how hegemony works and where resistance is possible.

The concluding chapter examines the new “diasporic” dimension of Chineseness as represented through the Narcissus Goodwill Tour in the last two decades. Using the 2002 Narcissus Tour to Hong Kong, China, and Japan as a case study, I argue that, contrary to some scholars’ claim of an emergence of global citizens and melted boundaries of nation-states, the Chinese Americans’ “homeland” tour is more a reenactment of leaving the ancestral land than a reattachment to it. After the tour, they return to their host place with more ethnic pride than diasporic identification. I also argue that, due to the specific power dynamics between the United States and China within the frame of global capitalism, the tour exemplifies more the process of Americanization rather than Chinesenization of Chinese Americans. As the tour unfolds, what they experienced and how they are perceived in China invoke more their American national identity than their ethnic Chinese American identity. The Narcissus Tour case also reveals the heterogeneity in diasporic consciousness and diasporic identification of Chinese Americans. Therefore, although a new diasporic consciousness did occur among Chinese Americans, we cannot ignore the political economy of time-space compression and exaggerate the mobility and identity flexibility of Chinese Americans.

This dissertation is about the self-representation of a Chinese American

community that is numerically small but socially and politically privileged in an American colony. It is about Chineseness and Americanness against the backdrop of the Native Hawaiian culture. As ethnic institutions that represent the community and assign meanings for the community over 56 years, the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant demonstrate both the contingency of Americanness and the specificity of Chineseness. What it means to be American is changed from the center by national and international politics; it is also changed at the periphery of the nation-state where the marginalized is constantly challenging and redefining the center. What it means to be Chinese is not fixed and universal either but transforms in reaction to the power dynamics of its specific locality.

Meanings of Americanness and Chineseness are convoluted and intertwined. The trajectory of Chineseness as displayed in the Festival and the Pageant is simultaneously defined by and influences the trajectory of Americanness. More specifically, the attempt of the Festival organizers and Pageant contestants in integrating a Western-originated beauty pageant with a commercially-oriented ethnic spectacle is simultaneously a process of becoming “American,” a process of decoupling Americanness and whiteness, and a process of decoupling modernity and whiteness. It is a process of self-transformation as well as a process of challenging the Western notion of the modern body.

However, the intervention of Chinese Americans in their process of Americanization is particularly problematized in Hawai‘i. To Native Hawaiians, the constructions of Chineseness and Americanness are merely a tug of war between two settlers on the land of Hawai‘i. Both have exploited Hawaiian culture and people for their

own benefit and have made Hawai‘i their own property. As the Hawaiian Movement continues and develops, both Chineseness and Americanness will face more challenges. My dissertation is an attempt to use a case study of Chinese American activity in Hawai‘i to add a Pacific Island voice to the general scholarship in diaspora studies, ethnic studies, and gender studies. Research on Native Hawaiians’ perspectives on the construction of ethnic identity in Hawai‘i is yet to be conducted.

Chapter 2

Modernity, “Race,” and the Female Body in the Representation of Hawai‘i prior to the Narcissus Festival

I open my dissertation on the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant from the annexation of the Republic of Hawai‘i by the United States to contextualize the community transformation and identity construction of Chinese Americans within a broader colonial background of Hawai‘i. I delineate the earlier representation of “race,” ethnicity, and the female body against the backdrop of the material and symbolic relationships between the United States and the Pacific in the first half of the twentieth century. I discern the racial relations the Chinese American community is embedded in and the colonial legacies and gender practices the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii drew from, either consciously or subconsciously, in initiating their own ethnic event. As Hawai‘i has an unusual geopolitical, cultural, and economic history of migration and U.S. colonialism, a study of the earlier half of the twentieth century can also accentuate the specific power dynamics and patterns of community transformation that Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i experienced compared to their counterparts in the continental United States.

The major cultural festivals and beauty contests that were staged by the Euro-American mainstream society in Hawai‘i in the early twentieth century included the Mid-Winter Floral Parade, the University of Hawai‘i *Ka Palapala* Queen beauty contest, and the first Miss Hawai‘i Scholarship Pageant. They produced many ideological, racial, and gendered symbols and tropes, such as the bifurcated imaginary of Hawai‘i as America’s new civilized territory and romanticized past, the use of the term “Island Princess” to

represent Hawaiian islands, the multiple beauty queens staged at the University of Hawai‘i that symbolized Hawaii’s racial harmony, and the use of Miss Hawaii to generate the public campaign for statehood. Chinese settlers in Hawai‘i initially experienced exclusion from the public imagination of Hawai‘i at the beginning of the twentieth century, yet four decades later they were representing Hawai‘i on the center stage when a Chinese American college student became the first Miss Hawai‘i and then went on to be the first Miss Congeniality in the Miss America competition in Atlantic City. Their experience from invisibility to representing Hawai‘i on a national stage paved the way for their “racial rearticulation” in the post-WWII era, when they rewired the colonial racism in Hawai‘i for their collective needs and interests.

Modernity and “Soft Primitivism” in the Representation of Hawai‘i

In summarizing the role that Americans ascribed for Asia and the Pacific in the nineteenth century, scholars tend to emphasize the U.S. desire for the world’s market and its drive in converting the world into both an export market for American goods and a labor market for American capitalist production. However, a bifurcated American ascription for Hawai‘i, which depicted Hawai‘i as both a place that awaits development and a place to retain “soft primitivism,”¹ was extant beginning in the late nineteenth century. This dichotomy subjugated Native Hawaiians, appropriated Hawaiian culture for tourism development, and paved the way for further economic, political, and military Americanization of the Islands in the twentieth century. In addition, this dichotomy

¹ Concept borrowed from Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display From Waikiki to Sea World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).

invoked a “racial rearticulation”² of Asian settlers in Hawai‘i and inscribed into them a bifurcated self-identification as a progressing race with a romanticized past.

A focus on the mechanism of world capitalist economy and capitalist democracy cannot reflect the full spectrum of the American colonial legacy in Hawai‘i. It obscures the fact that not only have American products and technology traveled to the Pacific, but so too have white Americans. Americans treated Native Hawaiians as consumers of American products and as laborers for the American market; however, they also turned themselves into explorers and tourists. They consumed the sun, the beach, the water, the air, and the women in Hawai‘i. They consumed and appropriated Hawaiian culture. As a result, the “natives” were not only laborers but also entertainers. The consumption of “the nature” and “the culture” in far-away lands is an indispensable part of American imperialism that deserves as thorough a scrutiny as the production/market dimension.

In his book *Barbarian Virtues*, historian Matthew Frye Jacobson summarizes the turn-of-the-century relationship between the United States and the non-Western world as one of America’s converting the “other” into both an export market and a labor market. Jacobson begins his book with the striking image of a turn-of-the-century advertising card for Singer Sewing Machines that depicted a grass-skirted Pacific island woman using a modern sewing machine inside a grass hut. He interprets this as the American view of the “native” as “both a reliable consumer and an industrious worker.”³

² See Lon Kurashige, *Japanese America Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival in Los Angeles, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign People at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 13.

Jacobson is neither the first nor the only to map out a market- and profit-oriented U.S. foreign policy as the core of the U.S.-world relationship. Among many scholars who developed similar arguments, David Hanlon has characterized American foreign policy in the post-WWII Pacific as one of domination through “development.”⁴ Hanlon defines “development” as an ideology that is held by American military administrators, educators, territory officials, businesspeople, and U.S. government representatives; that links peace, prosperity, and democracy with global capitalism, and associates injustice, chaos, and violence with poverty; and that justifies and promotes American superiority, interests, and activities in the Pacific. It is “a conceptualizing tool” to measure Pacific Islanders against the standards of Western civilization. When Hanlon defines the goal of development as turning foreign people into industrious laborers, diligent consumers, and citizens of capitalism, he sounds almost identical to Jacobson, with his notion of “a reliable customer and an industrious worker.”

Hanlon’s and Jacobson’s analyses of turn-of-the-century American foreign policy and post-WWII American strategy in Micronesia provide some insight into explaining colonial politics and power dynamics in Hawai‘i from the nineteenth century to the present. However, their focus on the mechanism of world capitalist economy and democracy overshadows the fact that Native Hawaiians were treated not only as consumers of American products and as laborers for the American market but also as entertainers. The consumption of “the nature” and “the culture” of Hawai‘i in fact paralleled the production and market dimension of American capitalism.

⁴ David Hanlon, *Remaking Micronesia: Discourses over Development in a Pacific Territory, 1944-1982*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1998).

A second look at the sewing machine advertising card can dispute what Jacobson has seen. The card shows a Pacific Islander woman using a sewing machine, but this does not necessarily mean the targeted viewers of the card were Pacific Islander women. In promising a betterment either in quantity or quality, advertising normally shows the “after” of the use of a product, not the “before.” The portrayal of the Pacific Islander woman before she makes any new clothes rather than afterward, for instance showing off her new clothes next to the machine, may well indicate that she and people like her were not the targeted consumers of the Singer Sewing Machine advertisement. The advertisement may well be targeted at those who were not Pacific Islander women but had the necessity or anxiety of distinguishing themselves from the “primitive” Pacific woman.

Rather than showing the Pacific Islander woman as “a reliable consumer and an industrious worker,” as Jacobson has interpreted, the card in fact symbolizes an inherent dichotomy in the U.S. appropriation of the Pacific. In one sense, the card reveals a desire to see the Pacific Islander woman use the sewing machine so that she can wear some “proper” clothes instead of a “primitive” grass skirt. In another sense, there is also the necessity for her to stay in her grass skirt so that she remains an antithesis of that sewing machine.

The same rhetoric is further enhanced in another advertisement that was released by the Singer Manufacturing Company in the late nineteenth century. Thinly disguised as a news report about the end of the Spanish American War, it features the grass-skirted King of the Caroline Islands showing his three grass-skirted ministers how to run a hand-rolled Singer sewing machine in front of their log cabin:

MISSIONARY WORK OF THE SINGER MANUFACTURING COMPANY

At the close of the recent war, the King of Ou (Caroline Islands) came to pay homage to the Government of Manila. As the best means of advancing and establishing a condition of things that would prevent all future outbreaks, the King was introduced to the “Great Civilizer,” the Singer sewing machine, and we have here his photograph, seated at the Singer Sewing machine, with his Secretary of State standing besides him. This is absolutely authentic. It is a half-toned plate made from the original photograph, which can be seen any day at the office of the SINGER MANUFACTURING COMPANY, 149 Broadway, New York City.⁵

The advertisement forged such details as “the recent war,” “the King of Ou,” “Government of Manila,” “Secretary of State,” and “half-toned plate,” used such phrases as “Missionary Work,” “Great Civilizer,” “absolutely authentic,” and “original photograph,” and portrayed scantily clad and dark-skinned men – to make the picture seem real. The Singer sewing machine was defined as the “Great Civilizer” doing the “missionary work” of bringing peace and prosperity to the natives. In the drawing, however, the King of Ou was not showing his minister how to make clothes so that they could dress like their former enemy. He was sewing a red-and-white-striped flag! Instead of picking up a weapon to fight for their independence, the natives are depicted as using the Singer sewing machine to make a flag that demonstrated their loyalty to the United States!

The dual ascription for the desirable Pacific Islander men and women to develop with the use of science and technology and to remain in a romanticized past in a non-threatening way – or “soft primitivism”⁶ – is a reflection of the Euro-American ideology of modernization/development and the West’s anxiety of losing the Edenic past in the process of industrialization, urbanization, and bureaucratization. It is the Euro-

⁵ “The Marketing of Singer,” <http://www.singermemories.com/singer-brand.html> (accessed February 22, 2005).

⁶ See Jane Desmond’s *Staging Tourism*.

Americans' need to maintain both a progressing "self" and the romanticized "other" who resides in the past. As adherents to Enlightenment who believed that they were transforming toward an even more perfect state, Euro-Americans needed to assign an ideal "other" as their past to complete the continuum of their linear history. They found in Native Hawaiians an ideal imagery of the Europeans' past, which represented the opposite of all the vice of industrialization and urbanization. Though there existed a negative perception of Native Hawaiians as black, a more popular image was to situate the Hawaiians at an earlier, idyllic stage of civilization. As Jane Desmond quotes from a 1924 issue of *National Geographic*, "When discovered, the Islands [of Hawai'i] were already inhabited by a handsome semicivilized race, a happy and kindly people, fond of music and of the beauties of Nature..."⁷ Native Hawaiians were also distinguished from Native Americans. Again Desmond finds the following words in one photo caption: "Their complexion is neither yellow like the Malay nor red like the American Indian, but a kind of olive and sometimes reddish brown... They belong to a branch of the Polynesian race, which was undoubtedly of Aryan stock."⁸ This "semicivilized" and "Aryan stock" imagery represented Native Hawaiians both as a race that promised movement toward modernity, yet would never "catch up" with the West, and as a race that served as a locality where Euro-Americans can revisit their romanticized past.

The dichotomy of modernity and "soft primitivism" permeated the public representations of Hawai'i from the late nineteenth century, such as in the nineteenth-century travelogue, in the Mid-Winter Floral Parade and Carnival at the beginning of the

⁷ Jane C. Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 85.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

twentieth century, and later in the Aloha Week celebration of “Hawaiian tradition” by white settlers after World War II. Through the commercial spectacle of the Mid-Winter Floral Parade and Carnival, a public image of Hawai‘i was invented – composed only of the vanishing, silent, and noble Native Hawaiians and the flourishing Euro-American residents and tourists. The majority of Hawaii’s residents – the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants that composed over 60 percent of the territory population – was erased from this public image, although they were right there at the scene, some as participants and most as bystanders. The Chinese residents were deemed especially undesirable – a problem that hindered Hawaii’s statehood. It was their invisibility in public representation that invoked the self-representation – or “racial rearticulation” – of Chinese Americans in post-WWII Hawai‘i.

In his historical analysis of the Japanese American Nisei Week Festival in Los Angeles, Lon Kurashige develops the concept of “racial rearticulation” that was originally raised by Omi and Winant.⁹ Kurashige defines “racial rearticulation” as a process of the subordinates “to advance their cause by reinterpreting racist discourse – thereby rearticulating it into an empowering racial identity.”¹⁰ He uses the Nisei Week as a case study to demonstrate how Japanese Americans in Los Angeles rewired racism to serve their own collective needs and interests and to rearticulate their own voices and identities. The Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant were a racial rearticulation of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i against their invisibility in the public

⁹ Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*, 4-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

image of Hawai‘i as well as a rearticulation of their representation in such mainstream spectacles as the *Ka Palapala* Queen Contest and the Miss Hawaii Scholarship Pageant.

Chinese settlers were a particularly undesired group when the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act was extended to Hawai‘i upon annexation. They were further condemned because the stigma that was attached to Asian immigration through the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act caused Euro-American settlers’ petition for statehood to be repeatedly rejected by the U.S. Congress. Their erasure from the public image in Hawai‘i finally invoked the desire of Chinese Americans to represent themselves, though they had to wait until after World War II to rearticulate their ethnic self. In their post-War public representation through the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant, Chinese Americans faced the same bifurcation of modernity and “soft primitivism.” However, they made their own intervention and created their own dichotomy of modernity and “tradition,” which will be elaborated in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

The first tourist-targeted public festival – the practice of representing Hawai‘i at public events as a commercial-purposed spectacle – can be dated to the Mid-Winter Floral Parade and Carnival at the beginning of the twentieth century in Hawai‘i. These two events were first hosted by *kama`aina haole* (local white) businessmen on February 22, 1906, George Washington’s birthday, as winter programs to attract white American tourists to Hawai‘i. The main voice of the Festival and Carnival was American, white, and male. It was six years after the islands of Hawai‘i became a U.S. territory, a time when American businesses and the descendents of American missionaries had taken control of Hawaii’s politics and economy, and when the development of organized tourism for commercial purposes had just taken shape. The festival was a commercial

appropriation of a Hawaiian public event called Kamehameha Day that can be traced back to 1872. According to Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, the commemoration of Kamehameha Day began June 11, 1872. Through the late 1800s, it was observed with recreational and sporting events, especially horse racing in Kapi‘olani Park. In 1905, the Order of Kamehameha was reactivated by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana‘ole, who restored the celebration and started the tradition of draping a lei on the statue of King Kamehameha in front of Ali‘iolani Hale and standing watch throughout the day. In 1914, the planning committee decided to organize a parade to proceed from ‘A‘ala Park to ‘Iolani Palace as a prelude to the ceremony at the King’s statue. Thus was the inception of the Kamehameha Day parade.¹¹

The Mid-Winter Floral Parade and Carnival incorporated some recreational programs from Kamehameha Day into its celebration of George Washington’s birthday, and thus injecting an American holiday with some Hawai‘i flavor. According to Stillman, the Parade and the Carnival functioned in three ways – “to present a display of American patriotism by observing an American holiday, to promenade the still novel but growing number of automobiles in Honolulu, and to exhibit Hawaii’s floral richness by lavishly decorating the automobiles with flowers.”¹² Stillman precisely captures the glaring Americanness of the events as the programs were organized to celebrate George Washington’s birthday and the major attraction was to have Euro-American men and women, dressed up in white suits and Victorian-style gowns, drive their heavily decorated automobiles slowly through downtown Honolulu and Waikīkī.

¹¹Amy Ku‘uleialoha Stillman, “‘Na- Lei O Hawai‘i’: On Hula Songs, Floral Emblems, Island Princesses, and *Wahi Pana*,” *The Hawaii Journal of History*, 28 (May 1995): 103-104.

¹² *Ibid.*, 96.

Arthur F. Wall, the Director of the Parade also stressed the importance of viewing Hawai'i as both an "American" and a civilized place on earth in the following remark:

Today, six out of ... ten men ...in Chicago or New York or Philadelphia...know that Hawai'i has ...the beauty of softly-waving palms, gay flowers blooming, and dusky figures clothed in little else but sisal skirts and smiles...but they also know that it is not peopled by savages, cannibals or sportive nymphs; that it is an American city...The other four out of those are learning. It has not been by geographies, travelogues or Chatauqua lecture courses that hundreds of thousands of Americans have been taught to regard Hawai'i as a civilized instead of a barbarian country, but through its public bodies and public press.¹³

In Wall's statement, we clearly see a dual representation of Hawai'i as both exotic and American/civilized. The "public bodies" and "public press" were the canvases on which this dichotomy was painted. Hawai'i was shaped into a creature that was both American – safe, familiar, and convenient enough for tourists to extend their mainland ways of thinking and living – and different enough, for tourists to feel allured, enticed, and transformed. This exploration of both similarity and difference also lies at the core of the later development of the beauty contest industry in Hawai'i. Exoticism was encouraged while at the same time American civilization was emulated in these contests.

Wall's statements reflect some popular concepts that mainstream Americans had about Hawai'i. Words that were used to refer to the islands of Hawai'i include "the beauty," "softly waving palms," "gay flowers blooming," "alluring," "pleasant," "a bright and hospitable land," and "dusky figures clothed in little else but sisal skirts and smiles." All these fit into the American imagination of "paradise," what the tourists were flocking to Hawai'i for. The negative images about indigenous Hawaiians, such as "savages," "cannibals," "sportive nymphs," and "barbarian," were refuted and replaced with images of a "civilized Hawai'i."

¹³ Arthur F. Wall, "The Floral Parade in the Mid-Pacific," *The Mid-Pacific Magazine* (Jan 1912): 181.

The irony was that while Wall represented Honolulu as “an American city” and “civilized country,” the majority of the residents in Honolulu was neither granted American citizenship nor given the franchise to vote for the governor of the territory. In Jacobson’s words, “the United States took the Hawaiian Islands without, as it were, taking the Hawaiians.”¹⁴ At the turn of the twentieth century, the United States became a transcontinental empire by subjugating Samoa, Hawai‘i, Wake, Guam, and the Philippines in the Pacific, Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Caribbean, and such Latin American places as Panama. Their new acquisitions were widely celebrated as a progress of civilization in such world fairs as those in Philadelphia (1876), Chicago (1893), St. Louis (1904), and San Francisco (1915). However, each of the newly acquired regions was taken without the United States having to treat the residents of these regions as equals. As Jacobson observes, “Each region found itself gripped in U.S. possession only at arm’s length: the United States held them, to be sure, but at a safe distance from anything approximating full citizenship, equality, or participation in the sacred workings of self-government.”¹⁵

Hawai‘i was annexed during the U.S. war with Spain in the Philippines due to its strategic importance. After annexation, U.S. citizenship was limited to “all white persons, including Portuguese, and persons of African descent, and all persons descended from the Hawaiian race... who were citizens of the Republic of Hawaii immediately prior to transfer.” Although Hawai‘i was deemed an American island, a combination of property and literacy qualifications significantly narrowed the franchise from fourteen thousand to

¹⁴Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 236.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 234.

only twenty-eight hundred after annexation. The constitution that was drawn up by whites made it especially difficult for Asian immigrants to participate in the governance of the Islands.

As a non-exception practice of tourist promoters, Arthur F. Wall masked the Asian population in Hawai'i in his previous statement about the winter events. In another comment on the events, Wall casually referred to the Asian section of the Parade as "a tinge of the Orient" even though the size of Asian population had surpassed those of the Native Hawaiians and white Americans since the late nineteenth century:

The attraction of Hawai'i for the February tourist is two-fold. There is the parade itself, colorful, kaleidoscopic, a tinge of the Orient, a tinge of the Occident, and a combination of the two. And there is Hawai'i itself, always alluring and pleasant, a bright and hospitable land, whose gay spirits bubble over once a year into the revel of the carnival.¹⁶

Although the tourist promotion materials did not mention anything about the fact that the majority of the island residents were settlers from Asia, these settlers were a conspicuous part of the festival. When Wall mentioned the Asian section of the Parade, he emphasized the American patriotism of the Asian participants:

When nearly five thousand Japanese marched in line on the evening of Feb 22 last year [1911], carrying a great and wonderful display of lanterns, flags, transparencies, torches, and garbed with varying fancy, visitors from all over the world were amazed that on the birthday of the Father of His Country subjects of an alien ruler, marching under an alien flag, and with shouts of 'Banzai!' upon their lips, should still carry, every man and child of them, some tiny flag or lapel button with the photograph of George Washington thereon.¹⁷

In short, the "Oriental" appeal of the International Lantern Parade described here is appreciated insofar as Japanese are interpreted as faithful alien subjects of the new

¹⁶ Wall, "The Floral Parade in the Mid-Pacific," 187.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

American colony. Surprisingly, when the Hawaiian units were depicted, nothing was mentioned about whether they appeared enthusiastic and patriotic six years after their annexation. Patriotism was an issue for the five thousand Japanese but not for Native Hawaiians.

While Native Hawaiians were seen by tourist promoters as desirable, the Asian population of the Islands were either rendered as invisible or as a problem. In Desmond's words, "Without exception, the imperial archipelago books concur that Native Hawaiians were to be placed at the top of the nonwhite hierarchy, above the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos and the North American Indians, as well."¹⁸ From the late 1880s, tens of thousands of immigrants from China, Japan, and the Philippines were brought to Hawai'i in successive waves to work on sugar plantations, and they soon outnumbered both whites and Native Hawaiians. However, in order for the Islands to be conceived of as a part of the United States, the presence of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino residents had to be downplayed. As the secretary of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association testified before the U.S. Congress in 1910, "The Asiatic has had only an economic value in the social equation. So far as the institutions, laws, customs, and languages of the permanent population go, his presence is no more felt than is that of the cattle on the ranges."¹⁹

The Chinese in Hawai'i were not invited to participate in the Parade, although they made up about 20 percent of the island population in the early twentieth century. From the late nineteenth century, Chinese had experienced a high rate of intermarriage with Hawaiian women and interaction with the rural Hawaiian population after they left

¹⁸ Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 58.

¹⁹ Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 236.

the sugar plantations. They also had a long tradition of celebrating Chinese festivals in Honolulu Chinatown. However, the cloud of “the yellow peril” overcast the Islands as the annexation of Hawai‘i extended the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act to the Islands. The stigma associated with immigration in general caused Hawaii’s petition for statehood to be rejected in 1903, 1911, 1913, and 1915. As Jacobson explains, “the well-established principle of Chinese Exclusion precluded any arrangement that would allow for the admission for a population like Hawaii’s.”²⁰ Some Euro-American settlers blamed the Chinese for the failure of statehood petition and thus excluded them from the winter parade. Instead, U.S. nationals and the admired Native Hawaiians were emphasized.

Possibly as a deliberate attempt to distinguish Hawaiians from the troublesome and inassimilable “Asiatics,” as well as to distinguish them from the automobile-equipped Euro-Americans, the organizers represented the people of Hawai‘i as nobles and island princesses who were good horse riders. Native Hawaiian women were represented as exotic, non-threatening, non-black, non-Asiatic, civilizable, and desirable. From the first year, a mock royal court including the Hawaiian King and Queen followed by Native Hawaiians on horseback were included in the Parade and the Carnival. A journalist wrote the following about the Hawaiian riders in 1906: “Among the Hawaiians the half hundred pā‘ū riders aroused more interest than any other section of the line. They noted in them a revival of a purely Hawaiian equestrian pleasure that had been dormant for 15 years.”²¹ According to Wall, “... the women of Hawaii ride like centaurs. Brought up almost in the saddle, they can master anything on four legs...Attired in the gay colors

²⁰ Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 236.

²¹ Quoted in Stillman, “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” 96.

of the islands, this section sweeps through the carnival crowds with startling and emphatic effect.”²²

The phrase “purely Hawaiian equestrian pleasure” was used in a loose way. Horses are not indigenous to Hawai‘i and were brought to the Islands only in the 1800s. Although some Hawaiian royal family members, including King Kalâkaua, then became horse lovers and rode horses and played polo for their leisure,²³ the easy match of the indigenous people and the horses reflected how Euro-Americans perceived Native Americans. As Jane Tompkins observed in her book *The West of Everything*, “Horses expressed a need for connection to nature, to the wild... Antimodern, antiurban, and antitechnological, they stand for an existence without cars and telephones and electricity.”²⁴ She also observed that the “gradual appearance, first in dime novels, then in major best-sellers and in films at the beginning of the twentieth century, coincides with the disappearance of horses from daily life.”²⁵ Since both the indigenous Hawaiian and the horse stood for something of “nature,” they were easily juxtaposed in the white-Americans imagination. It is interesting to note that the British played polo and that their women learned to ride horses long before the Hawaiians, yet it was the latter who were quickly compared to centaurs. In the minds of the Westerners, the Native Hawaiians’ love for sports and horses was instantly fossilized into their blood, their genes, and their unknown past. Yet again, the attachment of Hawaiians to horses indicates the non-

²² Wall, “The Floral Parade in the Mid-Pacific,” 183.

²³ According to Stillman, “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” through the late 1800s, for the Kamehameha Day that started since 1872 on each June 11, the commemoration was observed with recreational and sporting events, especially horse racing in Kapi‘olani Park. King Kalâkaua even played polo in England and won a polo cup.

²⁴ Tompkins, *The West of Everything*, 93.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

violent, fun-seeking, and benevolent nature of “an ideal primitive,” unlike the dangerous, vicious, lethal Indian warriors – thus the Hawaiians are thrilling but safe to watch.

The Female Body, the Flower, and the Color in the Representation of Hawai‘i

Native Hawaiians in the winter events were presented not only as “ideal primitives” but also as “sporty nymphs.” In 1907, a special section of pā‘ū riders, known as the Island Princesses, was added to the line after the mock royal court and the native riding units. Each major island of Hawai‘i was represented by a Hawaiian woman, referred to as an “Island Princess,” who rode on a horse in the company of male outriders and attendants:

Following them [the pā‘ū riders] came the island princesses, five principal islands of the group being each represented by one of their fairest daughters, riding in pā‘ū costume and preceded by a herald, bearing their colors and banner. This new feature of the parade proved most successful...²⁶

However, no article explained why the riders were “princesses” instead of “princes.” The use of female figures seemed to be taken as the natural and only way to represent the Islands. The female figures were also described simultaneously as beautiful and young with the phrase “fairest daughters,” which again represents the Native Hawaiians as exotic and non-threatening.

Thomas Eriksen’s discussion on the integration of gender and ethnicity can provide an answer to the glaring presence of the female body and yet the conspicuous absence of explanation for the practice. As quoted in the introduction chapter, he asserts that “sexual stereotyping is in many societies related to ethnicity... Gender imagery is

²⁶ Quoted in Stillman, “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” 97.

often used to describe ethnic groups as a whole.”²⁷ This is because indigenous and/or minority groups and women often share structurally similar positions. Both are “muted categories,” who are compelled to use the language of the dominant majority or patriarchy to express their interests without being allowed to determine the terms of that language.

In one sense, the Island Princesses were mute symbolic figures in the Floral Parade and Carnival and deemed the “fairest daughters” of the Islands. In the other sense, their appearance did form a sharp contrast with the popular image of “dusky figures clothed in little else but sisal skirts and smiles.” They were represented as elite Hawaiian women, who had a big build, full figure, and stately look. Though one could argue that this indicates another version of colonial impact that perpetuates Christian moral standards and control of the “native” body, this version of femininity was soon overshadowed by the *hula* girl image of the late 1920s.

This representation of pā‘ū riders is still a masking of more assertive and subversive roles women had taken in Hawaiian society and history. As Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor argues in her article “Constructed Images of Native Hawaiian Women,” the day-to-day reality of the average Native Hawaiian woman seldom resembles the poster-girl image. In fact, Native Hawaiian women span the broad spectrum of physical features, class, sexual orientation, as well as political involvement and socioeconomic status.”²⁸ Karina Kahanamui Green also asserts that by the end of the

²⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity & Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives* (Sterling, VA.: Pluto Press, 1993), 155.

²⁸ Davianna Pōmaika‘i McGregor, “Constructed Images of Native Hawaiian Women,” in *Asian/Pacific Islander Women: A historical Anthology*, eds. Shirley Hune and Gail M. Nomera (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 25.

nineteenth century the model Hawaiian women had changed “from a mother, lover, and even warrior to a whisper of a woman, a delicate, exotic flower...”²⁹ Green contrasts two royal Hawaiian women. Princess Ruth was the governess of the island of Hawai‘i and the granddaughter of Kamehameha I who weighed over 440 pounds, topped six feet, spoke as a “distant rumble of thunder” and who refused to speak English. Princess Kai‘ulani was a half-English, half-Hawaiian woman and Queen Liliuokalani’s niece, a Christian, lighter-skinned, younger, and frail-looking woman who died of consumption at age twenty-two. The former was despised by the U.S. minister to Hawai‘i as a “woman of no intelligence or ability” whereas the latter was hailed as “the very flower – an exotic – of civilization.”³⁰ The one that did not meet the desirable Euro-American imaginary of Hawaiian women was suppressed and outcast (Princess Ruth died in seclusion) whereas the one that fits the West’s view of beauty was cherished as an “exotic flower.”

As tourism developed in the 1920s and 1930s, the image of horse-riding Island Princesses was no longer a major attraction for tourists. Hawai‘i became further feminized, however, with images of scantily clad *hula* girls. The feminization and racialization of Hawai‘i is even more juxtaposed against a male, white Americanness, always defined as modern and civilized. *Hula* dance and *hula* music were appropriated for mass entertainment not only in Hawaiian tourist events but also were exported to the continental United States and Japan. Films, newspapers, and later TV commercials

²⁹ Karina Kahanamui Green, “Colonialism’s Daughters: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Western Perceptions of Hawaiian Women,” in *Pacific Diaspora: Island Peoples in the United States and Across the Pacific*, eds. Paul Spickard, Joanne L. Rondilla, and Debbie Hippolite Wright (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 221.

³⁰ Karina Kahanamui Green, “Colonialism’s Daughters,” 244 & 246.

tirelessly repeated the images of exotic *hula* girls and happy local musicians. This feminization of the Islands mushroomed with the production of various other island queens, such as the Lei Day Queen, Pineapple Queen, and Kona Coffee Queen from the 1920s onwards. *Hula* and *hula* music have also been appropriated into the Narcissus talent shows.

In the Mid-Winter Floral Parade, each island was also symbolized by a flower and a color. According to Stillman, this was the early sign of Hawaiian nationalism,³¹ which was expressed through a common Hawaiian practice of a deep attachment to land and place.³² Women riders (but not their male companions) would wear their island colors and flower leis. Although male figures were present, the prominent image of the islands of Hawai‘i was female, and it was on the female body that color and flower symbols were represented. The following is a newspaper account of the 1908 Mid-Winter Parade: “It has been arranged that each princess should wear the flower most popular in the island which she represented and the flowers used yesterday will be worn in future parades.”³³ By 1912, the emblem colors worn by the island princesses had become customary: “There was one [island princess] for each island of the group, each wearing the colors of her island.”³⁴

³¹ According to Stillman in “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” 93-98, the floral and color (emblems) association for the individual islands began during the first decade of the 1900s as seen in the pā‘ū riding units in the Floral Parade in 1907 and the two “Na Lei O Hawaii” songs by Reverend Samuel Kapu of Maui and Charles E. King respectively. The practice became popular in the 1910s and 20s, the heydays of public tableaux or historical pageants, with official endorsement seen in Joint Resolution No.1 passed by the territorial legislature in 1923.

³² Stillman, “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” 99.

³³ Quoted in Stillman, “Na- Lei O Hawai‘i,” 98.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 98.

The tradition of representing a group of people and their land with material imageries of the female body was later adopted by the Chinese community, which named its festival after the narcissus flower. Chineseness was attached to the white flower and personified in the beauty queen. Although people sometimes joke about the implication of ‘narcissism’ in the name of the Festival, they rarely challenge the connections that have been made between femininity, flower, color, and place.

The Representation of a Multiracial Paradise in the *Ka Palapala* Beauty Contest

The spectacle events in the 1910s and 1920s educated the public in Hawai‘i about the hierarchical relationship between Hawai‘i and America in a linear history, implemented a dual task for Hawai‘i to “develop” as well as to perform “soft primitivism,” and commercialized the “native” body in public representation. In the late 1930s, the creation of a beauty competition by the University of Hawai‘i further perpetuated the use of the female body in the representation of “race” and made Hollywood-style femininity the ideal type for women of different “races.” Moreover, this beauty contest moved beyond commercializing the Hawaiian body and presented Hawai‘i as a multiracial paradise with bodies in various phenotypes. This contest also reflected a different definition and use of the concept of “race.” Different from the contemporary United States, “race” in Hawai‘i then drew not only a color line but also a cultural and even a national boundary. The conceptualization of “race” and body in the UH beauty competition later exerted a direct influence upon the inception of the Chinese beauty pageants in Hawai‘i.

The *Ka Palapala* Beauty Pageant of Nations that started in early 1938 was the first full-scale beauty contest held in the islands of Hawai‘i.³⁵ It was originally called *Ka Leo-Ka Palapala-ASUH* beauty contest to indicate the two sponsors of the pageant – *Ka Leo o Hawai‘i*, the UH student newspaper, and *Ka Palapala*, the UH yearbook – and the attachment of both to the Association of Students of the University of Hawai‘i.³⁶ The direct purpose of the event was to choose beauty queens to welcome the visit of the basketball squad team from Washington State.³⁷ The year 1941 saw the change of the beauty contest title after *Ka Palapala* became its sole sponsor. The contest discontinued for four years during the Second World War but resumed in 1946 and lasted until 1971. According to the 1938 *Ka Palapala* and an article that was published in a major magazine *Paradise of the Pacific* in the mid-1950s, the invention of a beauty contest at UH was “nationally recognized as Hawaii’s unique contribution to campus activity,”³⁸ and “gained a nation-wide publicity for Hawai‘i.”³⁹

Since the inception of the competition, five to seven queens were chosen as winners every year to represent major “racial” and ethnic groups of the UH student population. The categories that were used include Caucasian, Caucasian-Hawaiian,

³⁵ Robert Schmitt said that it started in 1937. (Robert C. Schmitt, “Beauty Contests,” 1994, Hawaii Historical Society web page).

³⁶ It started from the idea of Neal Batchelor, an assistant editor of the student newspaper, *Ka Leo*, which means *The Voice*, and Calvin McGregor, a councilor of the Associated Student Body who eventually became a state judge. The first year’s pageant was sponsored by the campus newspaper. From the second year, the *Ka Palapala*, meaning *The Book*, student yearbook staff took over sponsorship of the Pageant and developed it into an elaborate production, hence its name.

³⁷ Anon., “Winners will be presented at a convocation honoring the visiting Washington cage squad on March 31,” *Ka Leo o Hawai‘i*, Jan 26 1938.

³⁸ Anon., “This, too, is the University,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, 68 No.11 (Nov 56): 105.

³⁹ *Ka Palapala*, 1938: 116.

Hawaiian, Asiatic-Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Negro, and Cosmopolitan (racially mixed).⁴⁰ Each competition was normally composed of two preliminary and one final contests, which was referred to then as a four-stage event:

First, names of participants are placed personally or by petition in their corresponding racial categories; second, two rallies are held at which contestants wear bathing suits and street length dresses; third, the student body elects five [three for some years] girls from each racial category; finally, a winner and a runner-up for each of the groups are named after formal judging.⁴¹

The judges for the final contest were made up of local professional artists, photographers, sculptors, and later on local businessmen and government officials. The standards for the contest were “deportment, features, form, hair, teeth, and hands” for the first year⁴², then had “personality” added beginning in the second year. After World War II, the “beauty formula” was 30 percent for facial beauty, 20 percent for perfection of figure, 30 percent for personality, 20 percent for poise. In the 1950s, this was simplified into 50 points for beauty, 30 points for carriage, and 20 points for body. Swimsuits were used for the first year, banned during the second year, then reintroduced after the War.

The placing of different ethnic categories of queens side by side on the public stage showcases the myth of Hawai‘i as a racial paradise which took shape in the 1920s and perpetuates to this day. It obscured the fact that the big sugar plantation owners and oligarchies promoted racial segregation and made huge profits out of their “divide and rule” policy toward the plantation laborers of different “racial” and ethnic groups. It used some young “racially” coded bodies to reify the image of Hawai‘i as an “ethnic rainbow.” With the University of Hawai‘i serving then as Hawaii’s well spring of

⁴⁰ “Filipino” was used in the 1940s and Negro in the 1960s.

⁴¹ Anon., “This , too, is the University,” 104-105.

⁴² Anon., “Coed Parade Slated for Thursday” *Ka Leo o Hawai‘i*, Wed, March 16, 1938: 1.

cosmopolitan culture (ranging from social life to fashion) and big-time sports till the 1970s (even today in terms of sports), the rhetoric and strategy used in *Ka Palapala* on “race” relations quickly prevailed after World War II in the territorial government’s tourism development campaign and the first Narcissus Festival in 1949.

The 1920s and 1930s in Hawai‘i saw the start of a trend to reify Hawai‘i as a paradise of “race” relations. As Jane Desmond has mentioned, as early as 1924, the *National Geographic*’s February special issue on Hawai‘i sang a different tune from the popular tourist discourse, which only showed Native Hawaiians and Caucasians as island inhabitants, and marveled at the variety of “race” and their intermixing in Hawai‘i. In this edition, a full-page photograph was captioned “Thirty-two Girls, Each of a Different Race or Racial Combination, All Attending Kawaiahae Seminary, Honolulu: A Striking Illustration of the Mixture of Races that is Taking Place in Hawaii.” The names for the thirty-two “races” and “racial combinations” were all listed, ranging from Hawaiian and Chinese to Hawaiian-Chinese-German-Norwegian-Irish and Samoan-Tahitian.⁴³ In addition, as Jonathan Okamura has noted, from 1926 to 1936, Romanzo Adams defined the Islands as a “racial melting pot” in a series of articles that was published in the *Mid-Pacific Magazine*, *Race and Culture Contacts*, and *Social Process in Hawai‘i*. In 1937, he published a book entitled *Interracial Marriage in Hawaii* and related the uniqueness of “race” relations in Hawai‘i to its high interracial marriage rate.⁴⁴ In 1938, Robert Park, a well-known sociologist whose research directly influenced the “race” relation studies at

⁴³ Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 87-88.

⁴⁴ Jonathan Y. Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawai‘i,” in *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States*, ed. Dru Gladney (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 265.

the University of Hawai‘i, called Hawai‘i “the most notable instance of a melting pot of the modern world.”⁴⁵ These thoughts permeated the publications *Ka Palapala* from its very beginning.

The word “race” was used consistently and deliberately to amplify the picture of Hawai‘i as a successful “racial experiment” for the U.S. continent. *Ka Leo*’s first announcement about the beauty contest on January 26, 1938 stated: “The staff of *Ka Palapala* will chose three from each group, then leading artists of Honolulu will select the most beautiful girl from each race and two Cosmopolitans.”⁴⁶ On March 12, *Ka Leo* clarified, “The most beautiful girls will be selected from each ‘racial’ group at the University of Hawai‘i which includes, Caucasian, Caucasian-Hawaiian, Asiatic-Hawaiian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Cosmopolitan.”⁴⁷ On March 16, it explained that “*Haole* was used to mean Caucasian.”⁴⁸ The caption for the picture of the 1939 winners in *Ka Leo* read “Six Racial Queens Standing in a Row...”, with the picture showing them all “dressed in their racial costumes.”⁴⁹ In 1940, the *Honolulu Star Bulletin* referred to the event as the University of Hawai‘i’s “racial beauty contest.”⁵⁰ The Cosmopolitans of that year included “Hawaiians and candidates of *racial mixtures*.”⁵¹

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.265.

⁴⁶ June Erickson, “Co-eds Warned to Look Best for Kapalapala Beauty Contest,” *Ka Leo o Hawaii*, Wed., January 26, 1938: 1.

⁴⁷ Anon., “Pulchritudinous Coeds to Parade Before Artists,” *Ka Leo o Hawai‘i*, Sat., March 12, 1938: 1.

⁴⁸ Anon., “Coed Parade Slated for Thursday” *Ka Leo o Hawa‘ii*, Wed, March 16, 1938: 1.

⁴⁹ Anon., “Six Racial Queens Standing in a Row...,” *Ka Leo o Hwai‘i*, Wed, April 12, 1939: 1.

⁵⁰ Anon., “UH Beauty Contest Finals Are Set for February 27,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, February 24, 1940: 3.

⁵¹ *The Honolulu Advertiser* further explained that, “No pure-blooded Hawaiians could be found to compete, so a special group, the cosmopolitans, made up of part-Hawaiians, was substituted. The Queen of the

An example of the best-articulated thought about the contest is the 1948 *Ka*

Palapala editorial note:

Dear Reader:

If it were all possible, we would have depicted an ethnic rainbow on our cover design. This would have been a much more appropriate symbol for the University of Hawaii... This is meant to say that we conceive of this university as a “melting pot” in the typical travel brochure sense of term... We are not quite that naïve... We acknowledge the fact that “racial” fraternities exist in practice. We are aware that the registrar’s office still requires students to list down their “racial ancestries.” *Ka Palapala* still sponsors yearly “racial” beauty contests... It may be that what the sociologists term the process of assimilation is as yet incomplete. Or, it may be that we cling to traditions, customs, conventions simply because they are traditional, customary and conventional. We wanted an ethnic rainbow to illustrate the point that, in spite of all these traditional artifices emphasizing ethnological differences, peoples of different heritages can form as beautiful a harmony as that of the spectrum of the rainbow. The time has come for us not merely to recognize these differences but also to understand that cultural diversity need not be cause for conflict.⁵²

Also worth mentioning regarding these expressions, the concept of “race” was used not just to refer to “color” or biological differences but also to culture, ethnicity, and even national origin. Among the categories designed for the contest, Caucasian, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean were each regarded as a “race.” “Cosmopolitan,” however, was used to refer to the racially-mixed. The local newspaper *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* simply called it the “UH racial beauty contest.” In the same paper, next to the news about the beauty contest, there was a picture showing a “Maui Folk Festival,” with the captions saying that “*eight racial groups* took part ... at the Wailuku gymnasium...[which] were Filipino, Japanese, Samoan, Hawaiian, Portuguese, Puerto Rican, Chinese, and Caucasian. Each group presented songs, dances and customs of the land from which they

cosmopolitans Edean Ross, described herself as ‘a little English, a bit of Scotch, and a dash of Hawaiian.’ (Anon., “Five Prettiest Students at University Are Awarded Campus Beauty Crowns,” February 28, 1940: 1.)

⁵² *Ka Palapala*, 1948: 28.

or their forebears came.”⁵³ “Race” was used here to mean cultural heritage or national origin. The juxtaposition of “race” and national origin were even more prominent in the 1950s. A 1955 article in *Paradise of the Pacific* called *Ka Palapala* the “showcase” of Hawaii and an “international competition.”⁵⁴ Another journal article read, “This spirit of internationalism was concretely carried out in a beauty contest... The University of Hawai‘i might easily be called a little United Nations.”⁵⁵ Next to the article, a picture showed young women in Japanese, Korean, and Chinese attires. The above pieces of evidence show that the concept of “race” was used interchangeably with the concepts of “nation,” “ethnicity,” and “culture.” There was not much distinction among them.⁵⁶ An exception though seems to be in that *Ka Palapala* editorial note, where “race,” while “emphasizing ethnological differences,” is distinguished from “ethnicity” which refers to “people of different heritage.” However, it still created an affinity between “ethnicity” and “color” in the expression “ethnic rainbow.”

The juxtaposition of “race,” “ethnicity,” and “nation” should come as no surprise as there always has been an overlap among them in popular discourse and even in academic discourse. According to Jacobson, a nineteenth-century leading British anthropologist named Edward B. Tylor defined “race” with an inclusion of a “cultural” or “nonheritable dimension that was not strictly biological.” He arranged a series of “races” into a hierarchy based on “culture,” such as Italian, Chinese, Aztec, and Australian,

⁵³ Anon., “UH Beauty Contest Finals Are Set for February 27” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 24, 1940: 3.

⁵⁴ Art Silverman, “Pin-ups , Hawaii,” *Paradise of the Pacific*, 67, no.7(Jul. 1 1955): 22-23.

⁵⁵ Anon., “This , too, is the University,” 104-105.

⁵⁶ This might correspond which Rebecca King’s resolution that race and ethnicity can’t be addressed separately. They were separate only in academic analysis but not in real life.

although the customary racial ordering that ranged from light to dark was still there.⁵⁷ Some other scholars argued for the abandoning of “race” as an ontological tool as early as the 1920s, among whom were sociologist Max Weber and anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict.⁵⁸ Weber suggested the use of ethnicity for group distinctions whereas Boas and Benedict emphasized “culture” as practices instead of essences. However, decades have passed in order for these scholarly concepts to acquire taken-for-granted states. Thus the notion of “culture” as learning and “ethnicity” most often co-existed with the notion of “culture” as inheritance and racial categorizations.

No matter what emphasis was given to racial harmony, ethnic co-existence, or internationalism, the standard definition of beauty for those racially coded bodies was primarily Western in the *Ka Papapala* beauty contest. *Ka Leo*'s first announcement claimed that it would be “... not the Queens of Movie-land and a Hollywood premiere, but queens in their own right, nevertheless, the University of Hawaii's Queens of Beauty.”⁵⁹ It later also emphasized that, “Unlike former beauty contests which ‘about-faced’ into popularity competitions, the decision will be strictly confined to beauty of face and figure and personality.”⁶⁰ Yet it conveniently forgot to explain how its standards were different from those of Hollywood. The rhetoric that *Ka Leo* used for recruiting candidates was fully charged with Western and Hollywood images of femininity:

⁵⁷ Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 152.

⁵⁸ Weber defined “ethnic group” as one whose members “entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration.” (1992 [1968], 389).

⁵⁹ June Erickson, “Co-eds Warned to Look Best for Kapalapala Beauty Contest,” 1.

⁶⁰ Anon., “Pulchritudinous Coeds to Parade Before Artists,” 1.

Co-ed! Take a glance in the looking glass; Look your best when you go to class, for it may be your fate, I mean, to reign as *Ka Palapala* beauty queen. The audience...lights...the admiring gaze of the men and the envious stares of their less fortunate sisters ...So, girls...when the worry and distaste of tests are things of the past, shake off your cocoons; tilt your saucy, powered noses in the air; spread your beaming smiles around the campus, for you and you and you may be chosen one of the Beauty Queens of the University.⁶¹

The Western standard of beauty was also gradually enhanced as the contest continued from year to year. As pictures about the contest in *Ka Leo* showed in 1938, the contestants did not wear high-heels with their bathing suits but were barefoot.⁶² Later on they had to so that their legs would look longer and their hips fuller. An article in *Paradise of the Pacific* later admitted that the bodies on stage and at the pool were judged more by an American definition of beauty: "Chosen on the basis of beauty, poise, carriage and with emphasis on a wholesome, American quality, winners are accorded honor and prestige."⁶³

Art Silverman's 1955 article justified the American-centered beauty standard by using an assimilationist analogy of family resemblance:

Just as couples, long married, begin to look alike after years of sharing, so these girls of many backgrounds reflect, in facial expression and in bearing, the American ideal...What strikes an average observer is, when Americans of various ancestries act, talk and think as Americans, any physical characteristics that might indicate a particular background become inconsequential. They have 'the American look'...[When our girls] appeared in native dress ... before a large group, predominately tourist, above their colorful costumes were frank and friendly American faces; smiling faces. As is usual with children of immigrating peoples, they have dropped those mannerisms which once distinguished the women of Japan, China, Korea, the Philippines.⁶⁴

⁶¹ June Erickson, "Co-eds Warned to Look Best for Kapalapala Beauty Contest," 1.

⁶² *Ka Leo o Hawai'i*, March 23, 1939.

⁶³ Anon., "This, too, is the University," 104-105.

⁶⁴ Silverman, "Pin-ups , Hawaii," 22-23.

However, when Silverman further defines what is the “American look,” he equates it to

Aloha:

All – and this includes the Caucasian – have taken on something essentially Hawaii. Call it *Aloha*. ...And when they moved into the hula which was high spot of their show, their unity, in motion, was ‘as precise as Rockettes.’ They sing too – and laugh – and enjoy. *Aloha* had a way of rubbing off on all of us.⁶⁵

Silverman’s definition of Americanness reflects a combination of an assimilationist vision for the immigrants and a colonialist fantasy of Hawai‘i. Immigrants shall gain “the American look” by shedding off their ancestor’s features and manners. “The American look” shall simultaneously be “the *Aloha*” look in Hawai‘i with some songs, some laughs, some *hula* dance, and a lot of smiles. *Ka Palapala* is thus another racial project for the people in Hawai‘i to fulfill their dual task of exoticization and Americanization. They were provided as a positive image on the *Ka Palapala* Queen stage after they demonstrated sufficient Americanization and racial evolution. However, the Chinese Queen was marginalized because the center stage was set for the Caucasian Queen and Cosmopolitan Queen. They were put on the same stage but only to be judged by Western aesthetics of beauty and the progress of their racial evolution.

