

**RUMOR MONGERING: SCAPEGOATING TECHNIQUES FOR SOCIAL  
COHESION AND COPING AMONG THE JAPANESE-AMERICANS IN  
UNITED STATES INTERNMENT CAMPS DURING WORLD WAR II**

A Thesis

by

JENNY BIGGS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2008

Major Subject: Anthropology

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee,	Thomas Green
Committee Members,	Sylvia Grider
	Jane Sell
Head of Department,	Donny Hamilton

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**ABSTRACT**

Rumor Mongering: Scapegoating Techniques for Social Cohesion and Coping among the Japanese-Americans in United States Internment Camps during World War II.

(August 2008)

Jenny Biggs, B.A., Texas A&M University

Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Thomas Green

This thesis examines the linkages between the verbal response to social stress, the ostracism of individuals from a social group, and the subsequent increased cohesion of the remaining members. To write the thesis, I utilized these printed references in the forms of scholarly research, journals, diaries, and interviews primarily from the Texas A&M Sterling Evans Library and the online journal resource JSTOR as well as a video documentary. Previous research into the genres of rumor, identity, and scapegoat accusations are explicated. Then, these approaches are applied to the rumors told by the Japanese-Americans who were removed from their homes and sent to internment camps in the United States during World War II. The internment camps were rife with scapegoat accusations between the internees whose once unified culture group was fissured along lines of loyalty to the United States or to Japan. These scapegoat accusations against fellow internees were an outlet for the stress exerted upon them by the American government that was not directly combatable. Even processes as

complicated as changing social dynamics can be observed through the mechanisms of rumors and scapegoat accusations.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Rumor, gossip, labeling and scapegoat accusations have been used as indicators of the narrator, the audience, and the social setting (Braid 1996:18; Mullen 1972:98; Stahl 1986:274; Tucker 1992:141). Through the analysis of the content and forms of these genres, and the inherent resurgence of cultural patterns, scholars have found that scapegoat accusations and other narratives are barometers for the strain or stress on a culture (Knottnerus 2000:11, i; Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:7-8, 19). These scapegoat accusations can provide a release of stress (Polletta 1998:139). By verbalizing emotions and sharing them with a group of peers, individuals can shape opinions of others or seek approval for their own opinions or actions in a socially acceptable manner. When a culture is under pressure, narrative and dialogue can become particularly powerful tools for uniting a group (Polletta 1998:137). For the purposes of my research, I will examine how rumors, gossip, labeling and scapegoat accusations can be used to tighten the bonds between members of a culture and revitalize tradition following a drastic environmental or social stress.

The process of scapegoating, whether of outsiders or insiders, ultimately serves to rally those individuals who do not bear the brand of “Other.” Verbal scapegoat terms may be used to unify the mainstream, conformist populace against a common perceived threat and to display the repercussions of going against the norms

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This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of American Folklore*.

of the group (Thomas 1906:258). Scapegoat accusations can borrow from a culture's shared supernatural folklore, to provide justification, drawing on a set of widely understood and inherent vilifications against the accused. For example, calling someone a witch uses a well-known set of associations to slander that person's reputation by associating him or her with all imagery associated with the cultural concept of a witch (Schoeneman 1975:530). Accusations can also take a wholly non-supernatural form by using accusations based on behaviors that are still taboo to the culture group, such as violence or betrayal.

Scapegoating serves as a system of self-regulation for the values of the community and a form of punishment for those who deviate (Eder and Enke 1991:504; Schoeneman 1975:533). Those who are not contributing to the community at a time of stress can be dealt with by other members of the community in a socially-acceptable, traditionally-established manner. The narrators of the scapegoat accusations integrate themselves further into the group by disassociating themselves from the accused and boasting of their own adherence to the norms.

In this thesis, I shall examine this connection between verbal responses to social stress, the ostracism of individuals from a social group, and the subsequent increased cohesion of the remaining members. Since individuals' places in a culture group are dynamic identities, strengthening and weakening along with their own verbal involvement with the community (Mishler 1999:8; Polkinghorne 1996:363), I will also consider how narrative and identity are reflexively tied to each other. Further discussion will include how the norms of a society are revealed through its rumors and the



terminology employed in its scapegoat accusations and labels, as well as the anthropological significance of the aforementioned scapegoat terms.

This analysis will be conducted through an examination of rumors spread by the internees in Japanese-American internment camps during World War II, based on various contemporary sources including diaries, letters, studies by anthropologists and other social scientists who visited the camps, and historical documents. After a brief historical introduction to the internment event, I will explore how different kinds of narrative and dialogue were used by the Japanese-Americans to deal with different kinds of stress.

The internment was selected for study for several reasons. First, every internee shared a common Japanese ethnic identity, and, second, all internees were isolated from the outside world in a rigid, prison-like atmosphere (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:1; Verdoia 1988). Additionally, the internment represents a period of undeniable social stress which disrupted the normal lives of the Japanese Americans involved, relocating them to often harsh, cramped environments. Finally, the internment of the Japanese Americans is an example of a clash of identities that had national ramifications for the United States both politically and socially.

In sum, this thesis analyzes how scapegoat accusations reflect a social climate and delineate subgroups of a population. Scapegoat accusations can be further divided into the categories of supernatural accusations and their more mundane counterparts. These accusations serve to enforce uniformity, group participation, social cohesion, and ethnic identity.

## Chapter Breakdown

Chapter II introduces the primary objectives and overall context of the thesis. This chapter provides the basic historical and social information on the period of the Japanese internment, including dates, locations, and population numbers. Then I delve deeper into the more specific data such as housing conditions, social strains within the camps, and subpopulations of Japanese-Americans and their various points of tension.

Chapter III discusses the previous research done on rumor, gossip, labeling, and ethnic slurs. It traces the recognition of these narrative styles and scapegoat accusations as valid genres of folklore, their differentiation from legend, and their defining characteristics (Dégh and Vazsonyi 1974:225; Stahl 1989:12-13). I analyze the form and function of rumor and gossip, the formal channels of conversation in which the genres take place, and their association with social stress and a means of its release (Allport and Postman 1947:38, Eder and Enke 1991:494-508). Subsequently, I outline the relevant categories of scapegoat accusations: those dealing with a supernatural entity versus those focusing on a more mundane taboo issue, as well as exoteric versus esoteric scapegoating. I refer to E.R. Leach's work about the derogatory uses of domesticated animal names (2000) in dealing with *inu* (dog), the most prevalent scapegoat term in the internment. I explicate methods of analysis for the various genres of rumor and scapegoat accusations, such as the phenomenological approach, which entails viewing supernatural accounts as a cultural interpretation of a concrete physical phenomenon

(Adler 1991:54; Hufford 1995a:55). Then, I discuss the specific purposes, inherent qualities, and relevant cultural information these genres can convey.

Also in Chapter III, I explore various aspects of narrative and identity theory as well as previous research into internment and total institutions. Beginning with the concept of identity theory and how identity is linked to narrative, I then investigate social conflict and its repercussions on identity, narrative, and scapegoat accusations. Individuals have a tendency to return to traditional forms of expression during times of social stress, clinging to romantic sentiments about the past in the uneasy present (Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:7-8, 19, 21). Generalized change and disruption is a major cause of stress (Burke 1991:836). Erving Goffman tackles the investigation of the traumatic effects of change in his study of total institutions and their deliberate disruption of identity (Goffman 1961). Finally, I borrow terminology from David Knottnerus's studies into strategic ritualization that illustrates social networks and methods of promoting folk traditions (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:7).

In Chapter IV, I analyze the published accounts from the Japanese internees as well as reports from social scientists to extricate relevant scapegoat data. It will be shown that the methods of accusation utilized by those individuals who considered themselves loyal to the American government differed from those who lost faith in the Americans and considered themselves disloyal to America (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:20). The discussion will include terminology the internees used and the sources from which they drew their terminology reflect their level of participation with their Japanese identity. Disloyals were more likely to summon accusations from traditional

Japanese folklore or use terms from the Japanese language. Furthermore, the level of organization of the disloyals versus loyals is also reflected in the prevalence and set vocabulary of scapegoat terms they used.

I discuss the concept of *inu* more thoroughly, and analyze instances in which the term was used against those believed to be loyal to the United States. Other Japanese loyalists turned to traditional folklore sets to vilify others, as the terminology inherently contains a long history of negative associations and solidified meaning (Opler 1950:389-390). In relation to this, I will review affect control theory, or the pairing of one word with another to affect the inherent sentiment of the initial word (Heise 1997). I categorize the scapegoat accusations along two primary dichotomies. One is the esoteric (subcategories of other Japanese Americans, rude slang terms, and derogatory terms) versus exoteric (derogatory terminology and rumors about the American captors themselves) (Jansen 1965:45-6). The other dichotomy consists of scapegoat accusations with folkloric supernatural bases as distinct from those with a more mundane content.

In Chapter IV, I also compare the scapegoat accusations at the different camps. I focus on the more rigid camp, Tule Lake, which was used to segregate those flagged by the government as disloyal, versus the other camps where administration was more lax and official channels more communicative (Spicer et al. 1969:171, 229-230; Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:53). The dichotomy between Tule Lake and the other camps shows two different levels of social stress within the Japanese internment camps.

Finally, in Chapter V, I review the findings from the thesis. I show the significance of scapegoat accusations in a charged social context and their

implementation in group interactions. Specifically, I review the patterns in traditional versus nontraditional terminology, which individuals are selected to be scapegoated, and the results of scapegoat accusations: ostracism, violence, the enforcement of group values through fear, and the subsequent tightening of the social group and conformity to its rules.

## CHAPTER II

### OVERVIEW OF THE JAPANESE INTERNMENT

#### **Overview of the Japanese-American Internment**

Very few situations disrupt the lives of people as much as when institutions intentionally subject people to drastically different lifestyles and isolate them from the outside world. This scenario underscores how cultural crisis ignites traditional dialogues that assist in the reduction of stress through scapegoat accusations. The Japanese-American internment lasted for a period of about three years, imprisoning people of all ages based on their ethnicity alone, isolating them from the rest of the country, placing them into what Erving Goffman (1961) terms a *total institution* (see Chapter III). There were conflicts both between the Americans and Japanese (exoteric conflicts), as well as among the subgroups of Japanese themselves (esoteric conflicts) (Jansen 1965:45-6). Before I can conduct an in-depth analysis of particular scapegoat events that occurred at the camps, I must first provide a historical survey of the internment in general.

#### **Leading Up to the Internment: Americans of Japanese Descent in the 1940s**

Before the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the subsequent involvement of America in World War II, there was a nascent, thriving community of Japanese immigrants and their children and grandchildren primarily in the western continental United States. As

of December 7, 1941, 127,000 people who could claim Japanese ancestry lived in the continental United States (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:1). Of these , 113,000 lived in the western states of California, Washington, Oregon, and Arizona; 94,000 lived in California alone (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:1). Another 150,000 lived in Hawaii; however, the Hawaiian population was more deeply rooted with thriving communities, having much greater numbers due to a massive influx of workers on the sugar cane plantations in the previous century (Daniels 2002:299). Despite these numbers, the total population of Japanese-Americans made up less than a tenth of one percent of the overall American population. Even in California, where their numbers were most concentrated, they only formed two percent of the population. Ninety-eight percent of the *Issei* (first generation Japanese) came to America prior to the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924; therefore, half of the 47,000 Issei in America were over the age of 50 when the war broke out. This immigration barrier further established the generational gap, as almost all of the first generation Japanese living in America were older than the second (*Nisei*) and third generation (*Sansei*) Japanese because no new Japanese were immigrating to America. Nisei and Sansei made up the other 80,000 of the Japanese-American population (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:1, 4). A third subset of the Japanese-American population existed at the time, coined *Kibei*, individuals who were born in America but who traveled to Japan for their education, spending many of their formative years there, only to later return to the United States (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:3). Even at the time, Kibei “frequently found themselves handicapped linguistically and culturally and displaced among their America-oriented bothers and

sisters” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:3).

The Japanese in America tended to fall into two extremes in their level of Westernization. On one extreme, many immigrant Japanese either established traditional, rural families or clustered together in communities called *nihonmachi*, or Japanese Towns (Verdoia 1988). Despite physically being in America, many practices that were considered traditional even in Japan persisted, such as women walking five feet behind the man (Hansen 1994:350). This was primarily due to the fact that, while Japan went through a revolution in the Meiji era, from 1868 until 1912, during which many old traditions were expunged in favor of more “modern,” Western traditions, there was no corresponding modernizing movement in the close-knit Japanese communities in America (Hansen 1994:350). On the other extreme were Japanese individuals who became active members in more Americanized communities. Some had come to America for educational purposes, establishing themselves as teachers at such universities as Stanford (Chang 1997:12); others were Nisei who attended American universities (Modell 1973:6).

When America joined the war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the sentiment towards Japanese in America shifted negatively. Japanese in America, despite how westernized they might be, became the targets of nationalist sentiments (Spicer et al. 1969:27). Many Chinese-Americans wore or posted signs outside their businesses declaring their Chinese heritage to separate themselves from the Japanese. Many Japanese were faced with a conflict of identity; whereas before they could proudly consider themselves to be Americans of Japanese descent, now many felt they had to



make a choice. They could return to Japan and renounce their American identity, or remain in America and renounce their Japanese heritage (Kuramitsu 1995:620).

### **The Relocation**

Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Americans began to view other Americans of Japanese descent negatively. This sentiment was not limited to average American people, but was reflected in the statements of government officials as well. General John DeWitt submitted his opinion to the President, suspecting the Japanese-Americans of potential sabotage, a suspicion so unfounded that he used the fact that there had yet to be sabotage as “evidence” that sabotage was inevitable (Verdoia 1988). On February 19, 1942 (just over two months after the Pearl Harbor bombing), President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 that allowed the secretary of war to prescribe areas of the nation as restricted military zones (Spicer et al. 1969:43). As phrased by the order,

The Secretary of War, and the Military Commanders whom he may from time to time designate... to prescribe military areas... from which any or all persons may be excluded, and with respect to which, the right of any person to enter, remain in, or leave shall be subject to whatever restriction the Secretary of War or the appropriate Military Commander may impose in his discretion (quoted in Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:9).

General DeWitt was given the authority prescribed by this order, and promptly declared the “western third of Washington and Oregon, the western half of California and the southern quarter of Arizona as Military Area No. 1 – an area from which ... all persons of Japanese ancestry as well as German and Italian aliens would be excluded” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946: 9). While other ethnicities were singled out, the first zone designated by the government consisted of areas with the highest concentration of Japanese-Americans. They then were legally allowed to not only force the Japanese-Americans from their homes and compel them to relocate, but to imprison them for the duration of the war on no other grounds than their ancestry. Between March and November of 1942, over 120,000 Japanese-Americans were relocated from their homes and communities on the west coast to internment camps where they would remain for nearly three years (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:53, Daniels 2002:299). They were forced to abandon their homes and most of their possessions. When people finally returned, many of their homes had been vandalized and robbed, fires had been set, and even graveyards had not escaped the vandals (Verdoia 1988).

Eleven internment camps were designated for the relocated Japanese-Americans, ten of which were utilized (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:27). The camps were Amache, CO; Gila River, AZ; Heart Mountain, WY; Jerome, AR; Manzanar, CA; Minidoka, ID; Poston, AZ; Rohwer, AR; Tanforan, CA; Topaz, UT; and Tule Lake, CA (Fugita and Fernandez 2004:50). The population sizes of the relocation camps at capacity varied, the smallest being Amache with 7,318 and the largest, Tule Lake, with 18,789 (Spicer et al. 1969:67). Family units were generally kept together (Villanueva and Ross 2005). There

were only a few individuals exempt from the evacuation: individuals of mixed blood, Caucasian spouses of interracial marriages, tuberculosis patients, and college students who were attending university outside of the prohibited areas (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:53). In one instance, a Caucasian woman named Mary Kumoro had married a Japanese man who had not yet arrived in the United States; the government attempted to relocate her children but not her, but she fought to be taken along with them (Verdoia 1988).

The living conditions in the camps were miserable. None of the construction on the camps was even finished by the time the first evacuees arrived (Spicer et al. 1969:66). The camps were located in remote and generally inhospitable regions. With the exception of Tule Lake, which was located at the fertile bottom of a drained lake, soil and water conditions were poor for farming. The six western sites were windswept and dusty. Tule Lake, Minidoka and Heart Mountain had harsh winters. Poston and Gila were in the Arizona desert and frequently had temperatures topping 100 degrees for long periods of time, and Rohwer and Jerome had the problems of a swampy region, including humidity and mosquitoes (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:28). Additionally, some of the camps were never intended for human habitation. Tanforan was a converted racetrack with the internees living in the horse stalls (Verdoia 1988). The residents, upon arrival, were ordered to clean their own stalls, which frequently had much of the residue expected of a horse stall including manure. The stalls were generally dark and dirty confinements with sound that traveled too easily. Organizationally, most of the camps were divided into clusters of barracks called “blocks”; each block housed 250 to

300 people, broken down into about 25 barracks (Spicer et al. 1969:65-66). In each barrack were about four apartments, in each of which a couple of families shared a single 20'x 25' living space (Spicer et al. 1969:85). A mess hall, lavatory, laundry and ironing rooms, and recreation rooms were provided for each block; the individual apartments did not have running water (Spicer et al. 1969:105, Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:29).

