

[Free] The Japanese Conspiracy: The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920

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Masayo Umezawa Duus

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Masayo Umezawa Duus : The Japanese Conspiracy: The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Japanese Conspiracy: The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920:

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. history,or opinion?By grate kubasakiThere seems to have been a lot of research done for this book, but I was concerned about the a factual omission in this book, Juzaburo Sakamaki was a pivotal person in this book, but the listing of his children was inaccurate, his youngest daughter was not mentioned. If this detail was wrong, what other facts were left out?4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A fundamental text in Hawaii labor historyBy Harry EagarIn "The Japanese Conspiracy," Berkeley historian Masayo Duus has rescued the record of a pivotal event in Hawaii's labor history, one whose significance has been misinterpreted.It usually is presented as a black and white drama -- or perhaps a brown and white one -- but Duus says, "Many writers on Hawaiian history have concluded that the Oahu strike of 1920 was a revolutionary labor struggle that transcended the bounds of race. But this interpretation is simply wishful thinking, based on a current perspective."Nor is it true that the Big Five simply ordered, "Jump," and everyone else asked, "How high?""Many among the haole elite," Duus finds, ". . . still believed strongly in Christian charity and the aloha spirit. They did not want Hawaii to become like California . . ."In 1920, Japanese sugar workers on Oahu struck the plantations. This had happened before, without much success, so a new strategy was devised. Only Oahu workers would walk out; they would rely on money and support from Japanese workers on other islands, who would keep working.During the strike, the house of Juzaburo Sakimaki, a translator and labor contractor at Olaa Plantation on the Big Island, was dynamited.

At the time, newspapers did not treat the crime as either important or as directly linked to the strike. Sometime later, 21 Japanese strike leaders were indicted for conspiracy in the bombing. Fifteen of them came to trial in the Territorial court. Duus used the trial transcript, Japanese language newspapers and interviews with descendants of the strike leaders to reconstruct the story. It is a complicated one, and in Duus's telling the well-known struggle between labor and capital in Hawaii becomes a richer and more ironic drama that we have been used to. The bulk of the book concerns the planning and direction of the strike, and the movements of the 21 leaders, followed by detailed accounts of the testimony. It takes many pages just to introduce the alleged conspirators, and many more to follow them. But the effort is worth it, as in the final chapter Duus assigns a cascade of results, good and bad, to the episode. She interprets the indictments as one phase of a plan of the Hawaii Sugar Planters' Association to reopen Hawaii to Chinese labor. The plantations pursued a policy of preventing any non-white ethnic group from dominating the islands. In order to gain support in Washington to overturn the Chinese Exclusion Act, the HSPA portrayed the strike as a conspiracy of Japan to gain control of the Hawaiian islands. There seems to be no evidence that the Japanese government had any such intention, but the claim played into the hands of white racists on the West Coast who were trying to get a Japanese Exclusion Act passed. The strike was lengthy and eventually unsuccessful. Koreans, resentful of the behavior of Japan's colonial occupiers, were happy to cross picket lines. The Japanese were badly split, with Christians tending to back meliorist solutions, as advocated by the prominent Americanizer, the Rev. Takie Okumura; while Buddhists supported the strikers, putting them up in temples when they were evicted from plantation houses. Though the plantations succeeded in one of their permanent goals -- to avoid having to engage in collective bargaining -- they were defeated by the California racists, who got new laws in 1924 that made cheap labor harder, not easier, to import. Among the many ironies of this tale is the fact that sugar prices were spiking in 1920. Hawaii cane workers had profit-sharing contracts. Many, perhaps most, Japanese immigrants to the islands had dreams of acquiring a stake and returning to Japan as comfortable owners of farms. Few managed it, but with their enormous bonuses in 1920, something like 6,000 left the islands. The Oahu workers, who missed out on this bonanza because of their hardy solidarity, quickly forgot their leaders, who ended up in prison for three years or so. Duus leaves little doubt that the trial, superficially fair, was deficient in many ways. For one, the translation from Japanese to English was inaccurate. She also concludes that attitudes, alliances and policies were influenced more by the strike than we have realized before. She links the strike to freedom of education, Japanese militarism, party politics, the ultimately successful labor movement of the late 1940s and the Depression. "The Japanese Conspiracy" is an impressive example of how a multifaceted historian can find gold where everyone else saw only iron pyrites, and Duus's history will rank as a basic text in the social, economic and political history of modern Hawaii. 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. I don't think this is about civil rights or workers rights - I think this is genyosha. By ... Hwhite bosses didn't want the Chinese to get too comfortable even though the Chinese were MODEL employees so they decided to let them wallow in unemployment and gave their jobs to sorta Chinese people: the Japanese. Give them an inch, they organize and strike violently. As if they had an agenda - live and learn. However, this directly illuminates the presence of postwar post internment Japanese in Chinese American civil rights actions in the 1960s not just in California, not just cradling Malcolm X in their lap - oh, no - confounding offensive to the US government organizations in New York City and I am not talking about Rocky Aoki.

In early 1920 in Hawaii, Japanese sugar cane workers, faced with spiraling living expenses, defiantly struck for a wage increase to \$1.25 per day. The event shook the traditional power structure in Hawaii and, as Masayo Duus demonstrates in this book, had consequences reaching all the way up to the eve of World War II. By the end of World War I, the Hawaiian Islands had become what a Japanese guidebook called a "Japanese village in the Pacific," with Japanese immigrant workers making up nearly half the work force on the Hawaiian sugar plantations. Although the strikers eventually capitulated, the Hawaiian territorial government, working closely with the planters, cracked down on the strike leaders, bringing them to trial for an alleged conspiracy to dynamite the house of a plantation official. And to end dependence on Japanese immigrant labor, the planters lobbied hard in Washington to lift restrictions on the immigration of Chinese workers. Placing the event in the context of immigration history as well as diplomatic history, Duus argues that the clash between the immigrant Japanese workers and the Hawaiian oligarchs deepened the mutual suspicion between the Japanese and United States governments. Eventually, she demonstrates, this suspicion led to the passage of the so-called Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924, an event that cast a long shadow into the future. Drawing on both Japanese- and English-language materials, including important unpublished trial documents, this richly detailed narrative focuses on the key actors in the strike. Its dramatic conclusions will have broad implications for further research in Asian American studies, labor history, and immigration history.

Language Notes
Text: English
Original Language: Japanese
From the Back Cover
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