"These Japanese continuously violated the alien-contract labour laws": The Gendered Paths of Labourers, Farmers, and Housewives from Japan Traversing the Canada-U.S. Border in the Early Twentieth Century

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From the mid-1890s to the mid-1920s, a number of women and men from Japan landed in two Canadian seaports, Vancouver and Victoria, and after varying periods of time crossed the border to the United States. Evidence derived from an analysis of quantitative and qualitative sources sheds light on the different experiences passage across the Canada-U.S. border entailed for men and women. While the border's porous nature at the beginning of this period provided a double opportunity for a substantial number of Japanese male migrants, for women the presence or sponsorship of a spouse was essential to their passage across the border. Such findings ostensibly strengthen the conventional view that Japanese men played active roles in migration and that Japanese women were marginal in this movement. However, evidence also points to the salient, and indeed indispensable, role of Japanese women in the emergence of new communities on both sides of the border.

Du milieu des années 1890 au milieu des années 1920, un certain nombre de Japonaises et de Japonais ont débarqué dans les ports de mer canadiens de Vancouver et de Victoria, choisissant à divers moments par la suite de franchir la frontière vers les États-Unis. Des données tirées d'une analyse de sources quantitatives et qualitatives nous éclairent sur l'expérience différente que vivaient les hommes et les femmes de leur traversée de la frontière canado-américaine. La porosité de la frontière au début de cette période ouvrait une double porte à un très grand nombre d'immigrants japonais de sexe masculin, ce qui n'était pas le cas pour les femmes, dont la présence ou le parrainage d'un époux était impérative à leur traversée de la frontière. De tels résultats renforcent ostensiblement l'explication classique voulant que les hommes japonais

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jouèrent alors un rôle actif dans la migration et que les Japonaises n'en jouèrent qu'un marginal dans ce mouvement. Mais les données tendent aussi à démontrer que les Japonaises ont joué un rôle de premier plan, voire indispensable, dans l'émergence de nouvelles communautés des deux côtés de la frontière.

OVER THE PAST two decades, scholars working in borderland studies and on the migration history of North America have called into question an analytical framework that has centred heavily and often entirely on the nation-state.[1] New studies have explored the relative ease, frequency, and multi-directionality of transnational movements undertaken by European, Canadian, and Mexican women and men bound for the United States and Canada, and have done so from a larger continental perspective.[2] These studies revise what historian Donna Gabaccia has

1 David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 3 (December 1999), as well as articles presented in the forum on transnational history; Ian Terrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History" and "Ian Terrell Responds," *American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4 (October 1991), pp. 1031–1055 and 1068–1072; Michael McGerr, "The Price of New Transnational History," *American Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 4 (October 1991), pp. 1056–1067.

2 Dirk Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact: World Migrations in the Second Millennium* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Joe W. Trotter Jr., "The Great Migration, African Americans, and Immigrants in the Industrial City," in Nancy Foner and George M. Frederickson, eds., *Not Just Black and White: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race, Ethnicity in the United States* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004), pp. 82–99; Walter Nugent, *Crossings: The Great Transatlantic Migrations, 1870–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992); Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History," *Journal of American History*, vol. 86, no. 3 (December 1999), pp. 1115–1134; Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser Ottanelli, eds., *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Peggy Levitt and Rafael de la Dehesa, "Transnational Migration and the Redefinition of the State: Variations and Explanations," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 26, no. 4 (July 2003), pp. 587–611. On the Canadian-U.S. border, see Randy William Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880–1920* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998); Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860–1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990); Bruno Ramirez with Yves Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel: Migration from Canada to the United States, 1900–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); Stephen J. Hornby, Victor A. Konrad, and James J. Herlan, eds., *The Northeastern Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction* (Orono, ME: Canadian American Center, University of Maine; Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press, 1989); Robert Lecker, ed., *Borderlands: Essays in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1991); John J. Bukowczyk, Nora Faires, David R. Smith, and Randy William Widdis, *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650–1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005). Far more voluminous work has been written about the Mexican-U.S. border. Among these titles, see, for example, Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1996); Don Mitchell, *The Lie of the Land: Migrant Workers and the California Landscape* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); John Mason Hart, "The Evolution of the Mexican and Mexican-American Working Classes," in Hart, ed., *Border Crossings: Mexican*

critically called the "immigration paradigm": a deep-rooted assumption that has been — and continues to be — closely tied to cultural and social perspectives positing the United States as the only and ultimate land of promise.[3] Canadian historians have not created a version of this immigration paradigm to the same extent as have their southern neighbours. Nonetheless, the view that the international border separates Canada from the seemingly similar but fundamentally different southern republic has strengthened the academic wall that has, until recently, artificially isolated the histories of these two societies.

The shift away from nation-centred history is also generating new studies on Asian migrants. An emerging generation of historians, including Erika Lee, Adam McKeown, Mae Ngai, Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, and Eiichiro Azuma, has skilfully explored continental and hemispheric approaches to analyse networks of family and other forms of human agencies among Chinese, Filipina/Filipino, and Japanese migrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.[4] They have also illuminated the ways in which anti-Asian feelings and exclusionary immigration policies spread over the Western hemisphere.[5] These studies aside, however, historians of Asian migration in general and Japanese migration in particular have been relatively slow to incorporate transnational and

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and Mexican-American Workers (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 1998), pp. 17–18; Oscar Martinez, ed., *U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 1996).

3 Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?" See also Gérard Noiriel, *La tyrannie du national : le droit d'asile en Europe, 1793–1993* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1991). Also pertinent is Richard White's critical comment that the concept of the nation-state tends to dominate recent literature that places North America within a larger spatial scale or that employs comparative approaches. See Richard White, "Is There a North American History?," *Revue française d'études américaines*, vol. 79 (1999), pp. 8–28.

4 Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Cultural Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882–1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Dorothy B. Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919–1941* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Henry Yu, "Los Angeles and American Studies in a Pacific World of Migrations," *American Quarterly*, vol. 56, no. 3 (September 2004), pp. 531–543. For an earlier work on Asian labour migration in the Pacific Northwest, see Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned Salmon Industry, 1870–1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). For studies on Asian migrants in Latin American countries, see Evelyn Hu-Dehart, "Coolies, Shopkeepers, Pioneers: The Chinese of Mexico and Peru (1849–1930)," *Amerasian Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1989), pp. 91–116; Robert Chao Romero, "Transnational Chinese Immigrant Smuggling to the United States via Mexico and Cuba, 1882–1916," *Amerasian Journal*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2004/2005), pp. 1–16.

5 Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach in Asian American History," *Journal of Asian American Studies*, vol. 8 (October 2005), pp. 235–256.

continental approaches into their analyses.[6] What Gary Y. Okihiro has called U.S.-centred parochialism within Asian American studies, together with the failure to integrate more fully gendered perspectives, has strengthened the powerful position held by the paradigm of "claiming for America."[7] This term invokes the central concern of Asian American scholars and activists to recognize Asian Americans as active and legitimate agents of change in shaping the history and present of the United States. Indeed, the desire to preserve the past and re-centre the presence of formerly oppressed and neglected people of colour is in itself legitimate. But the very focus on claiming a long overdue share of recognition within American society has also created a tendency to enclose the lives of these people within the framework of the nation-state while undermining the human links and transnational connections they forged that extended beyond the confines of state and national borders.

