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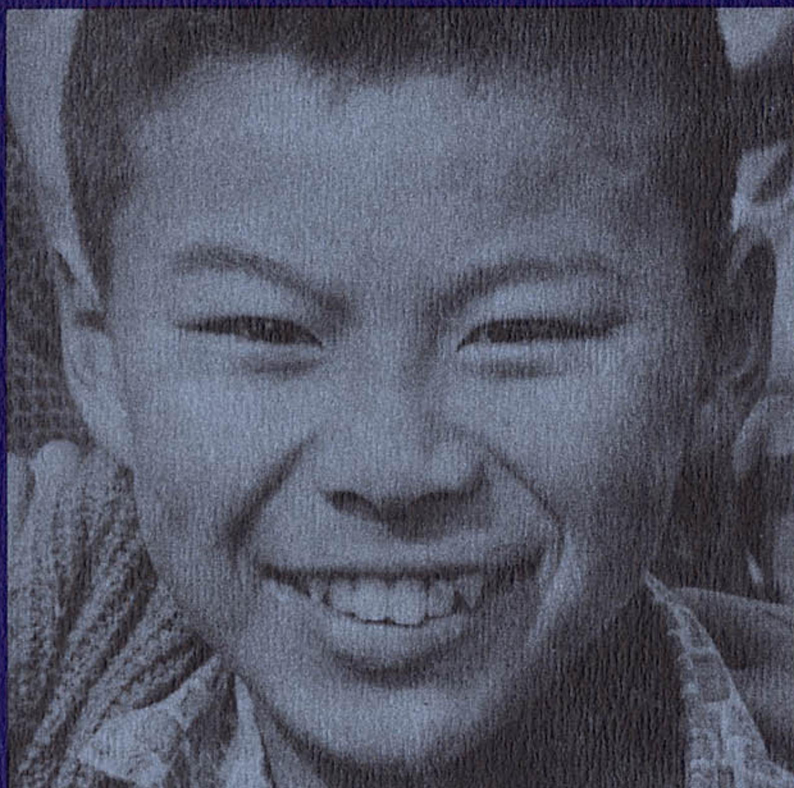
THE JAPANESE



IN CANADA

W. Peter Ward

Canada's Ethnic Groups Canadian Historical Association

ISBN 0-88798-096-1 *Canada's Ethnic Groups*
ISSN 1483-9504 *Canada's Ethnic Groups* (print)
ISSN 1715-8605 *Canada's Ethnic Groups* (Online)

CANADA'S ETHNIC GROUPS

Published by the Canadian Historical Association with the support of the Multiculturalism Program, Government of Canada.

Ottawa, 1982

Booklet No. 3

Printed by Keystone Printing & Lithographing Ltd., Saint John, N.B.

THE JAPANESE IN CANADA

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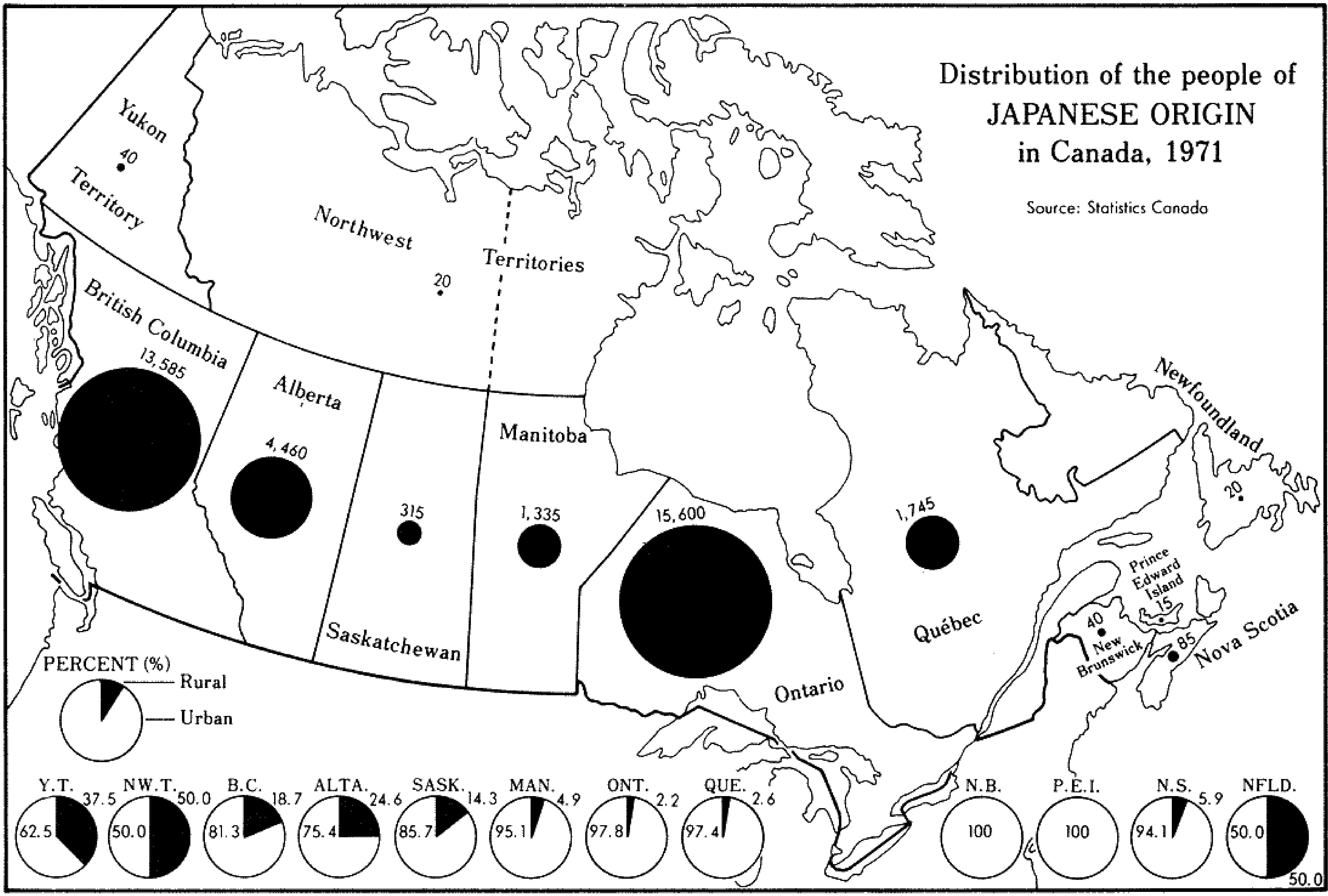

