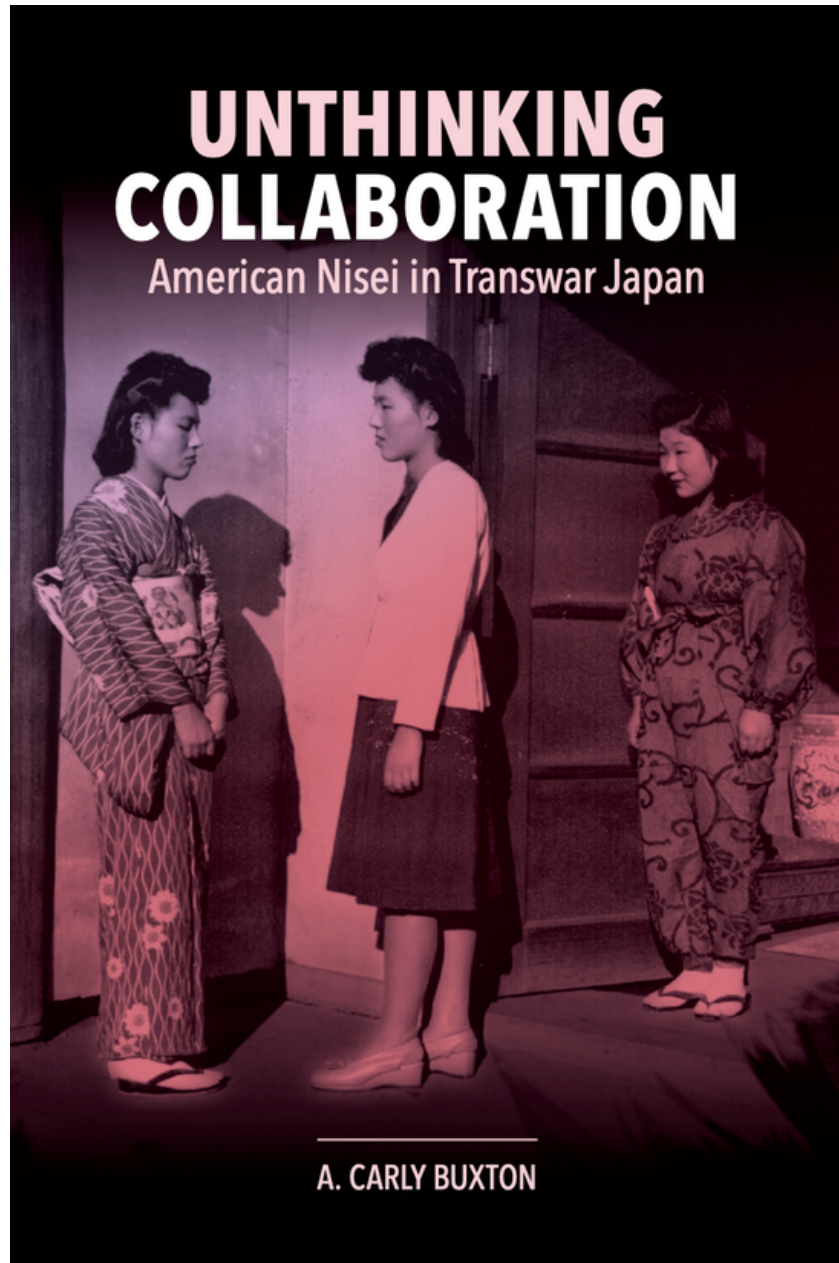


# UNTHINKING COLLABORATION

AMERICAN NISEI IN TRANSWAR JAPAN

## LEARNING GUIDE

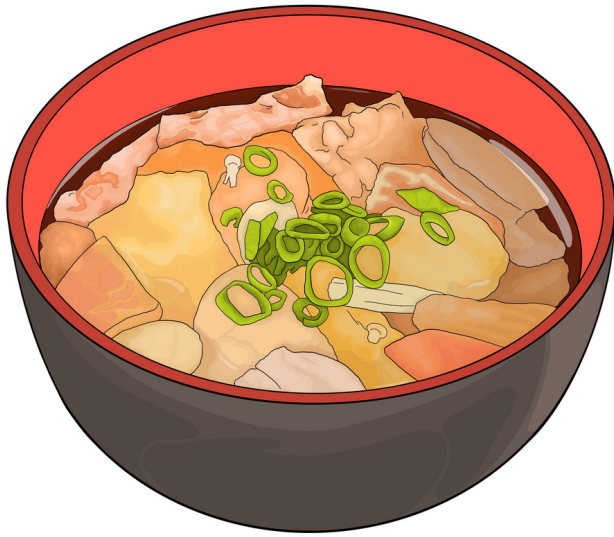
A. CARLY BUXTON



# 1. THE MNEMONIC SITE OF FOOD

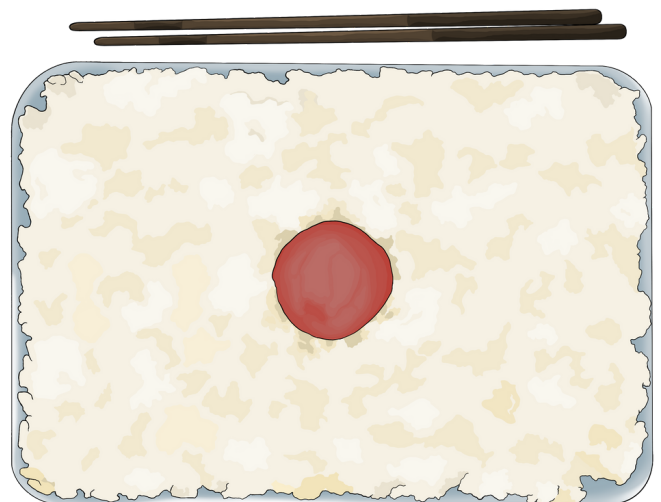
Chapter Four introduces the concept of the mnemonic site, material vehicles of meaning that shaped the physical landscape of everyday life in wartime Japan, stimulating Nisei—as well as the Japanese citizenry—to consider themselves as fused to other members of the populace through sites of shared meaning in the material environment. Select one of the following two recipes from wartime Japan to prepare and eat as you read Part Two of *Unthinking Collaboration*. As you learn about the mnemonic site of food in wartime Japan, you will be sharing in this ritual years later, participating in the food culture of wartime Japan—and savoring the ideals of patriotism (by eating the *hinomaru bento*) and economy (by dining on *suiton*) contained within the mnemonic sites of these dishes.

# SUITON

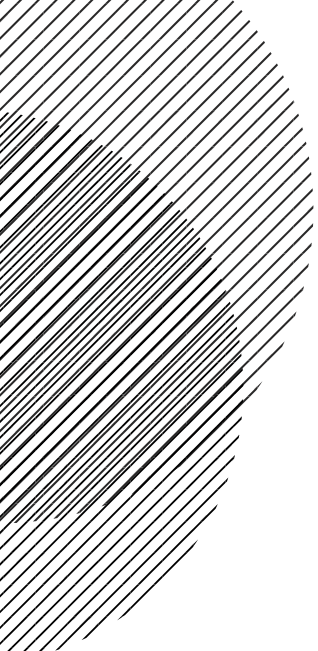


1. Make the dumpling mixture: Sift  $1\frac{1}{2}$  c flour into a medium bowl. Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  c water, whisking slowly. Cover with plastic wrap and set aside.
2. Prepare the soup ingredients: Slice  $\frac{1}{2}$  medium daikon radish and 2 stalks of gobo (burdock) into thin strips about 3 inches long. Dice 2 carrots. Separate a small bunch of Japanese mushrooms. Thinly slice 2 green onions, dividing whites from green tops. Cut a block of deep-fried tofu into 1-inch cubes.
3. Prepare the broth: Bring 5 cups of water to a boil in a large pot. Add 2-3 packets of dashi powder and stir.
4. Combine the soup: Add the daikon, gobo, and carrots. When the soup boils again, reduce to a simmer. Cover and simmer 10 minutes.
5. Add the mushrooms and white onion pieces. Stir.
6. Drop in the flour to make dumplings: Drop spoonful-sized scoops of the dumpling dough into the pot, one at a time, continuing to simmer the soup.
7. Once the dumplings have floated to the top, add the green onion tops and 3 T soy sauce. Stir and simmer 5 minutes. Serve hot.

# HINOMARU BENTO



1. Cook a serving of Japanese sushi rice, using either a pot or a rice cooker.
2. Place into a bowl or bento box and top with a pickled plum.