This article joins the growing efforts to explore the transnational and continental aspects of Japanese migration through a gendered lens, focusing on relatively short passages undertaken by women and men from Japan who landed in two Canadian seaports, Vancouver and Victoria. After varying periods in Canada, they eventually crossed the border to the United States. Aside from sporadic and anecdotal mention of such practices,[8] no study has yet systematically explored the contingent of "remigrants" from Japan, to use Bruno Ramirez's term referring to Canadian and European migrants who went to the United States from or through Canada.[9] Admittedly, this was a relatively short-lived practice among Japanese, but it nevertheless seriously concerned and irritated immigration officials on both sides of the border.

Japanese cross-border movement occurred at a crucial time when the formerly porous borders of the United States and Canada were gradually

6 An important exception to this general tendency is an anthology of conference papers presented at the University of Washington in May 2000 on the Nikkei, or people of Japanese descent, in the Pacific Northwest. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura, eds, *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

7 Gary Y. Okihiro, "Theory, Class, and Place: Introduction," in Gary Okihiro, Marilyn Alquizola, Dorothy Rony, and K. Scott Wong, eds., *Privileging Positions: The Sites of Asian American Studies* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1995), pp. 1–9; K. Scott Wong and Sucheng Chan, eds., *Claiming America: Constructing Chinese American Identities during the Exclusion Era* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

8 Scholars have referred to the cross-border movement of Japanese who went from Vancouver or Victoria to destinations in the United States. Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), pp. 102–103; Iino Masako, *Nikkei Kanadajin no Rekishi* [A History of Japanese Canadians] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1997), pp. 21–35, 29–37.

9 Ramirez with Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, chap. 5.

and selectively being closed, on the basis of the race, citizenship, class, and gender of people wishing to enter each country. With a series of laws and regulations, the American and Canadian governments sought to control the hitherto barely regulated travel of undesirable and less undesirable foreigners across the land border. This process included Japanese labourers but was not exclusive to them.[10] Who were these Japanese? How did the demographic and socio-economic profiles of Japanese men and women compare? What do such differences and similarities tell us about the strategies and agency of men and women on the move in the context of the increasingly impassable border? An analysis of 307 men and 33 women drawn from the *Soundex Index to the Border Entry to the United States* (hereafter referred to as *Border Entries*)[11] points to gender-specific consequences of the passage across the Canadian border. I argue that the time lag in implementing immigration laws and administrative measures on the part of the United States and, to a lesser extent, the Canadian government for controlling who should and should not be allowed to enter on the basis of race, citizenship, class, and gender created a double opportunity for a substantial number of Japanese male migrants. For women, on the other hand, passage across the border was ensured by the presence of a spouse. Although such findings ostensibly strengthen the conventional view that men played active roles in migration and women were passive players, the apparent marginality of Japanese women in this movement actually highlights their salient, and indeed indispensable, role in the emergence of new communities on both sides of the border.

Lacking a solid body of qualitative descriptions in which migrant women and men talk about their own passages, I have turned to records people generated unwittingly, or perhaps at times unwillingly, when they were

10 Daniels, *Asian America*, chap. 4; Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1991), pp. 35–41; W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), pp. 75–76; Fiset and Nomura, eds., *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest*, pp. 5–7.

11 U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85, *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries through the St. Albans, Vermont, District*, microfilm copy housed at the Salle Gagnon, Bibliothèque municipale de Montréal. My analysis is based on a 5% random sample of individuals derived from the *Border Entries*. Gathered from the entire collection, this primary source lists approximately 43,000 individuals. From this primary group, all the Japanese who crossed the border from Canada to the United States were selected. In addition to providing such information as name, age, gender, birthplace, last permanent residence, port of disembarkation, and U.S. destination, the *Border Entries* also allow one to determine the length of time between immigrants' entry into Canada and their departure for the United States, the identities of persons accompanying them, their former occupations, and their travels prior to arrival in the United States. I gratefully acknowledge Professor Bruno Ramirez for allowing me to use part of the data collected from this primary source.

routinely questioned or sometimes apprehended and interrogated as they crossed the Canadian-American border. Most important among these are the *Border Entries*. In these documents are people's answers to a series of questions about name, age, gender, birthplace, last permanent residence, port of disembarkation, destination in the United States, relationship of accompanying persons, and contacts at their destination.[12] Other major resources can be found in *Subject Correspondence, 1906–1931: Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85* (hereafter referred to as *Subject Correspondence*), housed at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. In combination with other governmental reports and historical studies, the evidence derived from these sources sheds light on the gendered experiences that crossing the Canadian-American border offered women and men during the brief period under study.[13]

"Coolies had come from the North"

Interpretations vary as to whether or not the adoption of restrictive immigration laws and regulations north and south of the border was a sign of successful efforts on the part of the United States to convince its northern neighbour to implement policies more compatible with American goals and practices.[14] One thing is certain: from the turn of the century, a number of measures came into effect that brought the two countries closer in protecting the land border they shared, a priority that had not previously been recognized by immigration authorities in either country. From the 1890s, the United States government emerged as a

12 In their research report on French-Canadian immigration to the United States, Ramirez and Otis point out that these entries were not recorded rigorously in the *Border Entries* in the initial period and that only after 1909 was this recording procedure consistently followed. This was not the case for Japanese immigrants I examined in this study. The number of Japanese entries recorded is scarce until 1895, but from that year onward the overwhelming majority of my sample of Japanese were listed as crossing the border southward. For the years 1917 and 1918, my sample does not list any Japanese admissions. Such disparities in the same source may result, as Ramirez and Otis hypothesize, from the partial loss of these early border records. The lost records more likely related to the eastern part of the continent, thus including a far greater number of French Canadians than Japanese. I have concluded, therefore, that the *Border Entries* data for my sample of Japanese in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth centuries are indeed valid. See Bruno Ramirez and Yves Otis, "French-Canadian Immigration to the USA in the 1920s: A Research Report" (Université de Montréal, 1992).

13 This study is part of a larger project in progress that seeks to re-centre Japanese and other migrants in transpacific and transcontinental perspectives. I explore Canadian and Japanese sources more extensively in this larger work.

14 For views supporting the link between American and Canadian restrictive measures, see Ramirez with Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, pp. 41–44, and Lee, *At America's Gates*, pp. 152–157. Iino Masako, on the contrary, provides a more cautious interpretation of the issue with her analysis of the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement of 1908, following the 1907 Vancouver Riot (*Nikkei Kanadajin no Rekishi*, pp. 31–32).

powerful organizer of human mobility as it instigated numerous restrictions on immigration across its borders and implemented these through the Bureau of Immigration, created in 1893. Following the passage in 1903 of an anti-contract labour law, which crystallized the hitherto *de facto* exclusion of Japanese labourers, the United States government signed with its Japanese counterpart the so-called "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907–1908, which restricted the entry of contract labourers, among others. In Vancouver, the anti-Asian riots of 1907 led Canada to sign the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement in 1908, the Canadian version of the Gentlemen's Agreement, by which the number of Japanese admitted to the country was limited to an annual quota of 400.[15] That year, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Executive Order 589, which prohibited foreign contract labourers, especially Japanese, from entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, or any insular possessions of the United States such as Hawai'i. Canada echoed this Executive Order by adopting a similar regulation, the Continuous Journey Rule, prohibiting immigrants who had not travelled to Canada by an uninterrupted journey from their country of origin.[16] Finally, the United States *Acts of Immigration* in 1924 completed the general ban on the entry of Asian migrants and restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe. A parallel shift in Canadian policy had occurred in 1923 when an Order-in-Council excluded "any immigrant of any Asiatic race" except farmers, farm labourers, and female domestic servants, all of whom supplied a source of labour in high demand in the prosperous Canadian economy. The only other exception pertained to the spouse and children of a person already legally residing in Canada. In 1930 the Canadian government closed its ports to all Asians under an Order-in-Council (P.C. 2115), just as the United States had done seven years earlier.[17]

15 Cited in Masako, *Nikkei Kanadajin no Rekishi*, chap. 2: Gaimushô, *Nihon Gaikô Bunsho* [Tokyo], vol. 39, no. 2, p. 1235; vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 1737, 1780, 1778. See also Ward, *White Canada Forever*, pp. 75–76; Howard H. Sugimoto, "Vancouver Riots of 1907," in Hilary Conroy and T. Scot Miyakawa, eds., *East Across the Pacific: Historical and Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration and Assimilation* (Santa Barbara, CA: American Bibliographical Center – Clio Press, 1972), p. 93.