The Americanization of Hawai‘i in the Miss Hawaii Beauty Competition

A climax of the Americanization of Hawai‘i was the 1948 Miss Hawaii beauty competition, the winner of which would compete in the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Launched by the Honolulu Junior Chamber of Commerce as part of the 49th State Fair – a territory-wide campaign to make Hawai‘i the forty-ninth state of the United States, the pageant attracted an audience of 40,000 people on the fairground and

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22-23

created the first live and “modern” public figure to represent the territory on the American continent. Although the campaign for statehood was continually rejected by the U.S. Congress until 1959 when Hawai‘i finally became the fiftieth state, the pageant that was held on Saturday, May 8, 1948 became the first venue of public self-perception as a potential state against the backdrop of expanding American global influence. In contest chair Arthur Campbell’s simple words, “This is not just another beauty contest... We feel this is a good chance for Hawaii to get added national recognition.”⁶⁶ What made the stakes even higher was the fact that 1948 was the first year the two U.S. territories of Hawai‘i and Puerto Rico sent candidates to compete with winners from the forty-eight American states. Miss Hawai‘i had to compete not only with the candidates from all the states but also with the one from Puerto Rico.

The Fair – “the greatest fair ever presented in the Territory of Hawaii” – was held at Kapi‘olani Park, originally scheduled for May 8 and 9 only, the Fair had to be extended two more days due to the huge crowds that flocked to the fairgrounds. Aside from the pageant, other programs of the Fair included livestock, fruit, and vegetable shows, home economic and industrial exhibits, live entertainment, and games. The total attendance for the four days surpassed 130,000. According to a *Star-Bulletin* report, “It has been so successful that the large crowds prevented many people from seeing the exhibits and displays, while thousands of others were unable to enjoy the entertainment features because of the throngs of spectators.”⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Anon., “TH Girls to Compete in Miss America Pageant,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, Sun., March 7, 1948.

⁶⁷ Anon., “49th State Fair Extended Two Days; Crowd Over 130,000,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Mon., May 10, 1948: 6.

Out of the five finalists who faced the 40,000 member audience,⁶⁸ the winner for Miss Hawaii was Irmgard Leina‘ala Waiwaiole, who was crowned by the territorial governor and performed the *hula* as her talent program. The other four were named “beauty queens.” Local newspapers called Waiwaiole a “comely, graceful brunet,” “a 23 year old miss of Hawaiian, Norwegian, Chinese and Irish ancestry,” who “typifies the many races of the territory.”⁶⁹ In fact, she looked *haole*, as most of the finalists did although the original recruiting announcement claimed, “There are no racial restrictions regarding entries and young women of every racial background will be encouraged to enter.”⁷⁰ They also provided “a few interesting statistics” about her: “her height, 5 feet 4 inches; weight, 116 pounds; bust, 32 inches; waist, 24 inches; hips, 32 inches.”⁷¹

A consensus was built that Waiwaiole was the “queen of beauty in the territory” to represent Hawai‘i in Miss America contest at Atlantic City. As Miss America was promoted in the territory as Miss America Scholarship, with sixteen awards to be given that totaled \$25,000, it was also speculated about how much “scholarship” she would win.⁷² However, Waiwaiole later abdicated her title when she could not complete the necessary high-school credits to qualify for the title before the Miss America deadline.

⁶⁸ The actual competition took place on Friday May 7, the day before the Fair started. The winner was already chosen but was not announced until before the Saturday coronation and the Fair.

⁶⁹ Anon., “Miss Hawaii, 23, Typifies Islands’ Racial Diversity,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Mon., May 10, 1948: 6.

⁷⁰ Anon., “TH Girls to Compete in Miss America Pageant.”

⁷¹ Anon., “Miss Hawaii, 23, Typifies Islands’ Racial Diversity,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Mon., May 10, 1948: 6.

⁷² Anon., “TH Girls to Compete in Miss America Pageant.” The prize included a \$5,000 scholarship for the winner, a \$3,000 scholarship for the first runner-up, \$2,500 for the second, \$2,000 for the third, and a \$1,500 scholarship for the fourth. A \$1,000 scholarship would go to the next 10 runners-up, plus another \$1,000 for the talented person not in the finals.

Yun Tau Zane from Kohala, Hawai‘i, a 20-year old Chinese and home economics major at the University of Hawai‘i, who was the runner-up, became Miss Hawaii and competed in the Miss America contest in September, 1948. The major newspapers in Honolulu did not cover the change of their “queen” until the Miss Hawaii promotion campaign of the next year. *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, an English newspaper circulated among the local Chinese community, responded to Zane’s replacing Irmgard Waiwaiole as “beauty and brains will be the emphasis at the national beauty contest in Atlantic city, and it can be said that Hawaii’s delegate meets both requirements.”⁷³ However, neither her beauty nor her brain won her any award. It was her “friendliness among the contestants” that won her the first Miss Congeniality title and won her \$1,000.⁷⁴

What appeared now as a project of American colonialism that followed the U.S. victory in both the Eastern and Western theaters of World War II actually inspired a lot of people in Hawai‘i at the time. To many young women, especially Asian American women, it was inspiring because it indicated that they were now “civilized” enough to compete with Caucasian women on the U.S. continent following the same standards of “beauty.” Furthermore, in contrast with those Caucasian women who had used their bodies to earn money as prostitutes to American soldiers in Hawai‘i during the War,⁷⁵ the

⁷³ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, 12, No.36 (Thursday, September 2, 1948).

⁷⁴ Zane later used the money to attend the University of Wisconsin, her then would-be husband’s alma mater. She received her fifth-year teaching certificate following her graduation from the University of Hawaii. Afterward, she taught in elementary schools for 33 years, 26 of them at Ma‘ema‘e School.

⁷⁵ Beth L. Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawai‘i* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

territorial contestants had a chance to use their bodies to earn scholarships toward their college education.⁷⁶

During my interview with some senior local Chinese who experienced the 1948 pageant or knew Zane well (she passed away in 2002), I was informed that Zane won because she did not look Chinese but could easily pass as *haole* in Hawai‘i. A picture of her in swimsuit with Miss Puerto Rico, 1947 Miss America, and Miss Canada⁷⁷ also shows that her physical features looked almost identical to others’, representing the same Western standard of beauty. However, to many people, Zane’s physical proximity to Caucasian female features and her winning were still significant because they demonstrated a wider spectrum of “Asiatic genes” and the possibility to cross that symbolic race line or break the color barrier. As Elaine Woo put it in the *Los Angeles Times*,

[Zane] was the first Miss Hawaii [who] helped break the color barrier in the Miss America pageant, ...[which] had a long history of racial exclusion. Until at least 1940, all contestants had to complete a biological data sheet that asked them to outline their lineage.... Ms. Chee [Zane’s family after marriage] and Irma Nydia Wasquez from Puerto Rico pushed the ethnic boundaries further when they joined the pageant. More than two decades would pass before the pageant had its first black contestant, Cheryl Brown, of Iowa, in 1970.⁷⁸

The Miss America pageant had a special meaning to many Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. Local Chinese newspapers, both in English and Chinese, extended congratulations to her. This was a turning point in creating a new public image of young Chinese Americans, as it provided a vivid contrast with the previous image, based on a

⁷⁶ Arthur Campbell, “TH Girls to Compete in Miss America Pageant,” *The Honolulu Advertiser*. Sunday, July 3, 1948: 1.

⁷⁷ *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Monday, November 20, 2000.

⁷⁸ Elaine Woo, “Yun Tau Chee – 1948 Miss Congeniality,” http://www.huaren.org/diaspora/n_america/isa/people/030202-01.html (accessed March 2, 2002).

1910s-1930s missionary-led critique of foot binding, *mui tsai* (female 'slave') systems, and concubinage amongst Chinese immigrants in Hawai'i.⁷⁹

Several local Chinese organizations in Honolulu started their own beauty pageants in 1948 and 1949, following the same judging methods and pageant procedures.

Although there was strong resistance among some Chinese groups against the swimsuit phase of the competition, local Chinese newspapers justified it with reference to measuring female proportions as scientific management of the body, and therefore part of becoming modern and American.

Conclusion

As highlighted in the Euro-American festival and beauty pageants, the material and symbolic relationship between the United States and Hawai'i in the earlier twentieth century was a process of American inscription of Hawai'i into a dichotomized role in U.S. economic, political, and military expansion. In one sense, Native Hawaiians were expected to become industrious laborers and diligent consumers – citizens of capitalism. In another sense, Native Hawaiians were expected to represent European romanticized view of the past that showed promise for modernization but retained “soft primitivism.” Native Hawaiians and Asian settlers were ascribed the same role in the first sense. However, Asian settlers were deemed undesirable and problematic in the other sense. In carving their niche in the U.S.-Pacific encounter, Asian settlers rearticulated the dichotomy of modernity *vis-à-vis* soft primitivism by adopting modernity, downplaying “soft primitivism,” and inventing a romanticized past of ancient Oriental civilization.

⁷⁹ Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 340-342.

From the Mid-Winter Floral Parade, the University of Hawai'i *Ka Palapala* Queen beauty contest, and the first Miss Hawai'i pageant, we can discern three phases of racial relations as defined by the Euro-American perspective of the mainstream society. Through these three phases, Chinese Americans' desirable public image in Hawai'i evolved from invisibility, to marginal visibility, to full visibility. They were made invisible earlier because they were deemed an inassimilable "yellow peril" that hindered Hawaii's statehood. They were used as a positive image on the *Ka Palapala* Queen stage after they demonstrated sufficient Americanization and racial evolution. However, the Chinese Queen was marginalized because the center stage was set for the Caucasian Queen and the Cosmopolitan Queen. Full visibility was realized after World War II through American terms. Chinese Americans in Hawai'i accomplished their full racial uplifting when Yun Tau Zane from the University of Hawai'i became the first Miss Hawaii and then the first Miss Congeniality in the Miss American Scholarship Pageant. The full racial uplifting provided them the confidence to represent themselves on the public stage in post-WWII Hawai'i.

Chapter 3

The Historical Conception of the Narcissus Festival and Queen Pageant after World War II – The Making of an Ethnic Spectacle

The Narcissus Festival, launched in Honolulu Chinatown in 1949 by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, was the first event of the Islands that proactively mobilized public interest in an ethnic enclave and consciously enticed public gaze upon an ethnic community. The Chamber took upon itself the task of explaining Chinese cultural practices, interpreting Chinese beliefs, representing the Chinese American community, and invigorating Honolulu Chinatown for its own political and economic interests. It created the first public cultural project of the Islands that was initiated by an ethnic community itself, independent from all other cultural spectacles that were sponsored by the mainstream Caucasian organizations and government agencies¹. Through the Narcissus Festival, Chamber members repackaged the annual family celebration of Chinese Lunar New Year into a modern ethnic spectacle in downtown Honolulu, and displayed a Chinese American identity they wanted to claim for themselves rather than the identities that they were assigned by the Caucasian-oriented mainstream society. This ethnic spectacle was a product of modern consumerism, tourist development, urbanization, suburbanization, Americanization, and orientalism in post-WWII Hawai'i.² The Narcissus Festival reflected the adaptation of some Chinese

¹ Events organized by the mainstream society included the Aloha Week by the Honolulu Jaycees, the 49th State Fair by Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, the D-Day Parade by the war-time military government, and Chinese cultural exhibitions by the Honolulu Academy of Art.

² I use the concept "spectacle" in my dissertation as it is generally defined in cultural anthropology rather than as defined by Guy Debord in his well-known *The Society of the Spectacle*. However, the Debordian perception of modern living as a consumption of images is very helpful in my understanding of the

Americans to the social changes in Hawai‘i and their redefinition (either conscious or subconscious) of Chineseness in post-war modernity.

In this chapter, I analyze the process of the invention of the Narcissus Festival by contextualizing it within post-WWII local, national, and international politics and social relations. I use Eric Hobsbawm’s concept of “invented tradition” to demonstrate the creation of some Chinese cultural practices into a modern ethnic spectacle. In his book *The Invention of Tradition*, he argues that “traditions” which appear old are often quite recent in origin and are socially “engineered” as “a legitimator of action and cement of group cohesion.”³ He emphasizes “tradition” as a process of formalization and ritualization that constantly refers to the past and constantly requires repetition to fulfill a present mission. He calls for more studies to look into the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant. Using the “invented tradition” concept, I address the inception of the Narcissus Festival as a quadruple-folded attempt of middle-class Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i – to claim a larger role in state tourism development; to promote Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i as a homogenous community; to turn a Western Oriental fantasy into their own cultural capital; and to maintain an ethnic identification in the process of their “Americanization.” In later chapters, I will further extend Hobsbawm’s theory to demonstrate how the Festival organizers continuously applied and reified the symbol of “Chinese tradition” over the past half a century to promote their changing economic, cultural, and political interests. I also substantiate

commercialization of culture, especially his notion that “The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.”

³ Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions” in *The Invention of Tradition*, 12-13.

Hobsbawm's argument on the social engineering of "tradition" by demonstrating how the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i invented a symbol of Chineseness with a beauty contest.

I first provide an overview of the general economic, social, and political situations that concerned Chinese Americans in World War II and postwar Hawai'i. I particularly emphasize the rapid integration of the Territory of Hawai'i into the American national and international system as well as the development of tourism in Hawai'i. In the second part, I address the internal context that Chinese Americans faced during this period, which include the demographic change of its population, the shift of community leadership, and the further Americanization of its middle-class. The third part delineates the specific process of the launching of the Narcissus Festival in Honolulu Chinatown and examines how the packaging of an ethnic spectacle was conducted through a series of rituals and symbols, from emblems and souvenir books to fireworks and parades. It also reveals the Chinese American community and the practitioners of the Festival as heterogeneous groups exerting various interpretations of Chinese culture and Chinese American identity. While presenting the Festival as a site of contestation and negotiation, I demonstrate what alternative discourses of Chineseness have been repressed or obscured in the creation of an imagined homogeneous Chinese American community.

Particularly intriguing is that the Chinese Chamber of Commerce placed a Narcissus Queen Pageant into the Narcissus Festival, a beauty contest that adopted the standards of judgment from the Miss America Scholarship Pageant and required the contestants to showcase their poise and personality in a "bathing suit." The beauty contest brought women and in particular female bodies into the limelight in an ethnic event for

the first time. This ethnic spectacle hence contained a new meaning; so did the interest in Chinatown and the gaze of the Chinese American community. While being incorporated into the Chinese New Year celebration, the beauty contest challenged the meaning of Chinese tradition, the boundaries of Chinese culture, and the image of the Chinese American community. As the Festival proceeded in the decades to follow, the Pageant became further incorporated as a showcase of Chinese culture and tradition. Female bodies became an even more prominent site where the representation and negotiation of Chinese culture and Chinese American identity took place. Therefore, the last section of this chapter focuses on how and why the Chamber included a beauty pageant in their cultural festival and how they explained the significance of showcasing young women of Chinese ancestry and how they made meaning of their bodies to the public. From the discourse of the contest organizers, we can further understand how they perceived their Chineseness and what they deemed as the most important elements to make them “Chinese” in Hawai‘i.

The conclusion of this chapter summarizes the integrated relationship between ethnicity and gender in the construction of an imagined Chinese American community and reemphasizes that there is no fixed Chinese American identity. Chineseness can only be examined within specific contexts.

The Economic, Social, and Political Changes in Hawai‘i in the 1940s

The Second World War, or specifically the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, altered the position of the islands of Hawai‘i in U.S. international relations. If Hawai‘i served as a supply station and a navy base prior to the war for the U.S. expansion to East Asia, it changed into the Western outpost for the defense of the continental United States

during the War and the headquarters for the “Americanization” of the Pacific and Asia afterward. The landmarks for this postwar change include two prominent federal agencies that were established on O‘ahu: the Voice of America radio relay station at Maili, West O‘ahu from 1944 to 1969 and the East-West Center at Honolulu from 1960 to the present. The former, as a part of the U.S. government’s International Broadcasting Bureau, propagated a strong signal throughout the Pacific rim with its programming in English and Asian languages. The latter, as the U.S. government’s think tank and liaison center in the Pacific and Asian region, conducted area studies and information collection in this region as well as promoted U.S. interests by recruiting graduate students from various countries and sending them home after several years as pro-U.S. professionals and administrators.

Nationally, the War accelerated Hawaii’s integration into American economic, political, military, cultural, and social systems. The martial law that was enacted from Dec 7, 1941 to Oct 24, 1944 in Hawai‘i was more excessive in scope and depth than on the continental United States.⁴ Under martial law, the U.S. Army suspended the constitutional rights of U.S. citizens and residents, took over civil and criminal courts, censored the press, froze wages and prices, regulated the movements and occupations of laborers, implemented strict curfews and blackouts, and assumed control of hospitals, public health, infrastructure, and other city and territorial government functions. The commanding officer of the U.S. Army became the military governor who literally assumed all executive, legislative, and judicial powers. The Army and the Navy, aided by civilian agencies like the Office of Price Administration and the National Resources

⁴ It was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in 1946.

Planning Board, executed a command that took over all leading economic sectors in the Islands, including sugar, pineapple, and tourism.

The U.S. military purchased all processed products from Hawaii's plantations and called for a full expansion of the sugar and pineapple industries.⁵ Although plantations could not meet the call for expansion, they produced at nearly normal levels during the war. Prior to the war, Hawaii's sugar industry had been on decline, with a drop in employment of 20 percent between 1939 and 1941. This decrease continued during the war when the workers, who were offered better hourly pay and/or better employment conditions in the military services, chose not to return to the plantation.⁶ Through extensive and intensive rationalization and the employment of all available school children (with far lower wages than adults), plantations succeeded in maintaining the level of sugar and pineapple output as prior to war. Pineapple production was maintained at around 18 million cases each year, while sugar production dropped slightly from 947,000 tons in 1941 to 821,000 tons in 1945.

The Hawaii Tourist Bureau (HTB), the territorial government agency for the promotion and regulation of tourism, closed during the war. The armed forces took over the travel industry to serve the leisure needs of U.S. officers and enlisted men. Ironically, the territory experienced its greatest "tourist" boom while the war technically froze pleasure travel. The military also regulated a sex tourism industry which thrived during

⁵ Due to the devastation in Europe and Japan's seizure of Java during the War, the Philippines, and other cane-producing areas, world sugar production dropped 60 percent.

⁶ The plantation owners benefited far more than the laborers although they were subject to the military control of their own companies. Plantation laborers who were diverted to military services mostly continued to receive their original wages on the plantation when the planter put the extra hourly labor pay from the military into their own pockets.

the war, typically serving 250,000 men each month and netting some prostitutes as much as \$25,000 each year.⁷ Every hotel, bar, brothel, restaurant, taxicab service, amusement center, souvenir shop, photography service, and drug store received more business than they could manage. As a U.S. Department of Labor study showed, “Any such enterprise, no matter how badly managed or poorly located, could be operated at a profit.”⁸ In 1945, hundreds of thousands of servicemen and war workers left \$584 million in the Islands. Wartime “tourist” expenditures of military personnel and civilians employed by the Army and Navy not only vastly exceeded any prewar earnings from tourism, but for the first time in territorial history they surpassed the combined value of pineapple and sugar production. In just four years, the island of O‘ahu was transformed from a primarily rural and agricultural community into a predominantly urban and service economy.

The war also consolidated the military presence in the Islands and made it the fourth pillar of Hawaii’s economy after sugar, pineapple, and tourism. The U.S. armed forces in Hawai‘i expanded from 40,000 to 400,000 after December 1941,⁹ and transformed the Islands into a series of enormous military installations that served as Pacific outposts for the defense of the U.S. continent and the staging ground for the million-plus men who fought in the war. In Hawai‘i, the wartime economy generated full employment. Virtually every man, woman, and child over the age of twelve was working during the war, while the rate of unemployment fell close to zero. Total personal income

⁷Christine M. Skwiot, “Itineraries of Empire: The Uses of United States Tourism in Cuba and Hawai‘i, 1898-1959,” (Ph.D. diss., The State University of New Jersey – New Brunswick, 2002), 160. Also in Beth L. Bailey *et al.*, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 157.

sky-rocketed 36 percent a year in the territory, rising three times more than it did in the booming wartime economy on the U.S. continent.¹⁰

This economic boom, however, was soon followed by drastic contraction and an economic recession in 1945-1949 in Hawai‘i. The military nearly halved its expenditures in Hawai‘i between 1945 and 1946, from more than \$400 million to \$224 million. They continued to fall until the Korean War, reaching a low of \$147 million in 1950. The number of uniformed and civilian employees of the armed forces in Hawai‘i dropped nearly ninety percent from 1945 to 1950, from 364,000 to 38,000. Unemployment rate soared as federal construction ended, and civilian jobs with the armed services disappeared. Of the four key economic sectors, only tourism grew, earning \$19 million in 1948. However, it was not big enough to carry the half-billion dollar-per-year agricultural export economy of Hawai‘i.¹¹

After the war, therefore, all sectors of business, from the Big Five¹² to the elite Japanese American and Chinese American business classes, began to explore ways to attract mainland investment to Hawai‘i. By the end of the recession in 1949, Caucasian-dominated organizations, led by the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, the Hawaii Visitors Bureau (HVB), the Bank of Hawaii, the Hawaii Economic Foundation, and supported by *Paradise of the Pacific*, *Hawaiian Almanac and Annual*, and *the Honolulu*

¹⁰ Skwiot, "Itineraries of Empire," 163. And it's worth noting that the Japanese did not receive their proportional share of increased wealth.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹² By 1910, the Big Five had reached full monopoly in sugar plantation, shipping lines, railroads, banks, insurance, utilities, retail and wholesale trades of the islands of Hawai‘i. The War interrupted mainland and local challenges to their hegemony, mostly led by the New Deal state, the media, and labor. The Big Five and many other members of the Caucasian business class staunchly supported military rule, which replaced their weakened and contested authority with the discipline of martial law. Yet consequently, the martial law broke its monopoly on economic and political power and divided the once seemingly monolithic Republican Party.

Advertiser, reached a consensus that tourism was the Islands' sole economic future. In 1949, the territory government doubled the funding of the HVB to an unprecedented amount of \$500,000 for the next biennium, a sum that local businessmen matched dollar for dollar. Other social groups, such as Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and organized labor also supported the promotion of tourism as a measure to diversify the Island economy of sugar and pineapple plantations and as a strategy to achieve economic and political independence from the Big Five.¹³ By the early 1950s, tourism began to grow at an astonishing annual rate of twenty percent, spurring businesses and employment from hotel construction to flower cutting.¹⁴ Tourist development became a buzzword in the post-war territory of Hawai'i.

Another buzzword, or a household term then was statehood for Hawai'i. In 1946 President Truman urged the Congress to admit Hawai'i to statehood. In 1948, both the Republican and the Democrats inserted a plank in their national platforms favoring statehood for the territory. But the campaign was lost in the Senate because of the use of delaying tactics by Senator Hugh Butler of Nebraska – saying that the territory should be purged of communist influences in its political and economic life first. The loss was cheered by the Big Five who intended to maintain their economic and political oligarchy as well as some native Hawaiians who feared that statehood would bring “Americans of Japanese Ancestry” into a new dominant political power. To many working class people and those who did not have the right to naturalization, the statehood campaign seemed

¹³ They also stressed the need for the development of other sector of economy, such as commercial fishing. HVB Building Committee member Chinn Ho and his Chinese American peers in the aviation, construction, real estate, and other travel-related industries took a stand favoring tourism development but also locally oriented industries.

¹⁴ Skwiot, “Itineraries of Empire,” 185

irrelevant to their life. For the majority of the mainstream society, however, the denial of statehood was sheer humiliation. As Rayson stated, "even the school children were made aware of the fact that they were, in a sense, 'second class' citizens of the United States."¹⁵ It took another full ten years for these people to prove their Americanness before the territory was granted statehood in 1959.

Chinese Americans in Post-WWII Hawai'i

Chinese Americans in Hawai'i were already urbanized and "Americanized" prior to World War II – with "Americanization" defined by historian Lawrence H. Fuchs as the adoption of "the English language, Christian religion, and American business and political methods."¹⁶ The wartime and immediate postwar situations generated further demographic changes among Chinese Americans, new meanings of Americanization, and more assertiveness of the middle-class members in promoting individual and community interests in Hawai'i.

Being the first Asian group recruited to Hawai'i in the middle of the nineteenth century as plantation laborers, Chinese Americans began their migration to Hilo, Honolulu, and other urban centers of the Islands in the late nineteenth century. By the turn of the century, over ninety percent of Chinese Americans in Hawai'i were urban residents, who established retail businesses large and small or pursued professional careers.¹⁷ By 1930, the population of Chinese descent had two times their demographic

¹⁵ Ann Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History* (Bess Press, 1994), 182.

¹⁶ Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*, 86.

¹⁷ Some Chinese practiced some taro (a staple food in Hawaiian diet) or rice farming after the completion of their plantation contracts. However, they had to close their business due to the drastic decline of the Hawaiian population and the land merge drive for plantation expansion respectively.

representation as bankers, two and half times as real estate agents and officials, one and a half times as builders and contractors, and two and a half times as insurance agents, managers and officials. Two thirds of them in Honolulu left the ghettos in Chinatown and dispersed into other residential areas, including some neighborhoods that had been reserved for Caucasians. By 1940, almost 60 percent of all employed Chinese Americans in Hawai'i were in the preferred occupational classes, a big increase from 11.6 percent thus employed in 1890. Less than 2 percent were still on the farms, a decrease from 12 percent in 1890. Some with Chinese ancestry were then holding high political offices, including three Territorial Senators and three Territorial Representatives, and two district magistrates.¹⁸ Their political, social, and economic status formed a sharp contrast with that of their counterparts on the U.S. continent, where most were confined to the laundry or restaurant business.

Chinese Americans attained their economic, social, and political success in Hawai'i primarily through Christianization, urbanization, and collective participation in electoral politics. Chinese American Christian churches played a crucial role in initiating English language learning in the community and in educating immigrant families about Euro-American business and politics methods.¹⁹ Being the first group to migrate from plantations to urban centers of the Islands, Chinese Americans were also the first to be able to send their children to missionary schools as well as public schools for full-time and formal education. In 1907, the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts was established in Honolulu. It was soon expanded into the College of Hawai'i in 1912 and

¹⁸ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, September 30, 1948, 1.

¹⁹ For more information, see Diane Mei Lin Mark, *Seasons of Light: The History of Chinese Christian Churches in Hawaii* (Chinese Christian Association of Hawaii, 1989).

the University of Hawai'i in 1920. With the establishment of the University of Hawai'i in Honolulu, many Chinese Americans, whose families could not afford to send them to college in China or continental United States, found access to higher education. Many of them found professional jobs in Hawai'i while they were still in their junior or senior year of college. Their business, educational, and professional success, however, did not provide them with immediate access to the decision making process in the territorial politics. In 1919, K.C. Ahana and his brother K.M. Ahana were elected as treasurer and auditor respectively of Kaua'i County, becoming the first two public elected officials of Chinese ancestry in Hawai'i and in the United States. But the election of territory-level Chinese American officials did not take place until the Hawai'i Chinese Civic Association organized campaigns for candidates with Chinese ancestry. Formed in 1925, the Association was led by college graduates who experienced racial discrimination in the continental United States and returned to Hawai'i with a determination to change their status of second-class citizens by participating in electoral politics.²⁰ In 1926, Dr. Dai Yen Chang became the first person of Chinese descent who entered the Honolulu Board of Supervisors. In 1927, Yew Char became the first Chinese American elected to the Territorial House of Representatives. Also in 1927, William Heen, a part-Hawaiian and part-Chinese political figure, entered the Honolulu Board of Supervisors and the Territorial House of Representatives. The election of these Chinese Americans inspired other citizens of Chinese ancestry to run for positions in the territorial government.

²⁰ Tin-Yuke Char and Wai Jane Char, "The Chinese," in *Ethnic Sources in Hawai'i, Social Process in Hawaii*, edited by Bernhard L. Hormann and Andrew W. Lind, 29 (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1996): 44.

The increase in the proportion of Chinese American males in the preferred classes of occupation, and the decrease in proportion in unskilled labor became more prominent during and after the Second World War. By 1950, one of every ten lawyers was of Chinese descent and one of every five medical doctors and dentists in the territory were of Chinese descent, although the community with Chinese ancestry constituted only 7 per cent of the population of the Islands. The 1950 census showed that 8.8 percent of the population of Chinese descent aged 25 and over had completed a college education, compared with 3 per cent of the Japanese, 2.4 per cent of the Hawaiian and part Hawaiian, and 0.3 per cent of the Filipinos.²¹ The upward mobility of Chinese Americans in desirable professions was matched by their move into large expensive homes in the best districts of the city. When a territorial auction of nearly 500,000 square feet of land in upper Makiki Heights was held in February 1951, twenty-four of the thirty-four successful bidders of lots costing up to \$16,500 were of Chinese descent.²²

Americanization, aside from the meaning defined by Fuchs as adoption of English, Christianity, American business and political methods, then meant a greater degree of professionalization and adoption of suburban living standards.

At the end of World War II, a small group of Chinese Americans began to challenge the Big Five's monopoly of large-scale, non-sugar economic sectors. As Robert Lee wrote in 1948,

In the field of business, the Chinese have always been prominent. But it has been only since World War II that they have aggressively competed against *haoles*

²¹ Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*, 437

²² Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*, 437.

(Caucasians) and have been fairly successful. Formerly, the Chinese went into business symbiotic in character, supplying the needs of the community.²³

In 1947, Chinn Ho became the first non-Caucasian in the territory to purchase a large piece of real estate from one of the Big Five firms (for the Big Five to sell land was unprecedented). He established Capital Investment with the intention not just of making profits, but also breaking the Caucasian monopoly on land by selling affordable fee-simple lots to homeowners, small farmers, and businessmen. Ho was not alone. At the war's end, a Chinese syndicate out-bid the Big Five on a property adjacent to Waikīkī Beach. Hung Wo Ching, Hung Wai Ching, and Hiram Fong began consolidating significant fortunes in real estate, insurance, airlines, construction, and other businesses.²⁴

The wealthy and middle-class Chinese Americans asserted themselves not only against the Big Five but also against the labor unions. The labor movement in the Islands, which was suppressed by the military rule during the war, experienced a tremendous increase and made Hawai'i the most unionized area of the United States. Within the four years following the war, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), representing a total of almost 11,000 workers, staged three industry-wide strikes in Hawai'i – the 1946 Sugar Strike, the 1947 Pineapple Strike, and the 1949 6-month-long Longshore Strike. They triumphantly ended with the sugar, pineapple, and dockworkers gaining “a respectable share of the wealth these industries produced and a measure of dignity heretofore lacking in Hawaii's labor relations.”²⁵ The experienced

²³ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, September 30, 1948, 1.

²⁴ Skwiot, “Itineraries of Empire,” 171.

²⁵ Edward D. Beechert, *Working in Hawaii: A Labor History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1955), 329.

ILWU led another successful long-term sugar strike in 1958, which enabled the sugar workers to “become almost a white-collar worker” with a retirement program, housing policy, medical coverage program, and a wage increase plan that they secured through negotiation.²⁶

The reaction of many Chinese American businesses and professionals toward the strikes was rather negative. The *Hawaii Chinese Journal* called the 1949 shipping strike²⁷ a “plague... that is disastrous to the public as well as to individual projects and companies...[Strikes] cripple industries, cause public inconvenience, disturb the peace of the community, and may prove detrimental to the strikers themselves ...” It blamed the ILWU of “valu[ing] their integrity above a notoriety created at the expense of public inconvenience and suffering.” Its further anti-union statement in the *Hawaii Chinese Journal* reads,

Labor should remember that it should meet capital as companions in mutual enterprise; that the theory that there will inevitably be clashes between capital and labor is a theory incompatible with the basis of our democratic government, which stands for justice and equality for all; ...”²⁸

This remark that refutes the existence of any labor-capital conflict in the territory echoes well with the anti-red rhetoric that was used by the management class and the territorial government to repress the labor movement. In Hawai‘i, as on the mainland, the labor issue became identified as an issue of communism and the Communist Party. The

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 330.

²⁷ The 1949 strike paralyzed the entire territory economy. Sugar and pineapple did not leave the Island; tourists did not enter or exit port; and strikers unloaded only necessary food, mail, medical, and military supplies. President Truman refused to act on the Big Five’s pleas to break the strike, in a sharp contrast to his strike-breaking activities in the U.S. continent. During the six months the ILWU blocked activity in the export-oriented economy, estimated loss to territorial income totaled \$100 million.

²⁸ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, September 1, 1949, 7.

accusation of Communists in the ILWU leadership was a tactic used with increasing frequency after 1946. A speech by Territory Governor Stainback in September 1947 promised to “fight communism in Hawaii” and cited a Communist “master plan” for seizing control of the territory.²⁹ Americanization thus also meant anti-communism or anti-red. This anti-red strategy assumed even more importance upon the “loss” of China in 1949, when Hawai‘i took a position as an American stronghold for the Cold War in the Pacific. To distinguish themselves from “red China,” middle-class Chinese Americans found even more interests in condemning the labor movement and presenting themselves as good capitalist citizens. Many of them also stopped sending remittances back to their families in mainland China for fear of being accused of assisting the communists in China or in North Korea.

The assertiveness of middle-class Chinese Americans was also seen in their energetic participation in the territory’s tourism development. Many Chinese Americans experienced a financially troubled time in the late 1940s and early 1950s as the territorial economy suffered a serious recession. After enjoying the economic boom during the war, the bars, restaurants, souvenir shops, and drug stores in downtown Honolulu lost most of their business as servicemen and war workers returned to the U.S. continent. Furthermore, imports from, and business ties with, China were greatly reduced and then suspended during the protracted Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s, World War II in the early 1940s, the Civil War between the Communists and the Nationalists in the 1945-49, and the Korean War in the early 1950s. In 1949, the Communist victory and the Nationalist retreat to Taiwan consequently shattered the hopes of Chinese Americans in

²⁹ Beechert, *Working in Hawaii*, 305.

Hawai‘i of resuming trade with China. In the same year, the six-month-long dockworkers strike that paralyzed the entire territory’s economy found some Chinese stores having neither the goods nor the customers to run their business. It was under these circumstances that in early 1949, the biggest Chinese American community newspaper *Hawaii Chinese Journal* (the *Journal*) spearheaded the campaign to rebuild a Chinatown that would attract tourists, as the Chinatowns on the North American continent had conducted.

The *Journal* claimed that when tourists came to Hawai‘i, they wanted more than just *hula* girls and expected the walking tours in Chinatown to bring them “close to the Orient.” Hawaii Visitors Bureau (HVB) officer Stewart Fern praised the work of the paper, promising that Chinatown merchants would have “a direct interest in the tourist industry of Hawaii ... which is the most expandable source of income, with a conservative estimation of collectable tax being \$2,000,000.”³⁰

On Oct 6, 1949, the *Journal* published an editorial entitled “Your Part in a Million Dollar Venture,” calling on the local Chinese American businessmen, especially those in Chinatown, to contribute to “the territory’s million-dollar-budget tourist promotion plan,” which was to have local businesses come up with half a million dollars and the territory would match with another half-million. It claimed that the plan would “lift local business out of the doldrums caused by the strike... and create more jobs to alleviate Hawaii’s pressing unemployment situation.” The editorial also introduced the “second ‘free’ promotional program” of the territory, which was “to get the tourists into your district in numbers large enough, and offer them goods that will induce them to buy enough... [and]

³⁰ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, March 31, 1949, 1.

make them so glad... that they will go home and urge their friends to come.” It further promoted,

Here in Chinatown, merchants have a natural drawing card for tourists. Here, is the Chinatown in the United States that takes tourists about as close to the Orient as most of them will ever get. Here is your atmosphere, of many races mingling in business, of strange goods, and exotic food.³¹

In its promotion, the editorial not only called on Chinese American businessmen who had the capital to invest in the tourism industry, but also those individual local Chinese Americans who had the “cultural” and “human” capital to induce tourist consumption and lure future tourists. It also indicates an embracing of the mainstream Orientalist ideas about China. By “strange” and “exotic,” it confirms the image of China as foreign, mysterious, enticing, and incomprehensible; and they are the innate traits that can be capitalized on. It implies a notion of cultural authenticity as well by saying that geographically the Chinatown in Honolulu is the closest many Americans can get to China thus is more genuinely Chinese as compared to other Chinatowns in the United States. Furthermore, the editorial also expressed the uniqueness of Hawai‘i as a gathering place of “many races.” The value of Hawai‘i lay not only in the accessibility to “authentic” Chinese culture but also in the coexistence of multiple “Oriental” cultures with Pacific Island cultures under an American influence. It was the “mingling” of “many races” that made Hawai‘i even more “strange” and “exotic” than any other tourist destination. This concept of a “mingling” of multiple distinctive non-Caucasian cultures may be deemed as the earlier form of “local” identity, which further developed into a political identity in the 1950s’ electoral politics and reached its peak during the 1970s’ anti-development protest movement.

³¹ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, October 6, 1949, 1.

Brightening Chinatown and performing the Orientalist fantasy for Hawaii's new tourism era were prominent concerns among elite Chinese Americans throughout the 1950s and 60s. An editorial in the *Hawaii Chinese Weekly* on July 24, 1959 reveals this ongoing effort of Chinese American community leaders:

For many years the people of the Chinese community and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce have talked about a "new Chinatown." They have tried to brighten the present one up...but with little success. With statehood, undoubtedly, before long, tourism will be Hawaii's leading industry. To share in this growth, Chinatown must be made appealing to the tourist...Now is the time for the community to stop talking and to begin its planning. The Chinese in Hawaii have in the past always been aggressors and leaders in all fields of endeavor. Are we to rest on our laurels or will we progress with the rest of Hawaii?³²

More than claiming a share in the skyrocketing boom of the tourist industry, elite Chinese Americans also took the rebuilding of Chinatown as an opportunity to construct a stronger Chinese American community. Although they had achieved certain economic and political power in the Islands without causing as pronounced resentment from the Caucasians and Hawaiians as the Japanese did, discrimination from the mainstream society was still their daily experience. Increased wealth and occupational status for Chinese Americans did not mean extensive social intermingling with Caucasians. A Chinese American might be chosen to the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents or as commander of American Legion or governor of the Lions International of Hawaii, but was not yet invited to join exclusive social organizations such as the Oahu Country Club, the Outrigger Canoe Club, and the famed Pacific Club.³³ Their civil rights were still contingent upon public sentiment and the U.S.-Asia relationship.

³² *Hawaii Chinese Weekly*, July 24, 1959, 1.

³³ Fuchs, *Hawaii Pono*, 438.

Since the first arrival of Chinese immigrants to the continental United States as railway workers and gold miners in the 1840s, the dominant attitude towards Chinese immigrants was of contempt and fear. This attitude can be witnessed in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, in the murders and massacres of Chinese laborers and miners in various regions, and in such early Hollywood Chinese villain imagery as Fu Manchu. Although conditions in Hawai‘i were less hostile to Chinese than in California and the rest of the American West, anti-Chinese agitation did flare up in Hawai‘i during the late 1870s³⁴ and following the U.S. seizure and annexation of the Islands in the 1890s.³⁵ Since the 1910s, the resentment toward Chinese was overshadowed by the animosity towards Japanese, who accounted for over a quarter of the population then and up to 37 percent by World War II in Hawai‘i. In the 1930s, when Japanese militarism encroached violently on Chinese national integrity, more positive images of China emerged. However, they represented Chinese as passive victims of catastrophe and exploitation who were in need of the West’s charitable aid and missionary work. Ironically, Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 highly improved China’s image. China became a cherished ally in the fight against fascism. The speaking tours of Song Meiling (Madam Chiang Kaishek), who was adept at using international media to her advantage, also helped create a new image of China as educated, Christian, Westernized, friendly, and beautiful. This romanticized stereotype though was soon challenged by the Civil War in China and eventually shattered by the victory of the Communist revolution in 1949, the

³⁴ The first pronounced anti-Chinese sentiment arose in Hawai‘i when some Chinese laborers gave up the dream of returning home with glory and began making a permanent settlement in Hawai‘i.

³⁵ Harry J. Lamley, “The Chinese in Hawaii: A Historical Overview” *49th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1998): 108.

“loss” of China, and China’s military confrontation with the United States in the Korean War.

During World War II, some discriminatory policies exerted upon the Chinese American community by the military government spurred a new growth of Chinese American community identity in Hawai‘i. Acculturation to the dominant social, political, and economic mores of America did not mean the obliteration of Chinese American group cohesiveness for social and sometimes economic and political purposes. In spite of their personal or family success, they saw the necessity of building the community as a stronger bargaining power and a bigger constituency.

One of these policies was a law passed in 1943 that prohibited the teaching of any language but English to school children in lower grades, which closed all the Chinese language schools. The excuse for banning the language schools was to prevent the infiltration of Japanese influences and to guarantee an American victory in the war. Chinese language schools received the same treatment although China was an ally of the United States. There was an attempt within the postwar territorial government to ban foreign language schools forever even after martial law was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i saw this attempt as an act of institutional racial discrimination against the non-Caucasian population. They formed a Hawaii Chinese Educational Association and collaborated with the Japanese counterpart to bring the case to court. In 1948, four Chinese schools reopened with a total enrollment of nearly 500 students. However, various restrictions were still exerted upon foreign language schools as well as on some ethnic societies. In 1949, a petition with over 50,000

signatures was sent to the legislature³⁶ by the Chinese American and the Japanese American community to ask for a repeal of the anti-foreign language law still in effect.³⁷ The campaign lasted for ten years before Governor Quinn signed legislation repealing those restrictions in 1959.

Discrimination against Chinese was also brought to public attention in the Gay Boen Gee case in 1949. Gee was a 60-year-old Chinese alien from Hong Kong who was charged with the first-degree murder of immigration station guard George Joyce during his detention for a cholera check at the Honolulu immigration station. The *Hawaii Chinese Journal* was the first territory newspaper to bring Gee's narrative to public attention (which was later printed by the two dailies and other papers in town). It turned out that Gee, who did not speak much English, was continually threatened with death by Joyce during his detention. Gee constantly demanded to contact the Chinese consul and Chinese newspaper but was denied by Joyce. The stabbing took place for self defense while Gee was trying to escape a threatened electric-chair execution from Joyce. Many Chinese Americans believed that Gee was mistreated during his detention and contributed to a fund to help him plead his case.³⁸

Another community-wide concern of the postwar period was the issue over the federal Judd Bill that was passed in 1943 to repeal the laws restricting Chinese immigrants from entering the United States and to allow 105 Chinese immigrants to enter the U.S. annually. The Chinese American community acted to prevent the bill from becoming a law so that it would not take away privileges already extended to the Chinese

³⁶ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, October 6, 1949, 1.

³⁷ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, February 24 & March 17, 1949.

³⁸ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, Feb 10 & Feb 17, 1949

in the Act of August 9, 1946, which authorized unlimited admission of the wives and unmarried children under 21 of American citizens of Chinese descent to enter the United States as non-quota immigrants. After the bill was passed, those people of Chinese descent who could have entered the United States without regard to quotas had to share the 105 immigration quota for China. In his letter to Delegate Joseph R. Farrington, Henry Awa Wong, the president of the United Chinese Society and second vice-president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, wrote:

The proposed law gives the countries with liberal quota more privileges and further reduces the opportunities for admission of American citizens' dependents in countries with low quotas... Therefore, there is no denying the fact that American citizens of Chinese descent are, in effect, singled out for the most unjust discriminatory treatment.³⁹

The community efforts to repeal the Judd Bill did not achieve any fruition until the passing of the 1965 Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act, which abolished the nation-origin quotas and established an annual limitation of 170,000 visas for immigrants in the eastern hemisphere.

Community protests and campaigns also nurtured a new, local, U.S.-oriented leadership within the community. Common-interest groups, such as the Hawaii Chinese Civic Association, were assuming a more prominent position in the community.⁴⁰ These organizations were based on actual common interests shared with other Chinese Americans and even other ethnic groups in Hawai'i rather than on the genealogical lines, geographical location, or political affiliation within China. The more Americanized Chinese Chamber of Commerce was attracting the most successful and generally younger

³⁹ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, March 31, 1949, 1.

⁴⁰ Judith Krow Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu: A Political and Social Status or a Way of Life?" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1977), 117.

members of the Chinese American community and replacing the United Chinese Society (UCS), the oldest voluntary association for the community of Chinese descent in Hawai‘i since 1882, as the leading representative of the whole community.⁴¹ The UCS, a counterpart of the Chinese Six Companies of San Francisco Chinatown, was a strong force in the earlier days of the Chinese American community when the largely foreign-born immigrant community needed an agency to function as a buffer or a mediator with the outside society they did not understand.⁴² Founded in 1912 as the Chinese Merchants’ Association and renamed in 1926, the Chamber was not conspicuous in its activities until the late 1940s.⁴³ Due to its isolation as a social group and their inferior position compared to Caucasians, the United Chinese Society functioned mainly as a governing body to settle most intra-Chinese disputes and was more concerned about Hawai‘i-China trade than commerce with local and American business organizations. After World War II, however, many Caucasians left Hawai‘i, leaving increased chances for Chinese Americans and other ethnic groups to challenge the former control of the Islands by the Caucasians. The Chamber, composed of more American-educated members with an interest in entering the decision-making circles in Islands business and institutions, started to serve as a public relations organization to help Chinese Americans engage in business with other local communities. Chinese ancestry was not a prerequisite to belong to it. Many members of the Chamber were also members of the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, thus maintaining their positions as both Chinese and cosmopolitan

⁴¹ Morrison, “Being Chinese in Honolulu,” 119.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 121.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

businessmen. It competed, rather successfully, with other more China-oriented organizations to become the locus to which the ethnic communities could look as the representative of Chinese Americans. As one member contended during an interview with Morrison in the 1970s:

The same clique had had power for about the last twenty-five years... and this group has done nothing for the Chinese community during that time and the whole structure exists to enhance the self-esteem of the ruling in-group. It is an anachronism which has served its purpose and should cease its existence.

The function of the UCS as buffer and mediator were out-dated; The UCS no longer acted as a buffer or a mediator in the Chinese American community.⁴⁴

However, the Chamber also started to face increasing financial problems after World War II. In the president's biennial report of 1945-46 Chamber activities, Hung mentioned the straining financial resources to run the Chamber as members scattered around the Islands and regular Chamber-wide face-to-face meetings became more and more difficult. Chamber members increased to 400 with membership dues of \$6 each per year, total membership dues is a little over \$1,000. In 1945-46, the membership increased to over 400, are "still unable to cover all the expenses (increased cost of living made the necessary increase of employee wages, and cost of stationary items as well as use of bilingual privilege add to out expenses) and still have to depend on solicitation of contribution at the end of the year to carry the deficit."⁴⁵ "It is the recommendation of the committee to increase membership dues as the only alternative to meet this problem. Increasing the dues from \$6 to \$12 or \$24 per year will increase the receipts to meet

⁴⁴ Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu," 125-6.

⁴⁵ Hung, *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Report of 1945-46*, January 1947, 1. Also in Chinese language on page 26.

expenses.”⁴⁶ The Chinese text reads “the Chamber attempt to seek the permanent method to solve the financial problem, and increasing the dues is one way.”⁴⁷ It was under these circumstances that the 1949 Chamber president Thom started the launching of the Narcissus Festival and planning for three festivals all year round to generate income to run the Chamber.

The Making of the Ethnic Spectacle

Between the two types of “invented traditions” that Hobsbawm categorizes, the Narcissus Festival belongs to the second one – the adaptation of some old material from the past in novel format and for novel purposes under changing situations.⁴⁸ As the Festival leaders stated, it started as a new move made by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii to stimulate the Chinatown economy, to promote the Chinese American community, and to showcase Chinese culture to tourists, residents, and the younger generation of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. The Chamber turned a private family gathering into a public celebration and legitimized their invention by defining the elements they adopted from the past as timelessly and primordially Chinese. This new move was not a separate event limited to the Chinese American community. Instead it was a result of post-war joint efforts made by the ethnic groups and the territory agencies to capitalize on mainstream America’s fascination with “the Orient.” The Hawaii Visitors Bureau had long recognized the potential tourist appeal of the distinctive cultures of

⁴⁶ Hung, *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Report of 1945-46*, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, in Chinese, 26. The translation is provided by the author of the dissertation.

⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, “Introduction,” 6. The first type of “invented traditions” refers to the adaptation for old uses in new conditions and through using old models for new purposes. An example will be the Catholic Church making changes to meet the new political and ideological challenges from the changing composition of the faithful.

Asian ethnic groups and advertised them in mainland publications with pictures of “Oriental” festivals and temples along with the obligatory beaches, *hula* dancers, and Hawaiian musicians. Ethnic tourism had emerged with the development of paradise tourism since the early twentieth century but did not really take off until the late 1940s. The invention of the Festival was engineered directly from four successful models of public spectacle that took place in post-war Honolulu. Two of these public events – the annual Aloha Week from October, 1947 and the 49th State Fair in May, 1948 – were sponsored by territory-level agencies while the other two – the Chinese Civic Association Fourth of July Picnic in 1948 and the United Chinese Society Picnic in October, 1949 – were held primarily for the Chinese American community in Honolulu.

The Aloha Week Aloha Week was initiated by a civic organization called the Jaycee Old Timers of Hawaii, which was formed by a group of Junior Chamber of Commerce alumni in November 1946. With the slogan of preserving the culture, tradition, and practices of old Hawai‘i, it was immediately incorporated by the Hawaii Visitors Bureau as a series of events to attract and entertain tourists each fall. The first annual Aloha Week started on October 26, 1947 and ran through November 2. The week long events followed a chronological sequence, beginning with the ancient traditions of old Hawai‘i and ending with the international aspect of then present day Hawai‘i. The events included the sacred ceremony of installing a king, a *makahiki*⁴⁹ pageant with ancient sports and religious festivities, a floral parade, a night-lantern parade, water

⁴⁹ It originally was a four-month festive season from the middle of October, after harvest and tribute were collected. War was forbidden during the season.

sports and canoeing, music and *hula* dances, and a *holoku*⁵⁰ ball which reenacted a similar event given by King David Kalākaua at ‘Iolani Palace in 1888. Many of the events revolved around a Hawaiian village that was constructed near a lagoon in Ala Moana Park. Other ethnic groups, including Chinese Americans, were asked to participate to represent the international aspect of contemporary Hawai‘i.

