



Life Behind Barbed Wire: The World War II Internment Memoirs of a Hawaii Issei

Yasutaro Soga

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Yasutaro Soga's *Life behind Barbed Wire* (*Tessaku seikatsu*) is an exceptional firsthand account of the incarceration of a Hawai'i Japanese during World War II. On the evening of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Soga, the editor of a Japanese-language newspaper, was arrested along with several hundred other prominent Issei (Japanese immigrants) in Hawai'i. After being held for six months on Sand Island, Soga was transferred to an Army camp in Lordsburg, New Mexico, and later to a Justice Department camp in Santa Fe. He would spend just under four years in custody before returning to Hawai'i in the months following the end of the war.

Most of what has been written about the detention of Japanese Americans focuses on the Nisei experience of mass internment on the West Coast—largely because of the language barrier immigrant writers faced. This translation, therefore, presents us with a rare Issei voice on internment, and Soga's opinions challenge many commonly held assumptions about Japanese Americans during the war regarding race relations, patriotism, and loyalty.

Although centered on one man's experience, *Life behind Barbed Wire* benefits greatly from Soga's trained eye and instincts as a professional journalist, which allowed him to paint a larger picture of those extraordinary times and his place in them. The Introduction by Tetsuden Kashima of the University of Washington and Foreword by Dennis Ogawa of the University of Hawai'i provide context for Soga's recollections based on the most current scholarship on the Japanese American internment.

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