

YAMATO NADESHIKO IN CANADA:
EXPERIENCES OF JAPANESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN, 1868-1941

by

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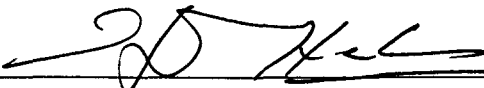
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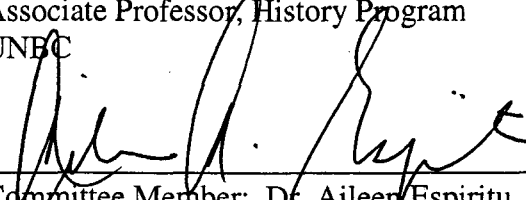
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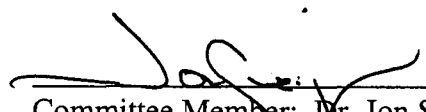
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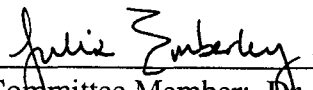
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Abstract

The dominant image of *Issei* women is passivity. However, the reality of the Japanese women's experiences reveals the opposite. Moreover, the contradiction between the women's images and their experiences increased with time. Nonetheless, the image of women as submissive wives continues. Clearly, much is hidden by such stereotypes. Their active participation both in the means of immigration and in the survival of their community mark them as resistive to the main stream ideology of both Meiji Japan and the male-dominated Japanese community in Canada. By examining their own words, this thesis will show that *Issei* women were active and positive, vigorous, and determined.

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Introduction

The policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1867) of forbidding contact with Europeans initiated a two hundred-year era of isolation for Japan.¹ During this period, Europeans were forbidden to enter the country and emigration was punishable by death. However, when the western nations forced Japan to open its doors and tried to conclude unequal treaties with the Tokugawa regime, young Japanese warriors revolted and this brought about the Meiji restoration of 1868. As soon as these new leaders established the Meiji government, they began expensive industrial, social, and economic changes in order to regain Japan's autonomy. The costs were thrust upon the peasants who made up approximately eighty percent of the population. The people not only endured heavy land taxes, but suffered the ruin of cottage industries which had for years supplemented their income. *Dekasegi* (seasonal laborers who go to work in urban areas) became necessary in order to bring money to the countryside. In 1885, the government allowed emigration to Hawaii for three-year work terms, and soon after allowed emigration to the United States and Canada.

By 1908, the Japanese population in Canada had grown to approximately 8,000. Except for a few women who worked as prostitutes in mining and railroading towns, most Japanese immigrants were single males who were supposed to return home with greater financial security after a few years. However, in most cases, this dream was frustrated by their low wages. As the original desire of 'returning to Japan in triumph' faded, many men settled down in Canada. As bachelors decided to establish families in

Canada, Japanese women began to arrive as their brides. The majority were 'picture brides', because the brides and grooms were introduced through photographs. From 1908 to the mid 1920s, some 5,000 young Japanese wives established their lives in this new land. This thesis is a history of these Japanese women and an exploration of their collective and individual experiences.²

Until the middle of the 20th century, scholarly depictions of the experiences of Asian immigrants to Canada were scarce. However, the promotion of multiculturalism since the late 1960s and a growing interest in social history, has increased serious consideration and interest of immigrants' experiences. As a result, Japanese immigrant history in Canada has received some significant attention.

In the publications regarding Japanese immigrants in Canada, the leading scholars in the field are Ken Adachi, Patricia Roy, and Peter Ward³. Adachi examines the course of Japanese immigration, transplanted cultural traditions and beliefs, the growth of social, economic and political organizations, and the ongoing struggle against discrimination that the immigrants and their descendants endured. He is precise and detailed but remains problematic in some respects. Adachi was unable to read Japanese and so could not use pertinent Japanese documents. Roy and Ward have also confined their work to English language sources. The government documents, periodical literature,

¹ Tokugawa period: 1603-1867.

² Peter Ward, *The Japanese in Canada*. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1982), Table 2. See also, Audrey Kobayashi, "A Brief History of the Canadian Nikkei" *Nikkei Images* vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1996), 4.

³ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978). Patricia E. Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989). Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians," *Reading in the History of British Columbia*, selected Jean Barman

and other sources used by these authors provide a 'white' perspective on the Japanese in Canada. Their studies of the anti-Asian exclusion movement in the middle of this century, highlight the excluders rather than the excluded. These scholars seldom examine the Japanese immigrants' thoughts and reactions to being ostracized.

To understand fully the story of Japanese immigrants, it is necessary to examine the experiences they recorded themselves in their own language. There is some literature written by Japanese immigrants but most of the books were published by male *Issei* (the first generation of Japanese immigrants). The male perspective dominates and creates a laudatory Japanese immigration history of male *Issei* in Canada. Some books lightly touch on Japanese immigrant women, but merely the wives of notable upper-class husbands. Mitsuru Shinpo alone relates the experiences of some ordinary women, and admires their strong determination in their daily lives.⁴

In fact, the experiences of Japanese immigrant women in Canada have been ignored until the last decade. Among Japanese female immigrants to Canada after World War II, Miyoko Kudou is one of the writers who have written about *Issei* women. Her book, Shakonzuma is a short account of thirteen *Issei* women; Kanashii metsuki no hyouryusha explores the experiences of *Issei* prostitutes. In her third book, Vancouver no ai, Kudou portrays a Japanese female novelist who eloped to Canada with a Japanese journalist. Although Kudou focuses on the varied statuses of immigrant women, she

and Robert A.J. MacDonald (Vancouver: Open University, 1989). Peter Ward, "British Columbia and the Japanese Evacuation," selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald (Vancouver: Open University, 1989).

⁴ Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 62,63. See also, The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, A Dream of Riches 1877-1977. (Toronto: Dread Naught, 1978) Also, Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983).

fails to analyse historical and political facts related to immigration. For example, she does not discuss why the Japanese immigrated to Canada, how they were treated by Canadians, and why they were treated so.⁵

Another female author, Tomoko Makabe also published a book on Japanese immigrants' experiences. In her 1995 book, Picture Brides, deals with five *Issei* women who immigrated into Canada as picture brides. Having established close friendships with the women, she interviewed them and transcribed those interviews exactly so as to preserve the regional dialect and idiom of the women. Her work inspired this thesis. Makabe argues that "I did not find a single case of a bride who had been coaxed or urged by parents and the people around her to cross the Pacific against her will."⁶ It is this conclusion that I wanted to test.

More scholarly in emphasis is the work of Audrey Kobayashi and Midge Ayukawa. Kobayashi's scholarship on 'gender' and 'race', centered on Japanese immigrant women addresses contemporary issues such as ethnic minorities and intercultural marriages. Ayukawa, using both English and Japanese sources, as well as her own experience of being Nisei (a second generation Japanese Canadian), analyzes the experiences of immigrant women. Although a number of Japanese Canadian scholars study their own communities, most focus on Nisei activities during World War II and up to the Redress campaign. By examining the experiences of Nisei who were involved in the political movement during this period we can see the process of how Japanese

⁵ Miyoko Kudou, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983). Miyoko Kodou, Yugirirou ni furu yuki ha. (Tokyo: Shoubunsha, 1983). Miyoko Kodou, Kanashii metsuki no hyouryusha. (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1995). Miyoko Kudou, Vancouver no ai. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1982).

