

A Shiga Immigrant Diaspora in Canada

As we have seen throughout this book, cross-border mobility in search of opportunity was a hallmark of Ōmi merchants, a *modus operandi* that resembled foreign migrants or seasonal workers in the modern era. Along with a colonial retailer in East Asia, another twentieth-century incarnation of the Ōmi shōnin was an overseas emigrant who crossed the Pacific. In explaining the first wave of emigration in the late nineteenth century, local histories in Shiga often draw their readers back to “origin stories” of Ōmi shōnin: the same set of factors identified as possible causes for their emergence, especially the flood-prone topography of eastern Shiga and the poverty of local farmers. The successive floods of 1884 and 1885, indeed, pushed some villagers to sign up for a state-sponsored program of labor migration to Hawai‘i.¹ But a bigger catalyst for mass emigration was the catastrophic flooding of Lake Biwa in 1896, the largest recorded in prefectural history. With their homes and farms laid waste, inhabitants of the hardest-hit districts “began surging across the ocean like an avalanche,” one gazetteer later recounted, seeking to rebuild their lives in “Amerika” (a term that referred to both Canada and the United States at the time).²

A spike in overseas departures from this eastern littoral forged a robust correlation between local traditions of sojourning and the global age of travel, reshaping the old “diasporic trajectories” into new.³ In many ways similar to contemporary emigrant villages in the Pearl River Delta and southern Fujian, “an existing culture of migration,” not only “push factors” of natural disasters, accounted for the chain migration of Shiga people that followed.⁴ Over the next twenty years, a Shiga diaspora emerged linking the hamlets surrounding Lake Biwa to more than a dozen countries in the Pacific Basin and beyond. The majority of them sojourned and settled in Canada. In the forty years from 1897 to 1938, Canada received a total of 7,585 Shiga migrants, the largest group of

provincials from Japan.⁵ The Inukami district alone sent more than half of Shiga emigrants to North America⁶—as well as, in fact, a dominant number of expatriates and businessmen to colonial East Asia, including members of the Itō family (chapter 5).⁷

In contrast to entrepreneurs like Itō Chūbē only once removed from peddlers, the common farmers and other rural folks who crossed the Pacific—as well as the broader story of Japanese immigration to Canada—are largely unknown in the United States and Japan. Yet they offer just as critical a window into the legacies of Ōmi shōnin and the intertwined histories of imperial Asia and immigrant America that scholars have begun to unearth from their hitherto siloed archives.⁸ As the Meiji intelligentsia reckoned, territorial expansion in East Asia and economic migration across the Pacific were opposite vectors in the same imperial project (chapter 3). Likewise, transpacific immigrants saw themselves, no less than did settler colonists in Korea and Manchuria, as descendants of expeditionary merchants helping to project Japan's power overseas.

The diasporic heritage of Ōmi shōnin that we identified in business activities of their offspring in the empire also imbued many aspects of the eastward migration of Shiga people: from patterns of settlement and employment to modes of store management. It was visible, most of all, in the economic dominance of Shiga natives in the city of Vancouver, where 75 percent of the Japanese in British Columbia (B.C.) engaged in seasonal labor and retail commerce before the Pacific War. In their dual life split between home and abroad, we see a similar dynamic of cultural grafting in retail strategies of family stores as well as on the level of the entire village, the primary unit of emigration.

Tracing the two-way flows of these local cosmopolitans illuminates Shiga's interconnectedness with the Pacific world—a vast and variegated space of cross-cultural contact and global exchange that was in full swing by the 1800s.⁹ Framed by Shiga people as a rescaling of Ōmi's ancestral custom, their emigration to Canada was not a story of uninterrupted expansion, however. Although the history of Ōmi shōnin on one side of the Pacific demonstrated how easily they crossed political and ethnic boundaries, they encountered intractable racial barriers on the other. From the late nineteenth century when immigrants began arriving from Asia, the Pacific Northwest—the western edge of white settler colonialism and the eastern frontier of Japanese migrant-led expansionism—became a shared space of competing capitalist empires. Provincial migrants from Shiga found themselves enmeshed in these overlapping imperial projects, and the racial politics of B.C. Yet, despite recurrent waves of white exclusion, their diaspora grew entrenched, along with their attachment to Ōmi, until all was uprooted in 1942.

TRANSPACIFIC IMMIGRATION OF SHIGA PEOPLE—AND WHITE BACKLASH

When a small number of Japanese first came ashore, around 1884, Vancouver had barely emerged as a hub for the global traffic of goods and people. Once a rough frontier town, it became the gateway to the Asia Pacific through a set of epochal changes reshaping the U.S.-Canadian borderlands: the “territorializing process of state formation” (i.e., boundary-making via settler expansion) and “the de-territorializing prerogatives of capital” (i.e., the boundless quest for markets and labor abroad). While the basic infrastructure of Vancouver was laid mostly by Chinese labor, its multiethnic society was driven and dominated by immigrants from the British Isles, Europe, the eastern United States, and other parts of the Anglophone settler world.¹⁰ Shiga migrants arrived in the midst of the making of white Canada. Fueled by a global confluence of capitalism and colonialism also impinging on the frontier of Hokkaido (chapter 2), white nation-building involved resource rushes that relied heavily on Asian labor and markets—and the theft of Indigenous peoples’ land and livelihood. It was for this purpose that the Canadian Pacific Railway (hereafter C.P.R.) opened its steamship service between Yokohama and Vancouver in 1887. Most Shiga migrants crossed the ocean on the C.P.R.’s liner—some “transmigrated” from Hawai’i after the U.S. annexation of 1898¹¹—to pursue opportunities created by the changing labor market in the Pacific Northwest. Following the passage of acts in the 1880s to restrict Chinese entry on both sides of the U.S.-Canadian border, white industrialists and entrepreneurs “turned increasingly to Japanese” migrants for the construction of railways and the extraction of resources, from metals and timber to salmon. The flow of immigration soon began to diverge up and down the Pacific coast, as port cities from Vancouver to San Francisco competed for cheap labor to fuel the Anglo-American empires of capital.¹² The province of British Columbia, with its mild climate and thriving industries in lumber and fishing, became a magnet for Japanese workers. Lured by a shared dream of success and rhetoric of self-reliance, white and Japanese immigrants would, nonetheless, inhabit very different places in Vancouver, situated at the fraught nexus of white settler colonialism and racial capitalism.¹³

Early emigrants set in motion what would be a decades-long process of chain migration, creating new networks and labor flows between the littoral hamlets of Shiga and the Canadian West. Through this mechanism of *yobiyose* (lit. summoning by kin),¹⁴ their relatives and fellow villagers in growing numbers crossed the Pacific to find work as miners, railway laborers, millhands, loggers, and fishers in B.C. Much like the merchants of Hino who utilized designated inns on their eastbound journey (chapter 1), Shiga migrants almost always stayed with fellow provincials who had arrived earlier; one of them, Ebata Ishimatsu, in 1909 lodged as many as eighty-seven from his native district of Inukami. After years of seasonal labor, many trailblazing migrants like Ebata, joined by their wives from home,

opened shops, boardinghouses, and other services for their countrymen in the Powell Street area, laying the basis for Vancouver's "Japantown."¹⁵ By 1912, Shiga people dominated the Japanese community in Canada, at 1,958 (or 20 percent of Japanese), followed by immigrants from Wakayama,¹⁶ Hiroshima,¹⁷ Kumamoto, and Fukuoka.¹⁸

Provincials lived clustered together as the economic geography of labor mapped their prefectures of origin. Upon arrival, most Shiga people found work in Vancouver's lumber industry, whereas Wakayama natives struck off to the port of Steveston to engage in fishing and cannery labor—an occupational "division between land and sea" that persisted long enough to become a saying still in use in their places of origin.¹⁹ Japanese "bosses" at Vancouver's sawmills were also predominantly from Shiga. They "exercised vertical control over the labor market," supplying workers directly from home and managing their wages, shelter, and other aspects of daily life.²⁰ One immigrant, having arrived from Hiroshima in 1907, found the industry so overrun by Shiga natives that it was "difficult to get a job in a sawmill."²¹ They represented more than two hundred workers at Hastings Mill and even had their own labor association; the mill's language was Japanese, but spoken in Gōshū dialect.²² The majority of them hailed from Hassaka of Isoda Village (the birthplace of their powerful boss, Yamada Suteya), giving the impression that "the entire hamlet uprooted itself and relocated to Vancouver."²³ Through the "Isoda-Vancouver network" built by Yamada and other trailblazers, hamlets like Hassaka functioned as *de facto* labor markets for Vancouver's sawmill industry.²⁴ More than sojourning abroad, mass migration of Shiga people entailed an overseas extension of their social and power relations, rooted in the homeland and refashioned as a labor hierarchy in the diaspora emergent across the Pacific.²⁵

Through seasonal cycles of labor in mills, mines, and canneries grew an ever wider array of businesses and services—from grocers and restaurants to inns, employment agencies, and notaries—many owned by Shiga natives, which collectively sustained the ecosystem of Japanese migrant labor in the Pacific Northwest. At the peak of migration in 1906, the Japanese Boarding House Association (chaired by Morino Eiji of Ōmi Inn) was formed to coordinate shelter for the hundreds of transmigrants from Hawai'i and railway contract workers for the C.P.R. transported from Japan.²⁶ Facilitating and funneling cross-Pacific flows of Japanese into the U.S.-Canadian borderlands, these businesses (and labor bosses) operated beneath large corporations, such as the Canadian Japan Supply Company, which superseded the role of Chinese merchant-contractors. But if furnishing migrant labor to local extractive industries and railways meant serving as "intermediaries" for the British and American empires of capital,²⁷ the Japanese did so with one crucial difference. They were, first and foremost, proxies for their nation's empire, who helped build a foothold across the Pacific, as we will see, by linking the commodity frontier of Canada and the industrializing economy of Japan.

That Japanese migrants were positioned between competing empires was not lost on white labor leaders; their interests increasingly set them against big industrialists employing Asian labor. From the last years of the nineteenth into the early years of the twentieth century, an influx of Japanese in British Columbia, making inroads into lumber, fishing, mining, and other industries, raised the specter of the “yellow peril” yet again. In white labor politics on the Pacific Coast, Japanese migrants were often conflated with Chinese as “coolies” and “Asiatic invaders” who threatened to tear at the fabric of white America. Soon, however, the Japanese as members of a rising Pacific nation came to be viewed as far more organized and fierce than the Chinese, who “were being displaced . . . in several industries” in B.C., the Royal Commission reported in 1902.²⁸ Across the border in Seattle, working-class whites themselves began to fear “being eclipsed by a more competitive, more vigorous race, which, in turn, cast doubts on white racial superiority.”²⁹ Such anxiety only deepened after Japan’s victory over Russia in 1905.

