

## Triple Consciousness: Sessue Hayakawa at Haworth Pictures Corporation

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### Introduction

Sessue Hayakawa established Haworth Pictures Corporation, his own film production company, in March 1918, after more than two years of stardom at Jesse L. Lasky Feature Play Company.<sup>1</sup> Already in 1916, Hayakawa said that he wanted to play roles in films that “do justice to the real Japanese character”:

Such roles [in *The Typhoon* (Reginald Barker, 1914), *The Cheat* (Cecil B. DeMille, 1915), etc.] are not true to our Japanese nature.... They are false and give people a wrong idea of us. I wish to make a characterization which shall reveal us as we really are, and ... [a film] in which I shall play a Japanese who shall do justice to the real Japanese character.<sup>2</sup>

After appearing in films whose major aim was not to introduce “the real Japanese character” but to establish Hayakawa’s stardom using rather stereotypical images of Japan, Hayakawa began to care about his reputation among Japanese people in the U. S. After his role in *The Cheat* was severely criticized by a Japanese newspaper in Los Angeles, Hayakawa paid particular attention to getting along with Japanese communities in California. For instance, in the newspaper he published an apology for his role in *The Cheat*. Then, Hayakawa sometimes appeared in theater plays for a Japanese audience in Los Angeles. It was reported, “Hayakawa is continuing his daily work at the Lasky studios, aided by a big company of Japanese players, and at night these same actor folk appear in stock dramas at the newly opened Japanese thea-

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<sup>1</sup> Sessue Hayakawa was a movie star from the late 1910s to the early 1920s America, playing various roles including sexy villains and tragic non-white heroes.

<sup>2</sup> Kingsley, Grace, “That Splash of Saffron: Sessue Hayakawa, A Cosmopolitan Actor,” *Photoplay* 9-4 (March 1916), p. 139. In *The Typhoon*, Hayakawa played Dr. Nitobe Tokoramo, a Japanese spy in Paris. Tokoramo cruelly murders his French girlfriend when she insults his nationality. To let Tokoramo complete his mission, the Japanese Secret Service decides to force a young diplomat to be executed in place of Tokoramo. In the end, Tokoramo commits suicide because of his conscience. In *The Cheat*, Hayakawa played Hishuru Tori, a rich Japanese art dealer in Long Island. Tori attracts a married white woman with his charm and luxury, but violently attacks her and brands his mark on her shoulder when she breaks her promise to be with him. In the end, Tori is lynched by a courtroom crowd. For more detailed analysis of Hayakawa’s stardom and *The Cheat*, see Miyao, Daisuke, “Sessue Hayakawa a Movie Star: Early Hollywood and the Japanese.” *Amerika Kenkyu* 30 (1996), pp. 227-46. For more detailed analysis of *The Typhoon*, see Miyao, “Doubleness: American Images of Japanese Men in Silent Spy Films,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 9 (1998), pp. 69-95.

ter. One wonders when Sessue is going to find time to sleep, but perhaps he, like Edison, is tireless and works on and on, with no need for sleep.”<sup>3)</sup> Also, Hayakawa became an associate member of Rafu Nihonjin-kai (Japanese Association of Los Angeles), in April 1917.<sup>4)</sup> On July 31, 1918, Hayakawa coordinated with Rafu Nihonjin-kai for Thomas Ince to present a Japanese float at the patriotic Fair to show American booty.<sup>5)</sup> Ince asked Hayakawa to request Japanese people to participate in his float that cost about \$800 and was intended as a representation of a Japanese warrior. It was meant to publicize Japan’s cooperation with the Allies during World War I.<sup>6)</sup>

What Hayakawa might ideally have done first at his own company was to replace his star image created at the Lasky company with an image of Japanese that would be regarded as “real” and “authentic” by Japanese spectators. It would be a nationalistic attempt to satisfy Japanese communities in the U. S. who had been frustrated by the mainstream construction of stereotypical images. His own production company would make his attempt easier because it gave Hayakawa power over their roles and salaries.<sup>7)</sup> Even though in 1918 it was still considered a radical attempt for a film star to establish his or her own production company, Hayakawa obtained a certain power to control his films. Hayakawa said, “300 people were working for me at the [Haworth] studio.... [The films made at Haworth were] Just mine.... Nights I had to work, on cutting and writing scenarios. I had a scenario writer, but I had to go over it with him. All those things.”<sup>8)</sup> Hayakawa wrote in his autobiography, “Lloyd [Ingraham], Bill Worthington, and Jim Young directed all scenes except the ones in which I appeared. I preferred to direct those myself.”<sup>9)</sup> Also, the *Moving Picture World (MPW)* reported that the first several films at Haworth were selected by Hayakawa himself.<sup>10)</sup>

However, it is still doubtful that Hayakawa really wanted to make a film that would “do justice to the real Japanese character.” It is true that after *The Cheat*, the roles he played at

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<sup>3)</sup> *Picture Play*, January 1917, n.p., in “Sessue Hayakawa Envelope” (SHE). The Robinson Locke Collection, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

<sup>4)</sup> *Rafu Shimpo* 4203 (April 19, 1917), p. 3.

<sup>5)</sup> Thomas Ince was a film producer at New York Motion Picture Corporation, who introduced Hayakawa to film business. *The Typhoon* was made under Ince’s supervision.

<sup>6)</sup> Yoneyama, Hiroshi, ed. “Rafu Nihonjin-kai Kiroku [Record of Rafu Nihonjin-kai],” unpublished material, 1994.

<sup>7)</sup> It is unclear about the financial background of the establishment of Haworth. According to Hayakawa’s autobiography, William Connery, Hayakawa’s college friend introduced Hayakawa to the president of A. B. C. Dohrman, a china and glassware company in San Francisco, who was willing to pay one million dollars to establish Hayakawa’s company. See Hayakawa, Sessue and Crowell Bowen. *Zen Show Me the Way: ... to Peace, Happiness and Tranquility* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1960), pp. 141–142. In another interview, Hayakawa said that Connery himself was “the son of a multimillionaire here, owns the coal mine,” and his parents prepared the one million dollars. “Popular Arts Project: Sessue Hayakawa” (1959). Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, p. 1090.