Canadians came to assert their own voices in Canadian society thereby improving their 'second class' status. However, the history of *Issei*, the foundation of Japanese Canadian community, also should not be forgotten. While most Japanese Canadian scholars enthusiastically study the experiences of Nisei, Ayukawa's study of *Issei* women is a significant contribution to the field.⁷

This thesis will pursue a history of *Issei* women who immigrated into Canada around 1870 to 1940. My argument is that while the stereotypical image of Japanese immigrant women is that of passive and domestic individuals, their experiences in the early twentieth century reveal them to be active agents in their own lives and in formation of the Japanese Canadian community. This argument is important because their experiences show their resistance against domination within both Japanese and Canadian societies. Furthermore, the continued image of the Japanese women should be criticized. Chapter one consists of three components forming the background for analyzing the *Issei* women's experiences. First, to understand notions of appropriate womanhood in the Meiji Japan, the genderization of women in that era will be examined. Next, a brief history of Japanese emigration to Canada will be provided including the nature of female migration. Third, by examining how the women were portrayed through

⁶ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995). 7. Ibid., 7-36.

⁷ The redress settlement negotiated between the Canadian government and the National Association of Japanese Canadians in 1988, to compensate individual Canadians of Japanese ancestry for the abrogation of rights in Canada. Audrey Kobayashi, "The Japanese-Canadian Redress settlement and its Implications for 'Race Relations'," Canadian Ethnic Studies, XXIV no. (1992), 1. Audrey Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children: Japanese/Canadian Workers/Mothers," in Women, Work, and Place, ed. Audrey Kobayashi (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press). Audrey Kobayashi and Peter Jackson, "Japanese Canadians and the racialization of labor in the British Columbia sawmill industry," BC Studies 103, (Fall 1994). Audrey Kobayashi, "Focus: Asian migration to Canada," The Canadian Geographer v.32 (Winter 1988). Midge Ayukawa, "Neither Wataridori nor Dekasegi: Early Japanese Women Building New Lives in Canada," in Japan in Focus, ed. Jacob Kovalio (Toronto: Captus Press, 1994). Midge Ayukawa "Good

literature and general Japanese texts, the stereotypical image of women will be explored. Chapter two concentrates on the immigrant women's motives in becoming picture brides, particularly highlighting their ambitions, curiosities, and their sense of adventure. This chapter clearly shows that these women's minds resisted Meiji gender expectations. Chapter three will analyze the Japanese immigrant women's experiences in Canada; it focuses not only on their labour, but also on their attitudes toward their new lives in Canada. These women were determined to survive in their new surroundings and their fortitude clearly emerged during difficult times in Canada. The later half of this chapter spotlights minorities such as single women and prostitutes. Although their image was that of social outcasts, they contributed to Japanese pioneer history in Canada. This chapter will show that the experiences of both majority and minority women were very different from the image constructed by the Japanese Canadian community. Chapter four discusses the *Issei* women's political experiences. The Public Peace Law during that period in Japan prohibited women from political participation, yet in reality they were politically active, and in Canada, especially, they were involved in the Japanese response to the anti-Japanese feeling occurred among the main population in the province. Although there are a number of texts about Japanese exclusion in the pre-war period, within my research, I have not encountered any academic studies about Japanese in pre-war period, focusing on the *Issei* women's involvement in political matters. This chapter will be unique in the study of Japanese Canadian history. More significantly, it will also glance at the women's opposition to both Japanese male leaders and anti-Japanese British Columbians. Ultimately, it is clear that the experience of Japanese women was at extreme odds with

the stereotypes, even those perpetuated in academic and popular history. Historically, Japanese women's exclusion from the writing of history has allowed the stereotypes to thrive. Now, that women are writing their own histories, other, arguably more rich, narratives are emerging.

A critical theory helped to build my argument in this thesis. Critical theorists uncover the hegemonic forces operating in society while exposing the underlying resistance. The scholars believe that by bringing hidden structures to light they can abolish social injustice. This idea of critical theory is important for my thesis, because my argument is to show *Issei* women's resistance under the hegemonic society; Japanese community in Canada, British Columbians, and both of them. Furthermore, exposing the Japanese women's realities link to promote revolution against forms of discrimination in a category of race and sex.⁸

Among the ideas of critical theory, some aspects of both Feminism and Marxist feminism have influenced me. Many feminist historians write history of women to argue an equal treatment of women and men. This approach usually involves substituting positive examples of women's capabilities in place of negative characterizations. Patriarchy, the systematic subordination of women by the exercise of male power, is an essential focus in the examination of gender inequality.⁹ My work in this thesis is to

Studies (no.105 and 106 Spring/Summer 1995).

⁸ Hegemony is a process of domination, whereby one group in society exerts leadership over all others. This process of hegemony occurs in many ways and in many settings through education, advertising, publication, and the mobilization of police forces and military personnel to subdue opposition. Peter Barry, Beginning theory: An Introduction Literary and Cultural theory (Manchester and Newark: Manchester University Press, 1995), 34. Also, theorists believe that only by becoming aware of the opposing forces in a struggle for power can individuals liberate themselves and change the existing order. Moreover, they hope to transform our present society into a just rational, humane and reconciled one.

⁹ Joan Scott, "Introduction", in Feminism and History, ed. Joan Scott, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

display the *Issei* women's active experiences in order to oppose the continued dominance of the women's passive image. Therefore, these ideas are necessary. Marxist feminists argue that the domination of women by men is a consequence of capital's domination over labour. In my thesis, this idea is adopted in examinations of women's labour in the Meiji industrialization, women's immigration and women's position as the domestic sphere.¹⁰

Drawing on these analytical frameworks, I have analyzed Japanese women's experiences, looking at education, gender roles and labour. Finally, I am working with ideas related to power that have come out of the work of Edward Said on Orientalism. In his early text, Orientalism, Said wrote:

The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony, and is quite accurately indicated in the title of K.M.Panikkar's classic *Asia and Western Dominance*. The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be "Oriental" in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be- that is, submitted to being - made Oriental.¹¹

The 'Orient' was created by and for western imperialists. In this construction of the 'Orient', it is all things that the 'west' is not. The west created the Orient to be inferior in order to justify its need for governing over 'the Orient'. This idea is helpful to understand the attitudes of Caucasians in the province during the Japanese persecution. In another point of using Orientalism, my interest in this thesis is bringing a gender analysis to the Orientalism that affected Japanese women. Through 'Orientalism', British Columbian society was able to construct Japanese women in their midst as barbaric and vulgar.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 67-8.

¹¹ Edward Said, "from Orientalism", in Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory A reader, ed. Patrick Williams and Chrisman, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 133.