Entering the camps from private, family-oriented lives was a severe disruption. There was virtually no privacy with the thin walls and communal amenities. The internees were segregated from the rest of the country in isolated camps, and under constant supervision by Caucasian Americans. Furthermore, at the onset very little official communication explained the situation to a necessary degree; rumors circulated wildly around the camps in order to attempt to supplement the lack of information (Spicer et al. 1969:96). Many had their trust in the American government shaken when FBI agents entered their homes to take them to the internment camps, and were now faced with vague futures, lack of answers, and a fearful distrust in the American government which now held power over their lives. Given the state of disruption and confusion, many residents were willing to “believe any kind of a rumor without verification” (Modell 1973:93).

### **Life at the Camps: Problems and Incidents**

At the camps themselves, even after the internees had settled in, the Japanese-Americans' problems were far from over. While the residents were allowed employment in certain designated jobs, such as farming or working in the mess halls or the camp's administrative offices, their wages were capped at \$19 a month, leading to bitter sentiments (Spicer et al. 1969:90). Police forces were also established, which the internees could join; however, they were led by Caucasians (Hansen 1994:134). Furthermore, while mail was allowed in and out of the camps, it was highly limited and censored. At first, no mail written in Japanese was permitted, but then the rules were relaxed to allow one piece of mail in Japanese and two pieces in English per week; nothing more than 24 lines in length was permitted at all (Fiset 1998:103). Any mention of banned information could stop a letter or cause it to be blacked out by the mail censors. Banned information consisted of: descriptions of the physical layout or location of the camps, internee arrival and departure dates, population sizes, strength of guards, transfers from one camp to another, or any complaints about the mail restrictions, personal treatment, government agencies or the Red Cross; writers were also advised to avoid exaggerating any favorable conditions of detention (Fiset 1998:103). The climate in the camps was that of indefinite suspension from normal life; the government had told them that the camps would be temporary, while efforts were made to resettle them in other areas, but no further information was forthcoming (Spicer et al. 1969:216). This

atmosphere of ambiguousness and transience gave rise to a sense that events inside the camps were unimportant as was the council authority within the camps, in addition to the fear of not knowing what the next day could bring.

Beyond the limitations on the internees imposed by the Caucasian organizers, there was tension between the internees themselves. While all the Japanese-Americans had the common linkage of Japanese descent, this imposed identity intensified the stratification and sub-identities within that ethnic categorization. People who might have viewed each other as brethren within the larger scope of American cities where all Japanese-Americans were minorities now split hairs to divide themselves into new subgroups that often were at odds with each other. In addition to the pre-existing terms such as Issei, Nisei, Sansei and Kibei in reference to the individual's genealogical and cultural distance from the parent country of Japan, individuals were also split based on their loyalties to the United States. The Japanese-American Citizens League (JACL) was an organization that, before the relocation, fought to keep Nisei and Sansei out of the camps, swearing their loyalty to the United States government (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:20). This organization also filled the power vacuum as officials and liaisons for Japanese-Americans with the US government after the initial impounding of Issei community leaders shortly after Pearl Harbor. These JACL members, once sent to the internment camps with the rest of the Japanese-Americans, were held in suspicion and contempt by many of the other internees whose sympathies lay with Japan, such as the Issei and most especially the Kibei who had most recently been enculturated in Japan (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:21). However, since the use of the Japanese language was

forbidden in large assemblies and newspapers at the camp, the JACL still held a dominant position in the camps:

These activities soon earned the Nisei leaders the reputation of being *inu* (informers; literally ‘dogs’), and of betraying the parent generation. They became the target to social censure in Japanese-American communities, for the accepted code of the Japanese immigrants had been that no detrimental information would be divulged outside racial groups (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:21).

The term *inu* became synonymous with a person loyal to the Americans, and a traitor to their people; calling someone an *inu* ostracized them from the community and branded them as a scapegoat. Some sources cite that a female loyalist was called a *neko* (which translates as cat) (Chang 1997:219).

Contention between loyals and disloyals came to a head in November of 1942, after all of the evacuees had been settled into camps, when American officials circulated a questionnaire supposedly in order to facilitate resettlement to the “outside world” and minimize conflicts in the centers (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:53). The US government wanted to confine all of the evacuees who were disloyal to America to one center, hoping to minimize conflicts overall and allow the government to impose more stringent restrictions on that one particular camp. Before a mandatory resettlement of the supposed disloyals, those individuals who “wanted to live as Japanese” were allowed to voluntarily move to Tule Lake (Spicer et al. 1969:171). Subsequently, the survey was

distributed among all of the internees. Containing over thirty questions, only two, numbers 27 and 28, were of importance to the sorting:

Question 27: Are you willing to serve in the armed forces of the United States on combat duty, wherever offered?

Question 28: Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, or any other foreign government, power, or organization? (quoted in *Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:57*).

Anyone who answered “no” to *both* of the above questions, or who refused to register through the submission of the questionnaire, was flagged as disloyal by the American government and sent to Tule Lake. This camp was selected as the location for resettlement because whereas, prior to the relocation, most camps had about a 20% disloyal percentage, Tule Lake had 42% (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:61). In actuality, the specific concentration of disloyal individuals in Tule Lake was no higher than at other camps. Instead, a breakdown in the line of communication between the US government and the camp officials, and subsequently between the officials and the residents, led to a bloated percentage of individuals labeled as disloyal (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:72-5). Since officials were unable to clarify issues and procedures and the significance of the answers on the survey until over three days after the surveys were distributed, many people did not understand what they were registering for and why. Petitions arose with the Kibei to persuade people not to register, and *inu* accusations and



harassing became more predominant (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:76-8). When officials finally explained the repercussions of yes vs. no answers, many had already submitted their forms and requests to change their answers were turned down (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:75). The terms “No-no boys” or “no-noes” were used by the internees at all camps to refer to the individuals who had answered no to both questions 27 and 28, and were subsequently sent to Tule Lake (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:84, Spicer et al. 1969:174). Those who answered no to just one of the questions were usually permitted to remain where they were, or serve on active military duty, although that information was not given to the internees who were filling out the forms. Family conflicts also arose between members who could not agree on the answers to put, and some families were even split apart when a son would answer negatively to the questions while his parents did not, or visa versa (Spicer et al. 1969:174). Poor official communication ultimately led to labeling, which in turn caused factionalism among the internees. This led internees to develop mechanisms for the articulation of the subsequent factions.

Following the segregation, a further contrast arose between Tule Lake and the rest of the internment centers. As the US Government predicted, conflicts did minimize at the other nine centers. Individuals settled into patterns of life. Many of the elderly Issei and women treated the internment as an extended vacation and took up hobbies and games such as the traditional strategy game of *go*; however, by contrast, many school and college-aged internees saw the internment as an unappreciated delay in their education instead of a vacation (Spicer et al. 1969:217-25). Many young men, in

response to the questionnaire, did leave to join the army; many other school-aged children (as old as high school students) would not take class work in the internment centers seriously, becoming delinquents (Spicer et al. 1969:226-7). Tule Lake, however, was a very different story, not because of the individuals interned there, but because of the differences in administration; people did not settle down, and no real community life among the internees was established (Spicer et al. 1969:229). The officials at Tule Lake treated the residents as disloyals due to the relocation criteria; security was more stringent and the residents were, in general, treated more like prisoners. The more oppressive atmosphere at Tule Lake came in the form of physical features of the environment and camp construction as well as in the form of administrative pressure:

The differences between Tule Lake and the other centers arose less from the nature of the people who lived there than from the nature of the government supervision and control which they experienced. Most of the people, up to the time they arrived at Tule Lake, were much like the people in the other centers. Moreover, their reactions to what happened to them at Tule Lake were different in degree rather than in kind from the reaction of the people in the relocation centers.

The conditions of life at Tule Lake constituted extreme developments of the most disturbing features of life in the relocation centers. The line between evacuees and Caucasians was much more sharply drawn, not only by the manproof fence around the center, but also

by the manproof fence between the “colony” and the administration area through which an evacuee could go only with a gate pass and after being individually checked.... The world of rumor thrived on the extreme isolation of the people behind the fences, out of touch not only with the outside but even with the center staff.... The correctives for rumor in the other centers through the coming and going of resettlers hardly existed (Spicer et al. 1969:229-30).

Tule Lake, therefore, became the center of dissent compared to the other camps, primarily because of the more stringent domination of the Caucasian administration and broken chain of communication. Furthermore, because of the segregation, a greater number of individuals who considered themselves loyal primarily to Japan were present at Tule Lake. In the vacuum created from a lack of official correspondence, rumor took hold. Accusations of *inu* also were more prevalent and more detrimental at Tule Lake than at other camps (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:261-82). A deeper investigation into the scapegoat accusations and stress on the internees will be addressed in Chapter IV.

### **The General Context**

According to Clifford Geertz’s principle of thick description, before examining the individual scapegoat accusations, the context in which the dialogues took place must first be described (Geertz 1973:6-9). While individual circumstances, locations, and

backgrounds of the narrators provide further insight into each individual account, all of the conversations and narratives took place within the internment camps. It is important to reemphasize two primary aspects of the setting: the pervasive atmosphere of rumor and discontent at the camps, as well as the re-sorting of individuals to different camps based on their supposed loyalty or lack thereof to the American government.

All of the internment camps were breeding grounds for suspicion and rumor, especially near the beginning of the internment. Between the stress of disruption of normal life, the invasive and domineering American presence as virtual jailors, the lack of privacy, and frequent lack of concrete information, the internment camps invited back-channel rumors and stirred mutual suspicion among fellow internees. According to Edward Spicer, “[e]ven during the first weeks of busy effort to straighten out the disorder of the blocks the dominant notes were uncertainty, anxiety, and even fear. Instead of abating after a short time as people settled into their ‘apartments’... the anxieties increased as the weeks went on” (Spicer et al. 1969:96). In the absence of official information regarding the situation of the internees, rumors circulated wildly. Furthermore, the drastic change of location and social atmosphere for the internees, combined with the supposed temporary nature of the situation, led to a sense of detachment from the real world (Spicer et al. 1969: 216). Even the older or more complacent Issei saw the centers as “an interlude between acts in their real lives” (Spicer et al. 1969:216). In other words, by choosing to differentiate the time in the centers from “real” time, they imply that the time in the centers was not viewed as a part of their real life or the real world. Rumors and beliefs that would not have survived outside of the

centers could proliferate. Some rumors that circulated in the camps, drawn from fear and uncertainty, made the situation seem even more dire:

During a strike at the resettlement center at Poston, Arizona, agitated demonstrators saw nonexistent [sic] machine guns and their crews. They saw imaginary hearses carrying away bodies at night. They believed that residents of the community were dying like flies because of heat, bad food, and inadequate medical attention. (Allport and Postman 1947:197).

Additionally, folk beliefs upheld during the internment such as the presence of malign supernatural beings like *kitsune* or ghostly presences, dissolved after the end of the internment; the same individuals questioned years later dismissed their observations or gave a more scientific rationale (Opler 1950:397). The atmosphere of the internment camps initiated the belief in otherwise dismissible rumors or antiquated folk beliefs.

As previously discussed, American officials sorted the loyal and disloyal into separate camps based on their answers to the survey. In Tule Lake, because of the emphasis of the camp as a more Japanese center, the Kibei became a majority:

[The Kibei] took as license the designation of the center as a place where people could live like Japanese. Their treatment of Nisei girls, their objection to American dancing, their support of Japanese-language schools were all expressions of their newly found status, and the other Nisei who knew little Japanese had been in the habit of looking askance at Kibei (Spicer et al. 1969: 181).

However, beyond just the shifted majority of Kibei at Tule Lake, the behaviors of the American officials imposed a disloyal identity on the internees. Harsher treatment of the internees and a more broken chain of communication led to a difference in atmosphere at the camp (Spicer et al. 1969: 229).

Resistance at Tule Lake was fostered by defective coordination between evacuee and administrative organizations; by the breakdown in communications between national and local representatives of the several branches of government responsible for registration; by the consequent inability of project officials to clarify issues, procedures, and penalties for the evacuees... (Thomas and Nishimoto 1947:72).

Additionally, many residents at Tule Lake after the segregation were there for other reasons than their professed lack of loyalty to the United States. Many families followed other family members who had been sent to Tule Lake, some chose to go in order to live a more Japanese life style, some wished to be further removed from an American public that they feared would threaten them, and many original Tulean residents chose to stay instead of moving again (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:85,104). Therefore, the pervasive atmosphere of mistrust caused by the administration at Tule Lake, more so than by the internees themselves, fostered the greater social strain and subsequently more severe rumormongering and scapegoating. Tule Lake, in contrast to the other internment camps, serves as a case study of how circulating rumors differ between one level of social stress and a greater level of social stress. I will revisit and analyze the scapegoat accusations at Tule Lake in contrast to the other camps in Chapter IV.

All of this background information provides a greater context to aid in the interpretation and understanding of the scapegoat accusations under investigation. Each of the internment camps imposed social strain on the internees and a sense of isolation from the real world; however, it is important to keep in mind the difference in the *levels* of social strain between Tule Lake and the rest of the internment centers.

### **Complications in Research on the Internment**

The Japanese-American internment was undertaken by government order, and, because of this, professional anthropologists observed many of the camps and a great deal of official documentation is available on the subject. Anthropologists such as Marvin Opler, Edward Spicer, Dorothy Thomas and Richard Nishimoto were stationed at the camps.

Another available resource is the body of published diaries and letters of the Japanese Americans themselves. Aside from these, very little primary data from the period of the internment itself survives to this day. There are reports that oral folklore and personal experience narratives were exchanged between the internees; however, most of the actual data is missing. Diary entries written after the events took place can be misleading because the authors had time to reflect upon and reinterpret conversations before committing them to paper. Furthermore, the published diaries and letters, such as the ones belonging to Iwao Matsushita, Charles Kikuchi, and Yamato Ichihashi, reflect the perspective of more Westernized Japanese-Americans. It is not surprising that the

journals that were written in English were ultimately the ones that were transcribed and published in America; it does, however, result in a bias in the record. These authors rarely spoke on supernatural beliefs of the Japanese-Americans or took the side of those casting *inu* scapegoat accusations against other camp members.

Finally, while some of the former internees survive to this day, most of those who are still alive were very young at the time of the internment and are difficult to track down for interviews. Even if interviews with survivors were possible given the limited resources of this research, it has been over sixty years since the last internment camp was closed. Accuracy of information would be clouded by age and reinterpretation. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is contemporary records of rumor and scapegoat accusations as opposed to personal experience narratives, memorates and other first person narratives.

## **Conclusion**

In January of 1945, the order to close down the camps began to circulate; the last camp closed its doors on August 11 of that year, after Japan surrendered. The internment ended but not necessarily many of the residual problems of the internees who returned home to vandalized and looted homes (Verdoia 1988). Similarly, the research conducted by anthropologists and sociologists in the internment camps was far from over; the data that they collected and information that they compiled formed a basis for future studies and analyses in human behavior. By looking at a regrettably extreme



example of social disruption, truths about the social mechanisms of humankind in response to stress can be elucidated.

**CHAPTER III**  
**RUMOR, GOSSIP AND SCAPEGOAT ACCUSATIONS: FORMS AND**  
**FUNCTIONS OF THE GENRES IN A SOCIAL NETWORK**

**Introduction**

The data from the Japanese internment examined here consist primarily of scapegoat accusations. These accusations can fall into several different folklore genres, such as rumor and gossip, scapegoat accusations, and labeling or slurs. This chapter examines the definitions of the genres, the methods of approaching the raw data and its interpretation. It will also explore what scapegoat accusations can teach about the people who tell them and the climate of their society. Narratives, performances and identity are closely intertwined. Furthermore, the periods of time in which scapegoat accusations arise coincide with social stress.

**Rumor, Gossip, Scapegoat Accusations, and Labeling**

Rumor, gossip, scapegoat accusations, and labeling are all established genres of folklore and all were utilized as outlets to relieve stress during the Japanese-American internment. However, before I present the material from the internment, it is first necessary to define these genres and describe their significance.

Most definitions of folklore involve the aspect of tradition. Tradition distinguishes between singular events and repetitive behaviors of a culture, and it is shared traditional culture that defines a folk group (Dundes 1965:2). Therefore, many scholars have until recently dismissed genres like rumor which involves individual experiences (Mullen 1972:95). However, while certain situations described in rumors and scapegoat accusations may be only singular occurrences, they can transmit traditional themes and sometimes even describe supernatural beings usually found in legends belonging to the parent culture.

### ***Rumor and Gossip***

The study of rumor posed a problem for scholars working with the traditional characteristics of folklore. Initially, rumor was not studied on its own because it did not seem to meet the qualification of being traditional (Mullen 1972:95). One of the first scholars to define rumor was Gordon Allport in 1947: “A specific (or topical) proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by word of mouth, without secure standards of evidence being present.... The implication in any rumor is always that some truth is being communicated” (Allport and Postman 1947:ix).

Some of the first folkloric research on rumor was conducted through the examination of legends and their formation, and built on Allport’s research (Mullen 1972:95). In fact, Allport himself compared rumors to legends, and discussed the similar widespread application and viability of the analysis, and likewise how a single story can spread to many individuals (Allport and Postman 1947:viii). Allport also said

that legends are a form of solidified rumor, and that myth is rumor that “takes place in the realm of primal forces and cosmology” (Allport and Postman 1947:162). In folklore studies, legends have been defined as “short, oral prose narrative[s] based in the reality of performers and audiences” (Ellis 1997:485). Legends are narratives that generally are set in the real world and depicted as true, many even using validating devices to substantiate the story. However, the line of demarcation between legends and rumor was established on the basis that legends take a more traditional form, and while a legend may be localized, it still follows a basic narrative pattern. On the other hand, rumor is usually brief and does not necessarily have to have a narrative element; it can simply be a “single proposition for belief or topical reference” (Mullen 1972:96). Rumors, therefore, fit as segues between broader legends and everyday conversation and do not need to adhere to traditional forms. At first, rumor was believed to be merely a part of a gradual process by which, through repetition of content and the polishing of style and structure, a rumor could become a legend (Mullen 1972:95). However, like belief tales, rumors were later reenvisioned as the method through which the motifs and values of legends were transmitted in a present context (Mullen 1972:96). Rumors act as transmission devices for beliefs that take place during normal conversations without the need of a lapse into a full narrative. They act as reinforcements for already existing legends and some rumors may even originate as and be derivatives of legends (Mullen 1972:98).