<sup>8)</sup> “Popular Arts Project,” op. cit., pp. 1089–90.

<sup>9)</sup> Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 143.

<sup>10)</sup> “Hayakawa Names First Two Productions.” *MPW* 36-15 (July 6, 1918), p. 76.

the Lasky company became more sympathetic ones. Yet, it is dubious that Hayakawa's such roles revealed Japanese characters as they really were. No matter how sympathetic, Hayakawa's roles were based on rather stereotypical images of Japanese people. For instance, *Alien Souls* (Frank Reicher, 1916), the first star vehicle for Hayakawa after *The Cheat*, told a *Madame Butterfly*-like interracial love story between an American man and a Japanese woman, and was banned in Japan because of its "inappropriate depiction of Japanese people." Probably for the same reason, only a few of Hayakawa's star vehicles made at the Lasky company were released in Japan. Hayakawa kept playing rather stereotypical characters that maintained his stardom for more than two years at the Lasky company.<sup>11)</sup> Even though we cannot totally deny the possibility that the Lasky company did not allow Hayakawa to make films that "do justice to real Japanese characters," Hayakawa's wish also sounds like a temporary excuse to the Japanese press.

The important issue here is that Hayakawa's creation of his star image seemed to be consciously mediated by both American spectators and Japanese spectators. In order to make profits at his own production company, it was necessary for Hayakawa to maintain his stardom with American audiences. It was not a good idea to show "the real Japanese character" just to please Japanese spectator. Hayakawa's strategy seemed to be a campaign of winning the hearts of Americans and of convincing Japanese in the U. S. of his "realistic" depiction of Japanese characters at the same time.

It is true that Hayakawa declared that at Haworth he would introduce authentic Japanese character in realistic surroundings. *MPW* reported that Hayakawa sent cinematographers to Japan to film scenes for the initial production. "They have just returned, bringing with them about four thousand feet of film taken in Tokio and Yokohama and in the wonderfully beautiful Mt. Fujiyama region."<sup>12)</sup> However, the method by which Hayakawa tried to emphasize realistic Japan was hardly original. Many early travelogue filmmakers had been sent to Japan to obtain exotic images of Japan such as Mt. Fuji and geisha, and presented them as "authentic" Japanese images to American audience. Hayakawa's emphasis on authentic Japaneseness seems to be consciously marketed at American audiences rather than Japanese ones. Hayakawa seemed to have pragmatically realized that too faithful an adherence to Japanese realities might not be pleasing to American audience. In that sense, it is doubtful that there would be any drastic change in Hayakawa's star image. Hayakawa later said in his autobiography, "I was not about to change away from the type of picture which had earned me my fame and following" when he established Haworth.<sup>13)</sup>

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<sup>11)</sup> Certain images of Japan were important components of Hayakawa's stardom to appeal to American audiences. Hayakawa's uniqueness as a star was emphasized in ways consistent with the "Japanese Taste," a sign of refinement and a high art form essential to the middle-class consumer culture in the U. S. by the 1910s. The Lasky company was initiating the movement toward refining cinema to obtain cultural legitimacy from middle-class audiences.

<sup>12)</sup> "Hayakawa Names First Two Productions," op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>13)</sup> Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 143.

There are at least three groups to decide the direction of Haworth. Hayakawa's star image was formed at the dialogic focal point between Hayakawa as a star and creative force, the American audience, and the Japanese spectator.<sup>14</sup> At Haworth, Hayakawa had to negotiate with the star image created by the Lasky company to appeal to American audiences, and with a "realistic" image of Japanese people, an alternative to the stereotypical image in the dominant medium, to please the Japanese spectator.

Advertisements for Haworth in film trade journals suggest Hayakawa's effort to balance his pre-existing star image and his Japanese nationality. The emphasis of the first ad for Haworth that appeared in *MPW* was on Hayakawa's Americanized image and featured a large portrait photo of Hayakawa in a tuxedo.<sup>15</sup> On the contrary, the second ad in the next issue of *MPW* emphasized Hayakawa's Japaneseness. A small photo of Hayakawa in a kimono was shown together with his signature in Japanese and a caption that said, "Watch for Hayakawa Productions made by most unique of all screen stars: son of Japan now heading his own company." All of those were surrounded by drawings of Japanese objects, such as *torii*, a shrine gate, and a stone lantern.<sup>16</sup> Then, the third ad that appeared in *MPW* two months later provided an eclectic image of Hayakawa emphasizing both his Japaneseness and Americanization through a photo of Hayakawa in a suit at the center surrounded by a drawing of large *torii* and Mt. Fuji.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, Hayakawa's attempt to create his star image at Haworth can be called a product of "triple consciousness," following W. E. B. DuBois' concept of "double consciousness." Dubois theorizes "double consciousness" as a "peculiar sensation," that is a "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity."<sup>18</sup> When Hayakawa (re)created his star image, he had to be sensible to be "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others." It is possible to argue that for Hayakawa both American and Japanese fit into Dubois' sense of "others." In other words, Hayakawa stood in a "trans-position," distancing himself from both the American audience and Japanese spectators in order to satisfy both of them.<sup>19</sup>

The notion of Japaneseness shown in films at Haworth may have remained stereotypical, but Hayakawa chose it consciously and strategically. This essay does not intend to take an approach only to protest against the "errors" and "distortions" in stereotypical depictions of char-

<sup>14</sup> When we examine the relationship between film producers and audiences, we should not forget distributors and exhibitors. Robertson-Cole, a new face in film distributing business, played an influential role on Hayakawa's stardom at Haworth, but that issue is beyond the scope of this essay.

<sup>15</sup> *MPW* 35-9 (March 9, 1918), p. 1332.

<sup>16</sup> *MPW* 35-10 (March 16, 1918), p. 1467.

<sup>17</sup> *MPW* 36-8 (May 18, 1918), p. 960.

<sup>18</sup> Dubois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. (1903; reprint, New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 45.