The specter of the yellow peril loomed larger still when shiploads of Japanese labor migrants arrived in Vancouver in 1907. That year, in an attempt to mollify whites’ demand for segregation on the American Pacific coast, the U.S. government banned Japanese relocation and entry from Hawai’i onto the mainland. As a result, more than a thousand Japanese landed in Vancouver by way of Hawai’i in a single crossing in July, followed by still more in the ensuing months. As thousands of Japanese poured into B.C., the local press inflamed anti-Asian fervor, calling the “Japanese invasion of Canada possibly the most serious Asiatic attack on this continent.” The *Vancouver Daily Province* declared, on behalf of British Columbians: “This province must be a white man’s country,” “an out-post of the Empire” to be defended against the “yellow horde.”³⁰ Enraged as well by the refusal of Lieutenant-Governor James Dunsmuir—an industrial tycoon who operated several collieries and railway companies with a significant Asian labor force—to sign the Natal Act passed by the B.C. legislature,³¹ a mass anti-Asian rally was called in Vancouver on September 7. Organized by the newly formed Vancouver Asiatic Exclusion League and attended by over 25,000 participants from across the North American West, the day began with a defiant march to the city hall, followed by incendiary speeches demanding tighter immigrant control, modeled on the settler colonial states of South Africa and Australia. Some members of the assembled crowd turned riotous. An angry mob of white men first descended on the Chinese quarters and then moved on to Japantown on Powell Street, hurling stones and smashing “nearly all the store windows” (fig. 11). Having launched a full night of chaos known as the Vancouver Riot, some returned to the Asian quarters the next day, but further violence was averted by the militant solidarity of the migrants. The besieged Japanese stood ready to defend their quarters with guns, swords, knives, and clubs, not content to rely on the police and forming their own patrols.³² They also joined Chinese workers in going on strike “to underscore the importance of their labor to the local economy,” which was felt in all sectors of the city’s life.³³



FIGURE 11. A grocery store damaged during Vancouver riot of 1907 (owned by a Shiga immigrant, Nishimura Masuya, at 130 Powell Street). *Source:* University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books and Special Collections (Japanese Canadian Research Collection, JCPC-36-017).

Many stores owned by Shiga migrants on Powell Street became the target of white mob violence; they represented fully 30 percent of some sixty businesses attacked in Japantown, many recently opened (including Morino Eiji's Ōmi Inn and the office of the Japanese Boarding House Association he chaired). The impact of the riot was grave enough to shutter a few stores, but most Shiga storeowners stayed put and, after fixing damages, quickly resumed their business. One grocery store, Kōbeya, even began selling Japanese swords of all kinds, as if to prime Japanese residents for future outbreaks of mob violence.³⁴ The swift investigation and compensation by the Canadian government for their losses avoided souring its diplomatic relations with Japan. But immigration remained a thorn, and simmering white hostility prompted Tokyo to revise its policy. In 1908, before the ink on the "Gentlemen's Agreement" with the United States was dry, Japan signed another with Canada to limit the number of new male immigrants to an annual total of four hundred. It also committed Japan to issue passports to only certain classes of travelers: returning immigrants, their wives and children, farm workers, and domestic servants with proper certification.³⁵ The flow of labor and contract migrants thereafter fell sharply, but white antagonism did not. Vancouver remained a seedbed of anti-immigrant campaigns in the following decades, when white anxieties about Japanese economic expansion soared to new heights in B.C.

ŌMI MERCHANTS IN "LITTLE TOKYO"

The growth of the Japanese community in Canada was, in many ways, a product of the 1907 riot. In its aftermath a plethora of new organizations sprouted up among Japanese residents to cement their solidarity. The most important was the Canadian Japanese Association (hereafter CJA) formed in early 1909. Dominated by business proprietors on Powell Street, CJA vowed to "promote overseas expansion of the Yamato race," working in liaison with the consulate to oversee immigrant affairs.³⁶ Merchants in various trades also fortified their unity and resolve by creating their own associations.³⁷ If anything, the Vancouver Riot turned provincial migrants into transpacific nationalists committed to the cause of mercantile expansionism.

Their most articulate voice was the *Tairiku nippō*, a conservative Japanese daily launched by Yamazaki Yasushi, who chaired the CJA.³⁸ The *Tairiku nippō* continually linked migrant affairs in Canada to colonial politics in East Asia, advocating "Greater Japanism" on both sides of the Pacific.³⁹ "Only by pursuing permanent settlement in both North America and Manchuria-Korea," editorials asserted in July 1908, "can our Japan demonstrate the true value of its immigrants."⁴⁰ To call for transpacific expansion was also to mount a counter-discourse against white settler colonialism, the cross-border efforts in Canada and the United States "to demarcate the boundaries of a 'White Pacific,'" according to Kornel Chang, and set "an outer limit against the encroachment of an Asia-Pacific world." Just as Western boosters envisioned turning the Pacific into an "Anglo-Saxon lake," so too the Japanese, from an opposite vantage point, imagined the American West Coast as their new frontier, with emigrants leading the effort to make the Pacific "a Japanese lake" (chapter 3).⁴¹ If "moving bodies themselves constituted borders," as David Ambaras claims in his study of itinerant subjects in the Sinosphere, then the Pacific Northwest also was a space where the boundary-making projects of multiple capitalist empires intersected and collided.⁴²

At the same time, sub-national organizations proliferated to serve specific emigrant communities, from prefecture down to a single hamlet. After all, the Japanese in B.C. remained a diaspora of provincials who, like overseas settlers elsewhere, lived in a cacophony of dialects and customs.⁴³ No group demonstrated the centrality of native-place ties more than Shiga people. Dissatisfied with a prefectural association,⁴⁴ they soon began grouping themselves on the basis of birth village, forming youth groups⁴⁵ and a flurry of hamlet associations that represented migration clusters in the East Lake district. As with the Chinese *huiguan* (native-place association),⁴⁶ Japanese immigrants mobilized different scales of attachment and belonging in organizing themselves for varied purposes; they were mobile subjects defined by "in-placeness" even while declared "out-of-place" by the host society.⁴⁷

Beyond the sawmill industry, Shiga immigrants were preponderant in Vancouver's retail commerce, a transpacific manifestation of the entrepreneurial legacy

of Ōmi shōnin. What came to be dubbed “Little Tokyo” was, indeed, dominated by Shiga natives, who owned many shops and businesses on Powell Street, the nucleus of Japantown located on the eastern edge of downtown Vancouver. In stark contrast to Wakayama immigrants who huddled in the fishing port of Steveston, Shiga natives constituted a mercantile colony within the urban enclave,⁴⁸ operating no fewer than a third of independently owned Japanese businesses by the late 1930s.⁴⁹ Many of them, as mentioned, were opened by pioneering migrants who had risen from the ranks of sawmill labor. Among the most successful was Ebata Ishimatsu from Hassaka. Having labored for a year as a fisherman, followed by another four years in sawmills, Ebata used his accumulated capital to open a grocery store on Powell Street, soon purchasing the adjoining building to start a fish market as well. He ran both businesses with his younger brother, pursuing a “strategy of earning small [margins] and selling large [volume],” or *hakuri tabai* in Ōmi merchant parlance.⁵⁰

“The vast majority of ‘Gōshū [Ōmi] people” followed this career arc, reported a 1912 Foreign Ministry survey. Some bought or leased small farms in the Fraser Valley or on the shores of the Okanagan to grow vegetables and fruits.⁵¹ But far more common for Shiga migrants was to use their capital to “open sundry-goods shops, grocers, watch stores, billiard halls, barbers, public baths, restaurants, and other businesses targeting the fellow Japanese as customers.”⁵² For Shiga people of all backgrounds who claimed a shared merchant heritage, business proprietorship on Powell Street became an affirming emblem of immigrant success.

Most stores were family-owned, while some were joint ventures of Shiga natives, reminiscent of *norai akinai* in the Tokugawa era (chapter 1). The aforementioned Kōbeya was one example. A full-fledged trading firm by the 1920s, Kōbeya had “outdone its competitors,” one local publication observed, becoming a paragon of collaboration for Japanese migrants otherwise “liable to discord.”⁵³ One of its partners, Hinatsu Kahē, brought to the firm many years of experience working in Osaka in addition to clerking at Ebata’s store for some time after his arrival in Vancouver. Many new immigrants like Hinatsu cut their teeth at businesses run by fellow Shiga natives before starting their own. Parallel to a system of labor bosses in the sawmill industry, a network of Shiga-born store owners functioned as an informal mechanism for apprenticeship, extending the time-honored Ōmi custom across the Pacific to teach its young migrants how to conduct business in a foreign land.

Among these migrant pioneers in Vancouver, perhaps none fit the label of the quintessential Ōmi shōnin better than Matsumiya Sotojirō from Kaideima. Unlike most immigrants born to farmers, Matsumiya had already begun his career as an Ōmi merchant, having spent his youth in apprenticeship before moving to Canada in his early twenties. After exploring various career prospects, in 1905 he set up shop on Powell Street with his new wife, Yaoko.⁵⁴ Matsumiya Store sold Japanese rice, miso, and soy sauce as the main line of goods, imported in bulk at low cost

through special contracts he signed with big stores and trading firms in Kyoto and Osaka. Patronized by Shiga natives, his store claimed “a substantial share of the groceries market” in Vancouver. Matsumiya dealt in cash only at the best of times, while making it a rule never to borrow money himself.⁵⁵ He also frequently traveled to Japan for business, using each occasion to conduct market research and look for goods and novelties he thought would sell in Canada. Eager to satisfy his customers, Matsumiya continually expanded the range of merchandise, making astute use of local papers to announce the arrival of new products almost every month.⁵⁶

Like other business owners, Matsumiya hired and housed many immigrants from home.⁵⁷ All his store managers were Shiga natives. Among the most gifted was Nose Seihachi. Having crossed the ocean at the tender age of thirteen, he was hired by Matsumiya after attending a white primary school. While a junior manager, Nose further enrolled in a business program at King Edward High School, graduating with distinction in 1917. That Matsumiya invested in young and talented cosmopolitans like Nose—born in Shiga and schooled in Western commerce—testified to his skill in braiding together family-style business and the latest knowledge and techniques of retail. We know far less about Yaoko, but she also took charge of internal affairs of the store, including the many young clerks in its employ as stipulated by the Ōmi custom, and led an active public life as an executive of the Japanese Women’s Association in Vancouver.⁵⁸ “Loyal,” “diligent,” and “trusted by customers,” Nose and other employees at Matsumiya’s store earned a collective reputation as “model clerks,” later opening their own stores to further expand the web of Ōmi merchants in Japantown.⁵⁹