The goal of my thesis is to show that the fixed identity of the “Japanese women” hid much of the experiences common to their immigrant experiences. The Japanese immigrant women’s stereotyped image was of ‘docile wives and mothers’, however their experiences often exhibit the opposite characteristics. Through my research, it became clear that far from the ‘naturalizing’ discourse about Japanese women, their own words created an equally compelling resistive discourse.

This thesis employs Qualitative methods to study the subtle nuances of attitudes and behaviors, and for examining social processes over time. For these reasons, the main strength of this method is “the depth of understanding that it may permit.”¹³ Generally, qualitative researchers are interested both physical events and also in how the participants make sense of these, and how their understandings influence their behavior.¹⁴ For this study, writings by and about *Issei* women were collected. Then, following on the theories describe above I looked for themes such as oppression, power, gender, hierarchy and resistance in them.

A fundamental source used in this thesis was oral history. Most *Issei* women who immigrated into Canada around 1900 have since passed away, therefore obtaining their oral history directly is impossible. However, it is possible to reach their own words by other means. There are written transcripts of oral histories conducted by the Oral History program of the British Columbia government, the sociologist, Tomoko Makabe, and non-

¹² Yuji Ichioka, “American Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant-Women in the United States,” *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 49, (1780): 355.

¹³ John Van Maanen, “Reclaiming qualitative methods for organizational research: A preface,” in *Qualitative methodology*, ed. John Van Maanen (Newbury Park London New Delhi: Sage publications, 1979), 9.

¹⁴ Course Natural Resources and Environmental Studies 705, Instructor Dr. Greg Halseth, (British Columbia: University of Northern British Columbia, 2000)

fiction writer Miyoko Kudou. Also, the Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives Society, the Special Collections of the University of British Columbia Library, and the Provincial Archives hold oral history tapes of *Issei* women. Some people had three or four separate interviews, some of which were conducted in both Japanese and English. The women's personal writings such as diaries and memoirs also captured their voices. The Special Collections of the University of British Columbia archives some *Issei* women's memoirs which contain important glimpses into *Issei* women's personal feelings. The Japanese Canadian National Museum and Archives Society houses a small number of women's hand written notes.

One might doubt the validity of oral history or might say that people usually put the best face on things particularly in interviews. But, in using oral history, we are not looking for "objective" accounts of the past. Rather, oral histories grant us access to the personal perspectives of, in this case, *Issei* women. And, in many cases, these perspectives are at odds with the expectations placed on women to be "submissive and docile women." The aggressive and ambitious view of themselves presented in these oral histories, then, indicates resistance to the gendered norms of Japanese society.

Secondary sources relating the women's experiences should not be overlooked. Scholars such as Midge Ayukawa, Yuji Ichioka, and Mitsuru Shimpo documented history of *Issei* women. Crucial to researching the experience of prostitutes are reports, written by Japanese journalist Nagata, in Tairiku Nippo (a Japanese language newspaper) from November 1908 to February 1909. Nagata traveled across Canada, visited the brothels, talked to the pimps and the prostitutes and wrote about their lives, including where they came from and their status. According to his first report, he did this with the hope of

preventing the importation of Japanese women for immoral purposes by explaining the dark side of these women's experiences to people in Japan. One might be concerned about the reliability of this source, yet Nagata's work should not be ignored. Compared to many *Issei* who tended to keep quiet concerning 'lives of disrepute', Nagata, who was outside of the Japanese Canadian community, would not have felt compelled to hide the more negative details. Furthermore, his findings can be corroborated. There are notable similarities between Nagata's report and experiences of Japanese prostitutes in the United States, as seen in The Issei written by Yuji Ichioka.¹⁵

Through this research, my impression of the Japanese women in Canada was that they were 'strong-minded women'. By this, I mean that Japanese women were determined to exert some control over their own fate. For long periods in Japan, Japanese women were called "Yamato-Nadeshiko" (Yamato is the traditional name of Japan, and Nadeshiko means a kind of wild flower, fringed pink). I thought that the name was based on a metaphor between the flower and Japanese women, looking tiny, weak and fragile. But, my research suggests a new interpretation; one that emphasizes strength instead of fragility. I now think that despite its delicate appearance this flower had amazing fortitude. The Japanese immigrant women in Canada reacted bravely and vigorously to the harsh situations created by their husbands and their white neighbors. The Nadeshiko, in spite of being covered by nasty 'yellow' mud or cold 'white' snow, sank their roots in Canada. This thesis shows that the Yamato-Nadeshiko in Canada blossomed strongly and proudly.

¹⁵ Yuji Ichioka, The Issei: the world of the first generation Japanese immigrants, 1885-1924. (New York,

Chapter 1. Gender, Meiji ideology and immigration

Good Meiji women

The Meiji government (1868-1912) used its education policy to encourage women to adhere to its model of 'Meiji womanhood' emphasizing motherhood, reproduction, and women's subordination to patriarchal relations. Women were taught that their value was raised by being mothers, by increasing the population and by nurturing and educating children. Also, society demanded women's subordination to men. Women were expected to obey first their fathers, then their husbands, and later their own sons. Moreover, this gender ideology was enshrined in Japanese law. For example, under the Meiji Civil Code of 1889, infertile women were prescribed "penalties for neglecting their duties."¹ And the Public Peace Police Law of 1900 prohibited women from participating in political activities. This is the backdrop against which Japanese women immigrants to early 20th century Canada emerged.²

In effect, Meiji education policy followed a framework of 'samuraization' that emphasized "loyalty and filial piety extending from personal relations to the metaphor of extended family that had helped to define the Japanese nation-state."³ Japanese women were taught that "the needs of the house were to be placed before individual needs. Rather than love and affection, filial piety and duty were to bind children to parents and

¹ Meiji period was from 1868 to 1912. Audrey Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children: Japanese / Canadian Workers / Mothers," in *Women, Work, and Place*, ed. Audrey Kobayashi, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 49-50.

² Ibid., 49-50. See also, Midge Ayukawa' "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia," *BC Studies* 105 and 106 (Spring / Summer 1995):106.

³ Ibid., 47.

wives to husbands.”⁴ Before the Meiji period, only the upper class practiced samuraization. However, by introducing the concept into the education system, the Meiji government imposed the idea throughout the society. By the late Meiji period, education had become the prime mechanism for unifying the Japanese people. Beginning in 1872 both boys and girls were compelled to undergo six years of schooling and by 1908 school attendance was reportedly at 98 percent. Based as it was on notions of samuraization, this mandatory schooling trained all Japanese and especially Japanese women in what it meant to be “good Meiji “ women. That role and their place in Japanese society was reinforced by textbooks arguing that

It is only natural for children to love and respect their parents, and the great loyalty-filial piety principle springs from this natural feeling. . . . Our country is based on the family system. The whole country is one of great family, and the Imperial House is the Head Family. It is with the feeling of filial love and respect for parents that we Japanese people express our reverence toward the throne of unbroken imperial line.⁵

Being good and being respectable meant knowing one’s place.⁶

By the middle years of the Meiji period, young women who completed compulsory education began to go to normal schools, high schools for girls, or midwifery schools established by prefectures. Although many women had an opportunity to access further education, the goal of these schools was to produce ‘good Meiji women.’ Female

⁴ Midge Ayukawa, “Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 105 and 106 (Spring / Summer 1995):105-6.