<sup>19</sup> Hayakawa's trans-positioning was not recognized by either Americans or Japanese. Once the Japanese characters were represented, Hayakawa who visualized them was likely to be considered as the representative of them. The idea of "trans-position" is borrowed from Ota, Yoshinobu. *Toransupojishon no shiso* [Thoughts of trans-position] (Tokyo: Sekai-shiso-sha, 1998).

acters in Hayakawa's stardom, but to reveal the negotiation within the stereotypes especially in the historical context of World War I, when nativist sentiment was increasing. This essay attempts to resist such binary thinking as true or untrue, fixed identities, and racial essentialism. It is an attempt to trace the volatile intersections between Japanese and white American cultures.

This essay analyzes the first two films produced at Haworth, *His Birthright* (William Worthington, 1918) and *Banzai* (Worthington/Hayakawa, 1918) in order to articulate Hayakawa's "triple-conscious" strategy. Before discussing films, this essay tries to locate Hayakawa's attempt in its historical context by referring to the discourse of a Japanese newspaper in California. What was the interaction between the star and the Japanese immigrant community in the U. S. regarding the representation of the Japanese? The interaction brings to mind how intensely Japanese people in the U. S. felt the need for "positive," or "realistic," representation of Japanese people in mainstream media, and how hard the star tried to satisfy their expectation. Thus, this essay starts from a reception-oriented history that speculates on possible relations between films, stars and their viewers.

### 1. *The Rafu Shimpo* and Japanese Immigrants' Reaction to Sessue Hayakawa

The sensational success of *The Cheat* led Hayakawa and the characters he played on the screen to be recognized as representatives of Japan both by American audiences and Japanese spectators, and positioned Hayakawa's stardom in the political terrain between Japanese immigrants and the U. S. American reviews of Hayakawa's star vehicles after *The Cheat* regarded Hayakawa as a representative of Japanese people. *Photoplay* actually wrote that *The Cheat* is "a melodrama so rational, so full of incisive character touches, racial truths."<sup>20</sup> Simultaneously, a strong protest against Hayakawa's Japanese character in *The Cheat* rose from Japanese communities in the U. S. Hayakawa wrote in his autobiography, "Recalling my experiences in making this picture [*The Cheat*] brings to mind the opposition my playing the role of the villainous Japanese stirred among those of my nationality in Los Angeles and throughout the country after the film was released. For portraying the heavy, as screen villains are called, as a Japanese, I was indignantly accused of casting a slur on my nationality."<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Hayakawa's insistence on making films that would "do justice to real Japanese characters" at Haworth seemed to be a political statement by Hayakawa addressed toward Japanese communities.

The Japanese-American press had an important role to form a discourse on Hayakawa's stardom in Japanese communities in the U. S. This section examines the articles of the *Rafu Shimpo*, which inaugurated the harsh criticism against *The Cheat* in the Japanese community in Los Angeles, and its tone of argument about Japanese immigrants and Hayakawa's films.<sup>22</sup> This section aims to introduce a group that had an influence upon Hayakawa's star image at

<sup>20</sup> *Photoplay* 9-4 (March 1916), n.p., in SHE.

<sup>21</sup> Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>22</sup> All the quotations from the *Rafu Shimpo* are translated from the originals by the author.

Haworth, and to offer a socio-historical background of Hayakawa's insistence in publicity upon making films that would "do justice to real Japanese characters."

The major characteristic of the *Rafu Shimpo* is its extreme sensitivity to the reputation of Japanese immigrants and the anti-Japanese movements in California. The main issue was the assimilability of Japanese immigrants. A series titled "Is the Japanese assimilable?" by Sidney L. Gulick, a pro-Japanese professor, typified the basic tone of argument in the *Rafu Shimpo*. What Gulick claimed was that there were two types of assimilation, "biological" and "social," and Japanese immigrants were able to socially assimilate. Gulick wrote, "Biological may touch upon the issue of miscegenation, but social assimilation is surely possible because it can be achieved by education and surrounding condition. Japanese can acquire our language and thought, and practice our democracy."<sup>23)</sup> Regarding miscegenation, Gulick insisted, "the result is not well studied scientifically yet. Therefore, I do not recommend it, but at the same time, miscegenation must not be prohibited only because of temporary emotion or racial prejudice until the result comes scientifically."<sup>24)</sup> Gulick's pro-Japanese attitude clearly contains elements of "scientific" racism and Social Darwinism. Gulick's claims about miscegenation indicate his admittance of the idea of a racial hierarchy between white and non-white, and his insistence upon accepting Japanese immigrants into American society was a compromising one. According to Gulick, if Japanese immigrants learned American language, thought and democracy, and unless they offended the anxiety of miscegenation, there would be enough of a chance for Japanese immigrants to assimilate to American life. Therefore, what the *Rafu Shimpo* emphasized was opposing anything that would endanger the possibility of Japanese assimilation by accepting the idea of a racial hierarchy, in which Japanese were more assimilable than more "primitive" others.

As a newspaper in Los Angeles, the *Rafu Shimpo* was particularly watchful to the motion picture industry, too. The *Rafu Shimpo* expected motion pictures to show not stereotypical but ideal and positive characteristics of Japanese people, and to promote the goodwill between Japanese immigrants and the U. S. One article clearly shows the position of the *Rafu Shimpo* about motion pictures: "Recently, anti-Japanese movement has been temporarily eased because of the European war and the San Francisco fair, but it only appears to be so. At the bottom, anti-Japanese sentiment is growing higher.... In this condition, there is no reason to consider that motion picture has absolute value as an art form, and destroy our U. S.-Japan goodwill policy and ignore our interests. We cannot overlook it."<sup>25)</sup>

Along these lines, the *Rafu Shimpo* started a severe campaign against *The Cheat* on December 23, 1915, right after the film was released at Tarry Theater of Los Angeles. One report said, "This film impresses Japanese people as outrageous evilness.... This film leaves a bad impression that the Japanese are extremely savage people. This film destroys the truth of

<sup>23)</sup> Gulick, Sidney L., "Nihonjin wa douka shiuruya (1)." *Rafu Shimpo* 3581 (August 8, 1915), p. 2.

<sup>24)</sup> Gulick, "Nihonjin wa douka shiuruya (2)." *Rafu Shimpo* 3582 (August 10, 1915), p. 2.

