Loyalty’s Janus Face:
The Office of Strategic Services
and Asian Americans during World War II

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I Introduction

Where does loyalty to America originate? If by “loyalty,” one refers to “a

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entity, then one of the highest expression of that sentiment is military service
since individuals involved pledge an oath of loyalty and risk their lives on its
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its behalf. Loyalty therefore, was particularly evident during World War II when
twelve million Americans donned the uniforms of the armed forces of the
United States and exhibited, as Morris Janowitz aptly put it, the “hallmark”
of (American) citizenship. But the depth, extent, and origins of that loyalty, however, is in dispute. In The American Soldier (1949), Samuel A. Stouffer’s research team revealed, after interviewing over twelve thousand of them
at the end of World War II that their loyalty was not rooted in belief in the
Four Freedoms, for example, but rather in their emotional attachment to their
units. But others, especially those studying racial minority groups like African
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African Americans came to the opposite conclusion. They found unit cohesiveness
had the opposite impact—segregated units degraded combat morale whereas ideology, particularly the belief in a double victory, or the struggle for victory
over the Axis Powers’ political system and improvement of race relations at
home—positively impacted African Americans’ willingness to serve in the
armed forces during World War II.1

1 David Campbell, “Deterritorialized loyalty: multiculturalism and Bosnia,” in Political Loyalty
22 (February 1975), 435; Samuel A. Stouffer, et. al., The American Soldier: Combat and its
In looking at Asian Americans during World War II, most scholars see them as resembling African Americans more than Euro Americans. Thomas Murphy (1955) found Japanese Americans demonstrated a high degree of loyalty and morale in their segregated units in Europe because they cherished democratic values. Nearly three decades later, Joseph Harrington (1979) and Masayo Duus (1983) argue that same loyalty came from Japanese cultural values, particularly those associated with the “samurai.” James McNaughton (2006) thinks otherwise, seeing among Japanese Americans’ courageous service in the Pacific Theater stemming from American cultural and educational values, a finding echoed by Brenda L. Moore (2003) who studies Nisei women in the military. Still others, notably Howard Schonberger (1990), found political ideology an important factor, notably among Japanese American leftists in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) who joined America’s first centralized intelligence agency to help open up a Second Front. Ron Takaki (2000) made Asian Americans the same as African Americans when he asserted that “double victory” was an appropriate explanation for why they in general supported the war effort of the United States during World War II.

K. Scott Wong (2005) concurs with Takaki in his study of Chinese Americans attached to the Army Air Force in China. Only Eric Mueller (2001) and Tamotsu Shibutani (1978) point to non-ideological factors in explaining why Asian Americans did, or in their studies, did not exhibit much “loyalty” to the United States, and the latter in particular, finds the Nisei soldier he studied and served with the exact opposite of the epitome of the strong, singular loyalty to America that others celebrated.²

² Thomas Murphy, **Ambassadors in Arms** (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1955); Joseph D. Harrington, **Yankee Samurai: The Secret Role of Nisei in America’s Pacific Victory** (Detroit, MI: Pettigrew Enterprises, 1979); Masayo Umezawa Duus, **Unlikely Liberators: The Men of the 100th and 442nd** (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), tr. by Peter Duus; James C. McNaughton, **Nisei Linguists: Japanese Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II** (Washington DC: US Department of Army, 2006); Brenda L. Moore, **Serving Our Country: Japanese American Women in the Military during World War II** (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Howard Schonberger, “Dilemmas of Loyalty: Japanese Americans and the Psychological Warfare Campaigns of the Office of...”
Where then did Asian American loyalty to the United States stem from? To answer this question, this case study analyzes three individuals—Lincoln Kan (Chinese American), Kay Sugahara (Japanese American), and Ilhan New (Korean American)—three American citizens among the 382 Asian Americans who served as officers or as civilians during World War II as agents for the Office of Strategic Services, the first centralized intelligence agency for the United States. It moves beyond the Euro-centric focus of works on this spy agency, and builds upon the few previous studies of the OSS in east Asia and Asian Americans to uncover an unknown chapter in American history. It looks at Kan who was an Army lieutenant working undercover, behind enemy lines; Sugahara, a civilian working as a propagandist behind the front lines; and New, a guerrilla leader in training. The study takes advantage of their diverse positions within the OSS to explore the roots of their respective loyalty as expressed in military service during World War II. To that end, it utilizes a large collection of private papers by these above-mentioned individuals and others involved in OSS intelligence gathering activities scattered in archives across the American landscape. In addition, the study exploits the largely underutilized records of the OSS released by the Central Intelligence Agency in 2000, as well as the records of seemingly unrelated federal government agencies such as the Immigration and Naturalization Services to capture the wider complexities of Asian American loyalty.3

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II Lincoln S. H. Kan (1919-1976)