As Matsumiya’s grocery store became a going concern in the 1920s, he “almost entirely entrust[ed] its affairs, large and small, to the manager and employees,” as Ōmi businessowners typically did, while diversifying his business into Western dress.⁶⁰ Matsumiya partnered with Nose to launch a men’s clothing store, which specialized in bespoke suits, jackets, and coats “tailored to fit the Japanese” physique.⁶¹ As competition increased on Powell Street, Matsumiya adopted “bold and dazzling marketing strategies,” including unique sales events billed as “Saturday Specials,” each announced in an outsized newspaper ad.⁶² Likely borrowing from white stores, Matsumiya’s stores also held “Dollar Day” sales and one-cent sales, in addition to offering easy credit (a monthly installment plan) and mail-order service.⁶³ And Matsumiya did not forget to advertise his commitment to charity. In response to the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, for instance, a “Saturday Special” offered a line of woolen products at a steep discount, with free shipping, in hopes that they would be sent to victims in Japan.⁶⁴ These were the same variety of retail strategies adopted by Minakai after the president’s tour of America (chapter 6)—and each was couched by Ōmi merchants on both sides of the Pacific in a hybrid language of service, an interface between the Christian “profitless ideal” and their ancestral commitment to meeting the needs of the broader public.

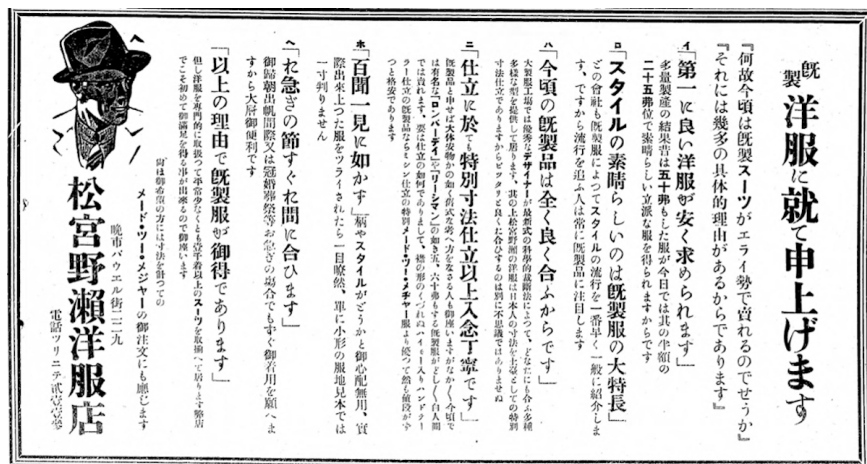


FIGURE 12. Newspaper ad of Matsumiya & Nose Co., explaining the benefits and virtues of ready-made Western suits. Source: *Tairiku nippō*, August 18, 1939.

In a joint ad posted on New Year's Day in 1924, the two Matsumiya stores affirmed their "grave responsibility" of "social service," one that avowedly went "beyond the pursuit of profit." For instance, "Our stores display current market prices of all goods in local papers with confidence," the ad explained, so they might "offer a guide for shopping 'with open eyes,'" and "prevent dishonest merchants from profiteering."⁶⁵ Anointing itself an arbiter of taste, Matsumiya & Nose Co. also frequently dispensed "expert" advice to prospective customers, "as doctors would their patients," regarding "ready-made clothes popularly sold among whites" (fig. 12).⁶⁶ Like their Ōmi merchant cousins in colonial Korea, Matsumiya and his managers enacted their altruistic philosophy by combining the sale of dry goods with a mission to edify the masses—in this case, selling a Western way of life to young immigrants to guide their participation in Canadian society.

By this time, Matsumiya had become thoroughly integrated into Vancouver's Issei leadership, serving on the board of CJA and the Japanese Merchants Association alongside older immigrant pioneers (fig. 13). Crowned "the most successful entrepreneur from Shiga" in a popularity vote in 1912,⁶⁷ a commemorative history of Canadian Japanese published a decade later featured Matsumiya as the quintessential Ōmi merchant who nonetheless transcended his provincial roots. "Quick to seize business opportunity" and "devoted to public service," the author raved, he was also adept at blending bold marketing strategies with time-tested tactics of managing risk: investment in clerks, delegation of business to managers, and low-margin sales.⁶⁸ Although not quite in the same league as Itō Chūbē II (chapter 5), Matsumiya drew similar plaudits as a "rising entrepreneur" who updated the legend of Ōmi shōnin by embracing as well as defying tradition.



FIGURE 13.
 “Powell Shieks on
 400 block Powell
 Street” (1920),
 showing male
 leaders of the
 Japanese community.
Source: Sadakichi
 Maikawa Collection,
 Nikkei National
 Museum, Burnaby,
 Canada.

Matsumiya’s commercial practices thought to embody their “pioneering spirit” would be inherited by his adopted son, Masuo. He took over the reins of Matsumiya Store in 1928, after completing his training as a new breed of “global Ōmi merchant” at Hikone Kōshō (chapter 4).⁶⁹

Matsumiya and other Shiga-born store owners, in early years, almost exclusively relied on fellow Japanese migrants for business. For their loyal patrons from the home prefecture, they competed to sell “Gōshū *takuan*” (pickled radish) and imported seasonal delicacies of Ōmi, such as boiled sweetfish of Lake Biwa (which went “peddling like the famed Ōmi shōnin” did to markets across the Pacific, one economic gazetteer quipped).⁷⁰ In terms of scale and circulation, these migrant businesses may have paled in comparison to corporate suppliers of labor, lumber

magnates,⁷¹ or big traders based in Kōbe and Yokohama, who handled the bulk of Canadian exports (wheat, timber, pulp, metals, fish)⁷² to meet the raw material needs of rapidly industrializing Japan. Nonetheless, the provincial immigrants were the first to create direct channels of exchange, through which they continued to sustain the flow of Japanese capital and goods, along with seasonal labor they sheltered and supplied to local sawmills as well as logging and fishing camps.⁷³ Particularly on the West Coast, the lack of manufacturing and consequent dependence on foreign imports made Canada an ideal, if overlooked, market for Japan's empire of silk and textiles, the *Tairiku nippō* editorialized, apart from being "the best colonial outpost for the Yamato race."⁷⁴ The national project of transpacific expansion, many Vancouver merchants agreed, relied not only on agriculture, as advocates of settler colonialism stressed,⁷⁵ but on the wheels of commerce and trade greased by Japan's industrial economy. With such an awareness Matsumiya and other Powell Street leaders launched a night school in 1914, seeking to train a new generation of Japanese clerks versed in the "essentials" of global trade and conversant in "Commercial English."⁷⁶

Meanwhile, other migrant business owners also began expanding their turf beyond the edges of Japantown—a trend ironically issuing from the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement that aimed to contain their economic mobility. Faced with a sharp drop in arrivals from home, those in the service industry increasingly sought new customers in the city's white population. Though likely guided by profit rather than patriotism, their mercantile expansionism was welcomed by Japan's Foreign Ministry as a "new phenomenon" among Vancouver immigrants, converting their businesses into room rentals, restaurants, and other services targeting whites.⁷⁷ By the early 1920s, many Japanese inns in the Powell Street area served mainly "white workers," as did barber shops, a shoe repair shop, and dry cleaners. Sellers of sundries, Japanese art, and clocks similarly targeted a white clientele, while Japanese-run "Western laundries" "actively encroach[ed] on white neighborhoods."⁷⁸

Notably, some of these businesses were owned by Japanese women. Although the immigrant economy was dominated by male workers, a not-insignificant number of women made their own living as seamstresses, midwives, and hairdressers. One such intrepid female was Murata Hana from the hamlet of Ooyabu. At age twenty-four, Murata arrived in Canada as the "picture bride" of a man who owned a grocery and a public bath on Powell Street. To her horror, however, he had another woman living with him, and their marriage soon fell apart. Undeterred, Murata resolved to go it alone in Canada. After studying dressmaking, she restarted her life as a seamstress and eventually opened her own shop in downtown Vancouver, serving white customers.⁷⁹ Another Shiga-born immigrant who reinvented herself as a career woman was Nishimura Hatsu. After losing her husband, which cut short her happily married life, she left her two daughters with her mother in Japan and returned to Vancouver to work as a dressmaker. Like Murata, Nishimura built up her career and reputation by catering to white residents. Her

business on Denman Street flourished to the point of taking on an apprentice like an Ōmi merchant by the mid-1930s.⁸⁰ Although Ōmi women were hardly acknowledged in contemporary accounts except as “silent and selfless supporters” of their husbands (chapter 4),⁸¹ the diaspora allowed them to carve out a niche in traditionally female occupations, even to craft new identities as “professional working women”—a status beyond the reach of most women back home. Death, divorce, and other life contingencies offered immigrant women a catalyst for self-refashioning. And many embraced such opportunities to pursue their career ambitions autonomously, earning wages that compared favorably to those of male migrants and deriving a new sense of empowerment.⁸²

COMBATING WHITE EXCLUSION

The Vancouver Japanese advancing into white markets reflected a larger movement among immigrants to positions of greater stability. Their trek from the bottom of the economic ladder to the petty bourgeoisie also meant more Japanese were putting down roots in Canada to live with families. As their presence grew, they began their struggle for inclusion as a racial minority. During World War I, the CJA enthusiastically called for Japanese volunteers to serve in the Canadian army as a pathway to suffrage and citizenship, while Matsumiya and other merchants rallied to collect donations for them.⁸³

Yet their campaign for inclusion continually ran afoul of efforts by B.C. whites to restrict the boundaries of citizenship. In the young dominion, where the definition of “Canadian people” remained in a state of flux, Asian immigrants symbolized the “transgressive mobility” of alien labor and capital that threatened the inchoate borders of white Canada.⁸⁴ Fellow British subjects from India were no exception, as demonstrated by the notorious *Komagata Maru* incident of April 1914.⁸⁵ The denial of entry in Vancouver to 376 passengers (mostly Sikhs) who had sailed on a Japanese ship from Hong Kong and their forced return to India on account of restrictive immigration laws served to “activate” the Canadian discourse on state control over intra-empire mobility as a matter of *national* sovereignty.⁸⁶ For B.C. conservatives, it was equally a matter of regional sovereignty, to “be built—and challenged—at the boundaries.”⁸⁷ With “the inherent rights” of states to manage migration within the empire recognized after the incident, B.C. politicians demanded greater constitutional authority for the provincial government to bar Asians from landownership and employment in certain industries.⁸⁸