⁵ Quoted from Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, (Toronto: D.C.Heath And Company, 1978), 100.

⁶ Midge Ayukawa, “Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia,” *BC Studies* 105 and 106 (Spring / Summer 1995):106.

students were educated to be respectable wives and mothers in a course that emphasized traditional ethics and household virtues including needlework, cooking and manners.⁷

In reality, this Meiji womanhood was an unattainable ideal for most Japanese. Although the Meiji government attempted to educate all Japanese women to be 'respectable Meiji women', only the upper class, who were able to remain at home, could possibly conform to the ideal. Because the Meiji government based its revenue on agriculture, peasants were taxed heavily and, the majority of women were forced to work in the fields.⁸

Industrialization increased demands for women's labour. While the Meiji policies strengthened the agrarian economic base from which the majority of taxes were obtained, the government promoted industrialization for capital development. By the turn of the 20th century, textiles had become the most important Japanese export commodity, and sixty to eighty percent of the textile labour force was made up of women.⁹ The textile factories were generally situated throughout the countryside and most workers were poor young women in farming villages. These women were employed largely because they worked hard for a small salary in miserable conditions. Many lived in extreme poverty where serious diseases such as tuberculosis often threatened. After 1900, women gradually entered the service sector becoming telephone operators, ticket sellers and salespeople in clothing stores. However, no matter where they were employed they were considered semi or unskilled employees who filled low quality and low-paid positions.

⁷ ed. Kunio Yanagida, Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era, (Tokyo Japan: Obunsha, 1957), 247.

⁸ Audrey Kobayashi, "For the Sake of the Children: Japanese / Canadian Workers / Mothers," in Women, work, and Place, ed. Audrey Kobayashi, (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 1994), 49-50.

Even where women who obtained white-colour jobs primarily held lower-grade clerical or secretarial posts.¹⁰

While gaining a measure of economic importance, female labour was nonetheless framed by Meiji gender concepts. The government needed women labourers, but also, required them to bear and nurture children for the prosperity of the state. Because Meiji education and civil regulations imposed women to be wives and mothers they inevitably quit outside jobs when they married. As a result, women were associated with outside work only until marriage when another young single woman assumed the position until she reached marriageable age. By repeating this process, the state was able to keep cheap labour and maintain population growth.¹¹

Although these women played a significant role in the Meiji industrialization, their labour was not valued as highly as that of men. Nevertheless, some people advocated change in gender relations. For example, Yukichi Hukuzawa, a prominent educator and social critic, argued for gender equality, supported the independence and self-respect of women, and demanded that men change their attitudes towards women. Socialists, feminists and women writers embraced his ideas. However, when Yukichi's book 'Shin-onna-daigaku (The new Women's Colleges)' was published in 1898, educators connected

⁹ ed. Kunio Yanagida, Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era, (Tokyo Japan: Obunsha, 1957), 249-50.

¹⁰ The Meiji government, in undertaking a highly organized and effective program of industrialization, did not follow the classical process of capitalist development as seen a century earlier in Britain. Rather than begin with structural changes to the agrarian sector followed by the development of labour-intensive industries, Japan started its development process with the establishment of capital-intensive industries- transportation and communications, and armaments- while simultaneously strengthening the agrarian economic base from which the majority of taxes derived. *Ibid.*, 45-50; also see 249-51.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45-50 See also, ed. Kunio Yanagida, Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era, (Tokyo Japan: Obunsha, 1957), 249-51.

with the government immediately banned and labeled his ideas improper for a society extolling the Meiji gender ideology.¹²

Thus, patriarchal gender relations were integrated into Meiji policies. While industry required women's work outside the home, Meiji education emphasized women's domestic duties. Women had to be dual workers, but Meiji gender ideology still demanded that correct Meiji women were 'good wives and wise mothers.'

Emigration to Canada

Not until the Meiji government was established in 1868 did passports to Canada become available to Japanese people. Most emigrants were young, single men whose goal was to work hard, save money and return home in triumph. Many of them worked in the sawmills and the fishing industry in British Columbia. For example, about two hundred Japanese men were working in the Hastings Mill in Vancouver around 1890 and, over the next two decades, these men comprised the largest ethnic group in British Columbia's sawmills. By 1900, the village of Steveston at the mouth of the Fraser River flourished with the Japanese fishing and canning industries. Many Japanese immigrants worked in mining and railroad construction.¹³

¹² ed. Kunio Yanagida, Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era, (Tokyo Japan: Obunsha, 1957), 254.

¹³ Most of them came from one of four heavily populated prefectures in Japan: Hiroshima, Shiga, and Wakayama, and Kagoshima. Hiroshima prefecture included a major industrial city. Wakayama supported fishing industry. Other regions were agricultural, devoted primarily to the cultivation of rice. Few immigrants were first sons, because the Civil Code allowed only first sons to inherit their parents' lands, second sons or others did not have much hope of becoming wealthy. Audrey Kobayashi, "A Brief History of the Canadian Nikkei" Nikkei Images vol.1, no.1 (January, 1996):3,4.

The Japanese came to Canada mainly through the "chain migration" process, drawn by device from friends and relatives who had preceded them to Canada. Others were sent abroad by Japanese companies, which

By the late 1890s, Japanese labor contractors were buying or leasing land along both sides of Powell Street in Vancouver. They built boarding houses for workers, and small service businesses such as barber shops, bathhouses and billiard halls mushroomed in the area. The Japanese immigrants' activities soon expanded in the province, where they obtained contracts in logging, milling, fishing or agricultural ventures in remote areas. The few Japanese women entered Canada were either wives or relatives of entrepreneurs or prostitutes imported most often by unscrupulous operators.¹⁴

Immigration increased after the turn of the twentieth century. The end of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 created unemployment in Japan, and there were crop failures in 1902, 1904 and 1906. Between 1905 and 1907, the number of Japanese in British Columbia was more than 4,000, and by 1908, there were nearly 8,000 Japanese working in the province.¹⁵ In Canada, Victoria was proclaimed the capital of British Columbia on May 25, 1868. Almost a year after Vancouver Island and the mainland were united into one colony, and a few years later it joined Confederation. From 1902 to 1907, economy of British Columbia expanded through forestry, agriculture and particularly construction of the Grand Trunk Pacific railway.¹⁶

made a business of facilitating emigration, sometimes also supplying labour to overseas employers. Ibid., 3,4. For example, Japanese miners worked mainly for the Dunsmuir's Wellington Collieries, and Japanese railroad constructors worked for Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern, and Grand Trunk. Ibid., 3,4.