The early upbringing of Lincoln S. H. Kan (1919-1976) suggests his ties to the American government were initially thin. Although Kan was an American citizen, born in New York City to Sat Hing Kan and Lydia Chun on February 12, 1919, his parents were only temporary residents in the United States. His father was a student who spent most of his time conducting his own father’s business, the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company, which was the largest Chinese-owned tobacco firm in Republican China whose sales and profits prior to 1937 were second only to the British-American Tobacco Company. His mother was the eldest daughter of a successful Guangzhou merchant who enjoyed strong ties with the Shanghai banking community where her family resided. Therefore, Lincoln’s early life, born and raised in Chinese wealth, made him more likely perceive ties to China as stronger than those to the land of his birth.4

But Kan’s upbringing instead swung his loyalty towards America. Even though Kan spent less than three of his first twenty years of his life in the United States, he was raised in a distinctly America-friendly environment. His father’s known friends were largely American businessmen, one of whom served as Lincoln’s legal-guardian from 1936-1938 while he attended high school in Asheville, North Carolina. His long residence in Shanghai among some 3,700 American expatriates set him apart from other Chinese and foreigners in

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China, particularly the British and their racially segregationist policies. Instead, Kan's environment was liberal if the *Shanghai Evening Post and Mercury* is an accurate reflection of the American expatriate community's attitude. His community's newspaper celebrated African Americans such as Paul Robeson, “whose father was born a slave, was given the honorary degree of L.L.D in 1932 by Rutgers University, his alma mater” and reported in a matter-of-fact tone the courtship and (happy) marriage of a New York City Chinese hand laundryman named Joseph Wang and a Miss Ruby Nell Anthony, daughter of a minister from Lavonia, Georgia. Little wonder, then that at age six Lincoln spoke only in English to US Immigration and Naturalization Service officials, a testimony to how closely his upbringing kept him in touch with American culture despite his limited residency in America.5

Lincoln Kan’s education instilled within him a shared commonality with others called Americans. His early formal education took place in schools across the Upper South following his father's work on behalf of the Nanyang Brothers’ Tobacco in their search for, and dependence upon, a reliable raw tobacco supplier in the United States. Although his secondary education from 1932 to 1936 took place in China, he spent his junior high school years at the Shanghai American School (SAS). His school under Principal Charles Boynton encouraged loyalty to the United States, as the school became the focal point for the American expatriate community’s Fourth of July celebrations and its graduates went on to college education in the United States. Moreover, his SAS provided him with a largely non-racially discriminatory education, admitting racially mixed (Chinese and Euro American) students as well as other Asians. Even though Kan was, in fact, only one of a small handful of Asians in the School's student population of 446 by 1936, and the only Asian of his one-hundred forty-odd members of the Class of ’37, Kan obviously faced little discrimination as he served as president and founder of the Photography

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Club and frequently held socials at his own home. Lincoln returned to the United States in 1936 to attend the Asheville Preparatory School for Boys, an educational institute in North Carolina that placed strong emphasis on honor and morality. In 1938, he matriculated to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill where as a freshmen and sophomore, Lincoln enjoyed the companionship of many young Euro American females and his frequenting of the Ratskeller, a restaurant/bar for the college crowd earned him the honor of having his own portrait hung on the wall of the establishment until a fire gutted the building in the 1990s. His education and community, therefore, was Euro American.6

Family ties also strengthened his ties to the United States. With the sudden death of his father in 1925 and no other siblings, Lincoln Kan learned from age six years to value his family above all else, a loyalty that converged with his commitment to the United States. Lincoln defended his mother and her wealth that sustained their expensive lifestyle from the latter half of the 1920s until her death in 1952, a fortune derived in part from her own father’s business as a compradore or intermediary business associate from Hong Kong who made lots of money serving in a similar capacity between the Nanyang Brothers Tobacco Company and Shanghai bankers. From his father’s side, Lincoln inherited a family legacy that made him willing to serve in the

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armed forces of the United States. In a letter to his son John and daughter Lydia, he disclosed that the Kan or Gahn family’s roots extended back at least thirty-three generations, and was filled with important personages that made the pride and honor of our family” worth defending with arms, if necessary. “The Gahns,” Kan reminded them, “although [a] people of peace, have risen to fight for right with arms when it was proper. But when a war is over we become once more men of peace.” Lincoln cited one of his ancestors, Kan Yat Mo as an example of how the Kans should fight, even if they were up against overwhelming odds as Kan Yat Mo was against the Great Genghis Khan. Lincoln said, “But what I want you to remember is that we wouldn’t be here if our forebear[er]s had not fought to make our future possible for us and our own. And we may have to fight for those in our future.”