Nor was citizenship simply a matter of race. A more important criterion for Vancouver whites, argues Robert A. J. McDonald, was “respectability” associated with “rootedness and families,” whose perceived lack among Asian migrants was deployed to justify the call to exclude them.⁸⁹ Lest they provide ammunition to such arguments, local Japanese leaders took active measures to monitor and reform immigrant life. In May 1914, a month following the *Komagata Maru*

incident, the CJA issued a stern “warning” to all Japanese residents, itemizing what whites might take to be distasteful habits and behaviors, evidently on daily display in Japantown:⁹⁰

1. Do not go out in Japanese dress and sandals or barefoot.
2. When going out, men must wear a necktie, a shirt, and a hat, women a neckwear, a skirt, and a hat, in order to avoid being subjected to white ridicule.
3. Remove an apron whenever going out.
4. Always wear a hat when going out, day or night.
5. When going on a walk or shopping in groups (with many people), always keep in step and keep pace with one another.
6. When a couple goes out, not only should they walk side-by-side, but the lady should not be made to carry baggage. When walking on the streets, women must always walk on the sidewalk (while men walk along the roadway), and must be to the left of men outdoors.
7. Do not leave children on a store counter or on the streets. In particular, when going out, avoid unsightly behaviors such as carrying a child on one’s shoulders or back.
8. At night always pull down the blinds.
9. Do not breastfeed children or make them cry at theaters, movie theaters, or public halls.
10. Always make sure children wear underpants.
11. Do not talk loudly on the streets, especially at public venues and inside the train.
12. Do not gamble at the storefront.
13. Strictly observe the Sunday Law, close the store and avoid playing baseball.
14. Always keep the inside and outside of the house clean.
15. Do not stand chatting for a long time on the streets, and do not spit on the sidewalk.

These hortatory instructions, which resonated with Nakae Katsujirō’s prescription for labor immigrants in the U.S., most assuredly targeted plebian members of the Japanese community. They were to comport themselves in line with Western norms and gender practices and “maintain the same level of character as good Canadian citizens” so as to “not disgrace our standing as members of a first-class nation.” The CJA’s warning ended by asking people to report the addresses and names of offenders. By placing their countrymen under mutual surveillance, the bourgeois Issei leaders hoped to make their lower-class compatriots at once self-disciplining subjects of the Japanese empire and worthy candidates for Canadian citizenship.

Japanese leaders also endeavored to “reform public morals” on Powell Street. They enforced regulations on rooming houses and made repeated declarations to “eradicate gambling from Japantown”—a shared affliction in the U.S.-Canadian borderlands, where many a sawmill worker from Shiga squandered their wages after a week of hard labor.⁹¹ Yet, as the CJA’s exhortations showed, the issue of respectability was no longer limited to mostly single, unmoored male migrants

traversing the Pacific. The onus of immigrant reform also lay with women, who after 1908 arrived in excess of men “almost every year up to 1940.”⁹² A typical opinion, contributed by one *Tairiku nippō* reader, urged an “awakening among the [Japanese] ladies” by walking properly and wearing a hat when going out. Beware of the white gaze, he enjoined the women, lest you “bring shame on your compatriots,” not to speak of endangering the future of the next generation.⁹³ The *Tairiku nippō* also appointed itself the role of reforming migrants, its editors frequently deploring ruffians and prostitutes in their midst. As part of a larger campaign against the demimonde, the paper dedicated many columns to “disciplining women’s bodies according to the ideology of *ryōsai kenbo*” (good wife, wise mother).⁹⁴

The Japanese Merchants Association, for its part, constantly urged store owners to comply with “white customs” and business hours as stipulated by municipal by-laws.⁹⁵ In a climate increasingly hostile to Asian economic ascent, fears that even a minor violation by a single store owner might imperil the entire immigrant community were rife. Indeed, as many Japanese moved out of the basic industries into new sectors—retail commerce for most Shiga natives, farming for others—they were met with another tide of white hostility, which peaked after World War I. While conflict between white and immigrant labor was rekindled by the return of veterans, antipathy to Asians spread beyond mills and fisheries. High unemployment, lower wages, and stagnant industrial production during the postwar recession all provided fertile ground for racial exclusion, drawing not only labor leaders but also retail merchants and businessmen who had hitherto remained on the sidelines.⁹⁶

From efforts at immigrant reform also emerged calls for remedying outdated labor practices of Japanese stores. Consul Ukita Gōji weighed in on the issue by drawing attention to the “unjust” imposition of long working hours and low wages on clerks. Viewing each as “an evil custom that likely traces back to the old practice of Japan’s merchant houses,” Ukita argued the Japanese “must adapt to white merchants’ methods of using and remunerating clerks” and “play fair in competing with them.”⁹⁷ The traditional system of apprenticeship, in which one signed up for a lifelong bondage to the employer (chapter 1), exercised the editor of *Tairiku nippō* as well. He highlighted the transpacific extent of the issue by instancing the recent movement among clerks in Osaka to assert their “rights” and “independence” in defiance of the sanctity of “master-servant relations.” It was time to break with the feudal shibboleths, he exhorted Japanese store owners in Canada, and start embracing the global cultural norm.⁹⁸

Interestingly, some labor migrants joined the chorus of complaint targeting the “propertied class.” One self-identified “working-class” reader, in an opinion piece for the *Tairiku nippō*, urged Japanese stores to rectify their custom of combining residence and business.⁹⁹ This spatial amalgamation begot daily encounters that “assault our sensibilities, let alone those of whites,” including “the smell of soy sauce incessantly wafting out from the back [of the store] at mealtimes, cries of a

baby, [and] shouts of a madam reaching the ears of customers, without restraint.” Whether eating in full public view or taking care of infants at the storefront, these unseemly behaviors, he believed, stemmed from a preoccupation with money-making “in neglect of the joys of home life.” Addressing these business owners directly, the author wrote in exasperation:

Most of you are so-called non-emigrants [*hi-imin*], who flatter yourselves as [belonging to] a class higher than us labor migrants and enjoy special treatment from the authorities in Japan and Canada. You are the ones who must be far more cautious and prudent than us labor migrants. If your indulgent lifestyle caused anti-Japanese fever against us workers to intensify, how could you possibly maintain your honor as non-emigrants?

By his reckoning, respectable “non-emigrants” were clearly not living up to the “honor” of being classed as such. In issuing passports, the Meiji government introduced a distinction in status between emigrant (*imin*)—referring to labor migrants—and non-emigrant (*hi-imin*)—referring to “professionals, agents, bankers and manufacturers, and merchants and dealers.” This differentiation, which similarly existed in British India, was intended to aid the American effort to curb labor migration “while protecting the ability of Japan’s upper classes to travel freely abroad.”¹⁰⁰ Turning the CJA’s “warning” on its head, the author called out the bourgeoisie for their own uncivilized behavior, leaving their lower-class compatriots to bear the brunt of white prejudice. His fears were not unwarranted. White exclusionists singled out for criticism the unhygienic practice of “sleeping, cooking and eating under the same roof and, in some cases, in the same room as where they carry on their business” as a compelling enough reason to avoid Asian stores.¹⁰¹

Another withering assessment of the bourgeoisie, aimed directly at Shiga-born businessowners on Powell Street, came from within their own community. In a front-page article of the *Tairiku nippō* in late 1920,¹⁰² a young resident of Ocean Falls, “born in Hikone,” delivered a searing critique of “Gōshūjin” (people of Ōmi) by distinguishing them from “new Shigakenjin” (people of Shiga prefecture) like himself. Gōshūjin, he wrote, were “conservative, inactive, selfish, clannish, crafty, and greedy.” Diligence was their only redeeming quality, albeit one that “derives from Mammonish greed.” Gōshūjin also wantonly displayed their parochialism on foreign soil, “prattling on in their regional dialect” and sporting “shirts and outerwear, almost all made in their province.” Nowhere was this more manifest than in the heart of Vancouver, where Ōmi people carried on their old-style commerce, as reflected in “their store windows.” They dominated the retail spine of Powell Street, yet, given to huddling together, ceded control of community institutions like CJA to “people from other prefectures,” he bemoaned.

Although his full identity was not revealed, the author was most likely a mill-worker in Ocean Halls, a company town populated by Japanese who labored at local paper and pulp mills.¹⁰³ Not coincidentally, his broadside against Gōshūjin’s

provincialism rehearsed some oft-cited shortcomings of Ōmi shōnin (chapter 4). In a veiled attack on their nativist pride, the author suggested remaining captive to provincial habits and customs would court nothing but white scorn on this side of the Pacific. This was a white Christian society, where even Buddhism was deemed a bastion of conservatism, or, worse yet, a mark of “Japanese imperialism” that testified to their “inassimilability.”¹⁰⁴ That Shiga migrants followed this ancestral faith as devout “parishioners of Ōmi,”¹⁰⁵ while the Christianization of Japanese proceeded apace, only appeared to validate the author’s charge of parochialism.