Rumors share much in common with legends, and that is one reason why folkloric research into rumor began with the study of legends. A further interpretation of these similarities has been provided by Mullen:

One reason rumors and legends have been associated in the past is the connotations of both terms in the popular mind with something erroneous. As a matter of fact, legend can be true or have factual elements, and the same can be said of rumor. The actual correlation of rumor and legend is not their falsity or accuracy but the fact that people believe both to be true (Mullen 1972:98).

So like legends, rumors are told as purportedly true accounts. In fact, rumors do not succeed in being passed on unless their veracity is believed by the audience. The performer of the rumor frames an experience in the terms of cultural context and forms the linkage between the experience and meaningful content pertinent to the situation in which it is told. The listener, however, also must interpret the rumor for relevance (Braid 1996:18). The comments, even the back-channel encouragements, of a listener can alter the content or encourage a performance. Furthermore, the imagery that the performer describes is played out in the audience's mind. It is the audience that shapes generalized images and associations of places and subjects, barring detailed description from the performer (Braid 1996:19).

When individuals participate in spreading a rumor, they are engaging in a social behavior. Mullen observes,

One of the most important approaches of rumor theory which can be applied to legend study is the concept of rumor as a process of social interaction. The oral transmission of legends can be approached in the same way... it is a collective transaction, involving a *division of labor* among participants, each of whom makes a *different* contribution. (Mullen 1972:101-2).

Rumors do not spread themselves, and the process through which a performer passes a rumor to an audience is a form of social interaction. Performers must find a receptive audience, and by initiating the discourse, the performers establish themselves as reliable sources of information and emphasize their group membership.

Another important characteristic of rumor is the situation during which they commonly arise. Scholars seem to agree with Allport's initial proposal that rumors tend to proliferate most often during times of social conflict and stress (Allport and Postman 1947: 167). Mullen adds that "[t]he setting of rumors is important in understanding their function. Many rumors arise in situations of crisis or disaster. Traditional breeding grounds for rumors have been earthquakes, floods, fires, and epidemics" (Mullen 1972:103). When a culture is put under pressure, that tension needs to be relieved in some form or fashion, and rumor provides a way to do so. As Mullen suggested above, the setting, that underlying cultural crisis, is important for understanding a rumor's form and purpose. According to Allport, rumors

...often assuage immediate emotional tension by providing a verbal outlet that gives relief; they often protect and justify the existence of these emotions which, if faced directly, might be unacceptable to their possessor; they sometimes provide a broader interpretation of various puzzling features of the environment, and so play a prominent part in the intellectual drive to render the surrounding world intelligible (Allport and Postman 1947:38).

In other words, situations of conflict and tension can leave individuals with two types of problems that they need to address: intellectual and emotional. Mullen agrees with this dichotomy and elaborates:

The ambiguity of a rumor- and legend-producing situation suggests two possible functions: emotional and cognitive. The emotional function has to do with the tensions and anxieties which arise from ambiguous situations, whether they be true disasters or simply unusual events. In the case of crisis, immediate relief of tension is sought, and since ordinary modes of communication do not provide enough information quickly, rumors provide release from the tensions. Rumors arise from actual situations of crisis or unusual events... Rumor is a cognitive device which enables man to understand and cope with events which are not visibly connected; he tries to fill in missing details; he tries to explain

things which are not obvious; and he tries to predict similar occurrences (Mullen 1972:105, 108).

Rumor is able to help individuals deal with emotional tension from a crisis by giving them a way to interact with the problem. They can discuss it, or even pin the blame on a source. Through rumor, individuals can immediately address the issue without needing to wait for information through official channels. Furthermore, rumor helps address intellectual gaps in official information by allowing individuals to rationalize causes of the event or other missing pieces of the story.

### ***The Phenomenological Approach***

Originally developed for the interpretation of personal experience narratives, first person accounts of past events, the phenomenological method helps give scholars the necessary vantage to understand what the content of rumors can say about the individuals who spread them. The information that individuals use to fill in missing parts of a story, or to explain its circumstances, is not generated from thin air. All individuals have a cultural bias, which acts as a filter for interpreting and transmitting the stimuli to which they are exposed to an audience. This method examines the base phenomenon behind an event to better understand the cultural filter that is applied by the narrator to interpret the event.

This approach originally was applied to supernatural experience narratives in order to look for actual common underlying experiences in cross-cultural supernatural narratives (Hufford 1995a:55). Hufford explains that instead of dismissing supernatural



experiences as purely expressions of faith that cannot be examined empirically, they are rational interpretations of experience (Hufford 1995b:12). When researchers examine a personal experience narrative or rumor through this experience-centered method, they have a third vantage beyond deciding whether the event actually occurred precisely as described or did not occur at all. The experience-centered method merely holds that *something* happened and that the interpretation of the event in a supernatural context is undertaken within the culturally-biased mind of the individual. Rather than attempting to discern the actual event that occurred, researchers focus on how that event was interpreted by the individual who later told the story. Hufford explains that the experiences themselves are stable situations independent of cultural patterning. From these concrete incidents, people interpret what happened to them through a cultural filter. Supernatural beliefs do not just reside in individuals' minds as stories, but are tied to their ethnic and cultural identity and shape the way they perceive the world (Jordan 1975:371).

Viewing narratives and rumors in this fashion better illustrates the cultural lens through which the narrator or performer viewed the situation. A scholar can reduce a memorate, a supernatural experience narrative, or rumor to the basic physical event that triggered the performance in order to better understand the subsequent cultural ascriptions. Additionally, from this simplification, scholars can compare a single experience from various cultural perspectives (Hufford 1995b:13). For example, if someone were to see unexplained lights in a marshy area, he or she might tell stories later of will-o-wisps, or fairies, ghost lights, devil lights, or any number of possible

explanations. However, the supernatural being that is attributed to be the source of the lights reveals the cultural repertoire of the individual who told the story. Additionally, solar eclipses have spawned numerous folk explanations for one phenomenon that has the same physical appearance to all observers independent of their culture affiliation (Hufford 1995b:21). One can analyze the stories with the understanding that they are not created purely from belief alone but as a reaction to a real, empirical trigger. This approach serves to underline the point that memories and supernatural rumors are conveyances of cultural beliefs, not just descriptions of events.

Another recent practical application of the phenomenological approach is the study of sudden unexplained nocturnal death syndrome (SUNDS) among Hmong immigrants. Folklorists were able to find a common Hmong belief about nocturnal attacks by Nightmare spirits (capitalized to differentiate the supernatural being from a bad dream) (Adler 1991:54). The description of the Nightmare or *dab tsog* shares the same basic properties as described in Hufford's recorded Night Hag or *mara* episodes. The physical sensations of the phenomenon include a somnolent person's sensation of being pressed down upon to the point he or she cannot breathe (Adler 1995:183; Hufford 1995b:13). This basic physiological process has been analyzed by sleep physiologists and described generally as sleep paralysis, although the details have not yet been thoroughly studied (Hufford 1995b:13). Since the phenomenon is not widely known in a medical sense, when experienced, individuals rely on cultural knowledge to explain what happened. The Hmong were in a situation of cultural distress as refugees in the United States. This stress, coupled with the belief that the Nightmare creatures of their native

belief system do not just rape or injure a person, but instead suffocate them, resulted in a widespread series of sometimes lethal nocturnal attacks (Adler 1995:183). This process of the intensification of supernatural experiences during times of cultural crisis will be discussed later in this chapter.

According to Shelly Adler, “[m]any folkloristic concepts, such as legends, personal experience narratives, traditions, and symbolic communication, are directly relevant to studies that seek to investigate new and emerging conceptualizations of the way human beings act in illness and health” (1991:68). Folklore can play such a powerful role in a person’s belief system that it can have physical consequences on the body through psychosomatic processes, especially when the individuals are already under severe psychological stress due to the disruption of their normal lifestyle (Adler 1995:198). This readily applies to the situation of the Japanese internees who underwent a great deal of disruptive stress when they were relocated to the internment camps.

The phenomenological approach is not limited to just supernatural rumors. When looking at non-supernatural rumors, scholars do not just study a concrete phenomenon that is filtered through a cultural worldview. The approach focuses on why that experience was deemed culturally significant to pass on, and how listeners interpret a story about the past into a meaningful narrative relevant to the present (Braid 1996:13). Furthermore, when individuals fill in missing parts of a story to create a rumor, there can be culturally significant aspects that they choose to use, or biases towards or against a group. This approach looks at how an event from the past is highlighted as being

meaningful through a cultural point of view and how the culture of the observer colors the very interpretation of the event.

### ***Eder and Enke's Study of Gossip***

More recently, Donna Eder and Janet Enke (1991) conducted a study on the analysis of gossip. Their study focused on gossip among adolescents, but also addressed more broad-ranging themes and aspects of gossip and scapegoating. The article delved into the structure of individual gossip episodes and linguistic tools utilized to minimize conflict between actors (Eder and Enke 1991:495). Additionally, their study provides a confirmation of the conclusions scholars have drawn on the role of gossip in social cohesion and self-promotion.

Eder and Enke, like Allport, recognize other contributions to the study of gossip, and also bring the research up to the present. These studies found evidence that gossip sessions can strengthen group bonds and promote a positive self image while simultaneously degrading the images of others (Eder and Enke 1991:494). In relation to bond strengthening, they point out:

Given the tendency among adolescents towards expressing shared viewpoints found in this study, it is not surprising that participation in gossip would have this effect. Gottman and Mettetal have pointed out that the 'us versus them' orientation of gossip also contributes to the strengthening of bonds (Eder and Enke 1991:504).

Gossip episodes, therefore, are a method of strengthening group relationships through the denouncement of others. This is an important concept, as not only do gossip and scapegoat accusations serve to ostracize their target from the social group, but they strengthen the cohesion of the remaining group members.

Eder and Enke (1991:494) analyze recordings of sixteen separate gossip episodes in adolescent conversations. According to their definition, gossip is “any informal talk about someone who is not present, including rumor, slander, or simply the exchange of information” (Eder and Enke 1991:494). By this definition, scapegoating events and rumors can certainly fall into the broader social psychological category of gossip. While this definition of gossip does not necessarily indicate a negative viewpoint, much like Allport’s study, their research seems to focus on the exchange of negative information and slander.

While gossip is generally an informal method of communication, they isolated several qualifying aspects: the performer gauges the initial reaction of the listener to the broach of the subject, which then directs the further gossip (Eder and Enke 1991:494, 497). Either there is a positive response and the gossip falls on sympathetic ears, promoting the expression of negative emotions, or it does not and gossip ceases. Eder and Enke use the terms “identification of a target” and “evaluation of the target” to describe the first stages of a gossip session (1991:497). Furthermore, basic gossip structure invites elaboration from other members in the discussion to add on to evaluations (Eder and Enke 1991:500). This is a process that can quickly develop from an idle conversation to a group assessment. An individual does not need to be familiar

with the target to build off of the gossip following patterns initiated with the evaluation (Eder and Enke 1991:498). Individuals can chime in with further speculation that coincides with the negative quality. The original accuser then participates in the group discussion, tightening bonds with the others gossiping. This further distances the accuser from the quality being ascribed on the target.

Other trends in gossip structure exist between the individuals themselves who are participating in the episode. Gossip episodes in groups were primarily initiated by those with medium or high social standings within their peer group (Eder and Enke 1991:504). Challenges to the assessment were made only by those who were equal to or higher in status than the individual who made the initial assessment. Individuals of all status levels, however, were observed giving support to initial assessments. This mirrors the device in a scapegoat accusation where an individual already a member of the “in” group makes an accusation about someone on the fringe. By making this accusation the performer confirms his or her own status in the community. As lower status individuals rarely object to the assessments, the structure of a gossip event herds group participants towards a negative evaluation of the subject. If lower status individuals disagree with the assessment, their status as a respected member of the group is put at risk and can single them out as subsequent targets of gossip.

This study builds on and agrees with Allport’s in several ways. It corroborates the parallel definitions of gossip and rumor. Rumor happens during idle conversations, is accentuated by times of conflict or crisis (between individuals or a society), is an assessment passed from person to person, and is not just a passing of an opinion but

contains a justification for the sentiment to an individual of like mind. While Allport conducted his study over sixty years ago, recent researchers like Eder and Enke use his initial analysis as a base for further, more in-depth studies.

As an example of how a rumor can have meaning extracted and analyzed, I will now examine a rumor from Allport's study that, as it happens, deals with the Japanese internment. Japanese internees were passing along a rumor that the babies were dying en masse in the internment camps (Allport and Postman 1947:197). This rumor pinned the blame for the infants' deaths on the American captors because of the inadequate housing conditions that they provided. This effectively isolated the Americans as being not part of the internees' community, and vilified them as baby-killers (a rather universal accusation as it invokes a strong negative reaction even if the deaths were purported to be unintentional). The rumor also allowed the internees to express rejection of their housing situation and to protest against the internment as a whole. Such supposed evidence of their inhumane treatment provided a validating reason for their dissatisfaction, beyond just general discontent. Through rumor, discontented internees were able to spread their sentiments to other internees verbally. This allowed internees who individually felt discontent and frustrated with the authority to form social networks with other like-minded internees.

### *Scapegoat Accusations*

Cultural cohesion, or the force that binds individuals together to form a community, is an elusive subject. In order to ensure group solidarity and not incur

resentment, individuals must be productive members of their society. When a group experiences stress, be it lack of sufficient food, a period of war, or other conflicts, and the group is unable to function efficiently at its given size, those individuals who are unproductive or otherwise fringe members of the society are the first to be targeted as scapegoats. Sometimes the accusations that fall on the individuals might be unrelated to their actual “crime” of being nonproductive, like accusing fringe members of the community of being *loup garou*, cannibalistic werewolves. In 16<sup>th</sup> century France, this label was steeped in folkloric meaning and provided a ready-made set of implications that further ostracized individuals from the group. Instead of listing a string of offenses or crimes against the individuals, a single term could invoke a negative sentiment and spread rapidly through a community. Furthermore, this label allowed members to dispose of fringe members in a socially acceptable fashion (Colombo 1982:174). While not all scapegoat accusations are quite this drastic or lethal in their repercussions, this mechanism can solve similar problems of group conflict or social stress.

Many other cultural phenomena result in ostracizing or persecuting the targeted individuals. Labels can remove individuals from the normative society, effectively tightening the remaining group and serving as examples of the penalty for misconduct or for being nonproductive members of society. Early research into scapegoating identifies it as a phenomenon which transfers evil to an object or person (Thomas 1906:259). This process assists the society in ridding itself of problems through a representational form that members can act upon, when the true source of the problems can not be physically dealt with (Thomas 1906:258). In some situations, the scapegoat can represent the sins



of the community that can be expelled through one individual. In others, however, it is an individual who represents a threat to the community by exhibiting behavior that serves as a contrast to the normative rules of the group (Thomas 1906:259). There are rules and punishments for rule breakers in all societies. The phenomenon of labeling a person as a performer of taboo action and the resulting ostracism of said individual is a simplistic way for a community to enforce normative societal rules or laws. The taboo is often a contradiction of the very central beliefs of a society. Therefore, a culture can develop an explanatory mythos around this action during a period of long-term social strain. When a taboo action elicits a negative reaction within a strained culture, this label can be applied to fringe individuals to denounce their names even further than their already marginalized status. The accusation does not even need to be true in order to elicit such a negative reaction. Over time, a mythos of a supernatural causality to the forbidden action can further dehumanize the scapegoat (such as the aforementioned French loup garou). Extended periods of social strain can reawaken and strengthen folk beliefs, providing a bridge between legends and current affairs. Therefore, scapegoat accusations can fall into two primary categories. The first category consists of scapegoat accusations with supernatural justifications, and the second category is non-supernatural accusations.

### ***Supernatural Accusations and Memorates***

Supernatural scapegoat accusations can reveal the relation between the belief in the supernatural and its role in justifying actions against scapegoats. Legends

surrounding belief in the supernatural serve to heighten the community awareness of a perceived threat, and, on the most basic level, increase group solidarity by means of fear of a threat. If there is a common enemy or danger, people will group together to feel safer (Schoeneman 1975:531). By vilifying someone who is another member of the community, the belief tightens the social relations even further. This forces the group to adhere to traditional ways, maintain group norms, and makes the individuals in the community take a productive role in society lest they be accused. This belief tends to occur either alongside a massive cultural change, a shift in power, or when a society is culturally or physically threatened. In this instance, the vilification is used as a *revitalization* technique, “an abrupt change owing to a ‘deliberate organized conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture’” (Schoeneman 1975:531). Supernatural beliefs can be a powerful propaganda device that can be utilized by people in a position of power, or by a tight-knit community that shares a structured belief system.

According to the experience-centered or phenomenological approach, strange phenomena are filtered through cultural beliefs resulting in culture-specific interpretations of unexplained events. For example, the belief in ghosts is a cultural acquisition and not an inherent quality of the human mind. A supernatural rumor or memorate (supernatural personal experience narrative) results from an interpretation of a phenomenon through a cultural filter. Strange incidents can be understood through the use of cultural beliefs in order to deal with and interpret the memories. This is especially pertinent when the choices are between seeing a ghost and having had a hallucination or

other substance-induced vision that would speak negatively of the individual (Hufford 1995a: 55).