In addition, Kan probably inherited a curious blend of regional pride and nascent Chinese nationalism from his great uncles. To distinguish their own company from their largest competitor, the foreign-owned and managed British-American Tobacco Company, Lincoln’s grandfather and great uncles styled their products as Chinese-owned and managed even if their initial technology and capital came from Japan. In fact, their style of Chinese “nationalism” was not anti-Japanese, unlike much of the early Chinese nationalism of the 1920s. Lincoln’s own grandfather took out Japanese citizenship in 1902 and together with his grandmother from Fat Shan village, adopted the Japanese name, “Shonanshi and Yuriko Matsumoto.” His uncles and own father received part of their education in Japan and Lincoln Kan himself married a Reno, Nevada-born Nisei named Jean Mitsu Koizumi while enlisting in the Army. Instead, the Kan family embraced a “nationalistic regionalism” or a belief that the rest of China needed to be nationalistic like his own region. Hence, they sought at one point to become a semi-governmental enterprise and in effect, became one not long after Lincoln left to study at Asheville when the ruling Chinese Nationalist Party’s T.V. Soong became the company’s president and moved its

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7 Edwin S. Cunningham to The Commissioner of Immigration/San Francisco, 6 June 1929, File 23962/14-1 KAN Sat Hing, Immigration Arrival Investigation Case Files, 1884-1944, Archival Research Catalog (ARC) ID #296445, San Francisco District Office, RG 85 INS, NARA/San Francisco, San Bruno, CA; “Former Reporter Heir To Estate,” [Goldsboro News-Argus ], 12 August 1954 and Lincoln Kan to John and Lydia [Kan], c June 1972, BFKP/CHNC.
headquarters to Hong Kong in 1940, not far from Macao and his grandfather’s home village of Fat Shan where Lincoln Kan would later be sent.\(^8\)

Hence, Lincoln’s joining the OSS was a logical outcome of the convergence of his family and national loyalties. After joining the Army as a private in 1940, Lincoln was recruited by the OSS, an organization that he knew would likely place him in China because of his linguistic skills, his high political connections through his family, and his familiarity with southeastern China and Shanghai. He was then promoted to the rank of Second Lieutenant, and sent off to the Officers’ Candidate School in Fort Benning, Georgia, before receiving his own spy training at Catalina Island. Lincoln was then assigned in late May 1944 to the Air Ground Forces Resources & Technical Staff of the Fourteenth Air Force under General Claire Chennault in Chungking, a cover for OSS spy operations inside southern China. As one of only forty-nine OSS secret agents by March 1945, Lincoln’s particular assignment was to penetrate behind Imperial Japanese lines in the Macau area and gather intelligence on the disposition, strength, and movement of those enemy forces (ground, air, and sea) while at the same time facilitate the return of downed American aviators. Lincoln’s spy and rescue ring was to play a critical role in this operation in Section Two of the mission codenamed “AKRON.”\(^9\)

Tremendous risks accompanied Kan’s espionage activities in Macao. His Section 2 was situated in an area infested with a growing number of guerilla groups whose loyalties were uncertain. It was also a region where Dai Li, spymaster for the Chinese National government, had placed some 1,600 of his own agents with orders to assassinate OSS agents. Also, the Imperial Japanese

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forces stationed about a thousand troops in the Macau area since their headquarters for their intelligence network in southern China was based there and led by the resourceful Toyo Sawa whose effective use of a number of local Chinese as his own agents was well-known. In fact, Sawa’s counter-espionage efforts forced Lincoln to terminate radio transmissions to his superiors for over four months until late February 1945, at which time his superiors believed him to be captured. Aware of the high risks, Lincoln Kan left several letters to loved ones and to his lawyer in the hands of an OSS agent Charles Fenn, saying “just in case anything happens.”

Despite these dangers, Kan’s efforts were largely unappreciated by his superiors. Kan, along with others, provided considerable intelligence data, both tactical and strategic (political, social, economic) for which the Fourteenth Air Force acknowledged was the major reason for their success in both intercepting Imperial Japanese aircraft, and bombing targets. Despite this, he was badgered by Charles Ambelang, his superior, for more intelligence and greater contact. While praising Kan for sending in accurate information on four boats, his superiors then criticized him for sending in the intelligence on ship movements four days late. “You have ignored any number of requests for information to date,” Ambelang whined, stating, “it is hard for us to depend upon you; perhaps this is not your fault—due to many factors without your control. However, how are we to know?” No doubt, Kan spent a part of his time in Macau dealing with his family—he even faked a marriage to one of his distant relatives in order to add to his cover. But his superiors seeming appreciated little of his efforts and said nothing when Lincoln reported he was fired upon by Imperial Japanese troops while crossing a river between Kongmoon and Siulam in early August 1945 to maintain better radio contact.