Distribution of the people of
JAPANESE ORIGIN
in Canada, 1971
Source: Statistics Canada
Yukon Territory
40
Northwest Territories
20
British Columbia
13,585
Alberta
4,460
Saskatchewan
315
Manitoba
1,335
Ontario
15,600
Québec
1,745
Newfoundland
20
Prince Edward Island
15
New Brunswick
40
Nova Scotia
85
PERCENT (%)
Rural
Urban
Y.T. 37.5 62.5
NW.T. 50.0 50.0
B.C. 18.7 81.3
ALTA. 24.6 75.4
SASK. 14.3 85.7
MAN. 4.9 95.1
ONT. 2.2 97.8
QUE. 2.6 97.4
N.B. 100
P.E.I. 100
N.S. 5.9 94.1
NFLD. 50.0 50.0

THE JAPANESE IN CANADA

I — The Japanese Background

After a century which brought European trade goods and missionaries to the Islands, Japan set its back against further contact with Europeans in 1641 and for more than two hundred years isolated itself from western influences. Europeans were forbidden to enter the country and emigration was punishable by death. But in 1854 American Commodore Matthew Perry forcibly opened Japan to western influence and during the second half of the nineteenth century the Japanese government began systematically to adopt policies which encouraged rapid social and economic modernization in the nation. It laid the foundations of an industrial economy, implemented extensive bureaucratic and military reforms, introduced mass public education, and permitted foreign travel. A small number of Japanese were even encouraged to go abroad, and to return with a knowledge of western ways. These early travellers — most of them merchants and students — were only temporary migrants, whose errands outside the country were brief. Emigration proper was extremely limited until the mid-1880s when the revolutionary changes which had occurred in Japan induced substantial migration overseas. Over the next fifty years the Japanese moved in the hundreds of thousands to Asia, South America, Hawaii, and continental America, only a tiny fraction — fewer than 40,000 — destined for Canada.

The country these immigrants left behind, a cluster of islands on the west side of the Pacific, was small, rocky and mountainous. With a total land area of 378,000 square kilometers it was approximately two-fifths the size of British Columbia. During the years of high emigration its population grew rapidly, from 40 million in 1887 to just over 70 million 50 years later and the population density increased from 105 persons per square kilometer to 175. Thus the arable land available, never abundant, was increasingly strained to feed a rapidly growing population, while competition to possess and exploit this scarce resource grew apace. Small landholding families — the basic social and economic unit in nineteenth-century rural Japan — confronted growing economic pressure as their lands were progressively sub-divided, while providing land for the next generation grew more and more difficult. Japan's farmers were often exploited by grasping landlords who profited from the short supply of land, and they were burdened by heavy taxes levied to pay for Japan's modernization programme, from which they gained little benefit. Like the fishermen and common labourers, who also figured prominently in the ranks of the emigrants, these farmers were engaged in a continuous struggle for survival; their traditionally low standard of living remained largely unaffected by the economic revolution in their society.

The first Japanese immigrant set foot in British Columbia in 1877 and for the next 20 years small numbers followed him. But migration did not begin in earnest until the mid-1890s. From then until World War I almost 30,000 Japanese entered Canada, three fifths of all who have ever come to this country from Japan. Two great peaks of migration each introduced 11,000 newcomers, the first in 1899-1900 (most of them soon leaving for the United States), the second

TABLE I: JAPANESE IMMIGRATION TO CANADA

	Total Japanese Immigrants	% of Total Canadian Immigration
1896 - 1900	12,788*	8.20
1901 - 1910	13,441	0.80
1911 - 1920	7,242	0.42
1921 - 1930	4,099	0.33
1931 - 1940	987	0.62
1941 - 1950	32	0.01
1951 - 1960	1,056	0.07
1961 - 1970	4,216	0.30
1971 - 1978	5,233	0.44
TOTAL:	49,094	

*Arrivals as distinguished from immigrants. Many soon departed for the USA or perhaps returned to Japan, as the 1901 census figure (4,738) suggests. No record was kept of Japanese immigration before 1896, but an estimated 1,000 Japanese arrived between 1877 and 1895.

TABLE II: PEOPLE OF JAPANESE ORIGIN IN CANADA

	Total Japanese Population in Canada	% of Canadian Population
1901	4,738	0.09
1911	9,021	0.13
1921	15,868	0.18
1931	23,342	0.22
1941	23,149	0.20
1951	21,663	0.15
1961	29,157	0.16
1971	37,260	0.17

in 1906-7. In 1908, because of strong public opposition to Japanese immigration in British Columbia, diplomatic agreements were reached with Japan whereby she voluntarily restricted the flow of migrants to Canada. During the 1920s and 1930s the numbers of immigrants dwindled continuously, averaging 250 per year. Interrupted entirely by World War II, migration from Japan to Canada remained extremely low until the mid-1960s when it increased to levels similar to those which had prevailed early in the century. Their numbers always small, Japanese have never constituted as much as 1 per cent of the incoming population in any decade since the turn of the twentieth century.

About half of the immigrants to Canada came from one of four heavily-populated prefectures in Japan: Hiroshima, Shiga, and Wakayama, located in south or south central Honshu (the largest of the islands), and Kagoshima, found on the southern shores of Kyushu (the southernmost of the large Japanese islands). The remainder was drawn from widely scattered prefectures. Wakayama was a coastal district and supported a fishing industry. Hiroshima prefecture included a major industrial city. These exceptions aside, the regions from which most immigrants came were largely agricultural, devoted primarily to the cultivation of rice. For the most part, the migrants came from farming and fishing backgrounds, although small numbers were craftsmen and petty traders. The great majority of these early emigrants left Japan for economic reasons. In Canada they saw prospects for wealth far greater than they possessed at home. Most often they intended to work temporarily in Canada, to remit their surplus income to their families, and to return home with their accumulated savings. Many of them must have realized these ambitions, at least in some measure. By the late 1930s, according to one estimate, 13,000 had returned to Japan, one in three of all Japanese who had come to Canada. The little Japanese village of Mio offers a striking example of this process at work. A small, poor fishing and farming village in Wakayama before the 1890s, it sent scores of its sons to British Columbia and prospered greatly because of their remittances, at least until 1941. Thus for both the migrants and their dependants at home, temporary migration offered the prospect of substantial economic gain. Through overseas sojourns in Canada and elsewhere, many Japanese were able to improve substantially their own living standards as well as those of their families.

Not surprisingly, migration was for the ambitious and resourceful. Before 1910 — when temporary migration was the objective of virtually all Japanese who arrived in Canada — the great majority of immigrants were young, male and single. The pioneers left their homes speculatively, hoping to find opportunity wherever they could. Soon they were followed by many young men who were recruited through the "chain migration" process, drawn by advice from friends and relatives who had preceded them to Canada. Others were sent abroad by Japanese companies, which made a business of facilitating emigration, sometimes also supplying labour to overseas employers. The government of Japan registered outgoing citizens, supervised the activities of emigration agencies and restricted the number of migrants permitted to leave for Canada.