In 1948, Chinese Americans answered the call of Aloha Week and participated with a lion dance, three floats, and some Chinese language students carrying Chinese lanterns in the section called the International Lantern Parade. The following year the United Chinese Society and the Chamber planned a more elaborate schedule for Aloha Week: lantern parade with floats, lion dance, and marchers with lanterns; a Chinese play in English by the Hawaii Chinese Civic Association on the Ala Moana Park stage; and an all-day community-wide picnic at Ala Moana Park.⁵¹

The UCS Picnic The picnic on Sunday, October 16, 1949 that was the first territory-wide Chinese American community gathering and attracted 7,000 people, including local residents and tourists.⁵² The event incorporated many youth- and family-oriented programs, such as an egg race, a blindfold race, cracker, watermelon, and pie eating contests, and a quiz program. Henry Awa Wong, the president of the UCS expressed the hope that, with those programs, “the younger folks may want to join the organization and help relieve the oldsters of their duties.” A Chinese newspaper editorial commented:

⁵⁰ It refers to a woman’s long and one-piece dresses, usually with a train, patterned after the ‘Mother Hubbard’ type dress worn by the missionaries’ wives.

⁵¹ Glick, *Sojourners and Settlers*, 354.

⁵² *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, October 20, 1949.

The [United] Society is known among the older Chinese for its quiet work on behalf of those in trouble. This change in tactics is a fine thing, and should make the younger generation aware of the existence of this group, and in time eager to learn more of its work.⁵³

The highlight of the picnic, which “caps the day’s thrills,”⁵⁴ was the selection of the first and only territory-wide “Hawaii Chinese Queen of 1949” beauty contest. On a stage set up at the park, 57 Chinese and part-Chinese candidates competed in a four-hour long contest in both formal gowns and swimsuits. The queen rode at the head of the International Lantern Parade representing the Chinese American community. After Aloha Week, she was awarded a tour to the West Coast of the continental United States and welcomed by Chinese American communities there with warm receptions and banquets. She watched the annual Rose Bowl parade and did two weeks of sightseeing in San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, and Tijuana, Mexico. During the tour, she was rendered “a welcome fit for royalty” by Chinese American communities and was “besieged by a battery of cameramen” in California.⁵⁵

The CCA Picnic The United Chinese Society’s picnic program was an elaborate version of another successful community picnic event held a year earlier – the annual July 4 picnic of the Chinese Civic Association at Waialua (Hale‘iwa) park in 1948. Organized by Soong Ching and Henry J. Choy, the picnic included baseball games, cooking contest, bingo games, talent contest for different age groups, children’s games, and a beauty contest.⁵⁶ It attracted a total of over two thousand people.⁵⁷ The beauty

⁵³ “Special Chinese Community Picnic Supplement,” *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, October 13, 1949, 1.

⁵⁴ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, September 22, 1949.

⁵⁵ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, December 29, 1949.

⁵⁶ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, July 8, 1948, 1.

contest was held prior to the picnic based on standards that were “similar to that of other beauty contests – beauty, personality, charm, and poise.”⁵⁸ A beauty queen was selected to reign over the picnic and was later awarded a free trip to Kaua‘i and free two-day hotel accommodation.⁵⁹

The 49th State Fair The programs at the Civic Association’s picnic, especially the beauty contest, reflect local residents’ impression and enthusiasm with the largest territory event, the 49th State Fair in 1948. Held in May by the Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, the fair was a campaign to win statehood for the Territory of Hawai‘i in the 1948 congressional session. Hope was high for many residents in Hawai‘i then, after what they went through during the war and the loyalty test they passed by earning the highest per capita purple-heart medals (for the soldiers killed or wounded) in the United States. Little was known then that it would take them another decade to win statehood. The fair, a showcase of Americanization and prosperity, featured various programs that attracted the largest turn-out of the whole territory ever since the D-Day celebration. It became the first post-war commercial spectacle that yielded tremendous financial success and provided a model for the running of future public events.

The Narcissus Festival Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i recognized the public’s zeal in festivals and played an active part in these territorial social gatherings. Through the picnic projects of the Chinese Civic Association and the United Chinese Society, they demonstrated that they could also transfer the zeal and success into their own community.

⁵⁷ Henry T. Lee, “Hawaii Chinese Civic Association President’s Report for the Year 1948,” *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, January 27, 1949, 4.

⁵⁸ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, June 3, 1948.

⁵⁹ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, June 10, 1948.

They accumulated experience and techniques in luring public gaze upon them and also realized the potential capital they could draw from people's fascination with Chinese culture. Their success, however, still took place on or close to the beach. The next step was to draw it to their base, Honolulu Chinatown although the Chinatown in Honolulu was never solely a business and residential district for Chinese immigrants in Hawaii's history. It started as a Hawaiian Quarter before the 1850s, then was called the Chinese Quarter since the late 1860s and became Chinatown (*wa fo*) after the two fires of 1886 and 1900. Many Japanese lived and ran businesses in the same area in the early decades of the twentieth century. Even when the growth of Chinatown reached its peak and Honolulu boasted the largest community of Chinese descent in the United States in the 1920s-1930s, only a third of the Chinese in Hawai'i lived in this area. However, the area from Honolulu Harbor waterfront to Kukui Street and from River Street to Nu'uuanu St. retained a reputation as Chinatown and remained a symbol of Chinese presence in Hawai'i. Most Chinese Americans remembered it as their stomping ground in Hawai'i. Therefore, it seemed natural when the Chamber announced the launching of its Narcissus Festival in Honolulu Chinatown.

The Narcissus Festival, according to the Chamber leaders, initially had two goals – to stimulate the economy in Chinatown and Chinese American business and to reintroduce Chinese culture to tourists, residents, and particularly the younger Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. As Wah Chan Thom, the Chamber president of 1949, wrote in 1979, “[with] a festival, we would greatly help promote business in Chinatown ... (and)

preserve our Chinese customs and traditions.”⁶⁰ Addressing the business motivation, he said,

I contended that we would greatly help promote business in Chinatown by encouraging the younger generation to purchase and use more merchandise from the Orient. In addition, a lion dance and golden dragon parade, together with other floats, would attract more tourists and encourage other resident ethnic groups in Hawaii to visit Chinatown, thus bringing in even more business.⁶¹

Thom also argued, however, that the initial financial motivation cannot be over-emphasized:

I felt that it was essential to preserve our Chinese customs and traditions and to assure that there was culture woven into all of the programs. All of these events would play vital roles in enriching the lives of the younger generation, which we felt was losing touch with its rich cultural heritage.⁶²

In 1995, Larry W. Ing, the Publicity Committee member and Cultural Consultant of the Festival traces the motivation in cultural preservation and even the making of the whole event to a sense of identity crisis among Chinese Americans:

Like all the ethnic celebrations in Hawaii, the Narcissus Festival was born in the need for identity survival. It was not so much a desire to impress or entertain others. A real need has to do with identity survival, a solidarity, a true sense of “being” in a polyglot community.⁶³

If Ing’s argument reveals more identity awareness of the Festival organizers and more agency among Chinese Americans in community construction, the identity crisis among Chinese Americans originated not only from the mixing of “races” and cultures in

⁶⁰ Wah Chan Thom, “The Narcissus Festival: Fostering Chinese Culture in Hawaii’s Multi-ethnic Community” in *Tradition for Living: A Booklet of Chinese Customs and Folk Practices in Hawaii* (Associated Chinese University Women, 1979): 60-61.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶³ Larry Ing, “The Narcissus Festival,” 46th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1995): 104.

Hawai'i but also from a derogatory public image of "red China" under the Cold War mentality as well as from a "loss of home" for the overseas Chinese following the Communist victory in China. News about the evacuation of American press, churches, businesses, and government agencies from China, and about the Socialist land reform and the confiscation of private properties made them feel completely cut off from their ancestral land. This sense of "up-rootedness" or "homelessness" further spurred their quest for the meaning of their Chineseness and identity reconstruction.

Thom initially proposed at his inaugural address three festive events in Honolulu – one for the Chinese New Year in early spring, one for the Dragon Boat Festival in summer, and one for the Moon Festival in autumn – in order to draw crowds to Chinatown all year round. The festival in spring would be the first to be launched, thus its success was crucial for the latter ones to emerge and for all the three to develop into annual events. Obvious to the spring festival committee members, the key to success lay in its ability to attract a diverse audience, both from within and without. The New Year celebration has to be "traditional" to attract the tourists and local residents yet also "new" to attract the younger generation of the community. The packaging started with the title.

According to Wah-chan Thom, the Chamber president in 1949, the word "narcissus" was "carefully chosen."⁶⁴ He explained that by calling the festivities "the Narcissus Festival" instead of the Chinese New Year Festival, he attempted to "avoid criticism of being antiquated or old fashioned in celebrating the Chinese

⁶⁴ Thom, "The Narcissus Festival," 60.

New Year”⁶⁵ and bring something new and modern into the events. The Chamber hoped that by making it the Narcissus Festival and Pageant instead of the Chinese New Year Festival, they could both attract their younger “Americanized” generations, who mostly thought of their parents and grandparents as dated and misplaced, and other local communities and tourists who were mostly interested in “ancient Oriental culture.”⁶⁶ “Narcissus” thus was used both to avoid being criticized as an “antiquated and old-fashioned” Chinese-style festival celebration and to establish a distinctive Chinese American identity with a “typical Chinese flavor.” The Chamber was trying to invent something that is both traditionally Chinese and “non-old-fashioned,” both ancient and modern, and past and present. This paradox corresponds well to what Eric Hobsbawm discerns as “the invention of tradition,” or “the contrast between the constant change and innovation of the modern world and the attempt to structure at least some parts of social life within it as unchanging and invariant.”⁶⁷ The automatic continuity from the past of “unchanging and invariant” justifies and legitimizes the modern practices and new purposes.

Narcissus (*shuixian* in Mandarin Chinese), a spring flower popular in Canton (Guangdong) and Fujian provinces, is legitimized by the Chamber as a natural symbol of Chinese New Year in Hawai‘i in two ways: first by sharing with the public Chinese legends about a water fairy that is named after the flower; and second, by interpreting the

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁶ Thom interview, May 2000.

⁶⁷ Hobsbawm, “Introduction,” 2.

flower as a symbol of rarity, purity, elegance, fragrance, hope and prosperity. According to Larry Ing, “the narcissus blossom was chosen as a symbol of hope that ‘things Chinese’ would enjoy a renaissance in Hawaii.”⁶⁸ It is also a perfect image that best demarcates the practitioners and sponsors from the negative image of Communist China and demonstrates themselves as congenial, peace-loving, and appreciative Americans.

Thomas Wai Nam Chun, Chair of the Publicity Committee stated:

Today, in Hawaii, the Narcissus flower is a symbol of the economic, civic and social progress of a race... A race that started, within the course of a hundred and some odd years rose from the status of immigrant laborers to varied positions of influence and responsibilities... This race is the Chinese race in a community of mixed races. The Narcissus Flower is a symbol of these achievements... The Narcissus Festival is more than a symbol. It is an active campaign to advance the interest of the Chinese and thus further the interest of all the people in Hawaii.⁶⁹

Prof. Fook Tan Ching also expressed the significance of having narcissus bloom in Hawai‘i:

Miss Amy Lowell, one of America’s greatest poetesses, learnt that the lilac had been transplanted from China by Clipper captains to New England, and become a native there became proud how her ancestors had come from England and now, like the lilac, had also become rooted in New England.⁷⁰

The irony, however, was that narcissus failed to be transplanted in Hawai‘i. Many times the garlic-like bulbs cultivated for the whole season did not bloom at all, which is regarded as very bad luck by many people from Canton and Fujian and antithesis of the renaissance theme. To overcome the discrepancy between the implication of bad luck and the indication of their desired virtues, the Chamber leaders asked some narcissus experts to cultivate the bulbs at a particular spot in Mānoa Valley, where the temperature is more

⁶⁸Ing, “The Narcissus Festival,” 104.

⁶⁹ Thomas Wai Nam Chun, “Significance of Narcissus Festival,” *6th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1955).

⁷⁰ Fook Tan Ching, “Rich & Poor Alike Love Flowers,” *2nd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1951).

agreeable to the flower, and then promote their produce to Chinatown store runners. Their efforts, however, turned out to be futile. For the past 55 years, narcissus bulbs had to be flown in every year from China. Instead of a symbol of Chinese renaissance in Hawai‘i, narcissus in fact suggested that the ancestral land was irreplaceable as the source of identity and Chinese roots were non-transplantable in Hawai‘i. Narcissus in fact symbolized the diasporic relationship between Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i and their homeland. The failure to transplant narcissus, however, was reinterpreted by some Festival promoters as a symbol of the mystery and exoticness of the “Orient,” thus enhancing the value of the flower. In later decades when the Pageant was scheduled much ahead of the New Year, more extra efforts were made to guarantee that on the evening of every Pageant show there was a display of blossoming Narcissus even though it was considered auspicious to have the bloom around the Chinese New Year, rather than a month ahead.

Aside from the narcissus, another emblem the Festival committees agreed upon was the lanterns. In Dec 8, 1949’s *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, an article “Chinatown Prepares for Lavish, Picturesque Narcissus Festival” states that “Chinatown all-glow with lantern light is the promise the Narcissus Festival committee made at a meeting...”⁷¹ The Chinese American newspaper provided more details: lanterns would be used to decorate the Festival at the joint sections of Hotel, Maunakea, Smith, and King Streets.⁷² This design, however, did not follow through due to lack of funding. Other symbols the Chamber chose to attract the audience included firecrackers, lion dance, and dragon

⁷¹ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, December 8, 1949, 3.

⁷² *New China Daily Press*, December 3, 1949, 1.

dance. They expected those cultural elements that were exotic to Western eyes to lure tourists and local residents into consuming Chinese goods in Honolulu Chinatown. To guarantee that the event was a true spectacle, they spent over three thousand dollars (equivalent to more than \$23,000 in 2005⁷³) to purchase a 110-foot-long, bamboo-framed silk Dragon and firecrackers from Hong Kong and had it shipped via Canada. The Chamber was devoted to a ten-month preparation to move a formerly family-oriented New Year celebration into Chinatown streets for a four-day event that ran from February 13 to 16, 1950.

The first Festival began with a beauty contest at the then Roosevelt Theater in Chinatown the first evening. It featured a parade of floats and dragon, lion, and unicorn dances on Beretania, Nu‘uanu, and King Streets and fireworks display at Aala Park the second evening, a flower show and narcissus contest at the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Hall the third evening, a nine-course Mandarin banquet at Wo Fat Chinese Restaurant at Hotel and Maunakea Streets followed by Chinese performances at Roosevelt Theater the last day, and daily street bazaar on Maunakea Street.

As standard practice in most modern spectacle events, guide/souvenir books were prepared for the audience to purchase. On the cover of the book was printed Narcissus Festival in English horizontally on top and in Chinese vertically on left and right sides, forming a pattern of Chinese front door inscription. The upper half of the cover features a flying dragon in the background, while the lower half had a branch of narcissus blooming in a square porcelain vase in the center, flanked by drawings of boat and mountain on each side. The side with coconut tree, Diamond Head crater, and two figures rowing a

⁷³ According to the inflation calculation given by the Consumer Price Indexes, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor by April 15, 2005.

sailing boat obviously indicated Hawai‘i, with the other side of steep peaks, pagoda, and ram-shackling ship for China. The contents included greetings from the Chamber president and from the chair of publicity committee, schedule of events, and a group photograph of short and curly-haired beauty Pageant contestants lined up in swimsuits and high heels, who smiled invitingly to the camera. The caption underneath the photograph started with “Which is Your choice,” the word “your” is capitalized, followed by the names of these contestants and the awards for the winner. The banquet menu was included in the souvenir book with each course listed in English, Chinese characters, and Cantonese pronunciation. The article that explained the menu emphasized that the food to be served was “Mandarin” rather than “Cantonese *chop suey*,” implying the fine taste and high status of the banquet. The program of the post-banquet stage performance was also in print, which included dances by Chungshan and Mun Lun Chinese School students, moon harp by Miss Nancy Wee, Chinese calisthenics by Albert Lum, fashion show by the Chinese Women’s Club, music by the Tan Sing Dramatic Club, and a court scene of the Cantonese Drama “Pi Pa Ki” (the Lute Song) by the cast from the Cantonese drama society.

The bulk of the souvenir book are articles explaining Chinese New Year practices and interpreting the meaning and significance of Chinese symbols and rituals:

In holding the Narcissus Festival we hope that our friends will enjoy not merely the outward show – the quaintness of our costumes or the glamour of our narcissus girls or the color of the different dragon, unicorn, and lion dances. We hope that you may catch a little of the spirit of the Chinese.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Henry Awa Wong, *1st Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1950): 1.

To assure that the “spirit of the Chinese” would not be misunderstood, the Festival Publicity Committee published detailed articles in the souvenir books to make good sense of Chinese symbols and customs for the tourists, the locals, and the younger generations:

Just as the Wall Street operator believes in business cycles, or the Broadway actor believes in the rhythm of his luck, so do the Chinese astrologer believe that fortune, good or bad, runs in cycles.

Just as the Hawaiian legislature oftentimes stops the clock to gain enough time to complete their work on the closing day of a session, so on New Year’s Day in old-time Chinese creditors were seen looking for their debtors carrying lighted lanterns in their hands to show that as far as they are concerned the New Year has not yet arrived.

The Chinese do not look upon the dragon in the same way as occidentals... The western saurian is cruel and hideous monster regarded with fear and hatred... The Chinese **lung** [dragon] is a helpful and friendly animal, viewed with respect and reverence.

The lion dancers must be well trained in the [Chinese self-defense] arts before they can undertake the intricate maneuvers of the lion dance. This explains the reason for the demonstration of Chinese boxing immediately following the lion dance.

Let the Shui Hsien Hua (Narcissus), be the symbol of good fortune, a symbol that shall flower and grace the homes of those who are kind in words and good in deeds.⁷⁵

Henry Awa Wong, the Chamber President represented Chinese Americans as a friendly and peace-loving people with his greetings in the 1950 Festival souvenir book:

We are living in a world filled with distrust and suspicion and darkened by the shadows of wars and aggression ... Now the Chinese have lived thousands of years, peaceful with their many neighbors, content with their often meager lot...Perhaps these people who prefer to put their gunpowder into fireworks to scare away devils rather than into bombs to blow up the living, whose whole philosophy is based on the adage “what ye desirest not to be done unto thee, do ye not unto others,” – perhaps they have something to offer toward making living more worthwhile... “Within the four seas all men are brothers.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *1st Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1950): 5, 6, 7, 8, &10.

⁷⁶ Wong, 1.

In the same souvenir book, Kum Pui Lai, the then Executive Secretary of the Hawai'i Territorial Conference of Social Welfare, wrote an article to celebrate the accomplishments of Chinese Americans on their "rough road to Americanization during the past 160 years in Hawai'i" and stressed the worthiness of Chinese Americans in Hawai'i: "[T] heir legacy [is] in the form of human beings – sons and daughters, American citizens of Chinese ancestry, for the future progress of Hawai'i."⁷⁷

Given Tang, the chairman of the 1951 Narcissus Festival, also articulated the emphasis on equality under universal fraternity:

We have become "One World" and as long as each cultural unit preserves the more abiding aspects of its parent civilization, and maintains the fraternity and democracy of the Hawaiian and American civilizations, we have the body and spirit that can withstand the onslaught of any opportunistic and destructive "ism" that may attempt to bore through our solid democracy.⁷⁸

The souvenir book significantly served as the textbook to teach both the Chinese American community and tourists the meaning of Chineseness and a manual to instruct people what to see, to eat, to buy, and to feel.

The Narcissus Queen Pageant and the Meaning of Chineseness

The Chamber repackaged the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration into a spectacle of Narcissus Festival not only through their selective application, definition, and interpretation of emblems and symbols but also through launching a female beauty contest with swimsuit competition. They not only inserted but also used the beauty competition as the inaugurating program in their ethnic festival, the format, procedure, and criteria of which were glaringly modern Western and anti-traditional Chinese. In fact,

⁷⁷ Kum Pui Lai, "From Laborers to Leaders," *1st Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1950): 12.

⁷⁸ Given Tang, "Welcome to the Narcissus Festival," *2nd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1951).

as shown in the souvenir book, the beginning night was entirely scheduled with non-Chinese programs – beauty contest and Western fireworks – with Chinese programs including Chinese fireworks starting from the second day. The contest was named “Narcissus Queen Contest” (“Narcissus Queen Pageant” from 1984) in both Chinese and English community newspapers, which rivaled directly with the title of “Hawaii Chinese Queen of 1949” that the United Chinese Society promoted. As in other beauty contests, the winner was named “beauty queen” to emphasize the high maintenance and noble- or dignitary-class treatment the winner would receive. The word “queen contest,” as seen in the *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, was even used interchangeably with beauty contest: “A queen contest accompanied by a display of American fireworks, will inaugurate festivities on opening night.”⁷⁹ James H. Chun, the first Festival Publicity Committee chairman, acknowledged that although, the fireworks, the parade with dragon, lion, and unicorn dances, the flower show and narcissus contest, the Chinese banquet, and the street bazaar were “all related to Chinese New Year festivities,” the Narcissus Queen contest was not a part of “normal” Chinese New Year celebrations, and was not even Chinese in origin. He further clarified that, “Although the Chinese admire pulchritude in their women as much as anybody else, the beauty queen selection is strictly a Western adaptation.”⁸⁰

The use of a modern Western beauty contest to kick off the Narcissus Festival stemmed partly from the public’s zeal toward beauty pageants – as fully displayed in previous territory and community gatherings that were addressed earlier in this chapter –

⁷⁹ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, December 8, 1949.

⁸⁰ Chun, *1st Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1950): 3.

and partly from the Festival steering committee's determination in mobilizing all possible resources to make it a crowd-drawing event. According to Thom and Ing, the beauty contest and the dinner was included in the program as attractions to regular tourists so that an additional \$1,000 could be raised to defray the cost of the dragon and fireworks imported from Hong Kong. In Thom's own words, "It was hoped that the beauty and talent contest and the Festival Banquet would encourage those most involved in the tourist trade to raise an additional \$1,000 so that the initial budget totaled \$4,000."⁸¹ Therefore, at the beginning of the Festival, the Pageant was considered a compromise of the Chineseness of the community event in order to fulfill the fundraising rather than a representation of any Chinese "tradition." The women contestants were recruited for commercial instead of cultural purposes. As mentioned earlier, the Festival leaders witnessed the crowd-drawing effect of Chinese beauty contests at the Chinese Civic Association and United Chinese Society picnics and thus expected their contestants to lure spectators to Honolulu Chinatown. They might not have expected the Pageant to continue after the first year, nor did they have the vision that the Pageant would become an indispensable part of the Narcissus Festival for the next half century.

Eleven contestants entered the 1950 Narcissus Pageant that was held at the now defunct Roosevelt Theatre on Maunakea Street. All were required to compete in both swimsuit as well as "formal wear," which was "any type of dress she prefers" – Chinese or Western. Although a Chinese gown was not a must, some Chinese language ability was "compulsory" since the winner would represent Chinese Americans in Hawai'i to Chinese American communities on the West Coast. A contestant was also required to be

⁸¹ Thom, "The Narcissus Festival," 61; Ing, "The Narcissus Festival," 104.

“full Chinese,” meaning both her parents needed to be “pure” Chinese. A queen and four princesses were selected based on “general appearances and talent.” The talent could be playing an instrument, singing, reciting poems or merely conversing in Chinese. The prizes, similar to the United Chinese Society’s contest of “Hawaii Chinese Queen of 1949,” included a trip to the West Coast and a complete wardrobe.

A major difference between the UCS contest and the Narcissus Queen Contest was that the former recruited both “Chinese and part-Chinese” contestants whereas the latter limited to “full” Chinese candidates. The Narcissus beauty contest also made an extra requirement for “some Chinese language ability.” These two criteria made many multi-generational or ethnically mixed young women of Chinese ancestry unable to enter the Narcissus beauty contest. In fact, the criteria benefited more the first- or second-generation contestants, who were more likely to have “pure-blood” parents and speak some Chinese language. Consequently, the number of contestants decreased from 57 for the “Hawaii Chinese Queen of 1949” to eleven for the Narcissus Queen Contest. After several years, the Festival leaders decided to compromise over the blood quantum and language requirement to enlarge the pool of candidates for the contest. They re-stipulated that a young woman could join the contest as long as her father had a Chinese family name. The new rule that defined Chineseness by the paternal Chinese family name instead of by the blood quantum immediately increased the number of contestants to more than twenty. As a result, the Festival leaders held two beauty contests each year – the preliminary and the final contests – so that each candidate could display her appearance and perform on stage. The rule lasted until the mid 1990s (when the Chamber

placed a requirement for a minimum of 50 percent of “Chinese blood” but accepted those contestants whose mother had a Chinese family name).

The beauty contest brought women and in particular women’s body into the limelight in a Chinese ethnic event. The ethnic spectacle hence contained a new layer of meaning, so did the interest in Chinatown and the gaze of the Chinese American community. As seen from the requirements for the attire, the talent performance, and blood quantum, what legitimized a Western-style female appearance competition to be insertable into an ethnic event is the body of young “Chinese” women. What guaranteed a young woman’s eligibility for the contest is the purity of her “Chinese blood” and her ability to converse in Chinese. The difference in requirements for contestants between the UCS contest and the Narcissus contest reveals that the meaning of Chineseness is multiple and contested. To one group, a portion of “Chinese-blood” suffices Chineseness; to the other, being Chinese means being “pure Chinese.” The change of requirements by the Festival leaders also indicates that the boundary of ethnicity is not fixed but keeps shifting. “Pure blood,” language ability, and paternal family name were fluid rather than permanent denominators for group ethnicity.

What drew crowds to the Pageant was rather young Chinese American women’s swimsuit-clad bodies, which were deemed the “American” body in the context of 1940s Hawai‘i. The swimsuits those young women wore were the most popular and fashionable style of the year as promoted in fashion magazines and downtown Honolulu’s department stores. These young women might or might not speak Chinese language or perform a Chinese talent during the Pageant. However, they all had salon-treated short curly hair, drew their eye-brows with a high arch, and wore high-heeled shoes. The Pageant,

therefore, represented the Chinese “race” in Hawai‘i as a group that contains “pure Chinese blood” but possesses mixed Chinese and American cultural elements.

Certainly the Chamber did not merely insert the fully American beauty pageant but injected a significant meaning by showcasing young women’s bodies in bathing suits, especially when they had to repeat the same crowd-drawing strategy with the beauty contest in the following three years. Dr. Frederick K Lam, the Chair of the 1951 Narcissus Beauty Contest committee stated eloquently:

Certainly we want to let the world know we have pretty girls. However, the staging of the Narcissus beauty contest is not merely for the purpose of parading Chinese pulchritude before the public. We want to present the striking result of what Hawaii has done for the daughters whose ancestors came from the land of Confucius.

These girls who are competing for the honors, beautiful in form, pleasant in personality and versatile in their talent, are a far cry from the ‘weeping willow’ beauties that Chinese of the not too distant past adored.

In short, the Chinese girls in Hawaii, wholesome in body and mind, abounding in enthusiasm and varied in their talent, are the products of a democratic soil.⁸²

In Lam’s argument, a link is constructed between running a beauty pageant and practicing democracy. A contrast is drawn between China and Hawai‘i, with the former defined as “the land of Confucius” and the latter the “democratic soil.” China is imagined as a society that produces the “‘weeping willow’ beauty” and Hawai‘i is claimed as a promising land of “pretty girls” who are “wholesome,” “abounding,” “beautiful,” “pleasant,” and “versatile.” The power that shaped the metamorphosis stemmed from the practice of democracy in Hawai‘i. The term “democratic soil” emphasizes the Americanness of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i, which reflects an aspiration for statehood that was newly denied at the U.S. Congress and an anxiety to

⁸² Frederick K. Lam, “Narcissus Queen to Reign over Fete,” *2nd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1951).

dispel the “Red Peril” that began to prevail in the McCarthy era of the 1950s. To Lam, the significance of the Pageant lies in the staging of the tremendous evolution the Chinese “race” had achieved in the American Hawai‘i.

The discourse of “racial evolution” also dominated the other beauty pageants. The 1948 Civic Association Picnic queen Janet Chun, a graduate of Baldwin High School, Wailuku, Maui was hailed for her “American” beauty: “Contrary to the old Chinese ideal of a frail beauty, Miss Chun represents the modern type girl, for she is also a good athlete, having won the women’s tennis tournament in high school, besides being an expert shot and an archer.”⁸³ The “Hawaii Chinese Queen of 1949” Mildred Koon Hung Wong, a 17-year-old business college student, was reported to have won the contest with “her coolness, refreshing appearance, and a well-proportioned diminutive carriage.”⁸⁴

Conclusion

The meaning of the Pageant is interpreted opposite to that of the Festival by the Festival leaders. While the body celebrated in the Pageant is culturally American, the one required for the other programs is culturally and ethnically Chinese, which can appreciate the dragon and lion dances, the fireworks, and all the Chinese Lunar New Year food items sold in the street fair. The whole event therefore portrayed a dualistic image for Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i – which is simultaneously modern and traditional, American and Chinese. The bifurcated representation catered to different potential audiences and targeted different goals of the Festival. The Festival programs had to be Chinese to consolidate community bond and maintain their ethnic distinctiveness.

⁸³ *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, July 1, 1948, 1.

⁸⁴ Anon., “Mildred, Familiar in Queen Role,” *Hawaii Chinese Journal*, October 20, 1949, 1.

Simultaneously, the beauty contest had to be American to refresh the old cultural practices and claim a modern American identity for the Chinese American community. The juxtaposition of the two aspects was rather blunt in the early years, with the Pageant forming a stark contrast with the other Festival programs. In the latter decades, the mixture grew more intertwined and nuanced, which I will demonstrate in the following chapters.

The early juxtaposition, however, presents a provocative case that challenges a common feminist argument about women's embodiment of a nation and the "tradition" of the nation. This feminist theory, as seen in Anne McClintock's book *Imperial Leather*,⁸⁵ argues that women are always used to represent the tradition and the past of a community or a nation, which needs to be both explored by the male insider and guarded against the male outsider. In the early years of the Narcissus Festival, women participated both in showcasing their modern body and preparing ethnic performance and food. The female body represented both the Chineseness and the Americanness of the community. The Narcissus Festival complicates the gendered representation by demonstrating that the elite group of a community can have multiple purposes and intentions in their representation project, and in their construction of femininity. In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how young Chinese American women were staged both to define tradition and to showcase modernity in an intertwined fashion.

⁸⁵ McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

Chapter 4

“Exotic America” – Identity Representation in the Burgeoning Decades of the Narcissus Festival, the 1950s and 1960s

The 1950s and 1960s were the heyday of the Narcissus Festival. Although the first few years were difficult for the Festival leaders, the Chinatown event soon grew into a territory-wide ethnic spectacle with its fame reaching Asia, North America, Europe, Australia as well as Latin America. The scope and popularity of the Festival in this era pales other public spectacles in Hawaii’s territory and state history given the fact that Chinese Americans only accounted for six to seven percent of the total population in Hawai‘i. Four major forces propelled the burgeoning of the Festival – the heat of tourism development in the territory and especially after statehood, the incorporation of the Narcissus Festival into the tourism promotion campaign of Hawaii Visitors Bureau, the collaboration of various community organizations with the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, and the participation of Chinese American women both as contestants and as Festival workers.

However, the Narcissus Festival and Pageant in this era was also a process of contestation and negotiation.¹ The Chinese American community was not a homogeneous group but articulated different voices, different interests, and different interpretations of Chinese tradition and culture. In the Festival, alternative interpretations were

¹ The concepts of “contestation” and “negotiation” are borrowed from Stuart Hall, “The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power” in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, eds. Stuart Hall, David Held, Don Hubert and Kenneth Thompson (London: Blackwell Publisher, 1996).

appropriated, negotiated, obscured, or silenced.² A look into those alternative discourses as well as the continuities and discontinuities of the practices and policies of the Narcissus Queen Pageant can reveal more clearly the contingent meaning of Chineseness.

The Narcissus Festival was both a success and a failure. It was a success in terms of the degree of its resource mobilization in Hawai‘i, a new sense of middle-class Chinese American community it generated, as well as its influence upon the representation of other ethnic communities in and beyond Hawai‘i. It was a failure because it did not achieve its goal of revitalizing the Chinatown community and business. It did little to lessen the double blow that hit Chinatown during the development of Waikīkī and Ala Moana and to protest against the profit-driven urban renewal project in downtown Honolulu that began in the early 1960s.

As the previous chapter has demonstrated, in their repackaging of the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration into an ethnic spectacle, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce constructed bifurcated images of the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i. The inaugurating program – the Narcissus Queen Beauty Contest – formed a sharp contrast with the rest of the Festival. The former represented Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i as new citizens of American democracy, whereas the latter represented them as carriers of distinctively non-Western tradition and harmonious Confucius spirit. The bifurcation in the representation of the Chinese American community continued with the inclusion of other “American” entries into the annual event through most of the first two decades of

² Prasenjit Duara’s “bifurcated history” suggests an analytical approach that looks at the produced discourse or established history as a result of “transmission-dispersal” process: alternative discourses are always obscured, marginalized, or appropriated in the construction of the established one and the process always indicates power politics between the center and the periphery, the self and the other, the past and the present. Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narrative of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

the Festival. A new image of “exotic American,” however, took shape as the distinction between the ethnic festival and the “American” pageant became fuzzy. The Pageant during this period was incorporated with ethnic symbols and increasingly exoticized into a package of Oriental eroticism and Pacific “soft primitivism.”³ The insiders – the community and male Festival leaders – and the outsiders who were primarily male Caucasian tourists and residents played different roles in the process of the Americanization and exoticization of the pageant.

I first introduce the social, cultural, and political conditions of the 1950s and 1960s in Hawai‘i. I specifically emphasize the further economic, political and military Americanization of the islands of Hawai‘i, which was propelled by Cold War politics, tourism development, the acquisition of statehood, and the emergence of American-style consumer society. I then point out the bifurcation that took place prior to World War II continued to grow during this period when Hawai‘i was simultaneously further Americanized into a consumer society and increasingly exoticized as a pleasant antithesis to modernity and development. An interesting twist in this era was that the success of the Narcissus Festival took place simultaneously with the decline of Chinatown as a social and commercial district in downtown Honolulu. This paradox then leads to a discussion about the dynamics between a physical Chinatown community and a middle-class Chinese American community. Thirdly, I delineate the exoticization of the Pageant in this era and demonstrate how it took place at two different levels with male insiders and male outsiders. Finally, I reveal the Chinese American community as well as the workers of the Festival as heterogeneous groups exerting various interpretations of Chinese culture

³ A more detailed analysis can be found in Chapter 2.

and Chinese American identity. While examining the Festival as a site of contestation and negotiation, I demonstrate what alternative discourses of Chineseness have been repressed or obscured in the creation of an alternative Chinese American community.

The Americanization and Exoticization of the Islands

The 1950s and early 1960s saw Americanization and American optimism reaching their peak in the islands of Hawai‘i. Militarization of the territory took on new speed in the 1950s after a slight slowdown following the end of the war. From 1950 through 1978, defense spending of the U.S. federal government increased steadily. The Korean War put Hawai‘i on the U.S. war front one more time since Pearl Harbor by sending over 17,000 men from the Islands. With a population then of less than 465,000, Hawai‘i supplied roughly 4,000 men for the draft in 1951, about two and a half times the national average. At the end of 1952 Island casualties were 341 killed, 879 wounded, 79 missing, and 40 prisoners of war.⁴ Since the Korean War, the federal government’s military and non-military spending in Hawai‘i exceeded the Islands income from sugar and pineapple. Employment increased by 100 percent in the armed forces from 1950 to 1960 when it drastically reduced in labor force.⁵ The biggest non-military federal spending in this era was the construction of the East-West Center. Breaking ground on the campus of the University of Hawai‘i in 1961, the State Department-backed center became the largest U.S. agency to promote cultural and technical collaboration in the Asia-Pacific region during the Cold War period.

⁴ Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 177.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

In the 1950s, McCarthyism haunted the Islands as it did in the continental United States. Communism in Hawai‘i was a constant issue in every statehood hearings at the U.S. Congress. Before the war, reasons provided by U.S. senators from the southern states for postponing statehood for Hawai‘i included “the distance of Hawai‘i from the mainland, the lack of a substantial middle class, the large proportion of citizens of Japanese ancestry, and the control that the Big Five exerted on the political and economic activities in the islands.”⁶ After the war, as the old arguments no longer held force, the new issue of Communism in Hawai‘i during the late 1940s further delayed statehood. In 1951, seven Hawai‘i residents were arrested by the FBI and were convicted of having violated the Smith Act, a bill that was passed by the Congress in 1940, making it illegal to support the violent overthrow of the United States government or to belong to any group that did so. The trial of the "Hawaii Seven" received the widest public attention since the Massie Case.⁷ The seven were found guilty and sentenced to five years of imprisonment but the verdict was later reversed by a circuit court of appeals.⁸

Simultaneously, GIs from World War II were making a “Democratic Revolution” in Hawai‘i through an assertive participation in the American-style electoral politics, most of whom were “Americans of Japanese Ancestry (AJA).” By the early 1950s, many AJA veterans were back from college or law school and settled into their jobs. They strove for not only better social status but also more influence in decision-making process

⁶ Richard A. Wisniewski, *Hawaii, the Territorial Years, 1900-1959* (Honolulu: Pacific Basin Enterprises, 1984), 110.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

⁸ The sentence also included a \$5,000 fine for each except Mrs. Fujimoto (She received 3 years of imprisonment and \$2,000 fine). On Jan 20, 1958, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal reversed the Honolulu Federal District Court conviction and acquitted the "Hawaii Seven."

of the Islands. Under the leadership of Jack Burns, then a police captain but soon “the common man’s man,” the AJA veterans ran as a team.⁹ They won a landslide success for the Democratic Party in the 1954 territory elections, gaining more than two-thirds of the House seats and a nine-to-six margin in the Territorial Senate. Almost half of the winners in the legislature were AJA. Burns eventually won governorship in 1962 and held it for three terms, making the 1960s Hawaii’s Democrat decade.

In 1959, 61 years after being annexed and 59 years after being made a U.S. territory, Hawai‘i became the fiftieth state of the United States. The U.S. citizens of Hawai‘i could finally vote in presidential elections and elect governors as well their congressional representatives. The vote for statehood was 132,938 to 7,854, a resounding majority in the biggest turnout in the Islands’ voting history (total population was 632,777 by 1960 census). According to the report of Oscar G. Iden in 1948, who was employed by Senator Butler for under cover investigation of Communism in the Territory of Hawai‘i, Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans in the higher economic levels or involved in politics favored statehood while those in a lower economic status had not given the matter much thought. Native Hawaiians generally opposed statehood because of their “fear and dislike of the Japanese.”¹⁰

William F. Quinn became the first elected governor after serving as the last appointed governor; Hiram L Fong won one of the U.S. Senate seats as “The Man of the Pacific;” the other Senate seat was won by Democrat Oren E. Long, a former Territory

⁹ According to Rayson, four other men paved the way for the rise of the Democratic Party with Burns: Dr Ernest Murai, Mitsuyuki Kido, Jack Kawano (an ILWU organizer), and Chuck Mau (a lawyer). Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 168.

¹⁰ H. Brett Melendy, *Federal Government’s Search for Communism in Hawaii* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), 15.

governor. The single seat in the U.S. House of Representatives went to Democrat Daniel K. Inouye, who in 1962 replaced Oren E. Long in the U.S. Senate. This meant to many that the spirit of American democracy finally broke down the racial barriers that had been placed upon Hawai'i by the white-supremacist senators from the Southern states. It also meant that a society made up of over 70 percent of people with full or partial non-white pigmentation could become fully American. The optimism in Americanism soared among island residents especially because of the election of Fong and Inouye into the Congress, who were Chinese American and Japanese American respectively. To many, they represented the truth and promise of American democracy.

Statehood brought further population and economic growth to the Islands. Many mainlanders started to move to Hawai'i, competing for the more desirable jobs with local residents. In the 1960s, the Islands' population rose by 22 percent, among the most rapid growth rate in the nation. With the population increase, the Islands also saw a rapid growth in apartment, co-operatives, and condominiums.

The 1960s also witnessed the emergence of a new commercial culture. The Ala Moana Center built by Walter Dillingham was the biggest of its kind in the world, when Honolulu was a city of only modest size that had a population of roughly 650,000.¹¹ The opening of this huge modern shopping center in 1959 created a major change in Honolulu's shopping habits, taking many customers from the downtown area, making the shopping plaza concept a model across the United States.

The concept of suburban living also became a common middle-class household term in the 1960s, whose American dream was a family home of three bedrooms, two

¹¹ Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 194.

baths, double garage, and with excellent TV reception. Henry J. Kaiser made a \$350-million agreement with Bishop Estate to lease and develop 6,000 acres of Hawaii Kai, thus starting the true beginning of California-style suburban housing and business commuting in Hawai'i. For the younger generation, the dream was to own an automobile made in Detroit. The most popular sport among them was high-school football.

On November 19, 1966, satellite-live TV transmission from the mainland was inaugurated with the broadcast of a college football game and a pro football game, great all-American pastime. Another milestone in modern living was the opening of the first McDonald's in 1968 in 'Āina Haina next to Hawaii Kai. In the summer of 1969 the Apollo 11 crew came back from humankind's first giant leap to the surface of the moon and terra firma was Hawai'i. They were greeted by a crowd of 25,000, the biggest to assemble in the Islands.

The high degree of Americanization of Hawai'i was clearly seen in different newspapers that were circulated in the continental United States. *Burlington Daily Times* of North Carolina published an article written by an Associated Press journalist that was entitled "Teens Says Life in Hawaii Very American" on January 23, 1965. In that article, Patrice Young, a "third generation pure Chinese Hawaiian" attending Wellesley College after her graduation from Punahou School, made the following statement when she was asked about her life in Hawai'i:

It is really very much like California or you might say the beaches are like Miami Beach...[People] sometimes ... have beach parties... but usually party at home more likely with the same rock 'n' roll music you can hear at parties any other place in the United States.¹²

¹² Vivian Brown, "Teen Says Life in Hawaii Very American," *Burlington (N.C.) Daily Times-News*, January 23, 1965.

Another article written by Associated Press journalist Ron Staton under the title “Hawaii, 10 years a state, becomes a busy, bustling asphalt jungle” contained the following quotation from Governor John A. Burns,

Either by imitation or dilution, we can become an extension of the metropolitan centers of the mainland, incorporating here the very elements of those cities which those who left them sought to escape.¹³

Simultaneously, parallel to the state’s full plunge into military, political, and economic Americanization, Hawai‘i was more aggressively marketed as a “paradise” – a “pleasantly remote and exotic” place – to potential American tourists and consumers. As historian Gavan Daws has rightly pointed out, the island citizens who graduated from public schools named after American presidents – Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, McKinley, and Roosevelt – were represented as friendly natives by the tourism industry. Natives and Hawaii’s distance from the U.S. continent, which had been the factors that put off statehood for decades, then became intrinsic capital for tourism development overnight.

The Hawaii Visitors Bureau played a vigorous role in the exoticizing and marketing of Hawai‘i. Originally named Hawaii Tourists Bureau, it reopened its office in early 1945 as Hawaii Travel Bureau. The change in name indicated its desire to appeal to temporary residents from the continental United States, to convey a friendly feeling to them so that they would carry this feeling back to their mainland homes after the war. Within a year, the name changed to Hawaii Visitors Bureau. Its activities included resuming “Hawaii Calls” and sending it via short wave to the mainland, advertising

¹³ Ron Staton, “Hawaii, 10 years a state, becomes a busy, bustling asphalt jungle,” *Chronicle-Telegram*, Elyris, Ohio, August 24, 1969, C4.

Hawai‘i in leading magazines and newspapers, setting up displays, and sponsoring festivals. During and after the war, there was also an upsurge of popular Hollywood musicals set in Hawai‘i and the South Pacific. Sixteen feature films were made in or concerning Hawai‘i in the 1940s and 38 in the 1960s,¹⁴ which included “Bird of Paradise” made in 1932 and 1951, “So Proudly We Hail!” and “December 7th” made in 1943, “From Here to Eternity” of 1953, “South Pacific” of 1958, “Blue Hawaii” of 1961, and “Hawaii” of 1966.

Tourism promotion began as early as in 1903. But due to the high cost of travel, Hawai‘i remained accessible only to elite-class travelers and celebrities. Advances in aviation revolutionized Hawaii’s tourist industry, bringing a new class of middle-income visitors after World War II. Steamship travel used to last two weeks to and from the continent, and the flight first lasted sixteen hours, costing \$278 for one-way fare. In 1946, the flight was twelve and half hours and one-way fare was \$195. In 1947, the price was reduced to \$135. The introduction of commercial jet service in 1959 drastically reduced the flying time to only four and a half hours. It finally made flying to Hawai‘i quick and affordable, beginning the era of mass tourism. New jet services brought a tourist increase from 300,000 in 1960 to 1 million in 1967 and 1.75 million in 1970.¹⁵

The tourism boom was also propelled by increases in real estate development, construction, manufacturing, trade, and professional services. High-rise buildings started to appear in Waikîkî. Kaiser’s development project of the Hawaiian Village became the biggest resort hotel in Waikîkî of this time. New tourist infrastructures were added as

¹⁴ Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 133.

¹⁵ Wisniewski, *Hawaii*, 102, 103 and 105.

tourist attractions. In 1952 the Honolulu Zoo in Kapi‘olani Park was rebuilt and restocked. In 1955, the Waikiki Shell opened in Kapi‘olani Park for concerts and tourist shows. In 1957-1958, the International Market Place opened with even more shops, restaurants, and entertainment to lure tourists. From 1951 to 1960, the tourist industry boomed from over 50,000 visitors to 300,000 visitors.¹⁶

Statehood in 1959 also generated a tremendous influx of tourists. Together with the start of jet service in the same year, it brought the number of visitors up to 42 percent from the previous year.¹⁷ A 1963 Gallup Poll showed that, when questioned about the choice of a dream vacation in any part of the world – if money was no object – most Americans chose Hawai‘i, twice as often as they chose California, with a European tour being their third option.¹⁸ Income from tourism surpassed sugar and pineapple in 1959 and surpassed defense in 1972.¹⁹

The Decline of Chinatown as a Social and Commercial District

Although tourism, statehood, and consumerism boosted the island economy, they did not bring prosperity to Chinatown. Being a vital source of revenue in other Chinatowns such as in San Francisco and New York City, tourism did not contribute much to the support of Honolulu Chinatown. Tourists who came mainly by steamship before the 1960s were wealthy individuals, limited in number, and the time they spent in Chinatown was restricted. The jet travel and mass tourism that began in the 1960s did not

¹⁶ Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 171.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 195.

bring visitors to downtown hotels, clubs, restaurants, and stores because the tourist concentration had moved to Waikīkī high rises and the neighbor islands.

Statehood and consumerism also did little to boost Chinatown's economy. The growth of the local population and income increase did not bring a retail revival in Chinatown. Chinese Americans in Hawai'i, as wage earners, made a median \$5,096 per head per year in the 1950s, hundreds of dollars more than Japanese and Caucasian census groups.²⁰ However, as suburbanization, commuting, shopping malls, and automobile ownership became common, there was less interest among Chinese Americans and the rest of the local population in maintaining ties with the city's older business areas. Slowly, Chinatown's strong businesses followed the general drift of the more affluent segment of the population toward east O'ahu. Major restaurants clustered in popular residential areas such as McCully and Waikīkī and successful retailers moved to the Ala Moana Center and surrounding areas where they could compete more effectively in a city-wide market. Retail trade in Chinatown, as in the adjacent central business district, suffered substantial decline in this era.

The most severe blow, however, was brought about by the Honolulu Redevelopment Agency's urban renewal projects of Queen Emma in 1958, Kukui in 1961, followed by Aala Park and Kauluwela. The municipal government's plan was to make the downtown area east of River Street and south of Vineyard a strictly commercial district with an "Oriental" flavor. The design was increasingly criticized by urban planning scholars in later decades for its failure in recognizing the importance of human

²⁰ Gavan Daws, *Hawaii, 1959-1989: the first thirty years of the Aloha State* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Publishers Group Hawaii, 1989), 5.

resources rather than material resources in Chinatown development. The Chamber led many other Chinese American organizations in an all-out effort to oppose the redevelopment in 1959 and 1961 and managed to prevent the full enactment of the original plan.²¹ However, the projects still caused permanent relocation of thousands of Chinese American families, many of whom originally would have clung to their proximity to Chinatown. Thus, the residential function of Chinatown virtually ceased to exist, and the newer developments, Queen Emma Gardens and Kukui Gardens, are only occupied in small measure by Chinese American families. By 1970, only 1,400 persons still lived in Chinatown, most of whom were not of Chinese descent, leaving only less than one percent of Chinese Americans on O‘ahu living in Chinatown.²²

During the Korean War, Chinatown business suffered due to an embargo imposed by the United Nations on China. All goods from China or goods made of material from China were not eligible for import for fear that any profit will go to the Communist China or North Korea. From 1953, with efforts made by Chinese Americans with the American government as well as the British government in Hong Kong, a small proportion of goods began to be imported with material from non-Communist China. More goods were also imported from Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, and Singapore, but the importing procedures and paperwork got ever more complicated.²³ In this era, many small shops were also forced

²¹ Frederic K.T. Chun, "Growth of Chinese Chamber Outstanding," *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, 1961), 17.

²² Chester Rapkin, "The current status of two of America's Chinatowns: New York's, purpose renewed, Honolulu's, purpose dispelled," a working paper (Honolulu, Hawaii: Pacific Urban Studies and Planning Program, University of Hawaii, 1972).

²³ Zhentao Xu, "A Brief Account of the Importation of Chinese Goods," in *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee* (Honolulu, Hawaii: Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, 1961), 144-145.

out of existence in Chinatown by new Board of Health regulations, which militate against open shops, smoke houses, and other common types of retail establishments.²⁴

Due to all these forces, Chinatown consequently declined as a significant center of social interaction with the drop in the number of shops, trade, and marketplaces. Despite the island residents' great interests in the shops and other activities in Chinatown, the area has not achieved much prominence either as a tourist attraction or as a new commercial center. Only a segment of its pre-war diversity of activities remains, when other Chinatowns on the continental United States were becoming more vigorous than they had ever been.

Success and Failure of the Narcissus Festival and the Narcissus Queen Pageant

Ironically, the threats imposed upon Chinatown's existence did not bring to a halt the newly formed Narcissus Festival. The Narcissus Queen Pageant became an instant hit as the "first ethnic beauty contest in Hawai'i."²⁵ As Claudina Keen, a high-status woman of a Walla Walla Cinema and Camera Club from the State of Washington reported in her local newspaper:

Celebration of the Chinese New Year was occasion of a gala time for the islanders, many of whom are Chinese or of Chinese descent. A 110-foot long dragon was paraded through the streets to the accompaniment of exploding firecrackers and no American Fourth of July ever produced so much noise.²⁶

The Festival became a model cultural event for other ethnic communities to emulate. The Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce soon launched the Cherry Blossom

²⁴ Rapkin, "The current status of two of America's Chinatowns."