¹⁴ Later, this area was called "little Tokyo." By 1905, this area had a number of significant institutions such as the Japanese Consulate, the Japanese Weekly, the first Japanese newspaper, the Japanese schools, and the Canada Japanese Association. Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 50,51. The first Japanese immigrant woman was Yo Oya, who arrived in 1887 and together with her husband, ran a business on Powell Street for many years. Audrey Kobayashi, "A Brief History of the Canadian Nikkei" Nikkei Images vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1996): 4.

¹⁵ Ibid., 4. See also, Peter Ward, The Japanese in Canada. (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1982), 4. See also, Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), Appendix 1. Immigration and population.

¹⁶ Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 7. Province, September 9, 1907. See also, Patricia E. Roy, A White Man's Province:

As the population increased, resentment toward the Japanese grew apace. Various official and unofficial groups tried to limit both the number and the civil rights of Japanese and other Asian immigrants. This anti-Asian feeling among the Anglo-Saxon British Columbians finally climaxed on September 7, 1907 when, in an attempt to halt Asian immigration, the Asiatic Exclusion League attacked Asian immigrant areas in Vancouver. A Royal Commission undertaken by W.L. Mackenzie King subsequently provided some compensation for physical damages on the end of the next month, but maintained that the "problem" could be solved only by limiting the size of the Asian population. The result was the Hayashi-Lemieux 'Gentlemen's agreement' in 1908, which severely limited further immigration except for returning immigrants and their families, commercial and official travelers, clerics and students.¹⁷

British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 154-5.

¹⁷ Audrey Kobayashi, "A Brief History of the Canadian Nikkei" Nikkei Images vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1996): 4. One of the main reason for the Anti-Japanese feeling was west coast-Japanese' economic challenge to white dominance. In most industrial areas, the Japanese accepted low wage and long working days. Generally, Japanese workers earned one-half to two-thirds of what whites were paid for equivalent work. For example, in 1902, Japanese sawmill employers were paid \$0.90 to \$1.00 daily while whites earned \$1.50. Similarly, in 1905, Japanese mine laborers earned \$1.37 per day to compare to the \$2.75 paid whites for the same work. Industrial companies preferred to hire the west coast Japanese who would accepted with lower wage and longer working days, as the result, white laborers were pushed out. This behavior of the Japanese was, for the whites, seen as aggressive competition. Also, although the number of the fishermen's licenses was legally reduced, many Japanese moved to the Fraser Valley, insignificant number, as farmers and gradually they became farm owners. For example, although the Japanese did not enter the Fraser Valley berry industry until 1914, within a decade, they controlled 39 % of the acreage devoted to small fruit growing. Others became progressive independent farmers in the Okanagan Valley. Moreover, many soon abandoned the seasonal low-paid work which they had performed on arrival, and tried the stable occupations or the profitable businesses such as a self-owned enterprise. For example, in the fishing industry, in the early years, Japanese labourers tended to depend on the canneries, but for over two decades they became fishermen their own right and proprietors of their boats and fishing equipment. Also, in Vancouver and other urban centers, some Japanese opened different commercial enterprises such as cleaner shops and the number of their businesses was increased. Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians," Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 395-8. See also, Charles H. Young and Helen R.Y. Reid, The Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1938), 172.

1908 marked the beginning of the Japanese 'family-building' in Canada. Married men who had decided to remain in Canada called their wives over. Single men, who still had not saved sufficient money to purchase some land or to begin a small business in Japan, decided to settle in Canada. And if they were to build families in Canada, they needed wives. For those who still dreamt of returning to Japan, they would achieve their dreams sooner if they had wives to help with the work.¹⁸

Japanese women entered immigrant society in one of three ways. Some were wives who had been left behind in Japan and now were called over by their husbands. Others married single men who returned to Japan to seek their brides who then returned to Canada with their husbands. Japanese men, however, found this an expensive way to obtain a bride and, by returning to Japan, they risked being conscripted into the Japanese military. Thus to save the expense of going back to Japan and to avoid the risk of conscription, men chose to order their mates by the picture bride practice. So, the third way Japanese women entered Canada was as picture brides.¹⁹

The practice of obtaining a wife by this way conformed to traditional Japanese marriage custom. When immigrant men reached marriageable age, their parents urged them into marriage. If the men agreed, their families or relatives sought out suitable women based on the social and economic worth of the two households. Partners were usually chosen from the same village or the same prefecture, and photographs and

¹⁸ The Hayashi-Lemieux Gentlemen's Agreement restricted the number of Japanese passports issued to male labourers to an annual maximum of 400. Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 27. See also, Audrey Kobayashi, "A Brief History of the Canadian Nikkei" *Nikkei Images* vol. 1, no. 1 (January, 1996): 4. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia," *BC Studies* 105 and 106, (Spring/Summer 1995): 103-11, 107.

¹⁹ Yuji Ichioka, "American Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant-Women in the United States," *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 1, (1980): 339-357, See specifically 342-3.

introductory letters were exchanged in the process. Each family investigated the other family's history in search of what they saw as hereditary afflictions such as insanity, leprosy, venereal diseases or tuberculosis. If the two households were satisfied and the young couple agreed, the weddings were arranged in Japan. One of the unique elements of this picture bride practice was that grooms were physically absent from the wedding ceremony. In the wedding, if somebody had a groom's picture, it was put on the traditional Japanese cushion on which the groom was supposed to sit. Despite the groom's absence as long as the couple's names were properly registered the marriage was both legally and socially acceptable in Japan.²⁰

A large number of picture brides came from heavy populated areas such as Miomura in Wakayama, Hikone in Shiga prefecture and from around Hiroshima.²¹ In some cases, they had known their future partners, because some grooms were cousins or older brothers' classmates. More often, however, they had no previous contact with their future mates. Generally many picture brides were better educated than their grooms having graduated from high, normal or midwifery school, while their grooms often had

²⁰ The Japanese government regulated picture brides' emigration into Canada. For example, the picture brides' names had to be entered into their husbands' family registries six months before their passport application. It also ruled that "women could only emigrate provided that; she already had a spouse living [there]; an immigrant returned to Japan to marry her; or she had married an immigrant by proxy." The hardest demand of the government was that couples had to hand in certificates of deposit of at least \$ 800. In this period, \$800 was almost six months salary for Japanese labors in Canada. Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia", BC Studies 105 and 106 (Spring/Summer 1995):89. Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 87-9. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia," BC Studies 105 and 106, (Spring / Summer):103-111, 107,108. See also, Yuji Ichioka, The Japanese immigrant: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924. (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 164, 165. See also, Miyoko Kudo, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 37, 89.