16 The Canadian government issued a continuous journey Order-in-Council on January 8, 1908. After the defeat of this order in court, the Laurier government issued a new continuous journey order, supported by an amendment to the *Immigration Act* (P.C. 23) on May 27, 1908, and added a $200 requirement order (P.C. 24) on June 3. Following the passage of a new *Immigration Act* in 1910, the Dominion government re-issued these orders as P.C. 920 and P.C. 926. Hugh Johnston, *The Voyage of the Komagata Maru: The Sikh Challenge to Canada's Colour Bar* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), pp. 4–5, 8, 9, 58–59.

17 The U.S. *Immigration Act* of March 3, 1903 (32 Statutes-at-Large 1213) reaffirmed the act of February 23, 1885 (23 Statutes-at-Large 332). U.S. *Immigration Act* of February 20, 1907 (34 Statutes-at-Large 898); U.S. *Immigration Act* of May 26, 1924 (43 Statutes-at-Large 153).

Despite these exclusionary laws and regulations north and south of the border, tens of thousands of Japanese looked for alternative ways to enter North America. A contingent of them found a solution for getting around inspection at American ports of entry along the coast by passing through Canadian ports like Victoria and Vancouver, and then across the land border. In 1900 the United States Commissioner-General of Immigration, Terence V. Powderly, the former leader of the Knights of Labor, stated that "the large influx of Japanese through Vancouver and Victoria, British Columbia, gained special force as regards our [the United States] northwestern territory." He continued, "[T]hese Japanese," along with Chinese, "continuously violated the alien-contract labour laws, particularly in the Puget-Sound district." The Sound, as it was familiarly called, extends from southern British Columbia to northern Washington State, including a large gulf in Washington State and the water that separates the southern tip of Vancouver Island from the West Coast. It opens eventually into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. With a multitude of islands and passages connecting north and south of the border through thick bush and along a coastline that turns back upon itself repeatedly, the Sound provided, according to one United States immigration official, the most advantageous spots for smuggling humans into the United States.[18]

Investigators employed by the State Labor Bureau of California also expressed frustration when they reasserted the point made by Powderly: "Nearly all of the coolies who were examined testified that they had not come to San Francisco direct, but had come from the north, most of them having landed at Vancouver, British Columbia."[19] Although no statistics are available to show the exact number of Japanese who arrived at their American destinations through Canada, an American official estimated that, at one point, as many as 90 per cent of the Japanese who came to Canada entered the United States within two

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Following the Order-in-Council of January 1923, the Canadian government issued an Order-in-Council (P.C. 2115) in September 1930 that prohibited the entry of "any immigrant of any Asiatic race" except the wives and minor children of Canadian citizens. Chan, *Asian Americans*, pp. 53–56; Patricia Roy, J. L. Granatstein, Iino Masako, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese during the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991); Ann G. Sunahara, *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1981).

18 Washington, DC, National Archives, *Subject Correspondence 1906–1931: Records of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Record Group 85* [hereafter *Subject Correspondence*], File 51630/44f.

19 United States Industrial Commission, *Reports of Industrial Commission on Immigration, including testimony with review and digest and special reports, and on education, including testimony, with review and digest* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1900–1902; reprint New York: Arno Press, 1970), p. 755.

weeks of landing in Vancouver or Victoria.[20] A more moderate estimate places the figure around 65 per cent in 1907.[21] In the fall of the same year, American Inspector-in-Charge P. L. Prentice, who oversaw Vancouver and surrounding area for border-crossers, reported the alleged entry of some 300 Japanese during the last two days of July and first few days of August at or near Blaine, Washington, a town located on the United States-Canada border opposite Douglas, British Columbia.[22] By 1908 this human flow swelled further, albeit momentarily, as prospective labourers from Japan rushed to the northern border before the passage from Canada to the United States was to be banned permanently under President Roosevelt's Executive Order. Of the 8,046 Japanese who landed in Canada that year, 3,619 men and women reportedly went to the United States immediately afterward, creating a spike in Japanese migration across the northern border.[23]

Who Crossed the Border, When, and How?

Why did a significant number of Japanese attempt to enter the United States from the Canadian border? One explanation has to do with changing politico-diplomatic circumstances. In 1901 the Japanese government stopped issuing passports altogether in response to mounting pressure from the United States against the arrival of contract labourers from Japan. A year and a half later, the government of Japan resumed issuing passports, but not to contract labourers, a measure of self-imposed selection and exclusion of a kind that was to be sanctioned by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908.[24] These changes in passport eligibility, and more broadly speaking in the emigration/immigration policies of Japan and the United States, compelled many rural farmers in Japan to pose as businessmen, merchants, or industrialists when applying for passports.[25] That labourers continued to represent the leading occupational group among border-crossers, followed by farmers and a significant number of merchants and businessmen, as well as students, is an indication of another strategy. These self-proclaimed labourers, together with the unknown proportion of contract labourers disguised as merchants and students, made up thousands, if not tens of thousands, of those seeking to avoid inspection by United States authorities by resorting to passages

20 Alan Takeo Moriyama, *Imin Gaisha: Japanese Emigration Companies and Hawaii, 1894–1908* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 152, n. 43.

21 *Subject Correspondence*, File 51931/149, no. 6102.

22 *Subject Correspondence*, File 51686/17av, no. 677.

23 Sugimoto, "Vancouver Riots of 1907," p. 112.

24 Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988), p. 52; Masaaki Kodama, *Nihon iminshi kenkyû josetsu* (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 1992), p. 524; Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 30.

25 Kodama, *Nihon iminshi*, p. 524; Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, p. 30.

along the border. Such practices corroborate an observation advanced by Eiichiro Azuma, pointing to schemes of popular defiance by which Japanese immigrants sought entry into the continental United States from Canada and Mexico.[26] They must have been informed by migration agents, steamship crews, or other means that the route through Canada was relatively easy: if they landed at Vancouver or Victoria, Canadian officials would inspect only those bound for Canada, while American immigration officials were authorized to inspect only passengers bound for the United States in transit at Canadian ports. Many thus did exactly what the American authorities feared they would and simply reported their destination to be some point in Canada. Once they reached their Canadian destination, they could cross to the American side with ease.

The case of Nishi Mori'ichi, 14 years of age and bound for Seattle, illustrates such a motive. When apprehended at the border in 1907 while trying to walk across from Cloverdale, British Columbia, to Blaine, Washington, he told an American immigration officer that he had landed in Canada without any inspection except an on-board medical examination. Why did he get off the boat in a Canadian port with a passport bound for Seattle? He explained that he had learned on board about "lots of troubles and expense and inconvenience getting examined for admissions to the U.S."[27] This was why, he concluded, he went through Canada to reach his ultimate destination.