²⁵ Thom, "The Narcissus Festival," 61.

²⁶ Iris Myers, "Hawaii Convert," *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*, Washington, March 12, 1950, 17. Women's Features section.

Festival and Pageant in 1953, which was then followed by other ethnic beauty pageants, such as the Filipino Sampaguita Festival and the Korean Moogoonghua.²⁷ News of the Festival spread to San Francisco as well as Hong Kong. Communities of Chinese descent in San Francisco, Vancouver, and Manila staged similar festivals, all patterned on the style of plans that evolved from the Festival.²⁸ George Joe, president of San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce enquired for full details of the Festival plans from Wah Chan Thom and in 1958 launched the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. contest.²⁹

Within a decade, the Festival became a well-known tourist attraction in Honolulu. As late as in 1972, it was still advertised as a major wintertime spectacle of Hawai'i in Chicago's newspaper *The Herald*:

Christmas in Hawaii? ... of course, throughout the winter Hawaii has surfing contests and golf tournament – and there are the Narcissus Festival in January and the Chinese New Year in February.³⁰

As an ethnic spectacle, the Festival was incorporated into the Hawaii Visitors Bureau's annual development plan, especially for attracting visitors during the off-season vacationing time in early spring. The Bureau first helped advertise the Festival on the continental United States, then started to subsidize \$1,000 yearly from 1957, and eventually increased to \$3,750 for further expansion in 1961.³¹

The annual event rapidly evolved from a four-day celebration in 1950 to a full two-week celebration in the mid 1950s and a month-long territory/state activity since the

²⁷ Ing, "The Narcissus Festival," 104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 104.

³⁰ Anon., "Want to Visit Hawaii?" *The Herald*, Chicago, Illinois, September 12, 1972, 4. Section 3.

³¹ 8th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1957).

late 1950s. The number of contestants rose from 11 in 1950 to 26 in 1953. Beginning in the third year, the beauty contest was held at both preliminary and final stages due to the increase of contestants. From the mid 1950s, some Festival activities were staged out of Chinatown. The queen contest was moved to the W.R. Farrington High School Auditorium from 1956, and the Coronation Ball to the Royal Hawaiian Hotel beginning in 1957.³² Also in 1957 when Raymond Y.C. Ho was the general chairman, the Festival was spread throughout residential, cultural and business districts of Honolulu in spite of the criticisms from the Chinatown community, “You will find at least one event in your neighborhood – in Kalihi, Makīkī, Punchbowl, the Academy of Arts, McCully, Waikīkī, Downtown and Chinatown.”³³

The Festival program grew to be more elaborate with each passing year. The number of events increased from four or five events in the first year to nineteen events in 1956. Kick-off receptions were moved from aboard cruise ships (Matson and American President lines), to consulates and grand hotels (Kahala Hilton and Hilton Hawaiian Village); Narcissus Symphony Concert, Artists in Action Day, Camera Day, Chinese Poetry Contest, Calligraphy Contest, Tournaments for Bowling, Ping Pong and Golf, House and Garden Tours, Chinatown Tours, Orchids and Flower Shows, Fashion Show, Youth Talent Night, Cooking Show, Cinema Night and numerous public appearances for the beauty contests were added into the Festival program in the late 1950s. The formal Coronation Ball had the Territory of Hawai‘i governor and later the State of Hawai‘i governor to crown the new queen. The balls were held at various sites, including the old

³² Ing, “The Narcissus Festival,” 105.

³³ 8th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1957).

Waikiki Lau Yee Chai featuring dancing under the stars, the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and the Hilton Hawaiian Village with live orchestra and dancing until midnight. During its heyday, the Narcissus Parade started in Honolulu Chinatown and ended at the Ala Moana Center, with floats and units from various large corporations in Honolulu. By the late 1950s, the Festival became established as a traditional island event, rivaling Aloha Week in tourist appeal due to “its elaborate and exotic nature.”³⁴

The roles of the queen and the court also evolved. The queen’s period to “reign” extended beyond the Festival activities into a year-round duty. She became a “goodwill ambassador” for the Chamber and even for Hawai‘i wherever she went. The queen and her court were seen everywhere, from welcoming official visitors from other countries and cutting ribbons for grand openings to attending the many Chinese American society Spring Banquets. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau often included the Narcissus Queen in the various events and promotions of the Islands along with other ethnic queens.³⁵ To promote statehood, a statehood queen was selected in 1959 and the winner was Cecilia Ching, a college student of Chinese ancestry who later became the Narcissus Queen in 1961. The prize for the queen expanded from a trip to the west coast to a trip to the “Far East” since 1956 plus an increasing amount of merchandize. As K. Tim Yee, Vice Chairman of 1956 Queen Contest Committee put it, “In no other queen contest held in Honolulu do each and every contestants receive this kind of financial aid from the sponsors of the contest.”³⁶

³⁴ Philip Chun, “Chinese New Year in Hawai‘i,” *9th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1958).

³⁵ Queenie Mow Chee, “53 Years of Evolvement of the Narcissus Festival and its Queens,” *53rd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2002): 100.

³⁶ *7th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1956).

The success of the Narcissus Festival lies not only in its expanding influence in the territory/state but also in the degree of community mobilization it generated. It was an ethnic event that recruited resources from the largest number of businesses and organizations in Hawai'i. The financial sponsors of the Festival included not only Chinese American businesses, big or small, but also general companies such as Pan-American and Canadian Pacific airlines, American President ship liners, Chrysler car dealers, Hawaiian Electric Co., Sears, Dairy Queen, Diamond Head Bakery Co. Ltd., and various hotels. The kick-off reception and the press reception were social gatherings of community leaders, celebrities, dignitaries, and the press. The coronation ball where the governor would crown the queen and dance the first waltz with the queen was one of the few high-class fanfares in Hawai'i. The list of distinguished guests for the ball included Japanese and French consul generals as well as the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. According to Thom, "All the guests came not in suit and tie, but in tuxedo. We don't go that formal anymore now."³⁷ Indeed, the coronation ball served as a venue for community leaders to maintain their connections with Honolulu's upper-middle class and political power. It functioned in the same way as the ball of 1856 that Chun Afong and other prominent Chinese merchants hosted in honor of King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma soon after their marriage. That ball was such an unprecedented and elaborate affair in Honolulu that all major local newspapers covered in detail the banquet menu, the guest list, and who danced which dance with whom.

Various Chinese American organizations played important roles in the expansion of the Festival. To name a few, the Chinese Civic Association, a club for American-born

³⁷ Thom Interview, May 2000.

Chinese Americans, was crucial in staging dramas in Cantonese and/or English at Festival theatres as well as on parade floats. The Chinese American Club held social dances and receptions for the Festival. From 1964, the Chinese Jaycee, the Chinese Junior Chamber of Commerce, took charge of the production of the Pageant, the flagship program of the Festival. In the late 1960s, the International Student Association of the East-West Center also performed in the Festival.

The Festival successfully teased out some of the best-quality Chinese cultural events that could not be organized by mainstream cultural institutions such as the Honolulu Academy of Arts. In the 1960s, the Festival's "Artists in Action" program introduced top-rated and world-renowned artists and designers of Chinese ancestry to Hawai'i. Another example is the Chinese literary couplet contest. Started in 1956 and running for over ten years, the contest attracted over a thousand entries annually from various parts of the world, including Hong Kong, Canada, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Australia. The judges for the contest included several former scholars who had passed the Chinese Qing Dynasty imperial civil services exams. The top six to ten entries were chosen each year, with their compositions published in Chinese newspapers and the Narcissus Festival Souvenir Book, together with the judges' interpretations and evaluations written in classical Chinese.

The Festival in the first two decades was in fact a chain of events loosely coordinated under the banner of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce rather than a single event comprehensively conducted by the Chamber itself. Therefore, it contained a tea ceremony, Chinese film screening, and a Chinese gardens tour, together with a bowling and a golf tournament as well as a Narcissus symphony concert. Festival leaders who

represented the Chamber occasionally complained about the financial inefficiency, the overlap of programs, and the lack of focus, or that the Festival was “chaotic and wasteful.”³⁸ However, the loose coordination enabled the Festival to gather the maximum number of Chinese American societies and clubs and to achieve the maximum scope of involvement from the population in Hawai‘i with or without Chinese ancestry. The Narcissus Festival thus became the most popular and convenient symbol an individual Chinese American could identify with. To a certain extent, the popularity, prestige, and scale of community involvement in the Festival created a public Chinese American identity for the first time in Hawai‘i. Before the inception of the Festival, most community events were conducted either exclusively by the Chinese population in Hawai‘i (such as fundraisings for village schools or regional famines in China) or as a section of a general social event (from the fundraising for the Titanic to WWI relief drives). The Narcissus Festival was the first event of the Chinese American community that defined a distinctive Chinese American cause and mobilized the general society for its own purposes.

The Festival, to certain extent, provided a space other than Chinatown for suburbanized middle-class Chinese Americans to form an “alternative ethnic community.”³⁹ Planning, preparing, and hosting various programs offered the Festival workers a chance to keep abreast of the whereabouts and happenings of their old neighbors, relatives, friends, and colleagues as well as to build new connections. More

³⁸ Clinton K.L. Ching, “Report on the 15th Annual Narcissus Festival,” May 25, 1964. Narcissus Festival Events section.

³⁹ My use of the term “alternative community” was inspired by the concept of “cultural community” from Huping Lin, *Chinese St. Louis: From Enclave to Cultural Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003).

importantly for the parents, having their high school-aged and college-aged children participating in the Festival activities also enriched the chance for their sons and daughters to date or even find a potential spouse among Chinese Americans. The Festival thus played an important role in maintaining a new middle-class Chinese American community when the physical community with person-to-person intensity no longer existed in Chinatown. It satisfied the needs of middle-class Chinese American to maintain social bonds and develop connections outside Chinatown. It provided those Chinese Americans, who regarded Honolulu Chinatown as an ethnic enclave that their ancestors were once confined to, a desirable, American, modern, non-immigrant, non-labor union, and non-Communist symbol to claim. The Narcissus Festival and Queen contest realized the mobilization of Chinese American community resources and the staging of the Chinese American community as a cultural spectacle. Even though it failed to achieve its primary goal of boosting Chinatown business, it replaced Chinatown as a new site for community reformation and identity reconstruction.

However, because it failed to revitalize Honolulu Chinatown, at least one section of the Chinese American community who are not members of the Chamber found the Chamber's efforts to publicize the Chinese American community with the Festival very offensive.⁴⁰ These Chinese Americans complained that the Narcissus Festival was for the *haoles*, the tourists, and even other non-*haole* residents of the Islands, but not for Chinese Americans. The activities of the Chamber, according to its opponents, show that it claimed to be Chinese but did few things for the Chinese in Chinatown.⁴¹ They found that

⁴⁰ Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu," 230.

⁴¹ Thom interview, May 2000.

people in the Chamber were only trying to prosper in a world dominated by *haoles* and were using the Chamber to further their personal business and political ambitions. The Chamber appeared more interested in public relations with the outside community than with the Chinese community itself.⁴²

Some, mostly small business owners in Chinatown, complained that while one of President Thom's concerns for suggesting the Festival was to bring business into Chinatown, the opposite actually has happened. During the first several years, to feature a parade and a lion dance that would visit all the shops and give New Year wishes, the Chamber collected Festival fees from Chinatown stores. They convinced the owners that all stores would receive more customers with the attraction of the dragon and the lion. However, when the predicted results did not materialize and the owners found it worthless to pay the dues, some refused to pay and open their stores during the celebration. In 1952, the anti-Festival voice was so loud that most stores decided to close on the Chinatown Open House day. Only the bankers in that area, who were Thom's close friends, and the Chamber members, supported him and opened their doors for the lion dance.⁴³ However, this resistance did not last long. Since the early 1970s, the activities in Chinatown take place only for three days during a three-month period, each day only three hours. All other features, the "kick off" reception, the Pageant, the coronation, the fashion show, the cooking demonstration, and the dinner showcase are located at shopping malls, city-owned facilities, or Waikîkî hotels.

⁴² Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu," 230.

⁴³ Thom interview, May 2000.

Other contesting discourses regarding the Festival and the Pageant also existed. For instance, some community members criticized that the choice of a queen in the Pageant depended not on her ability in *qin-qi-shu-hua* (a standard for female talent in classic Chinese literature – to play musical instruments, to play games of chess, to write calligraphy, and to paint), but rather on her physical features and the connections of her family. Some noted that while all other Chinese American society publications were bilingual, the Narcissus Festival Souvenir Program was primarily in English. They also complained that the organizers did not put enough emphasis on the Chinese language ability of the contestants, and those who could speak Cantonese, Hakka dialect, or Mandarin fluently were not given better scores. Consequently, more and more winners could only utter a few Chinese words and thus were failing their mission as a goodwill ambassador of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i to promote good relationships with other communities of Chinese descent in America and Asia.⁴⁴

The Festival leaders conducted changes in response to criticisms and challenges. In 1952, out of a desire for more economic profit and out of a reaction to the complaints against the elitist and biased judging, the Chamber experimented with a public ballot system for the queen selection. For the first time, the queen was determined by popular vote instead of by a panel of judges. Ballots were cast from December 26, 1951 to January 20, 1952 at sponsoring firms. The result, however, did not turn out to be more democratic, as friends and relatives of the wealthier contestants bought more

⁴⁴ Soong interview, August 2004.

tickets/ballots than those of the less wealthy ones. The vote was soon switched back to the Committee-selected judges.⁴⁵

Some individual female volunteers and women's organizations also criticized the Festival and the Pageant leaders. Women's involvement in the events was fundamental to the success of the Festival though their role was often taken for granted, marginalized, and even suppressed. As early as the second year, the Associated Chinese Women managed the Chinese flower exhibit and the art exhibit; the Chinese Women's Club and the Women Auxiliary of the American Chinese Club would don modern Chinese gowns and elaborate costumes of the past in the Festival fashion show. However, during my interviews, quite a few men and women informed me that women's efforts were often underappreciated by the Festival leaders in the earlier decades, which eventually caused the withdrawal of many women's organizations from the Festival.

From the 1950s through the 1970s, the University of Hawai'i had two major Chinese American sororities, *Tec Shih Sheh* and *Yang Chung Hui*, that were the core supporters of the Narcissus Festival and its Queen search and Pageant. Together with their counterpart fraternities, *Tu Shang Chieh* and *Peng Hui*, they provided the majority of the volunteers for various programs of the Festival. The two sororities accumulated rich experiences in selecting and training beauty contest candidates and running pageants through their participation in the University of Hawai'i *Ka Palapala* Queen beauty contest since the late 1930s (as mentioned in Chapter 2). They were most inspired when their sister Yuntau Zane won the first Miss Hawaii title and then the first Miss Congeniality title in the Atlantic City's Miss America Scholarship Pageant. It was a

⁴⁵ Ing interview, August 2000.

source of pride for them to have queens selected from their own sororities. They assisted in many aspects of the Narcissus Festival, from sponsoring contestants to hostessing and organizing various events. However, when the young women asked Chamber leaders to share some of the profits from the Festival to support the sororities' scholarship fund, their request was immediately rejected.

Other women's organizations experienced similar financial disputes with the Chamber. Through the heyday of the Festival, the three most popular programs were the Home and Garden Tour, the Fashion Show, and the Cooking Demonstration. All were organized and coordinated by women's organizations, such as the Associated Chinese Women's Club. According to the "Report on the 15th Annual Narcissus Festival," all the women-oriented activities were "well executed and extremely successful." The cooking program was so popular that "a waiting line generally forms approximately one hour in advance of the demonstration, and ... the room used for the demonstration is not large enough to accommodate the crowd." The Home and Garden Tour of 1964 guided over 600 people through "four lovely homes" and "registered a resounding success."⁴⁶ However, as the Associated Chinese Women's Club demanded their share of the profit, it was told that the participation of the women in the Festival should be for "community service" motives instead of "profit motives." Consequently, some women refused to handle a program unless they "received a sufficient financial return."⁴⁷

Another group of women who played an instrumental role in the steady growth of the Narcissus Festival were the wives of the past and current presidents and officers of

⁴⁶ Ching, "Report on the 15th Annual Narcissus Festival," Narcissus Festival Events section.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Community Participation section.

the Chamber. As Chris Yee stated, “The husbands wore the titles, but their wives did the job.”⁴⁸ Yee, who worked since high school and became the first female Hawaii Sales & Public Relations Manager for American President Lines (APL), further explained that most wives of those Chamber officers were “model housewives of the 1950s” who did not work, although most had received college education. They “had a lot of time” and therefore did most of the organization and management work for their husbands who were the chairs of Festival committees. Yee’s observation can be confirmed with the fact that many of the women who were shown as volunteers or committee members in the Festival souvenir books from the 1950s through the mid 1970s were identified with their husband’s full name instead of their own name. A woman would be addressed as Mrs. Richard Ing in 1970 and then as Mrs. Helen Ing in 1978.

During the same interview, Yee also remarked that the irony was that although those wives did their husbands jobs and made the Festival successful, when it was time for the Festival committees to convene, they would be asked to leave the room. They were expected to be the surrogate leaders of the Festival, but they were excluded from the decision-making process of the Chamber.

In fact, the Chamber did not accept any female member until the mid 1970s. It did not elect a woman president until 1992 when Lily K. Yao, president and CEO of Pioneer Federal Savings Bank, finally broke the glass ceiling in the Chamber. Its only other women president thus far has been France H. Goo, president and founder of Guardian Escrow Services Inc., who became the Millennium Year president of the Chamber. In 1997, Lishan Chong challenged the Chamber’s marginalization of women from

⁴⁸ Yee interview, February 2005.

leadership position by claiming herself the co-chair of the Chamber with her husband, the elected president. The introduction of the president-team read, “Mrs. Chong, a senior financial analyst... relished the opportunity to be both a helpmate and companion to her husband as he performs his many duties as President of the Chamber. It is a partnership that has benefited the Chamber and its members throughout the year.”⁴⁹

Prior to the mid 1970s, women could participate in the Narcissus Festival as volunteers and even committee chairs, but they could not become a member of the Festival’s executive committee, nor a member on the board of directors of the Chamber.

Equally ironic was that none of the winners or contestants of the Narcissus Queen Pageant is eligible to be a Chamber member even today (2005), although they have been called the “goodwill ambassadors” of the Chamber and the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i for over half a century. Since the founding of the Chamber, an age limit has stipulated that a person who applies for membership needs to be 40 or older. The Chinese Jaycees accepts members between the age of 21 and 39. However, the age restriction for entering the Pageant was 16 to 24, which became 18 to 26 in recent decades. The discrepancy between the requirements of age for the Chamber and for the Pageant clearly indicates the gender-oriented as well as age-oriented division of labor as determined by the Festival leaders. Just as the wives’ role was expected or even demanded yet simultaneously belittled and suppressed in the 1950s and 1960s, the participation of young women contestants to this day is crucial yet simultaneously marginalized by the Chamber.

⁴⁹ 48th *Narcissus Festival souvenir Annual* (1997): 11. It was the Chamber’s 85th anniversary year.

The Exoticization of the Narcissus Queen Pageant

Serving as a middle-class site of community representation, the Festival grew to encompass diverse aspects of Chinese American life in Hawai'i. It soon expanded into a more mixed package that combined "non-Chinese events" with the celebration of Chinese cultural heritage. If attendees of the first year were shocked to see the American-style beauty contest, they would be dumbfounded by the increasing number of "American" programs in the following two decades. In the 1950s and 1960s, baseball, bowling, golf, symphony, Camera Night, Paradise Park day, Social Dance Day were all added along with Chinese Garden Tour, Chinese Tea Ceremony, and Chinese Poem Competition.

An intriguing development, however, was that as more "American" activities emerged in the Festival, the beauty contest itself was "de-Americanized." Although the beauty contest was still perceived as an American cultural phenomenon and the Narcissus Queen Pageant as a direct copy of the Miss Hawaii Scholarship Contest, the newspaper announcement of the winners ceased to disclose their body measurements in 1953. From the 1960s, the commercialization of the Pageant also decreased after the Chamber provided each contestant equal amounts of money (\$150 in the 1960s and \$400 since the 1990s) to defray some of the cost. The contestants could still take financial sponsors but any use of their images by those sponsors had to be consulted with the Chamber. The most phenomenal change was that the swimsuit competition was eliminated from the Pageant in 1953. As a replacement of the swimsuit phase, a *cheongsam* or Chinese gown phase was introduced. Women were staged in body-hugging and high-collared Chinese *cheongsam* that has above-knee side slits.

The elimination of the swimsuit phase from the Pageant was a process of contestation between the mainstream society and the Chinese American community over the symbolic meaning of presenting the female body in swim attire. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Festival leaders justified their staging of young Chinese American women in swimsuits as a demonstration of the progress Chinese Americans had achieved as a “race” under American democracy. Their discourse echoed with the ideology that Hawaii’s mainstream society had promoted in their decades of campaigning for statehood. It also expressed a sense of urgency from those community leaders to showcase their Americanness when the United States was “losing China” to the Chinese Communist Party. In 1959, the same interpretation of the female body in swim attire as a symbol of Americanness – or a symbol of progress, modernity, and democracy – was rearticulated in mainstream American media.

On March 11 and 12 in 1959, the Senate and the House voted in favor of Hawaii’s half-century pursuit of U.S. statehood respectively. In the following days, many national and regional newspapers illustrated the news about the fiftieth state on their front page with a sensational picture provided by *The Honolulu Advertiser* which displayed three swimsuit-clad young women from Hawai‘i. These women stood in a row, barefoot, on a sandy beach with Diamond Head in the background. They were smiling into the camera, each holding above their head a sign that read “Yes.” They all had short permed hair, with the one in the middle having the word “Hawaii” printed on her swimsuit. In the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune* of March 13, the caption of the picture read:

50th State’s Beauties – Three of Hawaii’s prettiest girls pose before Diamond Head with Statehood extras of the Honolulu Advertiser. They are (from left): Miss Cherry Blossom of Hawaii, Jane Kuwata, who is of Japanese descent; Miss

Hawaii of 1958, Georgietta Parker, who is part Hawaiian; and Miss Narcissus of 1959, Caroline Tom, who is Chinese.⁵⁰

Underneath the picture was the title – “Hawaii Statehood Bill Sent to Ike” – and the story. The whole section about Hawaii’s new statehood, however, was placed under a headline in heavy black letters – “Ike Asks \$3.9 Billion Foreign Aid Fund to Fight the Cold War: Growing Red Threat is Cited.” In result, right next to the picture of “50th State’s Beauties”, the Associated Press article from Washington, D.C. quoted President Eisenhower’s warning about the “growing Communist potential to launch a war of nuclear destruction” as well as his urging for a full budget “to thwart ‘a fanatic conspiracy of international communism.’”⁵¹

Obviously, editors of the Wisconsin paper purposefully selected an image for Hawai‘i that would generate a positive coverage of statehood. They needed the image to be free of any indication of communist conspiracy and to present the fiftieth state as a new ally in restraining communist expansion and promoting global American democracy. Non-Caucasian beauty queens from Hawai‘i expressing their aspiration for statehood with their Hollywood-like hair style, smile and curvy bodies would seem the most friendly gesture of their modernity and Americanness. There is no man or native Hawaiian in sight in the picture. The three women look more similar than different, thus readers need to follow the specific instruction provided to identify them as Japanese American, part Hawaiian, and Chinese American. For tourism promotion, the women might be asked to pose in *kimono*, grass skirt, and *cheongsam* respectively to enchant readers with their distinctive styles of exoticness. However, this picture is to demonstrate

⁵⁰ Associated Press, *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*, Wisconsin, March 13, 1959, 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, 1.

the power of the United States as a “melting pot” and the ideology of different “races” becoming one under the great American civilization. Evidence can prove that this message, as desired by *The Honolulu Advertiser*, was conveyed well through the picture. As Tom vividly remembered, after the picture was released, she received “tons of letters,” including those that “proposed marriage.” Among them was one from a farmer in the South, who sent Tom a picture that showed a Caucasian man in his pullover jeans standing in front of a barn, with some chickens in the background.⁵²

The irony was that neither the Cherry Blossom Queen Pageant nor the Narcissus Queen Pageant allowed their contestants to compete in swimsuits at that time. Kuwata and Tom posed in swimsuits only for the campaign picture. As Tom recalled, after news about the Senate’s vote reached Honolulu, she was approached by *The Honolulu Advertiser* and asked to attend a photo shooting session in swimsuit for a statehood campaign early the next morning. The Chamber consented to Tom’s photo session with the press to support the campaign. However, as a phase in the Narcissus Queen Pageant, swimsuits had been condemned by many and were eliminated in 1953.

Chamber leaders had to eliminate the swimsuit competition despite their rhetoric of showcasing Americanness due to the fact that many Chinese American women regarded exposing their body on the Pageant stage as disgraceful and thus refused to compete in the Pageant. Compared to the discourse of modernity, progress, and democracy, the majority of the community preferred alternative interpretations of the female body in a swimsuit. They more often considered a woman showing off her body

⁵² Tom interview, January 2005.

in a swimsuit as “easy” and “cheap.”⁵³ As the ideal woman of the 1950s was defined as a middle-class housewife nurturing her modern nuclear family, the goal for many women to enter the Pageant was to “marry well.”⁵⁴ They expected the Pageant to elevate their value and bring social prestige to their family instead of having their body scrutinized both during and after the Pageant and bringing humiliation to their future boyfriend or even husband. They wanted to be treated as a “real queen like from a royal family.”⁵⁵ After the Chamber eliminated the swimsuit competition, the number of contestants more than doubled from the first several years. Consequently, a preliminary contest was added to select the top ten candidates to compete in the formal Pageant.

A quick browse through the pictures in the Festival souvenir books reveals that the representation of the beauty contest grew more standardized and more “Chinese” in this era. From 1952, the queen started to pose in modern-style *cheongsam* for her portrait. Among the eighteen contestants of that year who submitted their portraits for public ballot, two wore swimsuits, seven wore *cheongsam*, and the rest wore “school attire” (Western-style blouse or jacket and below-knee skirt). The year after, only 5 out of 21 contestants who posed for the group picture in the kick-off reception wore Western-style dress. The rest wore short-sleeve or sleeveless *cheongsam*. In the portrait picture of 1955, all twenty contestants except one wore *cheongsam*. Since then, it became mandatory for the contestants to wear *cheongsam* in portraits, at the kick-off cocktail reception, and during public appearances.

⁵³ Chee interview, November 2004.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 2004.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 2004.

The meaning of donning *cheongsam*, however, was interpreted differently by male insiders – the Festival organizers and volunteers – and male outsiders who were predominantly Caucasian residents and tourists. To male Chinese American organizers of the Festival, having the contestants appear in Chinese *cheongsam* represented their Chinese cultural heritage. From 1954 and 1955, most authors of the souvenir book, who were predominantly male, started to stress the cultural significance over business motivation. The 1954 Festival Chair defined the purpose of the Festival as “cultural enlightenment.” Thomas Wai Nam Chun, the 1955 Publicity Committee Chair, claimed that the purpose of the Festival was “to preserve some of the colorful and unique customs of the olden days,”⁵⁶ which read in the Chinese text as “to promote the culture of our ancestral land and to educate the Hawaii-born Chinese.” In the 1958 souvenir book, Philip Chun, Chair of the Publicity and Promotion Committee stated, “The purpose of the Festival is to keep alive in the Islands a remnant of things Chinese – a heritage of culture which has been in danger of slipping away with the rapid Americanization of the people of Chinese ancestry.”⁵⁷

This desire to “promote the culture of our ancestral land” stems from the worry about the “rapid Americanization of the people of Chinese ancestry” or the loss of “good old values” with the spread of urban, middle-class, white, and Caucasian American ways to eat, drink, dress, walk, and think. In fact, a sign of “things Chinese” being endangered was the disappearance of Chinese language in Festival souvenir books. The Festival’s souvenir book became partially bilingual from 1952, with the chair’s speech and the

⁵⁶ Thomas Wai Nam Chun, *6th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1955).

⁵⁷ Philip Chun, *9th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1958), 1.

events printed in both English and Chinese. The practice, however, stopped in 1958. First, the program was only printed in English from the tenth Festival of 1959, then English became the only language used in the souvenir book from 1965. This was possibly due to the high cost of bilingual translation, or to the fact that the Festival was sponsored by the state government and many activities were branched out to the whole Honolulu. The male leaders, therefore, promoted all possible “remnant of things Chinese” through the young contestants. *Cheongsam*, as compared to Chinese language or Chinese talent, was much easier to adopt. Therefore it became mandatory for the contestants since the late 1950s.

Some Festival leaders, their wives, and even their daughters shared the view that the modern *cheongsam* was already a rather diluted version of Chineseness. In Yee’s words, “it is not classic and not classy to them.” Modern *cheongsam*, which was Chinese women’s common attire in Asia till the 1960s (except in mainland China), could be machine made with any type of fabric and worn for a wide range of occasions. It had lost its authenticity and uniqueness to them as compared to its earlier version of loosely cut and heavily embroidered jacket and skirt in silk brocade, which women from royal and affluent families would wear since late Qing dynasty. These wives and daughters sometimes would wear their classic style jacket on formal occasions or at the Chinese Civic Association’s annual Mandarin Ball and reminisce about how it used to take many skillful hands and years of labor to finish a high-quality jacket. To them, the *cheongsam* that the contestants wore could only fool ignorant and low-taste outsiders.

For most outsiders, however, *cheongsam* meant Oriental eroticism and sexual appeal. The old version was archaic and asexual though extravagant. The modern one

that hugs the body best represents the unique beauty of Chinese American women. A good example of the exoticization of the female body in *cheongsam* is the “Narcissus Queen” theme song that was released in 1958. The composer of the words and music was R. Alexander Anderson, president of the Von Hamm Young Co., Ltd and the composer of such famous songs as *The Cockeyed Mayor of Kaunakakai*, *Lovely Hula Hands*, and *Mele Kalikimaka*. The first recording of the song was in the voice of Alfred Apaka, a popular Island singer, who formally introduced the song in February 1958 on “Hawaii Calls,” the nation-wide network radio program broadcast daily from Waikīkī. Thus the Narcissus Festival was advertised to thousands of listeners throughout the United States. Mr. Anderson and Mr. Apaka released all their rights to and royalties from “Narcissus Queen.” Profits made from the sale of records thus went to the expansion of the Festival. With lyrics as follows, the theme song fossilized China as ancient “Old Cathay” as well as conducted a double eroticization of Chinese femininity by portraying a woman dancing *hula* in a tight silken Chinese gown:

Oriental maiden fair,
Smiling eyes and raven hair,
Lovely one, Narcissus Queen,
Fairest flower I have seen.

Pretty maid from old Cathay,
Ancestors came here to stay;
Now she does Hawaiian way,
With a graceful hula sway.

Collar high beneath her chin,
Smiling lips your heart to win;
Silken gown with slit at knee,
Oh what she can do for me.

Gentle oriental maid,
Wearing gold and precious jade,
Now I swear by stars above,

She's the one I love.

The song defines a Chinese beauty with stereotypical exotic images of “Oriental girl,” such as “gold,” “precious jade,” “raven hair,” “smiling eyes,” “silken gown,” “high collar” and “slit at knee.” A Narcissus Queen is further sensualized in the song by the “Hawaiian way,” which is defined with “hula,” and “sway.” These elements are presented as desirable with such words as “fair,” “lovely,” “fairest flower,” “pretty,” and “graceful.” The fantasy for the queen is expressed in exclamation – “Oh what she can do for me.” The climax of the longing for an encounter with the exotic beauty, which is set on a star-lit night, is the articulation of “Now I swear by stars above, she's the one I love.” Haunani-Kay Trask once used Anderson's song “Lovely Hula Hands” to exemplify how Hawaiian culture has been feminized to fulfill a white colonial fantasy and facilitate U.S. imperial rule in the Islands.⁵⁸ The last part of the song reads as follows:

I can feel your soft caresses of your hula hand
Your lovely hula hands
Every little move expresses so I'll understand
All the tender meaning

Of your hula hands
Fingertips that say aloha
Say to me again I love you
Lovely hula hands, kou lima nani e

Evidently, both Anderson's songs articulated the same naked fantasy of a white American male. They demonstrate the same imagination of being served and satisfied by exotic women and culture in Hawai'i, either Hawaiian or Chinese. The Narcissus Queen

⁵⁸ Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai'i* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press and the Center for Hawaiian Studies, 1999).

theme song is still in use today to crown the new queen on Pageant night and to introduce her at various functions.

A further look into the history of *cheongsam* will complicate the interpretations made by both insiders and outsiders. As a style of female attire, *cheongsam* may represent the modernized life style in Shanghai instead of an aspect of traditional Chinese culture. It can also be androgynously liberating to women instead of being sexually alluring. Given the history of *cheongsam*, it is quite ironic that the Pageant used it as a symbol of Chinese tradition. The *cheongsam* (or *qipao* in Mandarin Chinese) was indeed very popular in China from the 1930s. From the 1950s, it has been the unofficial national dress of women in non-communist China and an international symbol of Chinese femininity.⁵⁹ However, according to Valerie Steele and John S Major in their book *China Chic*, “The *qipao*, better known in the West by its Cantonese name, the *cheongsam* ... is a hybrid design, combining elements of Chinese, Manchu, and Western clothing.”⁶⁰

During the nineteenth century, Han Chinese women usually wore a combination of two or three garments: a full jacket (*ao*), a pleated skirt (*qun*), and/or loose, wide trousers (*ku*). The jacket was fairly long and loosely cut with wide sleeves. The skirt was wrapped and often pleated and extravagantly embroidered. In the 1920s, skirts, jackets and trousers were all cut closer to the body. Young unmarried women, as well as working class people of both sexes could also wear trousers alone, which were not regarded as “masculine” as they were in the West. Chinese men of the elite, however, traditionally

⁵⁹ Hazel Clark, “The *Cheongsam*: Issues of Fashion and Cultural Identity” in *China Chic: East Meets West*, ed. Valerie Steele & John S. Major (Yale University Press, 1999), 159.

⁶⁰ Valerie Steele & John S. Major, *China Chic: East Meets West* (Yale University Press, 1999), 45.

wore long robes. So did Manchu women, but their hairstyles and accessories made them unmistakably feminine in appearance.

Many scholars agree that the modern version of *qipao* began among some urban, middle-class, young women in the mid 1920s in Shanghai, which was then Asia's largest modern trading city most populated by foreign business people, and a center of fashion, style, and the movie industry.⁶¹ However, there is no consensus on the exact origin of the style. The term *qipao* literally means "banner (Manchu) gown," and was applied to the new style of dress because it somewhat resembled the robe worn by Manchu women. Most scholars of Chinese costume and material culture therefore trace the origin of the new garment back to Manchu women's clothes style.

There are other speculations on the style. The word *cheongsam* in Cantonese means "long gown" and indeed in its early form, the garment resembled a Chinese man's long robe (*changshan*, or *changpao* in Mandarin Chinese). It is possible therefore, that the adoption of this new garment in the 1920s signified a kind of "vestimentary androgyny"—with the New Women of China (like their counterparts in the West) deliberately dressing like Chinese men.⁶² Even today, some university women professors in Hong Kong relate the garment to its original scholarly associations and teach their students to regard it as a respectable form of dress and a symbol of wisdom and power.⁶³

Of course the *qipao* they refer to is the earlier loose-cut and simple-colored one with

⁶¹ Steele and Major, *China Chic*; Clark, "The *Cheongsam*"; Antonia Finnane, "What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem," *Modern China* 22, No.2 (1996):99-131; Antonia Finnane and Anne McLaren eds., *Dress, Sex, and Text in Chinese Culture* (Melbourne: Monash Asia Institute, 1998); Xun Zhou et al., *Zhouguo Lidai Fushi* (Chn lang., Clothing and Adornment in Various Chinese Dynasties) (Shanghai: Xuelin Press, 1984).

⁶² Steele and Major, *China Chic*, 45.

⁶³ Clark, "The *Cheongsam*," 155.

wide sleeves. One of the best images to consider would be the style of Song Qingling, the wife of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, and the only woman celebrity who was never required to wear military-type uniform throughout her life in Communist China. Still other scholars suggest that the *qipao* may have evolved from the long, sleeveless vest called *majia*, which can be traced back to *bijia*, a popular young women's garment during the Ming dynasty.⁶⁴

The most pervasive version came in the 1930s when the western fashion for "bias cutting" caused the *cheongsam* to become more fitted and waisted: "the hemline dropped to floor length, the slits became longer and more revealing posters illustrate how silk stockings and western-style underwear were worn with the *cheongsam* to enhance the image of female sexuality."⁶⁵ The image of the *cheongsam* then spread overseas with advertisements featuring a variety of commodities on calendars and posters from Shanghai and Hong Kong.⁶⁶

The debate over the origin of the *qipao* goes on. However, what is certain in all these accounts is that the images of *cheongsam* bore the signifiers of "modernity" rather than "tradition." It is a garment for a woman with unbound feet, who often "sport[ed] modish permanent waves, high-heeled shoes, and western makeup."⁶⁷ A picture of earlier Chinese American women in Hawai'i more accurately reflects what was regarded as a "Chinese" and "traditional dress." As the picture shows, the Chinese American woman

⁶⁴ Steele and Major, *China Chic*; Zhou et al., *Zhouguo Lidai Fushi*.

⁶⁵ Clark, "The *Cheongsam*," 158.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 157.

walking in the street wore multi-pieced and loosely cut Han women's clothes. The young girls walking with her wore trousers. Therefore, the *cheongsam* standardized by the Narcissus Pageant as "Chinese dress" was an expression of modern female identity rather than maintenance of "tradition." The definition of *cheongsam* as "Chinese" and "traditional" by the Pageant is highly selective and inventive.

The Western view of *cheongsam* as "sexy," "feminine," and "glamorous" mainly originated from the "Suzie Wong" style created by Hollywood.⁶⁸ The modern, emancipating aspect of the *cheongsam* is forgotten and the androgynous dimension of the *cheongsam* is even more completely silenced. The Suzie Wong style that is represented by half-white-half-Chinese actress Nancy Kwan is eventually chosen as the standard for *cheongsam*. It is the style that permeates Americans' image of *cheongsam* as shown in the theme song, which pleases the gaze of men and tourists and meets the goal of the Narcissus Festival to attract more visitors to see the "glamour of China" in Chinatown.

The different interpretations of *cheongsam* by the male outsiders and the male insiders indicate different ways the female body is used by males to perceive the self and the other.⁶⁹ On the one hand, for the male insiders, feminized identity is fundamental to the construction of an "imagined" nation-state because the nation is always regarded as a metaphoric kin group. A sustainable nationalist ideology often needs a patriarchal view

⁶⁸ The style best known in "The World of Suzie Wong," a film made in 1960, in which Nancy Kwan, an 18-year-old Hong Kong student of England's Royal Ballet School, appeared in *cheongsam* in her role as the prostitute Suzie in the very fitted, usually full length, with high side-slits, high-heeled shoes to add to the fashionable illusion of slimness and height. In the same year, Kwan appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine in an emperor-yellow (bright yellow) *cheongsam*, posing in profile to accentuate her long black hair and the thigh-revealing side-slits of her *cheongsam*.

⁶⁹ The gender and sexuality analysis in this chapter takes heterosexuality and patriarchy as the dominating discourse. Thus the female body is juxtaposed to male gaze.

of the family, and requires the mother's metaphorical role to raise children and provide domestic service. In the process of abstracting gender roles symbolically, maleness equates with progress, publicity, power, and centrality, whereas femaleness indicates passivity, domesticity, purity, and piety -- all the traits perfectly represented in the Pageant contestants' body-binding *cheongsam*, elegant poise, and smooth voice. In this symbolic process, women are simultaneously necessary and inferior. They need both to be protected and exploited.⁷⁰ The purity and elegance of these Chinese women need both to be presented to and protected by men.

The modern concept of landownership indicates the same dynamics regarding men in that land also requires male exploitation and protection. Thus "women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation, but are denied any direct relation to national agency."⁷¹ In the same way, the Chamber selects and crowns the Narcissus Queen annually to help Chinese American businessmen promote their economic and political interests. The queen and her court (four princesses) work at various local, national, and international events as the Chamber's "ambassadors of good will." They smile at people and make acquaintances with people but never make decisions for the Chamber.

In contrast, for the male outsiders, the "imagined" nation-state feminizes the "other" as exotic and erotic. Edward Said uses the concept of "orientalism"⁷² to expose the modern global power structure as the Western tendency to objectify and exoticize the

⁷⁰ Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*.

⁷¹ McClintock, *Imperial Leather*.

⁷² Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

non-Western peoples. In the Pageant, the Chamber feminizes the image of Chinese Americans using the Chinese female body to appeal to the orientalist gaze of the mainstream American society. The best example is the “Narcissus Queen” theme song by Anderson, in which a Caucasian heterosexual man gazes upon an “Oriental” female body. The song blatantly uses the female body parts, such as “hair,” “lips,” “eyes,” “chin,” “knees” followed by “Oh what she can do for me” to objectify her. Yet this connection between Chineseness and the female body is taken as unproblematic by all parties, either for or against the Pageant. It is this paradox in the obscurity of gender awareness and the centrality of the female body in ethnicity construction that deserves our attention and study.

When talking about the integration of gender and ethnicity, Thomas Hylland Eriksen makes it clear that “sexual stereotyping is in many societies related to ethnicity... Gender imagery is often used to describe ethnic groups as a whole.”⁷³ Often times, indigenous and/or minority groups and women share structurally similar positions because both are “muted categories.” Both are oppressed and are compelled to use the language of the dominating majority or patriarchy to express their interests. Neither can define the terms of the language. Both are taught that their specific social identity is “immutable” and “biological,” therefore their subordination “natural.”⁷⁴

In this majority/minority power dynamics, Chinese ethnicity in the United States is simultaneously the object and the female. The representation of Chinese Americans as exotic, erotic, desirable, and consumable constructs the Caucasian majority as the

⁷³ Eriksen, *Ethnicity & Nationalism*, 154.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

modern, the unmarked center, and the subject. The femininity expressed by these local young Chinese American women reinforces the prevailing sense of superiority that Americans have developed towards China culturally and politically. The Chamber has utilized American racism in their strategic construction of Chinese culture to gain their political and economic benefits. Therefore, in this particular racial and gender power structure, the narcissus and *cheongsam* symbolically transform into a “Chinese” identity.

Conclusion:

This chapter delineated how, after the first few trying years, the Narcissus Festival was propelled into a territory-wide and a state-wide event by riding the current of tourism development, suburbanization, and statehood. It also argued that the expansion of the Festival was a result of middle-class Chinese American drive to develop and claim an alternative Chinese American image which was modern, American, non-immigrant, and non-Communist. The new image as displayed on the Pageant stage was an “exotic American,” which was interpreted differently by the male community/Festival leaders and through the male Caucasian perspective.

This chapter has demonstrated that the development of the Narcissus Festival and Pageant was a history of contestation and negotiation. The Chinese American community was far from homogeneous but represented different voices, different interests, and different interpretations of Chinese tradition and culture. The major discrepancy over Chineseness in this era unfolded in various interpretations of the symbolic meaning of swimsuit and *cheongsam* by the community, the Festival leaders, as well as the male outsiders. It further demonstrated that the female body and female attires are not

individual concerns or transparent matters, but are signifiers of racial and gender codes as well as power dynamics.

Chapter 5

Contestation of Three Meanings of Chineseness – National and Transnational Challenges in Identity Construction in the 1970s and 1980s

Beginning in the late 1960s, the Narcissus Festival experienced a decline in the variety of programs, the size of the audience, as well as in the number of people who participated in the preparation and running of the Festival. It shrank from a statewide event to a community event. Among the external factors that caused the decline, the most important one was the change in tourist composition. With the introduction and immediate domination of Japanese tourism in Hawai‘i in the early 1970s, the Orientalist catch of the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino ethnic cultures in Hawai‘i became a less effective means of luring Japanese tourists to Hawai‘i.¹ Technically, as many Japanese tourists poured in for their annual New Year vacation, there was less concern about a slack of tourism in the winter season. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau thus folded their funding for non- Native Hawaiian cultural festivals in the 1970s. The other factors that influenced the decline of the Festival include the development of tourism in the neighbor islands, the surge of Native Hawaiian cultural festivals such as the Merry Monarch *Hula* Competition, the further dispersion of the Chinese American population in O‘ahu, and the increasing diversity of the Chinese American community due to the new wave of immigration from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia.

The popularity of the Pageant also diminished as the Festival shrank to a community event. The number of contestants for the Pageant dropped below fifteen for

¹ See Mari Yoshihara and Yujin Yaguchi’s article on Japanese tourism in Hawaii, forthcoming in *American Studies*.

many years. Some explanations for this decline were a lack of novelty or curiosity among young women toward beauty contests, the emigration of young Chinese Americans to the continental United States, and the increasing possibility for women to seek a career or enter a public arena that was formerly dominated by men. Women could pursue their desired economic and social status through their own credentials and efforts rather than through “marrying well.” More significantly, the surge of the feminist and women’s liberation movements from the late 1960s brought a new awareness of the objectification of women in the beauty industry. Beauty contests were no longer in vogue. Fewer Chinese American women in the Islands viewed the Pageant as a laudable symbol that indicated modernity, democracy, and progress.

An interesting twist, however, was that the Pageant in this era became a more prominent program within the Festival as compared to the 1950s and 1960s. While the decline of the Festival caused a decrease in the number of programs in the event, the Pageant became the flagship program of the Festival. The Pageant persisted because its prizes were still attractive to those women who aspired to scholarships and/or a free tour through Asia as well as to the west coast of North America. Still others were enticed by the degree of public admiration and press attention that only celebrities could enjoy. To the Chamber, however, the financial benefit was one of the major concerns. The spectacle of the Pageant brought in more returns than other Festival programs, such as the Chinese New Year parade and the Narcissus Symphony. Therefore, in the early 1970s, the Chamber took the Pageant back from the Chinese Jaycees, who had been sponsoring it under the Festival banner for twenty years, and formed a new executive committee to ensure the success of the Pageant.

To guarantee a sufficient supply of good candidates and to dispel the unfavorable public image of beauty competitions, the Chamber invented new selling points in their recruitment campaign. Instead of promising fame, family pride, and good connections, it invoked the ethnic pride of young women and related the significance of the beauty contest to the improvement of the community's civil rights and well being. It amplified the opportunity to serve the community and the pride to represent Hawaii's Chinese American community in its queen search. The Pageant in this era became less tourist-oriented and more community focused than in the 1950s and 1960s. Compared to the earlier process of Americanization and exoticization, the Pageant in the 1970s and 1980s grew into a project of ethnicization. What accounted for the Chinese American community and Chinese American ethnicity, however, faced new challenges in this era.

If Chinese American identity in Hawai'i faced constant negotiation and contestation in the 1950s and 1960s, it pales in comparison to the challenges it encountered over the following two decades. In the 1970s and 1980s, Chinese Americans in Hawai'i not only experienced waves of social discontent that protested against the authority of the established American apparatus, but also encountered drastically changing dynamics in the U.S.-Taiwan-Mainland China relationship. With the surge of the anti-Vietnam War movement, many Chinese Americans developed a more critical understanding of the Americanism than they had idealistically embraced during the post-WWII decades. Under the influence of the ethnic pride movement in the continental United States and of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the Islands, some community members reached a new level of assertiveness as ethnic Americans and created a new

Pan-Chinese² American identity in Hawai‘i. The Pan-Chinese identity experienced three stages in Hawai‘i. It took shape among the Chinese after the founding of the Republic of China in 1911 and developed into a “localized” group identity through the 1930s and 1940s. Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i reemphasized a homogenous ethnic Chinese American identity in the 1970s when they began to restore their history of settlement in Hawai‘i. As these changes reflected within the community, there developed a new emphasis on the exploration of family genealogy and of the meaning of Chinese cultural practices. Efforts were made to define a more distinctive Chinese American identity within Hawaii’s “polyglot” society rather than to “blend in” with the Euro-American society as in the earlier decades.

However, dramatic changes in U.S. foreign relations with mainland China and Taiwan imposed a direct challenge to the newly formed Pan-Chinese American identity. If their political identification with either Communist China or Nationalist Taiwan was a covert issue during the first half of the Cold War, it triggered more salient conflicts within the Chinese American community after President Richard Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 and, in particular, after the U.S. reestablishment of formal diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1979. The new Pan-Chinese American identity that many were claiming was immediately undermined by the vicious attacks that surfaced between the pro-PRC and pro-Taiwan camps in Hawaii’s Chinese newspapers

² The concept “Pan-Chinese” I will use in this chapter to characterize the identity consciousness of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i in the 1970-80s is inspired by Yen Le Espiritu’s theoretical work *Asian American Pan-ethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities*. She contends that the common experience of immigration, common history of discrimination, and common political agenda enabled Asian Americans to create a pan-ethnic identity in the 1960s and 70s. I argue that the “Pan-Chinese” identity experienced three stages in Hawai‘i and it should not be mistaken as “the Greater China” identity. See Glick’s *Sojourners and Settlers* for the evidence of the first two stages of “Pan-Chinese” identity. See the Introduction chapter of this dissertation for the discussion on “the Greater China.”

during this period. Therefore, three meanings of Chineseness coexisted and contested each other in the 1970s and 1980s. Each was represented in the Festival in an intertwined fashion with the other two. In Chapter 5, I decipher the entangled meanings of Chineseness and how they represented the ideology of geo-political powers.

I open Chapter 5 with an introduction of the major social movements of the late 1960s to the late 1980s and an analysis of how they exerted a significant influence upon the creation of a new Pan-Chinese American identity in Hawai'i. I then elaborate on the implication of the U.S. rapprochement with the PRC to the Chinese American community in Hawai'i and how the community reacted to the changing dynamics among the United States, PRC, and Taiwan. I demonstrate how the Festival has provided a significant case through which we can discern the interplay of national and diasporic politics in ethnic identity construction. I argue that the Festival created a primordial and seemingly apolitical ethnic identity as a shield from the nation-state politics between Taiwan and Mainland China.