²¹ It is only since the Imperial Restoration that Japan is divided into *ken*. In 1868, a decree divided Japan into 13 *fu*, 273 *han* and 25 *ken*. Papinot E, Historical and Geographical Dictionary of Japan. (Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo: 1972), 270.

only a basic education obtained during the six years of compulsory schooling. Divorced women were also encouraged to marry Japanese men in North America.²²

The number of women who emigrated through the picture bride practice rose quickly. The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1908 severely limited the number of male immigrants, but placed no restriction on the number of women entering Canada. As a result by 1924, 6420 women had arrived in Canada and in 1913 alone, a peak year, 424 women arrived.²³ These women had many babies in Canada. In fact, their birth rate during 1920s and 30s was two times as that of norms in British Columbia.²⁴ Continuing until 1928 the picture bride emigration remained largely unregulated until re-negotiation reduced overall Japanese immigration to only 150, including wives and children. On June 9, 1928, Vancouver Sun reported prime minister king had announced:

that steps will be taken to terminate the practice of sending for so-called picture brides. The administrative measures directed to this end will go into force on September 1."²⁵

Yet despite the new limitation, the migration of the previous twenty years had ensured that Japanese women had already established roots in the Canadian soil.

²² Midge Ayukawa, "Good Wives and Wise Mothers: Japanese Picture Brides in Early Twentieth-Century British Columbia," BC Studies 105 and 106 (Spring / Summer): 103-11. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin vol. 30 (January, 1988): 25-9, 27. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Neither Wataridori nor Dekasegi: Early Japanese Women Building New Lives in Canada," in Japan in Focus, ed. Jacob Kovalio (Toronto: Captus Press, 1994): 267-74, 269.

²³ In this year, the Japanese population in Canada was male 9443, female 2330. In the number of 2330, 424, (more than one fifth) stayed only for one year. By 1931, the ratio of men to women among adults changed from over 10 to 1, to 2 to 1. Peter Ward, The Japanese in Canada (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1982), 6.

²⁴ Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 109.

²⁵ Since then, passports were processed by the Canadian legation established in Tokyo. "Photo Brides Barred," Vancouver Sun, 9 June 1928.

Images of emigrating Meiji women

A dominant image of these women in both Japanese and Japanese-Canadian literature is that of subordinated wives and mothers victimized by men. For example, scholar Mitsuru Shinpo, and a non-fiction writer Miyoko Kudou, praise the Japanese immigrant women for doing great work despite being so docile and fragile.²⁶

Although writing of the experience in the United State, Yuji Ichioka describes the circumstances that would have been seen in Canada as well for women coming to Canada:

No single motive explains why women came to the United States. In the case of married women who had been left behind in Japan, they responded to their spouses' summons to join them. Most picture-brides no doubt simply obeyed parents. Betrothed by parental arrangement, they too came to join their spouses. To refuse would have been an act of official disobedience, a grave moral offense.²⁷

Characterized as timid, docile and dependent, these supposedly pitiful women unwillingly crossed the Pacific Ocean after being coaxed or coerced by their parents.

Scholarly writing also perpetuates this image. Describing Japanese immigrant women in Canada, Stephen Beckow claimed that:

The life of a Japanese wife could be lonely indeed. She might live in rural isolation, or she might live apart from her husband while he labored in a mining camp, in a sawmill, or on a fishing boat. Coming to Canada usually ten years later than he, she

²⁶ Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996). Miyoko Kudou, Yugirirou ni furu yuki ha (Tokyo: Shoubunsha, 1983). Miyoko Kudou, Kanashii metsuki no hyouryusha. (Tokyo: Shuueisha, 1995). See also, Yuji Ichioka, "American Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant-Women in the United States," Pacific Historical Review vo.1 (1980). Stephen M. Beckow, Keeping BC White Anti-Orientalism in the West, 1858-1949: Canada's Visual History. (National Film Board Canada) National Museums of Canada. The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, A Dream of Riches 1877-1977. (Toronto: Dread Naught, 1978). However, the writings by Midge Ayukawa, Audrey Kobayashi and Makabe Tomoko are exceptions.

²⁷ Yuji Ichioka, "American Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant-Women in the United States," Pacific Historical Review vo.1 (1980): 339-57, 345.

generally had a lesser grasp of Canadian customs and the English language. If her children adopted Canadian ways and abandoned the traditions of the parents, her isolation might be even more nearly complete.²⁸

Japanese Canadian groups also depicted women's contribution mainly in terms of their sacrifices. For example, In Nikkei Legacy, Toyo Takata argues that:

... for many wives, it was a harsh, dreary existence in isolated fishing villages, on lonely farms or in remote logging camps. They stood for long hours in cold canneries, cleaned land and cultivated, or cooked and cleaned for the single men in the bunkhouses, taking time off only during pregnancies. . . . Though young and unprepared for the Canadian pioneer life, they brought solace to the home and stability to the community. With quiet courage, patience and dignity, most adjusted to their new life habitat and matured as wives and mothers. Unlike the men, the Issei women cannot be singled out for unique or outstanding achievement. But they were no less pioneers as they shared in the sorrow, struggle and sacrifice to settle in Canada. For it was they, above all, who comforted, admonished, nurtured and guided their sons and daughters. That was their foremost and finest contribution.²⁹

Although he admires the women's physical labour, he ultimately views their main task as being mothers. In so doing, he ignores women's public activities including their work in response to Anti-Japanese feeling among the white British Columbians before the World War II.

Also, Ken Adachi, a Nisei describes picture brides in his book, The Enemy that Never Was:

In any case, a wife ticketed for Canada was chosen on the qualifications set by the household: she should be healthy, skilled at housework and (if possible) farming, good natured and docile. And these qualities were utterly essential, for the husbands were to drive their wives and children with the same intensity with

²⁸ Stephen M. Beckow, Keeping BC White Anti-Orientalism in the West, 1858-1949: Canada's Visual History. (National Film Board Canada) National Museums of Canada.

²⁹ Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 17,18.

which they drove themselves. The wife was simply adjunct to the husband's needs in house and field, a person who would look after his wants and relieve his comforts much as his mother had always done.³⁰

Adachi's description mirrors how the women of that period were usually portrayed by people within the Japanese Canadian community. In fact, even historian Midge Ayukawa, who is Nisei, confesses that her impression of the Japanese immigrant women's experience before she studied them closely was of a "private and quiet people who were merely housekeepers and mothers."³¹ Thus, the image of women was limited to the private sphere. Although these writers were aware of women's labour outside the home, they seem to have devalued it.

Women brought over from Japan for the purpose of prostitution endure an even more demeaning historiographical image. According to one source,

Other less fortunate women were brought over to serve in brothels which existed (as early as 1890) in Victoria, Nelson, Cranbrook, and other mining and railroading towns. They were usually young, illiterate women from poverty-stricken villages, sent to earn whatever they could to support their families in Japan. They lived a caged existence and died without leaving any record of their lives.³²

Another author claims that

Many men loved these women only for their physical enjoyment. But no men loved or protected these women as wives or mothers. No men brought these women into the normal society. Even though these women had the same respectable humanity as others, they could not enhance themselves, and died.³³

³⁰ Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was*. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc. 1978), 90.

³¹ Midge Ayukawa, "Bearing the Unbearable." (British Columbia: M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1990), 7.

³² The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, *A Dream of Riches 1877-1977*. (Toronto: Dread Naught, 1978), 19.

³³ Mitsuru Shinpo, *Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku*. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 62.