Other reasons for disembarking in Canada, according to claims made by some Japanese men, were apparently more innocent. On May 30, 1907, Iguchi Saburô, a 19-year-old student, got off the *SS Athenian* when that ship sailed into Vancouver after a two-week voyage from Yokohama. His passport said that he was bound for Salinas, California. Asked why he did not go directly to the United States, Iguchi answered that he had some friends in Vancouver and that he "wanted to stay there for awhile."[28] Ishida Suejirô, a 28-year-old labourer from Shiga, also held a passport indicating that he was bound for the United States, even though he landed in Victoria. He explained: "I saw the climate was good here [in Victoria], and that there was plenty of work, so I decided to stop in Canada."[29] But the American immigration inspectors were not convinced. They suspected (perhaps rightly) that the true reason behind the entry of these Japanese into Vancouver and Victoria was to use Canada as a back door into the United States.

26 Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, pp. 29–31; Bangaku Mizutani, *Hokubei Aichi kenjinshi* (Sacramento, CA: Aichi Kenjinkai, 1920), pp. 264–270; Jesús K. Akachi *et al.*, "Japanese Mexican Historical Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Japanese Descendants in the Americas*, pp. 206–210.

27 *Subject Correspondence*, File 51893/53.

28 *Subject Correspondence*, File 51893/87.

29 *Subject Correspondence*, File 513893/85.

In his study of Canadian and European border-crossers at the turn of the century, Bruno Ramirez has pointed out that ebbs and flows in the number of migrants and remigrants did not result merely from legal and administrative criteria that dictated who should and who should not be allowed to enter the United States.[30] Migration patterns and yearly fluctuations of Canadian out-migrants to the United States responded to a combination of factors, ranging from specific economic circumstances, relative proximity to the border, knowledge of job openings south of the border, and, most importantly, the measure of assistance migrants could receive from family and friends at their destination. To what extent was this true of Japanese remigrants? A look at the fluctuations in the number of Japanese border-crossers into the United States suggests that, unlike Canadians, whose citizenship in a country of the Western Hemisphere afforded them far greater shelter from legal restrictions, Japanese men and women were by far more directly affected by exclusionary laws and regulations specifically aimed at controlling their movement. At the same time, although these regulations were effective in limiting the number of entrants from Japan, they created a bulge, rather than an ebb, just before the Executive Order of 1908 came into effect prohibiting the entry of Japanese from Canada and Mexico.

While the cross-border movement from Canada to the United States lasted largely from the late 1890s to the mid-1920s, one in three Japanese men and women I studied entered the United States from Canada during the five years between 1903 and 1907. The year 1903 witnessed a peak level of this human flow with one in five (or 18 per cent) crossing the Canadian border, suggesting the impact of Japan's decision to resume issuing passports. The first peak period of cross-border passage was followed by a spike lasting from 1906 to 1907 (12 per cent each, accounting for 24 per cent in total), when a large number of Japanese rushed to the border before the Executive Order of 1908 closed their passage across the Canadian border permanently. The situation changed radically in 1908, when the number of entries into the United States decreased both for women and men, and it remained low throughout the 1910s. By the mid-1920s, this cross-border movement had virtually ended (see Figure 1).

The importance of 1907 and 1908 as a dividing line for Japanese cross-border movement has implications beyond the Canadian-American context. Daniel M. Masterson and Sayaka Funada-Classen have pointed out the geographical shift in Japanese migration since 1908, as Latin American destinations such as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil gained a competitive edge over the economic opportunities offered to Japanese

30 Ramirez with Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, pp. 49–55.

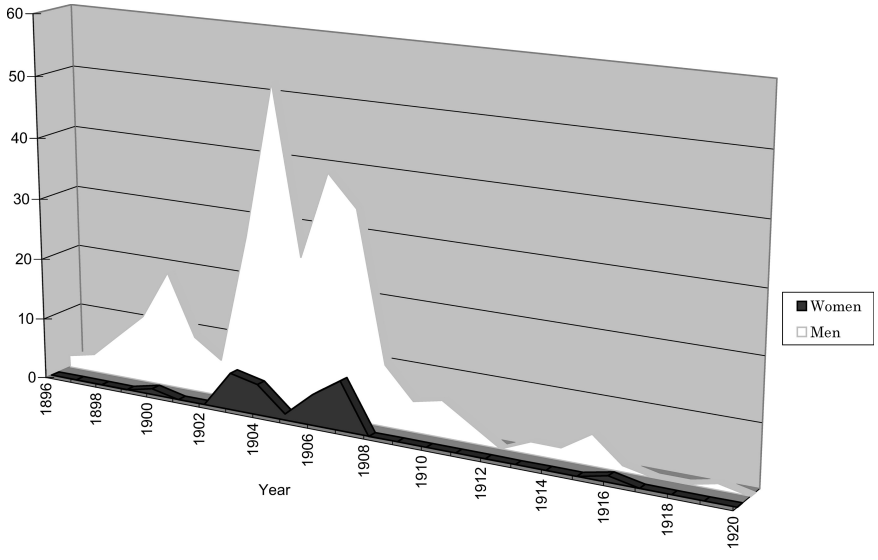

Figure 1: Yearly Fluctuation in the Entry of Japanese by Gender, 1896–1920.

by Canada and the United States.[31] That Japanese border-crossing at the Canada-United States border came to an end at about the same time as a growing number headed for new destinations in Latin America leads one to extend Masterson's observation that the enforcement of stricter immigration regulations in the United States and Canada had the effect of redirecting the migration movement from Japan to south of the Rio Grande after 1908. Further, border controls, which were now more selective and exclusive than previously against Japanese seeking entry from Canada, arguably precipitated this geographical shift towards southern destinations. Put another way, the geographic contours of Japanese migration were reconfigured on a continental scale or, using Erika Lee's term, on a "hemispheric" level.[32]

The overwhelming majority (over 90 per cent) of Japanese border-crossers were men, single or married, travelling without family members. Their age distribution spread across a wide spectrum, with the highest proportion falling in the 25-to-30 age group (see Figure 2). Korio Chôsaku was one of these. The 23-year-old, single male labourer left his native prefecture of Ehime in southwestern Japan, landed in Victoria on June 12,

31 Daniel M. Masterson with Sayaka Funada-Classen, *The Japanese in Latin America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p. 27.

32 Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas."

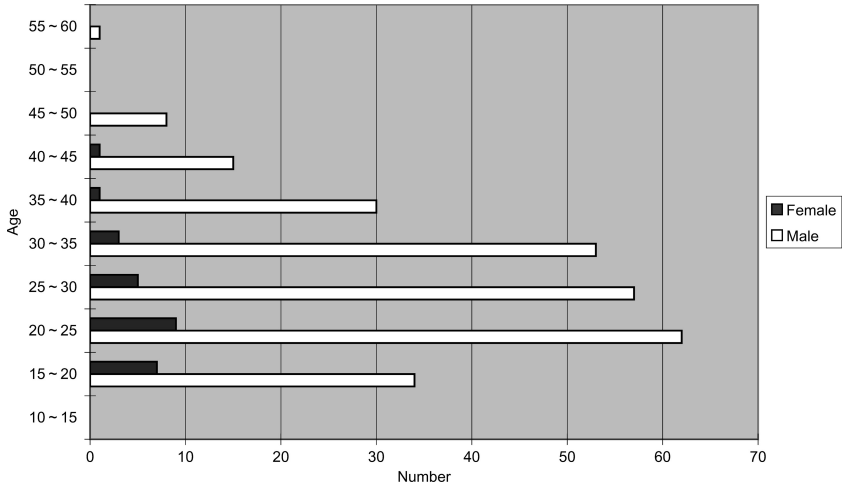

Figure 2: Age Distribution of Japanese Remigrants by Gender, 1894–1907.