“Ethnic America” and “Pan Chineseness”: Identity in an Era of Development and Protest

Hawai'i witnessed the “jet-age” of development and of waves of social protests in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new economic development of the Islands that was dominated by capital from the continental United States and Japan met a direct confrontation from Native Hawaiians and “local” residents. Simultaneously, the nationwide anti-Vietnam War movement also enabled Chinese Americans to develop a more critical understanding of the Americanism that they had idealistically embraced during the post-war decades. The surge of the civil rights movement and the Asian American movement in the continental United States and of the Hawaiian Renaissance in the

Islands provided a new meaning of “America” that emphasized ethnic pride and social justice for “minority” Americans. Under the influence of these movements, the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i reached a new level of assertiveness as ethnic Americans. Some community leaders advocated a new Pan-Chinese American identity in Hawai‘i. Efforts were made to define a more distinctive Chinese American identity within Hawaii’s “polyglot” society rather than to “blend in” with the Euro-American society as in the earlier decades.

The “Jet Age” Residents of Hawai‘i in the 1970s commonly referred to their time as the “jet age,” which metaphorically described the speed of tourism as well as economic development in the Islands. The introduction of jumbo-jet commercial aviation in 1970, combined with the decision made by the state two years later to market tourism in Japan, increased the number of visitors to Hawai‘i to two million in 1972, three million in 1973, and close to four million in 1979. Tourism became the largest contributor to the island economy in 1972 and exceeded the total combined expenditures or sales of defense, sugar, and pineapple in 1976.³ By 1988, with Hawai‘i being America’s number one destination for romantic vacations, tourists numbered more than 6 million a year.⁴ Real estate development escalated simultaneously, with suburbs further expanding in Hawaii Kai while large tracts of agricultural land in central O‘ahu were reassigned to housing development and golf courses. Downtown Honolulu experienced a “catch-up” type of development in the 1970s with Waikîkî and Ala Moana, transforming into a standardized central business district packed with glass-walled high-rises and narrow

³ Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 196.

⁴ Daws, *Hawaii*, 108.

streets. In Honolulu Chinatown, new urban planning programs were introduced and old residential and commercial facilities were demolished, driving out low-income tenants and small businesses.

Pro-Development Voice in Chinese American Community A large number of local Chinese Americans were pro-development and anti-protest. They saw development as another wave to catch after statehood to improve their economic well-being and to advance their community. While some Chinatown residents and university students protested against the eviction of low-income residents from Chinatown, many Chinese American families were enthusiastic to move out of the Chinatown enclave. Some Chamber leaders sought business and investment in state development projects, such as the construction of H-3 interstate and new residential areas in central O'ahu. Many Chinese Americans still regarded hard work and self-reliance – or “pulling oneself up from his own boot straps” – as the legitimate means to social equality and justice. A Chamber president stated the following opinion in his inaugural address in 1969:

In an age of protests and sit-ins it is perhaps wise to reflect on the lesson of the past. Had the first Chinese immigrants organized sit-ins when confronted with poor living conditions and intense racial discrimination instead of working to eliminate the barriers, they would still be in the fields today. It is ironic that the same type of dissatisfaction that was transformed into progressive social movements of the past is today immobilizing the world. You might say that it was from this group of dissidents that the Chamber was formed in 1911...⁵

To this president, compared to the discrimination and injustice he and his ancestors had endured in order to survive in the United States, the Vietnam war protesters should not complain or should express their dissatisfaction in a constructive way rather than immobilizing the society. His remarks indicated that the anti-development and anti-war

⁵ 20th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1969): 116.

activists in that decade merely took their advantages as citizens of the United States for granted and that these activists should instead contribute to their country for what they had been given. The statement clearly reiterates the “model minority discourse” that William Petersen started in 1966 to stress the values of conformity and political quietude instead of social protest for survival and social injustice.

Decline of the Festival and Pageant Under the new wave of tourism and development, the Narcissus Festival in the 1970s and 1980s experienced a decline from the heyday of the 1950s and the 1960s in the variety of programs, the size of the audience, and the number of people who participated in the preparation and running of the Festival. A major spectacle of the event, the Chinese New Year Parade, ceased in 1965. Although businesses and organizations that advertised in the Narcissus Festival souvenir books continued to reflect a whole range of community and state industries, from Hawaiian Electric Company and Canadian Air to Liliha Bakery and Lin’s Shoe Repair, the popularity of the Festival diminished in general. The Festival in this era shrank from a statewide event to a community event. Even within the Chinese American community, the Festival ceased to be a conglomeration of various activities sponsored by different kinship associations, women’s clubs, civic organizations, and college fraternities and sororities. Instead, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce had the sole sponsorship and control of the Festival. Those various Chinese associations and clubs that used to help with the running of the Festival or to sponsor their own program under the banner of the Festival ceased their involvement as organizational entities in the early 1970s. Their contribution to the Festival was still instrumental, but their members only helped with

different programs as individual volunteers or based on their personal connection to an individual Festival or program chair of a certain year.

There were multiple reasons for the decline. The most important one was the change of the tourist composition. With the start and fast predominance of Japanese tourism in Hawai'i, the Orientalist catch of the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino ethnic culture in Hawai'i became a less effective measure to lure tourists to Hawai'i.

Technically, as many Japanese tourists arrived for their annual New Year vacation, there was less worry about a lack of tourism in the winter season. Westbound tourists from Europe and the continental United States began to spend more days on the neighbor islands as the development of tourism there escalated at a higher speed. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau thus stopped its funding of non-Hawaiian ethnic festivals in the 1970s. This meant that the Chamber lost \$5,000 funds to run the Festival. Additionally, they lost the Bureau's free advertising of the Festival in the continental United States. The further dispersion of middle-class Chinese Americans as well as the island population from Honolulu continued to dilute the physical bonds within the community and to weaken their ties to downtown Honolulu. Furthermore, the surge of festivals with a Hawaiian theme, such as the Merry Monarch *Hula* Competition, and the increasing diversity within the Chinese community due to the new wave of immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the Southeast Asia, also served as diluting and weakening agents.

Social Protests Hawai'i from the late 1960s to the 1980s also witnessed waves of public discontent and resistance that were more socially and politically oriented than economically oriented as in the previous decades. Labor movements that had dominated social protests in the earlier decades had successfully developed labor unions into both a

public consensus and a political power in Hawai‘i. Social movements that flourished in the mid 1960s were propelled by a wide range of local, national, global, political, environmental, and moral agendas. Among them, those that exerted the greatest impact upon the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i included the anti-Vietnam War movement, the Hawaiian Renaissance, and the anti-development movement.

Anti-war Protest As during World War II and the Korean War, Hawaii’s central location in the Pacific and its status as a U.S. military base made it one of the states that was the most impacted by the American war in Vietnam. Once again, the Islands served as a staging post for thousands of Vietnam-bound troops as well as an “R& R” station for half a million servicemen, many of whom were met by wives and children flown in from the continental United States. Hawai‘i, the smallest of states in population, was disproportionately affected by the draft, sending seventeen percent of the national total of soldiers to the front line. It subsequently ranked seventh among the states in per capita casualties in the Vietnam War.⁶ In protest, 1,500 out of the 4,600 men drafted in the state signed a petition against the draft. Many of those signatures were sons of the members of the 100th Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, fighting units made famous during World War II. The anti-war movement spread as rapidly in Hawai‘i as on the U.S. continent. The second half of the 1960s and the early 1970s were frequented by prolonged sit-ins, vigorous teach-ins, unsettling marches, and public burnings of draft cards. In 1971, the ROTC building on the Mānoa campus of the University of Hawai‘i

⁶ Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 204.

was set on fire, becoming one of the most prominent symbols of the anti-war protest in Hawai'i.⁷

Hawaiian Renaissance⁸ Inspired by the rise of the ethnic pride movement on the U.S. continent, an explosion of interest in Hawaiian music, dance, language, land and sea technology, and cultural practices took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s. State and local organizations sponsored programs and workshops to train Hawaiian musicians and *hula* teachers.⁹ Numerous pageants and competitions, such as the Merry Monarch *Hula* Festival, the King Kamehameha *Hula* Competition, and the Prince Lot *Hula* Festival, started in the 1970s and promoted the non-tourist public presence of *hula*. The voyage of the Hokule'a in 1976 was one of the most symbolic moments of the Hawaiian Renaissance. When Hokule'a, a double-hulled canoe successfully returned from its first voyage to Tahiti by using the ancient Polynesian, non-instrument navigation system, 15,000 islanders and visitors attended the homecoming ceremony.¹⁰

Together with the cultural rebirth and ethnic pride emerged a struggle for legal rights among Hawaiians that had surfaced since statehood. By the end of the 1970s, Hawaiians were beginning to speak publicly and in all seriousness of reclaiming the sovereignty of an independent Hawaiian nation.¹¹ The most striking political manifestation was Project Kaho'olawe 'Ohana on the island of Kaho'olawe in 1976.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁸ The term Hawaiian Renaissance was coined by Dr. George Kanahale, president of the Hawaii Music Foundation.

⁹ Desmond, *Staging Tourism*, 135.

¹⁰ Daws, *Hawaii*, 83.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

With the goal of reclaiming the Island from the U.S. Navy, which for decades had been used it as a shooting and bombing range, the project was initially seen by many as a seemingly hopeless move against the armed forces of the United States. And yet by the early 1980s, the project had established beachheads on the island and was negotiating from a position of consolidated strength.

Anti-development Protest Movements of resistance formed by Native Hawaiians, long-term local residents, and environmental activists paralleled the development of the tourist industry and the island economy in the 1970s. Local dissatisfaction with the pressure of development abounded. Resistance by Native Hawaiians, local communities as well as wealthy landowners to the construction of the H-3, a new multi-lane freeway through the Koolau Mountains and Moanalua Valley in the heart of O‘ahu lasted for two decades. More clashes took place in Kalama Valley and Waiahole-Waikane on O‘ahu, Nukoli‘i on Kaua‘i, and Makena on Maui. Although development won more often than it lost, localism and Hawaiian identity grew stronger through the anti-development movement.¹² In Honolulu Chinatown, when new urban planning programs were forcing the demolition of residential and commercial facilities and driving out low-income tenants and small businesses, repeated protests were organized against eviction. A local organization, People Against Chinese Eviction (PACE), was formed among Chinatown business owners, low-income tenants, community leaders, and social activists. They played a key role in lobbying against the anti-residential Chinatown renewal plan and in helping small business owners and tenants to bargain for more reasonable moving subsidies and equivalent or better housing

¹² Rayson, *Modern Hawaiian History*, 220.

conditions. As one article in the *Honolulu Advertiser* wrote about the Chinatown redevelopment, “ It would be a criminal and wasteful mistake in creating a clean new city to destroy all of the old, to wash out the salt which give it its flavor.”¹³ Their voice eventually contributed to the federal government’s declaration of Chinatown as a historic area in need of protection, and the passing of laws that granted Chinatown the status of historical preservation site. While reconstruction flourished at this time, the Special District status forced developers to maintain the low-rise historic character that Chinatown was known for.

Voices from Language Schools and Medicine Associations The pressures of assimilation and Westernization remained strong among the Chinese American community. Ethnic projects such as Chinese language schools and traditional Chinese medicine were constantly suppressed by their mainstream counterparts. Resistance in these fields continued although any single victory seemed a Herculean task.

As early as 1961, Lin Wei Dong, principal of a Chinese language school, wrote the following words to call for a protest against the closing of Chinese language schools:

[T]he article published by the director of Redevelopment Bureau on September 3rd English newspaper has an hidden message that is piercing to our ears. [We] need to appeal a reconsideration of the value of education of Chinese language among Chinese and Western people... Chinese language schools are the bridges for Americans to understand the East ... The new terrain of Chinese language schools lies in its internal function of enriching American culture, and its external function of improving America's international relationship... Chinese should help enrich American culture and help communication not assimilation.¹⁴

¹³ Editorial, “Car Dealership not ideal urban renewal,” *Honolulu Advertiser*, Monday, January 26, 2004.

¹⁴Wei Dong Lin, “New Terrain of Overseas Chinese Education” in *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee* (1961): 143-144.

Lin's statement clearly indicates an anti-assimilation sentiment which asserts the contribution of Chinese culture to American society as well as to the American relationship with China. Lin wrote the article when the 1961 urban renewal program at the Kuku'i district was forcing out Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, two Chinese schools, two dozen Chinese societies as well as residents and business owners in the area. The program promised that the redevelopment would benefit the greatest number of people with a cultural center, commercial areas, a park, and affordable housing. However, over forty years after the project, a major part of the Kuku'i project – the Block J municipal parking lot – was sold to a car dealership, which was regarded by many as a betrayal of the original program and a waste of the displacement that former residents and businesses had to endure.¹⁵

Another battle against assimilation was the fight for professional status in medicine that was launched by the Hawai'i Acupuncturist Association. From the mid 1970s, there was a battle in Honolulu as to whether acupuncturists and herbalists, who in general have not been licensed by the state to practice medicine, could advertise themselves as doctors. Chinese acupuncturists and herbalists had been practicing their profession since the Chinese first came to Hawai'i. With western medicine prevailing in both Hawai'i and China since the turn of the twentieth-century, they had long been suffering from an oppressed and diminished status. However, word about acupuncture's effectiveness spread during President Richard Nixon's visit to China. It was covered by the American media that during Nixon's visit, one of his staff fell ill with acute appendicitis. A Chinese doctor performed an appendectomy and acupuncture was used

¹⁵ editorial, *Honolulu Advertiser*, Monday, January 26, 2004.

for pain control.¹⁶ It was further reported that whereas many other old Chinese cultural practices were deemed as feudal, traditional Chinese medicine enjoyed a high status during the Cultural Revolution. Its earlier lowly status became a “political virtue,” and acupuncture was considered “representative of the indigenous medical genius of China’s laboring classes.”¹⁷ After Nixon’s visit, Harvard Medical School promptly sent students to the PRC to study Chinese medicine in the mid 1970s. Schools of Chinese medicine soon appeared in the United States. The Hawaii Acupuncturist Association saw a great possibility in accrediting their professional status. It sought help from the Chinese Acupuncturist and Herbalists Association of America and lobbied for their license at the Hawai‘i state legislature and Hawaii Medical Association. Unfortunately, they lost the battle.¹⁸

History Center –“Pan-Chineseness” Apart from the professionals, many other Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i were also inspired by the Hawaiian Renaissance and the civil rights movement, and developed a new interest in their ethnic identity and their cultural heritage. Many families, especially those with multiple generations of descendants, began to research for their family genealogy and immigration history. New efforts were made by both the older and younger generations within the community to redefine the importance of their Chinese heritage and to reactivate some of their Chinese cultural practices. It was under these circumstances that the Hawai‘i Chinese History

¹⁶ Lyn Danninger, “Piercing Hawaii’s Acupuncture Market,” *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, Sunday, March 2, 2003.

¹⁷ Bridie J Andrews, “The Making of Modern Chinese Medicine, 1895-1937,” Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1996.

¹⁸ Morrison, “Being Chinese in Honolulu,” 145.

Center (the Center) was founded. This organization played a major role in restoring the history of Chinese Americans in Hawai'i and in stimulating the community's interest in their ethnic heritage.

In 1970, the Center was established by a group of community leaders and activists who had a sense of urgency to rescue the Chinese heritage and legacy from becoming obliterated under the pressure of development and the dispersion of the Chinese American community. They noticed that many local Chinese had not only lost touch with their "Chinese roots" but also with the legacy created by their parents and grandparents in Hawai'i. As the Center's 1972 executive director Irma Soong told journalist Merv Block from the Associated Press, "The young here don't read Chinese, don't speak Chinese, don't understand Chinese and don't feel Chinese."¹⁹ Some parents were still sending their children to Chinese schools. Some people still used clubs, such as surname clubs, to make and maintain contacts for business or social reasons, and some made it a stepping-stone to community prominence (giving their children "a lot of uncles and aunties"). Chinese societies still provided a means whereby their members could be identified as Chinese. However, "most local Chinese knew what sub-districts their ancestors had come from, but very few could name the village; with the last of the second generation gone, the villages in China became only a vague memory for the majority of the populace. The village club, once the place where immigrants and their children could really get together and reminisce about China –the village and the surrounding area – would disappear."²⁰

¹⁹ Merv Block, "Chinese Americans: Are They Making it?" *Chronicle Telegram*, Elyria Ohio, Sun Jan 2, 1972.

²⁰ Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu," 137.

The original idea for the Center took shape during a conversation about the need for Chinese historical research in Hawai‘i. This conversation was conducted in Hong Kong among Him Mark Lai, the first Chinese American history professor from San Francisco, his wife Mrs. Laura Lai, Tin-Yuke Char and his wife, Wai Jane Char, two Chinese American historians in Hawai‘i. The primary supporters of the Center included local Chinese American historian Irma Tam Soong, University of Hawai‘i professor of sociology Dr. Bernhard L. Horman, anthropology student Clyde Wong, director of the ‘Iolani Palace Restoration Project George L Moore, chairman of the Narcissus Festival and president-elect of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce Larry F.C. Ching, executive secretary of the Chamber Welton Won, chairman of the Chamber’s History of the Chinese in Hawai‘i Committee Leonard D.Y. Wong, editor of the Chamber’s Newsletter Ernest Ching, and steering committee members William L. Wong, William H. Wong, and Kenneth P. Chang. The official opening ceremony took place on July 24, 1971 in the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall at the then Chinese Consulate General of the Republic of China on Pali Highway.

The founding of the Center coincided with the establishment of the University of Hawai‘i Ethnic Studies Program in 1970, and benefited from professional training in oral history provided by the Claremont Graduate School and the Oregon Historical Society. A Hawai‘i Chinese History Center Research Fund was soon established with the University of Hawai‘i Foundation, beginning the Center’s first project of collecting oral histories from the senior Chinese Americans. The Center trained young adults to conduct interviews, most of which were tape recorded and eventually published for research usage.

Under the leadership of local Chinese American scholars Tin-Yuke Char, Clyde Wong, and Douglas Chong, the Center also conducted a series of projects for Chinese historic site preservation on all major islands of Hawai‘i. Historical task forces were formed to locate the sites, produce maps and drawings, take inventories, and make renovations to the buildings in cooperation with local Chinese organizations. They fully restored the Tong Wo Society in Kohala on the Island of Hawai‘i in 1971. In the following five years, they completed the findings on Chinese historical places in Kahuku, Wai‘anae, Punaluu, Waipahu, and Kâne‘ohe on O‘ahu, Kula on Maui as well as on Kaua‘i and Moloka‘i.

The Center also created a library of autobiographies, genealogies, maps, ethnic studies curricula, bibliographies, scrapbooks, duplicates of documents, tape-recordings, photographs, news clippings as well as Chinese and museological periodicals, all of which they made available to the public on a daily basis. The center also hosted public events, which included workshops on genealogical research by state archivists and state park historians, reports of early visits to the PRC by Arlene Lum, Dr. Dai Yen Chang, and Koji Ariyoshi, workshops on Chinese Christian church history, exhibits of Chinese immigrant clothing and artifacts, and exhibits of Chinese historical photographs from the Bishop Museum’s On Char collection. In cooperation with ‘Iolani School and the Consulate General of the Republic of China (ROC), the center sponsored a “Dr. Sun Yat-sen in Hawaii Bicentennial Project” in 1976 (when the U.S. formal diplomatic relationship was still with the ROC), which produced a photographic exhibit that was displayed in Hawai‘i and Los Angeles. It conducted a major research project on “Chinatown: A Community of Family Stores” in 1979, with financial support from the

Hawaii Committee for the Humanities and federal funds from the Comprehensive Employment Training Act. The center also sponsored the publication of most of the major works written in the 1970s and 1980s about the Chinese in Hawai‘i. These publications include Tin-Yuke Char’s *The Sandalwood Mountains: Readings and Stories of the Early Chinese in Hawaii* and *The Bamboo Path: Life and Writings of a Chinese in Hawaii*, Dr. Nancy Foon Young’s *The Chinese in Hawaii: An Annotated Bibliography*, Jean Ohai’s *Chinese Genealogy and Family Book Guide*, Dian Mark’s *The Chinese in Kula: Relocations of a Farming Community in Old Hawaii*, Douglas Chong’s *Reflection of Time: a Chronology of Chinese Fashions in Hawaii*, Kee Fook Zane’s biography *Memoirs of the Third Son*, and Clarence Glick’s *Sojourners and Settlers: Chinese Migrants in Hawaii*. During the 1989 bicentennial celebration of the coming of Chinese to Hawai‘i, the center also played an important role in organizing conferences, exhibits, and public lectures. In 1974, the Legislature commended the Center for its efforts “in gathering the history of the Chinese in Hawai‘i and stimulating the interest of the community in preserving ethnic history.”²¹ To this day, the Center is still collecting data on early Chinese settlers on Hawai‘i, producing a newsletter, and maintaining an active membership of approximately one hundred people.²²

The significance of the Center and its activities in restoring Chinese history lies in the new Chinese American identity, a Pan-Chinese American identity, it claimed and represented for the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i. The creation of this new identity demonstrated an attempt of Chinese Americans to resist and move beyond former

²¹ Irma Tam Soong, “The History of the Hawaii Chinese History Center, 1970-1980,” 5.

²² Morrison, “Being Chinese in Honolulu,” 105.

identity tropes that were either imposed upon or claimed by the Chinese in Hawai'i. These Chinese Americans defined their new identity against the orientalist enthusiasm in Chinese culture that originated from the white mainstream culture and prevailed through the promotion of tourism in Hawai'i. Simultaneously, they moved beyond the sense of Chineseness that had been maintained by Chinese surname clubs, village clubs, and district organizations, which was more based upon their kinship ties in China. Furthermore, they took a critical stand toward the attitude of total assimilation or 100-percent Americanization, which developed from the American idealism of the post-WWII era.

In effect, the founding and the activities of the Center negated an identification of Chineseness either as an exotic entity, as a China-centric kinship relationship, and as a full assimilation. Instead, its founding stressed the importance of Chinese Americans as a conglomerate settler group in Hawai'i, thus emphasizing the importance of their new identity that had been created and developed in the Islands, their identity of being Pan-Chinese in the fiftieth state of the United States. The Center represented the Chinese American community as one that had been remade and had taken root in Hawai'i. The projects of restoring old clubhouses and publishing history books were for claiming their settlement and commemorating their contribution rather than for benefiting from the exoticization of their culture. The center pursued its projects beyond the China-centric kinship boundaries that existed within the community. They conducted the projects as legacies and cultural heritages for all Chinese Americans rather than for different individual clubs or organizations.

The Center's assertion of the new form of Chineseness was also a way to assert the Americanness of Chinese Americans. This sense of assertiveness in both ethnic pride and settler identity was a consensus shared by many local residents of Asian ancestry in Hawai'i in the 1970s. It was accurately expressed by George Ariyoshi, Hawaii's first governor of Asian ancestry, "In order to be a good American in Hawaii, it is necessary to be a good Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Hawaiian, etc, first."²³ In Ariyoshi's statement, he defined the goal for people in Hawai'i as to be good Americans. Yet he did not provide any generic and independent standard for Americanness. To him, the meaning of Americanness was impossible to define without one's ethnic traits. What represented the spirit of Americanness lay in the achievement, contribution, and social justice that the ethnic minorities had accomplished as U.S. citizens. Hawaii's Senator Daniel K. Inouye also confirmed Ariyoshi's view. In his message to the Narcissus Festival in 1970, Inouye stated,

Colorful and exciting, the Narcissus Festival is more than just a week of celebration, it stands as a testament of a great American success story. Chinese culture has become delicately interwoven into the exotic fabric of our Hawaiian society and we have become one, a Pacific people proud of our own individual heritage, yet part of a greater community which faces the future with supreme confidence.²⁴

Inouye's message clearly asserts that it was the ethnic Americans who defined the success and progress of the United States. His statement also envisions a new race of "Pacific people" that was composed of Asian settlers and the indigenous people of the

²³ "Address to participants," Conference on Oral History, September 1975. Morrison, "Being Chinese in Honolulu," 106.

²⁴ *21th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1970): 17.

Pacific. It fully represents the confidence and assertiveness of Asian Americans as citizens of the new “Ethnic America.”

Wing Tek Lum, a Chinese American poet in Honolulu clearly expressed the importance of ethnic difference in the formation of Americanness in the following poem:

Chinese Hot Pot

My dream of America
is like *dá bìn lòuh*
with people of all persuasions and tastes
sitting down around a common pot
chopsticks and basket scoops here and there
some cooking squid and other beef
some tofu or watercress
all in one broth
like a stew that really isn't
as each one chooses what he wishes to eat
only that the pot and fire are shared
along with the good company
and the sweet soup
spooned out at the end of the meal.²⁵

Using the metaphor of Chinese hot pot and using it as *dá bìn lòuh* in Cantonese pronunciation, Lum expressed a definition of Americanness that is an antithesis of the popular notion of “melting pot” or “tossed salad.” He emphasized the importance of maintaining the distinctiveness of different ethnic groups rather than assimilation or becoming alike in the realization of their “American dream.”

“Cultural Nationalism” and “Primordial Chineseness”: Identity under the Changing Dynamics of the U.S.-Mainland China-Taiwan Relationship

The Pan-Chinese American identity, however, was not the sole identity of the Chinese American community. If Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i made a certain

²⁵ Wing Tek Lum, “Chinese Hot Pot,” in *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii: The Events of 1989-1990*, Stuart Ching, ed. (Honolulu: The Commission Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Chinese in Hawaii, 1991), 61.

achievement in reclaiming a new Pan-Chinese American identity in resistance to assimilationism, orientalism and China-centrism, they soon found new challenges that undermined their newly formed identity after U.S. President Richard Nixon's world-surprising visit to China in 1972. The Pan-Chinese American identity was a product of American domestic politics, or specifically a product of the spirit of the civil rights movement. However, it could not avoid being challenged by the arena of international politics, or specifically from the polemic of nation-state politics between Taiwan and mainland China. When those Chinese Americans represented themselves as a reconstructed homogenous group sharing a common immigration experience and a common settlement legacy in Hawai'i, they would be confronted with the political, cultural, geographical, and historical differences within the community. The competition between Taiwan and mainland China for being the single legitimate representative of China in the international arena simply showed that there was little homogeneity within the Chinese American community. Pan-Chineseness could not go very far.

“Cultural Nationalism” – Chinese Americans as Overseas Chinese of the ROC Many Chinese in Hawai'i had a long and close relationship with the ROC. Dr. Sun Yat-sen, “the father of modern China,” once lived in Hawai'i as a teenager. He learned English and began his western-style education in missionary schools in Honolulu. Sun also founded his revolutionary party *Xing Zhonghui* (Hsing Chung Hui in Cantonese, Reviving China Association) in Hawai'i in 1894. That group was one of the most important societies involved in rallying the efforts of overseas Chinese to overthrow the last dynasty in Chinese history and to establish the ROC in 1912 as the first constitutional democracy in Asia. During the following decades, ties between the Chinese American

community in Hawai‘i and the ROC continued to grow. Before the invasion of Japanese troops in China, many families used to send their children back to China to attend college. During the Great Depression, many Americans of Chinese descent went to China to seek employment, with some working in the ROC government. Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i not only sent remittances home but also donated money to support the construction projects of various infrastructure or to relieve their “country folks” from natural disasters in different parts of China. After the invasion of Japanese troops in 1937, Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i took an even more vigorous role in the wartime relief movement.

During World War II, the ROC government sent many batches of Air and Navy cadets for training in the United States, all passing through Hawai‘i. On the soldiers’ journey back to serve in China upon completion of training, the Chinese American community would entertain them with banquets and sightseeing. In 1945 and 1946, the United Chinese Society and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce entertained a Chinese Naval Squadron of eight vessels, which were given by the United States to the ROC. Chinese American organizations solicited funds through volunteers to decorate Fort Street with welcome bunting and to sponsor a luncheon for the Chinese officers of the squadron. They coordinated with Army, Navy, territorial and municipal authorities for the welcoming and sightseeing arrangements for the 1,100 Chinese Naval Cadets who were trained in Miami, Florida. The cadets stayed in Hawai‘i for twenty days.²⁶ In 1945, the Chinese American community also launched a territory-wide Double Ten celebration

²⁶Wong Buck Hung, “Ties with the ROC,” in *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Report of 1945-46* (1947): 2-3.

(October 10 was the national day of ROC), which was the first Chinese national day celebration in Hawai‘i after fourteen years of war against Japanese invasion.²⁷

After the ROC government retreated to Taiwan upon their defeat by the Communists, pro-Nationalist Party feelings persisted in Hawai‘i for political and personal reasons. The primary political reason was that the United States continued to recognize the ROC as the only legal government of China. Following the outbreak of the Korean War and in light of the strategic importance of the Taiwan Strait in the Cold War era, the ROC and the United States signed the Sino-Am Mutual Defense Treaty to consolidate their bilateral relationship in 1954. The formal diplomatic relationship between the United States and the ROC continued until 1979. At the personal level, many Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i supported the Nationalist Party and its plan to retake mainland China, due in no small part to the confiscation of their family land and family property under the Communist Party’s land reform and anti-capitalist movement, and because many of their relatives were killed, jailed or otherwise discriminated against.

Pro-PRC feelings did exist and Chinese newspapers in Hawai‘i frequently published articles about the corruption of the Nationalist Party in the late 1940s. According to James Hing Chun, a former journalist from the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, there were “a handful of people in the Chinese community” including himself who openly criticized the U.S. attempt to contain China in speech and in print in the 1950s and 1960s, when criticism of U.S. China policy was regarded as unpatriotic.²⁸ However, the pro-Communist camp soon became tacit and eventually invisible due to the influence of

²⁷ Huang, “Ties with the ROC,” 2-3.

²⁸ James Hing Chun, “Looking back on a life well spent,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Sunday, January 28, 1995, A-7.

the Nationalists' "China Lobby" and especially the influence of their friend Henry Luce, owner of the Time-Life Magazine, in Hawai'i. There was certainly also the fear of being caught in the trap of the McCarthy headhunters. Again according to Chun, when he tried to publish an essay "denouncing the U.S. containment policy against China as detrimental not only to China but also to the United States, no publisher was willing to accept it, given that the public psychology at that time would not make the book profitable."²⁹

The popular pro-Taiwan and anti-Communist stand was clearly shown in the souvenir book for the 1961 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawai'i. The cover of the book states "This Book Is Dedicated to Democracy and The Free World."³⁰ Leading the congratulatory messages from official dignitaries were ROC President Jiang Zhongzheng (Chiang Kai-Shek) and Vice President Chen Cheng. Jiang's message stated, "Promote alliance among overseas merchants; Develop patriotic spirit, unity, mutual help and cooperation; Strive for anti-Communism and the restoration of the country."³¹

Following their escape to Taiwan, a major economic policy of the Nationalist government on the island of Taiwan was to welcome investment from foreigners and overseas Chinese.³² In 1954 and 1955, the government announced the Provisions for Investment by Foreign Nationals and Provisions for Investment by Overseas Chinese.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, A-7.

³⁰ *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee (1961)*: 5.

³¹ *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee (1961)*: 146-147. In Chinese. The translation is provided by the author of the dissertation.

³² I use the term "overseas" in this section to refer to the ethnic Chinese outside China to follow the traditional use by the ROC government. The ROC always treated people of Chinese ancestry outside China as Chinese nationals.

The emphasis of Jiang's initial policy in Taiwan was on building "a military-industrial complex" that would provide sufficient resources to launch a counterattack against mainland China with support from the United States. Jiang refused to acknowledge his loss of mainland China as a defeat but called his flight to Taiwan a "military strategic retreat." The stay in Taiwan was thought to be temporary. He claimed that going back to China would only be a matter of several months at minimum and several years at maximum. As the speculation of a Third World War rang high, Jiang and his Nationalist party were confident that with a war breaking out between the United States and the Soviet Union over China and Southeast Asia, the restoration of the ROC on mainland China was guaranteed. However, the direct military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union never took place. The "hot" U.S. war against the exaggerated Soviet communist threat did not break out in China in the early 1950s but in Vietnam in the late 1950s. After 1965, when the United States halted its foreign aid to Taiwan, private-sector investment from foreign nationals became the major source of foreign capital and technology, and it made an enormous contribution to the island's economic development.³³ The ROC policy towards overseas Chinese formed a sharp contrast with that of the PRC, which tended to view overseas Chinese as possible capitalist infiltrators who owed primary loyalty to their host nations.³⁴

To maintain substantial economic support from overseas Chinese, the ROC government in Taiwan developed policies to strengthen cultural and political bonds with

³³"Relaxing Taiwan's overseas investment policy source: Economic Daily News,"<http://www.taiwanheadlines.gov.tw/20010424/200104o1.html> (accessed October 21, 2004).

³⁴ Ralph N. Clough, "The PRC, Taiwan, and the Overseas Chinese," *Journal of Northeast Asians Studies* 12:3 (Fall 93).

them, subsidizing Chinese language schools, newspapers, radio and television broadcasts, art festivals, conferences and overseas Chinese organization. When Dr. Tsai Wei-Ping served as the Consul General in Hawai'i during 1958-1962, he established the Chinese Cultural Foundation of Hawaii, which provided a program of lectures, art exhibitions, language instruction, and theatrical performances to the Chinese American community.³⁵ As mentioned in the 17th souvenir book, a Mrs. Elizabeth Kao stayed for about four months in Hawai'i in 1965, teaching many students various types of folk dances. Mrs. Kao was sent by the Chinese government from Taiwan on a good will tour to eleven or twelve American cities "to promote Chinese culture overseas."³⁶ In 1968, the Chamber and the Chinese Cultural Foundation co-sponsored a weekly conversational Mandarin class held in the Chamber Hall by Mrs. Edward Tsu-yu Wu (wife of the Chinese Consul General), promoting the idea that Mandarin "will eventually be 'the' Chinese dialect."³⁷

In his 1968 message to the Narcissus Festival, Johnson Chun-ti Pao, Minister Plenipotentiary, Consul General of the ROC, states:

While the Chinese culture which we hold so dear at present is at stake on the mainland of our mother country, I am indeed very proud and overjoyed of the friendly predominance of our rich culture heritage here... the Festival certainly will not only bring about the vitality of Chinese tradition but also will coincide with all the freedom loving Chinese people who are striving for the renaissance of Chinese culture everywhere."³⁸

In his message, Pao not only acknowledges the Narcissus Festival as an event to preserve Chinese cultural heritage, but also labels it as pro-freedom by juxtaposing the

³⁵ Robert M. Lee, "Interested in China, United Nations," in *Chinese Chamber of Commerce Golden Jubilee* (1961): 66.

³⁶ 17th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1966): 66.

³⁷ 20th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1969): 117.

³⁸ 19th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1968): 15.

Narcissus Festival with the Cultural Revolution that was raging in mainland China at that time. He diplomatically contrasted mainland China with the overseas Chinese community and Taiwan by an invocation of “tradition”, which defines the former as the Communist destroyers of tradition and the latter as the democratic carriers of tradition. Pao’s statement conveniently erases the fact that a lot of Nationalist Party members since Dr. Sun Yat-sen’s time were ardent anti-Confucian activists, including Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself. It also conveniently ignores the long-term existence of a local feud between the pro-tradition Constitutional Monarchy Party and the anti-tradition Xing Zhong Hui (Reviving China Party). The clash between the two parties influenced the majority of Chinese in Hawai‘i till the 1930s because the largest two Chinese language schools in Honolulu were sponsored and run by the two rival parties. Although both were conducted in Cantonese, the pro-tradition Mun Lun School taught classic Chinese texts and literature whereas the anti-tradition Zhong Shan School taught revolutionary texts and literature.

In Pao’s message, the “renaissance of Chinese culture” in fact refers to the Cultural Renaissance Movement (*wenhua fuxing yundong*) that took place in Taiwan from 1967 to 1977. According to cultural anthropologist Allen Chun, this movement was the middle stage of a three-step campaign of cultural nationalism that lasted from 1945 to the late 1990s in Taiwan, which was “part of a broader project by the Kuomintang government to realize its vision of the modern state.”³⁹ The other two stages were the Cultural Unification Movement (*wenhua tongyi yundong*, 1945-1966) and the Cultural Reconstruction Movement (*wenhua jianshe yundong*, 1977-1990s). Called upon by the

³⁹ Allen Chun, “From Nationalism to Nationalizing: Cultural Imagination and State Formation in Postwar Taiwan” *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 31 (January 1994), 49.

leader of the ROC, Chiang Kai-shek, in 1966 to remake Taiwan into the authoritative nation-state of Chineseness, the Cultural Renaissance Movement proceeded simultaneously at provincial, regional, municipal, city district, and rural township levels in cultural centers and schools. The promotion of cultural learning and awareness was incorporated in schools' daily curriculum and extracurricular programs and in "the cultural industry" of tourism, mass media, film, festival, beauty contests, and popular music.

The policy of "cultural nationalism" had a special appeal to many overseas Chinese. To a certain extent, the ROC shared the same anxiety with the overseas Chinese – the displacement from homeland and the consequent loss of identity. In propagating itself as the bearer of Chinese culture and in legitimizing itself as the Chinese government, the ROC in fact provided a new official definition of Chineseness. It insisted that, although it no longer led the majority of its population on ancestral Chinese land, it was still the legitimate government of China because it represented the ancestral Chinese culture. In their definition of Chineseness, culture became detachable from land and also became movable and maintainable elsewhere. Therefore, to the old Chinese American community in Hawai'i, the ROC not only provided a sense of "home government" when the PRC was not accessible during the Cold War, but also provided an official affirmation that Chineseness can be gained in diaspora through cultural attainment.

"Primordial Chineseness:" Reactions to Changes in the U.S.-Taiwan-PRC Relationship To reconnect to the ancestral land, however, remained a strong desire among Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. In fact, a small number of familyless and childless seniors managed to retire back to their villages in China during the 1950s-1970s through

a special arrangement made between the local Chinese American community and the PRC's Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs. In 1971, the reconnection became possible to all when the PRC won the China seat in the United Nations, replacing the ROC. It then became a choice after Nixon's visit to China and especially after January 1, 1979, when the United States switched its full diplomatic recognition and moved its China embassy from Taipei to Beijing. Travel, trade, and cultural exchanges between the United States and mainland China boomed afterwards. Soon however, the March 29, 1979 enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act still treated Taiwan as a country or a nation-state under U.S. law, and the United States made security commitments in Taiwan. The ROC established the Coordination Council for North American Affairs (CCNAA), performing most of the functions of the former ROC embassy and consulates general. In 1994, the name of the CCNAA office in Washington D.C. was changed to "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office" (TECRO), and the names of the twelve other CCNAA offices in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Guam, Honolulu, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and Seattle were changed to "Taipei Economic and Cultural Office" (TECO). The TECO in Honolulu serves both the State of Hawai'i and American Samoa.

The *de facto* existence of "two Chinas" led to a rapid development of the pro-Taiwan and the pro-PRC constituencies. A serious and sometimes acrimonious debate about the future of China among Chinese Americans in Hawai'i surfaced in community newspapers. Vicious and vitriolic name-calling appeared under unofficial circumstances. Some called the U.S. switch of its diplomatic relationship a "betrayal of the course of democracy." They argued that the future for China should be to have the Nationalist

Party and democracy take control. Others argued that the only way for Taiwan to be reunited with the Chinese mainland in the near future would be as part of the PRC. The Nationalist Party had lost its cause, and hence its legitimacy, except on Taiwan.⁴⁰

In the mainstream society of Hawai‘i, the pro-PRC momentum was more prominent than the pro-Taiwan voice due to the surge of the anti-Vietnam War sentiment. As an increasing number of people resented and protested against the prolonged war in Vietnam and the Cold War mentality that triggered and escalated the war, dissidents against the U.S. intervention in Third World independence movements grew stronger. The pro-Communists camp that was suppressed during the McCarthy era soon reactivated under the momentum of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Through the tireless work of educating and informing the public undertaken by the anti-war activists, a consensus grew among the mainstream society in Hawai‘i to acknowledge the decision of the Chinese people about their national leaders and accept this most populous country in the world into the United Nations. The public interest to re-approach and learn about mainland China was summarized well in Governor John A. Burns’ message to the Narcissus Festival. He wrote in 1973:

We note that the miasma of misunderstanding and poor communication that has obscured channels between us and China are today lifting, and that our people are with eagerness learning to respect and value common associations once again.⁴¹

It was under this circumstance that the pro-PRC organization, the Hawai‘i branch of the U.S.-China Peoples’ Friendship Association was established in 1972, proudly

⁴⁰ Anon., “Nationalism in China: Consequences in Hawaii,” in *Sailing for the Sun: The Chinese in Hawaii 1789-1989*, Arlene Lum, ed. (Hawaiian National Bank, 1988), 109.

⁴¹ 24th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1973).

boasting the origin of the nation-wide organization. The national USCPFA was established in 1974.

The first chairperson who was recruited by the *ad hoc* organizing committee to head the Hawai'i branch of the USCPFA was Koji Ariyoshi, an American of Japanese ancestry who grew up in Kona, Hawai'i, suffered through the Japanese internment on the U.S. continent, and fought in WWII as an American soldier. After the war he came back to Hawai'i to work for the labor journal *The Honolulu Record* as its editor-in-chief, but by 1952 became a member of the "Hawaii Seven" – a victim to McCarthyism. During the late 1940s, he was assigned to work in Yan'an as an U.S. correspondent and witnessed the sharp contrast between the corruption of the Nationalists and the democratic practice of land reform and multi-party government of the Communists. He became a staunch believer in the Communists being the future of the Chinese people, who had suffered a century of foreign invasion and encroachment. Even during the darkest age of the McCarthy era, he did not stop working for better understanding and better relationships between the United States and China.

After the founding of the USCPFA in 1972, the membership soon grew to be over 600 in Hawai'i, including people of diverse political background, from attorney and millionaire to Chinatown storeowner and housewife. Its first anniversary banquet on September 30, 1973 to celebrate the National Day of PRC, drew 500 people. Its board and committees were staffed with famous scholars as well as Communist activists. The USCPFA in Hawai'i remained the second largest branch nation wide in the 1970s, following the one in New York City. It played an active role in initiating and organizing public seminars, lecture tours by scholars, film and slide showings, exhibits, U.S.-China

ping-pong and martial arts exchanges, and community ping-pong matches to propagate normal relations with mainland China. These activities paved the way for the final establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Members of the Coalition Normalization Drive rallied to the hearings at the Hawai'i state legislature to protest Resolution 212, a resolution introduced by a pro-Taiwan senator for the continuation of American diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1977 and 1978, and successfully demolished the resolution. This made Hawai'i the only state that was able to turn back a resolution proposed by the pro-Taiwan lobby, while some 30 states had adopted similar resolutions.⁴² Their victory won praise from similar normalization drives on the U.S. mainland and in the PRC. According to Tien-Ni Fang, the Hawai'i sub-region representative and Honolulu Association Chairperson, Honolulu was then called the *Dazhai* (the PRC model for agriculture development) or *Daqing* (the PRC model for industrial development) of USCPFA and a model for outreach to all levels.⁴³ After 1979, the organization was the sole agency in the United States that could organize tours to the PRC. Today, the organization maintains a strong working relationship with the Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs at national, provincial, and municipal levels.

The pro-PRC momentum, however, was met with antagonism within the Chinese American community. As mentioned earlier, the ROC government had long adopted a policy of citizen diplomacy and cultural nationalism and developed close ties with Chinese overseas communities through trade, investment, and cultural exchange

⁴²James Hing Chun, "Letter of Resignation from the USCPFA of Honolulu," 1978. Material provided by Oliver Lee, emeritus professor of political science, UHM, 2005.

⁴³ Tien-Ni Fang, "Report from the National Steering Committee of the USCPFA" May 22, 1978. Material provided by Oliver Lee, emeritus professor of political science, UHM, 2005.

programs. Many families in Hawai‘i had personal ties with Taiwan – with friends, relatives, or acquaintances living there – if not business or official ones. With Hawai‘i being the symbolic origin of Sun Yat-sen’s nationalist revolution and of the ROC, local Chinese American community leaders received constant pressure from the ROC government to claim allegiance.

After repeated meetings and heated discussions, the United Chinese Society – which still functioned as the liaison headquarters of all Chinese organizations in Hawai‘i – and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce decided to adopt the official One China Policy as announced by the U.S.-China Communiqué. The purpose of this policy is to recognize the PRC as the only official and legitimate Chinese government, while continuing to maintain political, military, economic, and cultural ties with the government of Taiwan. Soon, many major organizations took down the ROC flag and the portrait of Chiang from the front walls of their meeting halls. Beginning in 1979, the UCS and the Chamber stopped inviting the Taiwan representatives as government dignitaries to their community and major organizational events, accepting them only as a cultural and economic organization.

The community leaders called this decision their policy of neutrality, which was formally announced in Anthony D.K. Ching’s inaugural address as president of the UCS on December 28, 1980:

... The People’s Republic of China is officially recognized by our government, and yet, we still have among us our old and good friends from Taiwan. It is important that we adopt new policies to meet this new development. Policies that will foster friendship, goodwill, and understanding among all Chinese, and Americans of Chinese ancestry living in Hawai‘i.

...As Americans of Chinese ancestry, it is natural that we have a special feeling for the homeland of our forefathers and for all Chinese people everywhere. We all

want to see a strong, prosperous, and united China. But I feel it is improper for us, as Americans, to interfere or be involved in the politics of a foreign country. China should solve its own internal problems and differences... I believe the only course open to the United Chinese Society is to continue to offer our love and friendship to everyone and hope that our friends will someday solve their differences between themselves in a peaceful way.

This policy of neutrality will mean that we do not take any action that will embarrass or hurt the feelings of any friend... Our organization will not be involved in any internal disputes or political activities of another country. We will respect the individuals right to have his or her own preference, but as an organization we will remain neutral... We should not forget our old Chinese friends, nor should we reject or ignore any new Chinese people who will be joining us. I ask for cool heads, understanding, and tolerance of each other, and for *maintaining* our traditional aloha spirit within our American Chinese community, and towards all Chinese people living among us..."⁴⁴

This speech that calls for apolitical friendship and goodwill for all was made in anticipation of the opening of a PRC consulate in Honolulu in 1981, for fear that the forthcoming coexistence of the PRC and the ROC government offices in Honolulu would trigger some vehement disputes within the Chinese American community. Although the PRC consulate never materialized in Hawai'i, the policy of neutrality is continued till today, sometimes with certain creative interpretations and justifications.

Upon hearing Ching's speech, the Taiwan delegation walked out of the UCS inaugural banquet. The following week, Ching was questioned by Consul Admiral Liu Ho Tu, and delivered a copy of his speech to the ROC Admiral Liu over a dinner meeting. While Ching was leading the Narcissus Tour through Taiwan, he again received a special summons from the government of Taiwan to explain the intent of his address. Ching claimed that during the interview he established a good understanding with the

⁴⁴ Anthony D.K. Ching, "Inaugural Address, United Chinese Society," December 28, 1980. Material provided by Anthony D.K. Ching, 2004.

Taiwan government by stressing the community's longing for a reattachment to their ancestral land. He said,

I just told the consul and repeated in the same way in Taiwan that we were not interested in politics. We just wanted our chance to get back in touch with our fatherland. No one can say no to our simple wish to go back to see our ancestor's land. They understand that.⁴⁵

Ching claimed that after those interactions he maintained a good personal relationship with Liu as well as his successor Paul Tso. Tso once appointed Ching as Overseas Chinese Commissioner for Taiwan but Ching declined. "We've had peace in Hawaii's Chinese community since that time."⁴⁶

The change in the USC and the Chamber's policy triggered constant protests from the Taiwan representatives in Hawai'i as well as strong resistance from some community members. These community members used to have more economic investments in Taiwan and Taiwan-related businesses, or more political ties with the ROC government. The pro-PRC group blamed these members for failing "to acknowledge the change of historical tides" and "to separate their personal interests from general public interests."⁴⁷ These members explained that they refused to accept the USC and the Chamber's "One China" stand after helping these organizations in facilitating and managing funds and assistance from the ROC general counsel for years, noting that "even dogs don't bite the hand that feeds them."⁴⁸ Soon, as a protest, a group of community members, some of whom used to be with the Chamber, organized a separate organization called the

⁴⁵ Ching interview, December 2004.

⁴⁶ Ching notes attached to his inaugural speech of 1981.

⁴⁷ Lin interview, March 2004.

⁴⁸ Wong interview, February 2001.

Chinatown Merchants Association. This was a name that was originally used by the Chamber during the first two decades after its founding in the 1910s. By using the original name of the Chamber, the organization meant to announce that the Chamber had abandoned its original cause of helping the people and businesses in Chinatown and had become an organization of opportunists now working for their own political and personal gain.⁴⁹

Compared to the community in San Francisco's Chinatown, where street demonstrations and even violence took place between the two constituencies, the newspaper and verbal exchanges, as well as the formation of the new Chinatown Merchants Association in Hawai'i, seemed quite minor events. However, many local Chinese still regard this episode of Chinese American history in Hawai'i as a knife that cut into the fabric of community harmony, which brought disgrace to the community and made them the laughing stock in Hawai'i. It was a straight blow to the face of an organization that tried to present the local Chinese as a harmonious group. This is a time in the organization's history about which discussion is still being avoided.

The Representation of Three Meanings of Chineseness in the Festival

As the Chinese American community's largest annual event that involved the most Chinese organizations and served as the public symbol of the community, the Narcissus Festival was a sensitive reflector of all the national and international politics that are mentioned above. In fact, the Festival and the Pageant represented all three meanings of Chineseness. In one sense, influenced by the ethnic pride movement, they enhanced the assertiveness of Chinese Americans in Hawai'i as ethnic Americans and the

⁴⁹ Dong interview, January 2001.

new Pan-Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. As these changes began to be reflected through the Festival and the Pageant, there developed a new emphasis on the exploration of family genealogy and of the meaning of Chinese cultural practices. Efforts were made to introduce more Chinese cultural practices to the Chinese American community Hawai‘i and to provide the beauty contestants with classes on Chinese heritage and history. In another sense, as a reflection of the rift between pro-Taiwan and pro-PRC factors, a split took place in the Narcissus Festival. A new beauty contest, the Miss Chinatown Hawaii Scholarship Pageant emerged in 1979 with an eye to represent different constituencies. It competes to this day with the Narcissus Queen Beauty Pageant for public support and community resources.

