

ハワイにおける砂糖革命と多民族化 1850-1920 (重近啓樹先生追悼記念号)

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The Sugar Revolution and the Construction of Ethnic Boundaries in Hawai`i, 1850-1920

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As one of the so-called “minority-majority states” in the United States, Hawai`i’s ethnic relations have drawn much attention from many scholars in various disciplines. Since the 1980s, when the debate over multiculturalism intensified in the continental U.S., Hawai`i has been perceived as a model for multiculturalism by both scholars and the media.

This prevalent view of ethnic relations in contemporary Hawai`i is called the “Hawai`i multicultural model.” According to this argument, tolerant and harmonious ethnic relations in Hawai`i date back to the late nineteenth-century plantation era, when the sugar industry began to expand significantly and immigrants from various countries drastically increased in the islands. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sugar had thoroughly transformed the culture and society of Hawai`i by bringing the economic system of plantation monoculture and immigrant workers. Proponents of the Hawai`i multicultural model argue that these immigrant workers came to Hawai`i with their own ethnocultural identity and were welcomed by existing residents with their “aloha spirit,” which places tremendous value on acceptance and respect for others.

This study examines these historical perceptions of the Hawai`i multicultural model by tracing the history of the sugar industry in Hawai`i in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historical accounts suggest that, as a matter of record, white sugar planters in Hawai`i imported immigrant workers from all around the world and allowed them to maintain their homeland cultures in plantation camps not because of their aloha spirit but because of the divide-and-rule strategy associated with white paternalism. These planters’ strategies to control labor led to the creation of “the plantation pyramid,” a highly stratified society in which one’s place in the hierarchy is defined by his or her ethnicity. I argue that it was primarily through the formation of the plantation pyramid during this period that ethnic boundaries and identities were constructed in Hawai`i.