10 INDOCHINA INTELLIGENCE REPORT G.B.T. GROUP. 22 May 1945, F314, E140, B40; Farrell from Davis to Helliwell, 26 July 1945, F301, E140, B38; Wilfred J. Smith to Strategic Services Officer, China Theater, 25 February 1945 and 25 March 1945, E99 B84; Helliwell to Texas, 3 May 1945, F3172, E154, B185; Akron to Repo and Texas, NR 10, 29 April 1945, F3172, E154, B185; “Kentucky,” Report YH/CK 142/45, 11 June 1945, F283, E140, B37; Nom J. Wong, GENERAL VIEW OF THE MILITARY ESPIONAGE ORGANIZATION OF THE JAPANESE GENERAL STAFF WITH NOTES ON THE MORE IMPORTANT BRANCHES, nd., c.7 November 1945, F410, E140, B51, RG 226 OSS, NARA II; Charles Fenn, At the Dragon’s Gate: With the OSS in the Far East (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 81-82.
with them. At the end of the war, Lincoln Kan received only his honorable discharge while his superior Ambelang received the bronze star medal for taking credit for managing spy networks in southeastern China which Kan actually established, producing “much valuable intelligence.”

III Kay Keiichi Sugahara (1909-1988)

Unlike Kan, Kay Sugahara’s loyalty was dual. His loyalty was not divided between two competing/conflicting political entities (Japan and the United States) since he clearly chose the latter over the former. Rather, Sugahara’s loyalty was split into two components, between political (United States) and economic (his own) and in terms of time, that is, he saw both the present (United States) and projected into the not-so-distant future (United States and Japan, and his own) of his loyalty accordingly that served interests of both the country of his birth and his own economic interests. Sugahara’s Janus-faced loyalty was a reflection of his own personal background and that of the wider context of what happened to Japanese Americans prior to, and during World War II.

Much of Sugahara’s political loyalty had already crystallized before he joined the OSS. Sugahara was loyal to a political system that made possible his Horatio Alger-like career trajectory despite all of life’s handicaps he had experienced. He was born the second child in Seattle, Washington, to Japanese immigrants of samurai lineage from Sendai, Japan, but his family was broken apart with each sibling raised separately from the others when their mother died in 1915 and their father seven years later. Sugahara was raised by another family but by his early teens had lived independently, lodging in a local Methodist Church dormitory. At age eighteen, he renounced his Japanese citizenship, and entered the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) to pursue his education while working to pay his way through school. In 1932, he graduated with an undergraduate degree in business administration from UCLA in 1932 and a year later, he founded an export-import company.

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11 YKE-2672 EXERCISE BOOK From AMBELANG and YKB-2672, second handbook. From Dewey] to K[an]. 11, F445, E140, B55; Citation Charles D. Ambelang, ca. August 1945, F Ambelang, Charles D., E224, B12, RG 226 OSS, NARA II.
under the name of Universal Foreign Service which succeeded immensely until the American government unilaterally abrogated its Commercial Treaty with Japan in 1939. Sugahara expanded into the real estate business, and became on the eve of World War II, a self-made millionaire. But his business collapsed—his ships could no longer trade with Japan once the war started. Sugahara was unemployed and then interned at Santa Anita Wartime Civilian Control Administration (WCCA) camp in spring 1942. He was transferred to and settled into the life of an internee in the Granada War Relocation Administration (WRA) camp in Colorado where he met Maxwell Kleiman, a recruiter for the OSS' Morale Operations (MO) Branch. Sugahara accepted Kleiman's offer, was inducted in late March 1943, and left his wife to care for their children and substantial property holdings including his 1942 Chrysler New Yorker sedan valued at $1,200 wholesale by the Kelly Blue Book Company.12

The pull of Kleiman's offer was matched by the push of the mainland Japanese American community. Sugahara fell into disfavor with many of his co-ethnic peers for his association for spying on his own kind. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Sugahara joined the Anti-Axis Committee, a coalition of leftists and conservative rightists acting as a voluntary watchdog against the mainstream of the west coast Japanese American community. Intolerant of any expressed support for Japan, Sugahara and his Committee composed of Togo Tanaka, Karl Yoneda, Joe Blamey, and others turned in names to the FBI which arrested and detained such individuals, actions that angered many. After being interned in the Santa Anita WCCA camp, he clashed with Shūji Fujii over camp labor issues related to the manufacturing of camouflage nets for the American military. For Sugahara, the poor working conditions and low pay were irrelevant compared with the significant wartime contribution Japanese Americans would make. Faced with such widespread disapproval of

his behavior, and astutely reading the writing on the wall, Sugahara relocated his family safely to the New York metropolitan area, signed up with Kleiman, and left the camps along with a handful of other Japanese Americans defined as *INU* or “spy” before the beatings and riots took place inside the camps in the fall of 1942.\(^{13}\)