The influence of the dynamic changes of the U.S.-Taiwan-PRC relationship is reflected in the Narcissus Festival program. At the peak of Taiwan’s lobbying in the United Nations, at the twentieth anniversary of the Narcissus Festival in 1969, a special two-week-long ROC Trade Show was co-sponsored by the ROC Consulate and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce. The souvenir book made the public advertisement that, “The Taiwan Government (Republic of China) ... will send special decorations for the display hall and will also send certain cultural and historical items. The government will also work with no more than 30 manufacturers in sending products such as carpets, garments, rattan items, pottery, bamboo items, marble items, toys, hand bags, shoes, wigs, furniture, and wood carvings and other handicraft and souvenir items.”⁵⁰ The trade show was arranged for the 1970 Festival so that the local community would have “another opportunity to view fine products such as apparel, furniture, carpets, pottery and

⁵⁰ *20th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1969): 114.

many art objects from 'Free China.'"⁵¹ It would again help "increase appreciation of the great culture of China, one of the oldest nations in the world."⁵² After the recognition of the PRC, the promotion of the Taiwan trade show as a part of the Festival was not held again until 1989, the year marking the bicentennial arrival of the Chinese in Hawai'i.

Since the 1960s, a kick-off reception, the inaugural event of the Narcissus Festival, was celebrated at the Chinese Consulate of the ROC in the Nu'u'anu Valley. However, in 1972, the kickoff for the twenty-fourth Festival was moved to Oceania Restaurant at Honolulu's Pier Six, then the largest floating Chinese restaurant in the world. Beginning in 1973, the reception to announce the start of the Festival and introduce the contestants to the public and the media was moved to hotels in the Waikîkî area. Then Consul General Poo Te-Chieh still gave welcoming remarks to the large gathering along with the Chamber president and the Festival chair at the floating restaurant in 1972. From 1973 on, the inaugural ceremony was conducted only by the Chamber president and the Festival chair.

The Festival used to seek official endorsement from the mayor of Honolulu, Hawaii's governor, and congressmen, and occasionally even the U.S. president. Prior to 1973, the souvenir book also printed a message from the Counsel General of the ROC. In 1973, however, the year after Nixon's visit to China, this practice, too, ended. Since then, the only congratulatory messages come from the governor of Hawai'i and the mayor of Honolulu. In maintaining their new policy of neutrality and adhering to their status as a non-governmental event, Festival leaders ceased soliciting official messages from the ROC as well as from congressmen and the U.S. president. Neither did they include any

⁵¹21st *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1970): 95.

message from PRC officials. Even in the bicentennial anniversary year of 1989, the Chamber and the Bicentennial Celebration committee refrained from printing any government message from the governments of Taiwan, the PRC, or the United States. From 1980, the year after the reestablishment of U.S.-China ties, China's general consul in San Francisco was added to the Festival's honorary advisory committee. The membership for Taiwan in the same committee changed from the Consul General of ROC into the Director of Coordination Counsel for North American Affairs.⁵³

Although the USC and the Chamber promoted the policy of neutrality with full effort in the hope of a smooth and tolerant transition within the community, a major rift still occurred. The newly established Chinatown Merchants Association decided to organize their own Chinese New Year celebration and other community-oriented activities in open defiance of the leadership of the Chamber. In the mid 1970s, the Association launched their own "Night in Chinatown," which was one of the oldest programs of the Narcissus Festival since its inception but was given up by the Chamber in 1973. They also reactivated the Chinatown New Year Parade, which again had been a part of the Festival tradition but was cancelled by the Chamber in 1965 due to its high demand of manpower and money to maintain.

Furthermore, the Association reached an agreement with the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce to host a new Miss Chinatown Hawaii beauty contest in Honolulu from 1979 and to send the winner to compete in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. pageant held in San Francisco during every Chinese New Year. The association set the Miss Chinatown Hawaii contest for September, around the time the Chamber started to recruit

⁵³ 31ST *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1980): 21.

new contestants for the coming year. It held its own public appearances in shopping malls to publicize the organization and the contest, and organized its own lion dances and store visits by Miss Chinatown Hawaii at their Night in Chinatown. The Association also sent Miss Chinatown Hawaii and her court to community spring banquets, city-wide parades, as well as on state trade missions. They often found themselves side by side with the Narcissus Queen and her court.

Every year, the Miss Chinatown Hawaii contest publishes its own souvenir book that includes official messages from Taiwan as well as from the state governor and the Honolulu mayor. In contrast with the Narcissus Queen Pageant, it designed a swimsuit phase from the very beginning for the contestants to encourage young Chinese American women to show off their body. As Wong put it, “The Chinese girls are modern and pretty. There is nothing to hide. Nothing ugly not to show.”⁵⁴ The organizers of Miss Chinatown Hawaii also claim that instead of being “political” and “a family showoff” as is the Narcissus Queen Pageant, their beauty contest is meant for young women to earn scholarships for better educational opportunities.

The changing programs of the Narcissus Festival and the rift between the two Chinese New Year celebration activities and beauty contests demonstrate that the Narcissus Festival and the Pageant are not as innocently apolitical as Festival leaders have claimed them to be. Ching and other Festival organizers attempted to create a primordial and seemingly apolitical ethnic identity to further maintain a Pan-Chineseness that is defined by a common ancestral land, a common cultural heritage, and a common American citizenship. However, their homogenizing definition of Pan-Chineseness

⁵⁴ Wong interview, February 2001.

continued to be challenged through the very community projects that they claimed to be apolitical.

The split of the Chinese New Year celebrations and the beauty contests also reflects the conflicting class interests of different sectors within the Chinese American community. As members of the Chamber and the majority of the old Chinese American community moved further away from Chinatown through urban redevelopment and suburban sprawl, the Narcissus Festival in the 1970s grew further away from Chinatown. New programs were introduced to showcase the Chinese culture that was not necessarily practiced in Chinatown. After the construction of the “New Chinatown” in the form of the Chinese Cultural Plaza was complete, the Chamber staged a new cultural show there annually, which further compressed and condensed Chinese cultural practice into a performance. If their earlier showcase of the Chinese New Year Celebration in the Chinatown streets mainly used such symbols as lion dance, dragon dance, firecrackers, festival delicacies, and performances, they now added many new cultural symbols that were not necessarily observed during the Chinese New Year, such as abacus and Tai Chi Chuan boxing.

The remaining residents in Chinatown were those who did not have the resources to move away or resisted urban redevelopment. It was to their utmost interest to maintain the old Chinatown style of business and living. Simultaneously, the 1970s and 1980s also saw sizable immigration from Asia and the Pacific, especially from the Philippines and Samoa, and most recently from Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia. Many immigrants from Southeast Asia found their first new job or home in Honolulu Chinatown and had to struggle for years performing the least desirable jobs in Hawai‘i.

Consequently, their expectations for the Narcissus Festival were in conflict with that of some Chamber leaders. To the Chinatown residents, it was the Chamber leaders' obligation to host the Festival and attract more potential customers because they had "made it." They should "give back" to the community and "take care of" the new immigrants. To the Chamber members, however, they viewed their success as a result of generations of endurance of the harshest social conditions and racial discrimination that the new immigrants could never comprehend. They deserved their success and wealth. They felt that the new immigrants should appreciate the situations the earlier generations had fought with and the benefits that those battles had provided for them, instead of being "lazy." The purpose of the Festival is to exemplify the glory of Chinese culture and the ethnic pride of the whole group, thus everyone needs to contribute time and efforts to make all the programs successful. When the Chinatown businesses failed to clean their stores and restaurants for the "Night in Chinatown," Festival leaders decided to transfer their Chinatown program to a different venue and expand their cultural presentation beyond the Chinese New Year celebration.

The interest in representing the new Pan-Chinese American identity can be seen in the Festival's experiments with "cultural shows" that introduced more Chinese cultural practices and emphasized an understanding of the meaning of those practices. The first experiment with "cultural shows" outside Chinatown was conducted in 1966. The whole project, named "The Essence of China," was conducted by the Yang Chung Hui Chinese sorority from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa under the instruction of general chairman Raymond Tan and committee chairmen. Staged at the Hilton Hawaiian Village Dome on January 29, 1966, artists demonstrated Chinese calligraphy, painting, candle-

making, and application of stage makeup. As described in the program advertisement, “Mystics will predict fortunes while musicians will entertain with flute, moon harp, song, and dance. Gamesters will play mah jong and tin gau, and actors will stage skits and puppet shows.”⁵⁵ Women from Yang Chang Hui also built a Chinese garden and ancestor worship shrine for the cultural show. Several sorority women conducted research on the history of jade and silk processes and the development of Chinese cooking. They displayed their research in the cultural show and demonstrated cooking techniques.

The cultural show of the next year was staged in the Pacific Ballroom of the Ilikai Hotel. Joining the Yang Chang Hui sorority were the Te Chih Sheh sorority and the Peng Hui Fraternity from the University of Hawai‘i, Chinese Women’s Club, Chinese Civic Association, and the Associated Chinese University Women’s Club. On top of the previous year’s programs, a program of “Taiwan Today” was added, with booths displaying porcelain, pottery, and antiques, an abacus demonstration, button making, Tai Chi Chuan boxing, a cooking demonstration, and the sale of Chinese sweetmeats.

Apparently, the show was a combination of what they believed could represent the essence of Chinese culture from the local community and what they thought worth introducing and importable from Taiwan. They made a specific statement in their announcement for the show, “This show is a tourist attraction. It is truly one which will show the various phases of Chinese culture.”⁵⁶ While these experiments took place, the Chinatown fireworks display, lion dance, and “Night in Chinatown” program continued. In 1973, the “Night in Chinatown” program that featured an open-store evening and street

⁵⁵ *17th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1966): 72.

⁵⁶ *18th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1967): 103.

performances by language school students and dance and music troupes that had existed since 1949 ended. Instead, the Chamber staged a two-day “Narcissus Fair” at the Honolulu International Center, which featured a “typical Chinatown street scene” as its main theme. The only program that remained in Chinatown was “Chinatown Open House” which combined the fireworks display and the lion dance on Friday, January 26, 1973, with a screening of a Chinese film at the Liberty Theater at the same time. The Narcissus Fair basically gathered the Pageant, the Chinese cooking demonstration, and the cultural show in one venue to produce a most intense version of Narcissus Festival with the intention that the public would be saturated with the “essence of Chinese culture,” senses overwhelmed in the exotic and exiting festivity. The Chairman of the fair, Alvin Lee, called it “a serious attempt to provide an exciting event that will be of interest to the entire State of Hawaii and out of state visitors.” He called this attempt “a totally new concept for the Chinese Community” which combines “many annual Narcissus Festival events with interesting and fascinating exhibits, sales booths, entertainment, food, rides and games.”⁵⁷ A Chinatown street recreated in the Honolulu International Center, compressed with demonstrations of cooking, acupuncture, calligraphy, kung fu, opera makeup, and kite making, exhibits of art work, herbs, plants, a noodle factory, and a Chinese store, Chinese food for dinner and snacking, exciting rides and challenging games, a beauty contest, and a trade show, designed to satisfy visitors of all ages and ethnic origins. If successful, it would be nothing short of a Disneyland fantasy.

⁵⁷ 24th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1973): 104.

This commercial version of Pan-Chineseness was highlighted in 1976 when the bicentennial anniversary of the founding of the United States took place. The Narcissus Cultural Show of that year set two objectives: “to promote and perpetuate our heritage and to celebrate our nation’s bicentennial observance.” To achieve these objectives, the committee under the leadership of Mrs. Walter S. L. Ching, designed a show that “blends the traditional and the modern, the east and the west.”⁵⁸ The programs included a fashion exhibit, an art display and demonstration, a cooking demonstration, a musical performance, Chinese paper cutting, brush painting and calligraphy, paper folding, and martial arts. In later years, new programs were added, such as ping pong tournaments, tilapia fishing contest for children, rickshaw races, auctions, eating contests, dunking booth with Chamber directors and other celebrities, a Narcissus-Queen-of-the-Future contest to determine Miss Narcissus Queen of 1995, body building, and Chinese acrobats.

In 1975, the Chamber found its permanent stage to exercise this Chinatown world fantasy. The Chinese Cultural Plaza (then called Kukui Cultural Plaza) was completed. The Narcissus Fair has since moved to the open-air stage in the middle of the Cultural Plaza. The Cultural Plaza, designed as “the showplace” of the Chinese in Hawai‘i, seemed a perfect location for the Chamber to stage their Narcissus Fair to the State of Hawai‘i and tourists. The fair did attract a large crowd during its earlier years from 1975 to 1980.

The Cultural Plaza, called the “home of the future Chinatown,” was the product of a joint vision of urban developers, municipal government, and some community leaders for the Chinese American community in Honolulu. In the 1975 Festival Souvenir book,

⁵⁸ 27th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1976): 72.

the Cultural Plaza was introduced to the public as “a shopping center featuring the commercial representation of the countries and cultures of the Orient and the Pacific Basin,” and “the new focal point for downtown Honolulu, an area of beauty and charm, preserving one of the oldest and most colorful histories of any American city west of the Rockies.”⁵⁹ It was designed for the Chinese American community to have a “pleasant experience” while purchasing Chinese goods and products as well as a tourist attraction where “the finest in Chinese culture and tradition will be displayed.”⁶⁰ It all started in the mid 1960s when many Chinese organizations, schools, and businesses were displaced by urban renewal projects. When the City government encouraged the displaced to participate in a redevelopment project that would help relocate their organizations and businesses, a group of men representing four Chinese societies (Chee Kung Tong, Lung Doo, and Leong Doo benevolent societies and Kuo Ming Tang society) and two language schools (Sun Yat-sen/Chung Shan School and Mun Lun School) -- most of which had existed since the turn of the twentieth century – responded actively and formed the Chinese Cultural Plaza, Inc. to buy “Block E”, 193,597 sq.ft. of the Kukui Redevelopment Project which was bounded by Beretania Street, River Street Mall, Kukui Street, and Maunakea Street. They each hired their own architect for their portion of the complex, and completed the structure in the spring of 1975. They changed the name to “Cultural Plaza” to attract other ethnic groups to be commercially represented within the shopping center. However, the Cultural Plaza never achieved its vision of being “a shopping center featuring the commercial representation of the countries and cultures of the Orient and

⁵⁹ Wally Ruckert, “The Cultural Plaza,” *26th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1975): 42.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

the Pacific basin.” Its enclosed and multi-level complex stands in stark contrast against the open-space and ground level shopping structures in the old Chinatown. It consequently became the headquarters of Taiwan when its government bought the property.

The Bicentennial Celebration: A Display of Multiple Chinese Identities

The representation of mainland China did not take place in the Festival until 1989 when Hawai‘i experienced a year-long celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the arrival of the Chinese in Hawai‘i. During this celebration, from January 1989 to January 1990, a showdown of various forms of Chineseness as represented by the PRC, the ROC, and the local Chinese American community took place over the whole state. Furthermore, the showdown proceeded using the body of women – particularly among models from mainland China, the Miss Republic of China, and the local beauty queens of Narcissus Queen and Miss Chinatown Hawaii.

The year of 1989 is the climax of Pan-Chinese American identity. It witnessed a boom in Chinese Americans’ confidence and prestige due to the historically unprecedented celebration and mainstream media’s hype over it. As Clinton Ching, the 1990 president of the United Chinese Society summarized, “1989 was a very good year for the Chinese Community in Hawai‘i. We came together to celebrate a Bicentennial, and in the process we developed a new sense of pride in our history, our culture and the accomplishments of our ancestors.”⁶¹ Several informants of mine commented on the impact of the celebration in Hawai‘i with a popular joke that spread among local residents: “After 1989, there was a big increase of the Chinese population because many

⁶¹ Clinton Ching, “United Chinese Society Inaugural Address,” 1990.

locals suddenly called themselves Chinese.”⁶² The opening day of festivities that was co-sponsored by the Governor’s Bicentennial Commission, the United Chinese Society, and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce was January 7, 1989. The celebration began with a parade from Chinatown to Thomas Square, with “the longest dragon in the world” manned by 100 volunteers from different Chinese martial art schools dancing through the streets of downtown Honolulu.⁶³ Onlookers that day watched the dragon being greeted and offered *lisee*⁶⁴ by U.S. Senator Hiram Fong, Governor of Hawai‘i John Waihee, State Senate President Richard Wong, and Honolulu Mayor Dante K. Carpenter. The yearlong celebration ended in January 18, 1990, with Maunakea and Hotel Streets closed off for a daylong Saturday fair. It was estimated that 100,000 people were in Chinatown “amid sweet smells and popping firecrackers that marked the end of the Chinese Bicentennial and the beginning of the New Year.”⁶⁵

Throughout the state, many institutions, organizations, and businesses held cultural fairs, demonstrations, exhibitions, forums, and lectures on Chinese history, culture, and arts.⁶⁶ Local radio and television stations and local newspapers not only broadcast the events but also produced special programs on the Chinese bicentennial.⁶⁷

⁶² Yen interview, April 2000; Choy interview, June 2000; Ing interview, July 2001.

⁶³ Stuart Ching, ed., *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii: The Events of 1989-1990* (Honolulu: The Commission Commemorating the 200th Anniversary of the Arrival of the Chinese in Hawaii, 1991), 22. At 620 feet and 7 inches long, the dragons’ measurement was sent to the Guinness Book of World Records.

⁶⁴ A Cantonese word that refers to the money wrapped in red paper for good luck and good fortune.

⁶⁵ Ching, *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii*, 61.

⁶⁶ Various campuses of the University of Hawai‘i held workshops and lectures on Chinese medicine, Chinese philosophy, Chinese performance art, and tea ceremony. Museums throughout the State mounted displays on the Bicentennial theme, such as the Bishop Museum’s exhibit of photographs of Chinese families. The East-West Center organized a national conference, “Lucky Come to Hawai‘i.” Local banks,

A wealth of literature was produced around 1989 that documented the social, economic, political, and cultural history of Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. It included family histories and genealogies,⁶⁸ social history on Chinese beliefs and customs in Hawai‘i,⁶⁹ scholarly research and anthology,⁷⁰ and literary works.⁷¹ An exhibition “Myriad Worlds: 200 Years of the Chinese in Hawaii” that featured archival photographs about Hawaii’s past toured O‘ahu, Hawai‘i, Maui, and Kaua‘i.

Dozens of historical and burial sites were restored or dedicated, such as the Kepaniwai Chinese Garden and Temple and the Wailuku Chinese Temple on Maui, and the Park Hook Tong Cemetery in Waimea, Kaua‘i. When the Hilo Chinese Cemetery Association dedicated a Chinese Cemetery Pavilion to Chinese burial sites, it declared that its goal was “to preserve and reaffirm the Chinese belief in finding spiritual strength

such as Hawaiian National Bank, also hosted celebrations and sponsored the publication of books on the Chinese bicentennial.

⁶⁷ Radio Station KCCN broadcast over 100 60-second vignettes on Chinese history and culture. KHON Television produced *Walls and Bridges*, which documented the experience of seven teenagers from Hawai‘i making new friends as they toured China with seven Chinese teenagers. KITC Television aired *Scenes from the Sandalwood Mountains* on the history of Chinese in Hawai‘i and Chinese culture. KGMB Television telecasted two shows: *Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors*, on Chinese beliefs and religion and *The Source of All Things*, on ancestral villages and towns in China. The *Honolulu Advertiser* published a special section on the Chinese Bicentennial, *The Chinese in Hawaii 200 Years*.

⁶⁸ see Edward Seu Chen Mau, *The Mau Lineage*; Lillian Awai Lum and Warren K.K. Luke, *From Kwang Tung to Kohala: Lineage of the Luke Family of Kohala, Hawaii*.

⁶⁹ see K.S. Tom, *Echoes from Old China: Life, Legends and Lore of the Middle Kingdom* (Hawaii Chinese history Center); May Lee Chung, Dorothy Jim Luke, and Margaret Leong Lau, eds., *Traditions for Living: A Booklet of Chinese Customs and Folk Practices in Hawaii* (Associated Chinese University Women).

⁷⁰ see Daine Mei Lin Mark, *Seasons of Light: The History of Chinese Christian Churches in Hawaii* (Chinese Christian Association of Hawaii); Arlene Lum, ed., *Sailing for the Sun: The Chinese in Hawaii 1789-1989* (Hawaiian National Bank).

⁷¹ Eric Chock and Darrell H. Y. Lum, eds., *Paké: Writings by Chinese in Hawaii* (Bamboo Ridge Press), an anthology of drama, essays, fiction and poetry by authors of Chinese ancestry; Scott C.S. Stone, *The Dragon Legacy* (Hawaii Heritage Center Bicentennial Committee).

in one's ancestors."⁷² What deserves attention here is the appropriation of Native Hawaiian discourse in Chinese Americans' re-imagination of their ancestors who were buried in Hawai'i. The use of the phrase "finding spiritual strength in one's ancestors" sounded almost identical to the Hawaiian discourse of "finding spiritual strength in our ancestral homeland."⁷³ A more common expression on the significance of Qing Ming, the ancestral worship festival among Chinese Americans is "to pay respect to one's ancestors," which often implied the importance of comforting the soul of the ancestors who were buried away from their ancestral land. The change from "paying respect" to "finding spiritual strength" created a homogenous religious mission for the ancestors in Hawai'i and thus indigenized the relationship of Chinese settlers to Hawai'i.

Chinese organizations also replanted hundreds of *iliahi*, or sandalwood trees, throughout the state in the centennial year. The rhetoric used by the Centennial Commission also represented the settlers' mentality. The Commission book told that sandalwood trees were once abundant on the Hawaiian landscape, "before the time of foreign exports." Chinese called the Hawaiian Islands *Tan Heung Shan*, or Fragrant Sandalwood Hills. "The planting sites will serve as historical reminders of the period during which King Kamehameha allowed Western merchants to use and transport the fragrant wood as exchange for Eastern trade, thus establishing an early link between Hawai'i and China."⁷⁴ What is apparent in this statement was that Chinese Americans in Hawaii valued the significance of their comparatively early encounter with Native Hawaiians and attempted to symbolically restore Hawai'i to what the Chinese name had

⁷²Ching, *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii*, 53.

⁷³ see Trask, *From a Native Daughter*.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 52.

assigned it to be. However, they eschewed their complicity in the extinction of sandalwood in Hawai'i by using the words "foreign exports." They blamed it either on King Kamehameha who "allowed" the trade or to "Western merchants" who used the "fragrant wood as exchange for Eastern trade." As the book was published two years after the planting, it could have also notified the readers that hardly any of those hundreds of replanted sandalwood trees survived. Some Chinese Americans in Hawai'i joked about the replanting as a political farce till this day.

Two other representations of Chineseness also abounded in the bicentennial celebration. The face-off between the ROC and the PRC began from the first day with the fireworks display and lasted the whole year. As the bicentennial celebration souvenir book described the grand opening of the yearlong event: "Bursts of 1,000 snakes of light exploded in the sky over Magic Island to begin the celebration. The magnificent fireworks show, courtesy of the PRC, literally was a traffic stopper on January 7, 1989." The fireworks that exploded and blossomed above the city for an hour attracted thousands of spectators. Along the crowded Ala Wai Canal and Ala Moana Center, people stopped driving and stepped out of their cars in the middle of the streets to watch the fireworks. A bridge collapsed under the weight of too many spectators standing on it in Ala Moana Beach Park.⁷⁵

In April 1989, the 435-foot warship *Zheng He* sailed into Pearl Harbor as the first PRC warship to make a port call to a Western nation. Vice Admiral Ma Xinchun, commander of the People's Liberation Army's North Sea Fleet declared that, "We have come here for the very purpose of advancing friendship between the people of the armed

⁷⁵ Ching, *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii*, 24.

forces and the people of China and the United States, and again, for the major objective of maintaining global peace.”⁷⁶ While the official rhetoric for the visit of the Chinese warship was to promote friendship and global peace, the real message for Chinese Americans and Taiwan was that mainland China was the legitimate government, recognized by the United State as well as by the United Nations. Had the Chinese Navy’s visit taken place two months later, after the breakout of the Tiananmen massacre, the message would have been drastically different. China might have cancelled the visit or the U.S. government might have rejected a port call.

Both the mainland China and Taiwan governments sent people to Hawai‘i to organize trade exhibitions, art exhibitions, and stage performances. As a result, the major local venues and local organizations hosted activities and personnel from both governments. The Honolulu Academy of Arts featured the “Masterworks of Ming and Qing Painting from the Forbidden City” and “Contemporary Chinese Paintings from the People’s Republic of China” for Beijing in June and then displayed “Contemporary Graphics from China (Taipei)” with 76 prints by “prominent Taiwan artists” in August.⁷⁷ The Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall hosted the Shanghai Children’s Palace Art Troupe, the Lien Yu Chinese Opera of Taipei, and The Chinese Traditional Vaudeville Troupe from Taipei. The only activity from Hong Kong was the Hong Kong Children’s Choir that featured children from age seven to fifteen and performed western, eastern, classical, and modern selections.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁷⁷ Ching, *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii*, 29.

The primary competition between mainland China and Taiwan took the form of trade exhibitions at the Neal S. Blaisdell Center Exhibition Hall, with Hawaii's Department of Business and Economic Development and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce serving as the local co-sponsor for both. The China Trade Exhibition in May and June was the first national China trade show, rather than a show that featured products from only one province or city. The opening ceremony was attended by Governor Waihee and Mayor Carpenter. It included representatives and products from the cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Shantou; provinces of Guangdong, Zhejiang and Jiangsu, and the special economic zones of Xiamen and Shenzhen. About 200 people from China participated in the exhibitions, displaying carpets, furniture, jewelry, clothing, handicrafts, and even missiles.⁷⁸ An elaborate display with replicas of terra cotta chariots, horses, and warriors of the first emperor of China from Xi'an was set up at the main entrance to the China Trade Exhibition. Modern China was presented by Chinese models, who wore contemporary clothes during runway shows that were presented several times each day.

The China (Taipei) Trade Fair in August featured fashion shows, cooking demonstrations and products that ranged from sports equipment and home appliances to computers. An opening reception was hosted by the Coordination Council for North American Affairs and its Hawai'i director, Paul Tso. The opening ceremony of Taipei Fair was attended by Warren Luke, Chairman of the Governor's Commission, Miss Chen Yen Qing, Miss Republic of China, and David Lin, leader of the trade mission. "Well-attended, the exhibition featured drawings for Taiwan-made products, much to the delight

⁷⁸ 40th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1990).

of fair-goers.” Fifty leading firms representing several of Taiwan’s outstanding industries were present, “demonstrating Taiwan’s economic success and ascent to modernization.”⁷⁹

From the Bicentennial celebration, we can see the division of identity representation between Chinese Americans and the “two Chinas.” The Chinese Americans’ motive was to exhibit their ethnicity, the history of upward mobility or racial uplifting in Hawai‘i. They had no need to demonstrate their level of modernization through a trade show nor stage themselves to entertain and demonstrate their accomplishments in performing arts. With the United States being the standard and the invisible center, the supremacy of American national power, democracy, and modernization was implicit to all three parties. The “two Chinas” in contrast had the mission of demonstrating their catch-up both in national economic power and citizens’ accomplishments. According to many sources, the PRC eventually lost this round of competition due to its lack of electronic appliances in the trade show and the PRC government suppression of the 1989 Tian’anmen students’ movement. Taiwan, in contrast, passed the test and demonstrated its advancement in democracy and modernization.

Conclusion

The changes that took place in the Narcissus Festival during the 1970s and 1980s demonstrate the multiplicity of Chineseness that was influenced by both national and international politics of culture and identity. There are generally three major types of Chineseness represented in the Festival: the Pan-Chineseness that stems from the politics of ethnic power, the cultural nationalism that reflects the influence of Taiwan’s campaign

⁷⁹ Ching, *The Chinese Celebrating 200 Years in Hawaii*, 59.

of nation building, and the primordial Chineseness that serves as a shield from the nation-state politics between Taiwan and mainland China. The first type of Chineseness is in fact revisionist Americanness, or a re-articulation of Americanness, because it expressed the assertiveness of Chinese Americans and their pride in what they had accomplished within the U.S. economic, social, and political system in Hawai'i. The second type of Chineseness, cultural nationalism, is sometimes used interchangeably with ethnic nationalism by many ethnic studies scholars in the United States. Examined in the context of the Narcissus Festival and the politics of the nation-state in Taiwan, however, the two indicate different power dynamics, with the former stressing legitimate Chineseness as guardian of Confucianism and the latter demanding a right to be different yet equal as citizens of a nation-state. Cultural nationalism in the Festival was influenced by the politics of the Cold War that defined Taiwan as the "free China" and the carrier of Chinese tradition and culture. It reflects the policy of the government in Taiwan that treated overseas Chinese as nationals of the ROC and as its followers to fight against the Communist China. The third type, primordial Chineseness, is often expressed in the previous two Chinese identities because the imagination of blood is still the most convenient means to essentialize one's difference or uniqueness. However, in the context of Hawai'i in the 1970s and 1980s, it was necessary for local Chinese to emphasize their fundamental connection to their ancestral land so that they are able to approach mainland China without offending their old friends from Taiwan. Indeed, the local Chinese community in Hawai'i provides a useful case study to fully understand the dynamics of various Chinese identities.

Chapter 6

“Multicultural America” – The Representation of Chinese Americans in the 1990s and 2000s

From the early 1990s, the end of the Cold War and the globalization of capitalism spurred a series of demographic, economic, social, and political changes in Hawai‘i. Chinese Americans of the Islands consequently experienced new patterns of community transformation and identity construction under the impact of national and international changes. The Narcissus Festival reflects the efforts of Honolulu’s Chinese American community to make sense of the new changes as well as their attempts to maximize their own control over community transformation and identity construction.

The most dynamic social conflict of this era lay in the clash between the globalization of Hawai‘i and the mounting aspirations of Native Hawaiians as well as “local” ethnic groups to take control of the Islands’ economic, cultural, and political future. Globalization forces in Hawai‘i, which could be exemplified by the encroachment of foreign investments and the in-migration of U.S. “mainlanders,”¹ met resistance both from Native Hawaiians and descendants of immigrants who identified themselves as “locals.” The Hawaiian Movement that started in the 1970s as an anti-development movement and a cultural renaissance continued to grow. The native population more defiantly reclaimed their rights as an indigenous people to the land in Hawai‘i and even demanded national sovereignty, which was taken away from them after the 1893 overthrow of Hawaiian government by U.S. forces. The local population desired to retain

¹ Globalization in Hawai‘i also contains other strands, such as Hawai‘i investments in Asia and Pacific region and the in-migration of people from this region, which will be addressed in different sections of this chapter.

their own power and influence in the Islands' decision-making process. The "local" power, which developed before World War II through labor union movements and electoral politics in reaction against the Big Five's economic, political, and social domination, matured during the 1954 Democratic Revolution and ended the ruling of the Big Five-dominated Republican Party. It reached its zenith in the 1970s when "local" – as an umbrella identity – united both Native Hawaiians and descendants of immigrants in their protest against development. Together with the "local" power developed a "local" culture – an Americanized blend of Hawaiian culture and ethnic cultures², which had been passed down to the descendants of immigrants through the language of "Pidgin" or Hawai'i Creole English. In the 1990s, the social activism of "local" power had receded but the culture and identity of "local" played a more salient role in defining the non-Hawaiian, non-Caucasian population. Retaining "local" culture then meant retaining a "local" identity and a host status in Hawai'i. Under the entangled forces of globalization, localization, and indigenization, Chinese Americans in Hawai'i felt the urgency to reclaim their "local" identity in Hawai'i. The Narcissus Festival became an important vehicle to meet that urgency. Within a global context, they began to attach a nostalgic sentiment to the Narcissus Festival and viewed it as part of the "local" culture and "local" tradition that were in danger of disappearing. The Narcissus Pageant, in particular, was perceived as a creative combination of Chinese and American cultures and as a unique contribution of the Chinese American community to the "local" culture. Contrary to its accessory status in the Festival in the 1950s and 1960s and its decline under the social

² Peter Manicas defines "local culture" as "a Hawaiianized version of multiculturalism in a place of magnificent natural beauty" in "Introduction," *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2004), xxviii.

movements in the 1970s and 1980s, the Pageant in the 1990s and 2000s became to many the most prominent embodiment of Chinese American advancement and of ethnic harmony in Hawai‘i. Indeed, the Pageant in this era became the sole symbol of the Festival and even the community.

In this chapter, in order to fully understand the new prominent status the Narcissus Queen Pageant enjoyed in the 1990s and 2000s, I first delineate the entangled relationship of globalization, localization, and indigenization as well as other major national and international dynamics in post-Cold War Hawai‘i. I then explore how the Festival leaders experienced and made meaning of the globalization, localization, and indigenization as well as how they resorted to the Festival, or the Pageant, as their vehicle to navigate through the clashing forces and to protect the niche that their earlier generations had carved out for Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i. The third section examines the Festival’s new representation of Chinese Americans within the new context. I argue that the permeation of multiculturalism and post-feminism as the new U.S. national culture played an important role in bringing young Chinese American women to the beauty contest. I demonstrate how the Pageant under this new hegemony represents the Chinese American community as an integral component of Hawaii’s ethnic paradise and Chinese American women as both feminine and powerful super women. Simultaneously, however, as “no hegemony is ever total,” Festival leaders conduct other practices that contradict what they claim. It is through those antitheses, which are salient practices in the Festival yet are expected to be unnoticed and taken for granted, that we see how hegemony works and where resistance is possible.

The Entangled Forces of Globalization, Localization, and Indigenization

Hawai‘i in the 1990s and mid-2000s was caught up in a series of dramatic worldwide political and economic events – from the end of the Cold War (with the federalization of the USSR and the normalization of U.S.-Russia relationship), the collapse of Japan’s bubble economy, and two U.S. wars in the Middle East, to Asia’s Economic Crisis and the long-term economic recession in Hawai‘i. Consequently, the Islands in this period experienced profound demographic, economic, political, and cultural changes, which often meant a misfortune rather than a blessing to their population. The most prominent changes included the stagnation of the tourist industry, the demise of the state economy, and the continuing decrease of the Hawaii-born population.

The end of the Cold War witnessed a tremendous increase in the travel industry worldwide and an initial expansion of tourism in Hawai‘i. However, the tourist industry, especially on O‘ahu, soon reached saturation and stagnation when it was outpaced by the development in other popular tourist destinations in the world, especially in those newly opened up countries that were formerly under “the communist sphere of influence.” The income from tourism plummeted in the early 1990s and has experienced no significant growth since 1997. The early 1990s recession was caused by the burst of Japan’s bubble economy.³ Tourism then suffered three serious setbacks during Asia’s Economic Crisis in 1997, after the “9.11” terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City in 2001, and during the spread of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) in 2003. The

³ According to Marion Kelly, *The Honolulu Advertiser* announced that by March 1993, investment from Japan dropped by 80%. Marion Kelly, “Foreign Investment in Hawaii,” *Social Process in Hawai‘i: A Reader*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2004), 73.

two wars the United States launched in 1993 and 2002 did not generate a tourist boom in Hawai'i. Different from the previous three wars (World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War) that the United States fought in Asia and the Pacific regions, the wars in the Middle East did not bring an enormous number of military service personnel to Hawai'i for rest and relaxation.

Hawai'i in the 1990s had passed its heyday of economic development. According to social scientist Ibrahim G. Aoude, "Virtually no economic growth occurred between 1990 and 1995." From 1996, the growth was incremental, with the rate being 1.5 percent in 1997, and 2.5 percent in 1999.⁴ The demise of the economy was primarily caused by its sole dependence on the tourist industry and by the monopoly of natural and human resources by foreign and continental U.S. investors. The domination of tourism in the state economy was reflected in statistics from 1980 to 1990 that showed the percentage of GSP income that was generated by tourism rose from 34 to 45, while the percentage decreased from 8.6 to 3.4 for agriculture and from 16.5 to 9.8 in the military sector.⁵ Aoude calls tourism Hawaii's "fatal attraction" because it posed as "at once Hawaii's strength and weakness on the economic as well as the political level."⁶ Another social scientist Marion Kelly stated in 1994 that, "It can be argued that in one way or another,

⁴ Ibrahim G. Aoude, "Policy of Globalization and Globalization of Policy," *Social Process in Hawai'i*, 40 (2001), xi.

⁵ Ibrahim G. Aoude, "Tourist Attraction: Hawaii's Locked-in Economy," *Social Process in Hawai'i: A Reader*, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2004), 217.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 228.

all residents of Hawaii are impacted negatively by the overindulgence of investments in tourism.”⁷

Investments in Hawai‘i have primarily been outside capital since the mid-1950s. Outside capital was in fact solicited and supported by the Democrat-led state government, first to infiltrate the monopoly of the Big Five and then to sustain tourism development as well as to diversify the economy. However, the majority of outside capital came from foreign countries instead of from the continental United States since the mid-1980s. Aoude used the term “the New Big Five”⁸ to indicate the degree of political and economic monopoly these foreign investors exerted in Hawai‘i. In 1994, “the New Big Five” included such countries as Japan, Australia, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In 2002, they were Japan, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia.⁹ Among them, Japan took an absolute lead. Investments from Japan took up 98 percent of total foreign investments of the 1980-1990 period.¹⁰ As *The Honolulu Advertiser* reported in 1990, “More than 90 per cent of Hawaii’s ‘deluxe-class’ hotels are Japanese-owned.”¹¹ Although Japanese investments withdrew considerably since 1990, they still remain the largest amount of foreign capital in Hawai‘i. In 1999, despite a drop of more than 3 billion dollars from 1994 to 1998, Japan still made up 83 percent of the foreign direct

⁷ Marion Kelly, “Foreign Investment in Hawai‘i,” 73.

⁸ Aoude, “Tourist Attraction,” 225.

⁹ “Hawaii: Exports, Jobs, and Foreign Investment,” http://www.its.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/state_reprots/hawaii.html (accessed January 26, 2005).

¹⁰ Kelly, “Foreign Investment in Hawai‘i,” 66.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

investments in Hawai‘i, with Europe providing another 8.7 percent.¹² As the director of the Department of Business, Economic, and Tourism (DBEDT) put it, “I don’t see any other country that’s going to replace Japan as a foreign investor.”¹³ Japan also held 93 percent of foreign-owned land on O‘ahu, with Canada, France, Hong Kong, and South Korea holding the second to fifth places in land ownership.¹⁴ Furthermore, since major investments in the state economy came from foreign countries, the income that was generated by Hawaii’s tourism mostly left the state. As Kelly reveals, “only a very minor part of the income from the [tourist] industry remains in Hawaii.”¹⁵ The sole dependency on Japanese tourists and investors was forced to change after the Asian economic crisis. The state government began to change economic structures to move from a tourism-based economy to the New Economy¹⁶ – a “knowledge- and idea-based economy” that has all the flexibility and diversity to encourage the development of convention, filming and TV production, health services and medical research, and high-technology industries. Yet not enough changes took place to rescue the island economy from degradation.

¹² “Foreign Direct Investment in Hawaii,” <http://www.enterprisehonolulu.com/html/display.cfm?sid=107> (accessed January 26, 2005).

¹³ Cathy S. Cruz, “Still the One: The Japanese still have the lion’s share of Hawaii’s foreign investments.” *Hawaii Business Magazine*, April 2001.

¹⁴ Cruz, “Still the one,” April, 2001.

¹⁵ Kelly, “Foreign Investment in Hawai‘i,” 64.

¹⁶ Li‘anā Petranek defines the New Economy well in her article “Task Masters of the New Economy,” *Social Process in Hawai‘i*, 40 (2001), 5: “The New Economy is a term used to describe the basic structural transformation of the world economy over the last decade (Hawaii New Economy Project 2000a). It is spoken of as an economy where the old rules no longer apply. The new winners in this economy are those who can access information and change quickly and continuously to maintain their niche (‘Imi Loa 2000:24). The New Economy is knowledge- and idea-based, an economy where organizational forms are network-oriented rather than hierarchical and bureaucratic. The new economy is an economy where uncertainty, risk, and change rule (McClain, 2000).”

Paralleling the demise of the economy was the decline of average household income and the skyrocketing cost of living. Between 1969 and 1997, Hawaii's average per capita dollar income had been higher than the rest of the country. In 1998, however, it fell below U.S. average by \$765 and further dropped to \$1,632 below it in 2000.¹⁷ Simultaneously, the cost of living grew even higher. The skyrocketing real estate prices made housing unaffordable for many families and forced many homeowners to sell their homes and even move away from Hawai'i. Since many available jobs were poorly paid service-oriented jobs, many residents had to take two or more jobs in order to maintain a decent standard of living. The poverty rate rose faster than in other states. As a result, many Hawai'i-born residents moved to the continental United States where there were more desirable jobs and a lower cost of living. Statistics showed that Hawai'i had the highest rate of out-migration among all the states from the 1990s. The pace of emigration accelerated among all local population groups except Caucasians. For the residents of Hawaiian and partial Hawaiian ancestry alone, the increase of emigration increased about 230 percent from 1990 to 2000.¹⁸ The 2000 census showed that 40 percent of Native Hawai'i population was scattered through the continental United States. As a result, Hawai'i witnessed a population growth that was "the lowest since the turn of the [twentieth] century."¹⁹ The state's overall population growth from 1990 to 2000 was only nine percent, the first time it fell behind the national average (which was 13.2 percent).²⁰

¹⁷ Alex Salkever, "20 Years from Now," *Honolulu*, 2002: 69.

¹⁸ Manicas, "Introduction," xxx.

¹⁹ David Choo, "Honey, They Shrunk the Island," *Honolulu*, 2002: 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

Of the nine percent population increase from 1990 to 2000, a large part was contributed by in-migration from the continental United States. Large-scale and permanent migration to Hawai‘i from other states began since statehood and accelerated from the 1970s. Most of those transplants were Caucasian, or what “locals” called *haole*. By 1990, for the first time, the *haole* population comprised the largest census group in Hawai‘i, which the State Health Survey documented as 24.1 percent.²¹ In recent years, there have been 30,000 transplants annually, as compared to 6,056 foreign arrivals in 2000.²² According to the 2000 census, 56.9 percent of Hawai‘i residents were born in the Islands as compared to 65.8 percent in 1990. It is predicted that by 2010, the percentage for Hawai‘i-born residents will drop below 50 percent and transplants will outnumber “locals.”²³

A result of this demographic change was the *haolefication* of Hawai‘i. As sociologist and philosopher Peter Manicas observed, “the culture of the place is increasingly being defined by *malihini haole* residents! Hawai‘i becomes more and more a version of *haole* America...”²⁴ These *malihini haoles* neither “belonged to the islands” nor “appreciated the culture of Hawai‘i” yet they were taking over critical cultural roles from “locals,” such as “media and mass communications, higher education, art, music, and key posts in advertising, marketing and public relations.”²⁵ They did not appreciate and would not assimilate into local society, but would replace Hawaii’s culture with

²¹ Manicas, “Introduction,” xxviii.

²² *Ibid*, xxviii.

²³ “Minority Report,” *Honolulu*, 2002:28.

²⁴ *Malihini Haole* is used to distinguish from the multigenerational *local haole*.

²⁵ Manicas, “Introduction,” xxviii.

“mainland” culture. Ethnic studies scholar Jonathan Y. Okamura noticed that, “Whether they know it or not, people are feeling the pressures of globalization... Along with it will come a cultural loss. People familiar with local culture will be gone... The Islands are a rest stop on the way to the global village, which is starting to resemble a global strip mall more and more everyday.”²⁶

Due to the globalization and the *haolefication* of Hawai‘i, the Hawai‘i-born residents felt an urge to maintain “local” culture and “local” identity although some viewed this new wave of in-migration “as an infusion of new blood and vitality to the Islands.”²⁷ The identity of “locals” developed since the 1930s, largely through the plantation workers’ labor movement and through their participation in the territory’s electoral politics. It matured during the 1954 Democratic Revolution, which ended the ruling of the Big Five-dominated Republican Party, and reached its zenith in the 1970s, when it united the local community and Native Hawaiians to resist evacuation and protest against the urban-renewal and development projects in Chinatown, Kalama Valley, Waihole-Waikane, and other locations. However, “local” identity took a different turn in the 1990s. If it meant a sense of urgency for local control in face of soaring inflation, continuing in-migration, urbanization, and big Japanese investors in the 1970s, it expressed a sense of disparity in the face of locals’ out-migration, mainlanders’ in-migration, and further marginalization of Hawai‘i in the global economy during the 1990s. If the 1970s’ vision was “We better do something before it’s too late,”²⁸ the

²⁶ David Choo, “The End of Local?” *Honolulu*, 2002:28.

²⁷ Choo, “The End of Local?” 28.

²⁸ Eric Yamamoto, “The Significance of Local”, 256, *Social Process in Hawai‘i: A Reader*. 3rd ed. Peter Manicas, McGraw Hill, Custom Publishing.

1990s' could be summarized as "There is nothing much we can do." As Okamura stated, "At some point local people just gave up...For many, it was impossible to overcome..."²⁹

The local population, however, still insisted upon an appreciation of the land, people, and culture of Hawai'i. They tried to retain as many elements of local culture and identity as possible. Some sacrificed better business and job opportunities elsewhere and chose to stay in Hawai'i for closer ties with their relatives and extended family. Some became active in local organizations and local cultural events.³⁰ Still some clung to local cultural symbols and advocated local lifestyles, such as the consumption of historical local food; wearing rubber slippers and puka T-shirts; Baby Lu'au (first birthday celebrations), pidgin English or the mere fact of being born in Hawai'i. These symbols of local identity could seem insignificant as compared to the "local" power and the anti-development protests in the 1970s. As Okamura critiqued, "they are picking some pretty trivial things as representations of what makes Hawaii a unique place to live."³¹ Manicas also stated that, "'local' has lost its class-edge."³² However, to some locals, those symbols were powerful and infiltrating because they represented an alternative way of living and alternative social bonds and because they challenged the "global strip mall" culture on a daily basis. Retaining culture, to them, was a task as daunting as retaining land and home. In fact, if being "local" meant a working-class identity and economic-oriented social protests in the 1970s, it defined a middle-class identity and cultural-oriented social

²⁹ Choo, "The End of Local?" 28.

³⁰ see Luciano Minerbi, "In the Face of Globalization: Two Decades of Insurgent Localism in Hawai'i" *Social Process in Hawai'i*, 40 (2001), 165-189.

³¹ Choo, "The End of Local?" 28.

³² Manicas, "Introduction," xxxi.

sentiment in the 1990s. It represented well the social status of the majority of “locals” who remained in Hawai‘i – who were predominantly upper to lower middle classes. Although some “locals” remained working class, the bottom of the class stratification was primarily left for Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, and more recent immigrants from Mexico as well as from Southeast Asia.

“Local” identity faced challenges not only from globalization but also from the indigenization force of the Hawaiian Movement.³³ The growth of “local” identity in the 1970s gained tremendous momentum from the Hawaiian Movement, which provided the “exclusive” definition of “local” as “an appreciation of the ‘goodness’ of Hawaii” and an “instinct about the land, people, and cultures of Hawaii.”³⁴ However, the Hawaiian Movement outgrew the “local” movement and became more exclusive by separating the “local” and the “native” and by demanding indigenous rights for their own.

The Native Hawaiian population, which suffered a danger of extinction and demoralization in most of the twentieth century, had a sustained revitalization from the 1970s. In the 1990s, Native Hawaiians were proud of their indigenous identity and no longer felt ashamed of their ancestry and culture. They also successfully gained more state- and federal-funded programs for the betterment of their health, education, housing, and economic environment. The 2000 census showed that the population for Hawaiians rose 74 percent from 1990 to 2000. While the drastic population growth could be because “the census allowed responders to give detailed information about their racial background

³³ The Hawaiian Movement, used by Haunani-Kay Trask, refers to both the Hawaiian Sovereignty Movement and the Hawaiian Renaissance. Peter Manicas used the same term in *Social Process in Hawai‘i*.

³⁴ Yamamoto, “The Significance of Local,” 260.

and indicate partial ethnicity,”³⁵ it could also be that the increase of indigenous pride and government-funded programs made them more willing to identify as Native Hawaiians.

A significant symbol of their victory in defining their heritage and sovereignty was the passing of the Apology Resolution by the U.S. Congress under Clinton Administration in 1993. In this open apology to Native Hawaiians for U.S. overthrow of the Hawaiian government in 1893, it stated, “... the indigenous Hawaiian people never directly relinquished their claims to their inherent sovereignty as a people or over their national lands to the United States, either through their monarchy or through a plebiscite or referendum.”³⁶ Although no substantive improvement was achieved to reach any genuine reconciliation between Native Hawaiians and the U.S government, the apology did generate a higher wave of optimism in the sovereignty movement and a boom of sovereignty organizations and events. Different visions of independence and self-determination, from state-sponsored commission and “nation-within-a-nation” to complete independence, were widely discussed among the Native Hawaiian population and even became household terms in Hawai‘i. Hawaiian language, heritage programs, and cultural festivals further flourished as well in this era. As Okamura stated, “Native Hawaiians have extended their cultural construction and expression of distinctiveness into institutions of the ‘public domain’ ..., that is, government, the economy, law, and education.”³⁷

³⁵Salkever, “20 Years from Now,” 68.

³⁶Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 76.

³⁷Jonathan Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise: Privileging Multiculturalism in Hawaii” in *Making Majorities*. D.C. Gladney ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 279.

A serious blow, however, impaired the movement in 2000 although the movement was never free from rifts and controversies. In the case of *Rice vs. Cayetano* in 2000, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the State of Hawai‘i and its Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA)³⁸ and in favor of allowing non-Hawaiians to cast a vote for trustee candidates for the state office. The ruling of the Supreme Court then encouraged other lawsuits that attacked the Hawaiian-only state programs and opened up the possibility for non-Hawaiians to attack other Native Hawaiian trusts such as the Kamehameha School.³⁹

The blow provoked a sense of urgency to create a Hawaiian government for Native Hawaiian causes – “It is vital for Native Hawaiians to regard the establishment of a Native Hawaiian Government with a sense of urgency.”⁴⁰ The ruling impelled some Hawaiian community members to push for formal U.S. recognition of Hawaiians as an indigenous people so that similar lawsuits such as the *Rice vs. Cayetano* case could be avoided in the future and federally funded Hawaiian programs would be secured for the benefit of Native Hawaiians. Among the institutions that supported the federal recognition plan were OHA, the Department of Hawaiian Homelands and many nonprofit organizations benefiting Hawaiians. Out of a concerted effort of these agencies and organizations, Senate Bill 2899 (Akaka Bill No.1) was drafted with much community

³⁸ OHA (the Office of Hawaiian Affairs) was created in 1978 by the State of Hawaii Constitutional Convention to represent the interests of Native Hawaiians in the administration of the Hawaiian Homelands and the Ceded Lands that formerly belonged to the Hawaiian government and crown. Originally, OHA trustees were to be elected by Native Hawaiians only. However, the U.S. Supreme Court’s rule in *Rice vs. Cayetano* case determined that this restriction was unconstitutionally race-based. As a result, OHA trustees were then elected by all registered voters in the state.