<sup>25)</sup> "Izure wo omonzuru ?? [Which Should We Evaluate?]." *Rafu Shimpo* 3696 (December 25, 1915), p.

Japanese race, and it is unforgivable for the Japanese actors to appear in such a film, even for money."<sup>26)</sup> The important issue is, the *Rafu Shimpo* used very nationalistic terms when they criticized the film for its possible obstruction of Japanese immigrants' efforts to assimilate to American society:

The issue of Japanese exclusion is a big problem not just between the U. S. and Japan but in the world, and the intellectuals in both the U. S. and Japan have made every effort and consideration. Our people in the U. S. have experienced many troubles and hardships, and 60 million Japanese people have been extremely patient in order to solve the problem favorably. In this kind of situation, how could Hayakawa, the shameless, despite his blood of Japanese race, appear in an anti-Japanese film that leaves impression of an extremely evil Japanese in Los Angeles, where should be the base of pro-Japanese sentiment? You, traitor to your country!!"<sup>27)</sup>

The nationalist fervor the *Rafu Shimpo* employed to critique *The Cheat* was the "truth of Japanese race," which could easily be transformed into a racist assertion of the ultimate difference of "Japanese race" from Americans. Therefore, the tone of argument of the *Rafu Shimpo* was contradictory in its recommendation of both Americanization and nationalistic pride in Japanese nationalism. It is noteworthy that the *Rafu Shimpo's* criticism of *The Cheat* was not so much against the "evil" image of the Japanese character. Rather, the *Rafu Shimpo* abhorred Hayakawa's showing "misery" at the climactic scene of lynching, which is a "humiliation to Japanese people." The reporter of the *Rafu Shimpo* "cannot stand watching Hayakawa shot by her and suffering in blood, and I got out of the theater, but I heard that the final scene at the courtroom, in which Hayakawa was lynched, was more terrible...."<sup>28)</sup>

Some Japanese intellectuals in the U. S. at that time already recognized the nationalistic tone of argument of the *Rafu Shimpo*. For instance, Okina Kyuin (Rokkei) criticized the "narrow-minded nationalism" of the campaign against *The Cheat* in the *Rafu Shimpo*. Okina wrote:

Since the Kotoku Shusui incident, a strange tendency had risen in Japanese communities in the U. S. That was a wet thought of narrow-minded nationalism. It was not suitable in the New World where freedom and democracy were its ideal. That tendency brought a mysterious thought of the Japanese spirit into ignorant Buddhists and gangster world. Vulgar reporters followed the trend, cried out decisively and honorably, "Japanese men should do like this," or "God's People should do like that," etc. I did want to have a pride as Japanese, but I hated such a vulgar tendency."<sup>29)</sup>

Hikotaro Yamaguchi of the *Rafu Shimpo* severely criticized Okina in a very nationalistic

<sup>26)</sup> "Hainichi no tane wo maku katsudo shashin [A motion picture that causes Japanese exclusion]." *Rafu Shimpo* 3694 (December 23, 1915), p. 3.

<sup>27)</sup> "Kyoka oroka hainichi haiyu Hayakawa Sesshu [Crazy or stupid anti-Japanese actor Sessue Hayakawa]." *Rafu Shimpo* 3695 (December 24, 1915), p. 3.

<sup>28)</sup> "Gokuaku naru hainichi katsudo shashin kenki [A Record of Watching an Extremely Evil Anti-Japanese Motion Picture]." *Rafu Shimpo* 3696 (December 25, 1915), p. 3.

tone. Yamaguchi even seemed to question Okina's Japanese nationality. Yamaguchi wrote, "If Okina is Japanese, he must support the *Rafu Shimpo's* opinion to worry about *The Cheat's* bad influence.... Since Okina scorns the action of the Japanese Association [against the exhibition of *The Cheat*] with his immature artistic point of view, he must not be Japanese but Chinese."<sup>30</sup> Yamaguchi's claim reveals the nationalistic tone of the *Rafu Shimpo* that is based on the notion of a racial hierarchy. The *Rafu Shimpo* tried to take a position that delineates Japanese from other Asians. Actually, the *Rafu Shimpo* appealed to the Japanese people in California to register not as "Mongolian" but as "Japanese" when they registered at the Registration Center and the California State Government, because "the Japanese is different from the Chinese."<sup>31</sup> It is true that this vehement reaction against *The Cheat* and Hayakawa was not unanimous among Japanese immigrants. However, the nationalistic tone of argument in the *Rafu Shimpo* must have had a certain influence on the emerging public discourse in the Japanese community in Los Angeles, where Hayakawa resided and made films.

## 2. Balancing Japaneseness and Americanization: Hayakawa's Patriotic Pose in *His Birthright* and *Banzai*

*His Birthright* was the first film released by Haworth Pictures Corporation. Hayakawa was one of the authors of the original story. That means Hayakawa had control over the film from the choice of the plot material. Hayakawa's strategy for (re)creating his star image at Haworth can be seen clearly in *His Birthright*.

Hayakawa plays Yukio, a young Japanese man, born of a Japanese mother and an American father, Lieutenant John Milton of the U. S. Navy. When Yukio turns 21, he learns that his mother, brokenhearted at the desertion of her husband, stabbed herself to death while Yukio was still a baby. Yukio goes to America as a cabin boy to take revenge on his father, and confides his intention to Edna, a German spy. She persuades Yukio to steal important documents from his father, in return for which she promises her love. Yukio's sense of honor leads him to fight with German spies when he learns that her professed love was false, and restores the documents to his father. Yukio abandons his ideas of revenge and determines to enlist in the service of America.

The only surviving print of *His Birthright*, which has been preserved by Nederlands Filmmuseum, lacks the opening sequences set in Japan. According to *MPW*, "A Japanese atmosphere has been cleverly contrived as a background for the opening of the story."<sup>32</sup> The review in the *Exhibitor's Trade Review (ETR)* insisted, "The scenes in Japan are exquisite with

<sup>29</sup>) Translation by the author. Okina, Kyuin. *Okina Kyuin Zenshu: Waga Issho Dai 1 Kan: Konjiki no Sono* [Okina Kyuin Complete Works: My Life Volume 1: Garden of Gold] (Toyama: Okina Kyuin Zenshu Kanko-kai, 1972), pp. 108-10.