After 1910 a crucial change occurred in the nature of Japanese migration to Canada. While single, male sojourners continued to arrive in significant numbers, over the next 30 years the majority of immigrants were women. Some were brought by husbands who had returned to Japan for a wife. But most came

as brides of men they had never even seen. Lawfully married by proxy in Japan, they had been wedded to men in Canada through the picture bride system whereby a man wishing a spouse would send instructions to his family in Japan, who arranged an alliance and then sent him a picture of their choice of bride for his approval. This development created a more normal balance between the sexes. The ratio of men to women among adults dropped from over 10 to 1, to 2 to 1 by 1931. Soon after came marriage, children, family life, and new attitudes toward life in Canada. Those who married and had children began to put down roots in their new world home, gradually placing behind them thoughts of returning to Japan. Increasingly they accepted — sometimes eagerly embraced — permanent settlement in western Canada. Thus with the passing of time the sojourner became an established resident.

II — The Issei

The Issei were the first generation of Japanese immigrants. As Table II reveals, they and their descendants have never constituted more than a tiny fraction of the Canadian population. Nor has the community which they founded grown consistently. Before 1931 its rate of growth was high; it almost doubled in size during the first decade of the century and expanded only slightly less rapidly over the next twenty years. This pattern was disrupted during the Depression and World War II, the number of Japanese in Canada dropping by 7 per cent over these years. After mid-century the growth rate of the minority increased, but at much lower levels. In general it has conformed to the overall pattern of population growth in post-war Canada. By themselves, these growth rates reveal relatively little about the character of the immigrant population. The sources of this growth — net migration and natural increase — varied considerably over time, and these changes reflect major alterations in the nature of Japanese Canadian society. The growth pattern of the community can be conveniently divided into four distinct phases. Before 1911 expansion was sustained almost entirely through migration, and young male sojourners constituted the great majority of the population. As Tables I and II indicate, only a third of those who had previously migrated remained in Canada by 1911. During the next decade, the second phase, families were formed, children were born, and natural increase began to contribute significantly to the growth of the community.

Between 1921 and 1951, the third phase, a series of demographic tremors shook the Japanese community and fundamentally altered its essential character. The growing incidence of marriage, the disproportionately large segment of the female Japanese population of child-bearing age, and the traditional Japanese desire (common among peasant peoples everywhere) for large families combined to produce extremely high rates of net natural increase during the 1920s. In British Columbia they reached a peak of over 73 per thousand in 1930, more than ten times the prevailing rate of 6.6 for the population as a whole. At the same time restrictions reduced the flow of migrants to a trickle, which dried up entirely during World War II. Consequently, the Japanese Canadian community progressively lost the stimulus of close contact with the mother country and came to rely on the social and cultural resources which could be generated within itself. Meanwhile many sojourners returned home and after the war a

TABLE III

DISTRIBUTION OF PEOPLE OF JAPANESE ORIGIN IN CANADA

Total No. (and %)

	Atlantic Provinces	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	British Columbia	Northern Territories
1901	1 (-)	9 (0.2)	29 (0.6)	18 (0.4)	4,597 (97.0)	84 (1.8)
1911	4 (-)	12 (0.1)	35 (0.4)	309 (3.4)	8,587 (95.2)	74 (0.8)
1921	6 (-)	32 (0.2)	161 (1.0)	635 (4.0)	15,006 (94.6)	28 (0.2)
1931	4 (-)	43 (0.2)	220 (0.9)	817 (3.5)	22,205 (95.1)	53 (0.2)
1941	5 (-)	48 (0.2)	234 (1.0)	725 (3.1)	22,096 (95.5)	41 (0.2)
1951	19 (0.1)	1,137 (5.2)	8,581 (39.6)	4,722 (21.8)	7,169 (33.1)	35 (0.2)
1961	49 (0.2)	1,459 (5.0)	11,870 (40.7)	5,297 (18.2)	10,424 (35.8)	58 (0.2)
1971	160 (0.4)	1,745 (4.7)	15,600 (41.9)	6,110 (16.4)	13,585 (36.5)	55 (0.1)

further 4000 were voluntarily repatriated to Japan. During this period departing Japanese may have outnumbered newcomers by as much as two to one, somewhat offsetting the prevailing high rates of natural increase. Since the great majority of those who left had been born in Japan, their departure further reinforced the new world character of Japanese Canadian society. By 1941 60 per cent of the Japanese community were Canadian born, almost all of them under the age of 30. In the final, post war growth phase a small migration from Japan was resumed. At the same time rates of increase soon conformed to those characteristic of Canadian society as a whole. The overwhelming majority of Japanese, now two or three generations removed from the homeland of their ancestors, had adopted the demographic behaviour of urban, middle class North America.

When they arrived the Issei first settled in Vancouver and at Steveston, a nearby fishing village at the mouth of the Fraser River. Over the years, as the immigrant community grew and its employment pattern broadened, the Japanese dispersed themselves somewhat more widely in British Columbia, on Vancouver Island, along the northern coast, or in the Okanagan Valley. But they remained heavily concentrated in those areas where the pioneer migrants first located. On the eve of World War II, after half a century in the new land, more than two thirds of the Japanese in Canada still lived within forty miles of central Vancouver. Very few had ever ventured beyond the western slope of the Rockies. Until Pearl Harbour 95 per cent of all Japanese Canadians lived in British Columbia; the only other small clusters of settlement were found on the prairies and in southern Ontario. Loath to leave the Pacific coast, the closest point in Canada to Japan, the early Japanese settled in closed communities facing westward across the Pacific.

The immigrants arrived in British Columbia during the early stages of the development of an industrial economy dominated by resource extraction, particularly in salmon fishing, lumbering, and coal and hard rock mining. Construction activity was also an important feature of early expansion. Between 1880 and 1920 rapid, though somewhat cyclical, economic growth created an expanding demand for labour which, if not sustained, was at least recurrent. The Japanese, like tens of thousands of other immigrants, were attracted by this demand for wage labour and upon their arrival were quickly absorbed into the provincial labour force. The great majority of the early immigrants worked in the coastal fisheries. At least 4000 were employed in the industry at the turn of the century, primarily at the mouth of the Fraser where the salmon fishery was then concentrated. For many Japanese it must have been a lucrative activity; during the early years some of the fishermen "commuted" from Japan for the summer season alone. But fishing was not necessarily the road to instant wealth. A seasonal occupation, it offered employment from April to October at best. Some Japanese found work in other sectors while the less fortunate endured periodic unemployment.