One traditional Japanese example in regards to the Japanese internment is an accusation of being a *kitsune* (a shapeshifting fox trickster spirit). A *kitsune* can assume human form to mingle with others, explaining its initial nondetection, but is not actually human and is frequently the cause of misery in others through cruel tricks (Opler 1950: 389). Any accusation of being a nonhuman malignant force ostracizes the accused individual and justifies severe punishments. The label distances the accusers from normally obligatory feelings of guilt arising from hurting another human being. Even when people are displaced from the environment in which the belief originated, rumors can still persist. In Opler's examination of the Japanese-Americans in the World War II internment camp in Tule Lake, rumors about the traditional Japanese supernatural creatures (such as *kitsune*) appeared even when there were no real foxes in the area (1950: 389-390).

The system also works in reverse. People who claim to have seen a ghost, a witch, or a UFO are perpetuating belief in those supernatural beings. Ghosts, for example, originate in myth. Beliefs in the supernatural creature's habits and themes are perpetuated through impersonal legends as well as popular culture presentations, and brought to the forefront of actual *belief* in memorates and supernatural rumors. In this manner, beings that are introduced in the legends or mythic folklore of a culture group are kept within the realm of the present, real world through rumors validated by individuals

Memorates and supernatural rumors can also be used to measure the twin factors of dynamism and conservatism of belief in a larger cultural context. They have the dual duty of bringing legends and amorphous beliefs into the contemporary believable realm while also keeping up with contemporary society. They are a wonderful benchmark for change in a society as well as revivals of traditional culture; they push and pull between the dynamic and conservative forces at work on traditional beliefs. In today's society, "people's mentality has changed under the influence of modern urbanization. According to contributors to the Finnish Folklore Archive, electric lights have dispelled the fear of ghosts lurking in strange places after dark" (Dégh 1996:34). In this situation, dynamism dispelled the traditional beliefs altogether. Without a basis for the belief in the society (no creepy dark rooms at night), the fear of the ghosts was dispelled and along with it the belief tales. Without belief, the belief tales dissipated.

Supernatural rumors are much more than simple ghost stories told to frighten children. They are powerful carriers of belief that can keep legends and myths alive in a culture. They can be used as a benchmark of belief and cultural affiliation between an individual and a cultural identity, or a society as a whole as it responds to stress and conflict. Supernatural belief tales form the most basic (and most dynamic) level in the transmission and maintenance process of a set of beliefs within a society. Rumors can be told within the context of normal conversation and serve as a device for group cohesion.

### *Non-Supernatural Accusations and Slurs*

Many scapegoat accusations can develop into a dehumanization of the accused individual. This process ties a perceived threat or crime to a characteristic of a monstrous being and ascribes a label that is rich with meaning significant to the culture. However, a scapegoat does not need to be associated with the supernatural in order to draw the ire of group members. Many other mundane accusations can carry the weight of taboo, identifying an act reprehensible enough to mar the name of anyone who is associated with the word, such as *murderer* or *traitor*. Likewise, the association of an individual with an animal can bestow culturally-perceived negative characteristics of the animal on the accused, while simultaneously dehumanizing him or her. Like a supernatural accusation, these words convey a full set of ascribed properties and perceived connotations beyond just the mere definition of the word itself. Linking an individual to a crime or inferior being demotes the value of the individual in the eyes of his or her peers.

The accusation does not have to be literal in order to have the desired effect of pushing the individual further to the outskirts of the group and relegating him or her to the status of target. This distancing allows for further cohesion of the remaining group members. Edmund Leach examined the language of obscenity, specifically “animal abuse – in which a human being is equated with an animal of another species” (2000:325). Leach showed that most of the animals used in accusations and insults were culturally delimited as close to mankind and removed from the wilderness,

in other words domesticated animals: pets and livestock (2000:329). These animals fall in the liminal space between self and the wild, occupying a status less than human but sharing human occupancies or eating cast off human food (Leach 2000:334). These liminal areas are where subjects of taboo arise.

An example of a non-supernatural scapegoat accusation from the Japanese internment is the term *inu* (literally “dog”) used to brand informers (or supposed informers) who were traitors to their peers and gave information to the American captors. According to Leach, his analysis of the use of animal categories for verbal abuse transcends just the English language; his article cites examples from the Kachin language of Burma (2000:325-6). He continues by saying, “[s]cientifically speaking, the analysis is interesting only in so far as it opens up the possibility that other languages analyzed according to similar procedures might yield comparable patterns” (Leach 2000:338). The Japanese terms in question: *inu* (dog) and *neko* (cat) were both used to label male and female informers respectively. Leach suggested that animals used in obscenities generally have monosyllabic names. However, the Japanese language has very few monosyllabic terms given the language structure. The Japanese language is based upon strings of monosyllabic consonant-vowel pairs or lone initial vowels. Since most words end in a consonant-vowel cluster, there are not many single-syllable words in Japanese. However, *inu* and *neko* consist only of two syllables each, comprising two symbols when spelled out phonetically in the native syllabaries, or one *kanji*. They are also both animals that are kept as pets and familiar to the Japanese. Neither is eaten. The term used most widely, *inu*, also has the most cultural connotations. *Neko*, referring

to female informants in the Japanese internment accounts, was only noted in one source (Chang 1997:314). Dogs, traditionally, are fed human table scraps. They are inferior but kept close to the house, which can be perceived as an allegorical representation of the role of the informer in relation to the American government.

In sum, any form of scapegoat accusation, be it supernatural or mundane, includes a claim that the target is outside of the realm of acceptable society. The type of target that a group picks to vilify, either a member of the community or an outsider, can speak a great deal about the conflict the society is experiencing and its effect on the group. This significance will be examined later in respect to the forms of scapegoating recorded among the Japanese-American internees during WWII.

### *Sources of Study*

Scholars can examine rumors and scapegoat accusations from various types of sources. While the most direct method of observation would be a first-hand account of a rumor or scapegoat accusation being made, this primary data can be difficult to acquire, especially if the focus of the study belongs to a time period long since past. In the case of this thesis, the Japanese-American internment happened over sixty years ago and there are no first-hand personal experience narratives recorded that I was able to locate. While there are secondary accounts, such as reports on personal experience narratives, indicating that first-hand personal experience narratives were being transmitted verbally, very few actual primary context narratives have survived. There are also interviews with internees conducted after the close of the camps, diaries kept by internees that have been

published, and many reports from anthropologists who were stationed at the internment camps. All of these are reliable sources of information, and established venues by which rumor and scapegoat accusations can be studied. For example, in his research on slang epithets and the origin of the word *gringo*, folklorist Américo Paredes (1961:287-8) cites John C. Duval's study from 1842. Duval conducted ethnographic research with Mexicans in the Lower Rio Grande, and in one account made reference to the term *gringo* being used in reference to the researchers. Paredes cites this secondhand account from another anthropologist as valid source material for his research on verbal abuse. Likewise, the accounts from ethnographers in the internment camps yield viable data.

### **Literature Review: Identity Theory**

Identity, put simply, is who or what people consider themselves to be. However, identity is more complex than the single abstract "true self" category or label proposed during the 1950s by Erik Erikson (Mishler 1999:7). Every individual possesses a multitude of dynamic identities, divisible into group affiliations and qualitative self-labels; some of these identities are held in higher priority by an individual (Howard 2000:367-9). Poetically put, "Metaphorically, we speak – or sing- our selves as a chorus of voices, not just the tenor or soprano soloist" (Mishler 1999:8). Scholars have several primary approaches to the study of identity: personal traits that remain stable throughout a lifetime, the variability of traits within certain situations, and "personal identity as it is



manifested in peoples' identity stories" (Polkinghorne 1996:363). I will focus on the third approach to identities in this work.

As mentioned above, many people's identities are nestled in their perceived cultural affiliations. Humans are, above all, social creatures: "the approaches of identity researchers vary in their particulars, but the importance of locating individuals within the social and cultural matrix is well recognized" (Mishler 1999:16). Therefore, the identities associated with social networks are vital to an individual's sense of self.

A subdivision of identity categories within social groups is ethnicity. Ethnicity can be a very powerful aspect of identity, and is the first social identity category discussed by Judith Howard: "Identity development is particularly complicated for those belonging to ethnic and racial minority groups, owing to negative societal stereotypes and discrimination" (2000:374). When people are part of an ethnic minority, their ethnicity becomes more activated, providing a sharper contrast between them and the nation in which they live. The Japanese-Americans before the relocation are an example of an ethnic minority with their Japanese ethnicity activated. When people are part of an ethnic majority, that identity becomes further blended with the concept and identity associated with nationalism. However, ethnic minorities, especially those that are recently relocated from a parent population, can intensify their ethnic identities when displaced as a minority (Nagel 2000:81). These ethnic identities, however, are fluid, and individuals can choose whether or not to participate with their ethnic identities. Not only are ethnic identities promoted from within the group, but they can also function as exoteric labels imposed on the group from the resident nation (Nagel 2000:81). Like any

identity, “many contemporary studies of ethnic identity cast ethnicity as fluid and ethnic boundaries are continuously changing” (Howard 2000:375). There is no hard line that divides someone from a claim to an ethnic identity. This is particularly true in a country like America with many individuals of mixed ethnic ancestry. Trends over time can strengthen or weaken individuals’ ties to their ethnic identity. For example, revitalization movements can intensify individuals’ perceptions of their ethnicity, yet also set them apart from a parent nation. An example of this can be found with Native American groups: individuals who possess as few as one-eighth of Native American ancestry can still legally claim this cultural and ethnic identity. Particularly, individuals claimed a Native American identity when opportunities such as scholarships or other government funding for them became available. Ethnicity, therefore, can be a constructed identity that can intensify or weaken in different situations.

The formation of identities is a process implicitly tied to people’s surroundings: who they are around, others’ reactions to their actions, and what that they see and hear. No single process is entirely responsible for someone’s ethnic identity. According to Nagel, “[e]thnic identity is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations” (2000:83). Mishler argues, however, that identities are products of how individuals interact with others in their social networks (1999:16). Social interactions and networks play a larger role in ethnic identity formation than internal processes. Developmental studies into ethnic identity formation from external forces have detailed “specific socialization practices, including family members’

teaching about the ethnic culture, parental generation of migration, mothers' cultural knowledge and orientation, language spoken, and demographic characteristics such as parents' education and degree of community urbanization" (Howard 2000:374-5). Many factors can contribute to an ethnic identity such as physical characteristics, language, and religion. However, it is primarily the social interactions (both from a young age and from later enculturation) that contribute to the formation of an ethnic identity. Social interactions place labels on ethnicity and define what it means to be of a certain ethnicity.

Beyond simple conversation, particular forms of social interaction specifically contribute to identity formation. How do people understand what it means to be of a specific ethnic affiliation? How does one place oneself within the context of the socially-construed or legitimate history of a group of people? Conversations and narratives frequently act as bridges between an individual and a community. Cultures help people construct identity in a verbal form that they can understand (Polkinghorne 1996:365). Polkinghorne observes that most languages of identity formation imply that narratives are intentional constructions of identity. Conversations occur during social situations, and verbally strengthen the social context and the performers' roles in the group.

Narratives and other conversations serve three vital functions to identity formation and social transmission of that personal status: verbalizing an internal identity of the speaker, reaffirming that speaker's identity through words to another individual, and finally, transmitting that identity to another.

Both supernatural rumors and memorates as well as their non-supernatural counterparts can help an individual participate within his or her ethnic identity. Supernatural beliefs do not just reside in individuals' minds as stories, but are tied into their ethnic and cultural identity and shape the way they perceive the world (Jordan 1975:371). Every cultural group has its folklore; the "first test of a social group is the existence of shared folklore" (Bauman 1971:32). Therefore, "folklore is a function of shared identity" (Bauman 1971:32). Oral folklore forms the connection between an ethnic affiliation and individual experience. The past is reinterpreted through the filter of an ethnic identity, strengthening the individual's identity. Furthermore, memorates and supernatural rumors emphasize the aspect of belief in forces that dwell beyond the mundane realm. In order to understand an experience, individuals turn to their body of cultural knowledge.

Memorates and supernatural rumors do more than simply act as a filter through which to interpret past events and bolster an individual's corresponding identity. Due to their oral nature, these supernatural rumors also serve as a method for transmitting culture to other individuals. Social groups that have supernatural beliefs in common can use supernatural rumors as cohesive devices. Through the act of relating rumors to others in an ethnic or cultural group, one can affirm one's own group affiliation and identity. At a basic level, telling the rumor demonstrates that the individual is aware of shared cultural knowledge and beliefs in particular supernatural beings or practices. Furthermore, these rumors can be used as a conversational ice-breaker among others in an ethnic group to affirm one's membership in the group (Jordan 1975:372). In an

ethnographic study on a Mexican-American woman's association with her Mexican identity, Rosan Jordan (1975:372) observed:

“Insofar as she had been able to draw on a knowledge of ethnic [Mexican] folklore ... such material has helped Mary to cope with her adult life situation in various ways. Subjects such as buried treasures, dream warnings, and divining the future, for example, often provide her with conversational wedges and with substance for carrying on interpersonal interaction in an ethnic social context. Such displays of esoteric knowledge serve to establish a feeling of belonging among the participants and make it easier for Mary to function as a group member.”.

The shifting of one's personal identity into and out of an ethnic affiliation can also be reflected in the rumors and narratives told (or not told) at different points in a person's life. One can choose to spread rumors relevant to a certain ethnic group as a form of participation with the group. Conversely, when one wishes to segregate from an ethnic group, one can cease telling the associated rumors:

[Mary's] sense of identity as a Mexican-American and her sense of belonging as a family member are also central to her concept of who she is. Since, however, she remains in some ways alienated from the ethnic group and views the ethnic identity in a somewhat negative manner, it is important that she is able to adjust the extent of her participation in ethnic culture in order to maintain a self-image which she finds acceptable. As we have seen in her use of supernatural lore, she is able to increase the

degree of her involvement with the supernatural... in order to strengthen her position as an insider (and thus her identity as a Mexican-American and as a member of the family), especially when that membership seems threatened. When that identity becomes negative in her eyes (when it becomes associated with the irrational and the superstitious), she no longer wishes to identify herself with it so closely and lessens the degree of her participation in the culture (thus becoming something of an outsider). In Mary's varying stance in regard to the supernatural, we can see many of her basic conflicts regarding her ethnic status (Jordan 1975:380-1).

This trend can also be reflected in non-supernatural rumors that focus on incidents with a strong cultural bias.

Telling a supernatural rumor strengthens the performer's group identity while simultaneously affirming his or her membership to the others. Furthermore, Jordan observed that the strength of one's ethnic identity can be reflected in the supernatural rumors told. When Mary wished to isolate herself from her Mexican identity, she was able to reduce her participation in performances. When she wished to activate her ethnic identity, she could participate with supernatural aspects of Mexican folklore and share supernatural-based rumors and narratives with other Mexicans. It is this intensification of identity through the usage of folklore when the identity is threatened that will be examined next.

## **Social Conflict**

The transmission of memorates and supernatural rumors can be used as an earmark of the status of someone's ethnic identity. Therefore, one can examine periods in which ethnic identity intensifies. In particular, these verbal identity studies can be matched with studies of stress and conflict. On an individual scale, stress has been defined as an interruption and overload (Burke 1991:836). On a small scale, stress can be generated by the interruption of an activity or thought process; the interruption of a particularly powerful identity can generate a major amount of stress. Likewise, when individuals receive contrary feedback to how they view their identity, anxiety forms. In response, people either interact with others whose feedback reflects the identity in question, or they alter their behavior in order to yield a reaction that reinforces their identity (Burke 1991:838-9). Therefore, a stress on an identity can result in an attempt to bolster that identity. Furthermore, when identities come into conflict, or even when another identity is stressed, it can cause the strengthening of a separate identity (Misher 1999:83). To relieve stress, an individual might participate in an action that activates a separate, stronger identity, such as engaging in traditional cultural practices. As supernatural rumors are part of a culture's traditional trappings, their transmission can serve to strengthen an ethnic identity.

Extreme identity stress can also cause a change in identity during an overload of conflicting or disrupting stimuli (Burke 1991:846). This process, particularly the cyclical output versus input of identity, ties closely with narrative and rumor studies.

The performances, or outputs, reflect the referent identity. The reactions, or inputs, of the cultural peers to whom the rumors were told further confirm (or reject) the identity back to the narrator.

Turning to traditional ethnic practices in order to invoke and strengthen an ethnic identity can be seen as a reaction to disruptive stress placed on an individual. When a society as a whole comes into a stressful period, such as when their ethnic identity is threatened, traditional values and folk practices can go through a revival period. Belief in the supernatural is an aspect of folk tradition that can oscillate from time to time within a culture, especially as it requires a level of cognitive *belief* as opposed to just practice of a time-honored custom. The transmission and expression of supernatural rumors and memorates does not accompany an ordinary practice like traditional food preparation or the production of a physical craft object.

Supernatural rumors are cohesive devices that can strengthen ethnic identity and group unity in the face of social stress. To test this hypothesis, one can look at a particular instance of an ethnic group under social pressure to examine scapegoat accusations and slurs. One can then contrast it to practices before and after the period of stress to show that social stress directly correlates to the prevalence of scapegoat narratives.