These statements describe the prostitutes as outcasts in the history of Japanese Canadian pioneers. They may show sympathy toward prostitutes but do not offer any sense of community.

In effect, the stereotypical image of Japanese immigrant women is that of tragic figures. They were seen as young women who were forced by their parents or relatives to marry unknown men for their families' profit. In equal measure, they were also portrayed as domestic workers, their husbands' helpers, and viewed as irrelevant to political activities. Prostitutes were portrayed as pitiful victims of an illicit business catering to men's sexual demands. In these sources, all women sacrificed themselves for their families, their husbands, or the men's physical satisfaction: hence, they were passive victims of a patriarchal society.

This portrait of the immigrant women echoes notions of Meiji womanhood. *Issei* women are portrayed through histories, as being domestic figure and passive. In these depictions, *Issei* women conform to the Meiji ideals emphasizing the duties of motherhood, reproduction and subordination to men. This match between the ideal and image reveals that how many depictions of *Issei* women have been coloured by Meiji expectations. As I will show in later chapters, *Issei* women were not so restricted.

TABLE 1 Immigration of Japanese Women, 1900–1930

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of Female Immigrants^a</i>	<i>Total No. of Immigrants^b</i>
1900		6
1901		—
1902		—
1903		—
1904		354
1905		1,922
1906		2,142
1907	242	7,601
1908	566	858
1909	153	244
1910	134	420
1911	217	727
1912	362	675
1913	424	886
1914	447	681
1915	338	380
1916	233	553
1917	310	887
1918	370	1,036
1919	530	892
1920	389	525
1921	338	481
1922	300	395
1923	197	404
1924	233	510
1925	269	424
1926	214	443
1927	—	511
1928	—	535
1929	—	179
1930	—	217

Midge Ayukawa, "Neither Wataridori nor Dekasegi: Early Japanese Women Building New Lives in Canada", in *Japan in Focus*, ed. Jacob Kovalio, (Toronto: Captus Press, 1994), p268.

Chapter 2. Gender, resistance and immigration

Although the ideal of Meiji womanhood required absolute submission and popular and scholarly writing has depicted Japanese women as obedient, a closer examination of picture brides and their lives provides a very different view. In fact, despite long held notions that these women were forced into marriage by families or friends, there is considerable evidence to suggest that most brides willingly emigrated to North America using this marriage as their means.

For women who did not want to get married in their villages in Japan, going to North America as a picture bride was an eagerly sought out adventure. Most picture brides came from small, very poor communities in Japan where their futures were predictable: marrying and living in their villages for the rest of their lives. According to Maki Hukushima, who herself lived on a small island in Japan, many young women from her village ran away to cities using the Hukushima family's steam boat that operated between the island and the mainland.¹ When young Japanese women saw other women just like themselves going to Canada, they wanted to go as well. In comparison with simply running away, leaving as a picture bride was a more respectable way to escape their lives. A picture bride, Hana Murata herself recalled that:

A lot of my classmates in primary school came to Canada later. When we started getting older, we'd start wanting to go somewhere. I got wanting to go to America, too. To my way of thinking, it would be better than getting married to a farmer

¹ Born in 1892. Maki Hukushima came to Canada in 1914 as a picture bride from Ooshima-gun in Yamaguchi-ken. (This profile was obtained from the introduction of her oral history interview, and each woman's profile in this thesis was obtained this way. The names quoted in this thesis are last names excepting 3 or 4 women whose last names are anonymous.) Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 46.

from the village.²

Another picture bride, Sato Yoshida, recalled how young Japanese women longed to go to North America:

In those days, the picture-arranged marriage was very trendy. Everybody was talking about it. We thought that Canada, America, Seattle, and Vancouver were all same, America. So everybody wanted to go to America. In those days, there was nobody in my village who wanted to marry in Japan. Everybody wanted to go to America as picture brides.³

In fact, in the oral history of picture brides, many use the word 'akogare' (longing) to describe their motives for emigrating to Canada. Apparently these women expected that a marvelous life awaited them in North America. In comparison with village life in Japan, Canada was a fancied dreamland.

Not every picture bride was motivated by such visions. Others were driven by more specific goals. They wanted to make large sums of money by working in Canada. Because many picture brides came from areas that sent many male labourers to North America, they saw some wealthy men who came back from Canada.⁴ For example, in the Mio village of Wakayama prefecture, successful men from Canada spent money extravagantly even when Japan was in a terrible depression.⁵ Indeed, in the early days, many Japanese believed the story that making money in North America was easy as easy

² Born in 1895. Hana Murata came to Canada in 1915 as a picture bride from Hikone-city in Shiga-ken. Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 76.

³ Sato Yoshida came to Canada in 1911 as a picture bride from Hiroshima-ken. Miyoko Kudou, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 22.

⁴ Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin vol.2, (February, 1988): 28.

⁵ Miyoko Kudou, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 166.

as raking fallen leaves.⁶ Needless to say, going to North America was attractive for those who hoped to make money and who were willing to work hard. In her oral history, Yasu Ishikawa, recalled that she

wanted to work hard and make money. I thought, I can do it if I go to Canada, maybe, and work as a midwife. I hoped to make money, even though to start up a bank with. . . . I'll make a lot of money. I'll get rich, I'll show you. That's why I wanted to go to America and make a living for myself. Nowadays I'm shy, but when I was young, I had lots of spirit.⁷

Another picture bride, Hukushima said:

I was still only 18 years old. I didn't know what kind of man he was, but I was happy as long as I could get to America. (I thought that) It was easy to make money in America. My family was poor, and it was going bankruptcy, and anybody could see my parents were just making do with what they had. I started feeling they were in a bad way, and wanted to go somewhere to make money and help them out, and not bother to get married. I had so many younger sisters you see, I was just innocent girl, not even nineteen years old and thought I'd like to make money. I'd work very hard and save lots of money.⁸

Another example was Ito Imada who immigrated to Canada in 1911 as a picture bride.

When Imada was young, she visited her wealthy friend's large house and longed to live in such a place. But her own family owned only a small parcel of land and her father was sick. She was determined to make money by herself and sought out an opportunity to do that. When she heard that a man in Canada was looking for a picture bride in her village, she jumped at the chance.⁹

⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁷ Born in 1896. Yasu Ishikawa came to Canada as a picture bride from Hiroshima-ken. Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 104.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁹ Born in 1892. Ito Imada came to Canada in 1911. Memoirs by Ito Imada, (Vancouver: An inventory of the paper and records in the Japanese Canadian collection in the UBC special collection) Box 3. See also, Mitsuru Shinpo, *Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku*. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 65. In this book, Her name was interpreted as an assumed-name, Haya Hikita.