As the provincial economy developed and the immigrant community grew, gradually the Japanese entered a broader range of occupations. Nonetheless, most of the jobs they found were low-skilled, low-paid tasks, often the most arduous and least rewarding in the labour market. Frequently Japanese working men were paid half to two-thirds of what white labourers earned for the same

types of work and the range of employment opportunities was considerably narrowed by social prejudice. Even when more broadly dispersed throughout the provincial labour force, the Japanese remained concentrated in a limited range of activities. A survey in 1931 revealed the following distribution: agriculture, 9 per cent; fishing, 19 per cent; general unskilled labour, 18 per cent; lumbering, 12 per cent; personal services, 11 per cent; and commerce, 5 per cent. The remaining 16 per cent were scattered throughout all other economic sectors. A small minority of the Japanese were independent proprietors, particularly those found in agriculture and commerce. But independence seldom meant much greater wealth. By and large those who were petty businessmen made their livings by providing services to the Japanese Canadian community. For others fishing — the first immigrant activity — remained the most attractive option. A man who owned his boat and gear, who worked hard throughout the season, and who had a bit of luck could earn a substantial sum, depending on what the canneries paid for fish. After 1922, however, at the behest of white fishermen, the federal department of fisheries limited the number of fishing licenses issued to Japanese. Thereafter the doors to an attractive occupation were partly closed to the Japanese community.

If the Issei were quickly incorporated into the work force of a labour hungry British Columbia, their social integration proceeded much more slowly. The first generation always remained a separate community, clearly set apart from the host society. Their social lives were lived within the cultural confines of the minority group, their contacts with the white majority largely casual and impersonal. They lived in separate districts, married other Japanese, established friendships within the group, and attempted to re-create many of the distinctive cultural traditions and institutions they had known in Japan. They formed a wide range of voluntary associations, numbering at least 230 by the 1930s, to serve the various interests of the immigrant community. Among the most important were Buddhist temples, vernacular newspapers, trade unions, businessmen's associations, and various social, educational, and philanthropic societies. Whether borrowed from Japan or created in the new world, these institutions addressed the needs of the first generation community and, quite naturally, reflected their outlook. In doing so they helped to maintain the minority group's boundaries, turning it in upon itself, preserving its distinctive character, and retarding its absorption into the larger society of western Canada.

As sojourners the early migrants considered themselves temporary residents of Canada; the primary purpose of their journey was to earn a large sum of money before returning home. Thus they had little incentive to accommodate themselves to Canadian society any further than was essential. With marriage, family formation and permanent settlement came greater inducement to acculturation, but even then change was slow. Adult immigrants traditionally have difficulty learning new languages and cultural responses, and most Issei shared this handicap. They could also live their lives within a vital minority community which offered familiar and comfortable alternatives. Consequently they were not often required to make those extensive adjustments which greater isolation might otherwise have necessitated.

In many respects, then, the Issei shared experiences common among first generation immigrants in Canada. But in one way their experience differed

markedly from the norm. Not only culture but pronounced physical differences set them apart from the majority and complicated the process of their integration. While most immigrant groups engendered some form of nativistic reaction, none encountered more virulent animosity than the newcomer from Japan. Long before the first Asians arrived in North America, white supremacist convictions had become embedded in western thought. The commonly accepted colour spectrum of race ranked Asians in an intermediate position between blacks (then condemned to utter inferiority) and whites (whose superior character seemed self-evident to white ideologues). When Europeans and Asians encountered one another at various points around the Pacific rim, whites were already firmly convinced of the Oriental's lesser nature. Early contacts between whites and Chinese in California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia during the gold rush and railway construction eras (1849-1885) reinforced these convictions. In addition the larger numbers and superior power of whites automatically placed them at the top of the racial pecking order, above all other groups in authority, status, and wealth. During these initial encounters in British Columbia, strong antipathy and periodic tension characterized the response of whites to Chinese immigrants. This established patterns of thought and behaviour which moulded race relations in western Canada until after World War II.

The first Japanese who entered Canada thus fell heir to an unhappy legacy of prejudice. From the earliest days of their settlement in the far west, popular opinion inclined against them, and little time was lost in extending disabilities already imposed on the Chinese to the Japanese. In 1895, when the Japanese population of British Columbia could not have been more than 1000, Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry were barred from the provincial franchise (and since the federal electorate was drawn from provincial voters' lists they lost the federal franchise in British Columbia as well). Save for a handful of military veterans given the vote after World War I, all Japanese who were Canadian citizens either by birth or naturalization were denied this fundamental right of citizenship. Consequently they had no political role to play in the public life of the country. Numerous other examples of white racism can be cited: a major race riot in Vancouver in September 1907, limitations upon employment opportunities, immigration restrictions, discriminatory housing covenants, and segregation in public accommodation. Some of these measures were acts of public policy, others grew out of private agreements, while still others stemmed from casual acts of petty discrimination. Whatever their nature and cause, they were expressions of widespread racial antipathy in white society. Taken together, they reinforced the exclusivist tendencies deeply rooted in the Issei and further retarded their assimilation of Canadian customs.

III — The Nisei

The great majority of the second generation, the Nisei, were born in Canada after 1910, primarily during the 1920s and 1930s. Most of them knew little of the land across the Pacific which their parents had left behind. Though raised by men and women strongly attached to Japan, whose cultural norms and values were largely those of the old world, the second generation were Japanese more by inheritance than experience. The only country they knew was Canada, the nation of their birth, and they grew up much as did most Canadians of their

generation. They spoke English, played Canadian games, enjoyed popular pastimes, and shared much of the outlook of their white contemporaries. Consciously and unconsciously, through the lessons of school and playground, they absorbed the culture of the only society they knew. As immigrant parents often do, the Issei tried to pass on to their children the full range of Japanese cultural tradition. After school and on Saturday mornings thousands of Nisei children trooped off to Japanese vernacular schools for instruction in the language, history and culture of their parents. A small number — the kika Nisei (literally returning second generation) — were educated in Japan. But these rear guard actions had limited success. The Nisei grew up Canadian, resembling their white peers much more than their cousins in Japan. For many parents, wedded to traditional ways, this resemblance was a source of deep concern. Like many other migrants they, too, tasted one of the bitter fruits of acculturation, set apart from their own children by a wide cultural gap.