<sup>30</sup>) "Okina Rokkei ni Kuyu [Regret, Okina]." *Rafu Shimpo* 3719 (January 23, 1916), p. 7.

<sup>31</sup>) "Jinshu betsu de omonchaku [A big problem of racial differences]." *Rafu Shimpo* 4244 (June 6, 1917), p. 3.

<sup>32</sup>) *MPW* 37-8 (August 24, 1918), p. 1153.

the Japanese gardens, wisteria bowers, tea houses, geisha girls and cunning Japanese children.”<sup>33</sup> *Exhibitor's Herald and Motography (EHM)* also claimed, “many of the scenes are laid in Japan. The settings and locations show with wonderful fidelity the exquisite beauty of the Kingdom of Flowers and the quaint and picturesque life of the Nipponese.”<sup>34</sup> In the surviving print there are only two shots set in Japan, which appear as flashbacks. It is a pity that we cannot thoroughly examine how authentically *His Birthright* presented Japanese landscape and characters in its opening scenes, some of whose shots were actually shot in Japan.

Yet, it is worth pointing out that the Japanese landscape in the remaining two shots does not particularly emphasize staged exoticism as in Hayakawa's past films. The first shot is Milton's flashback, in which Milton in his uniform flirts with a Japanese girl in a kimono. The location looks like a Japanese garden because there are a temple-like building and a balustrade of a Japanese bridge in the background, but other than those objects and the two people what we see in this long shot are only trees. The garden does not look as claustrophobic, or stage-like crowded with strange Japanese objects as the “Japanese” sequences in *The Typhoon* or *The Cheat*.

The second shot set in Japan is Yukio's flashback. It is a frontal medium shot of the Japanese girl in a white kimono who flirted with Milton. She looks up and raises both of her arms. She has a small Japanese sword in her left hand. Even though this shot looks more stage-like because of her somewhat ritualistic action, there is no strange point with the girl's kimono and Japanese-style hair. Her hair is authentically *marumage*, a hairstyle for a married woman, while she has *shimada*, a hairstyle for a young woman, in the first flashback. Also, there is no forced emphasis on the Japaneseness of the background. If we assume from these two shots, because of more precise details in the sets, costumes, and makeups, Japanese landscape and characters in *His Birthright* appear, on its surface, more authentic and realistic than those in Hayakawa's past films.

Moreover, the name of Hayakawa's Japanese character is an authentic Japanese one, Yukio. While Hayakawa had earlier played stereotypical Japanese characters with strange Japanese names before, such as Nitobe Tokoramo (*The Typhoon*) or Hishuru Tori (*The Cheat*), at Haworth Hayakawa played six Japanese characters with correct Japanese names in a row before he returned to playing other Asian roles from *The Man Beneath* (Worthington, 1919): Yukio, Akira, Sasamoto, Sakurai, Toyama, and Goro Moriyama,

However, beneath its surface, *His Birthright* exploits the same motifs of Hayakawa's star vehicles at the Lasky company, which utilized rather stereotypical images of Japan. Firstly, like many of Hayakawa's star vehicles at the Lasky company, the plot of *His Birthright* utilizes the archetypal *Madame Butterfly* narrative, which was the most popular narrative motif for stories about Japan at that time. The scenario was written by Frances Guihan, who wrote one of Hayakawa's *Madame Butterfly*-type of star vehicles, *The Soul of Kura San* (Edward J. LeSaint,

<sup>33</sup> *ETR* 4-19 (October 12, 1918), p. 1615.

<sup>34</sup> *EHM* 7-16 (October 12, 1918), p. 54.

1916). *Variety* points out that the film “followed the lines of John Luther Long’s story.”<sup>35)</sup> As the two flashbacks set in Japan suggest, an American naval officer falls in love with a Japanese girl, but leaves her behind. After giving birth to her son Yukio, she ritualistically takes her own life with a dagger.

Secondly, the most prominent motif of Hayakawa’s star vehicles at the Lasky company, the motif of a racial hierarchy that positions Japan in the racial middle ground between white and non-white, is also used in *His Birthright*. As we can observe in Gulick’s writings, the notion of a racial hierarchy based on pseudo-scientific Social Darwinism was part of the popular discourse of the period. In Hayakawa’s star vehicles at the Lasky company, Hayakawa’s characters became sympathetic mainly because they were Americanized in their lifestyles or in their sense of morality obedient to American laws and order. Even though Hayakawa’s non-white characters were also ultimately inassimilable to white American society, they became more sympathetic and obtained a higher position in the racial hierarchy than other non-white characters because of their Americanized lifestyles or motto.

In the early 1910s, a certain discourse existed that differentiated the Japanese from other non-whites racially and culturally, and tried to discover “scientifically” some links to the “white race.” Some called the Japanese “the Yankees, the British and the French of the far East.” For instance, William Elliot Griffis wrote in *North American Review*, “it is as unscientific to call the Japanese ‘Mongolians’ as to say that Englishmen are Jutes or that Americans are Angles.... Their [Japanese] history, language, ethnology, physiology, religion, culture, tastes, habits, and psychology show that instead of being ‘Mongolians’ they are the most un-Mongolian people in Asia. There is very little Chinese blood in the Japanese composite and no connection between languages. Physically the two peoples are at many points astonishingly unlike.”<sup>36)</sup> Griffis argued that Japanese ancestor was “Aryan speaking Ainu,” and, therefore, “the Japanese at base are a ‘white’ race” scientifically.<sup>37)</sup> Moreover, regarding philosophy and religion, Griffis juxtaposed the Japanese, who “transformed their imported Buddhism as well as their exotic politics and social ideals” with the Greeks, who “transfused the simple, spiritual ethics of Jesus into an elaborate theology,” and the Romans, who “turned it into an ecclesiastical discipline.”<sup>38)</sup> It is arguable whether the “Ainu” was the original Japanese or not, but those articles connected the Japanese with the “white race” culturally and “scientifically.” This discourse of a racial hierarchy and Japan’s middle ground position in that hierarchy existed behind Hayakawa’s star image.