1907, and then two days later crossed the border bound for Seattle.[33] Another example was Takamoto Josaburô, a 26-year-old labourer. The native of Hiroshima was married but travelling without his family. Takamoto departed on his transpacific journey and landed in Victoria in early November 1907. A week later he crossed the border into the United States, reporting his final destination to be Seattle. When asked if he knew anyone there, he answered in the negative.[34]

The cross-border movement of Japanese also included a small number of women, who exhibited a starkly different profile as a group when compared with their male counterparts. One would expect that, as the overall number of Japanese women arriving in the United States increased after the adoption of the Gentlemen's Agreement, so too would the number of women remigrating from Canada. My data show otherwise. The marked discrepancy in the gender ratio in fact widened as the proportion of female remigrants radically decreased after 1908. The overwhelming majority went to the United States during the years before the Gentlemen's Agreement; indeed, about half entered the United States from Canada in 1906 and 1907 alone (see Figure 1). Why was this so? The very small presence of Japanese women who crossed the border southward can be explained, at least in part, by the Gentlemen's Agreement. A section of this agreement officially sanctioned the entry of the wives of Japanese men residing in the United States on the

33 *Border Entries*, 224–097–K600.
34 *Border Entries*, 364–059–T253.

condition that, upon their arrival, these women, having been married by proxy in Japan, be wed again in a Christian ceremony on the docks before being allowed to land in America.[35] Clearly, this agreement did not stem the tide of anti-Japanese and anti-Asian feelings among white residents on the West Coast.[36] Nevertheless, the legal authorization of the entry of newlywed Japanese women likely eased to some degree their fear of rejection as they arrived at the ports of San Francisco or Seattle. This in turn arguably lessened the need among women migrants to seek alternative routes across the border, which entailed more lengthy, physically demanding, and legally risky journeys to reach American destinations until the abrogation of the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1924 officially closed this option for good.[37]

Unlike remigrating Japanese men, whose age distribution and marital status varied, Japanese women who crossed the Canadian border show a strikingly similar demographic profile (see Figures 2 and 3). The data also point to important convergences in regional origin. All except one were married, all were between 15 and 45 years old (their prime child-bearing and child-rearing years), and more than three-quarters were in their late teens and twenties. Tatsuhara Kieno was likely one of the few picture brides who travelled to her American destination through Canada.[38] The 24-year-old native of Hiroshima prefecture, in southwestern

35 Chan, *Asian Americans*, pp. 107–108.

36 Masako, *Nikkei Kanadajin no Rekishi*, chap. 2; Sasaki Toshiju, *Nihonjin Kanada Iminshi* (Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1999), pp. 169–185; Chan, *Asian Americans*, p. 108; Tomoko Makabe, *Shashinkon no Tsumatachi: Kanada Iimin no Joseishi* [Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada] (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1983).

37 Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 131.

38 As historians have shown, picture marriage, or *shashin kekkon*, was a transpacific version of arranged marriage, a common custom in Japan at the time adapted to the difficulties encountered by single Japanese male migrants attempting to find a marriage partner in turn-of-the-century United States and Canada. First, there were few Japanese women in North America, and miscegenation laws prohibited Japanese men from marrying white women. In addition, a return trip to Japan not only would cost more than most Japanese male labourers could afford, but would also have meant that they would lose their deferred military draft status from the Japanese government. Many thus resorted to writing to relatives in Japan, asking them to find a wife and send her to the United States. Such arrangements were rooted in a common practice in Japan at the time — marriage by proxy — which was thus adapted to meet the needs of transpacific migrants. This gave rise to the phenomenon of marriage by photograph and the arrival of hundreds of brides. Ichioka, *The Issei*, chap. 5; Alice Yun Chai, "Picture Brides: Feminist Analysis of Life Histories of Hawai'i's Early Immigrant Women from Japan, Okinawa, and Korea," in Donna Gabaccia, ed., *Seeking Common Ground: Multidisciplinary Studies of Immigrant Women in the United States* (Westport, CN: Praeger, 1992), pp. 123–138; Eileen Sunada Sarasohn, *Issei Women: Echoes from Another Frontier* (Palo Alto, CA: Pacific Books, 1998); Eithne Luibheid, *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), chap. 3; Masabuchi Rumiko, "1910-Nendai no Hainichi to 'Shashin Kekkon'" [Anti-Japanese Sentiment during the 1910s and "Picture Marriage"], in Togami Soken, ed., *Japanizu Amerika: Iju kara Jiritsu e no Ayumi* [Japanese American: The Path from Emigration to Independence] (Kyoto:

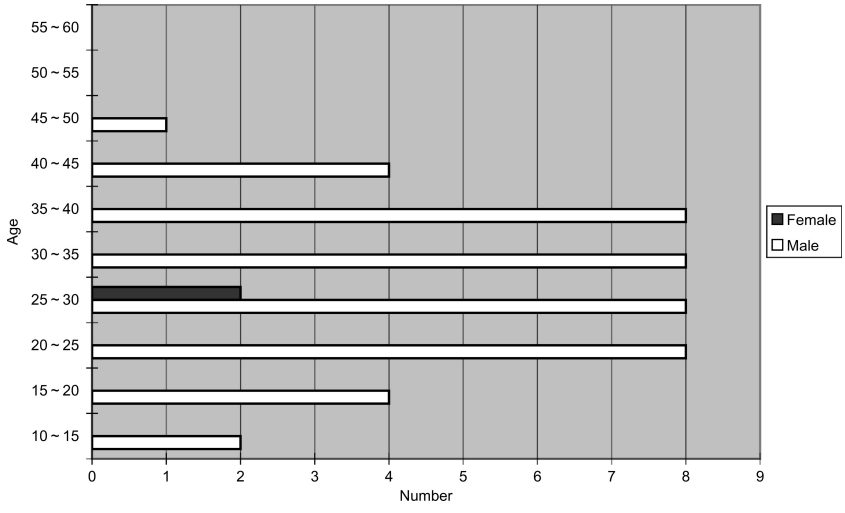

Figure 3: Age Distribution of Japanese Remigrants by Gender, 1908–1932.

Japan, crossed the border into the United States some time after her arrival in Victoria on July 30, 1903. She was accompanied by her 27-year-old husband, who had paid her overseas passage. The couple headed for Portland, Oregon. Kanemitsu Umeno was another example. The 32-year-old was from Okayama, another southwestern prefecture. Three months after landing on the North American shore (port of disembarkation unknown) on June 26, 1907, Kanemitsu entered the United States with her husband, who was 29, and headed toward Los Angeles. Her husband paid her travel expenses.[39] Hori Kume was yet another example. The 19-year-old from Okayama landed in Victoria and headed for Portland, Oregon. Unlike Tatsuhara and Kanemitsu, Hori was travelling alone, but she, too, had a husband whom she listed as a contact to meet at her destination in the United States and who had paid her passage.[40] That Tatsuhara, Kanemitsu, Hori, and all others in my sample were travelling with their husbands across the Canadian border, or on tickets paid for by a spouse, points to a major characteristic of their

Minerva Shobô, 1986); Kei Tanaka, "Japanese Picture Marriage in 1990–1924 California: Construction of Japanese Race and Gender" (PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, 2002).

39 *Border Entries*, 224–070–K533. The *Border Entries* specify prefecture of origin of Japanese immigrants without providing information on the city of origin. Hiroshima thus refers to the Prefecture of Hiroshima. Unless otherwise mentioned, the same applies for other localities mentioned hereafter.

40 *Border Entries*, 199–008–H600.

passage: their travel across the border was contingent on the presence of a spouse in the United States.