## 2. CODING THROUGH PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE

Have you ever been to a "Come as You Aren't" party? What is it like to wear a "costume" different from the one you wear in your daily life? For this activity, select an alter-ego—a cultural stereotype with a socially-acknowledged type of "look" very different from your own, and wear this costume in public (among strangers) for a few hours. Take notes about how you feel, about the reactions you observe from onlookers, and about any changes you might make to your speech, demeanor, or movement as a result of this new outward identity.



# 3. AN UNFAMILIAR SCRIPT

Nisei who moved to Japan were under scrutiny in a new social climate that policed their behavior and called attention to their cultural differences. As the oral histories of Nisei shared in *Unthinking Collaboration* reflect, Nisei felt pressure to perform in ways that felt unnatural, especially under the watchful eyes of neighbors, teachers, and classmates who were quick to denigrate them. What does this feel like? Go to a religious service from a religion that is not your own—not one you "grew up" in or know well. Attempt to blend in as a member of the congregation. Where do you make missteps? Where do you feel at ease? Where do you feel unnatural? What if your well-being (or your survival) depended on being undetected as an outsider in this environment?

# 4. WELCOMING SURVEILLANCE

The memory of an acquaintance slapped on a streetcar in wartime Japan for reading a book in English haunted several individuals whose stories appear in *Unthinking Collaboration*. Public pressure to purge themselves of all things "Western" cowed Nisei into distancing themselves from using English, and from "acting American" in public. What does it feel like to know that you are being judged for engaging in a behavior deemed socially unacceptable and worthy of disdain, such as reading English in wartime Japan? Print out a fake book cover—create a title that is culturally taboo, something certain to raise ire from a typical passerby—and wrap *Unthinking Collaboration* in it as you read it in public, in a park or on a bus. How do you feel? What do you observe about the reactions of onlookers? Does anyone dare to call you out?

# KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.

share your ideas, your activity prompts, and your reactions.

reach out to schedule a virtual workshop or classroom q&A with the author.

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