Sugahara’s willingness to join Kleiman involved his own projections of a new world order in east Asia where he too could play an important economic role. Kleiman was not the surrogate father figure for Sugahara as historian Howard Schonberger had claimed but represented an intelligent way to both serve the political ends of the United States government as well as advance his own economic interests in reviving his once lucrative export-import trade. Sugahara saw an opportunity to work with Kleiman, a man fluent in Japanese due and with close connections to Japanese businesses prior to the war—so close that OSS officials thought he could have been prosecuted for failing to register himself as “an agent for a foreign principal.” Sugahara therefore positioned himself well for a postwar recovery of his business, not unlike so many in the British Secret Intelligence Service and the Special Operations Executive who also had an eye on protecting or expanding their own postwar economic interests. For Sugahara, participation in Morale Operations meant he was actively working to secure a Japanese surrender which would save American and Japanese lives, help preserve Japan’s economic strength for the future, and ensure Sugahara’s own possibility of launching again his own export-import business with the connections and knowledge he would likely develop as part of his propaganda work for MO.\(^{14}\)

Sugahara therefore produced surrender-inducing propaganda for the MO Branch. He was one of only thirty-nine Japanese Americans OSS agents deployed in the entire Pacific and China Theaters combined, and only one of eighteen such Nisei. The particular fourteen-member “MARIGOLD” team that

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Sugahara was assigned to as a translator-writer was known as "the cream of the crop" of MO and was slated by John Emmerson and others within the State Department to serve as the Free Japan Movement in conjunction with Wataru Kaji, the anti-militarist who received the financial backing of the Chinese Nationalist government. Since MARIGOLD’s propaganda materials potentially could topple the Imperial Japanese government and offer an alternative government, the materials Sugahara and MARIGOLD made were screened carefully by an elite team in Washington DC consisting of State Department, Army and Navy intelligence personnel, and professors like Serge Elisséff of Harvard University. Sugahara and MARIGOLD were then sent to Calcutta in March 1945 with the aim of merging them with Wataru Kaji and other MO teams.\textsuperscript{15}

MARIGOLD produced “black” or deceptive propaganda to weaken Imperial Japanese soldiers’ willingness to fight. They produced materials designed to raise doubts among soldiers as to their own superiors’ willingness to make sacrifices to win the war by circulating false rumors of peace and surrender. MARIGOLD, together with team COLLINGWOOD drafted Japanese fake postcards for distribution among Japanese soldiers, designed to pass “minute inspection” and to sow dissent among Imperial Japanese soldiers at the frontline in China. Team members crafted radio broadcasts featuring non-existent peace-advocating groups inside Japan in an attempt to convince the listeners the Japanese public was divided and ready to surrender, as well as to convince them that the sole Allied aim was removal of the militarists.\textsuperscript{16}

But Sugahara found working conditions surrounding MARIGOLD difficult. He had to suffer through the colonialist policies of the British who controlled Calcutta where he worked, and that meant accepting restrictive conditions not unlike the Santa Anita WCCA camp—they were kept under house arrest because they were “Japanese.” Among MARIGOLD members, he was one of

\textsuperscript{15} Thomas J. McFadden to Charles Cheston, 16 October 1944, F6, E 092, B165; Herbert S. Little to Roland, 17 April 1945, F6, E092, B550; Herbert S. Little, MO Reports Office, Asiatic War Diary, Washington/Far East 1945, 1-2, 4, F2500, E139, B188; H. H. Harjes to The Strategic Services Officer, HQ, IBT, 12 March 1945, F7, E99, B78, RG 226 OSS, NARA II; Yamamoto, \textit{Bureikku Puropropaganda}, 213-23.

\textsuperscript{16} Thomas J. McFadden to Donald B. Monroe, Charles Fenn, Robert Wentworth, Carlton F. Scofield, 28 July 1944, F6, E092, B550, RG 226 OSS, NARA II.
only two non-leftist members of the team, putting him at odds ideologically with his Communist Party colleagues who dominated MARIGOLD and its production of materials, including radio broadcasts. Rather than Sugahara, the team followed the leadership of Joe Koide, a charismatic leader who encouraged the production of “white” or truthful propaganda materials but whose loyalties were suspect and whose service may have been on behalf of governments other than the United States. Even though he described himself in his application to the OSS as “an idea man,” Sugahara’s ideas were not accepted by the group whose Japanese linguistic skills were far superior to his, and whose political outlook would not embrace Sugahara’s. Given these conditions, Sugahara’s performance was rated as considerably less than stellar, earning for himself only a “satisfactory” mark as a “translator-writer” for the group even though his “practical intelligence” was given an “excellent” rating and “stability” as “very satisfactory.” Sugahara was rejected from joining the United States Strategic Bombing Survey Team headed for Japan to assess the effectiveness of American aerial bombing, bringing his career in the OSS to an end by October 31, 1945.\(^{17}\)

IV Ilhan New (1894-1971)

At first glance, one might expect that Ilhan New’s loyalty would lie with the United States. Although he became an American citizen by early 1945, he never adopted an Anglicized name. “Ilhan” was a contraction of “il” or “first” and “han,” his generation within the New family. In addition, New received almost his entire education in the United States, being sent by his father at a very young age to Kearney, Nebraska where he played football for his high school team. In 1919 New earned his college degree in business administration at the University of Michigan and worked for only a short while