Nevertheless, as most Nisei discovered, there were limits to acculturation. Many were unwilling to abandon entirely the Japanese component of their cultural identity. Moreover, like their parents, they were faced with an unyielding wall of white prejudice. Canadian born and bred though they were, in the eyes of their white critics they would always be Japanese. During childhood and adolescence the Nisei might avoid direct confrontation with overt racism, since schools, playgrounds and beaches were not formally segregated, although theaters, cafes and swimming pools sometimes were. Not until they looked for jobs did the second generation — young men in particular — encounter the boundaries which set limits on their opportunities. Like most Canadians of the inter-war generation, the Nisei were motivated by materialist values and sought occupational success. These aspirations were accentuated by a characteristic immigrant desire for upward social and economic mobility. Like true twentieth-century North Americans they strove to surpass the achievements of their parents. A small number even earned university degrees in their quest for success. But the second generation discovered that the doors to many desirable jobs were closed to them. Few white businessmen would employ Nisei youths in white collar occupations and they were denied access to most professional employments. Thus they were left with the same blue collar occupations which their parents had held, most of which offered modest wages, low status, and limited prospects for improvement. The other major alternative was work in an Issei-owned business, few of which held out much opportunity to the ambitious because of their marginal nature. The fact that many Nisei came of age during the depression further compounded their difficulties. When jobs were scarce those with an added handicap had even greater trouble finding work. Consequently, whatever their aspirations the second generation seldom achieved their vocational goals. Instead, they conformed to the pattern which the Issei sojourners had established, taking work where it was most often available and labouring in the resource, agricultural, and service sectors of the British Columbian economy.

The Japanese family system, the central social institution of Japan, was profoundly altered in western Canada and in its alteration the Nisei played a crucial role. The traditional Japanese family was extended and patriarchical, bound together by common interest, honour, and obligation. Ideally, individuals

subordinated their interests and desires to those of the kin group, whose major tasks included preserving the continuity of the family, its property, and its honour. Marriages were normally arranged by parents on the basis of prudential (not romantic) considerations. Women were invariably subservient to their husbands. Children were expected to submit to paternal authority and to conduct themselves in accordance with the dictates of family honour. The Issei brought this family model to Canada and attempted to duplicate it in the new world. In some respects this replication proved impractical: extended kinship networks were disrupted by migration and the immigrant family was usually pared to its nuclear core. But the patriarchical, authoritarian, honour bound traditions of Japanese family life were much more portable and thus were reproduced on the eastern side of the Pacific. The Nisei, however, grew up in an atmosphere of liberal individualism, aware that the nuclear family of twentieth-century Canada was far more democratic and permissive than its Japanese counterpart. In adolescence they often rebelled against parental authority and as young adults they eagerly embraced North American courtship customs and the marriage based on romance. At the cost of considerable inter-generational tension and conflict, the Nisei put behind them the family traditions of their inheritance and adopted the practises of their community of birth.

During the 1930s, as their numbers grew rapidly, the older Nisei became increasingly conscious of themselves as a separate social group. Children of two worlds, they were not fully a part of either. An articulate minority among them formed separate voluntary associations to discuss mutual problems and seek common goals. They also founded and read English language Nisei newspapers (the most successful being *The New Canadian*, established in 1938) which expressed the views and aspirations of the second generation. Like changes in family relationships, these developments augmented intergenerational friction, for by establishing distinctive institutions for themselves, the Nisei activists tacitly challenged the social leadership of the older generation. By emphasizing their distinctiveness they consciously and unconsciously drove deeper the existing wedge between themselves and their elders.

The chief concern of Nisei leaders, however, was not their status within the minority group but rather their position in the Canadian community as a whole. Having been schooled in the liberal democratic values of twentieth-century Canada, they were angered by their own second-class status, chief symbol of which was their lack of the franchise. During the later 1930s Nisei spokesmen, in concert with an extremely small band of liberal white sympathizers, began to press Ottawa for the right to the federal vote. Although they failed to achieve their objectives, the attempt presaged a growing commitment to the achievement of full civil liberties among the second generation. It also bespoke a further measure of Nisei acculturation. The Issei, while not wholly unsympathetic to the general aims of their children, were far less concerned about such issues as the vote. Having come from a society where democratic tradition was shallow, they did not see in the franchise issue the central significance it assumed in Nisei eyes. In contrast, the second generation's commitment to democracy was a North American phenomenon. So too were the aggressive pressure group tactics, obviously borrowed from local political models, which they employed in their campaign (and which, not surprisingly, the Issei frequently deplored). To some

degree Issei reserve about Nisei political activities derived from the latter's competing claims to community leadership. But ultimately it was grounded in the major cultural differences which divided the two generations.

In the later 1930s developments outside the Japanese Canadian community occurred which soon were to alter profoundly the course of its history. Anti-oriental agitation in British Columbia began to increase in 1937 after having lain dormant for more than a decade. On this occasion the Japanese were the sole targets of prejudice for, unlike previous outbursts of racism, this one was touched off by events across the Pacific. Japan's Manchurian adventures had aroused western concern over her expansionist policies and, when she invaded China in 1937, a wave of anti-Japanese feeling swept over western North America. Many west coast whites jumped to the conclusion that Japan had military designs on British Columbia and viewed the Japanese community as a potential threat to both regional and national security. Over the next two years this wave of hostility ebbed considerably, only to be succeeded by a second in the spring of 1940, just as Canada, Great Britain and the other allied powers were suffering major reverses at the hands of the German army. RCMP surveillance maintained over the Japanese since 1938 revealed no subversive activity within the community. Nevertheless the federal government of W.L. Mackenzie King established a standing committee on Orientals in British Columbia to allay popular fears and promote public calm. King was particularly anxious that, given the delicate state of relations between Britain and Japan in the Far East, nothing should occur in Canada which might provoke a Japanese declaration of war.

Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 plunged Canada into war on a new front. Suddenly British Columbia, until then far distant from Europe and conflict, found itself exposed to a new and daring adversary. One quarter of the Japanese living in Canada were citizens of Japan and hence became enemy aliens as soon as war was declared. Most of the remainder were Canadian born, and a further small proportion had been naturalized. But public opinion in British Columbia made no fine distinctions; all Canadian Japanese, regardless of national status, were considered potential threats to the community. The first tense weeks following the outbreak of war brought fears to a head. As Japan conquered much of South-East Asia, alarm at the prospect of external assault and internal sabotage mounted until it verged on hysteria. In a massive protest movement white British Columbia demanded that all Japanese be interned or removed from the coastal region of the province.