The limited variability in the demographic profiles (and occupational experience, as we shall see) exhibited by Japanese remigrant women like Tatsuhara and Kanemitsu echoes the profile of a larger number of Japanese wives who journeyed across the Pacific directly to the United States or Canada. The homogeneity of their demographic profiles stands in sharp contrast to the diverse circumstances of their Canadian, British, and, to a lesser extent, Italian remigrant counterparts who crossed the Canadian border southward at about the same time. Unlike Japanese women, all of whom were married, Canadian and European women who journeyed across the Canada-United States border included single, married, and a significant minority of widowed women (especially among Italians) of various ages. A relatively small portion (6 per cent each) of Italian and Scandinavian female remigrants were 14 years old or younger; a larger proportion of those from the British Isles, Central and Southern Europe, and Canada (9 per cent, 22 per cent, and 33 per cent, respectively) consisted of young teenagers.[41]

In addition to the similar demography of Japanese remigrant women and men and the larger number of their contemporaries from Japan who travelled directly to their destinations, a good proportion of the two groups originated from the same regions, especially the southwestern part of Japan, and they travelled to similar destinations in the American and Canadian Pacific regions. Like Japanese migrants who went to the United States and Canada directly, many among the remigrants I studied left Hiroshima, reporting it as the place of last permanent residence before migration. Okayama and Wakayama prefectures followed Hiroshima, again conforming to the distribution of geographic origin among direct migrants. This and other evidence suggests therefore that common links tied the two movements.[42] Equally important is that a significant minority of remigrants had resided outside Japan just before their recorded entry to the mainland United States, in places such as Honolulu, Vancouver, Victoria, and Steveston, a small fishing village near Vancouver. As for destinations, Seattle ranked first: 119 individuals, or over one-third of remigrants I studied, went to that city. Close behind Seattle came San Francisco, to which city 67 women and men, or about one-fifth, travelled.[43]

41 Ramirez with Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, pp. 81, 114, 146, 160–161.

42 Yukari Takai, "From Canada to the U.S.A.: A Continental Perspective on the Migratory Itineraries of Japanese, 1890–1916" (paper presented at the Nikkei conference in Seattle, University of Washington, May 2001).

43 Calculation based on data drawn from the *Border Entries*.

The similar demographic characteristics of the small number of remigrant women from Japan makes clear that one must consider the connections between the Japanese of British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, and California as well as Hawai'i, as we would otherwise miss small, vital dimensions of the emerging communities of Japanese. In other words, seemingly separate flows out of Japan into Canada and the United States intertwined in the transborder region of the Pacific Northwest as those bound for the two countries made up part of a complex web of human networks across the Pacific and the North (and later South) American continent that linked specific villages and towns in Japan to Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle, and other localities.

The practice of sending for prospective wives after brief exchanges of letters or photographs was not, of course, unique to Japanese. On the American frontier in the second half of the nineteenth century, "mail order brides," black and white, American and immigrant, were quite common. When the brides-to-be arrived in these frontier communities, many, if not all, anxiously met their husbands for the first time. For bachelor loggers in Washington State, black miners in Arizona, field hands in California, and settlers and immigrants in Nebraska, life on a frontier was impossible without someone to tend to daily chores like cooking, heating, and doing laundry, all of which meant hours of intensive work. Moreover, marrying off unattached men residing in their jurisdictions made sense to local or state officials, in view of building a more stable and settled environment. Women, for their part, left behind families and friends, bound for unknown places, because for many it was a chance to escape poverty, dead-end servant jobs, or the daunting prospect of life as a spinster and to achieve a long-held dream of a freer life. Single men thus found willing help for arranged marriages among family and acquaintances, their churches, or match-making businesses.[44]

Unlike "mail-order brides," Japanese wives did not receive the same measure of "welcome" because of the threat they posed, in the eyes of many white residents of California or British Columbia, as permanent, racially degrading elements unfit or unassimilable to the destination society.[45] Sending wives for Japanese male immigrants made sense to the Japanese government and immigrant leaders, however, because the

44 Mike Dunning, "The Southern Perception of the Trans-Mississippi West, 1845–1853" (PhD thesis, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 1995), and "Manifest Destiny and the Trans-Mississippi South: Natural Laws and the Extension of Slavery into Mexico," *Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 35, no. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 111–127; Chris Enss, *Hearts West: True Stories of Mail-Order Brides on the Frontier* (Guilford, ON: Falcon Publishing, 2005); Meg Greene Malvasi, "Freedom's Women"[online article], retrieved February 29, 2000, from http://www.suite.101.com. I would like to acknowledge Colin Coates for suggesting the parallel between Japanese picture marriage and mail-order brides in the American West.

45 Chan, *Asian Americans*, pp. 108–109.

growing presence of women among emerging Japanese communities suggested stability as well as the desirable and civilized nature of the overseas Japanese in alleged contrast to the low status of Chinese immigrants.[46] For example, Nosse Tatsugoro, the Consul General of Japan in Ottawa, condemned in an eloquent evocation of white stereotypes that Chinese "smoke opium; they start gambling dens; they are unclean; they never assimilated with the population; they take all they earn to China." Japanese immigrants, in contrast, were representatives of a "highly civilized people." As historian Andrea Geiger points out, because these women were "clean and frugal; they set up the family; they open churches,"[47] Japanese wives, once settled, served as a bastion of modernity and civilization, fundamental tropes in the Japanese diplomat's effort to quell the voice of discontent coming from policy-makers in British Columbia.

The Extent of Family Networks

One can only speculate, within the limitations of available sources, the reasons for the starkly low figures of those listing contacts among remigrating Japanese men. Did this have to do with the extent to which they were aware of the risks their cross-border journeys might pose to their families and relatives? Or did this reflect the possibility that informants, such as steamship crew members, told passengers of the risks to contact persons should the immigrants be rejected, or worse, apprehended? Or did migrants censor themselves to be cautious about giving the names of contacts to immigration officials? More questions arise than clear-cut answers. One thing is certain: many Japanese adhered to a principle whereby causing any trouble to one's family or acquaintances constituted the greatest shame. Such a principle had a function of social control, as Roger Daniels has noted in another context,[48] to suppress any act that would dishonour the family reputation in particular and the Japanese image more generally. Remigrating men were thus reluctant to name family members or acquaintances, an act that might expose family or friends to the scrutiny of immigration officials and subsequent dishonour. There were certainly exceptions. A case in point is 19-year-old Iguchi Saburô, mentioned earlier. When asked, he declared openly to a United States immigration officer that he had a friend in the city. For every Iguchi, however,

46 Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, pp. 47–60; Andrea Geiger, "Cross-Pacific Dimensions of Race, Caste and Class: Meiji-era Japanese Immigrants in the North American West, 1883–1928" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2006), pp. 94–96.

47 "Nosse in Montreal," *Victoria Daily Colonist*, March 28, 1897, cited in Geiger, "Cross-Pacific Dimensions," pp. 94–96.

48 Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 132.

Table 1: Relation of Accompanying Persons to U.S.-bound Japanese from Canada

	Men		Women	
	1896–1907	1907–1932	1896–1907	1907–1932
Husband	–	–	13	1
Wife	7	2	–	–
Children	2	1	0	0
Spouse and children	2	3	0	0
Father	2	0	0	0
Mother	0	0	0	0
Brother or sister	2	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0
Total of accompanied	14	6	13	1
All	261	46	27	2

Source: U.S. Immigration Service, Record Group 85, *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries to the U.S.*

there were more than eight Japanese men who answered "none" to the same question.