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\(^{17}\) Robert D. Ellis to Strategic Services Officer, OSS/UIB, HA Det 404, 26 July 1945 and John D. Archbold to Strategic Services Officer, HQ, Det 404, 27 July 1945, F2, E99, B83; J.R. Withrow Jr., Theater Service Record, 21 August 1945, F Keiichu Sugahara [sic], E224, B756; Roger Simpson to Mr. R.C. Reed, 1 October 1945, F6, E092, B165, RG 226, OSS, NARA II. See also James Oda’s claim that Joe Koide was a double/triple agent in his *Heroic Struggles of Japanese Americans: Partisan Fighters From America’s Concentration Camps* (North Hollywood, CA: KNI Inc., 1981), 184.
for the Michigan Central Railroad and General Electric in Schenectady, New York before quitting to establish his own independent business, the La Choy Foods Product Company, with Charles “Wally” Smith, in 1921. His marriage in 1925 to Mary Woo, a Chinese American who earned her medical degree from the University of Colorado, seemingly anchored him to the United States despite his return to Korea in 1926 ostensibly to take over his retiring father’s business. Anticipating a war between the United States and Japan, New returned to the United States in 1938, applied for American citizenship three years later, and relocated the headquarters of his expanding pharmaceutical conglomerate to San Francisco. His education, upbringing, and lack of fluency in the Korean language made Ilhan New seem more “American” than Korean in “habits of thought.”

Yet New tied himself to a vision of an independent Korea of the future rather than the United States. In the first place, his wealth, as he saw it, was derived from Koreans since his Yu Han Corporation, a pharmaceutical company, was founded with investment money from other Koreans even though it most likely expanded with the cooperation of the Japanese Governor-General. His customers were often Koreans, residing not only in Korea but also in Manchuria, China, and southeast Asia. But New’s association with the Korean American community was the greater factor, as New would later admit. His community, unlike the Chinese and Japanese American ones, had no visible American-born leadership organizations comparable to the Chinese American Citizens’ Alliance or the Japanese American Citizens’ League which emphasized exercising political rights as American citizens or channeled the attention of American-born Koreans towards politics within their country of birth. Even when Korean Americans in Hawaii discussed politics, as Donald Kang, English language editor pointed out, it was about Korea, not

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the United States. Mainland Korean Americans too, showed little concern for American politics, as many of them, living in the rural, isolated sections outside of Los Angeles, were preoccupied with other matters. But enough of them had antipathy towards Imperial Japanese authority, as evident by the few who registered with the Japanese Consulate in Los Angeles. Of perhaps eight-hundred Koreans living in the Los Angeles area by 1926, only seventy-one Koreans registered, and all of them chose Korean rather than Japanese names.19

Further propelling New to embrace an independent Korea were the Korean “students.” By the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, many of them were “students” in name only, having overstayed their visas and were tolerated by the State Department for the duration of the war with Japan. Most of them had, in fact, immigrated to the United States with Imperial Japanese colonial administration’s visa stamped into their Japanese passport unlike New who left Korea prior to Japanese annexation in 1910. Their strong antipathies towards Japanese colonialism combined with the opportunity to help their homeland and themselves into positions of prominence and power led them to participate in the Korean independence movement. By 1942, the movement, which had been split largely between the socialists/communists and the nationalists, had temporarily united, to acquire federal governmental support for their own cause. The nationalists, under Syngman Rhee, carried some influence with H. Preston Goodfellow, assistant director of the OSS, but had alienated Alfred Tozzer, head of the OSS Research and Analysis office in Honolulu. The socialists and communists in Los Angeles enjoyed good connections with Carroll Harris, a friend of New and in Military Intelligence (Army) and Robert Hall, head of the Research and Analysis's San

Francisco office who in turn had the ear to the State Department.\textsuperscript{20}

But New lacked a strong political base within the Korean independence movement to influence Korea's postwar future. Although he was chairperson of their Postwar Research Committee of the United Korean Committee and was liked by the “students,” New had not earned the trust of the older leadership of the Committee as he had clashed with Syngman Rhee and the conservative Korean National Association leadership over their willingness to settle for a United Nations trusteeship for Korea. Even though his call for immediate independence and economic reform found favor among the socialists and communists, he was not trusted by them either since he was a wealthy “capitalist” unwilling to punish Korean collaborators with the Japanese, much like Syngman Rhee. In the middle with few solid supporters, New jumped when the OSS offered to train him and his select group of Korean Americans.\textsuperscript{21}

New joined a project to establish himself in control of a spy/guerrilla team inside Korea. Called NAPKO, his team's aim was to penetrate Korea, gather intelligence, and train locals to fight a guerrilla warfare against Imperial Japanese forces. Initially, the plan called for slipping eight of them