The example of the Japanese-American interned during World War II is ideal for this study because the individuals were imprisoned based on nothing more than their common ethnic identity and the fact that they were all living in a specific geographic region. Their identity as people of Japanese descent was vilified, and their identity as



Americans was questioned. Their American and Japanese identities were also put into sharp conflict by their captors, causing a great deal of additional social stress on top of the understandable stresses of imprisonment and separation from their previous lives. Turning to their traditional practices fulfilled the need for social cohesion and group support for those who clung to the traditional Japanese ethnic identity in a situation of otherwise incombatale pressure. If they were to reject or attack their American captors, it would have further separated them from their own American identity. Traditional practices also provided an outlet for aforementioned frustrations and provided a way to defend their ethnicity against the ethnic denigration promoted by their captors. This is a prime example of the resurgence of traditional motifs and subjects in memorates during a time of cultural stress. Opler (1950:385) observed the relation between social stress and the belief in the supernatural during the Japanese internment:

[Marvin Opler]... note[d] the rich diversity of such beliefs and practices... [W]hat was more interesting, however, was their revival as part of a total nativistic reaction from 1944 to 1946, and their equally sudden decline in importance after 1946, once the conditions of Tule Lake Center existence were removed ... [After 1946, the study] showed that the folkloristic beliefs and practices had again largely vanished – that the revival was over once the American scene was substituted for the Center (Opler 1950:385).

As indicated, Opler followed up his original research several years after the Japanese-Americans had been released from the internment and questioned their beliefs

at the time. Many of the individuals not only denied belief in ghosts and *kitsune* at that point, but disavowed belief in the supernatural that Opler had recorded them relating during the internment (Opler 1950:379). One former resident commented: “Oh, those fox and badger stories back in the Center; well, people used to believe a lot of things in that Center they never believed before and haven’t believed since!” (Opler 1950: 391). This is a dramatic illustration of beliefs changing (as exemplified through memorates) as a result of social stress. This emphasizes the highly temporal aspect of the belief in the traditional supernatural beings from Japanese legend. The supernatural rumors would not be told (and purported as true) during times when the legends behind the stories were not believed. Thus, the timing of the rumors underline the cohesion and strengthened ethnic identity during the stressful time of the internment.

Contrary to the earlier example with the electric lights dispelling Finnish ghost stories, sometimes a revitalization of a traditional belief can still fulfill a role in a culture even when that group is physically isolated from the phenomenon that the belief is based on. Some of the Japanese-Americans in the internment camps, as mentioned previously, used traditional cultural themes and terms to explain problems. Even when imbedded in a foreign setting isolated from traditional icons or even non-magical foxes, belief stories were still told about *kitsune* and fox-possession. The purpose served by tales of fox-possession in Japan where there were foxes was still relevant despite the absence of real foxes. Circulating rumors about malignant supernatural forces when the society is already facing more earthbound threats might seem counterintuitive at first;

however, if the stress is either undetermined or unable to be fought, the dissociation of the problems onto a supernatural scapegoat is one way of coping with the stress. Additionally, the belief in traditional supernatural beings serves the additional purpose of reaffirming group cohesion and identity, minimizing conflict within the group.

Another study that focused on constructed social memory of the perceived past centered on Thailand. The study showed an increasing focus on traditions and sharing memories in order to feel a greater sense of nationalism in the face of social challenges such as an AIDS epidemic, pollution, and increasing globalization (Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:7-8, 19). The past was selectively reinterpreted through narratives as an idealized time. The shared ethnic identities of the populace were intensified through traditional practices as a protest against the globalization and modernization of their country (Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:21). As part of this intensification, there was a resurgence in memorates, supernatural rumors, and associated practices that were strongly tied to the Thai culture, such as the belief in spirits and professional spirit mediumship (Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:26). The Thai belief in spirits and the supernatural was a traditional representation of their idealized past that was accessible to all members of the society. Furthermore, this belief spread to people who had either dismissed or not participated in such beliefs before the stressful time period. “Embedded memory and practices in the spirit cults enable the newcomers and lower class peoples to reconstitute themselves in response to anxiety, insecurity and contingency in the current transformation” (Shigeharu and Keyes 2002:26). These spiritual beliefs also provided a

method of dealing with the stress to their identity during a time of change. Belief in the supernatural is innately tied to traditional cultural and ethnic identities. Therefore, when an ethnic or cultural identity is challenged, traditional memorates may be a method through which that identity is affirmed.

Social conflict can also result in a non-supernatural form that highlights the underlying tension between two groups. Racial tension, for example, can breed rumors and legends with traditional characteristics such as the urban legend of a young boy found in a public restroom who was mutilated by the targeted racial group, be it Blacks or Mexicans. “It arises during times of racial disturbances when tension, fears, and anxieties are at a high pitch. (Mullen 1972:103). Often, however, it does not even take a full fledged legend or rumor to spread this racial tension through conversations. Minority groups and immigrants living in America are often viewed as economic or social competition. “Reaction to this ‘threat’ is expressed in many discriminatory slurs and sayings” called *blaison populaire* (Birnbaum 1971:254). Like with other verbal abuse categories, such as Leach’s animal abuse categories, single words can communicate volumes of culturally relevant information.

According to a study of extreme disruption and ritualization, which encompassed such folk practices as “...talking, story telling, discussion groups, sports, games, concerts, shows, theatrical productions, holiday celebrations, music, dance, parties, art works, crafts...”, ritualization is a fundamental component of human behavior and it significantly influences people’s ability to cope with coercive disruptions of their lives (Knottnerus 2002:11, i). The study analyzes narratives of individuals who spent time in

the concentration and internment camps of various countries (Russia, Germany, United States, and Japan) during World War II and compares the variety and frequency of participation in ritualized behaviors. The research concludes that those individuals who participated in more ritualized behaviors had a greater chance of coping with the traumatic experiences. Also, the organization of their social life around such ritualized behaviors is a universal phenomenon (Knottnerus 2002:i, 26). In times when the normal, ritual pattern of existence is severely disrupted, an extremely problematic scenario is created and forces individuals to turn to another pattern that brings a semblance of normalcy to their lives (Knottnerus 2002:1). Therefore, repositories of folk belief can provide a source of ritualized behavior such as the spread of supernatural rumors or memorates, and be a comforting place to turn to when normal life is disrupted. This also explains why, when people return to their previous lives, the patterns of behavior from an internment camp might be once again abandoned.

An earlier, book-length analysis of how individuals react to a domineering social situation is Erving Goffman's *Asylums* from 1961. This was a groundbreaking study that coined the term *total institution*: "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman 1961:xiii). These total institutions intentionally set out to strip the former identities of the residents and imbue a new, complacent one upon them through stringent rules and devices. Often, the physical layout of the total institutions mirrored the psychological intent: "The encompassing or total character is symbolized by the barrier to social

intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors” (Goffman 1961:4). Goffman also lists several types of organizations that qualify as total institutions: organizations that are established “to protect the community against what are felt to be intentional dangers to it, with the welfare of the persons thus sequestered not the immediate issue: jails, penitentiaries, P.O.W. camps, and concentration camps” (1961:5). Total institution can also be psychiatric wards, prisons, or internment camps. No matter the reason for the internment, the institution itself is the primary agent in the reshaping of the individuals’ identities. There are many devices utilized by the establishment to debase or isolate the resident from their former life and identity:

The recruit comes into the establishment with a conception of himself made possible by certain stable social arrangements in his home world. Upon entrance he is immediately stripped of the support provided by these arrangements.... He begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self. His self is systematically, if often unintentionally, mortified... The institutions engage in various methods to isolate the inmates from material possessions and trappings of the outside world. Objects that they use are marked as property of the institution, and can be taken from them to be sanitized or switched around (Goffman 1961:14, 19-20).

Additionally, there is frequently physical contamination of the environment in which the resident interacts. Such contamination can be expressed through unclean living situations, poor food standards and unclean utensils, exposure to filth through duties or pairings with other residents (Goffman 1961:26). Bonding between the residents occurs out of their shared negative experiences and other individual merits, not because of their reason for internment. Some might also see their debt as being more than paid to society, becoming criminals through the imprisonment in order to “get even” (Goffman 1961:56-7). However, despite the tendency to ally, there is frequently much dissention between individuals and groups in total institutions. Frequently people cannot trust one another not to steal from them or inform on them. With the dual processes of mortification and privileges, the inmates are set at odds with each other, preventing a strong unity (Goffman 1961:60). It is clear from this that social typing among inmates rests on the question of security. This leads to the definition of others as “squealers,” “finks, rats, or stoolers” on one hand, and “right guys” on the other (Goffman 1961:55). The Japanese-American internment camps in the United States readily fit into the parameters of Goffman’s definition of a total institution, and the pattern of internees finding themselves at odds with one another supports his subsequent conclusions.

Social conflict and identity reaffirmation have also been tied with rumor studies. Allport and Postman (1947:193-6) made the connection between rumors being a measuring device for social unrest, as rumors can be the breeding ground for riots. Not only do rumors propagate during times of social stress, but they can bring tension to a head, and convert talk to physical outbursts when suspicion and hatred have been

festering. Narratives have also been used as a cohesive device, such as with Francesca Polletta's look at "Narrative and Identity in Social Protest" (1998). She argues that narratives are vital devices in the face of cultural change (which causes stress) in that "[narratives'] temporally configurative capacity equips it to integrate past, present, and future events and to align individual and collective identities during periods of change" (1998:139). This utility can be seen in the evocation of an idealized past through narrative. The past is not discussed for its own sake but to illustrate its influence on the present or to outline an action that should be taken in a greater historical context: "Narratives' configuration of events over time makes them important to the construction and maintenance of individual and collective identities" (Polletta 1998: 140). Ethnic identities are particularly important when populations are dispersed from their homelands. This causes members to take into consideration their common past location and incorporate a sense of tradition for group unity and maintenance of their ethnic identities.

### ***Applications and Social Networks***

In one study by Knottnerus and LoConto, groundwork has been laid along with useful terminology in order to examine traditional folk pathways in an ethnic community. Knottnerus recognizes that ethnicity is "fluid, transitory and spontaneous" and constantly being shaped and redefined by social processes and organizational factors (2000:1). In order to examine the pathways of power, influence, and dynamic ethnic identity, the authors did fieldwork among Italian-American immigrants who migrated to



southeastern Oklahoma in the late nineteenth century (2000:3). These Italian-Americans were under social pressure for over 80 years from a combined economic depression and a region that was not welcoming to “hyphenated Americans” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:3).

The framework of the society is examined from a perspective of strategic ritualization, activities which are “sometimes carried out in a deliberate, purposive, and calculating manner”(Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:6). These structured practices reassure the folk, maintain unity and ethnic identity, and play significant roles in the balance of power and influence between actors in the community (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:6). By Knottnerus’s definition, these rituals can encompass traditional food making, annual festivals, ethnic dancing, and even folk narratives. The members of the community understand that those rituals are trappings of their culture and the participation therein is a prescribed method of affirming their ethnic identity. For example, dancing a traditional dance in a festival puts the dancers in touch with their ethnicity. They physically participate with a symbol of their culture for both their own benefit as well as onlookers’. The agents of strategic ritualization are broken down into four types: “*ritual legitimators, ritual entrepreneurs, ritual sponsors, and ritual enforcers*” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:7).

Ritual legitimators are “actors who authorize, validate, or accredit what ritualized symbolic practices are associated with a particular group or collectivity” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:7). These often take the form of respected individuals in the community, such as an ‘elder’ or “leader of a group, a highly esteemed religious or

political actor in society ...[whose] judgments and opinions usually carry more authority than others” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:7). Thus, if they espouse a folk belief, it serves as a legitimatization for the rest of the community.

Ritual entrepreneurs are “actors who employ ritualized symbolic practices associated with a particular group or collectivity in the carrying out of economic practices” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:8). In other words, these are individuals or businesses that profit from folk traditions. This does not necessarily mean that they sell trinkets as folk objects. This category also encompasses, for example, a grocer that expresses his Italian-American heritage in the name of his business, or sells ethnic food. This association might allow him to compete against large chain stores that move to town. The public folk affiliation of these businesses appeals to other members of the folk group. When they might not be able to compete against larger chain businesses with lower prices, they can appeal to individuals of a shared ethnic identity to support them. They accomplish this by offering something unique to those who share that cultural affiliation.

Ritual sponsors are “actors who develop and promote events comprised of ritualized symbolic practices that are associated with (i.e., are representative of) a particular collectivity” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:9). Through the act of sponsoring these events, they not only affirm their own shared ethnic identity and promote their status in the community, but also bring the sorts of activities that comprise the events into stronger association with the shared ethnicity. These events might be strategically selected to shape the outside opinion of the ethnic group, as well as be used

to enculturate or educate others who would normally be on the fringes through the way that ritual sponsors wish to depict their ethnicity.

Finally, ritual enforcers are “actors who utilize social power and/or a position of domination to determine the ritualized symbolic practices that are associated with a particular social unit” (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:11). They have direct control over the folk practices and rituals that the folk participate in, either overtly or in a more subtle, coercive fashion. For example, a respected elder in the community who shares stories about the founding of the settlement and subsequently ascribes traits and values to define the group would be a ritual enforcer.

All four of these types of strategic ritualization shape the methods that folk tradition is conveyed and carried out in a community. They can be used to analyze the power structures in the community, and aid in understanding why certain types of folk practices occur in a given community. These terms and this method of viewing folk practices provide an established set of terminology that can be used to examine and explain social pathways of tradition in the Japanese-American internment camps.

## **Conclusion**

Rumor, gossip, and scapegoat accusations are all established genres of folklore. Scapegoat accusations, supernatural narratives, and slander become heightened during times of stress, acting as both a means of tightening group cohesion and an outlet for that stress. They can reformat social networks, ostracize nonproductive or fringe members,

and splinter existing social groups. Passing on rumors and making scapegoat accusations are methods of participating with a given identity, and they can be the dynamic force behind changing social interactions. Observing these accusations can reveal the greater social climate of the group being studied. Subsequently, the toolsets and scholarly approaches to analyzing rumor, gossip and scapegoat accusations from this chapter will be utilized in Chapter IV to examine narratives from the Japanese-American internment.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**ACCUSATIONS FROM THE JAPANESE-AMERICAN INTERNMENT:**  
**SCAPEGOAT ACCUSATIONS, RUMORS, AND SLURS**

**Introduction**

In this chapter, I examine the concrete examples of ethnic slurs, rumors and scapegoat accusations at the camps, arranged according to the individuals or groups that they targeted. Then, I discuss the functions these accusations served in promoting adherence to a group norm in the face of inextricable social pressure.

**Anti-American Ethnic Slurs and Rumors**

The Japanese-Americans, wrested from their homes and sent to live in cramped, dirty, prison-like internment camps had every right to feel angry at the American government that sent them there. However, the American government was a distant, powerful entity that overshadowed every aspect of their daily lives. Before the internment, most of the internees considered themselves Americans (Kuramitsu 1995:620, Mass 2001:159). Now that identity was taken from them by the very government they affiliated themselves with.

The choice of terminology that internees used when referring to the Americans was an indicator of their sentiment. Those terms verbalized the internees' perception of

the Americans, and therefore helped establish networks between groups of internees based on loyalty or lack thereof. The separation between the Caucasian Americans and the Japanese-American internees through derogatory language also assisted the sudden break from the internees' American identity. Even those Americans who had no real power at the camps were frequently relegated to groups characterized by negative slang. According to Asael Hansen, an applied anthropologist at the Heart Mountain internment camp who had problems establishing a rapport with the internees, "there was a widespread view that no *hakujin* (white person) could ever empathize with Japanese-Americans" (2001:33). *Hakujin* was the most neutral Japanese slang used in reference to the Americans, literally translating to white person, and was used fairly synonymously with the English word Caucasian (Hansen 1994:225). In addition to Hansen's self-reflective description, Robert Spencer, a field anthropologist at the Gila War Relocation Center apparently agreed with the term's neutrality, describing it as "all right" (Hansen 1994:225). Robert Spencer, in an interview with Arthur Hansen, elaborates on the other, less kind slang terms that were used at the camps to label the Americans:

S: Oh, look, anybody was unpopular. Okay? Any Caucasian.

The word "*keto*" was used very widely. You know the word?

H: Sure. It means "hairy beast," right?

S: Like *hakujin* [Caucasian]. "*Keto*" is worse. Beast.

H: Beast, yes.

S: The *hakujin* was all right. But the “*keto*”... and everybody was “*keto*”. And what happened, of course, was that the evacuees then put up a united front. It was essentially a racial thing.

H: So, very early on then, you know, Smith was victimized by just the fact that he was the head *keto*.

S: He was the director, yes.

H: Was that animus extended to his wife as well, even though she was functioning in a healing capacity?

S: It was extended to everybody. (Hansen 1994:225).

Keto, therefore, was a worse insult than Hakujuin, and was widespread amongst internees. It played on the negative physical differences between the Japanese and the Americans (hairiness). Furthermore, the internees who used the term did not discriminate between benign and malign Americans; the insult was used against all Americans and erected a stronger barrier between the Japanese and the Americans. The internees who used this slur therefore valued their ethnic Japanese identity stronger than their American identity;

this term serving as a reinforcement of that perception. As mentioned previously, there was uniform terminology between the camps. The fact the term keto was used at more camps than just Gila evidences the congruence of terminology. Charles Kikuchi was an Americanized twenty-six year old Nisei from Berkeley, California when he was sent to the Tanforan relocation center. In his diary, he describes an encounter with an anti-American Issei:

Today I ran across the first Japan nationalist who reacted violently. He said that Japan “requested” that we be put into a concentration camp so that we have to do it for the sake of Japan. The man seemed pleasant and harmless enough at first, but when he started to talk on this subject, I was amazed to see the bitter look of hatred in his eyes and face. He asked us point-blank whether we were for Japan or America and we said “America” on the basis of our beliefs and education. He got extremely angry and pounded on the table while shouting that we Nisei were fools and that we had better stick by Japan because we could never be Americans; only “Ketos” [white men, literally, hairy people] could be Americans. Since we had Japanese faces we should be for Japan because she would always protect us and not treat us like dogs, etc. ... And I still am not convinced that it is impossible to educate the Issei, although the argument that we are in camp just like them and therefore not Americans is beginning to influence many Nisei (Modell 1973:57).