In calling for an overthrow of the status quo, working-class criticism of the Issei bourgeoisie also captured a brewing class tension that began to fracture the Japanese immigrant community—and fragment their response to white exclusion. This tension was epitomized by the rivalry between the CJA, a redoubt of older and conservative Issei businessmen, and the Japanese Labor Union of Canada, a group of younger men of diverse backgrounds led by Suzuki Etsu (1886–1933), a firebrand journalist who joined the *Tairiku nippō* in 1918.¹⁰⁶ Formed in the wake of the Swanson Bay Strike in 1920—a rare instance of interracial solidarity between white and Asian workers—the Japanese Labor Union sought to overcome exclusion by means of uniting with whites as members of the global proletariat.¹⁰⁷ If the CJA leaders were rankled by Suzuki’s allegations of co-ethnic exploitation by “capitalists” in Japantown,¹⁰⁸ the two groups also fundamentally clashed over the question of assimilation, a flashpoint for racial tension in the U.S.-Canadian borderlands. Younger Issei and labor activists argued the best defense against white prejudice was to embrace Western ways (an argument to be championed by Nisei in their campaign for full citizenship). By contrast, older Issei, whose loyalty lay squarely with the homeland, remained steeped in their “separatist tendencies.”¹⁰⁹

So did most Shiga-born immigrants in Vancouver. This became plain during the Swanson Bay Strike and its aftermath. The Japanese millworkers initially pledged unanimous participation, but no sooner had the strike commenced than half of them, predominantly from Shiga and Mie prefectures, resumed work at the bay, pressured by their bosses.¹¹⁰ In an unmistakable sign of collusion among “capitalists,” Maikawa Store, owned by a Shiga immigrant on Powell Street, also daily posted a newspaper ad “urgently seeking” strikebreakers.¹¹¹ Although the failure of the strike only strengthened the resolve of Suzuki and his allies to launch their labor union a month later, the tendency of Shiga natives to operate in isolation persisted. The new union represented Japanese workers across industries in B.C., but two hundred Shiga-born workers at Hastings Mill did not join, opting to maintain their corporate-centered “union” run by their bosses.¹¹² What the Japanese leader of the strike castigated as a deplorable act of betrayal was also a telling illustration of their dilemma. In the sawmill industry, as noted, Shiga immigrants operated in a closed system of patronage and fealty to their bosses, almost all from the home prefecture, that ensured workers’ job security and fraternity but simultaneously blunted their activism.¹¹³ In this sense, the effort of Suzuki’s group to

disrupt the ecosystem of immigrant labor was defeated not by capital so much as by the workers' cleaving to their native place.

Meanwhile, white retail merchants in B.C. came to rally behind the cause of "Oriental exclusion."¹¹⁴ Before the war, they had seldom perceived Asian businesses, which served a specialized niche of their countrymen, as a threat or competition. As the war drew to a close, however, the foray of a small number of Asian (especially Chinese) merchants into previously all-white neighborhoods provoked new anxiety.¹¹⁵ Their occupational and spatial mobility threatened to "breach the moral order of place and race" inscribed in Vancouver's landscape, prompting concerted state and private efforts to "seal off" Chinese activity "at the boundaries of Pender Street."¹¹⁶ In August 1921, the worried voices coalesced into the formation (or relaunch) of the Asiatic Exclusion League of Canada. A diverse alliance brought together long-time and new stalwarts: representatives from the Vancouver Trades and Labour Council (which had organized the 1907 rally) and trade unions of barbers, bakers, hotel and restaurant employees, carpenters, retail merchants, machinists, and tailors, in addition to veterans of World War I.¹¹⁷

What became a typical argument for "keeping B.C. white" was voiced at a luncheon held by the Vancouver Branch of the Retail Merchants' Association of Canada (hereafter RMA) in September 1921. In the presence of Japanese and Chinese consuls, J. S. Cowper of the *Vancouver Daily World* made his case by citing the high number of fishing licenses issued to the Japanese, and the Asian penetration into the fresh produce and logging industries. Although organized labor had pressured the government to restrict new immigrants, he noted, the door still remained "wide open in so far as merchants were concerned," as indicated by the Chinese entry into various lines of retail. As for the Japanese, they posed not just an economic peril but a challenge to the very existence of white Canada, with their "high birthrate" and their "intense loyalty to country and particularly to the Imperial Japanese family." Their patriotism was most manifest "in the attitude of the Japanese residing on foreign soil," their newspaper "breathing a sentiment of world ambition and Imperialism not exceeded in intensity by anything ever uttered or printed in Germany." What was at stake for B.C. whites, in imminent danger of a Japanese demographic take-over, was "self-preservation" "as representatives of Western civilization," Cowper argued, one that must be defended at all costs for "our children."¹¹⁸

The new impetus given by the Exclusion League and retail merchants moved provincial politicians to champion the cause of a white British Columbia in the early 1920s. B.C. delegates of the RMA proved "particularly effective in lobbying for parliamentary support" to take "drastic action" on Chinese immigration.¹¹⁹ And the merchants looked across the border for U.S. cooperation and lessons on how to check "the increasing menace" of Japanese immigrants, seeing "the Mikado" in Tokyo as the puppet master "pull[ing] the strings behind the scenes."¹²⁰ An anti-Asian drive in Parliament, led by B.C. conservatives, ultimately ushered in the

passage of another act in 1923, which effectively halted further Chinese immigration. The Japanese government also agreed to reduce the annual quota from four hundred to one hundred and fifty migrants.¹²¹

During this time of soaring white hostility, Suzuki and other reform-minded Japanese managed to bring the CJA temporarily under their control. They launched a series of energetic initiatives to promote "assimilation" via immigrant reform,¹²² even distributing a questionnaire to Vancouver's white leaders on the issue.¹²³ A meeting of Japanese "bosses" was also convened to improve migrants' labor and living conditions.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, their leadership proved short-lived. The factional split within the CJA led their campaign astray, and the arrival of a conservative consul in 1925 allowed the bourgeois old guard to eventually oust the labor faction.¹²⁵

While the Japanese leaders disagreed over strategies to combat white resentment, local fears of "Oriental menace" remained unallayed. Provincial politicians and retailers in B.C. carried on their crusade to press the Dominion government for restricting the Japanese activity on the level of Chinese exclusion.¹²⁶ Their effort resulted in the passage of such legislation as the minimum wage law (1926) designed to drive Asian immigrants from certain industries. A more blunt instrument of exclusion was demanded in 1928 by a group of mostly Vancouver businessmen, who endorsed the idea of T. R. E. MacInnes. "An outspoken white Canada advocate," MacInnes proposed the creation of Trade Licenses Boards with authority to refuse business licenses to anyone who was not eligible to vote in municipal elections: that is, Chinese, South Asians, and Japanese.¹²⁷ The nature of the "Oriental menace" was, in fact, exaggerated out of proportion to the actual realities of Asian landownership or competition posed to white businesses.¹²⁸ Nevertheless, the campaign led by B.C. politicians, combined with the pressure of public opinion, swayed leaders in Ottawa, who resumed talks with Japan on the subject of immigration in 1925. The protracted negotiations heralded another revision in the Gentlemen's Agreement. In May 1928, the Japanese government finally acceded to the Canadian demand to include parents, women, and children in the annual maximum of one hundred and fifty and also to end the practice of "picture brides."¹²⁹

THE BIRTH OF "EMIGRANT VILLAGES"

By the end of the 1920s, immigration had also made an indelible impact on the other side of the Pacific. At the same time that a Shiga diaspora emerged against the tide of white exclusion in the Canadian-U.S. borderlands, overseas flows of people, capital, and goods gave rise to so-called emigrant villages on the eastern shore of Lake Biwa. Equivalent to "*qiaoxiang*" in southeastern regions of China with high levels of outmigration, these emigrant villages and their inhabitants derived their sense of belonging and pride from sojourners who remained

“irrevocably bound to their native place.”¹³⁰ The growth of emigrant villages forged a cultural corridor between the historic birthplace of Ōmi shōnin to increasingly globalized circuits of labor, capital, and goods via the Canadian West. The same processes that transformed Vancouver into a hub of exchange with Asia, in other words, turned these littoral districts into provincial nodes of overseas expansion, embedding them just as firmly in the larger Pacific world.

Most Shiga immigrants in Canada hailed from a cluster of villages in the East Lake district, known as the Kotō region. An overwhelming majority of residents on Powell Street were born in Hassaka, one of the three hamlets (*ooaza*) that made up Isoda Village.¹³¹ Furukawa Yoshizō of the Itō family clan (chapter 5), during his visit to Vancouver, was “flabbergasted to learn that everyone here knows the name of this hamlet,” not even a dot on the map of the world he toured in 1928–1929.¹³² Interposed between the estuaries of two rivers flowing into Lake Biwa, where farming was limited,¹³³ Isoda became a major supplier of emigrants, for reasons not unlike the hamlet of Mio in Wakayama that shared the moniker “America *mura*” (village). Just as Mio was “ravaged almost yearly by storms and tidal waves which ruined crops,”¹³⁴ Isoda was constantly exposed to the threat of flood and its inhabitants condemned to a life of struggle and sojourn. By the 1920s, there was “not a single family in the village that has not stepped on American soil,” where as many as 756 people from Isoda had taken up residence.¹³⁵

Another emigrant village, located in the same district of Inukami, was Kai-deima. According to fieldwork conducted by Audrey Kobayashi, residents of Kaideima, like their neighbors, inhabited the cultural milieu from which Ōmi merchants sprang.¹³⁶ Almost every second and third son in the Kotō region moved to Canada, one Kaideima resident recollected, seeing their journey as but “the other end of [the spectrum of] Ōmi shōnin venturing to Tokyo and elsewhere,”¹³⁷ diasporic tradition transposed into a wider Pacific context. Enterprising young men, indeed, may have regarded work in Canada as a more attractive alternative to commercial apprenticeship in Japan. In just one year of overseas labor between 1898 and 1899, for instance, Matsubayashi Hirasaburō remitted a total of 105 yen back home, a sum comparable to what a seasoned apprentice of more than ten years of service at an Ōmi merchant house would have earned at the time.¹³⁸

As emigration became a way of life beyond the mere seasonal labor of single men, many residents of the Kotō region began to lead a diasporic lifestyle reminiscent of their Tokugawa antecedents.¹³⁹ Patterns of dual residence seen in Ōmi merchant households—families living on remittances, absentee fathers, women outnumbering men, translocal flows of goods and money—also emerged among these transpacific emigrants from the Meiji period onward. Lengthy sojourn in Canada, lasting from one to ten years at a stretch, created in their villages a “spatial separation of industrial and residential life”¹⁴⁰—the same way Ōmi shōnin had maintained a division between the space of work and the place of home where they kept their families (chapter 1). Men of Hassaka in early years continued a

cycle of migration for the sole purpose of “earning money to buy a house and rice fields” in their home village, with no thought of settling down abroad. One of them explained the typical pattern as follows:

[We] earn money by working, working, and working around the clock from morning until night. After saving as much money as possible, we return home temporarily to build a new house and roughly coat the walls. Then we go back at once [to Canada], work again and sock away some money, and return [to Hassaka]. This time we use the money to finish the second coat of paint, and the final coat of paint, and leave for Canada once more. At that point, I take my [grown up] son or summon him, set him up there [in Canada], and I alone return to Hassaka. My son stays in Canada to work and sends me money. Because I am old by then, I enjoy farming [in my retirement].¹⁴¹