\textsuperscript{21} (Clarence N. Weems), A REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE FREE KOREAN MOVEMENT (Part II), 29-30, F572, E140, B72, RG 226 OSS, NARA II; (Clarence N. Weems), A REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE FREE KOREAN MOVEMENT (Part II), 28-29, F572, E140, B72, RG 226 OSS, NARA II.
into the Chemulpo Bay area (near Incheon/Seoul) and in Chinnampo (near Pyongyang) via submarine and small boats, setting up the two intelligence gathering groups, called “Einic” and “Charo,” backed by two sets of a dozen radio operators each on Luzon and Iwo Jima islands to relay their reports, plus another eight more backup personnel. NAPKO further envisioned recruiting the local population to help smuggle out Japanese politicians, scientists, soldiers sympathetic to the Allied cause out of Japan Proper, rescue downed Army Air Force crew members, and recruit saboteurs among the Koreans residing in the industrial sections of Yokohama and Kobe as well as Korea. And when ordered to do so, they would conduct guerrilla warfare against the Imperial Japanese forces. NAPKO was approved in principle by the Planning Group of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.22

But NAPKO was flawed. It failed to account for the fact that the Occupation police force was well-established inside Korea and exercised extensive control over the land. By 1930, it numbered 18,811, of which forty percent (7,113) were Korean police officers. A typical police substation had a native assistant helping two Japanese police officers. They had jurisdiction over an average of twenty small villages or eight-hundred households. The police officers patrolled their jurisdictional areas on foot or by bicycle and knew every individual in the village. Most police substations had telephones by the mid-1930s and so they could swiftly communicate with each other, pair up and suppress problems rather quickly. Furthermore, the Japanese exploited the system of village elders, tribal chieftains, and neighborhood heads in assisting the police. Penetrating the Korean coast and moving about undetected even in the rural sections of the land would have been difficult at best.23

To overcome these obstacles and accomplish their mission, NAPKO team

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22 OSS, Field Experimental Unit, THE NAPKO PROJECT, 30 March 1945, F29 E139A, B3, RG 226 OSS, NARA II; Carl F. Eifler to Miss Lois Poe, 9 November 1945, F The Deadliest Colonel, B3 Carl Eifler Papers, HISU; George M. Johnson, Memorandum for the Director, Strategic Services, 12 March 1945, F173, E144, B29; CHAFX, Kunning to Director, OSS, 29 April 1945, F173, E144, B29, RG 226 OSS, NARA II; E.G. Wilson to Planning Group, 28 May 1945, F173, E144, B29, RG 226 NARA II.

members including New trained extensively. After being carefully selected by Eifler and undergoing an extensive background security check, the team members were given an initial assessment at “the Farm” in Virginia, then shipped off to Los Angeles by train where they were then taken by bus to the San Juan Capistrano Beach Club in Orange County for processing and transportation by boat to nearby Catalina Island. There on this isolated island off the coast of Los Angeles, they trained in two groups isolated from each other and other OSS groups on the island. They had instructions in weapons use with M-1, carbines, forty-five caliber pistols, Thompson submachine guns with pop-up targets, demolitions, close-quarter combat with daggers, and the art of stealthy approach and killing with a knife, black jacks, or bare hands. The eight Korean Americans also practiced radio transmissions, jungle warfare tactics, avoidance of ambush and snipers, map and compass field exercises, rock climbing, amphibious landings and infiltration from the sea, simulated night attacks, and three-day survival trips with only a knife and fishing line. Their training also included a great deal of physical exercise, doing uphill mountain sprints and early morning calisthenics like push-ups amidst the "soggy deposits of cow-dung scattered about," as one trainee from another group would later recall.24

Ilhan New’s training on Catalina Island in spring of 1945 reveals the limits of his loyalty. While NAPKO team members generally excelled in all phases of their training, especially those involving action, New’s performance was less than stellar. He was good at mapping and firing his weapons, but was poor in their maintenance. His physical conditioning was also “generally poor” since he was troubled by “muscle in groin, kidneys, and old age.” Moreover, New had “a habit of malingering,” asking too many questions about the identity of other groups training on Catalina, and irritating insistence that NAPKO team members were not “spies.” Worse, New’s influence upon the rest of NAPKO members was perceived as negative, prompting his drill instructor Vincent Curl to question New’s loyalty and condemn his near-insubordinate behavior:

...I am fully convinced that New is not working for a patriotic cause but for his own selfish reasons. ...the group would be a hundred percent better off, if he were removed. By his actions and remarks, he feels far superior in everything to anyone in this organization. I have heard him make remarks about everyone but you, Colonel, and I am positive that he has gone as far as to make remarks about us. New definitely resents the fact when anyone asks him to do anything such as making his bunk, or any other minor thing.