These demands fell upon receptive political ears. Since Confederation most of British Columbia's politicians, whether federal or provincial, had been resolutely anti-Oriental. In the wake of Pearl Harbor political leaders in the province shared the anxieties which possessed their constituents. They lost little time in pressing this deep concern upon the King government and forcefully repeated the widespread demand that all Japanese be evacuated. While some perhaps hoped to rid their province of an unpopular minority, most of them were driven by the urgency of the moment. On its part the federal government, by no means sympathetic to the plight of the beleaguered minority, had no wish to divert precious war-time funds and resources into such a programme. As a result it temporized by promising partial removal — all enemy aliens and adult

males regardless of national status. But this solution failed to mollify west coast opinion; British Columbia's federal politicians continued to insist on a complete evacuation. In the end the King government capitulated. On 27 February 1942 it ordered the wholesale removal of all persons of Japanese ancestry from the coastal zone of the province. Over 21,000, more than 90 per cent of the entire Japanese population in Canada, were forced to abandon their homes and relocate under federal supervision.

Some 750 Japanese men were interned soon after the outbreak of war, a few because they were considered potential subversive threats, others because they balked during some phase of the evacuation process. The great majority of the evacuees were sent to live in relatively isolated areas. The largest number — 12,000 — were placed in detention camps in British Columbia, most of them renovated ghost towns in the interior of the province. A further 4000 were dispatched to southern Alberta and Manitoba to meet a wartime labour shortage on sugar beet farms. Another 2000 men were immediately sent to interior road construction camps, but at the end of summer, 1942, most of them rejoined their families in detention camps. A final 2500 either remained self-supporting or received special permission to work outside the camps. Wherever they were sent, the war years were difficult for most of the evacuees. The detention camp dwellers fared worst of all. Ill-housed, under-employed, their movements circumscribed by wartime regulations, they lived in limbo until war's end when their futures could be resolved. Most of them existed from day to day, supported largely by their savings, casual earnings, and modest federal subsidies. The beet workers, too, experienced much initial hardship. They passed their first winter housed in quarters intended only for migrant labourers during the summer, earning pay which offered them little more than a bare subsistence.

Most evacuees also suffered another grave loss: their property and accumulated savings. Even before the evacuation announcement the federal government ordered the surrender of all Japanese owned fishing boats, and soon other items were added to this list, notably motor vehicles, cameras, and radios. The 1100 boats, an important part of the coastal fishing fleet, were quickly sold and returned to operation. Despite government assurances to the contrary, the other restricted items were soon put to auction as well. In no instance was permission sought from or given by those who owned the property. But there was more to come. A federal agency sequestered all real and personal property left behind by the evacuees, originally declaring its intent merely to hold everything in protective custody. Early in 1943 the federal government authorized it to liquidate these goods, a decision based at least in part on the problem of administering the large, diverse quantity of property involved. Over the next few months the property of the evacuees — their lifetime accumulations — was put up for sale, in most instances bringing only a small fraction of its value. The proceeds, less administrative charges, were held for each owner, often to be drawn on for support during his residence in a detention camp. Thus, for most Japanese the economic consequences of the evacuation were little short of catastrophic. They lost their jobs, incomes, property and accumulated savings. By 1945 a poor minority had been stripped of the limited wealth it had come to Canada to gain. Economically most evacuees had to begin their new world lives again.

IV — The Sansei

The Sansei, grandchildren of the Issei, were the third generation of Japanese Canadians. Born in the post war era most of them knew neither the sacrifices of their grandparents nor the hardships of their parents. The minority community in which they were raised was a remarkably different one from that known by both earlier generations, for war and its immediate aftermath had transformed Japanese Canadian society. Most obviously, the evacuation had dispersed the community across central and western Canada. Even on VJ day two-thirds of the Japanese still resided in British Columbia, albeit in detention camps rather than their former homes. But over the next year the community's settlement pattern shifted markedly. Under heavy pressure from the federal government, anxious to avoid further outbursts of race prejudice, and pliant in the face of strong pressures from west coast politicians, thousands of Japanese Canadians moved east of the Rockies, some settling on the prairies but most putting down new roots in Ontario (especially Toronto) and Quebec. By 1951 almost half of the Japanese resided in central Canada while only a third remained in the Pacific coast province. In the immediate post war years, most of those who lingered in British Columbia found their way back to familiar haunts, Vancouver and Steveston, but the once cohesive community had been destroyed, its population widely scattered across the face of the dominion. It now lacked the cultural and social unity it had formerly possessed.

Another group — almost 4000 — were dispersed in quite a different way: they were sent to Japan. Toward the end of the war some 10,600 evacuees, nearly half of the entire Japanese Canadian population, disillusioned and embittered by their wartime experiences, accepted a federal government offer of assisted passage to Japan when hostilities had ended. Shortly after the war, 6300 changed their minds and revoked their requests. But the federal government refused to accept these revocations; it fully intended to deport all those who had asked to go to Japan and had not changed their minds before the close of war. Prime Minister King justified this policy by claiming that the Japanese so affected were guilty of disloyalty. In 1946 a courtroom battle ensued regarding the legality of the deportation orders. While resolved in favour of the government, it aroused sufficient opposition from Japanese Canadian activists and liberal elements in the white community that the federal orders were cancelled in January 1947. Consequently only those who wished to go (one in six of the Japanese Canadian population) were transported to Japan.

The bitter legacy of the war stimulated this return migration, but it was not the only motive. While half of the repatriates were Nisei, the other half had been born in Japan, many of them married to women at home whom they had not seen for years. For them returning to Japan meant family reunification. The average age of the Issei repatriates was 54 or 55; that of the Nisei was 16 or 17. Obviously, most of the latter were dependent children accompanying their parents back to Japan; they were not going of their own free choice. Thus, while small numbers of Nisei consciously chose the land of their ancestors, the great majority of the voluntary repatriates were returning to the land of their birth. Probably no more than half of the returnees left primarily because they rejected Canada. The others — like many migrants — went home essentially because they were impelled by family considerations.

In several ways repatriation and relocation left their mark on the process of Japanese integration. Repatriation permanently removed from Canada almost 2000 Issei, one third of the entire first generation population still resident in the country. Consequently it further reduced the size of that dwindling element in the community most closely tied to the homeland and least extensively integrated into Canadian society. Thereafter the Issei constituted only a small, aged and shrinking proportion of the immigrant group, their influence ever dwindling in the face of overwhelming community dominance by the Canadian born. Then, too, while in the short run evacuation segregated the Japanese from white Canada as never before, in the long run it encouraged their integration by destroying the cohesive, inward looking Japanese communities in British Columbia and dispersing their members across western and central Canada. Although they often relocated near other Japanese, the evacuees never re-established the tightly knit communities of the pre-war era. Increasingly they came to be absorbed into the social fabric of Canada as a whole. Of course, other major factors hastened integration, particularly Nisei upward mobility, the birth of the Sansei, and declining Canadian racism. But the war and its immediate aftermath marked a crucial turning point in the history of the Japanese in Canada by greatly accelerating the Japanese Canadians' social integration. This is not to condone a government policy which, judged by the standards of any liberal democracy, was clearly racist and immoral. Nor does it deny that the Japanese Canadians have an unique claim on the national conscience. Rather it merely points to a paradox, an unintended consequence of an act whose purpose was contrary to its ultimate outcome.