His oral testimony offers a tangible sense of how Hassaka migrants might have built their homes, one transpacific voyage at a time. This goal was within the reach of average migrants, not just a few village pioneers who owned big stores on Powell Street. According to emigrant portraits serialized in the *Osaka Asahi shinbun* in 1913, many humble farmers in Shiga, once they crossed the sea, earned higher wages, with which to buy or renovate houses and purchase new fields in their native hamlets. The most successful ones bought land and built houses on both sides of the Pacific.¹⁴² Even emigrants from Kaideima, who mostly labored at sawmills, earned enough to emulate the lifestyle of a landed and merchant aristocracy. “In the southwest corner of the residential lot” where “wealthy landowners or Omi shōnin” traditionally built storehouses, for instance, many emigrants erected separate abodes where “the household head and his wife retire once the eldest son establishes a family of his own.”¹⁴³

Over time, these transpacific emigrants together transformed the material landscape of the entire Kotō region. In the twenty years since farmers and fishermen of Isoda made their first passage to Canada in 1896, what used to be a struggling village with “lowly thatched-roof huts” became dotted with “elegant” and “imposing” houses with tiled roofs, leaving not the slightest hint of its former misery.¹⁴⁴ The migration of peasants worked similar changes on Kaideima, where fine houses and their grand Buddhist altars (*butsudan*) became the village’s monuments to emigrant success. Like the case of Kaminoseki studied by Martin Dusingher, donations from abroad also sustained the social and physical infrastructures of many hamlets, while conferring on the emigrants higher social status.¹⁴⁵ Village temples and shrines, centers of rural life, were their primary recipients. In Kaideima, a pair of cow statues on either side of Sugahara Shrine were added in 1902, with the hard-earned money sent by some forty villagers toiling in the Canadian-U.S. borderlands, their names “carved in stone at the base of each animal.” In 1911, Matsumiya Sotojirō and other devoted parishioners of Kakushō Temple launched a donation drive in Vancouver, with some contributing “a full month’s salary in Canadian

dollars.”¹⁴⁶ Issei immigrants from Isoda likewise poured money into sites of worship back home.¹⁴⁷ Not to be outdone, their children, who grouped themselves as the Isoda Youth Corps, expressed their “love for the hometown” in 1919, pooling a sum of 1,000 yen to furnish Isoda Primary School with a suite of scientific instruments “not found in other schools.”¹⁴⁸

More than their economic standing or wish for public recognition, what emigrants demonstrated through donations from Canada was “a commitment to the way of life that had existed for centuries”—or *zaichisei* (rootedness in one’s ancestral home), to paraphrase from the discourse on Ōmi merchants (chapter 1). As Audrey Kobayashi writes, the material investments made by emigrants in their homeland signaled their desire above all to ensure “the continuation of a household within the village.”¹⁴⁹ Through acts of philanthropy, Shiga emigrants, like early modern sojourner-merchants of Ōmi and elsewhere, strove to demonstrate their worth and their mostly nonagricultural endeavors abroad as central to the maintenance of their home community.

Underneath the surface, more significant changes occurred to reshape the pattern of landownership. Earnings and remittances from North America allowed families to pay off debts and to “redeem the bulk of ancestral lands” that inhabitants of Isoda, in financial straits, had pawned to moneyed men in the neighboring villages. A farm register for the year 1923 shows that the hamlet of Hassaka (with a total of 233 households) had, by then, become a community of smallholders, who not only farmed their own land but also lived on rent collected from tenants.¹⁵⁰ The same happened to their counterparts in Kaideima. In 1890, one powerful Ōmi merchant named Tonomura, “who lived in the nearby town of Gokasho,” alone held 12.3 hectares, or 16 percent of the agricultural land in Kaideima. By 1910 all the land had been returned to the ownership of villagers, who had risen above their beginnings as landless emigrants.¹⁵¹

To handle the rising flows of money from abroad, a village branch of Hyaku Sanjūsan Bank (precursor of the Bank of Shiga) was set up in Isoda in December 1921. Unprecedented for its rural location, the branch received an estimated total of \$150,000 (300,000 yen)—or an average of \$600 in remittance per person—from Canada every year. These remittances also enriched the village coffers. By the early 1930s, Isoda “boast[ed] the prefecture’s top record in tax payment,” having been officially commended multiple times “for producing not a single delinquent taxpayer.”¹⁵²

If the flows of money merged two halves of the village across the Pacific, flows of people kept many families apart to differentiate their native place in Japan. A spatial bifurcation of family life was reflected in the gender demographics of the Kotō region, where “absentee fathers” became a widespread phenomenon. In the case of one Kaideima resident, his father had left for Canada before his birth, so he grew up not knowing “what having a father meant.”¹⁵³ The corollary of distant

labor by young men was “an excess of women,” an acute “problem facing Isoda Village” even in the early 1930s.¹⁵⁴ Although family emigration became more common from the 1910s, many wives were kept from leaving (or made to return home) for various reasons, such as the need to take care of aging parents and oversee their children’s education. This spawned a spatial dynamic akin to a gendered division of labor between the Ōmi merchant toiling in faraway lands and his wife maintaining the family and dependents at home. Left alone to work in the village, these women were valorized as much as pitied as “American widows” (*Amerika goke*)—a status shared by wives of Hino merchants (dubbed “Kantō widows”),¹⁵⁵ or their counterparts in southern Fujian, where wives of migrant Hokkien men managed household economies in their chronic absence.¹⁵⁶

Emigrants shuttling across the Pacific, too, became vessels through which Western goods, ideas, and values flowed into eastern Shiga, extending the process of cultural grafting back home. Local archives offer glimpses of a cosmopolitan world that developed in emigrant villages in marked contrast to their rustic surroundings. By 1931, Isoda was replete with foreign goods—from food, clothes, and stationary to watches, gramophones, and sewing machines.¹⁵⁷ On special occasions such as New Year’s Day and school ceremonies, “not a few girls in Western dress are seen around the village,” a rare sight in the Japanese countryside, reported by a local correspondent in the mid-1910s.¹⁵⁸ Another uniqueness of emigrant villages was the presence of bilingual children, returned by their parents to their home village for compulsory education in Japan. Many of these children, as in Canada, fluently mixed Japanese and English in their daily speech and writing, as their school teachers observed.¹⁵⁹

Circuits of labor linking emigrant villages to the Pacific Northwest also became conduits for knowledge, which shaped the outlook of local cosmopolitans. On the one hand, Japanese-language papers in Canada kept the immigrants abreast of developments back home. In the early years of circulation, the *Tairiku nippō* ran columns dedicated to “News from Ōmi,” covering local politics and other community affairs, in addition to announcing the impending arrival of new emigrants. The two-way traffic of letters and dispatches through which the Shiga diaspora stayed connected, in turn, brought their kith and kin into politics of the wider Pacific world. In April 1924, when the news of a planned U.S. ban on Asian immigration reached the Kotō region, some four hundred leaders sprang into action, assembling local residents at a mass rally in May. Seeing exclusion as “a grave crisis” facing “Shiga people” sojourning on both sides of the border, the organizers wired their protest directly to President Coolidge and his ambassador to Japan, calling them out for the “unjust indignity” visited on “our compatriots.” When the act went into effect on July 1, 1924, Kiwada Shrine in Hassaka joined prayers around Japan “for the elevation of national prestige” in defense of their overseas countrymen.¹⁶⁰ These gestures of solidarity demonstrated scalar shifts in Shiga people’s sense of belonging, as racial and labor politics in the

U.S.-Canadian borderlands, through migration circuits, resonated deeply in the localities. Just as white proletarian racism in North America prompted the state to strengthen its commitment to Japanese migration across the southern border,¹⁶¹ so, too, it had the effect of sharpening provincial identities, within and beyond national borders.

In the first decades of emigration, men and women who crossed the Pacific garnered much admiration for their contributions to rural renewal. Villagers of Isoda, in particular, were lauded as “the vanguard” of expansion “leading Shiga people on to the global stage” and offering “a practical lesson in overseas activity” to the rest of Japan.¹⁶² With the onset of depression from the late 1920s, however, public attitudes toward these local cosmopolitans grew decidedly more ambivalent. One educational text of Isoda Primary School flagged some worrisome trends among residents of Hassaka, viewed as at odds with calls for austerity and agrarianism. Not only were their “dress and diet prone to being extravagant and [their] lifestyle self-indulgent,” the villagers also exhibited traits of “American individualism and materialism.” Simply put, an influx of foreign influences grafted onto the local terrain “is eroding compassionate village customs.” As Japan moved toward war in the 1930s, the sight of “ladies of leisure” (*yūkan fujin*) or the “urban” and “American lifestyle” that suggested cultural hybridity began to raise eyebrows, not mere curiosity or envy, in the increasingly regimented landscape of rural Shiga.¹⁶³

The potentially pernicious effects of emigration also drove the anxious discourse about the education of children born and raised abroad. Although the Issei distrust of public schools in Canada was reversed from the 1920s,¹⁶⁴ many parents from Shiga, it appears, continued to prefer educating their Nisei children in Japan before summoning them back to Canada.¹⁶⁵ At home, local officials and teachers alike began to frown upon Nisei children’s bilingual upbringing. A text on “native-place education,” published by Isoda Primary School during the Rural Revitalization Campaign, chided students for interspersing their speech with foreign words like “Papa” and “Mama.” Even though the study of English was central to vocational education (chapter 4), teachers at Isoda proceeded to ban its usage altogether, judging it “undesirable from the perspective of national thought” (*kokumin shisō*). Such new intolerance toward straddling the local and the global showed how cosmopolitanism of Nisei began to militate against the parochial goal of native-place education: to harness “love for one’s home” to the promotion of emperor-centered patriotism.¹⁶⁶

The growing official clamor for cultural purity, however, did not drown out local salutes to a transpacific diaspora. Rather, their perceived friction was sublimated by a claim repeated time and again: that cosmopolitanism was part of long-lived regional tradition. A narrative that held sway in gazetteers and textbooks on Ōmi drew a linear arc of genealogy, connecting itinerant peddlers of yore seamlessly to contemporary emigrants in America. Just as “merchants of Hachiman once sought a refuge in Matsumae” after their castle town fell, so “peasants of Ōmi today, their

fields” ravaged by flood, “have crossed the Pacific” to rebuild their lives and communities. “The ‘Ōmi spirit,’ on the wane among the wealthy, has not yet perished” among the “lower classes,” one text insisted, with a dose of agrarianism.¹⁶⁷ Embracing this trope of continuity, residents in the Kotō region celebrated the overseas strivings of Shiga people as an unfolding legacy of expeditionary Ōmi shōnin as much as a new departure for Japan as a global power. Inscribed in textbooks and village monuments, they were also feted in school songs. The third verse of Isoda Primary School’s anthem was a direct ode to the immigrant diaspora in America, extolling “accomplishments of our pioneers” and claiming their role in national expansion as a distinct “source of provincial pride”: “Over a thousand of business activities of our villagers / extend across the foreign countries / in the far corners of the Pacific Ocean” (Towaba kotaen satobito no, sen’yo ni oyobu nariwai wa, Taiheiyo no suetooku, totsukuniguni ni hirakeyuku).¹⁶⁸ The mythology of Ōmi was co-authored by the community, not just by political elites, holding global and local imaginaries in a perfect symbiosis.