This passage exemplifies the hatred that many disloyals had for the American government as well as the fissures that developed between internees based on allegiance. Interestingly enough, the editor's translation for Keto in this work softens the translation, removing the "beast" implication. It is also worth noting that the Issei likens the American's treatment of the internees to dogs, which becomes a term for those Japanese suspected of being American informers. This diary entry was dated May 5, 1942, only two days following Kikuchi's arrival at the internment center, and tensions were already running hot. As Charles expresses, even though the internees had only been sent to the camps very recently, the relocation was viewed by many as a stripping them of their American status and identity. This disconnection between the Japanese and the Americans is well represented by the keto racial slur.

The negative verbal barbs against the Americans went beyond slang epithets. Rumors circulated throughout the camps about instances of abuse and dangerous negligence on the part of the American captors. In a cooperative study of the internment camps by contributors to the Community Analysis Section of the War Relocation Authority, evacuees, and anthropologists stationed at the camps, the attitude of the Japanese-American internees regarding the Americans during the initial few months of internment is described as follows:

Out of these [poor] conditions grew anxiety and fear, and out of these anxieties grew rumors, sometimes fantastic rumors, which increased the fears as they sprouted and grew in the laundry rooms and the bachelors' barracks where people talked and listened.

The anxiety about food rose and fell in relation to the actual conditions in the various centers. A succession of relatively poor meals gave rise to the rumors that the warehouses were empty. A shortage of meat or rice resulted in rumors that the whole American transportation system had broken down and the food supply had been cut off. A large number of Issei began to believe that they could not trust the Caucasians to supply them with food and that consequently they would have to depend on their own efforts to raise vegetables in the block gardens. Inequality in the distribution to mess halls of a particular shipment of food gave rise to stories on the one hand of favoritism and graft among the evacuees who had jobs in the stewards' departments and on the other hand to rumors of dishonesty among the WRA [War Relocation Authority] personnel. The atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust led cooks and individuals in many blocks to hoard what food they did get against the occasional lean days, or to provide for the imagined eventual complete breakdown in the food supply. The failure of an evacuee to receive a personal shipment of food from a friend in California resulted in a widespread belief that the WRA staff members were dishonest and were withholding and probably selling for their own profit food that was rightfully intended for evacuees.

Increased anxieties about health and medical care grew up simultaneously with those connected with food. Like the rumors about

food, those about the hospitals were usually based on some real event, the death of an evacuee in the hospital, a shortage of equipment, or an instance of poor ambulance service or discourteous treatment in the hospital receiving room. At Manzanar during the summer a large number of evacuees came to believe that a mother had died in childbirth as a result of incompetence by a doctor. At Poston similarly large numbers of evacuees believed that two babies had died because of neglect. There were rumors that evacuees were being used experimentally in the hospitals; that Caucasian doctors deliberately allowed evacuees to die (Spicer et al. 1969:101-2).

Once again, the rumors occur during times of stress, giving voice to the internees' apprehensions and aligning those who used racial slurs against the Americans. The internees spread the belief that the Americans were incompetent and hostile, reinforcing the beliefs through rumors based on incidents of lessened rations, poor meals, or missing packages. The stress and suspicion caused the tellers to embellish the problems, turning the stories into exaggerated caricatures of the real problems.

The set of incidents gave rise to rumors which were colored by the beliefs and perceptions of the internees. There were underlying, real events that inspired the rumors., but the rumors took their forms based on pre-existing general sentiment and anxieties. Mistrust of the Americans and a belief in the lack of humane treatment were preconceptions that tainted the stories and gave rise to the hyperbolic rumors. The social stress which precipitated the rumors also facilitated their rapid spread through the

population of the internees. Casual conversations at everyday locations, such as the laundry rooms and bachelors' barracks, were the media of transmission, not formalized meetings or the written word. The rumors then gave rise to actions: squirreling away rations or starting gardens in the event that the American-given food supply ran out. The more Japanese-enculturated Issei encouraged an independence from the captors, leading to some of the mistrustful sentiments. This spawned a further segregation between the Japanese internees and the Americans, who had the ability to be more self-sufficient if the need arose. Thus the attempts at autonomy can be seen as providing the internees with a modicum of control over their lives and would have yielded a positive emotional effect.

Another observer, a social psychologist by the name of Alexander Leighton, recorded a rash of rumors during heightened periods of disruptive stress:

In his own experience with Japanese-American evacuees from the West Coast, Leighton came into contact with many such hallucinatory rumors. During a strike at the resettlement center at Poston, Arizona, agitated demonstrators saw nonexistent machine guns and their crews. They saw imaginary hearses carrying away bodies at night. They believed that residents of the community were dying like flies because of heat, bad food, and inadequate medical attention. Babies were represented as perishing in overheated nurseries. Such tales are typical of fourth stage rumor in a situation of mob strife (Allport and Postman 1947:197).

This is another affirmation of similar exaggerations of American hostility. The fact that the report of machine guns took place during a strike demonstrates that the rumor arose during a period of heightened anxiety and stress. Both this passage and the previous one describe rumors that involve essentials such as food and medicine being at risk or tainted. By calling into question the reliability of American-provided services that were necessary for survival, the internees expressed the fear that their lives were in jeopardy by relying on or affiliating with the Americans. Sometimes, such as with the rumors about babies dying, the conversations were further spiced with taboo issues to rile audiences. As mentioned in Chapter III, infanticide is universal taboo that can be used to quickly sway opinion on a subject in a negative manner. Ultimately, the rumors about American mistreatment or negligence served to stir mistrust among the internees of their captors and provided unquestioned grievances for the internees to share with each other. The rumors reinforced bonds between those internees already skeptical of the establishment and swayed some of those who might have previously been undecided.

The Americans, individually responsible for the internment or not, were the most obvious targets for the hatred and suspicion of the internees. However, due to the constraints of the internment camps, the Japanese-Americans did not have a great deal of power to affect anything. The rumors and slurs used against the Americans could alleviate some tension by lending a verbal form to emotional sentiment and forming social networks of like-minded individuals. However, the words could not truly affect the establishment; they could only drive a deeper wedge between “us” and “them”. So while many of the internees did adopt bitter slang terms for their captors or spread the

rumors that depicted their captors to be even worse than they really were, for many it was not enough to deal with the stress. And so, instead of directly confronting the Americans, many internees drove deeper fissures between their own subcultures, taking the frustration and stress out on each other.

### **Fellow Internee Scapegoating by Disloyals**

Life in the internment camps, particularly Tule Lake where the strain on the internees was greater, had a tendency to polarize the internees' loyalties. Those internees who considered themselves more Japanese, who answered "no" to the two loyalty questions of the registration, or who lost faith in the American government, were considered "disloyals". While most of these individuals were sent to Tule Lake after the registration, all of the camps understandably had some degree of dissatisfaction with the American government among the internees. However, for many, the American government or the institutions of the camps were foes too formidable to confront directly. Instead, suspicious and bitter eyes turned towards those fellow internees who still considered themselves Americans despite the internment. One prominent label spread through the camps as a way to paint those internees loyal to the American government as outsiders and scapegoats: *inu*.

*Inu* translates to "dog" in Japanese, but the word took on a more insidious meaning in the internment camps (Hansen 1994:427). *Inu* became synonymous with "traitor": people who supposedly were informing on their fellow internees to the

American government. The term's use as a slur was nonexistent before the start of the internment, and spread into common usage and everyday conversation in the camps following the registration (Hansen 1994:427). The word itself was Japanese, and as that fact suggests, the term was used by those individuals more loyal to Japan against their more Americanized peers. James Sakoda, a doctoral student at the University of California, Berkeley who was both an internee and a researcher of the internment, commented on the terminology of *inu* in an interview:

The dog is an animal that quite often gets used in remarks that are derogatory. You know, you say, "She's a dog." The word is also used for stones. If you're making a stone fence and you have all these ill-shaped rocks, they're called dogs. There's a term in Japanese which is *injini*, which means "dog death," which is a meaningless death. I don't think of it in a deep sort of way. The dog just happens to be used in a very derogatory way, and, in particular, *inu* happens to be used as "spy." I can only attribute it to the fact that it's a domestic animal which happens to be thought of in a very negative way. As far as I know, you don't get connotations like "the faithful dog" and that sort of image in the Japanese literature (Hansen 1994:426).

*Inu* accusations had such dire connotations because the implications of being an informer broke the unspoken ties between the Japanese internees. An unwritten law existed during the internment that one was to keep "damaging information about his fellow evacuees within his own racial group" (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:21). *Inu*

had supposedly broken this sacred trust, divulging sensitive information about the Japanese to the Americans. Therefore, *inu* accusations served the function of ostracizing those internees who were suspected of working against the group. This tightened the bonds between the remaining internees disloyal to the American government and enforced the unified beliefs and group participation needed during a time of stress. Many internees, particularly at Tule Lake, lived in a state of fear of being informed upon on one side of the spectrum, or being called an *inu* on the other (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:261).

Yamato Ichihashi expressed the general sentiment towards *inu* accusations in a letter to a friend. Yamato was an Issei who had moved to the United States for graduate work at Stanford and was a professor at Stanford at the time of the internment. Yamato was highly Americanized by the time of the internment; however, he still held many of the fearful beliefs about the supposed *inu* informants during his stay at Tule Lake prior to the registration:

It is very plain that the Administration employs secret informers, though it denies it; the Japanese here call them “Dogs,” and they hurt the Japanese morale very badly and the dogs ought not to be employed. But police-minded bureaucrats can never see that way. You may be interested to know that these dogs are nisei and issei, both male and female; females are referred to as “cats”, poor animals. At any rate, the situation became more tense as time went on, and finally reached a point of disturbance, because it became known definitely that many nisei men



refused to register, and with the usual harangue and agitation (Chang 1997: 219).

Yamato does not view the stories of *inu* informants as anything but truthful accounts. While some individuals used the term *inu* intentionally to ostracize unproductive individuals or enemies, most people lived in fear of being turned in to the American government by spies in their midst (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:264). *Inu* were a palpable threat to the internees, whether or not there really were any actual informers. The rumors and accusations of *inu* became more precipitated around periods of uncertainty and stress, particularly Tule Lake's registration as Yamato expressed. This account is also one of the only instances I have seen where female informers were referred to as *neko*, or cats. The term did not seem to be as widely used; other accounts use *inu* as a gender neutral term.

The individuals who were most prone to being targeted as *inu* were those Japanese-Americans in prominent positions of association with the Americans. The members of the JACL in particular stood out as targets (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946: 20-21). JACL members were Nisei prominent in the internment camp communities, and often held positions of leadership because the Japanese language was banned in large assemblies. *Inu* accusations, however, spread beyond just internees with notable ties to the Americans, sometimes reaching the level of virtual witch hunts. Individuals were reticent to work with anthropologists or other social scientists for fear of being labeled as *inu*. A study undertaken by social scientists from the University of California in 1942, reports this problem:

To their fellow evacuees, “Research” was synonymous with “inquisition” and the distinction between “informant” and “informer” was not appreciated. Consequently, every one of our evacuee staff members were stigmatized, or in danger of being stigmatized, as an *inu* (i.e., an “Informer”...) by some of his fellow evacuees. The bases of the suspicions that led to this stigmatization were such acts as associating with the Caucasian personnel in the camps; taking notes in public meetings; using typewriters in their barracks; asking too-direct questions; receiving mail in envelopes marked “Evacuation and Resettlement Study”; and cashing university checks. Each of these acts raised suspicions that our staff members were operating as stool pigeons for the project administration or one of the governmental intelligence agencies, all of which, it was widely believed, employed operatives among the evacuees (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:ix).

Japanese-Americans in the internment camps were reluctant to deal with Caucasians or share information for fear of being branded as an outsider, an *inu*, to their peers.

Innocuous activities could be held in suspicion by fellow internees and raise suspicions that their peers might be spies. The term *inu* was undeniably a scapegoat term. Just as the unfounded rumors of American negligence and mistreatment of the internees spread, so did accusations against other internees.

Those who were labeled as *inu* were subjected to ostracism from and harassment by their peers. At Tule Lake, following the registration,

[*Inu*] were... subjected to distressing forms of social ostracism. A suspected *inu* would be met with marked hostility in mess halls, block meetings, recreation halls, latrines. People would break off conversations at his approach, or would lower their voices to whispers. Children would bark at him suggestively. Young men would shout “Hey, *inu*!” as he passed. Rumors that certain persons were planning to waylay and beat him up would reach his ears. His wife and children would be similarly shunned and insulted. The long-expected series of beatings did not actually get under way until the middle of June, when, within less than two weeks, at least four “*inu* beatings” occurred (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:264).

Those individuals branded as *inu* at Tule Lake could no longer effectively participate as members of the community. They were ostracized to the full extent of the other internees capability, and this tension built to overt violence. Thomas elaborates, “[t]he fear of being branded as an *inu* was the more intense, because a person so suspected was not only subjected to the most severe social ostracism but was often in very real danger of physical violence” (1946:225). This was more of an effect than the internees could wreak against the American captors themselves. Social pressures of confidentiality and animosity towards the Caucasian Americans could be enforced by the internees themselves, tightening bonds between the remaining community members. Even children were encouraged to harass *inu*, thereby instructing young people in social taboos and the repercussions of breaking them. And because an entire family could

suffer from the burden of an *inu* relative, individuals were encouraged to keep their family in line with the social norms in addition to monitoring their own actions.

Ultimately, the term *inu* was elastic in its usage and repercussions, depending on the context of the social strain (Hansen 1994:426).

*Inu* accusations were more prevalent during times and places of particular social strain or crisis. The more pressure on the internees, the more the term *inu* was stretched to encompass more people. The periods of greatest stress at the camps coincided with periods in which *inu* accusations were most rampant: “Suspicion reached a maximum at the time of registration, ebbed after segregation, recurred with every period of crisis in every camp, and was a factor that had to be considered from the inception until the closure of the camps” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:ix). This point is emphasized in the aforementioned interview with James Sakoda:

Now, when a major crisis hit, it would seem that *inu* would have been a term that got stretched to the point of almost infinite elasticity. I suppose that in those cases the threshold dividing *inu* and non-*inu* in the population would be anybody who had anything to do with the administration or with the *hakujin*. You saw that at least in one instance at Tule Lake, I guess, during the period of the registration (Hansen 1994:426).

The registration period at Tule Lake was a peak of tension in the camps: a time of confusion and stress with little official word from the administration. Later in the interview, Sakoda emphasizes his experience at Tule Lake: “It was probably at

registration that [*inu*] became an obvious term” (Hansen 1994:427). Before the heightened tension between the Americans calling for a mandatory registration with ambiguous repercussions, the term *inu* was not as prevalent. With the escalating tensions and the need for an outlet, the term began to be utilized with increased frequency and severity. In response to the registration, a group of Kibei at Tule Lake began circulating a petition that demanded that the signers should be treated like Japanese nationals and be removed from the project (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:78). The group “entered various block meetings and demanded that signatures be affixed to the petition before the meetings broke up. At the same time members threatened to beat up *inu* who, by this time were defined as people willing to collaborate with the administration by registering” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:78). The term *inu* became flexible as the need demanded. However, it was always used by those who had a stronger affiliation with their Japanese identity against individuals who had or were accused of having ties to the American government in some fashion.

While the term *inu* might have become most prevalent during the registration, the term existed as a threat before that period in time. Following the initial adjustment to life in the internment camps, the internees exhibited “unrest and distrust directed towards both the administration and fellow evacuees, with periods of protest and manifestations of revolt against the administration and cleavages among the residents” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:45). This heightened tension is one of the primary reasons for the registration and subsequent relocation of “disloyals” to Tule Lake. However, at the height of this period of protest at Poston,

[w]arnings to *inu* (in this case possible informers to FBI) became conspicuous. Having references to the fact that the word *inu* means literally “dog” a dog-faced man appeared on the post, which bore the block 22 flag; a cartoon of a dog, and a real dog-bone bearing the message “this is for dogs” on the police station wall; a dog with a wienie suspended in front of it on the block 19 post, and a Japanese boy chasing a dog on the block 35 banner. The anxious voice of parents admonishing their teen-age sons not to become *inu* could be heard near the camp fires (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:48).

The internees used visual media alongside rumors and scapegoat accusations to spread the term *inu* to the residents along with undisguised derision and scorn. Once again, the term was reinforced to children as a bad thing, and the imagery was accessible to all internees across age and language barriers. Portraying traitors using visual depictions of dogs further dehumanized them, likening them to lower creatures.

In an interview with Harry Ueno, the principal figure from a riot at Manzanar and a *kibei*, Ueno also cites an instance in which graphic representations of actual dogs were used in *inu* accusations. Ueno recounts an experience from his time in a temporary jail in Moab following the Manzanar riot in December of 1942:

AH: How about the relationship between the people who were at Moab and who had come from various centers? Were there factions based on the camps they had come from? Did they tend to stick to themselves as units?