The federal government's repatriation program had another unintended effect upon the Japanese minority: it fostered a defensive movement within the community which, in turn, established a limited basis for social cohesion in spite of the post-war disruptions. The movement's victory in its campaign against repatriation was moral rather than legal. Nevertheless, it brought together a coalition of Japanese Canadian civil rights groups which, with support from several major national organizations including the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, led the crusade for just treatment of the minority. They sought and won increased compensation for losses sustained during wartime property sales (though the compensation awarded still fell far short of the losses which were claimed). They campaigned for an early relaxation of federal wartime controls on the Japanese, which had been extended well into the postwar era. They lobbied Ottawa and Victoria for an end to disenfranchisement, a matter of great symbolic as well as practical significance. Victory in this instance came in 1948 and 1949.

All these efforts would likely have come to naught without major changes in the racial attitudes of white Canada. But during the immediate post-war years prejudice against Asians generally, and the Japanese in particular, sharply declined. A more liberal atmosphere prevailed even in British Columbia where racism had persisted since the earliest days of Asian immigration. Legal forms of discrimination were quickly dismantled and public declarations of racist sentiment were no longer tolerated. By the early 1950s these were things of the past. Casual prejudice and informal discrimination persisted but, no longer considered respectable, they were driven underground. Five years after the war's

end the Japanese, formerly the most reviled of all Canadian minorities, had gained a measure of acceptance unprecedented in the history of their years in Canada. Once dispersed, the Japanese seemed less visible and therefore much less threatening than they had formerly appeared in British Columbia, while Japan's defeat eliminated any prospect of external attack or internal sabotage, thus removing the immediate cause of the wartime anti-Japanese outcry. Of greater significance, peace brought to light terrible German and Japanese wartime atrocities, some of which bore an uncomfortable resemblance to the Canadian treatment of the Japanese after 1941. Everywhere in the western world racist doctrines fell into disrepute and many Canadians came to subscribe to new, liberal views on race relations. Moreover, by the later 1940s acculturation had wrought its work on three generations of Japanese Canadians. As the cultural distance between whites and Japanese diminished, racial tensions subsided and broader toleration, if not complete acceptance, was finally possible.

Although legal discrimination against Asians in Canada had ended by 1950, a *de facto* colour bar prevailed in Canadian immigration law until 1967, when education, skill, occupational demand, age, and relationship to resident families became the primary criteria of immigrant selection. Before 1967 migration from Japan was slight, some 2300 (about 100 a year) between the end of the war and the centennial year overhaul of immigration regulations. From 1967 to 1978 Japanese immigration averaged somewhat less than 700 per annum, about the same level as prevailed in an ordinary year before 1918. Compared with the massive migration to Canada from Italy, Portugal, Greece, China, Hong Kong, and India during the past thirty years, these numbers are very small. Indeed, since the 1960s Japan's population has had little incentive to leave home. Their nation's post-war surge of economic growth has brought them unprecedented prosperity. For this reason the new immigration has added only slightly to the post-war growth of the Japanese-Canadian community. The new immigrants, unlike their early twentieth-century predecessors, have been highly-skilled and well-educated urban men and women, who have merged relatively easily into the social and economic institutions of late twentieth-century Canada. Nor have they encountered a highly distinctive Japanese community with which to affiliate. Since the few surviving Issei were then in their 70's and 80's, the Japanese minority consisted almost entirely of those for whom Japan was little more than the home of their ancestral past. Except for their common racial origins, most Nisei and Sansei had very little in common with the newcomers.

Indeed, the Sansei were more thoroughly acculturated and more completely integrated than their parents had been. Because they were widely dispersed throughout the labour force, there were few pronounced concentrations of Japanese in specific occupational sectors by the 1970s, except in the west coast fishing industry. Geographically scattered as well, the Japanese no longer congregated in separate ethnic enclaves. By and large urban dwellers, they distributed themselves throughout major Canadian metropolitan centres. At least half of the Sansei have intermarried with whites, in sharp contrast to the Issei and Nisei who married almost exclusively within the bounds of their own group. In this way too they have progressively merged into the dominant society. Having long since abandoned the language and culture of Japan, they

have also put behind them the concerns and organizations of immigrant society and have adopted the customs, values and institutions of post-war Canada. Few Japanese Canadians have achieved positions of power and prestige during the past quarter century, affirming John Porter's observations about the vertical nature of the Canadian mosaic. But their incorporation into the mainstream of Canadian life remains an undeniable fact.

Nevertheless, distinctive elements of Japanese culture are still to be found among the Nisei and Sansei. The Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre, opened in Toronto in 1963, provides one important focal point for the continuing cultural life of the minority. There lessons are taught in folk dancing, brush painting, paper folding and flower arrangement as well as traditional cooking and the Japanese martial arts. Yet these pastimes are largely peripheral to the daily lives of the Japanese Canadians who pursue them. However important they may be to the identity of their practitioners, their cultural significance is essentially nostalgic. The very fact that these folk arts now require formal instruction is a measure of how Canadian the Japanese have become over the past three generations.

Concerned, dissatisfied and perplexed, a small group of Sansei have groped for a distinctive sense of cultural identity while older traditions have eroded. But without the common experience either of Japanese birth or wartime dislocation, they have found little upon which to build. Lacking direct contact with systematic discrimination, they have berated their Nisei parents who strove to put the war years behind them and sought to protect their children from the worst effects of this legacy. Still, the most important element in the modern Japanese Canadian identity is the evacuation itself. For Issei, Nisei, and Sansei alike the remembrance of past injustice has become the common bond which unites them. Paradoxically, this too is an index of Japanese Canadian acculturation. The liberal democratic convictions about the rights of individuals in the modern state, which underly this sense of collective grievance, were largely alien to Japan until after World War II. But they existed in theory (although obviously not always in practice) in the Canada which Issei pioneers encountered on the first day of their sojourn.

V — A Comparative Perspective

The complexities of human migration are such that any migrant's experiences are in some ways unique. Yet there also are many elements in the migration experience which are common, for those who leave one land for another often share similar aspirations and conditions, even when their cultural origins differ considerably. For example, the motives which encouraged Japanese migration to British Columbia were not unlike those underlying the movement of many migrants during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A growing population outstripped available land supply in parts of Poland, Russia, the Ukraine, Germany and the Scandinavian countries as well as in China and India, forcing millions to abandon their homes in search of new economic opportunity. In addition, all of those who came to Canada between 1880 and 1920 were fitted into a nation in the throes of massive social and economic change: geographic expansion, rapid population growth, new resource develop-

ment, industrialization, and urbanization. However diverse their origins, the newcomers shared their encounter with a society in a state of flux.