“THE JEWS OF THE ORIENT”

Although the flow of transpacific migrants slowed to a trickle after 1928,¹⁶⁹ their diaspora had come of age, with a cultural corridor firmly connecting the eastern shore of Shiga to the western seaboard of Canada. Vancouver had likewise come into its own as a “global port,” as Nakae Katsujirō duly noted during his tour of the continent.¹⁷⁰ In the first years of the 1930s, anti-Asian agitation also stayed relatively quiet. A confluence of global and local developments—worldwide depression, near cessation of new Asian immigration, and a corresponding shift in white labor’s attitudes toward the Japanese (who were now included in the struggle for higher wages and better working conditions)¹⁷¹—served to mute the vociferous calls for exclusion. Canada’s industrial and business leaders, too, began to reorient their focus in trade from the Atlantic to the Pacific.¹⁷² When John M. Imrie of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce visited Japan as part of a trade mission in 1930, he emphasized “mutual prosperity and cooperation,” with Canada supplying all the necessities for industrializing Japan, by then the third largest trading partner after Britain and the United States.¹⁷³ More broadly, he envisioned Canada as “an intermediary between the British and Japanese empires” of capital, dominant powers in the two oceans, who could derive equal benefit from trading via North America.¹⁷⁴

In this transpacific exchange, “all but limited to the west of the Rockies” where most Shiga immigrants pursued business,¹⁷⁵ Kitagawa Genzō of Kaideima (1897–1976) and Kuwahara Satarō of Hikone (1886–1953) distinguished themselves by plying their trade on the other side of the mountains, in the interior plains of Alberta Province. In 1922, the two men launched a joint venture typical of Ōmi merchants (*noriai akinai*) to import and distribute Japanese silk fabric and textile goods. By the mid-1930s, their company, reorganized as Nippon Silk Co., had

become an expanded “partnership of three stores” with Kuwahara in Calgary, Kitagawa in Regina, and another business associate in Edmonton.¹⁷⁶ Their stores operated in areas with a smattering of Japanese, catering exclusively to whites and hiring employees locally, almost all white women. Over time, they sourced the bulk of their merchandise from Canadian manufacturers. Emphasizing adaptability to “local conditions and benefit,” and offering quality goods at “10% off” the market prices under the motto “For Better Value,” owners of Nippon Silk, wittingly or otherwise, followed maxims and methods of commerce exemplified by their Ōmi ancestors in trading with strangers.¹⁷⁷ For his years of contribution as an importer of silk, Kuwahara was commended in late 1936 by the Japan Industrial Association, a tribute to his role in pushing the frontier of the nation’s textile empire into the Canadian interior. Having himself once trekked the eastern provinces, hawking samples for a Japanese wholesaler before opening his own store, Kuwahara took the occasion to call on the Nisei to actively “advance into the East,” certain that “prospects for Japanese goods in Canada will grow further still.”¹⁷⁸

Following the Manchurian invasion of 1931, however, Japan’s transpacific trade encountered new uncertainties. Foreign imports met higher Canadian tariffs, which escalated into a brief trade war with Japan in 1935.¹⁷⁹ On the West Coast, the old white fear of “Oriental menace” resurfaced, with two important changes from the previous tide of exclusion. Not only was white animus now fully directed at the Japanese, it was also “transferred” from laborers in the basic industries to farmers and the small but rising group of merchants and business proprietors. As owners of many stores and services in Vancouver, Shiga immigrants once again bore the brunt of agitation.

Among the revived fears about Japanese migrants, perhaps none was more persistent than the concept of “peaceful penetration”: it fused and amplified all the entrenched beliefs about Japanese unassimilability, aggressiveness, iniquity, and high birthrates.¹⁸⁰ But its most strident critics by the 1930s gave the Japanese a new appellation: “the Jews of the Orient.” One of them was Tom MacInnes, who had hatched the idea of Trade Licenses Boards. In his *Oriental Occupation of British Columbia* (1927), MacInnes claimed the Japanese had “insidiously” spread their activity to “commercial streets of Vancouver upon which, even so short a while as ten years ago, not a single Chinese or Japanese shop was to be found.” If their expansion was left “unchecked,” he warned, the educated Asians, born and raised in Canada, would “control the mercantile life of Vancouver as much as the Jews control the mercantile life of New York today.”¹⁸¹ Though alarmist in tone, MacInnes’s observation captured the pace and extent of Japanese economic mobility that grew seemingly unabated into the 1930s. According to a 1938 field survey,¹⁸² Vancouver had witnessed an “exodus of Japanese” residents from the Powell Street area to more affluent neighborhoods “such as “Kerrinsdale and the 10th Avenue Kitsilano district, south of False Creek.” Even more dispersed was their business activity: the Japanese now had enterprises “all over the city where their only customers are

Whites,” having thrived “to a remarkable extent” that “has led Whites to call them ‘the Jews of the Orient.’”¹⁸³

Historically applied to ethnic Chinese communities overseas and proudly accepted in the regional lore in southern Fujian,¹⁸⁴ the epithet also frequently appeared as a comparator in metropolitan Japanese discourse. “Overseas Chinese” (*kakyō*), dubbed “Jews of the Pacific,” were a model of diasporic vigor Sugiura Shigetake and others both feared and admired, through a comparison with Ōmi shōnin (chapters 3 and 4). By the late 1930s, Sugiura’s vision—of taking advantage of Chinese exclusion to secure a foothold in America—appears to have been made a reality by his fellow Shiga natives in Vancouver. The white media and political leaders suggested how the Japanese had come to outpace, even supplant the Chinese as worthy of comparison to Jews in their economic aggressiveness and “invasion” of industrial life in B.C.¹⁸⁵ The Canadian Japanese themselves internalized the Jewish trope, but its application was evidently reserved for Shiga immigrants. According to the postwar recollection of Hirai Shigeru, owner of Fujiya grocery store, “In Canada we’d often say that ‘*Gōshū-mon* [natives of Ōmi] are Japanese Jews.’ . . . That is to say, working for money, money, money, and money.”¹⁸⁶ An epithet shared by their Ōmi ancestors made Shiga-born business owners bedfellows of diasporic Chinese and Jews, “entrepreneurial outsiders” who menaced “the white man’s world” across time and space. More recent research corroborates the ever-increasing dominance of Shiga people within a general pattern of Japanese commercial dispersion and diversification; by 1938 they owned 32 percent of all the Japanese businesses spread across twenty districts of Vancouver.¹⁸⁷ Among the most entrepreneurial were the Maikawa brothers, who developed a thriving network of family-run businesses in the Powell Street area. Maikawa Grocery Store, founded in the wake of the 1907 Riot, had operated at the level of a department store by its thirtieth anniversary.¹⁸⁸ Its family members led a life of bourgeois respectability in a separate residence managed by an educated housewife from Hikone, who devoted her time to raising her children rather than running the store with her husband.¹⁸⁹

The outbreak of war with China in July 1937 turned white concern about the Japanese penetration into full-blown hostility. Anti-fascist leaflets, distributed by both whites and Chinese in Vancouver, urged local residents to boycott Japanese goods, and sporadic violence against the Japanese also occurred on Powell Street.¹⁹⁰ Although the impact was smaller than initially feared, Japanese businesses still felt the pinch. “Storekeepers in Vancouver suffered losses when white patronage declined. Chinese grocers refused to handle hothouse rhubarb and vegetables grown by Japanese farmers in the Fraser Valley as well as goods such as mandarin oranges imported from Japan.”¹⁹¹ The CJA began lobbying white leaders with stakes in transpacific trade, prodding them to take action to “revise the Canadian people’s attitudes toward the Japanese,” or they would risk “losing promising markets in Asia.”¹⁹²

Rather than retail merchants, however, it was municipal politicians in Vancouver who took up the cudgels against Asian immigrants in this period.¹⁹³ Few were more outspoken about the “Oriental penetration” than Alderman Halford Wilson, an insurance agent who was elected to Vancouver City Council in 1934. In parallel to his anti-Chinese crusade,¹⁹⁴ in February 1938 Wilson submitted a proposal to “expel Japanese stores from white districts in Vancouver and segregate them in the Japanese areas.” Voicing special alarm about their trespass in white neighborhoods, his proposal noted that “the Japanese [stores] have come to occupy every street corner of the Mount Pleasant area,” where Wilson himself lived. He complained, as many an exclusionist had done before, about “unfair methods” used by the Japanese and ruinous effects of their competition on white businesses. The only way to thwart their intrusion, he argued, was to legislate a new geography of exclusion: to police flows of Japanese capital, labor, and goods by delimiting spaces of their business activity, and restricting their mobility across boundaries separating the “Japtown” and white districts.¹⁹⁵

Later that year, Wilson even “suggested transferring part of the Oriental population to other provinces,” and persuaded the City Council to accept a revised proposal to limit the number of trade licenses issued to Asians to no more than fifteen per cent of the total.¹⁹⁶ But this required amending Vancouver’s city charter. When the legislature’s Private Bills Committee refused to do so, viewing Wilson’s proposal as ultra vires, its chairman also did not fail to notice a parallel with measures being enacted against another diasporic community in Europe: “If we ‘substitute ‘Jewish’ for the word ‘Oriental’ . . . [we are doing] . . . just what Hitler is doing in Germany.”¹⁹⁷ Yet in many ways Wilson was infusing a new sense of urgency into ideas that had already appeared earlier. When placed in the context of cross-border policing and surveillance of immigrants underway in the U.S.-Canadian Pacific West, his proposals would have simply meant to enact state efforts to regulate aliens on a municipal scale;¹⁹⁸ the Chinese had long been targeted for such multiscalar efforts, abetted by the enduring “image of Chinatown as an opium den” and “a narcotics base.”¹⁹⁹

Short of taking drastic measures of segregation as Wilson demanded, municipal authorities intensified their level of surveillance on Japanese stores. Inspectors were regularly dispatched to Powell Street in response to white allegations of Japanese ignoring early closing hours.²⁰⁰ They carried out raids on local merchants, reported the *Tairiku nippō*, by sending a dozen “spies” to ferret out violators and take away their trade licenses.²⁰¹ One court case in 1938 shows that Maikawa Fish Market, along with a few other Japanese stores, was fined \$25 for “employing person outside the hours posted,”²⁰² though Maikawa did not lose his license. Staying open to serve the community beyond the call of duty was precisely what was expected of hardworking merchants of Ōmi. Ironically, when that traditional work ethic was transposed to Canada, it was held against the immigrant community as a racialized trait of Asian iniquity and intrusion into white settler space.