In sharp contrast to their male counterparts, a far greater number of female remigrants from Japan benefitted from, or were dependent on, family and kinship networks. Data drawn from the *Border Entries* suggest that social networks, including both travelling partners and contacts at their destinations, constituted an indispensable condition governing women's movements. One-half of the women (or 13 out of 27 in the period from 1894 to 1907 and one out of two in the period from 1908 to 1927) for whom contacts were identified indicated having a person to meet at their destination, invariably a husband. Furthermore, women who did not have a contact travelled with their spouses (see Tables 1 and 2). That Japanese women who crossed the Canadian border went to the United States typically as part of a family unit — or a legally sanctioned conjugal unit, to be more precise — corresponds to the experience of other migrant women such as Mexicanas who went to Los Angeles in the first half of the twentieth century and Filipinas who migrated to Seattle during the first third of the twentieth century.[49]

Several factors account for the essential role played by husbands for these Japanese remigrant women. First, the overwhelming number of single or married men comprising the Japanese influx to the continental United States and Canada before implementation of the Gentlemen's

49 George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 137; Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power*, p. 122.

Table 2: Relations of Contact Persons to Japanese Leaving Canada for the U.S.

	Men		Women	
	1896–1907	1907–1932	1896–1907	1907–1932
Husband	–	–	*9	*1
Wife	0	0	–	–
Children	0	0	0	0
Spouse and children	0	0	0	0
Father	0	0	0	0
Mother	0	0	0	0
Brother or sister	0	0	1	0
Brother-in-law	0	0	1	0
Address	0	0	1	0
Total	0	0	12	1
All men	261	46	27	2

* These numbers include women who travelled with their husbands. Three women in the period 1896–1907 and one woman in the period 1907–1932 did so.

Source: U.S. Immigration Service, Record Group 85, *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries to the U.S.*

Agreement between the United States and Japan[50] meant that there were few women to act as contacts for newcomers in the first years of the twentieth century. Moreover, because the overwhelming majority of female remigrants were likely recently wed to Japanese men already residing in North America, the very reason for women's travel was to be united with their husbands, precluding the need for other contacts. Finally, when women travelled across the Pacific or within the continent, they were exposed to a range of risks that differed from those encountered by men traversing the same passage. These risks included the presumption that they worked as prostitutes and physical or verbal assaults. This situation compounded, rather than replaced, the set of troubles faced by both men and women, including contracting health problems such as trachoma, which provided an additional basis for being judged inadmissible. Some of the risks, both real and potential, that Japanese women faced were akin to the difficulties encountered by Chinese women who travelled across the Pacific to North America and many African American women as they took part in the Great Migration from rural localities and urban centres in the South to the urban and industrial North and West within the United States.[51] All these factors, one may argue, led men and

50 Chan, *Asian Americans*, pp. 37–42.

51 The view held by many white westerners that all Chinese female migrants were prostitutes was among the factors that led to the *Chinese Exclusion Act* of 1882. Lucie Cheng, "Free, Indentured, Enslaved: Chinese Prostitutes in 19th Century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 5 (1979), pp. 23–29; Benson Tong, *Unsubmissive Women: Chinese Prostitutes in*

women to undertake distinctly different journeys. While men benefitted from what one American official described as "circuitous routes" when they sought to evade strict inspection at the border as late as 1907, the same routes presented women with few advantages, and even greater risks, than direct travel from Japan. For the small number of women like Tatsuhara who participated in this venture, the set of risks must have compelled them to give exact names of contacts, preferably their husbands, who either awaited them at their destinations or accompanied them en route. The impetus to seek admission into the United States thus propelled female and male remigrants to act in opposite fashion, precluding women from protecting their contacts from official scrutiny.

Social and Occupational Backgrounds

The available sources leave little information with which to determine the social origins of remigrant Japanese. Neither the standing of their families of origin in Japan nor that of their spouses in the United States is known. The Gentlemen's Agreement placed a class-based restriction in banning the admission of labourers and stipulating that anyone who failed to show a bank account or other liquid assets of at least $800 was ineligible to send for family members, including a wife.[52] The threshold of $800 was difficult to meet "even for the hardworking and frugal *issei*,"[53] given that American railroad workers, who were among the best paid blue-collar workers at the time, earned on average $677 annually.[54] Consequently, many Japanese men turned to a system of "show money" by which a group of co-workers and co-villagers pooled their resources and used "the same $800" to "provide travel documents for a number of wives, picture brides, and other relatives."[55] Did Tatsumi and other women like her travel the circuitous routes because of their spouses' inability to raise such show money? Or did they do so because they wanted to find another way to get around the exclusionary measures? These and other related questions remain open for future study.

Nineteenth-Century San Francisco (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994); Sucheng Chan, "The Exclusion of Chinese Women, 1875–1943," in Chan, ed., *Entry Denied*; George Anthony Peffer, *If They Don't Bring Their Women Here: Chinese Female Immigration before Exclusion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), cited in Lee, *At America's Gates*, p. 93. For discussion of the migration patterns of African American women, see Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915–1945," in Joe W. Trotter, ed., *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), pp. 127–154, especially p. 132.

52 Daniels, *Asian America*, p. 131.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

In her study of Filipina/Filipino migrants in Seattle and the Transpacific West, Dorothy Fujita-Rony has observed that gender factored heavily into the nature of links between migration and labour markets, determining what one could and could not do at one's destination.[56] A look at the occupational experience of Japanese remigrants extends this observation; gender served to define what one was expected to do or not do even before one set out. The Japanese remigrant men I studied listed 44 job titles, most having been farmers, farm labourers, day labourers, or both of the latter before migration. More than half, or 64 farmers and 67 farm and general labourers, made up these categories (26 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively, of those with identified jobs) between 1896 and 1907. In the period from 1908 to 1927, the proportion in both job categories further increased (five individuals and fifteen individuals, or 12 and 36 per cent, respectively). No Japanese women, in contrast, indicated having had any occupation prior to migration. Except for three unidentified cases, all female remigrants listed "wife" or "housewife" as their occupation — again suggesting women's financial dependence or the primacy of their role in providing sustenance work (see Table 3).

The lack of occupational experience among Japanese remigrant women also differs from the experience of remigrant women belonging to other ethnic groups. A far greater proportion (ranging from 50 to 80 per cent) of female border-crossers from Canada, Great Britain, and Scandinavia had worked either as weavers or carders in textile mills, salesgirls or bookkeepers in shops and offices, parish or public school teachers, domestics in family homes, or medical nurses in hospitals or in supervisory positions.[57] Although the significant proportion of women who listed no occupation or declared themselves as housewives cannot be disregarded, such variation among women of Canadian and European origins leads one to conclude that many belonging to the latter groups used their skills and experience in the industrial and service sectors as one of the few assets they had for undertaking their own migration and that of their families.

It is tempting to suggest that the lack of wage labour experience among Japanese female remigrants points to their financial dependence and insignificance, in contrast to the independent and entrepreneurial qualities of Japanese men as well as a number of their female Canadian and European counterparts. Such an interpretation is further strengthened if

56 Fujita-Rony, *American Workers, Colonial Power*, p. 83.

57 Ramirez with Otis, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, Tables 5 and 9, pp. 92, 125; Takai, "The Family Networks and Geographical Mobility," pp. 370–380, and "Expérience de travail et sexe comme critères migratoires : le cas des immigrantes canadiennes-françaises à Lowell (Massachusetts) au début du XX^{e} siècle," *Francophonies d'Amérique*, vol. 11 (2001), pp. 183–193. Not included in the figures above is the large proportion of nuns. According to Ramirez and Otis, nuns accounted for 8 per cent of the French-Canadian female migrants and 13 per cent of the Anglo-Canadian female migrants in the period between 1906 and 1930.