³⁹ “What do Hawaiians Stand to Lose?” [http:// www.nativehawaiians.com/questions/impacts/html](http://www.nativehawaiians.com/questions/impacts/html) (accessed January 26, 2005).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

input in August 2000.⁴¹ Four months later, however, Senator Daniel Akaka introduced a revised Senate Bill 746 (Akaka Bill No.2). Although it contained some changes that created much division and confusion in the Hawaiian community,⁴² the consensus among Hawaiian activists was that Akaka Bill No.2 was “a powerful piece of legislation that would perpetuate a semifunctional Hawaii wardship indefinitely in exchange for federal recognition...ie., federal protection.”⁴³ If passed, it would legitimate the status of Hawaiians as a “nation,” and create a relationship of “nation-within-a-nation” status for Hawaiians, similar to the status held by Native American tribes and Native Alaskan groups. Akaka Bill No.2 soon won more support from the Hawaiian community when Akaka Bill No.3 (Senate Bill 1783) was introduced to the Congress by the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) after a drastic revision of Bill No.2 against the interests of Native Hawaiians. On Feb 11, 2003, supported by the Hawai‘i State Legislature and Governor Linda Lingle, Senators Akaka and Inouye reintroduced Bill No.2 as Senate Bill 344 to the 108th Congress. However, it was blocked from a full floor vote by a Republican senator using an anonymous procedural hold in June, 2003. After being shelved in the U.S. Congress for almost two years, the bill was reintroduced in 2005 to the 109th Congress as a standalone measure for a Senate vote.⁴⁴ Although a shocking incident happened when Senator John McCain expressed disagreement on the bill as the

⁴¹ Anne Keale Kelly, “The Akaka Bill and Hawaiian Self-determination,” *Honolulu Weekly*, January 30, 2002.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ “Senate vote on Akaka Bill promised for next session,” Federal Recognition Bill Status Update, Updated 10/26/04, <http://www.nativehawaiians.com/FedRecBillUpdate.html> (accessed January 26, 2005).

new Chair of the Senate's Committee on Indian Affairs, Akaka and Inouye soon obtained an endorsement from McCain to submit the bill for the full floor vote at the Congress. They both predicted with strong confidence that the bill was to be passed by the House and the Senate on March 1, 2005.

The development of the Hawaiian Movement forced non-Hawaiian "locals" to reconsider their history of immigration and settlement and their taken-for-granted host status in Hawai'i. When different plans for Hawaiian independence and self-determination, ranging from state-sponsored commission and "nation-within-a-nation" to independent sovereignty, were crafted by the Hawaiian community, "locals" began to reevaluate their roles and rights in Hawai'i and contemplate the implication of each plan to their future life in the Islands. Opinions varied. Some might take the movement a threat to their status quo in Hawai'i. As Okamura quoted an editorial from *The Honolulu Advertiser*, sovereignty issues "could destroy our spirit of aloha and divide Hawai'i along racial lines" and bring to Hawai'i "a reputation for hate."⁴⁵ However, the Rice vs. Cayetano case did not split the "local" community. Filed by a Caucasian ranch owner from the Big Island who was supported by the wealthiest Caucasian attorneys, the case instead reminded "locals" of the historical conflict of culture and interests between *haole* and non-*haole*. As one of my senior informants commented on the case, "They [*haole*] are doing it again. They want everything for themselves."⁴⁶ Manicas showed that the majority of "locals" supported Akaka Bill No. 1 and No.2 as well as similar sovereignty plans for Hawaiians. According to a poll conducted by OHA, 78 percent of "locals"

⁴⁵ Jonathan Okamura, "The Illusion of Paradise," 284.

⁴⁶ Pang interview, December 2004.

agreed with a status for Hawaiians “similar to the special recognition given to Native Americans and Alaska Natives,” and 82 percent of non-Hawaiians supported Federal programs for Hawaiians.⁴⁷

The Chinese American Community and the Narcissus Festival in the Age of Entanglement

The Chinese American community in Hawai‘i keenly felt the impact of all the dynamic local, national, and international changes. Its response to globalization, localization, and indigenization, however, is nuanced and diversified. Most community members from multi-generation families in Hawai‘i claimed “local” identity, supported the Hawaiian Movement, and simultaneously navigated the globalization forces.

Many multi-generation Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i tapped the globalization forces to maintain their socio-economic status. Their immigrant background brought them new economic, social and cultural capital in the age of globalization. They actively sought a bigger role in the Islands’ decision-making process by acting as an international liaison and broker between Hawai‘i, the “Greater China,”⁴⁸ and Southeast Asia. Many more recent immigrants since the 1970s felt as strongly for adapting to the American mainstream society as for maintaining their transnational ties with Asia. Chinese Americans from the older community had less keen knowledge about and less close ties to their land of origin than the more recent immigrants. However, they held more resources with which to navigate the entangled forces of globalization than most of the more recent immigrants because of their generally higher socio-economic status in Hawai‘i.

⁴⁷ Manicas, “Introduction,” xxvii.

⁴⁸ Generally refers to mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. Sometimes includes Singapore.

The Chamber in this era aggressively claimed its membership in the “Greater China” and sought to further political and economic interests in Asia through their old and new connections. Together with China-related business associations, DBEDT, and UH, it acted as a coach for China, making Hawai‘i a training field for China’s agriculture, technology, tourism and other industries. As a former Chamber president stated, “China is learning how to run in a capitalistic system. They have to learn accounting systems, legal systems and build all the rules in this game they want to play.”⁴⁹ Since the mid 1990s, the Chamber began to run business management training programs for officials from different sectors of the Guangdong provincial government and the Pudong economic development zone in Shanghai. From the late 1990s, it also facilitated the State of Hawaii’s trade mission to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China. The Chamber and other Chinese Americans are playing a significant role in globalizing Hawai‘i and helping the establishment of the budding relationship between Hawai‘i and China. As David McClain, the former dean for the College of Business Administration of the University of Hawai‘i, said about establishing relationship with Chinese government and businesses, “The name of the game is making connections and seeing what happens...Culturally, we (Hawai‘i) are very comfortable for them, and that’s a plus.”⁵⁰ The statement by McClain expressed a confidence that Hawai‘i has more cultural advantage or cultural capital to utilize in globalizing China because of the cultural legacy. The 1994 president of Chinese Chamber of Commerce also clearly stated:

The Chinese Chamber has made many friends on its Narcissus Tours of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China ...It is important that we retain these friendships for as

⁴⁹ Chin interview, December 2004.

⁵⁰ “Investing in Education: Chinese businesspeople tap Hawaii’s resources,” *Hawaii Business*.

these areas, especially China, are opening up opportunities of investment, the CCC can utilize their cooperation to assist the individual interests of any Chamber member. These friendships are also important for it may enable the Chamber to promote Hawaii as an international business center to attract Asian investment.”⁵¹

In the face of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement and the challenge of their host status, they reemphasized their long history of intermarriage with Hawaiians, their appreciation of Hawaiian culture, and the similarity between Hawaiian and Chinese social relations. This aspect was emphasized in the classes on Chinese history and Chinese experiences in Hawai‘i that were arranged by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce and provided by established community historians for the beauty contest candidates. In particular, Hawaiianized Chinese names were sorted through to familiarize the contestants with the intersection of Chinese and Hawaiian communities and cultures as well as to help them trace their family lineage. This aspect was also reflected in the fact that since the 1990s, more contestants had training in *hula* since they were five to seven years old and several queens won the title by performing Hawaiian chants and *hula* dance at the talent phase of the Pageant. The Pageant audience of recent years also gave a louder and longer applause to a contestant when she demonstrated particularly difficult foot movement and body coordination in her *hula* performance. A former queen from the early 1970s recalled, “Nobody then thought *hula* as a serious talent that could win the title.”⁵² However, in 2002, the Narcissus Queen Kuuleialoha Manya Chun was also a soloist for Miss Aloha *Hula* of the 2000 Merry Monarch Festival’s *hula* competition. Her *hula* chant and dance won her the best talent award of the Pageant among the contestants who played piano, blared trumpet, and danced Chinese dances.

⁵¹ 45th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1994): 12.

⁵² Chee interview, November 2004.

Community members also reemphasized their generations of contribution to Hawaii's everyday life in terms of foodways, businesses and services, as well as social customs. Although Native Hawaiians were becoming a third distinctive and separate social group, these members from multi-generation Chinese American families still tended to use the dichotomized *haole-vs-non-haole* criterion to categorize the people living in Hawai'i. Many still felt a close tie and a shared identity with Native Hawaiians and such ethnic groups as Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Filipino Americans, and Portuguese Americans. They demarcated the non-*haole* as "us" and the *haole* as "them." This dichotomized view was clearly expressed in an interview I conducted with a senior Chinese American, who grew up in pre-WWII Hawai'i and traced the economic stagnation of Hawai'i back to statehood:

People were content with what Hawai'i was like after the war, after many *haoles* left... Many people didn't know what statehood meant. They voted for it, thinking it was great to vote their own governor, their senator and two representatives to the Congress. But they didn't know the price they got to pay. They now have to follow all the regulations and rules from the outside. The same thing like in Iraq now. People there also don't like Americans enter there and tell them what to do...⁵³

This statement clearly expresses the frustration over the loss of local people's control in Hawai'i. It articulates the resentment towards continuing U.S. expansionist policy and links what happened in Hawai'i from the 1950s to what was taking place in Iraq in the 2000s. It clearly indicates the speaker's self-identification as a "local" in Hawai'i, an entitlement to claim a host position in Hawai'i.

The sense of "local" identity grew stronger among Chinese Americans as they faced the rapid dwindling of their multi-generational families, which was caused by a

⁵³ Tang interview, December 2004.

high rate of out-migration and out-marriage as well as a low birthrate. The elder Chinese Americans sensed a danger of the loss of their community since the 1980s. They felt the acute impact of “brain drain” when a high proportion of their younger generations had to leave for the continental United States for further education and settlement after high school and college. The domination of the service-oriented economy provided very limited desirable jobs for their children and grandchildren with higher education. A large part of the island high school and college graduates with Chinese ancestry had to migrate to the continental United States to find more desirable jobs and maintain their parents’ and grand-parents’ socio-economic status. Among those who remained in Hawai‘i, the elder Chinese Americans saw an increasing rate of out-marriage and a decreasing amount of Chinese cultural practice. Among the children of out-marriage families, the elder members saw a limited incentive for them to claim their Chinese ancestry as their primary ethnic identity.

The 2000 Census confirmed their anxiety – only 4.7 percent (56,600 people) of Hawai‘i’s population identified themselves as “Chinese alone” whereas 14.1 percent or 170,803 people chose “Chinese alone or in any combination.” Some 9.4 percent claimed Chinese identity when combined with one or two other categories. In fact, Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i, next to Native Hawaiians, had the second highest rate of out-marriage, much higher than Caucasian, Japanese and Filipino census groups. Many Hawai‘i residents with Chinese ancestry more likely identified with their non-Chinese ancestry first. The 2000 Census showed that Hawai‘i had the nation’s highest percentage of mixed-race residents, where intermarriage was an accepted norm. 21.4 percent of the state population or 259,343 people described themselves as more than one race,

compared with 2.4 percent of the nation as a whole. The Chinese census group in Hawai‘i had an even higher rate of mixture. Of the total number who claimed Chinese alone and in combination in Hawai‘i, 66.7 percent described themselves as mixed Chinese, which is more than three times higher than the state percentage and almost 28 times higher than the national percentage.

The dwindling population base and high rate of intermarriage directly shrank the pool of potential contestants for the Narcissus Queen Pageant. The queen search committee of the Narcissus Festival found it increasingly difficult to find enough contestants to join the Pageant year after year. Therefore, in 1995, after heated discussions, intense consulting with its legal advisors, and long sessions of board meetings, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce formally announced the change of requirement for entering the Pageant. It began to allow those young women whose mother had a Chinese surname to enter the beauty contest as long as they agree to use their mother’s surname during their involvement with the Festival and the Chamber, both before and after the Pageant. Before 1995, although there existed contestants with mixed ethnic or racial background, all Pageant candidates had to have a paternal Chinese surname.

The 4.7 percent who chose “Chinese alone” also included first-generation immigrants from mainland China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia, such as Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Although they all traced their ancestry to China, they came from different nation-states and geographic regions, spoke different dialects and languages, practiced different social and cultural customs,

and formed different sub-communities in Hawai‘i. Therefore, even among the 4.7 percent, it was a highly diversified group and far from a homogenous community.

Many of the more recently arrived immigrants of Chinese ancestry came from Southeast Asia. They were primarily engaged in service and agriculture industry, and lived in low-income housing districts all over Hawai‘i. Some entered restaurant and retail businesses in Chinatown and lived in Chinatown as well as its vicinity, as the earlier generations of Chinese immigrants did until World War II. Thanks to the hard labor of them and of other immigrants from Southeast Asia, Chinatown experienced revitalization in the 1990s and 2000s. Because of the immigrants from Southeast Asia, the resident population of Chinatown grew close to 7,000 in the early 2000s, “which nearly matches the historic high reached in 1900.”⁵⁴ The members of the older Chinese American community were becoming mere patrons in Chinatown restaurants. Only a dozen old businesses and another dozen headquarters of old societies and associations remained active. Many Chinatown stores and vegetable stands were run and owned by first- and second-generation entrepreneurs from Southeast Asia, many of whom belonged to the Organization of Chinese from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Chinatown was better known among the long-time residents in Honolulu as the Southeast Asia Town. A regular senior Japanese tourist to Hawai‘i expressed to me her amazement at the degree of improvement Honolulu Chinatown had achieved from the mid-1980s. Since her annual vacation to Honolulu in the mid 1960s, she visited Chinatown once every two or five years but finally stopped going there in the mid-1980s because “the restaurants and food

⁵⁴ Kevin O’Leary, “Chinatown, No Place Like It,” *Honolulu Weekly*, December 10, 2003: 4

were all the same, and the streets were dirty and gloomy.” In October 2004, she went back to Chinatown by chance and was amazed by “the fresh vegetables, the *dim sum*, the nice and clean streets, the new market, and all the people.”⁵⁵

Honolulu Chinatown experienced more redevelopment through the Department of Housing and Community Development in the 1990s. City-sponsored projects in Chinatown included Pauahi Area improvement (drain, sewer, water, roadway, street light, electric, telephone and traffic systems), Chinatown Gateway Plaza (that included rental apartments, a public park, a private park, and a terraced water feature, commercial space and parking stalls with two guardian statues from Kaoshiung, Taiwan), River-Nimitz (rental apartments, commercial space, and parking stalls), Winston Hale, and Pauahi Hale. Different from the “mowing-all” policy in the 1960s and 1970s, the redevelopment in this era had to take into consideration the historical and architectural preservation of Chinatown and tried to maintain a balance between increasing affordable housing opportunities, improving aging infrastructure and accommodating new development, and facilitating commercial revitalization activities in Chinatown. The most successful redevelopment included the Smith-Maunakea and the Kekaulike projects, which became the hub of Chinatown’s retail business and a gathering place of senior citizens living in and near Chinatown.⁵⁶

The *Haolefication* of Hawai‘i was also directly felt in Honolulu Chinatown. Since the late 1990s, more than a dozen art galleries and trendy clubs/restaurants emerged along Nu‘uanu Street, north of Hotel Street. This area was soon named “NoHo”

⁵⁵ Iijima interview, October 2004.

⁵⁶ 43rd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual (1992): 68-69.

(Nu‘uanu north of Hotel Street)⁵⁷ in line with SoHo in New York and SoMa (South Market) in San Francisco. The Downtown Chamber of Commerce organized a popular evening event on the first Friday of every month, which featured live music, street entertainment, open cafes and bistros, antique stores, and even a tattoo parlor, with Chinatown and downtown galleries, museums and studios opening to the public from 5 to 9 pm. It provided local residents as well as visitors an opportunity to experience the artistic and cultural scenes and resources of Honolulu and promoted publicity for the artists and dealers. The monthly evening program attracted a white, middle-class group of Honolulu residents to Chinatown, who would rarely visit downtown for non-business matters otherwise. The event was successful enough for some artists to push for an expansion of the “artsy” area one more block toward the Honolulu Harbor. A new name “NuKi” – Nu‘uanu above King Street, was already created out of that plan. Artists in Chinatown also pushed for “art lofting” to make the second-floor spaces above Chinatown stores available for rent since the late 1990s. Due to the regulations for historic district, the City and County of Honolulu did not allow anyone to become a tenant in Chinatown unless that person owned or leased a shop on the street level. Artists and other Downtown Chamber of Commerce members demanded that the municipal government revise the regulation – “We want the law changes to allow primary-use residential lofts within the historic core district.”⁵⁸ And they succeeded in their lobbying. From November 2004, the upper-level spaces in several streets were made available for rent to people who did not own or run a business in Chinatown.

⁵⁷ Dave Donnelly, “Hawai‘i,” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Tuesday, October 24, 2000.

⁵⁸ O’Leary, “Chinatown,” 4.

The Chinatown community had mixed feelings about the *Haolefication* process. Some welcomed the newcomers and hoped the patrons and visitors to the art galleries and studios would become new customers in Chinatown restaurants. They viewed the emergence of an artsy district as a big step to a permanent solution to the “bustling by day and dark at night” paradox in downtown Honolulu.⁵⁹ Some predicted that such events as the First Friday would not last long because local themes, genres, as well as markets are limited. Furthermore, many Hawai‘i residents knew Asia and Southeast Asia too well to be easily enchanted by the Asia-themed exhibits or antique sales in downtown. Others regarded the artists as intruders and were angry toward the municipal government for being more attentive to the pleas of the artists and prioritizing the artists’ demand.⁶⁰ A general consensus among the Chinatown community and many Chinese Americans was that the gentrification of Chinatown should not change its function as the main hub for the more recent Asian immigrants to run a business and make a living. As Robert Gerrell, developer of Smith-Maunakea and Kekaulike put it, “parts of Chinatown may gentrify somewhat, may become more artsy. But the core economic engine for the district, the thing that historically had made it run, is merchandising for small businesses. As long as Hawaii is a magnet for immigrants, looking to better their lives, Chinatown will prosper.”⁶¹

The Chinese Chamber of Commerce, facing the challenge of a dwindling multi-generational community, the emerging new immigrant groups, and the *Haolefication* of Chinatown worked more closely with its increasingly diverse members to retain its

⁵⁹ Dave Donnelly, “Hawaii” *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, Tuesday, October 24, 2000.

⁶⁰ Lee Interview, October 2004.

⁶¹ O’leary, “Chinatown,” 4.

leadership within the Chinese American community. New efforts were made by the Chamber leaders to fortify the communication and cooperation of the long-existing societies and associations. They also began to embrace other new Chinese immigrant members and organizations as “the new blood” in order to keep pace with the demographic and social changes and retain its leadership in the Chinese American community. In claiming their leadership among the immigrants from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and PRC, the board of directors of the Chamber voted Ming Ching, an ophthalmologist from Taiwan, as the Narcissus Festival Chair of 2005 and the president in waiting for 2006. For the first time in the Chamber’s history, its president will be a Mandarin speaker who speaks English with a Mandarin accent. It will also be the first time that its president is an immigrant from Taiwan. In maintaining their leadership among the new immigrant community in Chinatown, the Chamber elected Ted Li, president of the Association of Chinese from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos as the third vice-president of the Chamber. According to the Chamber’s general procedure, this means that Li is scheduled to be the Narcissus Festival chair in 2007 and the Chamber president in 2008.

Efforts were also made among the Chamber leaders to enhance the cooperation among the long existing community organizations so that the Chinese American community became more unified. Of course, not all Chamber leaders shared the same anxiety and prioritized the same agenda. Reuben Wong, the Chamber president from 2002 to 2003 promoted and spearheaded the new campaign to consolidate the Chamber’s leadership among the older community in the new era. He initiated and established the Council of Directors that conglomerated the presidents of major Chinese American

societies and associations and facilitated communication among the organizations. A result of the Council of Directors' work is the new Taste of China event that is held annually since 2003 in the Neal Blaisdell Concert Hall that features booths of over thirty community organizations as well as Chinese businesses, ping-pong matches, performances, and food. Also in his year, a Sun Yat-sen Festival was held in replacement of the Double Ten (the ROC national day) celebration in Chinatown, which was composed of a parade from King Street to the Sun Yat-sen Statue at the River Street gateway of Cultural Plaza, a performance of Chinese folks dances, martial arts, and lion dances on the Moon-gate Stage in the Cultural Plaza, and an exhibit/reception of Sun Yat-sen's manuscripts and pictures at the Kuomintang (Guomindang) Society Hall. It was the first time the Chamber and the Chinatown Merchants Association jointly held a Chinatown event. Another demonstration of the Chamber's new proactive leadership campaign under Wong was the Chinatown restaurants visit during the spread of SARS in Asia and North America.

In the spring of 2003, SARS swept through the greater Hong Kong area, much of China, and Toronto, Canada. Fear of SARS was felt in Honolulu, and rumors about the emergence of a SARS case were spread in Chinatown, where business was severely affected with the usual shoppers and diners staying away in large numbers. The state Department of Health issued press releases in order to reassure people that there was nothing to fear, and the Chamber did its part to revive Chinese businesses. On Saturday, April 19, three days after Governor Linda Lingle took a dozen of her Cabinet officials for lunch at six restaurants in Chinatown to dispel the rumors and fears, President Reuben Wong organized the Chamber's own support. He led a group of Chamber officers,

directors, and society presidents to Legend Seafood Restaurant, Won Kee Seafood Restaurant, New Empress Restaurant, Glowing Dragon Restaurant, Nam Fong, and Golden Palace Restaurant to show that the public could safely patronize Chinatown restaurants and food sellers.⁶² The publicity of the government and community leaders' support of Chinatown businesses through the mass media effectively calmed down the public and helped the restoration of Chinatown's business.

Another significant measure for the Chamber to maintain its leadership was as always the continuation of the Narcissus Festival. Under the impact of indigenization, localization, and *haolefication*, the Narcissus Festival in the 1990s and 2000s served as an increasingly important channel for the Chamber to maintain its social connection both within the community and among the general society. Festival events, which were held mostly in Waikīkī hotels and municipal concert halls, provided middle and upper-middle class Chinese Americans not only a venue to maintain the social bonds among themselves but also an interface to reconnect with the middle and upper-middle class of the general society.

The maintenance and reconnection functions of the Festival were particularly important to the middle and upper-middle class Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. Although they enjoyed a rather high socio-economic status in Hawai'i, their extremely small size made it imperative for them to reach beyond their own community and foster cordial and trustworthy relationships with their counterparts of the bigger society in order to maintain their status. As shown in the 2000 Hawai'i State Department of Health data on household income, compared to the state's overall income distribution, Chinese Americans in

⁶² 55th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2004): 82.

Hawai‘i have a larger underclass (14 percent was below \$14,999), a much smaller working and lower-middle class (37.3 percent between \$15,000 and \$54,999), and a larger middle, upper middle, and upper class (44.9 percent was over \$60,000). The state’s overall income distribution was 12 percent, 50.6 percent, and 37.4 percent respectively for the above three categories. According to the same data, 40.1 percent and 35.3 percent of Japanese and Caucasian American households had household income over \$60,000.⁶³ Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i had the largest proportion of middle and upper middle classes. However, smallest in number (around three percent of the Islands’ total population), they had more anxiety in maintaining a strong bond among themselves and a good relationship with their counterparts from other ethnic groups. Chinese American middle to upper classes in Hawai‘i could never exert as much influence upon the state’s politics as Caucasian Americans and Japanese Americans did. Governmental officials of Chinese ancestry could never resort to their community’s block vote alone to locate their desired position, as Japanese and Filipino Americans did. They always needed to count on relationships across ethnic and racial boundaries to vote them into office. The Narcissus Festival provided one of those “golden times” when relations were consolidated and connections were maintained.

It was through the social functions of the Narcissus Festival that a sense of “local” bond was strengthened. Different from the working-class-based social protests by “locals” in the 1970s, the claiming of “local” identity was more subtle and intricate among the middle and upper middle classes. The working language and social language at the functions were standard English instead of pidgin English, but it was certainly a

⁶³ Source: “Ethnicity of Respondent by Household Income – State Adults, Year 2000,” Office of Health Status Monitoring, Hawaii State Department of Health. <http://oha.org>.

plus if one could speak pidgin and had “thick” island background. When new contestants gathered for the first orientation, socialization among them, their families, and community leaders started with exchanging information about their family names, their village associations, and the high schools they had attended. Categorization of “local girls” vs. those “new to Hawai‘i” was instantly and subtly drawn from the first meeting. Simultaneously, categories were drawn between “public school girls” and “private school girls,” “Punahou girls” and “‘Iolani girls.” Other distinctions that were made include master vs. bachelor degree holders, professional vs. non-professional jobs, and affiliation with any honor or association. The deeper one could proceed through the “labeling” routine, the closer a bond was formed. At all functions, from the public appearances, the kick-off reception, and the Pageant to the coronation ball and the fashion show, the introduction of each contestant and winner would begin with the names of her parents. Whether she had already finished college or graduate school, the name of her high school would always be mentioned because attending high school in Hawai‘i had been regarded as the first marker for “local.” A typical bio would read like the one of Darah Annette Kwai Mei Dung’s, the Queen of 2005:

Darah was born in Honolulu and is the daughter of Dennis and Annette Dung. She is a graduate of Roosevelt High School and is a senior at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa where she is majoring in Speech. Darah is employed as a Sales Associate at Fendi Ala Moana. She enjoys singing, traveling, modeling, pottery making, and going to the beach with family and friends. Darah is interested in a career in print and commercial modeling, acting, and becoming a professor of speech.⁶⁴

Here, “born in Honolulu,” bearing the family name of Dung, Roosevelt High School graduate, a student of UH with a major in speech, working for Fendi at Ala Moana

⁶⁴ 56th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2005): 38.

Center, various hobbies, and career goals in modeling and teaching at college, all served as “pressure points” where others can locate and tap for connection, communication, and distinction.

The Pageant itself was an encounter of “locals” and an educational experience for non-“local” contestants and audience. The masters of ceremonies were all “locals,” either a TV news reporter, a talk show comedian, or a former queen. The ethnic jokes that primarily targeted primarily Chinese, Portuguese, and Filipinos in Hawai‘i would only sound funny to those who knew the stereotypes that were established for those groups on the Islands.

To many middle- and upper middle-class “locals,” the Festival and the Pageant had also become a shared memory. Narcissus flower became the trademark of the Chamber and the most prominent symbol of Hawaii’s Chinese American community. The Pageant, which started and originated as a novel and odd part of the Chinese New Year celebration, became a time-honored island tradition, thanks to its six-decade-long continuous presence in Honolulu’s social and cultural scenes. Long-time “locals” began to attach nostalgic sentiment and historical reference to it. As a past Pageant princess expressed to me, although she felt embarrassed about her Pageant experience and never told anyone that she once was a contestant, she believe it was important for the Festival and the Pageant to continue – “because it stands for the community. People look forward to it every year. The Chinese would lose a sense of morale without it.”⁶⁵ This sentiment toward the Pageant increased the prominence that was assigned to it. From the early 1990s, the Festival was restructured in a way that the Pageant became not only the core

⁶⁵ Liu interview, February 2005.

but also the bulk of the Festival. In fact the Pageant almost became the sole program of the Festival, though proceeded in different forms. In a former Narcissus Queen's words, "The Festival now revolves around the Pageant. The Pageant is the Festival."⁶⁶

The Festival was no longer tourist-oriented or Chinatown-oriented. It was no longer a spectacle to the whole Islands as in the 1950s and 1960s. Hardly any tickets were bought directly from the Chamber office by tourists in recent years. Most tickets were sold directly or indirectly to contestants, sponsors, and community leaders. It was no longer a collaboration of different Chinese American cultural clubs and associations. The Chamber became the sole organization running the Festival and the Pageant, doing it in the most financially efficient way in terms of the input of time, resources, and manpower. It had less drawing power to unify the whole Chinese American community but served as the only powerful vehicle for the multi-generation sector of Chinese Americans to reconnect with each other, to foster ties with other "local" communities and government leaders, as well as to retain their well-established "local" status. Stories about how the earlier years of the Pageant had too many contestants to include in one Pageant show and about how a Narcissus Parade extended to all major districts of Honolulu almost became legends.

The 1990s until the present is probably the most stable phase in the over fifty years of history of the Narcissus Festival. The pattern and format of the programs from 1990 to 2005 were routinized with a high level of consistency. The kick-off reception that first formally introduced the contestants to the Chamber members, the community, and the media was held in either in Ala Moana Hotel or in Hilton Hawaiian Village. There

⁶⁶ Chee interview, November 2004.

were always three or four public appearances each year to provide the contestants training stages for their poise and speech. The venue was always at such shopping malls as Ala Moana Center, Windward Mall, Pearlridge Center, Royal Hawaiian Shopping Center, and Kahala Mall. The Queen Pageant was held every year in Neal Blaisdell Center, just as the Coronation Ball and the Narcissus Fashion Show always take place in the Hilton Hawaiian Village. Only two events proceeded in Chinatown, which were the Chinatown Open House and Lion Dance through the old Chinatown District and the Chinatown New Year Celebrations at Cultural Plaza. Several programs, such as the 1996 Lantern Festival celebration, the 1997 and 1998 Chamber's Golf Tournament at Kaneohe Marine Corps Klipper Golf Course, the First Day Stamp Commemoration at the Year of the Ox and the Rooster stamp by Clarence Lee, and 1990-1995 Narcissus Flower Culture Workshop (1990-1993) and Crab Claw Exhibit (1990-1995) at the Honolulu Academy of Arts were incorporated into the Festival. But they either disappeared the next year or became a separate event. The Cooking Program that was the second most famous program next to the Pageant folded in 1993 and was then replaced by the Electric Kitchen, a cooking program sponsored by the Hawaiian Electric company on television in 1995. The Closing Banquet, or sometimes the Grand Finale Banquet ended in 1994.

Even the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Narcissus Festival and the Queen Pageant, with the theme of Remembering the Past and Imagining the Future, in 1999 did not expand into a full community event. Instead, Jackie Chan was invited to receive a lifetime achievement award at the Festival and six chefs from China were brought over to demonstrate different styles of Chinese cooking (Imperial Court Cuisine, Shandong cuisine, Sichuan cuisine, Huai Yang cuisine, Vegetarian Cuisine,

refreshment/snack). And all the programs, including a Jackie Chan Day at All Star Cafe, a Martial Arts Spectacular at NBC Arena, a Kitchen God Reception, a Kitchen God Cooking Demonstration, and a Kitchen God Golden Dragon Dinner Showcase at Hilton Hawaiian Village, were not related to the Chinatown community.

Identity Representation under the Influence of Multiculturalism and Post-feminism

The production of the Festival and Pageant was strongly influenced by the new American culture of multiculturalism and post-feminism. Multiculturalism and post-feminism, as two new dimensions of American cultural hegemony, can be viewed as two strands of the globalization forces that extended from the continental United States to the islands of Hawai'i. They demonstrated the vast extent of the globalization from above and the *haolefication* of Hawai'i. However, it is necessary to single them out from the globalization force and give special attention to them in this chapter because they were crucial in the representation of Chinese Americans in the Festival and in the making of the Narcissus Queen Pageant women in this era. Many Chinese American women participated in the beauty contest because of their belief in multiculturalism and post-feminism. Many queens and princesses of this era cast their roles within the community also based on their understanding of these two principles. Therefore, to better understand the changes of contestants from the previous decades and to understand why women were still participating in the ethnic beauty contest, we need to study the politics of multiculturalism and post-feminism.

For the concept of hegemony, I use Jean and John Comaroff's definition:

We take hegemony to refer to that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies – that come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world and everything that inhabits it. It consists ...of things that go without saying because, being axiomatic, they come without

saying; things that, being presumptively shared, are not normally the subject of explication or argument (Bourdieu 1977, 94).⁶⁷

In this definition, the Comaroffs emphasizes the “take-for-granted,” “axiomatic,” “come and go without saying,” and “being presumptively shared” nature of hegemony. They further discuss the relationship between hegemony and ideology and argue that it is the mute power of naturalization that distinguishes hegemony from ideology. In their words, “Hegemony, then, is that part of a dominant ideology that has been naturalized and, having contrived a tangible world in its image, does not appear to be ideological at all.”⁶⁸

Gramsci’s definition of hegemony, as introduced by Raymond Williams, also emphasizes “its acceptance as ‘normal reality’ or ‘commonsense’” nature: “it (hegemony) is seen to depend for its hold not only on its expression of the interests of a ruling class but also on its acceptance as ‘normal reality’ or ‘commonsense’ by those in practice subordinated to it.”⁶⁹ However, compared to the Comaroffs’ definition, it denies the agency of the subordinates by rigidly defining hegemony as a creation of the ruling class for their own interests. It overlooks many contexts where a hegemonic construct originally begins among the subordinates but is appropriated and rearticulated by the ruling class. It is the ruling class’s appropriation and rearticulation rather than its creation that makes the construct seemingly permeating and transcendental. A good example from Hawai‘i is “the Aloha spirit.” The culture of Aloha was not created by the white

⁶⁷Jean and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1 : Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 23. My use of the Comaroffs’ concept of hegemony is inspired by Jungmin Seo, “Chapter Two: Commodified Nationalism: Theoretical Grounds” in “Nationalism in Market: The Chinese Publishing Industry and Commodification of Nationalistic Discourses in 1990s” (Ph.D diss. University of Chicago, 2004).

⁶⁸ Jean and John Comaroff, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 29.

⁶⁹ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) 145.

missionaries and plantation owners, who in fact attempted to eliminate the native culture. But it was appropriated and turned against the interests of Native Hawaiians. The agency of Native Hawaiians can be multi-faceted in the process of appropriation. Some were reclaiming the culture of Aloha by emphasizing a kinship between the land and the people. Some were re-emphasizing the culture of Hawaiian warriors in counter to the feminization of its people. Still others re-appropriated the ruling class's version of Aloha culture to use federal funds in promoting Hawaiian language and cultural education among the younger generation. The example from Hawai'i demonstrates that the resistance to hegemony is located right inside the hegemony. The Comaroffs' definition leaves open the beginning, the ending, and the ownership of hegemony, thus enabling a more dialectic study of hegemony and resistance.

This section demonstrates that the representation of the Chinese American community and Chinese American women under the hegemony of multiculturalism and post-feminism was highly selective. It confirms Raymond Williams' notion that "no hegemony is ever total" and the seeming factuality it produces is always partial. To be sure, more race, gender, and class politics than multiculturalism and post-feminism were practiced in the Narcissus Queen Pageant. For example, the hierarchy of ethnic groups within local identity, the worship of middle-class values, and the subordination of women were expressed in the Pageant in a salient way. However, the additional practices were conspicuously unclaimed and uninterpreted. It was the selectivity in identity construction that left room for ongoing contestation and negotiation.

The meaning of multiculturalism, like the one for post-feminism, was different for the real world and the academic world in the United States, although the two worlds

overlapped and shared similar power politics and hegemonic ideology. Multiculturalism and post-feminism in both worlds were products of “identity” politics, or the politics of “difference.” They were all reactions towards the politics of “equality” from the earlier decades that promoted ethnic assimilation and gender equity. However, they also varied in their interpretations of “difference.” In the field of racial and ethnic politics, the popular meaning of multiculturalism lauded the peaceful coexistence of diverse racial and ethnic groups and the preservation of their cultural heritages in the United States. By contrast, the academic definition of multiculturalism emphasized the class dimension in racial and ethnic relations, and a conflict of interests in identity politics. In the field of gender politics, the popular meaning of post-feminism expresses a sentiment that women can be empowered without losing their femininity, whereas the academic dimension reflected a further incorporation of post-structuralism (such as the ideas of Derrida, Lacan, and Foucault) and post-colonialism (such as the works by Hall and Spivak).⁷⁰ In this section, I will focus on the popular meanings of multiculturalism and post-feminism which the beauty contestants drew from for their identity reconstruction.

Hawaii’s version of popular multiculturalism was reflected in such concepts as the “ethnic rainbow” and “racial paradise.” Many residents in the Islands deemed Hawai‘i as a successful laboratory of peaceful ethnic co-existence and a forerunner of ethnic cultural preservation. Many defined it as an ethnic paradise where people knew

⁷⁰ My distinguishing two levels of post-feminism is directly influenced by Michele Barrett’s interpretation of post-feminism. She divided it into two meanings: a popular sentiment and an academic thinking and argued that “It is useful to keep the popular and the academic meanings of post-feminism separate.” I will introduce her definition of popular post-feminism in this section. For the academic definition, she provided it as “Academic developments that have transformed feminist theory through the incorporation of ideas from post-structuralist theory. These ideas cut away so much of the conceptual ground on which feminist theory previously rested, that – to some – they justify the use of the term ‘post-feminist.’”

how to tolerate differences and appreciate diversity. Ethnic Studies scholar Jonathan Y. Okamura summarized clearly four features of “the Hawai‘i multicultural model,” which are “a tradition of tolerance and peaceful coexistence” under the spirit of Aloha; “harmonious” and “low keyed” social relations with high rates of intermarriage; “equalization of opportunity and status” for all ethnic and racial groups; and “a shared ‘local’ culture and identity.”⁷¹ The discourse of popular multiculturalism was omnipresent in the Narcissus Festival. As Frances H. Goo, the 2000 Chinese Chamber of Commerce president clearly articulated:

This continuous assimilation ...of all the ethnic societies in the State... is a testimony of how diversity and creativity of human nature can compliment and strengthen each other. Diversity does not have to be a divisive force. The activities of the Narcissus Festival continue to serve as part of Hawaii’s living model to an increasingly divided world on how to blend our distinctiveness and enjoyment”⁷²

Neal Abercrombie, Hawaii’s House Representative to the U.S. Congress since 1986, has a famous slogan that “In Hawai‘i – our Rainbow Society, diversity defines us rather than divides us.”⁷³ Goo’s statement clearly echoed Abercrombie’s and amplified the significance of Hawai‘i for the rest of the United States and even the world as a “living model” of ethnic harmony. Contrasted against the ethnic turmoils all over the world (which could include the ethnic conflicts in Los Angeles, Bosnia, the Middle East, Rwanda, and Southeast Asia), the Narcissus Festival became not only a successful ethnic project but also an integral component of Hawaii’s “Rainbow Society.” The Narcissus Festival Chair of 2002, Frank K.S. Mow also stressed the significance of multiculturalism

⁷¹ Okamura, “The Illusion of Paradise,” 267.

⁷² Goo, *51st Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2000): 10.

⁷³ Abercrombie interview, February 2001.

in Hawai'i: "Here in the State of Hawaii, we take pride in contributing to and sharing in our multi-cultural heritages. Together we can contribute to build a stronger blended community in the democracy of the United States of America with aloha." ⁷⁴ In this statement, Mow made a clear connection of multiculturalism with American democracy as well as with the "spirit of Aloha" in Hawai'i. With one phrase of "the democracy of the U.S.A with aloha," Hawaiian culture is appropriated into American ideology and simultaneously the hegemony of American democracy is internalized and localized by using the concept of Aloha. What seamlessly superimposed the American ideology upon the culture of Aloha was the "multi-cultural heritages." However, what went unquestioned was the different power positions the American colonizers and Native Hawaiians held through this superimposition.

The 1997 Narcissus Queen Elyn Yao, who was born and grew up on the continental United States, also lauded "the spirit of Aloha." She claimed that:

Hawaii is not only the home of many beautiful cultures, but it is also a unique place where distinct ethnic groups can preserve their identities and traditions while living together in harmony and respecting one another. These qualities generate the "aloha spirit" which makes Hawaii such a special place.

She further contrasted other American places where she grew up with Hawai'i,

Growing up as a minority on the East Coast, in the Midwest and in the Pacific Northwest was challenging at times. Looking back, I remember feeling as though I constantly had to prove my abilities, explain my family customs and defend my cultural differences. I was never ashamed of my Chinese heritage, only afraid of how others would respond to it. Overwhelmed by these challenges, I had little desire to explore my Chinese culture or its origin until...I moved to Hawaii. After my first visit to the Islands, I was fascinated by the cultural awareness, preservation and acceptance, which are in abundance. These new discoveries

⁷⁴ Frank Mow, 53rd *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2002): 67.

inspired me to embark on a journey towards cultural enlightenment, which led to my participation in the 47th Narcissus Festival Queen Pageant.⁷⁵

As shown in Yao's account, the "abundance" of "cultural awareness, preservation and acceptance" in Hawai'i invoked her interest in "cultural enlightenment" and in exploring her own ethnic identity. Once Yao identified Hawai'i as a multicultural paradise, she had to find her own niche. This parallel between multiculturalism and identity seeking was expressed by many Chinese Americans in Hawai'i. Indeed, together with multiculturalism, "identity" became a buzzword in the 1990s and permeated through the Festival. Larry Ing, one of the few remaining founding members of the Narcissus Festival, reinterpreted the meaning of the whole event with the concept of identity,

Like all of the ethnic celebrations in Hawaii, the Narcissus Festival was born of the need for identity survival. It was not so much a desire to impress or entertain others. A real need has to do with identity survival, a solidarity, a true sense of 'being' in a polyglot community.⁷⁶

Narcissus contestants also used the same concept in addressing their Pageant experience. The 1995 Queen Karen W.L. Lee mentioned that the whole Pageant experience was an identity search process for her, who grew up half in Singapore and half in Hawai'i and felt uncomfortable in both cultures for a long time – until her Narcissus tour to China.

The 2004 Queen Kathleen Mei Lan Wong, who has a Chinese father and a Caucasian mother, was first encouraged to run for the Pageant queen when she was a little girl, to whom her father "used to coyly say, 'You will be my Narcissus Queen someday.'" But as a young woman, she decided to join the Pageant for her own search

⁷⁵Elyn Yao, "Cultural Pride," 48th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1997): 100.

⁷⁶Larry Ing, "Narcissus Festivals," 46th *Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1995): 104-5.

for identity, “I grew up being very proud of both of my cultures, and I had immense respect for my ancestors. My Chinese heritage instilled in me many of the virtues that I hold today. The Narcissus experience looked very attractive in developing my cultural identity.”⁷⁷

Many beauty contestants entered the Pageant because they took it as an opportunity to learn about their Chinese heritage and explore their Chinese identity. Because of this motivation, and because of the classes on Chinese culture they have to take during their training as well as the lack of a swimsuit phase, many women refused to call the Narcissus Queen Pageant a beauty contest. Instead, they regarded it as an ethnic pageant. Michele Choy, a contestant in 1974, believed in the significance of identity exploration through the Pageant. She reformed the Narcissus Queen Pageant after she became the Pageant chair in the late 1980s by emphasizing the contestants’ exposure to Chinese culture and Chinese community through the Pageant. Since 1974 Choy had been involved continuously in the Pageant – first as the contestant coordinator for 18 years and then as the Pageant chair since 1992. Choy had attended the Chinese language school when she was young and developed a particular interest in Chinese folk dance. She took formal lessons from various Chinese dance teachers who were assigned on cultural diplomacy missions by the ROC government in Taiwan from the 1960s and opened her own dance school for a decade in the 1970s to 1980s. From her decades of experience with the Festival and the Pageant, she knew how to improve the beauty contest to make it more attractive to potential candidates and more rewarding to the majority of contestants who would not win any title.

⁷⁷ Kathleen Mei Lan Wong, “A Lifelong Dream,” *55th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2004): 111.
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As the Pageant chair, Choy made a conscious reprogramming of the contest's training phase by moving the Pageant "away from being primarily a beauty contest" and by "promoting Chinese culture." She located a local Chinese historian, a Chinese cookbook writer, a Ching Ming (Qing Ming) ceremony master, a martial art master, a calligrapher, a narcissus flower cultivator, and a Chinese crafts artisan to provide classes on Chinese history and culture to the contestants at evenings and weekends. To motivate the contestants to "learn Chinese culture," Choy changed the content of the contest's speech phase "from general questions about personality and hobbies to Chinese tradition and customs." To prepare for this phase as well as the pre-Pageant public appearances, contestants needed to research and write a one-minute speech on different topics that were designed by their Chinese history and culture teacher. Festival leaders first found Choy's invention burdensome and too extravagant an investment of the Chamber's community resources in the contestants. After a trying period, they saw the appreciation of the contestants and their families for the cultural classes as well as an increase in contestants, and accepted Choy's reprogramming of the Pageant.⁷⁸ Festival leaders began to argue that the Narcissus Queen Pageant was not a beauty contest, but rather a cultural pageant – a celebration of Chinese traditions and values and a sharing of Chinese heritage with other ethnic groups in Hawai'i.

Many queens and contestants emphasized the significance of the cultural classes organized by Choy. The 1997 forty-eighth Queen Elyn Yao said,

Within this four-month voyage, I learned everything from what the little red date on New Year's gau symbolizes to how my ancestors created notable inventions such as paper, the magnetic compass and fireworks. I feel extremely fortunate to

⁷⁸ *49th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1998): 60.

have worked with authorities in Chinese cuisines, history, culture and arts as well as personal development and speech presentation.⁷⁹

The 2004 Queen Kathleen Mei Lan Wong shared her experience with the classes:

The effects this experience has had on my life are immeasurable. The classes we took sparked a renewed sense of cultural pride as I proudly shared my new knowledge with my family and friends. I found that my excitement about my culture brought out interest in my family as well. I became close to Popo, as we speak about ancestors in China; my mother, as we discussed how she chose my Chinese name, my sisters, as we rolled egg rolls around the table at Thanksgiving (a recipe taught by our beloved cooking teacher Linda) and my extended family, as we jumped into games of mah jong at parties. The Narcissus experience helped to bring me closer to my family, which has been priceless. Mr. Chong [the history teacher] was able to retrace my Wong family's immigration to Hawaii. He found their records in San Francisco and gave my family and my [Sic] information and pictures we had never seen before. Thank you so much Mr. Chong.⁸⁰

During my research, some past queens and contestants from the 1950s and 1960s who had attended the Pageant in recent years also remarked that the present contestants were luckier because they had the benefit of all the “good things of the Pageant – the cultural classes,” which were not available in their time. During my Pageant audience survey, the audience also told me that the Pageant was educational because they could learn about Chinese history and the meaning of Chinese customs from the contestants' speeches. However, what the Pageant conveyed about “Chinese culture” and defined as “Chinese” was problematic. I will analyze the meaning of the Chineseness as constructed through the contestants' speech in the later part of this section.

The concept of “the Rainbow Society” was also used to curb the complaints against the change in the Pageant's entry requirement and the lack of Chinese items in the contestants' talent competition. As mentioned in the previous section, Festival leaders

⁷⁹ Yao, “Cultural Pride,” 100.

⁸⁰ Wong, “A Lifelong Dream,” 111.

redefined the boundary of Chineseness by changing the blood quantum to 50 percent in 1995, meaning that as long as the contestant's father was full Chinese she could compete in the Pageant. In 1996 the Pageant allowed that 50 percent of blood to be "maternal," thus if the contestant's mother was full Chinese but her father was not, she could also run. The condition was that the "applicant shall agree to use her natural mother's Chinese maiden names, if her surname is not Chinese, in all Narcissus Festival publications and at all Festival events".⁸¹ The change invoked a lot of "racial murmurs"⁸² within the community and the critique that the Chamber was giving up its Chinese roots too easily by accepting half-Chinese contestants. The same group also criticized that the Chamber did not value Chinese talent entries high enough and thus saw an increasing dominance of Western and Hawaiian performances at the Pageant. To these complaints, the Chamber and some Pageant winners responded that what they were promoting through the contest was "not a false Chinese community" but a community that "has become an assimilated group through intermarriage," and "combines the best of American, Chinese, and Hawaiian cultures."⁸³ This statement was a clear echo of popular multiculturalism. The seemingly flawless statement was problematic because of its selectivity in naming American, Chinese, and Hawaiian as the core components of the Chinese American community in Hawai'i. Again I will further explain this in the later part of this section.

Popular post-feminism also exerted a great influence on the young Chinese American women's perception of their identity and on their decision to enter the

⁸¹ *Narcissus Queen Pageant Registration Rules*, 1999.

⁸² Concept borrowed from Chris Yano.

⁸³ Chong interview, October 2003.

Narcissus Queen Pageant. Different from the domestic-oriented womanhood of the 1950s and the militant feminism of the 1970s, what defined ideal womanhood in the 1990s was a mixture of feminism and femininity. As explained by Michele Barrett, the popular post-feminism, as a response to the perceived lack of femininity in the feminist movement of the 1970s, was the “popular feeling that a drearily militant feminist politics has been succeeded by a new phenomenon – we can shorthand it as ‘girl power’ –which puts the femininity back into women’s sense of identity and aspiration.”⁸⁴ Girl power refers to the phenomenon that “Girls are doing better at school, saucy, girls are not frightened, girls are confident, some are even violent. Girls, now, are the beneficiaries of the battles that feminists once fought: they take for granted their equality with boys – even superiority over boys.”⁸⁵ This popular strand of new feminism developed as a reaction to the feminist political movement of the 1970s. Many women in the 1970s shared the belief that “there were no significant differences between men and women – other than those created in a sexist society – and that the task of feminism was to bring about a social and economic order in which the underlying equality was realized.” In the 1990s, however, the feminist movement was “now seen as attempting to obliterate the difference between men and women in its serious pursuit of the goals of equality.” Different from this “equality” model, post-feminism advocated the “difference” model, arguing that the insistence on equality “had understated fundamental differences between women and men. Whether understood as biological or psychological in nature, such differences were there and were important.”