While store owners in Japantown stayed vigilant, the Japanese businesses nested in white neighborhoods took a group vow to “follow the municipal by-laws without fail,” as “the Chinese all do now.” Although one merchant chafed at the restrictions, another delivered an emphatic reminder of their “fundamental identity as the Yamato race”: “When considering the brave soldiers of the imperial army risking their lives at the battle front, it is nothing for us to obey the law at a paltry loss in profit. We must impress upon the whites how law-abiding a race the Japanese are.”²⁰³ In what the *Tairiku nippō* framed as a fight against the anti-Japanese crusade of city councilors like Wilson,²⁰⁴ Vancouver merchants came to see themselves as defending the economic front line of their nation’s embattled transpacific diaspora.

In August 1940, as Anglo-Japanese relations deteriorated (after Britain, shortly followed by Canada, declared war against Germany in September 1939), Wilson delivered “the bitterest” attack yet on the Japanese immigrants. When presenting a revamped proposal to withhold their new trade licenses at the city council, he launched into a half-hour tirade against the Japanese, inflating their presence in B.C. (“one in twelve of the population”) and making a series of incendiary charges, the most serious of which was their disloyalty to the British empire. “They have insidiously worked for our downfall” as agents of “their Imperial Government,” he averred, while showing “no interest or support” for the Canadian war effort.²⁰⁵ The news of Wilson’s salvo against the Japanese community provoked immediate outrage. Angry epistles poured into the city council from vexed Japanese leaders, clarifying their record of purchase of war bonds and contributions to the Red Cross. “Wilson’s campaign” to impugn their loyalty, the CJA fumed, was “a most cowardly attack [by] . . . an irresponsible demagogue.”²⁰⁶ But it was the Japanese Canadian Citizens’ League, formed in February 1936 by a group of Nisei, who faced down Wilson on behalf of their community. The league dispatched a delegation of Nisei to the city council, where they not only debunked each of Wilson’s charges but also argued for “accepting their services in the Canadian army.” In an impassioned bid to establish their bona fides, they went so far as to pledge to “defend the British Columbia coast against the Japanese navy,” in the event of a clash between the two empires.²⁰⁷

The Nisei’s gesture was “applauded by the City Council,” but some questions lingered among aldermen, who wondered aloud about loyalty of the older Issei in particular. Doubtful that Issei would ever disavow the Japanese empire, none could gainsay Wilson’s claim that many Japanese remained stubbornly attached to their homeland. White mistrust found validation in the Issei’s support for Japan’s ongoing conflict with China. A few months after the war began, the CJA distributed an English-language pamphlet, pinning its provocation squarely on the Nanjing government to justify the Japanese military actions in China.²⁰⁸ The Japanese leaders also mounted a campaign to collect funds and comfort (*imon*) bags for soldiers of the Imperial Army. When correspondents for the *Vancouver*

Sun and *Province* descended on the CJA office and asked where these parcels were headed, the association's secretary equivocated, hastening to add that Japanese contributions to Canada's war effort were greater.²⁰⁹ His awkward response betrayed the fact that Japanese residents continued their fund-raising drive in a covert fashion right up to Pearl Harbor.²¹⁰ Maikawa and other Shiga immigrants were at the center of action.²¹¹ The war also had the effect of tightening their bonds of kinship, spurring the creation of more hamlet associations to hold Buddhist services for the deceased soldiers from their places of origin.²¹² As yet unencumbered by the choice between Japan and their adopted home, Shiga immigrants reaffirmed their belonging to their native place through transplanted rituals of allegiance even as they declared themselves "loyal residents of Canada."²¹³

Vancouver merchants, too, carried on as before, selling goods made in Japan as well as in Britain and supporting both of their war efforts through sales events and lotteries.²¹⁴ Nippon Silk, which opened a Vancouver branch in 1940, continued catering to white customers, though the store changed its name to Silk-O-Lina out of the desire "to avoid unnecessary public harassment."²¹⁵ Matsumiya & Nose Co. imported "pure woolen suits from England" while simultaneously offering woolen socks, towels, and handkerchiefs "as comfort goods for the (Japanese) Imperial Army."²¹⁶ Purveying products of one textile empire to the citizens and soldiers of another, these Ōmi merchant stores navigated their tension on the ground, practically, as trade intermediaries, a role John M. Imrie had envisaged for Canada before the war.

But this position became untenable after December 1941, when Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and on British forces in Asia merged the two wars into one. For some Nisei lodged between two empires, their incompatible loyalties meant having to choose between fighting for imperial Japan and defending Canada as a naturalized citizen. This was the dilemma faced by Hori Zen'ya's family. His son, Hideo, recounted years later, "My older brother argued that the Canadian-born should become Canadian soldiers," but "he was forbidden from doing so" by his father, a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, baring a generational divide in the immigrant community.²¹⁷ Nonetheless, the issue of dual loyalties soon became moot, as all Japanese in the U.S.-Canadian borderlands, regardless of their citizenship, were deemed enemy aliens. The "Evacuation" of 1942, declared shortly after a similar order in the United States, was a culmination of long-standing efforts by B.C. politicians, merchants, and other proponents of white Canada "to rid the province of the Japanese economic menace forever." Having pressed Ottawa for removal of all Japanese east of the Rockies, provincial leaders of B.C., backed by their white constituents, had their wishes granted finally, when the government moved toward forced relocation of the Japanese from a hundred-mile zone inland from the Pacific Coast.²¹⁸

Shiga immigrants, a total of 1,385 in 1941,²¹⁹ were among some 22,000 Japanese, the majority of them Canadian citizens (65 percent), who were uprooted, sent to road labor camps, sugar beet farms, and former mining towns or, in the case of the more affluent, permitted to resettle in “self-supporting projects” at their own expense. Most were exiled to the Slocan Valley, where they were provided with nothing other than makeshift shelter by the Canadian government. This was in marked contrast to the United States, where federally operated camps offered basic shelter, food, clothing, and education. Out of the wartime need for labor, the U.S. government soon permitted the Japanese Americans to work outside, enroll in the army, and access health care—what Takashi Fujitani interprets as a shift from “vulgar” racism to its disavowal, a logic that concurrently drove the Japanese military conscription of Koreans.²²⁰ To prevent the Japanese from returning to the West Coast, the Canadian government also confiscated their farms and other possessions and permitted what amounted to a fire sale of Japanese property.²²¹

The Shiga diaspora in Vancouver, and the rest of Japantown, unraveled in the months following the evacuation order. As Issei began to be shipped off to camps in February, Japanese residents in the city were placed under curfew and business plummeted as a result, the owner of Kondō Drug Store later recalled. Despite his protestations as a Canadian citizen, Kondō’s store fell under the control of the Custodian of Enemy Property, as did Maikawa Store and other Japanese businesses.²²² At the end of August, all that remained of the once thriving Japantown were a handful of stores; the last to close were Maikawa Fish Market and another business owned by a Shiga immigrant. In the next two months, removal of the few Japanese left in Vancouver and the rest of the West Coast brought an abrupt end to their fifty-year-old diaspora in North America.²²³

As the Pacific gateway became a site of dislocation, and Canadian liners that had once carried cargo and emigrants were converted to battleships, a cultural corridor connecting Shiga to Vancouver disappeared. With Japanese immigrants expelled from the U.S.-Canadian borderlands and forced into concentration camps, their families on the other side of the Pacific found themselves in a precarious position. Ebata Akio was, at the time, back in the home village of Hassaka. So dependent was the family on remittances from his parents that when the flow of money from Canada suddenly ceased, his older sister was compelled to “quit her women’s school and start working.”²²⁴ Similar stories echoed across the eastern shore of Lake Biwa.

In February 1945, even as Japanese Americans began returning to the West Coast, the Canadian government continued to restrict the mobility of Japanese, who were presented with two options: resettle outside British Columbia or “voluntarily” repatriate to Japan. Not until April 1949 were the restrictions on Japanese settlement on the Pacific Coast fully lifted.²²⁵ Although complete data are not available, most Shiga immigrants appear to have opted to go back to Japan. In the case of Kaideima villagers, all but thirty of the ninety-three families who had been

interned in North America returned to Shiga by 1950.²²⁶ So did many Canadian citizens, like the owner of Kondō Drug Store, after the harrowing experience of detention and dispossession.²²⁷

Hundreds of miles away from the B.C. coast, meantime, a pair of Shiga-born immigrants carried on their trade as Ōmi merchants. Whereas the Japanese mercantile colony in Vancouver disintegrated, the joint venture of Kuwahara Satarō and Kitagawa Genzō, Silk-O-Lina, survived the war intact, largely unaffected by the evacuation order. Although the Vancouver branch was forced to close, “our business conditions [in Alberta and Saskatchewan] improved” in the context of shortage, Kitagawa recounted. Kuwahara also “helped many Japanese who were being relocated” to Calgary, even negotiating with the government to procure rice for them.²²⁸ In addition to a chance of geography, perhaps the fact that both were Christians and naturalized citizens who immersed themselves in the white society helped their business. Silk-O-Lina thrived after the war. Following Kuwahara’s untimely death in 1953, his partner Kitagawa took charge of the company, vigorously expanding its business during the postwar boom.²²⁹ Until the last days of his life, which ended three years after receiving the Order of Canada in 1973, Kitagawa “had been making his daily rounds of the branch stores,” in keeping with the traditional duty of an Ōmi business owner. As his son reflected years later, their company managed to overcome past adversities and flourish as a family business, not least because “Sataro was able to bring that Ohmi tradition to Canada’s prairie provinces.”²³⁰ For decades after the Shiga diaspora had unraveled in the Canadian West, indeed, the legacy of Ōmi shōnin remained alive and well east of the Rockies.