Table 3: Leading Occupations of Japanese Remigrants by Gender, 1896–1932

	1896–1907	1907–1932
Men		
Labourer, farm labourer	67	15
Farmer	64	5
Student	33	3
Merchant, dealer, salesman	29	7
Hotel, boardinghouse, or restaurant keeper	5	1
Total of men for whom an occupation was identified	243	44
Women		
Wife, housewife	24	2
Total of women for whom an occupation was identified	24	2

Source: U.S. Immigration Service, Record Group 85, *Soundex Index to Canadian Border Entries to the U.S.*

one considers the other features discussed previously, such as the very small proportion of Japanese women among the remigrant population as a whole and the patterns of their journey wherein women rarely travelled without a husband's accompaniment or sponsorship. Alternatively, one may suggest that such qualities point to the salient, and indeed indispensable, role of Japanese women as, above all, providers of subsistence work, which included a wide range of housework, care work, and later child-bearing and child-rearing. Such tasks made substantial difference in the quality of life of those men living in rural and, to a lesser extent, urban settings. Further, such "women's" responsibilities were crucial to the transformation of the Japanese communities from so-called bachelor societies, composed largely but not exclusively of single men, to ones consisting of families with men, women, and children.[58]

While it is not easy to discern reasons for the alleged lack of paid work experience among Japanese women given the dearth of available sources, existing studies on women's work, power, and relationships reveal useful ways to reflect on this question. One possible explanation stems from inaccuracy in the recording of women's occupations. In her study of late-nineteenth-century Montreal, Bettina Bradbury has pointed out that, because of the nature of women's work, which lacked regularity and was more informal, wives, mothers, and daughters tended to underestimate their contributions, considering their work as only "helping" their spouses or households temporarily.[59] In a different historical setting but

58 Chan, *Asian American History*, pp. 107–108.

59 This may well have been the case not only among a goodly number of women of all ethnic backgrounds who were indeed secondary wage-earners within a household and thus worked intermittently, but also among women who were the sole breadwinners in their households. The

similar psychological implications, anthropologist Sheba Mariam George has presented cases of female migrants from Kerala, India, to a late-twentieth-century American city who deliberately minimized and at times ignored the financial and decision-making power they gained from their profession as medical nurses in the United States.[60] This was perhaps because, as George argues, a goodly number of Kerala women wanted to avoid the disturbing consequences of breaking with traditional ideologies and gendered balances of power.[61] Differing historical contexts render impossible any easy inference from the case of Kerala nurses or French-Canadian and Irish women in industrializing Montreal to analyse the mind-sets of Japanese wives in the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, the customary practice of undermining the value of women's contributions and their sense of obligation to adhere to and protect the values and practices dictated by family-wage ideologies may have had a significant influence on Japanese remigrant women's reporting of their occupation as "housewife."

A second and closely related point was that being a housewife meant more than a civil status for these Japanese women who went to join their husbands in the North American West. It also represented a specific standing in the gendered hierarchy of a Japanese family and a distinct set of culturally determined responsibilities for married women within the household that, in many cases, included her husband and his parents, though geographic distance across the Pacific and away from in-laws might have lessened the severity of these obligations to some degree. At the same time, the rugged conditions and physically dispersed localities in which their husbands worked as farmers, labourers, loggers, or miners meant that a wife had to cook, clean, and wash for her husband and his co-workers. Oral history accounts abound with cases in which such living conditions pressed Japanese immigrant women to perform a heavy load of subsistence work ranging from drawing their own water, to gathering

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federal manuscript census provides ample examples of cases in which a husband was purportedly the only wage-earner in a household, but was listed as working as a day labourer or unskilled worker in a textile mill, making it difficult to imagine how he could have supported a family with a large number of children under working age. Unless these men's wives were engaged in paid work at least irregularly, it would have been impossible for these families to avoid starvation. Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), n. 38, pp. 282–283.

60 Sheba Mariam George, *When Women Come First: Gender and Class in Transnational Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

61 *Ibid.*, chap. 3, especially p. 98. Historical and sociological studies on non-migrant families also suggest that family relations did not automatically alter when changes occurred in the wage-earning capacity of the household. See Mark Rosenfield, "'It was a hard life': Class and Gender in the Work and Family Rhythms of a Railway Town, 1920–1950," *Historical Papers/ Communications historiques* (1988), pp. 237–279; Mira Komarovsky, *The Unemployment of Man and his Family* (New York: Arno Press, 1973).

wood themselves to cook and heat their homes, to fighting to keep dirt out of houses that were "little more than shacks,"[62] tasks not so different from those undertaken by the non-Japanese "mail-order brides" discussed earlier. Moreover, the economic needs of the family and the demands of regional labour markets pressed women like Tatsuhara, Kanemitsu, and Hori, who lacked previous occupational experience, into engaging in wage-generating work as soon as they joined their husbands in Washington, Oregon, or California.[63] In addition to the race and gender-specific criteria determining who was considered best suited to the demands of particular regional economies and the nation's moral and political institutions, the household needs of Japanese immigrant men for work partners in agricultural fields and logging camps and providers of unpaid domestic work arguably carved out a distinct occupational profile among remigrating Japanese women. Japanese women in the early-twentieth-century American and Canadian West perhaps recognized this as part of their obligation and definition as wife, another reason that may at least partly explain why they listed their occupation as housewife or wife when asked at the United States border.

Conclusion

The transnational region of Vancouver/Victoria and Puget Sound opened a pivotal space for Japanese women and men who entered the United States from Canada in the early twentieth century. The porous nature of the Canadian-American border shaped the distinct demographic and socio-economic profiles of remigrating Japanese men, as well as the smaller number of women, who passed through this border region. The profile of Japanese female remigrants in comparison with the almost perfectly inverted picture of what characterized their male counterparts' travels — including the skewed sex ratios, the indispensable presence of contacts at destinations, and above all the alleged lack of paid work experience — are similar to the salient characteristics of Japanese women who travelled directly to the United States or Canada. Together with geographic features (such as places of origin and destination) common to the two groups, such similarities suggest strong connections

62 Ito Kazuo, *Hokubei hyakunen zakura* [North American Hundred Years Flowering Cherries] (Tokyo: Hokubei hyakunen zakiura jikko iinkai, 1969), and *Issei: A History of Japanese Immigrants in North America*, trans. Shinichiro Nakamura and Jean S. Gerard (Seattle: Executive Committee for Publication, Japanese Community Service, 1973), pp. 428–429, quoted by Gail M. Nomura, "Tsugiki, a Grafting: A History of a Japanese Pioneer Woman in Washington State," in Karen J. Blair, ed., *Women in Pacific Northwest History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988; 1990), pp. 284–307, especially 287–290.

63 Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor*, pp. 116–120; Nomura, "Tsugiki, a Grafting," pp. 207–229.

that linked the continental cross-border movement with the more general contours of the transpacific migration among Japanese women and men.

The apparent lack of wage labour experience among remigrating Japanese women confirms a historical view of migrant women in general, and migrating Asian women in particular, that underlines the financial dependence and even insignificance of the majority of (but not all) women, in contrast to the independent and entrepreneurial qualities of their male counterparts. Such an interpretation is further strengthened by the other features discussed here. One may turn the argument around, however, by positing that such qualities in fact indicate the fundamental role of women even among a very small number of remigrants who provided indispensable hands for productive work, subsistence work, and, although not discussed in this study, later family work in the bearing and raising of children. Either way, the indispensable and inevitable nature of all the types of work that these women performed — as housekeepers and caretakers of their families and of co-workers labouring alongside their husbands — is a reminder of their central role in creating and sustaining their families and communities on both sides of the border.