⁸⁴ Michele Barrett, “Post-feminism,” *Understanding Contemporary Society: Theories of the Present*, Gary Browning, Abigail Halcli and Frank Webster, eds., (Sage Publications, 2000), 46.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

Natasha Walter named this new embracement of femininity “the new feminism” in her book titled as such. Walter attempted to “rescue a proper feminist concern with equality and power from the unfortunate connotations of political correctness, socialist politics, poor dress sense and worse make-up.” Walter used Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister of the United Kingdom in the 1980s, as an icon for the new feminism, who had feminine hair-dos and managed to “normalize female success.”⁸⁶

Women in the 1990s were the beneficiaries of the battles that feminists once fought vehemently in the 1970s. Young girls no longer had to play dumb, such as lowering their school grades or making deliberate spelling mistakes in their love letters in order to attract boys, like in the famous study done by Mirra Komarovsky in 1946. Young women could enter the professions that used to be dominated by men more easily and push the “glass ceiling” considerably higher. They took for granted the equality they could enjoy with men and wanted to retain their difference from men. They wanted to be “glamorous, sexually attractive to men and very brainy.” Mass media produced a endless list of such female icons, which included Captain Kathryn Janeway in *Star Trek* series, *Voyager*, the fragile single attorney Ally McBeal in *Ally McBeal*, the sorority-queen-turned-attorney Elle Woods in the *Legally Blond*, the leading female characters in *Sex and the City*, the sexy and brainy female action icons in *Dark Angle*, *Alias*, and *Lara Croft Tomb Raider*, the new *Charlie’s Angels*, and all the princesses in such movies as *The Princess’s Diaries*, *Shrek*, and *Ella Enchanted*. They represented the new package of femininity that combines “traditional feminine good looks with a new exercise of women's power.” This “reinstating femininity” is “partly, but not exclusively about

⁸⁶ Natasha Walter, *New Feminism* (London: Virago Press, 1999).

heterosexuality.”⁸⁷ The corporate executive is stunningly dressed, the financial expert gorgeous. What is defined as desirable for both is the economic and social success of women in breaking through the glass ceiling and “the retention of the classic tropes of femininity.”⁸⁸

This “feminine presentation of self” was practiced by the contestants in the Narcissus Queen Pageant. The contestants in the 1990s no longer expected the Pageant to help them marry well as in the 1950s and 1960s or to find them a desirable job – such as a flight attendant and a company’s public relations representative – as in the 1970s and 1980s. They entered the contest to accomplish a sense self-fulfillment that was not obtainable by competing on equal footing with men. They entered the contest to meet the challenge of the ideal “super woman.”⁸⁹

Through my interviews with contestants from different decades, I noticed the change in their motivations in joining the Pageant. The motivations for participating in the Pageant in the earlier decades tended to be the novelty, the celebrity treatment, the media attention, the fame, the pride of the family, and a chance to marry well. The average age for the women to enter the contest was younger, most of them were high school seniors or college students at UH. Their desirable jobs tended to be modeling, fashion design, and teaching – the traditional occupations for women. In the 1970s, the motivations to travel, to see the world, and to land a desirable job were still common. Most of the contestants had never left the Islands in their life.

⁸⁷ Barrett, “Post-feminism,” 48.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸⁹ Chan interview, June 2003.

In the 1990s and 2000s, many women expressed their desire to learn about their Chinese heritage or to improve the skills of public speech and managing stress through the Pageant. Most contestants were college juniors and seniors; some even finished their graduate education and were already pursuing a professional career. Some were first generation immigrants from Chinese or non-Chinese speaking countries. Some had attended college or graduate school outside Hawai‘i and traveled to different countries and continents. Some were Chinese Americans with mixed ancestry who had never had a chance to learn about Chinese culture before. The Festival provided them the most immediate access to Chinese culture, no matter how limited that was.

April Chan, an East Coast university graduate of architecture who oversaw two renovation projects of hotels during her Pageant year, used the term “super woman” to label the ideal image of women in the 2000s. She defined “super woman” in the same way popular post-feminism defined it – “to have a lot of power without losing her feminine characteristics.” Chan denied she was a “super woman” and also denied it to be her goal. She identified herself as a “tomboy” who “feels more comfortable being goofy with men than doing shopping and girl’s stuff.” She expressed that dealing with the fifteen men working under her in the hotel renovation projects was “much easier than babysitting my niece for a day.” However, she decided to join the Pageant because “that was the biggest challenge I could think of for this year without having to quit my job.” Her decision was shocking to everyone in her family because “a beauty queen was the least like me.” She won the first princess of her year and claimed the Pageant to be “quite an extreme sport.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Chan interviews, June 2003

There were quite a few contestants like Chan, if not as extreme. I have met several who told me they had never applied make-up and never worn high-heels before they entered the contest. They did not treat what they learned in poise and make-up classes as skills they would use in their real life. The Pageant coordinator of the past 25 years, Michele Choy, once expressed to me her puzzlement about the motivations of the recent years' contestants. It seemed to her that the material awards did not seem appealing to the more recent contestants because they had been "traveling and successful." The cultural classes, that were available to the contestants, could be redundant or irrelevant to those who just left Taiwan, Hong Kong, or Singapore not long ago. They did not seem to need the Chamber to locate a job or build connections to do business with China. However, some were willing to spend thousands of dollars on personal coaches, make-ups, hair-dos, tailor-made *cheongsam*, talent lessons, and tickets for family and friends. They also invested three years (one year for preparation, one year for training and competing, and one year to serve at the court) of her personal time for it. Afterward, "they just went back to what they were before," meaning that they did not maintain the shape, posture, and style of Pageant women after three years of training and practicing. The 2005 Queen Darah Dung, who had won four other beauty crowns and nine in total combined with her two other sisters, provided her explanation in a local newspaper about the drive for winning beauty contests among young women. She traced it to the "independent mind" of "the millennial generation – babies of the baby-boomers born from 1977-1994," saying that "...This generation is very motivated and very driven to go after what they want. Our interests are very different... Women (of this generation)

are very independent and outspoken about what they want. That's a good thing. They are taking on more leadership roles."⁹¹

The Festival and Pageant leaders fully exploited the concept of "super woman" in their contestant introductions through all the functions. During the kick-off reception, a Chamber president proudly stated, "The contestants nowadays have 'much higher caliber', are more talented, better educated, more cosmopolitan, and more successful. Yet they are also more beautiful." In all the public appearances in different shopping malls, each contestant was presented on stage in standardized Chinese *cheongsam* while their education background, career experiences, talents, hobbies, and lifetime goals were announced. On the Pageant stage, the same information was delivered by the master of ceremonies while the contestant was showing off her shapely figure in tight and glittering Suzzie Wong-style *cheongsam*.

However, in addition to multiculturalism and post-feminism, other messages were also salient on the Pageant stage. What makes those messages more thought-provoking was that they were unclaimed and uninterpreted by Festival leaders and Pageant participants. It was the absence of their labeling that made them conspicuous. On the stage of multiculturalism, what went unexplained included the compartmentalization and hierarchy of Chineseness and Americanness, the appropriation of Hawaiian culture, and the ethnic stratification within the local community. On the stage of "the super woman," what went unexplained contained the subordination of women and the celebration of bourgeois Chinese American cultural values.

⁹¹ Susan K. Sunderland, "The Rooster Queen," *MidWeek*, Feb 16, 2005.:56.

The Pageant demonstrated a compartmentalization of Chineseness and Americanness and a hierarchy along a linear history of modernity. This practice was in direct contrast against the third and fourth dimensions of the Hawai'i Multicultural Model as summarized by Jonathan Okamura, which are the "equalization of opportunity and status," and "shared local culture and identity evident in multicultural lifestyles." It was most obvious in the use of Chinese symbols at the phase of *cheongsam* presentation during the Pageant show. For that phase, a contestant not only needed large-sized designs sewn or glued onto her body-fit, tailor-made *cheongsam* with glittering rhinestones and sequins, she also had to write up a description of the design for the audience. Most gown descriptions defined "Chinese" with a wide range of symbols, ranging from a powerful dragon, a graceful phoenix, and a romantic butterfly, to such colors as prosperous gold, happy red, and elegant fuchsia. Words that were related to the West include "power," "dream," "prosperity"; the East "sacrifice," "family," "harmony," "arts," "ageless." Although Chineseness was depicted in a seemingly benign way, as opposed to the images of "yellow peril" or "red peril," there was clearly the reaffirmation of a hierarchy with a modern West and a traditional East.

Here is the description written by a contestant about her gown in 1998 Pageant:

Ester captures the spirit of her Chinese & Western cultures through a *cheongsam* with a combination of a Chinese dragon and a Phoenix. The dragon symbolizes the power and the tradition, which she stands for, and the Phoenix symbolizes the graceful and social side of her. White and Silver sequins offer guidance and protection to us all. Her elegant fuchsia *cheongsam* manifests her excitement and enthusiasm for the future as the wisdom of the traditional East bridges the challenges and hopes of the West for a united and peaceful world. (1998 Narcissus Queen Pageant Script).

As seen in Ester's distinction of "the wisdom of the traditional East" and "the challenges and hopes of the West," the East and the West are clearly assigned to different

stages on a linear scale of development: the East, as China, is imagined with its past, the ancientness of its tradition whereas the West, represented by the United States, is imagined with its future and modernity, advanced enough to handle challenges, and powerful enough to have hopes.

The speeches of the contestants were all about “Chinese traditions and customs” as well. For this phase, a contestant had to do research on one question out of a pool of eighty topics provided by the Chinese history teacher, and write a one-minute speech on that topic, and memorize it with proper speech manners and styles.

The topics for the 1998 speech phase included:

1. The fabled 8 mortals play a significant role in Chinese religion, art and culture. Define this group and their particular powers.
2. Chinese families do not cut their New Year’s pudding or “Ninggow” until the second or third day of the Chinese New Year. What is the reason for this?
3. The “Cheongsam” is the most appealing and seemingly traditional garment of Chinese ladies. During what period of history did women borrow this garb from Chinese men and how did the present design evolve?
4. The representation of “Lise” or “Hongbow” is an old Chinese custom. For what events is it given and what is its significance besides making children happy?
5. Chinese family system, filial piety remains the essential concept of respect and responsibility. Define filial piety and a tale associated with it.
6. Chinese regard green jade as being of primary value, yet it is rather new to the Chinese culture. What was traditional jade in old China and when and why did green jade become popular?
7. Plump glutinous rice dumplings or “joong”, dipping with chunks of spiced pork, beans, and golden salted-egg yolks is a favorite dish of all plump Chinese. Comment on the history and festival related to this delicious snack.
8. The Chinese pomelo fruit, or “boolook,” and its leaves are very significant in the Chinese culture. Tell us about the fruit and its role in Chinese religion and practices.
9. When calling on friends, Chinese always present fruit in even numbers. What is the reason for this and what should we do to indicate good manners?

Chinese culture as covered in the 1998 topics is highly essentialized. All the “Chinese” customs mentioned during the whole phase of speech are timeless and boundaryless. Only two topics from the above ask about changes in Chinese cultural

practices (no.3 and no.6). Most treated Chinese culture as invariant and unchanging, such as the questions on “Hongbow,” “Ninggow,” “boolook,” and filial piety. This representation of Chineseness as “ancient,” “traditional,” and “unchanging” locks the “imagined” China in the “constructed” past and avoids any confrontation with their contemporary Americanness, thus making the “imagined” China unchallenging and enjoyable. This in turn re-affirms the audience’s ethnographic “gaze” or “self gaze”⁹² that fetishizes the Chineseness as artistic, graceful, and exotic as expressed through the body of women. It helps gloss over any current conflict and problems within Chinatown and the community and feeds them a soothing, glorifying story of a long, unbroken, harmonious history and displayable aesthetic details of green jade, pomelo leaves, elegant *cheongsam*, and even-numbered fruits. It brings pleasant illusions to the troubled social relations and conflicting identities.

In addition to the compartmentalization and hierarchization of Americanness and Chineseness, the Pageant also demonstrated the appropriation of Hawaiian culture and the ethnic stratification within the local community. Although claiming an integral part of the multicultural society with shared commonalities, the Chinese American community as presented on the Pageant stage was highly essentialized into American, Chinese, and Hawaiian dimensions. This was obvious in the hierarchy of talents. The talents that were regarded by Pageant leaders and judges as desirable ones that could positively represent the community were categorized into American/Western (such as piano, ballet, opera, Broadway songs, and Jazz dance), Chinese (ribbon dance, martial arts, Chinese story told in English, and calligraphy) and Hawaiian (*hula*) groups. Those that did not fit into the

⁹² David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/American: historical crossing of a racial frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

three categories would be ignored or scorned upon. For instance, Arabian belly dance and performances with not-well-known Chinese musical instruments were looked down upon even among the contestants. The multicultural model was highly selective and exclusive. None of the local Japanese, Taiwanese, and Southeast Asian performance items were even possible to be presented. Hawaiian *hula* was a popular winning talent in this era but it was limited to only the *hapa-haole* style of *hula* instead of the full range of *hula*. As a contestant noticed, “They want the happy and sexy *hula* not the angry *hula*.”⁹³ Ethnic stratification was clearly seen in the ethnic jokes the masters of ceremonies shared with the audience. Fewer and “thinner” jokes were made about “the *Haoles*,” “the Chinese”, and “the Japanese.” Many more “thicker” jokes were about “the Portuguese” and “the Filipinos.” Occasionally stereotypes were made about the “sissy” men from Punahou and ‘Iolani. Yet mostly, the stereotypes were about the “dumb” men from public schools.

Stratification also existed among the contestants. Winners of the contest were more likely to be graduates from private high schools. Certain measures were taken by the Pageant leaders to assure a more level ground for all the contestants. An equal amount of money was provided to all contestants to defray some cost. The uniform *cheongsam* in terms of style and quality was mandated for any pre-Pageant activity, including the public appearance, kick-off reception, and judge’s interview. Stage prompts and supporting performers were kept at minimum to prevent the contestants from competing through stage set-ups. However, as mentioned earlier, a contestant’s socio-economic background still played a crucial role in the Pageant. Contestants from private high schools generally could afford more investment in their competition – personal coaches, fitness training,

⁹³ Loo interview, June 2003.

talent classes, salon-done make-up and hair-dos, and more expensive *cheongsam*.

“Local” contestants also had more chance to win as compared to the “non-locals”, and “non-local” winners normally faced extra pressure and scrutiny from the community after the Pageant. As mentioned earlier, the Pageant leaders had adopted the “50 percent blood quantum” rule and fended off complaints about the Pageant not encouraging Chinese talents and Chinese language skills by using a multiculturalist argument. The seemingly non-discriminative and realistic policy was actually more beneficial to “local” contestants because they were more likely to have mixed racial background and could not speak any Chinese.

The “super woman” claim also clashed into the subordination of young women through the Narcissus Festival head-on. The Festival and Pageant events have constantly witnessed the representation of the Chinese American community in the symbolism of an ideal-type conventional family, which is composed of a powerful male and a virtuous female. The male represents authority and protection whereas the female represents chastity and beauty. The patriarchal division of gender roles is shown in almost every stage of the Festival, from the Chamber president’s introduction of the Pageant at public appearances to the State governor’s crowning and dancing with the queen at the coronation ball (Shortly after she became the first female governor in Hawai‘i, Linda Lingle expressed during my interview that she was lucky enough to have a male lieutenant governor to carry out the role of dancing with the new Narcissus Queen at the coronation ball). The divided gender roles were also evident during the 2002 Narcissus Tour to China that I did participant observation with. At the banquet of each city or capital on our itinerary, the Chamber president would talk about the significance of

Chinese connections across nations and oceans whereas the queen and her court would entertain the local government dignitaries with their *hula* dances. During the entire three-week tour, the queen and her court hardly had any chance to speak up at any public event. Whenever they attempted to speak for our group or to ask about the city we were visiting, they were soon silenced or suppressed by the tour leaders.

Although called “the goodwill ambassadors” of the Chamber as well as the Chinese American community in Hawai‘i, the Pageant winners were never invited to the Chamber’s business meetings nor were eligible to join the Chamber. The queen and the court were provided free the monthly newsletter *The Lantern* by the Chamber during their year of reign. But once a new queen and court were selected, they were no longer on the Chamber’s mailing list. One past court member commented, “What a waste! After we went through all of that, they just let us go so easily. We enjoy socializing with people, like to help the community, but they just think they are over with us. How much can a newsletter cost? I guess they just want us to smile, and be beautiful.”⁹⁴

While the goal of contestants was to reach a balance between feminism and femininity, their feminist aspect was obscured and subdued in the Pageant. The style of *cheongsam* was more stagy, glamorous, more “show girl type,” more expensive with all the crystals and rhinestones, some designed by professional fashion designers. It was also more curvy and with higher side slits. Their accomplishments, good education, and worldly experience, however, were only treated as background credentials and pleasant markers to be considered at the judges’ will instead of being put to use to promote the Chinese American community or the Hawai‘i community. Their role model only required

⁹⁴ Lai interview, January 2005.

them to be nice, mature, but not in charge or take any concrete action. Their worldly view was not expected to put to use during the Narcissus Tour. They were expected to listen and keep their mouths shut when the conversation on politics and economy proceeded at the banquet tables. “At the tour, we would just sit there and listen to what they say. Sometimes, we could really help the conversation. Of course we would not speak all our mind. We know how to respond properly. But of course they did not want our opinion.”⁹⁵

No matter how capable a queen was, the Chamber never provided an opportunity nor any training for her to be a community leader. Not a single queen or contestant became a community leader and president of the Chamber in the 56 years of history of the Pageant. Although a few became involved in state politics, only Maile Mei Jun Loo, the queen of 1993, became a leader of the Chinese American community who was able to realize some of her plans to improve the community. After Loo finished her reign as the queen, she launched the “Cherish Our Chinatown” beautification program that was sponsored by the Chamber, the United Chinese Society and the Chinatown Merchants Association for two years. She coordinated Chinatown cleanup efforts with the cooperation and support of Mayor Frank Fasi, the City and County of Honolulu, the Honolulu Police Department and the Honolulu Fire Department. Under her leadership, on a Sunday in April of each year, close to 1,500 volunteers from over 50 organizations, including school children, gathered in Chinatown to pick up trash, sweep, scrub sidewalks, remove gum, and wipe out graffiti. Other queens, courts, and contestants sought other ways to “give back to the community” – such as joining the fund raising, volunteering at the Special Olympics, and visiting classes in local schools to explain

⁹⁵ Lai interview, January 2005.

Chinese traditions and customs. In 2003, a team that was made up of the full court and other Chamber volunteers won third place in the annual international dragon boat race in Waikîkî, which greatly impressed the Chamber leaders. Most contestants and winners, however, remained “crouching tigers and hidden dragons” and followed the status quo of the Chamber. Therefore, although their goal is to achieve new femininity, to strike a combination of feminism and femininity, their expected role in the Chinese American community only reconstructed them as the subordinate and accessory gender that has no power to make any decisions and speak their mind.

Some contestants and winners were treated as rebellious daughters who needed to be disciplined. They were expected to be the women who wanted fame, glory, attention, pampering, and family pride. They were treated according to that image. If they stepped off the expected role, they were blamed for not being mature and not knowing their place. They were expected to be accommodating and supportive in a non-aggressive, non-challenging way.

The studies of Zizeck and Weden on ideology and hegemony have shown that what made ideology and hegemony function was the “domination with cynicism,” the public’s “cynical attitude,” or its “living in a lie.” The hegemony of the ruling class will crumble when it stops being empty slogans and gestures, when the public becomes true believers of the ideology or hegemony and ask their ruling elites to be accountable for it. In Seo’s words, “When political subjects fully accept the factuality of the ideological construct produced by the ruling elites, the ideology can be easily appropriated and utilized by subordinates; the ruling elites lose the capacity to manipulate the contents of

the ruling ideology.”⁹⁶ Seo used this argument to explain the rise of popular nationalism in China. I believe the same idea can be used to evaluate the unclaimed practices in the Festival. Maile Mei Jun Loo, the Narcissus queen who launched the “Cherish Our Chinatown” campaign serves as the best example of how the difference a true believer of post-feminism can make. Through her cleaning-up Chinatown campaign, “meet people and gain confidence,” “become a leader,” and “give back to the community” were no longer empty slogans for the contestants. The hegemony of post-feminism could be utilized by the contestants to ask the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to be held accountable. In the same vein, as a true believer of multiculturalism, a contestant can launch resistance against the Hawaii Multicultural Model from within.

Conclusion:

Contrary to many feminists’ hope that beauty contests would phase out as women were more empowered with equality and upward mobility, the case of the Narcissus Festival and Queen Pageant in the 1990s and 2000s has demonstrated the opposite. This more-than-half-a-century-old ethnic event in Honolulu gained a new momentum in the recent decade among the multi-generation Chinese American community in Hawai‘i. It became an important vehicle for them to navigate through the entangled forces of globalization, localization, and indigenization and to sustain their well-established socio-economic and host status in Hawai‘i.

The Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant also found its new momentum under the new American national culture of multiculturalism and post-feminism. It was the hegemony of the new culture that brought many women to the

⁹⁶ Seo, “Chapter Two,”12.

Pageant. However, as “no hegemony is ever total,” many counter-hegemonic practices ran salient yet were taken for granted and unclaimed in the Festival. As hegemony operates through “domination with cynicism,” a powerful resistance existed in the core of the hegemony itself. Hope lies in the end of cynicism and a demand for the hegemony to exercise what it preaches. As seen in the Festival, hope exists when the young women begin to pursue their multiculturalist and post-feminist ideal through the Pageant.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: “Hybrid and Diasporic America”

The previous chapters have examined the historical notion of Americanness and Chineseness through a local case study of the Narcissus Festival and Pageant. They have provided abundant material to demonstrate the contingency of Americanness and the specificity of Chineseness. Generally speaking, the mainstream definition of Americanness in twentieth-century Hawai‘i changed from “whiteness” in the earlier twentieth century to “assimilation” in the mid-twentieth century and then to “ethnic diversity” in late-twentieth century. The meaning of Chineseness experienced five stages of changes: being invisible and non-assimilated in the 1910s, becoming assimilated in the 1930s, becoming an “exotic American” in the 1950s and 1960s, claiming to be an “ethnic American” in the 1970s, and being a “multicultural American” in the 1990s. Gender was a fundamental instrument in the reconstruction of Americanness and Chineseness over the century. Chinese American beauty pageant women not only represented the identity changes through the display of their body but also spearheaded those changes by constructing a community symbol with their body.

The case study has demonstrated that the “creolization” and “localization” approach that is suggested by Ien Ang and Allen Chun is an effective way to de-center Chineseness and emphasize its contingent meaning in specific contexts. Homi Bhabha in the *Location of Culture* (1994) critiques the totalizing view of cultures as “self-generating organic wholes” and argues strongly for privileging the perspective of persons drawn

from “in-between spaces” and for the strengths of “hybridity” and mixture.¹ In the context of cultural theory and studies of race and ethnicity, “hybridity” refers to “the newly composed, mixed, or contradictory identities resulting from immigration, exile, and migrancy.”² It is mostly treated as a positive experience that can de-essentialize such notions as subject, culture, ethnicity, and nation-state. The approach of emphasizing “creolization” and “hybridization” through “local interaction” has fully demonstrated the diasporic articulation of “traveling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-traveling,”³ or the agency of Chinese Americans in their interaction with other social groups and their identification of themselves in specific locations. This approach, with its emphasis on “both conflictive and collaborative coexistence and intermixture with other cultures,” encouraged a study of the construction of Chineseness beyond the Asian American *vis-à-vis* Euro-American relationship into such dynamics as indigenous *vis-à-vis* settlers, residents *vis-à-vis* tourists, and locals *vis-à-vis haoles*.

However, this case study has also demonstrated that the hybridity approach did not answer all of the problems. Localization of Chineseness did take place. But a new problem was that it took place as a perpetuation of the Western mainstream paradigm that equates the West to modernity and the future and the East and the Pacific to tradition and the past. An emphasis on local hybridization in diasporic identity construction may prevent an “obsession” with geopolitical or cultural Chineseness. However, it does not stop the “obsession” with modernity, progress, and the supremacy of American colonial

¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

² Peter Brooker, *A Glossary of Cultural Theory* (London: Arnold, 2002).

³ James Clifford, “Traveling Cultures,” in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 108.

power. I therefore suggest a more careful examination of “hybridization.” I argue that the imbalance of global power does not end with hybridization but often continues in a hybridized body.

In the concluding chapter, I further demonstrate how, in the Pageant’s representation of China and in the annual Narcissus Goodwill Tour to China, various meanings of Chineseness coexist and function in various power structures but do not necessarily hybridize or mix. The first part of this chapter highlights the problem of the hybridized Chineseness in the Festival. I demonstrate that although evidence of hybridization permeates the Festival and the Pageant, it resides side by side with the essentialization of “Chineseness.” The practitioners and participants often times celebrate their hybridity self-consciously through the Festival and the Pageant and simultaneously they carve a special niche for their “Chineseness” in a hierarchical relationship to their “Americanness.”

The rest of the chapter focuses on the “diasporic” dimension of hybridized Chinese Americans as represented through the Narcissus Goodwill Tour. I argue that, contrary to an emergence of global citizens and melted boundaries of nation-states as some scholars have predicted, the Chinese Americans’ “homeland” tour is more a reenactment of leaving the ancestral land than a reattachment to it. After the tour, they return to their host place with more ethnic pride than diasporic identification. I also argue that, due to the specific power dynamics between the United States and China within the frame of global capitalism, the tour exemplifies more the process of Americanization rather than Chinesenization of the Chinese Americans. As the tour unfolds, what they experience and how they are perceived in China invoke more their national identity than

their ethnic identity. The Narcissus Tour case also reveals the heterogeneity in diasporic consciousness and diasporic identification of Chinese Americans. Therefore, although a new diasporic consciousness did occur among Chinese Americans, we cannot diminish the political economy of “time-space compression” and exaggerate the mobility and identity flexibility of Chinese Americans.

Hybridization in the Narcissus Pageant

Hybridization permeates in cultural, geopolitical, racial, and physical – four different dimensions of the community events. Culturally, the Festival was a deliberate “invention of tradition” from its very beginning. The inception of the Festival in 1949 was a result of coming into power of a new leadership in the Honolulu Chinese community – the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, which was more American-educated and more interested in entering the decision-making process in Islands’ business and institutions than the former leader, the United Chinese Society. Under the thickening shadow of the Cold War and Communist victory in China, the Chamber sought the Festival as their way to stimulate local Chinese business and represent themselves as friendly citizens of the United States. They turned a formerly family-oriented celebration of Chinese Lunar New Year into a Chinatown spectacle. They added a beauty contest and named it after a “traditional” New Year flower in the Canton area, with a full awareness of its western connotation, in order to bring something “new” and “modern,” or in the then Chamber president’s words, to “avoid criticism of being antiquated or old fashioned in celebrating the Chinese New Year.”⁴

⁴ Wah Chan Thom, “The Narcissus Festival: Fostering Chinese Culture in Hawaii’s Multi-Ethnic Community” in *Tradition for Living: A Booklet of Chinese Customs and Folk Practices in Hawaii* (Associated Chinese University Women, 1979): 60.

Geographically, the practice of the Festival and the Pageant to a certain extent has challenged the “Chineseness” that is defined around any geopolitical center such as Beijing and Taiwan and remapped a China around the Chongshan (Zhongshan) county of Canton(Guangdong) Province, from where most prior-1965 Chinese immigrants in Hawai‘i originated. This remapping of China is provided annually to the contestants through formal and informal community orientations, over 40 hours of classes on Chinese history, medicine, martial arts, cooking, calligraphy, handcrafts, and leisure, and the assignment of research questions on Chongshanese/Chinese tradition and customs. This regionally oriented Chinese identity bears a strong notion of cultural “authenticity” and ethnic pride that sometimes clashes with the interests of other Chinese groups. The conflict is reflected in the fact that the Narcissus Queen has never represented Hawai‘i to compete for Miss Chinatown U.S.A. in San Francisco, and that the Narcissus Pageant has competed annually with Miss Chinatown Hawaii since the 1970s for contestant recruitment, pageant resources, and sponsorship; the latter is organized by the Chinatown Merchants Association and Chinese Jaycees.

Racially, the Pageant redefined its boundary of Chineseness by changing the blood quantum to 50 percent in 1995, meaning that as long as the contestant’s father is Chinese she can compete in the Pageant. In 1996 the Pageant allowed that 50 percent of blood to be “maternal,” meaning that if the contestant’s mother is Chinese but her father is not, she can also run. The condition was that the “applicant shall agree to use her natural mother’s Chinese maiden names, if her surname is not Chinese, in all Narcissus Festival publications and at all Festival events.”⁵

⁵ *Narcissus Queen Pageant Registration Rules*, 1999.

Physically, hybridization is shown on the body of the contestants in that way that “Chineseness” sometimes matters and other times does not. Chineseness matters with such unwritten rules as that there should be no tattooing, no bleached hair, no tan, no body piercing except for regular earrings, no “loose” costume or attitude, and that contestants should wear *cheongsam* in every public appearance. Chineseness does not seem to matter when all the contestants, whether they are new immigrants from Taiwan or third-generation local, have to present their speech in English, and when they have to look tall and carry themselves as much like a professional model as possible in terms of the way to stand, walk, and turn. The poise instructor as well as the Pageant stage manager for the past twenty years is a Caucasian woman who used to run her own modeling school in Honolulu. She claims that the way she trains the contestants’ poise and runs the Pageant show is solely based on the standards set for international modeling and pageant running. It has nothing to do with Chinese or any ethnic culture.⁶ It does not seem to matter much in terms of the format and content of talent performance, “racial” features (such as “*haole*” or “Hawaiian”), and whether she can speak any form of Chinese or not. Most times, the contestants have to look as much like a fashion model as possible. Over half of their total training is practice in walking, taking the stairs, pausing, turning, standing, sitting, smiling, looking at the audience, and adjusting the microphone.

Indeed, the whole Pageant show is such a hybridity of many types that sometimes one can hardly tell where Chineseness starts and where it ends: The Pageant is scheduled according to the Chinese New Year but the venue is outside Chinatown; the audience, primarily friends and relatives of the contestants, is composed of various groups of local

⁶ Maduli interview, February 2002.

residents instead of just Chinese; the master of ceremonies is most often a local comedian or TV broadcaster who entertains the audience with local jokes or generic jokes as well as information from the Pageant book; the stage is designed with such Chinese symbols as bamboo, lanterns, moon gates, vases, and the zodiac signs but the talent award can go to a *hula* dance, a piano piece, or an American pop song; the new queen can be “Chinese-,” “Hawaiian-,” “*haole*-,” or “*hapa*-” looking. and the judges can be from various ethnic or racial backgrounds.

The hybridization in the Festival and the Pageant demonstrates the intermixture and localization, or the multiculturalism of Chinese American life and Chinese American community in Honolulu, Hawai‘i. However, these events have not necessarily made the definition of Chineseness fluid and mixed. Their practice of hybridization may de-essentialize the Chinese American community in Honolulu but does not necessarily de-essentialize their notion of “Chineseness.” Hybridization in fact resides side by side with the essentialization of Chineseness in the Pageant. This is generated by the compartmentalization of multiple identities, the stratification of Chineseness in relation to Americanness, and the representation of Chinese Americans as a model minority of the United States.

Compartmentalization takes place in the Pageant when a contestant is seen to carry various identity niches (such as Chinese, Hawaiian, Japanese, and *haole*) and certain elements or material that are regarded as distinctively “Chinese” are used to represent her Chineseness. Hybridity in this sense celebrates the multiplicity of those identity niches but it also reifies the boundaries and the content that are carved out for each identity. Compartmentalization is most obvious in the use of Chinese symbols at the

phase of *cheongsam* presentation during the Pageant show. For that phase, a contestant has to write up a description to explain the design that is sewn or glued onto her body-fit, tailor-made *cheongsam* with glittering rhinestones and sequins. Most gown descriptions define “Chinese” with symbols, that range from a powerful dragon, a graceful phoenix, and a romantic butterfly, to such colors as prosperous gold, happy red, and elegant fuchsia. Words that are related to the West include “power,” “dream,” “prosperity”; the East “sacrifice,” “family,” “harmony,” “arts,” “ageless.” The niche of Chineseness is carved in a seemingly benign way, as compared to the negative images of “yellow peril” or “red peril,” yet there is clearly a construction of the West and the East as antithesis and an opposition of a modern West and a traditional East.

The Festival and the Pageant have also witnessed a hierarchy of compartmentalized Chineseness and Americanness along a linear history of modernity. In the descriptions of *cheongsams* and the contestants’ speeches, the East and the West are clearly assigned to different stages on a linear scale of development: the East is imagined as the past and tradition whereas the West is imagined as the future and modernity. All the “Chinese” customs mentioned during the speech phase are timeless and boundaryless. The common representation of Chineseness as “ancient,” “traditional,” and “unchanging” locks the “imagined” China in the past and avoids any confrontation with their contemporary Americanness. It facilitates the audience’s “gaze” or “self gaze”⁷ that fetishizes the Chineseness as artistic, graceful, and exotic objects as expressed through the body of women. It also glosses over any conflicts and problems within Chinatown

⁷ David Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/Americans: historical crossings of a racial frontier* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

and the community and presents a soothing, glorifying story of a long, unbroken, harmonious history adorned with displayable aesthetic details.

From an American national political framework, this reification of “Chinese” identity fits well into the “model minority discourse.” In this sense, the process of constructing Chineseness is in fact a process of constructing dominant American ideology. Started in 1966 by William Petersen’s research on the success of Japanese Americans, then popularized by U.S. President Ronald Reagan when he called Asian Americans “our exemplars of hope and inspiration,” the model minority discourse told the minorities to stop complaining about oppression and to start drawing upon inner strengths for survival and development. It, as David Palumbo-Liu states, calls for “self-affirmation” through family units instead of emphasizing the state’s responsibility for social justice.⁸ And instead of collective activism outside the family, it calls for self-supporting family units for whatever difficulties might lie in their way. This discourse reaffirms the values of conformity, political quietude, and deference to civil and familial authority. The emphasis of familial authority also reproduces the myth of an ideal-type conventional family, which is composed of a powerful husband, a virtuous wife, and filial children. It writes out a substantial history of social resistance and protest as well as those familial structures whose experiences in American society had been extremely uneven. The emphasis in the contestant speeches of “family,” “hard work,” “sacrifice,” “harmony,” and “frugality” as “Chinese” virtues and “Chinese” secrets to success as settlers in Hawai‘i reiterate the dominant ideology of “self-affirmation.”⁹ Chineseness as

⁸ Palumbo-Liu, *Asian/Americans*, 187.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

defined by the Narcissus Festival and the Pageant has its logic developed out of and coherent with this national political ideology of neo-liberalism. Therefore, the process of constructing Chineseness in the Festival is simultaneously a process of constructing Americanness. The identity construction process is determined by the inescapabilities and positionalities that Chinese Americans cannot transcend from their nation-state.

As these examples demonstrate, the notion of hybridity, if only used to celebrate the multiplicity of identities, can still compartmentalize and reify those identities, thus unable to de-essentialize any culture, ethnicity, and nation-state. This is the reason why hybridization and essentialization can reside side by side in the Pageant; why the practitioners and participants can celebrate their hybridity but simultaneously carve a special niche for their “Chineseness” in a hierarchical relationship to their “Americanness” and reproduce the discourse of “model minority.” Thus a celebration of hybridity is not necessarily a radical and “de-centered” way of diasporic identification. A study of hybridization should not only focus on the creolization and the local coexistence and intermixture with other cultures, but more importantly examine the stratification of these cultures and the ideological context of its production.

Identity Construction through the Narcissus Goodwill Tour

The “homeland” visits of Asian Americans are often imagined as a prototype reconnection to their roots and reidentification with their ancestral land. Their “going home” is often viewed as an act of diasporic identity proclamation, an extension of diasporic imagination, or at least a moment of diasporic consciousness. Yet my participant observation of the 2002 Narcissus Goodwill Tour demonstrates that the Chinese Americans’ “homeland” tour can be more a reenactment of leaving the ancestral

land than a reattachment to it. After the tour, they return to their host place with more ethnic pride than diasporic patriotism. As Libby Lum, the 2000 Narcissus Queen once expressed, “I was struck with pride for my ancestral ties and yet felt very fortunate to be where I am today. I thanked my mother for her strength and courage in moving to America...”¹⁰

The 1990 Queen Michelle Leolani Mei Yuk Wong wrote that,

As a child of two diverse cultures, it wasn't until the actual experience of being in the original surroundings of my ancestors, that I felt a bond between the past and the present. I am constantly reminded of my Hawaiian heritage because of the fact that Hawaii is my home. However, as I walked through the streets of Shekki, the original locale of my Chinese ancestors, I felt a deep bond between the people that lived there and my ancestors shared the same livelihoods at one time or another. Returning to Shekki Village in Zhongshan gave me the only opportunity to leave China with an overwhelming feeling of awe, appreciation, and contentment.¹¹

Due to the specific power dynamics between the United States and China within the frame of global capitalism, the tour also exemplifies more the process of Americanization rather than Chinesization of Chinese Americans. As the tour unfolds, what they experience and how they are perceived in China invoke more their national identity than their ethnic identity. As reflected in the 1998 Hawaii's Chinese Chamber President Randall Chang's words: “As the Chamber president, the most impressive thing

¹⁰ Libby Lum, *52nd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2001).

¹¹ Michelle Leolani Mei Yuk Wong, “A Rewarding Year as Narcissus Queen,” *42nd Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1991): 62-63.

to me was how much the Chamber is recognized ... as playing an important role in building friendship between our two countries. [We] are not taken lightly by the Chinese...”¹²

The Tour The Narcissus Queen Goodwill Tour, conceived in Honolulu in 1949 by Hawaii’s Chinese Chamber of Commerce, has a history of 56 years. It was bound to the neighbor islands and the West Coast of North America (Canada, United States, and Mexico) in the early 1950s, expanded to East Asia (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong) and Southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines) from the late 1950s to the end of the 1970s, then focused on Mainland China (mainly the eastern and southern part of China) since 1981. The expansion of the tour and the change of the destinations paralleled the post-WWII development of tourism and air travel industry in Hawai‘i and the extension of American commercial airlines and American capitalism in the world. Each tour lasts two to four weeks, with the number of participants ranging from 40 to 150 people. Led by the president of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, each tour is garnished with that year’s newly selected Chinese beauty queen and her four-princess court. A free round trip to China is the major award the beauty contest queen wins aside from a couple of scholarships and merchandise certificates. The four princesses only get free airfare for the tour but have to pay their own hotel accommodations.

The enduring purpose of the tour over the past half a century has been to promote and maintain political and business relations for the Chamber members, to do sightseeing, to meet different people, to eat, and to shop. Other important purposes also surfaced

¹² Randall Chang, “Experience of a Lifetime!” *50th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1999).

within different historical contexts: after World War II, when the whole territory of Hawai‘i yearned to gain American statehood, touring the U.S. continent was to learn the “American” way; when East and Southeast Asia were “open” to America as its Cold War staging ground as well as its new economic and tourist field, the Chamber’s west bound tour aimed at developing co-ethnic connections with Chinese communities in different places and developing cultural nationalism with Taiwan; after China “reopened” to the world, the tour to China was considered “going home” to reconnect with the ancestral roots.

The tour is named the Narcissus Queen Goodwill Tour because it is the culmination of the Narcissus Festival and Narcissus Queen Pageant. The flower narcissus was selected as an ethnic emblem by the Chinese Chamber to promote the Chinese in Cold War-Hawai‘i as a friendly, peace-loving, and prosperous community, and to repackage the family-oriented Chinese New Year celebration into a series of territory-wide ethnic events. The Festival and Pageant were initially orchestrated by many local Chinese organizations to promote Chinatown businesses and tourism but presently are run single-handedly by the Chamber to maintain its leadership among the Chinese in Hawai‘i and to bring in revenue to run its organization.

To those who relate narcissus to narcissism, the Chamber expected the name to arouse enough attention and curiosity toward their events; to the others who know the origin of the flower and the popularity of the flower during the Chinese Lunar New Year in the Canton area, the Chamber emphasizes their identification with their homeland tradition and their efforts in achieving a “community renaissance” for the Chinese in Hawai‘i.

Ethnic Pride vs. Diasporic Patriotism I conducted a participant observation study of the 2002 Narcissus Tour and video-documented the three-week-long activities in China. My primary identity in the tour was as a Chinese student from the University of Hawai'i doing her dissertation research about the meaning of being Chinese in Hawai'i. Along with a honeymooning couple who run a famous Chinese noodle store in Honolulu Chinatown, I was regarded as one of the three "independent members" of the tour. The other 62 members were related either to the Chamber, the president's family, or the queen's family. They were primarily of Chinese ancestry, with a minority being of Japanese, Filipino, and Caucasian background. They were predominantly second- to fifth-generation Americans from the pre-1965 Chinese community, who mostly identify themselves as either "Chinese," "local," or "local Chinese" in Hawai'i.

For most members, the 2002 tour was their first trip to China. In spite of months of preparation, the Chamber's orientation, and numerous briefings from people who had been to China, it was a "big cultural shock" to some. Many members told me that the tour impressed upon them a more favorable perspective of who they are as citizens of the United States, repeatedly singing the hegemonic discourse of "Lucky Come Hawai'i." China became both a source of ethnic pride and a land to get away from. Although they received a red carpet reception and two banquets a day from government officials and rested at the best hotels at each stop, many saw China as a land impossible to live in mainly due to the condition of its socio-economic infrastructure and general lifestyle. The last day in China, a 24-year-old woman on the tour asked me, "Jin, are people happy here?" Her question implied her conclusion about the low quality of life as well as her sympathy for the ordinary people in China, and also a sense of personal luck by having a

better life elsewhere. Lum's quote I mentioned earlier reveals a similar perception about China. Their visits to China inspire an appreciation of their ancestors' leaving China and a stronger attachment to Hawai'i and America as their home. The identification they built with "the mastery of Chinese handiwork and the legacy of ancient dynasties" that they witnessed on the tour became a source of their ethnic pride that they can thrive on in U.S. "multicultural" politics or specifically, in Hawaii's "rainbow society."

National Identity vs. Racial/Ethnic Identity The Narcissus Tour has not only re-enhanced the ethnic identity of Chinese Americans, but also amplified their national identity. Paradoxically, if what brought most members to the tour was their awareness or aspiration of their racial or ethnic Chineseness, the identity that became most salient through the tour was their Americanness. The "Chinese blood" that was imagined in themselves and shared with people in China certainly racialized the Chinese Americans with the majority of the Chinese population. However, this physical affinity and "imagined blood tie" were the backdrop rather than the center stage of their identity reconstruction in China. What became most salient during the tour was not their racial or ethnic identity but rather their geopolitical and social-economic identity.

The Narcissus Queen of 1997 Susan Chien-Tzu Hwang, born in Kaoshiung, Taiwan and a graduate of Palm Springs High School in California expressed a very critical and cautious view toward the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, which formed a sharp contrast against the general sense of pride expressed by the people in Mainland China and Hong Kong:

We were on hand to witness the historic moment when the new Bohemian flag of Hong Kong rose over Tiananmen Square in Beijing. It was symbolic and will

serve as a reminder that the old China, full of nationalism, embellished with the trends of the new, will undergo even more changes and criticism in the next 100 years. The one sentiment shared by many as we watched is best said by Eisenhower, ‘We merely want to live in peace, to commune with them, to learn from them as they may learn from us.’¹³

When she envisioned the future of Hong Kong’s returning to China, Hwang used the phrase “even more changes and criticism in the next 100 years,” which expressed a sense of crisis and resentment. Her anxiety toward Hong Kong’s return was more clearly shown when she quoted the statement Eisenhower made at the earlier stage of the Cold War.

Being in their “homeland” indeed provided these Chinese Americans a chance to represent the United States, probably more so than when they tour most other places in the world. They were treated by China’s municipal, provincial, and central government officials as potential investors for a foreign or joint-venture enterprise, as well as potential allies of China in international politics and American national politics. At official meetings and banquets, they were constantly informed of the favorable investment environment of the city they were visiting and recent progress in development. As a tour member noticed, “city officials recited economic statistics with the precision of accomplished statisticians.”¹⁴ They were also constantly reminded of their significant role in promoting the Sino-U.S. relationship. In the summer of 1998,

¹³ *49th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1998): 117. The full statement was: “We merely want to live in peace with all the world, to trade with them, to commune with them, to learn from their culture as they may learn from ours, so that the products of our toil may be used for our schools and our roads and our churches and not for guns and planes and tanks and ships of war.”

¹⁴ Delwyn Wong, “2002 Narcissus Tour,” *54th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (2003).

Chinese government officials at several cities juxtaposed the Narcissus Tour to President Clinton's visit to China, which took place at the same time, and "expressed pleasure at ... two 'visits of friendship from America.'"¹⁵ It was within this context that Chang said "We were not taken lightly by the Chinese..."

Many tour members were also reminded of their non-Chineseness by the behavior and attitude of some ordinary Chinese people in the streets and at tourist spots. Once some peddlers realized that the tour group that was unloading from the air-conditioned busses was from America, they would try harder to sell their merchandise. An extreme example from the 2002 tour was a Chinese man chasing a Japanese American man on the tour, who was the queen's boyfriend, around a parking lot outside the Yu Yuan Park in Shanghai in order to sell him a fake Rolex watch for \$20 dollars.

At the same time, the Americanness of some Chinese American tourists became salient when they reacted to what they saw in an U.S.-centered Orientalist fashion. In that aspect, they were not much different from some regular tourists and cultural tourists on several University of Hawai'i and East-West Center summer tours that I had served as an assistant on after I first arrived in Hawai'i. These tourists were constantly looking for contrasts, particularly the contrasts between the icons they are familiar with in the United States and the ones that are stereotypically pre-modern. An example was Coca Cola boxes being transported in a cart pulled by a donkey. During the long bus ride between Guangzhou and Zhaoqing, some would gasp at each passing truck packed with pigs or ducks and at each brand new gas station under installation on the highway. Some would get emotional whenever they saw a kid playing with a pet (which was regarded as a sign

¹⁵ Randall Chang, *50th Narcissus Festival Souvenir Annual* (1999).

of China's restoration of humanistic spirit). Some would tease each other whenever they saw a bottle of liquor with snake or lizard in it.

If their Americanness surfaced during the tour, the Chamber promoted their "Hawaiianness" from the very beginning of the tour. The queen and her court had to perform *hula* at the banquet every evening. They danced all their way from Shenzhen and Guangzhou to Beijing and Xi'an, either in their Hawaiian-style *muumuu* or Chinese-style *cheongsam*. Before the tour, the queen and her court, whether they had ever danced *hula* or not in their lives, had to learn and prepare a few group dances. In the Chamber president's speeches at different cities, terms such as "Aloha" and "Aloha spirit" were constantly used to indicate their desire of building friendship in China. However, the Chamber leaders took the representation of their "Hawaiian" identity more as a gesture than some other tour members would desire. The 2002 Queen Kuuleialoha Chun was brought up mainly as a Hawaiian girl. She went to the Kamehameha School and danced *hulas* since the age of five. She was a participant in the 2000 Miss Aloha *Hula* contest and at the Narcissus Queen Pageant her *hula* performance won her the talent award. Taking her role seriously as a goodwill ambassador to China, she designed a performance that combined a Hawaiian chant of blessing, *hula* dance, and an ending with everyone at the banquet holding hands and singing "Hawai'i Aloha." Yet she only managed to perform it at the first banquet. For the rest of the trip, she had to follow the Chamber president's order and dance *hula* with the princesses to a Chinese pop song. Obviously, the Chamber wanted the young Chinese American women to represent themselves as Chinese who can perform "as Hawaiian" but not to "become Hawaiian," or who can appropriate Hawaiian culture, but not adopt Hawaiian culture.

Heterogeneity of Diaspora The tour therefore reveals the heterogeneity of diasporic consciousness and diasporic identification. Narcissus Queen Chun's perception of China, the Chinese in Hawai'i, and the tour differed from the Chamber president's due to their contrasting roles in the community and on the tour. Her perception also differed from the 2001 Queen Yingying Lee's, who grew up in Taiwan and modeled alternatively in Taiwan and Honolulu. A tour member who still has a hometown to visit demonstrates a sense of attachment different from one who does not. The diasporic identification is not always positive toward the homeland, either. A good example that was remembered well by both tour members and Chinese hosts would be how Sun Yat-sen established the Chinese organizations Xin Zhong Hui and Tong Meng Hui in Hawai'i and collected funding from overseas Chinese to overthrow the Qing government. Therefore, although a new diasporic consciousness did occur among Chinese Americans, we cannot diminish the political economy of "time-space compression" and exaggerate the mobility and identity flexibility of Chinese Americans. We should not gloss over various socio-economic, regional, and gendered power-dynamics embedded in the Narcissus Queen Goodwill Tour. Diaspora, without specification, can be misused to essentialize Chinese Americans', Asian Americans', or other ethnic American' homeland visits as a pull-away from their pan-ethnic identity in the United States.

Chinese Americans have entered their third century in Hawai'i. During the first two centuries, the majority of the community went through identity changes from sojourners of Canton Province, to settlers of Hawai'i, to citizens of the United States, and to Chinese Americans. As the third century proceeds under the forces of globalization,

indigenization, and localization, the older middle- and upper-middle-class Chinese Americans share the anxiety that the historical ethnic community is dying and they are losing a distinctive identity. Community leaders feel a desperate need to look to the past to build a consensus and maintain their leadership. In his presidential inaugural address “Onward Toward the TriCentennial!” at the United Chinese Society in 1990, Clinton Ching announced that, “I believe we discovered in 1989 that we are prepared to march forward... Frankly, we do not want to lose the momentum of this past Bicentennial year. And as we enter our third century it will continue to be the duty of the UCS to lead the Chinese Community. ‘Onward Toward the TriCentennial!’ But we cannot hope to lead Hawaii’s Chinese Community if we do not act like leaders, if we do not create an identifiable Chinese voice, and if we do not carry with us the moral imperative to vigorously espouse the traditional ethical values of our venerable culture.”¹⁶ As well known to Ching and most Chinese Americans in Hawai‘i, the 1989 Bicentennial Celebration brought a great impetus to unify the community and revive its prestige. However, the momentum is impossible to keep, the leadership is harder to claim, and a “Chinese voice” is less identifiable within the current competition of Chinese American identities. Fewer descendants of older immigrants become members of clubs and organizations. Fewer new immigrants find Hawai‘i an affordable place to settle. The available new immigrants come from different countries and identify themselves as Hong Kong Chinese, Taiwan Chinese, Mainland Chinese, Thai Chinese, or Vietnam Chinese. Honolulu Chinatown is no longer the historic and symbolic ethnic center of the older community but is becoming the Southeast Asia Town of new immigrants. The Hawaiian

¹⁶ Clinton Ching, “United Chinese Society Inaugural Address,” 1990.

Movement continues to challenge the role ethnic Americans play in the colonization of Hawai'i. How the new stakes in ethnic relations and power dynamics will invoke new representations of Chineseness and Americanness is yet to be seen.

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Interviews (The list only includes those who were directly quoted in the dissertation. To protect the informants' confidentiality, I only show the month and the year of each interview. I also changed some informants' last names as they requested.)

Yen interview, April 2000.
Thom interview, May 2000.
Choy interview, June 2000.
Ing interview, August 2000.
Dong interview, January 2001.
Abercrombie interview, February 2001.
Wong interview, February 2001.
Ing interview, July 2001.
Maduli interview, February 2002.
Chan interview, June 2003.
Loo interview, June 2003.
Chong interview, October 2003.
Lin interview, March 2004.
Iijima interview, 2004.
Soong interview, August 2004.
Lee Interview, October 2004.
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Pang interview, December 2004,
Tang interview, December.
Lai interview, January 2005.
Tom interview, January 2005.
Yee interview, February 2005.
Liu interview, February 2005.