In *His Birthright*, on the one hand, Yukio is characterized as a savage. In one party scene, Yukio as a valet watches an African-American orchestra. He moves his hands exactly in

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<sup>35)</sup> *Variety*, September 20, 1918, p. 45. John Luther Long was the author of the original story of *Madame Butterfly* (1898).

<sup>36)</sup> Griffis, William Elliot, “Japan and the United States: Are the Japanese Mongolian?” *North American Review* 197 (June 1913), p. 721.

<sup>37)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 723.

<sup>38)</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 730.

rhythm with the orchestra. Then, he turns to the guests dancing gracefully, but not in harmony with the rhythm. Yukio frowns and tilts his head. Here, the Japanese man and the African-American people are juxtaposed in terms of their way of appreciating music, which is contrasted with white people.

In the climactic scene, Yukio brutally attacks a white woman he loves. He jumps at Edna, who cheated him, grabs her at the neck, and tries to strangle her. When her bodyguards enter the scene, Yukio throws them one by one using "jiu-jitsu". In this scene, even though Edna is a villainous German spy and Yukio acts for America, his act also reminds one of Tokoramo and Tori, who try to avenge their tragic interracial romance. Yukio represents the threatening image of a Japanese man on white womanhood and of anxiety of miscegenation. Also, Yukio's use of "jiu-jitsu" technique provides a violent and savage image of Japanese.

On the other hand, Yukio shows his closeness to white males in *His Birthright*. From the beginning, Yukio's whiteness is emphasized by his makeup, his costumes, and the lighting on him. Close-ups of Yukio make him look white. In his all-white cabin boy uniform, broken only by his black bow tie, the black peak of his cap, and his black eye brows and dark lips, Yukio's skin and his face look quite white in the strong key lighting.

This strong lighting to make Yukio look white is repeated before Yukio attacks the female German spy. Yukio looks directly toward the camera in a medium close-up, and points at the camera with his right forefinger. With his little frowning face and his white skin color, Yukio's pose looks exactly like the famous pose of Uncle Sam in patriotic posters, saying "I Want You for U. S. Army."

As this pose of Yukio suggests, *His Birthright* gives Hayakawa's character the image of Americanization. In the late 1910s, Americanization, especially embodiment of white American traits, seemed to be one of the key elements for achieving stardom in cinema. According to the final results of the "Motion Picture Hall of Fame" popularity contest in the *Motion Picture* magazine in December 1918, five of the male stars listed in the top ten, Douglas Fairbanks, Harold Lockwood, William S. Hart, Wallace Reid, and Francis X. Bushman, were from the "clean-living group of all-Americans."<sup>39)</sup> It seemed natural to provide Hayakawa with an Americanized image when the most popular stars of the time embodied this "all-American" image.

Yet, the image of Americanization of Hayakawa's character is provided in accordance with the motif of a racial hierarchy. Yukio plays the role of a loyal son of America, who is placed in an inferior position to his father, Naval Officer Milton, a white American male. When Yukio is nearly lynched by Edna's bodyguards, he is finally saved by his father. In the final scene, Yukio stands up at his desk and moves his hands in rhythm with what he hears from outside. This time, it is not an African-American orchestra but the march of U. S. Navy. In *His Birthright*, music signifies racial identification. Yukio's moving up the racial hierarchy is shown as his

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<sup>39)</sup> Koszarski, Richard. *An Evening's Entertainment: The Age of the Silent Feature Picture, 1915-1928* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1990), p. 299.

transformation in his identification with certain music styles. The final intertitle, in which a picture of an American soldier and a Japanese soldier saluting each other in front of their national flags is drawn, says, "I am willing to give my life for the Stars and Stripes – your country – OUR country." As *ETR* claims, in *His Birthright*, "The birth of patriotism in the heart of the young Japanese boy is graphically pictured."<sup>40</sup> Yukio's half-Americanness guarantees his connection to whiteness, but, at the same time, his half-Japaneseness keeps him in an inferior position to white Americans. The motifs and characterization of *His Birthright* are not very different from those in Hayakawa's star vehicles at the Lasky company: the Japanese hero is ultimately a savage from the land of *Madame Butterfly*, but he is Americanizing himself to climb one step up the racial hierarchy. Yet, Hayakawa's character remains in the racial middle ground. Thus, the emphasis of *His Birthright* is not so much on introducing authentic or realistic Japanese characters as on showing Japanese people as loyal followers of America. *His Birthright* seems more like a pro-America war propaganda film, despite its reference to authentic Japanese characters and landscape on its surface. On reflection, Hayakawa may have emphasized his loyalty to the U. S. especially because he showed more authentic Japanese characters than before.

Hayakawa's strategy of recreating his star image by balancing his Americanized star image made at the Lasky company with a surface of authentic Japaneseness in *His Birthright* is observed more obviously in the publicity for *His Birthright* in trade journals. There, actuality and fiction, Hayakawa's private narrative and his screen role, were dissolved into one, in order to maintain Hayakawa's Americanized star image with authentic Japanese flavor.<sup>41</sup> The fusion was achieved on two levels: between Hayakawa's biography and the story of *His Birthright*; and between an authentic Japanese object and a stereotyped image of the object. *ETR* published the interview with Hayakawa:

"His Birthright,' in which the famous sword of the Samurai is involved, uses a sword in the production which has been in the Hayakawa family for 400 years. Hayakawa belongs to one of the oldest families in Japan, one whose traditions involve the succession of the oldest son to the family troubles and guardianship of the family honor. He is also custodian of the family sword – most precious of family possessions.

'Time was – not so long ago either' – remarked the actor a few days ago, 'when a man's honor consisted in his preservation of certain traditions that in some instances were

<sup>40</sup> *ETR* 4-12 (August 24, 1918), p. 1006.

