



Preface

A NUMBER of colleagues and friends have asked me how it is that I have come to write this book. The question arises because my own field of specialization is Chinese, not Japanese, and because one would expect a book of this sort to be written by a specialist in Japanese, most likely one of Japanese ancestry.

My first reason for writing the book is a very simple one — because no one else has. The second reason is a highly personal one. In the course of my contacts with persons of Japanese ancestry — with them as individuals and with their problems — I have had very much the feeling of *déjà vu*, of having seen all this before, though in fact I am a relatively recent arrival in Hawaii. The feeling stems from the fact that my own background has many points of similarity with those of Japanese

Americans in Hawaii. The latter have their origins largely in peasant immigrants from Japan. My own origins are similar except that the country in question is Italy rather than Japan. Indeed to my Japanese-American friends, particularly the Nisei (i.e., those born in the United States of parents who themselves were born in Japan), I often jokingly refer to myself as an Italian Nisei.

This partially shared background helps to explain why this book has been written by an Italian American rather than a Japanese American. Perhaps the latter are too close to the subject, too involved in their own search for identity. There is some advantage in being outside the specific culture of Japan but inside the general process of acculturation. This half-in-half-out situation, this partially shared background provide a certain degree of objectivity