Among the many cultural groups which entered Canada between 1867 and 1939, the Chinese offer the most fruitful basis of comparison with the Japanese. Superficial racial similarities apart, they came from cultures and economies which were not dissimilar, and their new world histories had many parallels. Chinese emigrants long preceded Japanese to distant points around the Pacific margin. Those who came to British Columbia after 1858, like their later Japanese counterparts, were sojourners. Young, single men, they also journeyed abroad in hopes of earning enough to augment the family fortunes in China. Because they considered themselves temporary residents rather than permanent settlers, they had few incentives to accommodate themselves to Canada any further than their short-term objectives required. For this reason they constituted a large labour pool mainly employed in the resource and service sectors of the western Canadian economy. Largely unskilled, the Chinese moved from job to job, and from work to unemployment, as opportunity permitted. Thus the Chinese and the Japanese fulfilled similar economic roles, occupied similar economic ranks, and received similar economic rewards when they came to Canada. Although geographically somewhat less concentrated than the Japanese, the Chinese also clustered in self-contained communities wherever they resided. British Columbia was always home to the largest number of Chinese, though with the passing of time they settled in hundreds of towns and cities throughout central and western Canada. But wherever they located, they continued to live on the margins of white Canadian society. Having found a niche in the nation's economy, they remained almost entirely unassimilated into its social fabric.

The Chinese and Japanese also encountered a common prejudice toward Asians in the new world. During the century following the first immigration from China, popular opinion in western Canada, particularly British Columbia, inclined strongly against all Asian immigrants. Before the Vancouver riot of 1907 the Chinese were seen as a far more serious threat to west coast society than the more recently arrived Japanese. After Confederation discriminatory legislation imposed restrictions on Chinese immigrants, laying foundations for similar laws later applied to the Japanese. The most important anti-Chinese laws withheld the franchise, limited employment opportunities, and restricted immigration through a tax on all Chinese entering Canada. Introduced in 1885, the head tax at first levied a $50 tariff on all Chinese newcomers; in 1900 the tax was increased to $100 and in 1903 to $500.

Although similar in spirit and intent to the immigration restriction agreements reached between Canada and Japan, the head tax had quite a different impact on the Chinese minority in Canada than the gentleman's agreements had on the Japanese. Since most of the Chinese immigrants were poor and came to Canada to make their fortunes, the head tax was an expense which almost all migrants had to meet from their own earnings. Immigrants who could not labour for a cash income had to be paid for by someone else, and this was a luxury which few Chinese in Canada could afford. Consequently, very few women and children came to Canada from China until well after World War II. Canadian immigration law thus reinforced the long-established Chinese

tradition of temporary migration. With little possibility of establishing normal family relations in Canada, most immigrants from China remained bound to their families at home, hoping to be reunited with them at some point in the future. Chinese and Japanese immigrants therefore were integrated into Canadian society in distinctly different ways. While they shared similar economic roles, the social character of the two minorities contrasted sharply, particularly after World War I. The Chinese community remained overwhelmingly male and oriented toward China until the mid-twentieth century. Japanese immigrants, on the other hand, soon reconstituted family life on the eastern shores of the Pacific. Their children, and their children's children, were born and raised as Canadians. Neither group was socially assimilated to a significant extent before 1945. But by that time the Japanese, unlike the Chinese, were largely acculturated. The major obstacle barring their way to full participation in Canadian society had become white prejudice rather than cultural differences.

Other reasons also help to explain why the Chinese were slower to assimilate than were the Japanese. The greater strength of the Chinese kinship system, with its heavy emphasis upon loyalty to the family group, reinforced the sojourner's trans-Pacific outlook. The pre-modern nature of China was another factor of consequence. Chinese immigrants came from social, economic and cultural origins far more remote from those of most western Canadians than did the Japanese. At the outset of emigration, Japan was already well-advanced along the path to becoming modern. As a result the Japanese brought with them attitudes and values more closely attuned to those which prevailed in North America and their acculturation was facilitated. Finally, although both groups were subjected to strong racial prejudice and persistent discrimination, the Japanese bore the brunt of both during the twentieth century. The forced destruction of their community life during the 1940s had no parallel in Chinese Canadian history (or indeed that of any immigrant minority in modern Canada). Chinatowns, which provided rich social lives for the communities which they served, continued to offer a sheltered environment for Chinese immigrant culture. In contrast, the war years swept away most of the remaining foundations of Japanese Canadian society. Once dispersed, the Japanese were more exposed than ever to the forces of acculturation which had been at work in their midst for more than a generation.

Suggestions for Further Reading

The historical literature in the west on Japan is rich and extensive. Students wishing a general introduction should consult E.O. Reischauer and A. Craig's *Japan: Tradition and Transformation* (Boston, 1978) and K.B. Pyle's *The Making of Modern Japan* (Lexington, Mass., 1978). The most recent, comprehensive history of the Japanese community in Canada is Ken Adachi's *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1976). Although Adachi's approach is largely narrative and descriptive, the scope of the book is broad and inclusive. It pays particularly close attention to the events of the 1940s, unfortunately at the expense of a more thorough examination of the later period. Adachi did not consult available Japanese language sources and major archival collections, relying instead on newspapers and other published materials. These problems aside, the book remains a useful, reliable overview. It largely supercedes two earlier works. *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto, 1938) by C.H. Young and H.R.Y. Reid was inspired by the racial problem in British Columbia and was written in hopes of improving race relations through objective description and analysis of the Japanese Canadian community and its history. F.E. La Violette's *The Canadian Japanese and World War II: A Social and Psychological Account* (Toronto, 1948) carefully examines the wartime crisis in the Japanese community. On the basis of published documents (national archival sources for this period then being closed), it provides a detailed account of federal government policy and explores the social and psychological impact of the evacuation and relocation upon the Japanese. W. Peter Ward's *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal, 1978) places anti-Japanese feeling and policy in the larger context of Canadian responses to Asian immigration before 1942. It argues that economic conflicts were subordinate to psychological tensions as the primary source of racial tension, particularly in British Columbia. A recent autobiographical account by an Issei is Takeo Ujo Nakano's *Within the Barbed Wire Fence: A Japanese Man's Account of his Internment in Canada* (Toronto, 1980), a sensitive and thought-provoking description of his evacuation and subsequent internment in the federal government's maximum security detention camp at Angler, Ontario. A.G. Sunahara's *The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War* (Toronto, 1981) is contentious and superficial, but it contains new information drawn from archival sources.

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