<sup>41</sup> To publicize an actor's private life to construct his or her star images was a typical strategy the film industry took at the emergence of the star system, and Hayakawa's case was not exceptional. Richard deCordova insists the "star is characterized by a fairly thoroughgoing articulation of the paradigm professional life/private life. With the emergence of the star, the question of the player's existence outside his/her work in films entered discourse." At the emergence of the star system, deCordova claims, the "private life of the star was not to be in contradiction with his/her film image—at least not in terms of its moral tenor. The two would rather support each other." deCordova, Richard, "The Emergence of the Star System in America," in *Stardom: Industry of Desire*, Christine Gledhill, ed. (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 27.

not worthy of preservation. Among these was a too ready use of the sword to avenge insults, sometimes imaginary ones.

'Now we take our troubles to the courts, just like Americans. The sword of the Samurai is a noble tradition, but we don't use it with old time indiscriminacy. It hangs on the wall in the place of honor among the portraits of our ancestors who were good old fighters of a different regime.'"<sup>42)</sup>

Here, Hayakawa tries to fictionalize his biography and the origin of an authentic Japanese object along the line of the plot of *His Birthright* to fit to the eyes of American audiences.

Hayakawa's strategy seemed to be well-received, according to the reviews in trade journals. The authentic Japanese surroundings were praised as quoted above. The motifs and characterizations were welcomed favorably. A reviewer at *Variety* wrote, "a strong theme in the above, and the young Japanese star makes the most of it."<sup>43)</sup> A reviewer at *ETR* claimed, "one of the best things he [Hayakawa] has done, and promises well for future Hayakawa pictures under this management."<sup>44)</sup>

The motif of racial hierarchy and the characterization of the hero as the loyal son of America in *His Birthright* were not only an appeal to American audiences, but also a point of compromise with Japanese spectators in the U. S. As we have discussed, the discourse of the *Rafu Shimpo* on Japanese self-image was conscious and acceptant of the middle ground position of Japanese in the racial hierarchy, typically insisted on by Gulick. In this sense, the characterization of Yukio as a loyal son of America was consistent with the discourse of the *Rafu Shimpo*. The *Rafu Shimpo* was actually satisfied with the characterization of the hero in *His Birthright*, despite the film's compromised depiction of authentic Japaneseness. Hayakawa's public announcement that he would make films that would "do justice to real Japanese character" may have worked well. A reviewer praised the film in a nationalistic tone:

The plot seems like a sequel to *Madame Butterfly*.... To me it was more delightful than any other recent films by Hayakawa.... The main issue here is that the Japanese people appreciate mysterious goodness and beauty in revenge since ancient times, and it looks sarcastic compared with the white hypocrisy hidden behind the discourse of "Love your enemy." ... It is much preferable than watching a Japanese man falling in love with a white woman and thrown away in the end. Sessue should explore more about showing the essence of the Japanese people and making films with delightful acts.<sup>45)</sup>

While admitting the archetypal *Madame Butterfly* narrative in *His Birthright*, the reviewer was impressed by the characterization of the hero, who reserves his Japanese background and attains justice in America.

Hayakawa showed his dutiful and patriotic pose toward the U. S. more directly after the establishment of his own company and his declaration of emphasizing authentic Japaneseness

<sup>42)</sup> "Hayakawa Holds Samurai Sword of His Ancestors," *ETR* 4-12 (August 24, 1918), p. 1004.

<sup>43)</sup> *Variety*, September 20, 1918, p. 45.

<sup>44)</sup> *ETR* 4-12 (August 24, 1918), p. 1018.

<sup>45)</sup> "Tsukai na katsudo [Delightful motion picture]." *Rafu Shimpo* 4627 (September 3, 1918), p. 3.

in his films. Since the U. S. was participating in World War I, Hayakawa occasionally showed his devotion to the alliance by speaking for Liberty Bonds. *MPW*, for instance, reported, "Sessue Hayakawa, the Japanese star of the Haworth Pictures Corporation, was the first screen player to appear at the tank [a reproduction from the French Front], and in less than an hour disposed of bonds valued at \$6,500."<sup>46)</sup>

Hayakawa made a promotional film for the Liberty Loan Campaign. *EHM* reported, "In exactly thirty hours after a request had been received by Sessue Hayakawa from Adolph Zukor, chairman of the Liberty Loan committee of the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry, for a film which would assist the flotation of the Fourth Liberty Loan, the film was made, and six hours later it had been cut, titled and shipped to Washington."<sup>47)</sup> That was *Banzai*.

Two strategic devices are taken in *Banzai* to emphasize Hayakawa's and Japan's loyalty to the U. S. Firstly, *Banzai* tries to confirm a favorable image of Japan in opposition to Germany. *Banzai* forces the image of "yellow peril," typified by ape-like figures, on Germans, and demonizes German soldiers with the image of death, alcohol, and a threat to white women. The film opens with a theatrical set of German Headquarters. The intertitle has a picture of an ape-like man with a big ears and fangs wearing a helmet with a drawing of a skull. A soldier with a bottle of champagne and two white women joins a German General in the room, and asks, "How about that champagne party in Paris, General?" General grabs a woman's arm, forcefully embraces her, and says, "Next month. Then in the Fall, a celebration in New York, and all American women will belong to German Soldiers." The intertitle has a picture of white people captured by the hands of huge black monkey.

Secondly, the motif of masquerade blurs the difference between an Americanized Japanese and an American, and emphasizes the goodwill between them. *The New York Dramatic Mirror* wrote, "Sessue Hayakawa as a Japanese soldier in the United States Army in his Liberty Loan film 'Banzai.'"<sup>48)</sup> However, Hayakawa actually plays an American soldier who saves white women from the Germans. An American soldier with a blonde mustache enters the German Headquarters right after the German General attacks the white woman, shoots the German General, and opens the door for other American soldiers. He tears down the German flag on the wall, and replaces it with an American flag. Then, he says, "The bluff called, Four Liberty loans over-subscribed. Your dollars, turned into bullets, won the war. The Victory is ours. The war is over." The following extreme long shot reveals that the sequence has been played on a stage. The shot/reverse shot structure shows American audiences in the theater clapping at actors playing American soldiers in front of the American flag on the stage. The American soldier with mustache takes off his helmet and peels off his fake mustache. Hayakawa's dark hair and actual Japanese face are revealed. Even though his Japanese face appears, Hayakawa

<sup>46)</sup> "Screen Players in Loan Drive," *MPW* 36-7 (May 18, 1918), p. 985.