New's final insult to his trainers was to claim he was “just as responsible for the training as Curl was” and that he would not go overseas with NAPKO but was simply “just overseeing [the] training.” Fortunately for New and the team, the war ended before they could execute NAPKO. Termination shattered New’s dreams of personally effecting a fully independent Korea in the postwar era—a goal not in step with American foreign policy—and whose aim revealed the limits of his loyalty toward the United States.25

V Conclusion

What then can one conclude about Asian American loyalty? While this case study is far from definitive, two things stand out. In the first place, the process whereby loyalty to the United States was formed involved a matrix of factors whose interaction is not yet completely clear. Possession of American citizenship obviously meant much to Lincoln Kan and Kay Sugahara, probably because their American education influenced them to imagine themselves as moving through space and time together with others labeled as Americans, whether in California or in Shanghai. Long residency in the United States too obviously influenced Sugahara, though it was less a factor for Kan. The community to which they were immersed exerted some influence as well, pushing Sugahara away and towards a tighter embrace of his American

25 Lt. Russell’s report in Vincent L. Curl to Colonel Carl F. Eifler, 1 April 1945 and Vincent L. Curl to Eifler, 25 March 1945, F Curl’s Rpts - #1, B4, Carl Eifler Papers, HISU.
loyalty while for Kan, his close association with other Euro Americans pulled him into an American orbit through space and time. But those very same factors worked the opposite effect on Ilhan New. His citizenship was American but he valued Korea despite his almost exclusive American education. His long residency in the United States as a young man made him yearn more for a Korea that he didn’t remember and whose language he could only haltingly speak. His community propelled him towards an independent Korea of the future, rather than the United States of the present. Hence, when all three served in the OSS, not surprising, Lincoln Kan excelled despite his superiors’ complaints while Sugahara’s service was only “satisfactory,” and New’s time spent in training was marked with tension and dissatisfaction.

The second result of this case study is a suggestion for future research. Previous studies on Asian Americans and their loyalty expressed in military service during World War II pay inadequate attention to non-ideological and personal factors behind loyalty. They assume that “loyalty” is singular and related only to the nation-state and hence, measure only the depth and extent of their subjects’ seeming commitment to that entity. Possibly, part of the reason is because of their dependence upon oral interviews—the people they spoke with were understandably portraying their own motives for service in patriotic terms. Two suggestions, therefore come to mind. The first is that scholars need to critically evaluate information culled from oral interviews especially after so many decades have transpired between the event and what is being recalled. The second is that future research needs to take a wider view of loyalty which demands a wider search for primary sources and assumes the subject matter to be multiple and overlapping rather than singular and fixed. If these two suggestions are adopted, the outcome of future research on Asian American loyalty will probably produce some unexpected results, as this case study illustrates.
ABSTRACT

Loyalty’s Janus Face:
The Office of Strategic Services
and Asian Americans during World War II

Brian Masaru Hayashi

Where does loyalty to America come from? For Asian American servicemen during World War II, the answer is complicated by the fact that many had ties to east Asia that defy generalization. Yet some scholars simplify matters by claiming their desire to serve the armed forces of the United States involved a conscious political struggle to better their own status as an ethnic group in America by defeating the Axis enemy through service in the US military forces (Ron Takaki, 2000 and K. Scott Wong, 2005). Others claim political ideology, particularly a belief in democratic values (Murphy, 1955) or leftist/anti-fascist ideology (Howard Schonberger, 1990) was paramount. Still others assert their patriotism stem from cultural values absorbed from their American environment (James McNaughton, 2006) or from a strong retention of east Asian cultural values (Masayo Duus, 1983). Which is correct?

To provide an answer the question, this case study analyzes three individuals—Lincoln Kan (Chinese American), Kay Sugahara (Japanese American), and Ilhan New (Korean American)—who served the United States during World War II as intelligence agents for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). By focusing on three American citizens serving in America’s first centralized intelligence agency as an Army lieutenant (Kan), a civilian (Sugahara), and a commando (New), the study covers a wide range of roles Asian Americans played during World War II. It also utilizes a large collection of private papers by these above-mentioned individuals and others involved in OSS intelligence gathering activities scattered in archives across the American landscape. In addition, the study exploits records of the OSS only recently made accessible to the public, as well as the records of seemingly unrelated federal government agencies such as the Immigration and Naturalization
Services. The end result is an empirical study based on a wide selection of recently declassified, previously unused, or underutilized primary documents, to capture some of the essential features of their expressed loyalty.

While not definitive, this study finds that Asian American loyalty was shaped as much by economic opportunism, personal, familial, and community ties as by political ideology or cultural values. While two of the three individuals demonstrate a strong commitment to democratic values as embodied in the American government, one clearly saw his loyalty as with his former homeland rather than the United States. All three had to varying degrees personal reasons for joining the OSS, including economic and political opportunism. And finally, it suggests future research in this area give greater weight to non-ideological factors through the use of primary sources rather than depend on data gathered from oral interviews of participants conducted decades after the war.