HU: No. I noticed the people from Gila, there was a ... I've forgotten his name. He was half Caucasian. He was kind of a radical fellow. I don't know what he did to be put into Moab, but one of the fellows who came together with him put a dog's picture right beside his bedside. The point was that he was a stool pigeon or something like that. But he was quite a nice fellow. And he was engaged to some girl back in Gila camp. He was cooperating very good with the administration because he wanted to get out. As soon as that picture was pasted on his bed they [the administration] sent him back to the Gila River camp. I heard that he married the girl and moved to another camp or something. But he was a nice fellow (Hansen 1995:48).

This account seems to show that while Ueno himself was not familiar with the term *inu*, he was still able to observe the implications. The person from Gila had been cooperating with the administration and was suspected of being an informant. When the photograph of a dog was put beside him, it was a way to accuse him of being an *inu*. This incident is interesting because the accuser can maintain a measure of anonymity when he was in the prison situation under the American watch.

Following the registration, American authorities sent anyone whom they deemed as disloyal along with any who preferred to live a more Japanese lifestyle to Tule Lake. Tule Lake then became the location of the greatest tension between the disloyals and the remaining loyals who had not left. While the other camps might have settled into a

period of general stasis, Tule Lake's administration was strict and aggravated the cleavage between the loyals and disloyals (Hansen 1994:426; Spicer et al. 1969:216). At Tule Lake, an underground organization of disloyals primarily consisting of Kibei (who were in a majority at Tule Lake), began using *inu* as an intentional and directed scapegoating tool (Spicer et al. 1969:181; Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:222-5).

The underground leaders made effective use of this fear by branding as an *inu* anyone who made a statement which could be interpreted as proadministration, or critical of themselves or their group. Since few of the residents explored the basis of the rumors arousing these suspicions, a man's reputation could be ruined by a few whispered words or by an inspired "smear" campaign (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:225).

The underground organization was aware that few people personally researched the accusations and it targeted people as *inu* for opposing the organization itself in addition to being associated with the Americans. This shows the development of an intentional, devious use of the scapegoat device. A single word whispered to friends had the power to demean the target in the eyes of the group. Residents lived in fear not only of having their words turned against them by the supposed informers that might be masquerading as their friends, but also of being accused of being an *inu* (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:225). The individuals in the underground organization served as ritual legitimators to the community, promoting and validating the *inu* accusations from their positions of influence over the community. They purposely assisted in defining the group norms and what activities or viewpoints could earn social ostracism.



By comparison, after the registration Minidoka still had *inu* accusations, but the accusations did not bear nearly the same gravity. James Sakoda describes the Minidoka camp in comparison to Tule Lake:

Minidoka was relatively relaxed as far as accusations of that type were concerned. The fact that the community council and some people were declared *inu*, the whole thing wasn't taken too seriously. It wasn't that kind of crisis situation, either. During the whole time I was there, it was a much [more] relaxed atmosphere. There wasn't a feeling of real crisis...

(Hansen 1994:426).

Sakoda concludes that the less stressful atmosphere at Minidoka contributed to the reduced severity of the *inu* accusations. The term still existed at centers outside of Tule Lake, but the level of social stress was the primary factor affecting the extent of social ostracism experienced by those accused.

The scapegoat term, *inu*, began out of fear: a way to direct the confusion and lack of control or influence with the Americans to the internees' peers. The prevalence and severity of the accusations went hand in hand with the level of stress on the population, and during the periods and places of greatest friction the term was even used deliberately to slander enemies. *Inu* accusations could be used to motivate or threaten people to participate in activities. In Poston, during the protests before the registration, "[i]n a number of blocks it had been announced at breakfast that anyone who refused to picket the police station would be branded as an *inu* and treated as such" (Thomas and

Nishimoto 1946:47). This blatant threat to force action shows another deliberate use of power through the scapegoat term.

*Inu* accusations could also be used for personal gain: “Lawbreakers, who had been ‘legitimately’ arrested, often took advantage of the prevailing state of pathological suspicion and called their arraigners *inu*, hoping thereby to establish their ‘innocence’ in the eyes of the community” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:263). In order to escape judgment, people who were arrested sought community support against the police by calling them *inu*. This would call into question the veracity of the law enforcement and turn the situation around. Furthermore, by calling the arraigners *inu*, the lawbreaker would declare himself or herself to be unaffiliated with the Americans, and thus a more vital member of the group. The Japanese internees themselves were even aware of this process. George Fujii, a Kibei internee at Poston, explains:

My father was interned [in an enemy alien internment camp]. That’s just an example. It’s very minor. So people were suspicious towards the Japanese themselves. At the same time, in camp you’ve got to blame some of these Japanese, also, in order to have your status or position. Here’s what happened. The Japanese reacted and said “You must be one [an *inu*].” They said this in order to protect themselves. Some of the Japanese, especially the Kibei, tried to show their strength by being connected with the administration. “You wouldn’t dare touch me.” I won’t say all of them, but some of the Kibei acted that way. They would go into places where you weren’t supposed to go and they drove the

administration cars and so on. Some of them cashed checks that were not issued by the WRA, which caused suspicion. But to them, that was one method of protecting themselves, so that people wouldn't dare touch them. To me, that's one of the reasons that the judoists were targets of suspicion. In those days, they connected karate with judo. I'm not trying to defend judo. They felt that we were connected with judo, this group that was a radical group. And here I was, with Isamu Uchida, going in and out of the judo *dojo* [hall] at Poston. So after this one Kibei [Kay Nishimura] was beaten, Isamu and I were pulled in as suspects (Hansen 1995:83).

This shows a fascinating dichotomy between the *inu* and those accusing them of being *inu*. The Japanese felt threatened by their fellow internees, and in order to feel safer, they needed to ally with either the administration or stand firmly against them. By accusing another internee of being an *inu*, they consciously were protecting themselves against such accusations. On the other hand, some internees felt safer siding with the administration.

This practice even went a step further at Tule Lake after the registration when “[r]esidents did not hesitate to suggest that their private enemies, or persons whom they merely disliked, were *inu*. Usually no specific accusations were made. It was sufficiently damning to pass along word that ‘so-and-so is an *inu*’” (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:264). The term became so generally used that an explication of why the targeted individual had incurred this title was no longer necessary. Furthermore, by using the term against personal enemies, the term departed from its base as a label for a

traitor to turn into a general scapegoat designation. As James Sakoda stated in his interview, when he speaks of the atmosphere at pre-registration Tule Lake: "...if there was any suspicious behavior... it may not be completely justified, but it would be a basis for being called an *inu*" (Hansen 1994:426). The mere suggestion that a man was an *inu* was enough to smear his reputation at the camps. This threat of ostracism enforced group unity and cooperation. Ruffling feathers, even if unrelated to American loyalty, could draw forth the accusation of *inu* by one's enemies. In a single word, a whole array of connotations and cultural taboos could be expressed. Everyone in the camps was aware of the implications that the word suggested beyond the literal definition. Calling someone an *inu* did not just draw parallels to the animal, but spoke of treachery, affiliation with the enemy, and a detachment from the group. In a time of social stress where unity was important, the internees needed outlets for stress. The term *inu*, therefore, served a vital role in regulating normative behavior.

### ***Supernatural Rumors: Traditional Japanese Folklore at Tule Lake***

The *inu* accusation mimicked the role of many folkloric scapegoat terms discussed in Chapter III. However, *inu* was not the sole label used as an outlet for social stress. The Japanese culture is rich with traditional folklore of malignant and benign legendary creatures. The internment camps, particularly Tule Lake, were also home to memorates and rumors describing fantastic encounters and vile beings in the guise of fellow internees. Beliefs that had been suppressed for many years were rekindled in the

stressful environment among the large population of Japanese who remembered and transmitted traditional folklore.

Marvin Opler, who served as the Community Analyst at Tule Lake between 1943 and 1946, conducted a study at the camp examining the revival of traditional folklore beliefs during this short period of time. Tule Lake, in addition to being the most stringent of the internment camps in terms of regulations and oppression of the internees, was also the center that harbored the greatest percentage of Kibei. These individuals had recently been educated in Japan and were more closely tied with the Japanese culture. The camp was presented as the camp for those who wished to live “as Japanese”; before the mandatory segregation many individuals were “voluntary segregants” who had moved willingly to Tule Lake for that reason (Spicer et al. 1969:171; Opler 1950:386). These conditions facilitated the spread of traditional Japanese beliefs throughout the camp.

Tule Lake served Opler and other anthropologists as a case study in the dynamism of culture: “Folkloristic elements were revived and at points intensified beyond anything characteristic of the post-Meiji Japan from which they stemmed” (Opler 1950:386). The clustering of Issei and Kibei, both enculturated in Japan, resulted in a knowledge base of traditional folklore that could be disseminated throughout the camp. Opler observed this process and explained: “Folklore which had been remembered by a handful of Issei, and perpetuated in a small circle, was seized upon by Issei and Nisei alike in a broadening sphere when it was deemed important to strike back at administrative pressures, programs and policies with the dignified

weapons of Japanese culture” (1950:387). Not only were the folkloristic beliefs perpetuated in a time of social stress, but they were used as intentional propaganda devices. They served to enculturate the Nisei, who had been removed from Japanese culture, in traditional beliefs and to promote a vantage of Japanese superiority. Death omens such as *hidama* (fireballs) and *hitodama* (ghost-lights) were reported throughout the center, many by Nisei who had never heard of the phenomena before the camps (Opler 1950:388). Subsequently, when the individuals were asked about the ghost lights after the internment period was over, scientific-sounding explanations were given to account for what they might have seen. Outside of the environment of the internment camp, when the stressful period had passed, the supernatural phenomenon passed from belief to mere memory. As discussed in the previous chapter, choosing to share cultural memorates and rumors is a way to activate the ethnic identity of the performer to both the performer and the audience. Participation in tale telling, or expressing belief in Japanese-flavored supernatural beings through memorates or rumors signifies the performer’s Japanese ethnicity to the audience. This could be one device through which an individual might stave off being accused of being an *inu* whose loyalty lay with the Americans.

There were supernatural rumors at locations other than Tule Lake. Charles Kikuchi described in his personal diary how rumors of ghost lights spread rapidly around the Tanforan Assembly Center prior to the registration.

That night the F.’s went to bed but he felt uneasy because the Japanese have some sort of superstition about killing snakes. While lying

in bed they looked up at the ceiling and were terrified to see a faint blue eerie glow. They thought it was some sort of spirit so they ran to a neighbor and slept with them. It didn't take long for the story to get around and by breakfast time the crowd began to gather. All sorts of rumors spread around. They were retold in the messhalls, toilets, and washrooms. Some said it was the ghost of a jockey who had been murdered. Others believed that it was the spirit of a departing horse. Some said that it took the shape of a monster and waved its hands around. After roll call, the mob increased to about 1000 people and the internal police force had to disperse them.... After all the stories about it being like the blue light seen near cemeteries in Japan, etc., he felt very uneasy. But they looked around for the cause until they finally located a tiny crack in the far wall near a beam. The moonlight from outside came through this crack and traveled behind this beam, emerging as the mysterious blue glow! So they boarded it up. Marie said that ten people have already moved out of the Bowl, and all sorts of stories are spread about its cause... I never knew that the Issei were so superstitious. They must be extraordinarily limited in intelligence (Modell 1973:162-3).

Kikuchi was an Americanized Nisei in the resettlement center, and showed obvious disdain for the supernatural beliefs of the Issei. Tanforan was a converted racetrack, and thus some of the rumors linked the origin of the ghostly visage to the location. The phenomenon of the blue light went through the cultural filter of the witnesses and they

then interpreted it as ghost lights from the traditional Japanese beliefs. Then, explanations of the cause were affected by the location; speculations about the ghost being a jockey or a horse would not have arisen had Tanforan not previously been a racetrack. The phenomenon also occurred after the F.'s performed a taboo action (by Japanese tradition) of killing a snake. This suggests that the F.'s already were in a state of heightened anxiety before seeing the ghost lights. Additionally, since this incident took place before the registration, there was still a sizable population of more Japanese-minded people at Tanforan before many of those individuals moved to Tule Lake.

Like *inu* labeling, supernatural beliefs could also materialize to take the directed form of scapegoat accusations. Supernatural scapegoat accusations not only serve the same purpose of entwining the performer in the culture group, but also can ostracize the target, tightening the bonds between the remaining individuals. Some beings from traditional Japanese legends allegedly had the power to shift shape or possess human hosts. One trickster figure in particular, the *kitsune*, would fool unwary humans through transformational or possession magic (Opler 1950:389).

In 1945... a woman, whose only differentiating features were a connection with a minor religious cult (and [being a mother] whose son was famous in his Block for not intending to renounce citizenship), was linked with "Fox possession." There were no foxes in camp or in the surrounding countryside, but rumor had it that she talked aloud, in her Apartment, with "some Fox." A neighbor, upset and unstrung in her own right, hysterically reported "loud tappings on the floors and walls next



door, day and night,” “screams and barking sounds,” and human voices in “noisy arguments.” The woman, a divorcee and attractive, was first called *kitsune-tsuki*, “Possessed by foxes,” by female gossips, but the story spread to Nisei circles and her daughter was called “immoral, like her mother” for no reason at all (Opler 1950:389-90).

Family ties were very strong in Japanese culture, and a slight against one member could spread to dishonor the entire family. This pattern has already been seen in the way in which *inu* accusations directed towards one family member could affect the entire family. At Tule Lake, where Kibei were a majority and sentiment favored Japanese identity over the American, the strong American sentiment that the accused woman’s son held may have served as a motivation for her victimization. Also, according to the phenomenological approach espoused by Hufford, there were concrete events that triggered this folkloric explanation. The neighbor reported strange noises and loud arguments coming from her apartment. A loud argument is another source of contention in the barracks with cramped living spaces where the walls were often thin. These negative events were interpreted as being signs of a *kitsune* possession. While no physical harm came to the woman, rumors of her possessed status spread even to Nisei social circles and harmed her reputation. Like with other folkloric scapegoat accusations, she was dehumanized through the accusations: no longer mentally a normal woman but a *kitsune*.

Another supernatural rumor circulated among residents of the block that bore a heavy resemblance to the non-supernatural *inu* accusations:

One center resident who managed to keep a dog on Center premises was married to a part-Caucasian and evoked no criticism until late in 1944. Thereafter, however, rumors circulated that the Japanese wife became “possessed” with the spirit of the animal; they could take interchangeable form, talk to one another in a strange language, and the young wife could harm people when the beast’s spirit invested her. While the actual subject was outspoken in dealings with Block residents, we could note no personal peculiarities other than a frank and forthright manner (Opler 1950:389).

The tie between the woman and her dog, given that *inu* images were literally drawn in many places around the block, might have been a cause for suspicion alone.

Furthermore, since dogs were not normally allowed in the center, the fact that she had a dog, in and of itself, was likely to make her peers interpret her behavior negatively (reminding them of the *inu* accusations). This, combined with her part-Caucasian husband, likely made her seem more sympathetic to Caucasian Americans. The presences of an actual dog would not be used rationally as a piece of evidence for the woman’s being an *inu*; however, traditional folklore of animal possession could be utilized to slander her name. The possession was then further slanted to the negative by saying that she would actually harm people while channeling the dog. This symbiotic relationship with the animal moves her from the sphere of being a victim of the possession to being a willing aggressor and a danger to others.

The process of scapegoating individuals by calling them supernatural creatures makes action against those individuals easier to morally justify. With the *inu* accusations, calling someone a traitor burdens the accused with a despicably taboo crime thereby justifying actions against the accused. With folkloric scapegoats, the accused supposedly is not even human, let alone one of the peer group. This estranges the individual from social situations while integrating the accuser further, as the accuser demonstrates esoteric knowledge of the ethnic folklore. Just as with case of the ghost lights, all individuals who spoke of the *kitsune* or *inu* possession, when questioned a few years after the closure of the camps denied the belief and reported no further encounters with supernatural animals (Opler 1950:397). These beliefs were concentrated in the camps during a time of acute social stress where the ethnic Japanese individuals were in a majority.

### **Loyals: Siding with the Americans**

Even at Tule Lake, not all individuals carried their Japanese heritage as a banner of pride. Many of the internees were Nisei who had grown up in America, attended American universities, and had American friends. For some, their Japanese heritage was hardly activated until that identity was imposed upon them when they were sent to the internment camps. Charles Kikuchi, mentioned previously, was a Nisei Berkeley resident who drew strict lines between himself and other Japanese-Americans before the internment. After the Pearl Harbor bombing and before the internment, Kikuchi referred

to Japanese nationalists as well as other Japanese-Americans in nihonmachi communities by the slur “Japs” (Modell 1973:43-4). This verbally segregates him from other Japanese, and is a psychological device to distance himself from his own Japanese identity. Other Japanese-Americans in the JACL attempted to ingratiate themselves with the American government. The JACL attempted to have Nisei exempted from the internment because their loyalty to the American government was not an issue (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:20). Even after they too were sent to the camps, many retained their influential status because the Japanese language was forbidden in large assemblies and newspapers (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:21). As a result, many individuals loyal to the American government held positions of influence in the camps and were in the majority at camps other than Tule Lake.

Looking at the other side of the coin from the *inu* accusations, some individuals who retained their American identity scapegoated the disloyals. They blamed the Caucasians’ negative perception of Japanese-Americans on those who had stronger ties to Japan, sometimes generalizing the Kibei as a whole as the troublemakers. Kikuchi expounds on his sentiments towards those individuals with stronger ties to Japan early in the internment:

It gripes me no end to think of being confined in the same place with all these Japanists. If they could only realize that in spite of all their past mistreatments, they have not done so bad in America because of the democratic traditions – which has its faults. It may be a sense of personal frustration which is projected

to a hatred of all “Keto” and deep resentment towards America. I hope we are able to counteract this sort of thing among the young kids (Modell 1973:58). Kikuchi resented being grouped physically and categorically with the “Japanists.” This diary entry takes place only a few days after he was sent to Tanforan (in May of 1942); he was quick to focus his frustrations on the “Japanists”. He views their bitter sentiments towards America as misplaced, and expresses that he hopes that the future generations will be educated to a different, “correct” vantage. Kikuchi takes this sentiment to the next level only a few weeks later following an accidental fire in an apartment:

I started a rumor that an Issei tried to set the place afire in revenge for his incarceration in camp, and it probably will go around like wildfire. It’s really surprising to see how the camp residents are willing to believe any kind of a rumor without verification. It must be due to the unsettled state of mind of the residents who are ready to believe almost everything (Modell 1973: 93).