<sup>47)</sup> "Hayakawa Makes Film for Next Loan Drive in Thirty-six Hours," *EHM* 7-11 (September 7, 1918), p. 39.

<sup>48)</sup> *New York Dramatic Mirror* 79-2076 (October 5, 1918), p. 519.

slightly frowns, poses like Uncle Sam with his finger pointing at the camera, and says, "Applause didn't win the war. The boys backed by your Liberty Bonds, did. Applause will not bring them home or pay the war bills. Your dollars in the victory Liberty Loan will. I am not talking to the man near you – but to you – the real American." This close-up of Hayakawa not only leads the audience for the film to identify with the audience in the film, but also emphasizes Hayakawa's Japanese facial characteristics. Then, in the following medium shot Hayakawa raises his right fist and cries out, "Banzai !," raises both arms and repeats "BANZAI !" Even though Hayakawa's Japanese nationality is emphasized by the close up and the use of the word "Banzai," he faithfully plays his role as an American for American audiences. In other words, Hayakawa masquerades as a white and makes the audience conscious about his racial difference as a Japanese, but, at the same time, by playing a white American, he emphasizes his Americanized self with his loyalty to the U. S.

### Coda

As the most emphasized thematic motif of *His Birthright* was the half-Japanese, half-American hero's final decision to become a loyal son of America, and his acceptance of a rather inferior position to white Americans, the first two Hayakawa's films made at Haworth were pro-American propaganda films. While the existence of authentic Japanese landscape or characters were emphasized in both films, what they conveyed with their plots and characterizations of the heroes were the Japanese people's loyalty to the U. S. Even though Hayakawa declared he would make films that would "do justice to real Japanese characters," the main issue for Hayakawa at Haworth seemed to be maintaining his star status by consciously exploiting his Americanized star image and rather stereotypical Japanese image created at the Lasky company. In this sense, authentic landscape, objects, and characters seemed to be consciously and strategically chosen for a secondary purpose of not offending the feelings of Japanese spectators in the U. S. Thus, Hayakawa's first two films at Haworth can be called a product of "triple consciousness": a result of the negotiation between Hayakawa, American audiences, and Japanese spectators.

Before anything else, the name of his company, Haworth, symbolized Hayakawa's careful mediation between his Americanized and Japanese star image. No record is left about the details of naming his company, but Haworth seems to be the combination of "Ha" from "Hayakawa" and "worth" from William Worthington, who was Hayakawa's right-hand man, and directed twelve films out of the first thirteen Hayakawa's films at Haworth. In any case, the important thing is "Haworth" sounds a very waspy name. If Hayakawa had a total control of the company, the name could have been "Hayakawa Pictures Corporation," because Worthington was just a director of the company. A possible reason for Hayakawa's choice of the waspy name Haworth for his company was his particular attention to the Americanized aspect of his star image.

Additionally, but importantly, the Japanese characters that Hayakawa represented at Haworth were not an actual representation of Japanese at that time. Even when authentic

landscape or objects were used, they were transformed or stereotyped according to the taste of American audience. At the same time, those images of Japanese characters sometimes perceived as an “ideal” image that mirrored the imagined national identities of Japanese immigrants in the U. S., who showed nationalistic tendency at the same time as they tried to assimilate into American society. One of the criteria Hayakawa used to (re)create his star image seemed to conform to the image that Japanese immigrants liked to convey of Japan. For Japanese communities, which were fighting against the nativist anti-Japanese movement, identification with the “ideal” image represented in a dominant medium (cinema) could become a cohesive and binding force. This was also true for Japanese intellectuals who had been initiating modernization in Japan. For instance, those who started so called *jun'eigageki undo* (the Pure Film Movement) turned favorably to Hayakawa's films for their “ideal” way of exploiting Japaneseness. Those intellectuals advocated reforming cinema in Japan to challenge the dominance of American cinema in international markets after World War I. Hayakawa's activity at his company became a critique of the Japanese self-image. Hayakawa's attempt to contest his star image created at the Lasky company not only supplied an alternative to American stereotypical depictions of Japanese, but also led the Japanese spectator to question, “What is Japanese?”

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## 三重の意識：ハワース映画会社における 早川雪洲のスターダムについて

### 〈Summary〉

宮尾大輔

米国無声映画界の日本人スター早川雪洲は、彼のスターダムを築いたジェシー・L・ラスキー映画会社との契約が切れるのを契機に、1918年3月、自らの映画製作会社、ハワース映画会社を設立した。ラスキー社での主演作品は、主に偏見に満ちた日本像を利用したものだったため、早川は米国内の日系人コミュニティにおける自身の評判を気にかけていた。そのため、自社ハワースでは、まずそれまでの自身のスター・イメージを離れ、より「現実的で本物らしい」日本人を描く映画を製作することを宣言していた。しかし、一方、米国映画界において会社を経営する以上、早川は米国人観客からの人気を維持することも必要としていた。早川は、米国人を魅了すると同時に、米国内の日系人に対し現実的な日本人像を提示しなければならなかったのである。つまり、ハワース社において、早川のスター・イメージは、少なくとも3つのグループの思惑や利害関係が交錯するなかで形成されていたと考えることができる。3つのグループとは、ハワース社のスターであり、なおかつ映画製作の責任を持つ早川自身、米国の映画観客、そして日系人社会である。本論文は、早川が提示した「日本」と米国観客が求める「日本」、そして米国在住及び日本の観客が求める「日本」とが、各々いかにハワース社における早川のスター・イメージを決定していく要因となったかを、人種主義およびネイティヴィズムが高まりを見せた第一次世界大戦期の米国社会の歴史的な文脈の中で検討する。本論文は、まずロスアンゼルスの日系新聞『羅府新報』が早川についていかに論じたかを検討する。次に、ハワース社で製作された最初の2本の早川主演映画（『異郷の親』および『Banzai』）を精密に分析し、早川のスター・イメージがいかにして3つのグループの文化的な摩擦と交渉の結果形成されていったのか明らかにする。