Kikuchi identified the fact that rumors were taking seed at the camps in this period of uncertainty and fear. He used that fact to his advantage to deliberately slander “Japanists” through rumor. Saying that a disloyal Issei started the fire suggested that the Issei were not concerned for the safety of other internees; starting a fire is a dangerous form of protest. This deliberate slander is reminiscent of the Tule Lake underground organization’s deliberate *inu* accusations against their own personal enemies.

Individuals who answered “yes” to at least one of the two loyalty questions from the registration were permitted to remain at their current internment camp and were considered loyal to the American government (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:79-80). Therefore, aside from Tule Lake, the majority of the individuals in the camps after the registration were considered loyal to the American government. However, even Tule Lake was not comprised entirely of disloyals. Many individuals who were considered loyal to the American government at Tule Lake declined a second relocation following the registration. After Tule Lake was subsequently inundated with disloyals, these Old Tuleans were those most likely to be accused of being *inu* (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946: 261-3). Furthermore, since Tule Lake was closed off to the outside more than other camps, many individuals chose to remain there (or resettle there) because of the fear of the “outside world” and for protection for themselves or their family (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:91). However, with the majority at Tule Lake still considered disloyal to the American government, publicly voicing support of or agreement with the Americans could result in being labeled an *inu*. Therefore, scapegoating measures against Kibei or other disloyals took place either before the resorting or outside of Tule Lake.

Some individuals rationalized the purpose of the camps, adopting defense mechanisms to deal with the internment. They turned the blame and guilt on themselves to deal with the psychological pressures of suddenly being vilified by the nation they had considered themselves a part of. Amy Iwasaki Mass is a Nisei who was sent to an internment camp and later worked as a consultant to Asian American clinics and

community service organizations. She wrote an article based on her own experiences and interviews with other Issei, Nisei and Sansei from Southern California regarding these psychological defense mechanisms that many Japanese-Americans in the internment camps adopted:

For many years, the majority of Japanese-Americans accepted the incarceration as an inevitable wartime necessity. Many still minimize the negative aspects of the camp experience and speak of the positive results. We were told we were being put away for our own safety, a patriotic sacrifice necessary for national security. By believing the government propaganda, we felt virtuous that we helped the war effort. By believing the propaganda, we could feel safe in the care of a benevolent, protective Uncle Sam...

Seeing the government as right and ourselves as somehow “not O.K.” is the same psychological response that abused children use in viewing their relationships with their abusive parents. Abused children suffer depression and shame. Mental health experts have found that abused children prefer to believe they, themselves are bad. In this way the child hopes that by acting properly, his parents will love him and treat him well. Like the abused child who still wants his parents to love him and hopes by acting correctly he will be accepted, Japanese-Americans chose the cooperative, obedient, quiet American façade to cope with an overly

hostile, racist America during World War II. By trying to prove that we were 110 percent American, we hoped to be accepted (Mass 2001:160-1). Instead of blaming the Americans or even blaming other segments of the population, many turned the responsibility onto themselves, trying to better themselves in the eyes of the Americans. Some of these Japanese-Americans would over-emphasize their American identity to appeal to the government or justify the internment itself as being for their own good. These individuals did not pin blame on other segments of the population of the camps; instead they turned the blame inwards.

The internment placed a great deal of stress on all those affected: daily lives were disrupted, and fear and suspicion were prevalent in the camps. Even those individuals who had considered themselves full fledged Americans before the internment had that identity challenged by the American government itself. Some reacted by turning against those individuals with stronger ties to Japan, blaming their own negative treatment on the poor example of Kibei or “no-noes”. Others internalized the blame and attempted to reinforce their American identity in response to the challenge.

## **Discussion**

The rumors and labels examined in the previous sections exemplify the ways many of the internees dealt with the social stress resulting from the internment. Factions developed between the internees based upon their loyalty or lack thereof to the American government. Terms that were nonexistent before the internment, such as *inu*, were



integrated into the daily vocabulary of English and Japanese speakers alike. Scapegoat rumors were perpetuated through social networks within individual camps as well as between the camps. Furthermore, the accusations at Tule Lake took a more directed and dangerous slant following the registration as compared to the rest of the camps. In this section, I take a closer look at the mechanisms behind the rumors, accusations and slurs in light of the previous research from the fields of folklore and social psychology.

### *Language*

Language can serve as a powerful tool to affect the sentiment towards an individual or a group. According to the affect control theory, when one associates an actor with a term or action, it affects the listener's sentiment towards that actor (Heise 1997). Individuals hold preconceived notions in relation to any given subject, but those notions can be altered along scales of good and bad, active and passive, or strong and weak depending on the context in which they are portrayed. Associating a subject with a taboo action, such as being responsible for the death of infants, dramatically shifts sentiment toward the subject in a negative direction. A neutral sentiment towards a warden is shifted to the most extreme negative sentiment when the invoked event is killing a baby (Heise 1997). Therefore, when the internees spread rumors about how babies were dying due to negligence or incompetence in the American-run hospitals, they created a strong negative sentiment regarding the Americans. Whether or not the rumors were true, the damage to the reputation and sentiment of the Americans was dealt.

The term individuals used to describe the Americans likewise illustrated their sentiments. By choosing to use a Japanese word for the Caucasians or Americans, they participated with their Japanese identity. If they used *keto* instead of *hakujin*, they portrayed a more negative opinion. This not only reaffirmed their sentiments to themselves through usage, but also to the people around them. The terms individuals used could be an easy way to find like-minded people among the internees, serving as an indicator to other internees of whether they were loyal or disloyal. Individuals could find other like-minded people without having to ask probing or potentially inflammatory questions. This aided in the formation of groups based on affiliation.

The affect control theory has much in common with Edmund Leach's research in animal names and verbal abuses (Leach 2000:322). As discussed in Chapter III, most insults stemming from animal names come from domesticated animal types with short names (Leach 2000:329). These animals occupy culturally liminal areas, between the wild other and the familiar self of the home (Leach 2000:334). The term *inu* fits quite well with this theory. *Inu*, the Japanese word for "dog," is a short word for a familiar, domesticated animal. In the context of the internment, the term was used to label those who were suspected of being informers to the American government. However, while that definition for this term became common knowledge, the word itself would still summon imagery of likening the subject to a lowly animal. In fact, as described above, posters would depict *inu* in association with dogs or even with the heads of dogs themselves (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:48).

The fact that the word for informer was taken from the Japanese word for dog shows that such accusations were primarily made from the vantage of those who had a stronger tie to their Japanese identity. Informers were usually called *inu* instead of dogs, even by those individuals who did not speak Japanese. Using the term in the Japanese language was a way to participate with ones' Japanese identity. The terms used in the scapegoat accusations alone can express a great deal about the motivations behind the terms as well as why they were so successful in affecting people's mindsets.

### ***Networks of Communication***

One reason the study of rumors, scapegoat accusations and slurs is so poignant is because they are illustrations of the underlying networks between individuals at the camps. Slurs and accusations are used as intermediary devices to form alliances and groups, as well as methods of ostracizing others from the group. Individuals choose to participate in a group and its corresponding identity through the sharing of rumors. Others in the group can recognize that individual as a member through their verbalization of shared, esoteric themes. Rumors and accusations can also affect others' status in the community. Scapegoat accusations can ostracize other individuals from the group, labeling them as outsiders who have broken a taboo or as beings less than human.

In Knottnerus and LoConto's study of strategic ritualization, they analyze how actors in a community are responsible for the perpetuation and spread of ritualized practices (2000:6). The spread of rituals can be an intentional means of self-

aggrandizement or otherwise manipulating the community. Ritual legitimators are individuals who hold a position of power or respect in the community and use that authority to spread these practices (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:7). In the internment camps, the Issei were observed as the source for the folklore in Opler's study (1950:387). At the camps, because of the laws limiting immigration to the United States from Japan, almost all of the elderly Japanese-Americans were Issei. In Japanese culture, the elderly are respected as knowledgeable and often hold influential positions in the community. Likewise, at the internment camps, the Issei were frequently the leaders of their communities (Hansen 1994:122). They had the authority in the camps to distribute traditional Japanese folklore to the younger, later generation of Japanese-Americans. Nisei who had never personally been to Japan felt the pressure to be more Japanese in the ethnically limited environments of the Internment camps. Hansen explained: "The evacuation plunged [the Nisei] into an environment that was totally Japanese. Soon they discovered they lacked an awareness of many of the details of their culture that other Nisei had. This deficiency caused occasional awkwardness. Both were striving to fit in with the flow of camp life" (2001:35). In this instance, folklore could serve as a bridge for the Nisei who wished to fit in better at the camps and who chose to participate more with their Japanese identity.

Internees used more than just the memorates to intentionally coerce the Nisei to participate in a more Japanese lifestyle, particularly at Tule Lake. As opposed to the spread of folklore from the elder Issei, the underground organization officiated the *inu* accusations and made very specific, deliberate choices of who to label as an *inu*. Those

individuals who chose to side with the American government at Tule Lake opened themselves up for these accusations and subsequent ostracism from the community. The members of the underground organization served as ritual enforcers (Knottnerus and LoConto 2000:11). They deliberately used their social power to label others as *inu* or to enforce acceptable social habits. This power was subsequently abused to designate their enemies as *inu* regardless of the justification or lack thereof (Thomas and Nishimoto 1946:225). These communication channels gave the underground organization a power within the community through the use of strategic scapegoat accusations and rumors in a social setting with preexisting suspicion and anxiety.

Rumors were a medium for expression of culture and affiliation at the internment camps. A shared terminology existed throughout the camps, reflecting a greater social network which was maintained through communication and the movement of internees between the camps. The elevated anxiety in the camps gave purchase for rumors to take hold. Ultimately, the interactions between the internees were dynamic relationships that could be altered through rumor and accusations.

## Conclusion

Rumors, scapegoat accusations and slurs are vital tools for social cohesion and identity affirmation. Particularly during times of stress, scapegoat accusations are verbal tools that can be used to strengthen or change social networks. Individuals can be ostracized from the social unit while the individuals spreading rumors bond themselves more tightly with the remaining, core group. Social order and cultural rules can be maintained and enforced through informal conversation. The amount of social tension also directly affects the amount and severity of scapegoat accusations. The Tule Lake facility had more dramatic instances of *inu* accusations than the rest of the internment camps following the registration. Periods of stress also facilitated the spread of memorates and supernatural-based rumors and belief in traditional supernatural forces through ritual legitimators. The Issei had both an intrinsic knowledge of the traditional Japanese folklore as well as a respected place in the society due to their age.

When a group as a whole experiences pressure, fissures will develop, be it along lines of ethnicity, background, gender, belief systems, age, or any other line of demarcation. The situation might aggravate a particular line of segregation that becomes the basis for scapegoat accusations and ostracism. Before the internment, Japanese-Americans were an ethnic minority in the United States. They were generally close-knit, many living in *nihonmachi*, and looked out for each other. United organizations like the JACL promoted awareness and acceptance of Japanese-Americans. When the American

government grouped them together under the pressure of a total institution, and the Japanese-Americans were no longer in a minority setting, other differences between subgroups of this ethnic group became activated. These differences acted as a point of friction. Scapegoat accusations against other subgroups were used as an outlet of this frustration and social pressure. *Inu* supposedly got paid by the Americans to spy on their brethren. In this, they removed themselves from needing the other internees. Their loyalties were supposedly with the government and not with the community in this time of stress.

Conversely, the Nisei who harbored ill will towards the Kibei viewed them as responsible for the Americans' negative sentiment that landed them in the internment camps. In blaming the Kibei, Nisei could proclaim their distance from them and thus demonstrate to the Americans that they were different and undeserving of the internment.

Both vantages use scapegoat accusations to distance the performers from one subgroup and thereby attempt to improve their standing with the other. The rumors, scapegoat accusations, and slurs are the devices through which social mobility is achieved, solidifying social networks.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The Japanese-American internment can teach a great deal about human nature and the results of severe social stress. The Japanese-Americans in the internment camps all shared a common ethnic ancestry. While their forced removal from their normal lives was truly an unfortunate predicament, and it is to be hoped that a such scenario that will not be repeated in the future, the Japanese-American internment still provides an apt case study of how extreme social pressure on an isolated ethnic population can change group dynamics as observed through scapegoat accusations, rumors and slurs.

The significance of the role of rumor, slurs, and scapegoat accusations in a closed community and their role as agents of identity has been clearly demonstrated. Individuals can verbally activate their ethnic identities. By choosing to relate culturally significant rumors to other members of the community, individuals express a desire to participate with the group. The dialogues establish common ground and express esoteric knowledge. Individuals cling to traditional identities such as ethnicity most strongly during times of stress, disruption, or when other identities are challenged. Scapegoat accusations in particular not only assist in the activation of a cultural identity, but also serve to tighten the bonds between group members while further isolating individuals on the fringe of the society. Thus, when a significant stress is exerted upon a society, scapegoat accusations can help alleviate some of this stress. This is achieved not only



through the revivification of traditional beliefs and values, but also through providing a tangible outlet for feelings of frustration.

The severity of the repercussions of being labeled an *inu* was dependent on the level of social stress at the camp. Tule Lake was the most notorious camp for *inu* accusations following the registration, and, significantly, it was also the camp with the most extreme American domination. Those labeled as *inu* were ostracized from the community or even subjected to threats of violence or actual beatings. Supernatural scapegoat accusations emerged during this time of strain as well; internees who had no previous (or subsequent) record of the belief in the supernatural bore witness to and spread rumors of ghost lights and *kitsune* possessions. Ultimately, while the Americans themselves were often targets of ethnic slurs as well as subjects of rumors of neglect and cruelty, the scapegoat accusations against fellow internees were the tools through which individuals could gain a semblance of power. Internees could not only manipulate their own status in the community, but they could also exclude others from that community. As a result, when the group was cut down to those participating in the community, the internees could enforce group normative behaviors and viewpoints. Furthermore, the internees were able to take actions to provide some release of the tension from the stress without having to directly confront it.

### **Potential Criticisms and Future Avenues of Research**

Critics of this thesis topic might have issues with the antiquity of the data, calling it dated or non-representative. Because the sources that I have cover several of the ten internment camps in varying detail, the question of the representativeness of my sampling could also be called into question. But, because many of the individuals in the camps moved from one camp to another at least once during the internment, there was an overlap of culture groups and an exchange of internment-specific terminology between the camps. The theory of overlapping cultures is supported in the use a term common among all the camps yet specific to the internment event, *inu*. Furthermore, witnesses such as Edward Spicer, Dorothy Thomas, and Roger Daniels maintain that the overall climate of the camps, with the exception of Tule Lake, was very similar and argue that the subgroups at the various camps had a similar experience and structure during the internment. Tule Lake, the exception, was the camp where those who identified themselves as being more Japanese, or those who refused to swear fealty to the American government and would not volunteer to join the military were sent. This camp, therefore, was more heavily policed by the American guards and experienced a much more stringent atmosphere of control and oppression. This difference in atmosphere is a counterpoint to the comparatively more lenient camps after the segregation.

Finally, there are other avenues of research based on this study that fall outside the scope of this work. This specialized study of the Japanese internment represents just one instance of the scapegoat phenomenon. This study could be compared to other culture groups in total institutions or who are otherwise under social pressure and restricted in exposure to the outside world. This study can potentially also be used to predict behavioral patterns were another culture group to be put into a similar situation. Alternatively, the study could be deepened through the inclusion of more first-hand narratives from internees who have survived to the present, although there are very few still alive. The usefulness of this approach, however, since over the sixty years has elapsed since the closure of the last internment camp. Such a broad expanse of time causes recollections to fade and also allows individuals to reinterpret past events to more accurately reflect present beliefs, as demonstrated by Opler's follow-up research in which internees dismissed past beliefs. One could also take a diachronic approach to Japanese-Americans' responses to stress as a community through the analysis of the community before and after the internment.

### **Closing Words**

Research from this thesis can be applied to even more avenues than those just suggested. However, even the narrow scope covered by this thesis grants the reader a glimpse into a human response to stress under specific conditions. Japanese-Americans were an ethnic minority in the United States in the period leading up to the internment,

and there was not a great deal of friction between subgroups of Japanese-Americans before the internment. During the internment, that minority became a majority within a total institution environment and was subjected to social stress. When the group could not directly confront the cause of the stress, the group fissured into subgroups. The members of the subgroups identified more strongly with their subgroup designation than their parent identity of Japanese-Americans. The stress on the contained populations agitated the friction between the subgroups. Eventually aggression was taken out on the other, now opposing, subpopulations as an outlet for the social strain. It is the scapegoat accusation that is the valuable tool which allows scholars to analyze these changing social dynamics in any population under stress.

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**VITA**

Name: Jenny Biggs

Address: 5505 Timberwood Dr, College Station, TX, 77845

Email Address: arania@neo.tamu.edu

Education: B.A. Anthropology, Texas A&M Univeristy, 2003,  
Summa Cum Laude  
M.A. Anthropology, Texas A&M University, 2008