Imada was but one of many who unhesitatingly took the chance of being a picture bride. Some women declared that if the passage from Japan had been unrestricted, they might have crossed the Ocean alone, not as a bride. For example, Ishikawa said, "Even if I wanted to be a midwife in Canada, it was impossible to go to there alone. That's why I got married."¹⁰ Another picture bride, Tami Nakamura recalled that "At the time, you couldn't come over unless you were married. No matter how much you wanted to, it was impossible to come alone."¹¹ Moreover, most of these women were primarily concerned with going to Canada, not with husbands. Indeed, both Ishikawa and Nakamura were, at best, indifferent about their mates. Ishikawa claimed that she

had no idea what kind of person I had married, and what kind of life he was leading. Anyway, I had my heart set on coming here, and that was all I could think of. That was my dream, and I thought things would turn out all right. I was just a child, you see. there was no time for studying about Canada. I didn't even know what it meant not to know English. I thought I could get along with Japanese. Because I was young, all I could think of was coming here.¹²

For her part, Nakamura stated that

we exchanged letters for six months. My husband often wrote, but there's nothing special that I remember. I don't remember anything of what I wrote, either. I do remember that his letters gave me the impression that he wasn't a bad person. Anyway, it was my feeling that I could get married to anybody, so I wasn't particular about details.¹³

¹⁰ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 105.

¹¹ Born in 1896. Tami Nakamura came to Canada in 1916 from Hiroshima-ken. *Ibid.*, 131. The Japanese government ruled that "women could only emigrate provided that; she already had a spouse living [there] ; an immigrant returned to Japan to marry her; or she had married an immigrant by proxy." *Ibid.*, 130.

¹² *Ibid.*, 105.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

For these women their goal was to go to Canada in order to pursue to their dreams and being picture brides was a means to that end.

Many picture brides were better educated than their husbands, having graduated from Jogakko (girl's high school).¹⁴ They had also experienced paid labour as part of Japan's industrial workforce. However the ideal women's behavior in the period was still to be good wives and wise mothers in their homes. So, women were expected to work until their marriage. But not all wanted to cease employment at that time. Nakamura recalled that:

In those days, nobody worked even if they'd graduated from Girl's high school. A woman just got married. If you said you were going to be a working woman, you got laughed at. In the Hiroshima area, some women became school teachers, nurses, or telephone operators. But that was just until they got married. I used to see young women walking past our house morning and night, going to work. they were wearing Hakama (Japanese-style divided skirts). If women had been free to work, like today, I would have tried it, too, without getting married. But I just went to girls' school where all they gave you was a bride's education. So when I graduated I was like everybody else; I took lessons in sewing and the koto (a Japanese harp).¹⁵

Obviously, for those whose ultimate goal was to go to Canada regardless of the means, being a picture bride was a necessary expedient.

Some women wanted to study western culture in Canada. Yokoi, like Nakamura, a picture bride, did not want to end up being a housewife but hoped to learn more about Western literature. Although she was a Jogakoo graduate, she decided to marry an immigrant man who had completed only Grade Three. She brought many books to

¹⁴ Ibid., 7. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin vol.30. no.2 (February, 1988): 27.

¹⁵ Ibid., 131.

Canada in her wicker basket.¹⁶ Other women had similar desires as Yokoi. According to a picture bride who came to Canada in 1917, a number of Jogakko graduates on the same ship declared that they had married America, not men. During this period, Western knowledge was being introduced in most schools in Japan. These women must wanted more than what the schools could offer. They wanted the real experiences that they thought they could gain if they went to Canada.

The strength of women's desire to emigrate impressed the sociologist Makabe who took the oral histories of *Issei* women. She wrote in 1995,

They (*Issei* women) say, from a distance of more than 60 years, that the only thing in their minds was a desire to go to America. Even though they spoke casually, as though discussing a third person, the listener could sense the sheer youthful eagerness of the migrant, without any dark undertones. Going to America was a great dream, a great longing.¹⁷

Makabe sees these picture brides as "young women with a strong drive to work and make money." Ultimately, she concludes that "The strength of their desire could be felt, even in their casual conversations, and it made a strong impression on me."¹⁸

Contrary to the women's strong desire to be picture brides, their parents were concerned about their daughters' future in the alien land. Particularly, fathers opposed their daughters becoming picture brides. Ishikawa's case is typical. When Ishikawa told her father of her idea, he furiously said, "It's the most important time in a life time, and anybody who wants [to] marry you should come in person. He can't be a suitable man, if

¹⁶ Born in 1895. Yokoi came to Canada in 1914 from Hiroshima-ken. Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" *Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin* vol.2, (February, 1988): 27. See also, Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 115.

¹⁷ Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 7, 8.

he asks somebody else to look for a wife.”¹⁹ Yet, parents could not stop their daughters going to Canada.

And once their daughters decided to leave for Canada, parents grieved intensely. In the case of Imada, though she was very excited the night before she left, her mother cried all night long thinking about the separation.²⁰ Similarly, from the moment that Kouno announced that she would go, her father sat on the cold ground for many hours in front of a sculpture of the village God to pray for her future. Her mother visited another God which was located one thousand kilometers from her village, and walked around it every day for a hundred days in her barefeet praying for Kouno’s future.²¹ Clearly, parents were not forcing their daughters into these marriages. And when these women decided to go to Canada, they did so knowing that their parents disapproved.

Thus, many picture brides were not coaxed or urged by their parents or people around them to cross the Pacific Ocean. On the contrary, they longed to go to Canada, and often went without their parents’ blessing. The motives of these women seem to indicate a desire to improve themselves and their lives. Many picture brides came to Canada on their own decisions. Therefore, the image of picture brides as those very sad women who simply obeyed their parents and were betrothed by their parents to cross the Pacific Ocean is inaccurate. Women’s resistance to Meiji education and gender ideology

¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹⁹ Ibid., 105-6.

²⁰ Memoirs by Ito Imada, (Vancouver: An inventory of the paper and records in the Japanese Canadian collection in the UBC Special Collection) Box 3.

²¹ There is a traditional Japanese custom that if people strongly want their dreams to come true, they have to visit and walk with barefeet around a sculpture of the God of a village praying for 100 days. People do it when they want happiness for someone else. Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 133, 134.

was expressed by their emigration. Their experiences while in Canada further belie the dominant image of Japanese docility, as we shall see in subsequent chapters.

1. Japanese prospective brides on board ship,
facing an uncertain destiny. (date unknown).



2. Many *Issei* women, after landing in Canada,
quickly adapted to western fashions.

Chapter 3. Issei women and gender: building Japanese Canadian community

This chapter focuses on the daily experiences of Issei women in Canada. Few found that Canada or their husbands met their expectations. Although the majority lived under primitive conditions, much worse than even in the poorest village in Japan, they established new lives in Canada. These women's physical work and indomitable spirit reveal how they stepped outside of Meiji stereotypes. Single women and prostitutes even more boldly rebelled against Meiji gender expectations. Even though such women were portrayed as being tragic outcasts of the Japanese Canadian community, they survived in their new land and contributed to the history of Japanese pioneers in Canada. The experiences of both married and single women were far from the images produced by the Japanese Canadian community.

The Daily Colonist on March 10, 1926 reported the arrival of the most recent ship carrying picture brides into Victoria as:

Picturesquely arrayed in their multi-colored kimonos, forty Japanese brides arrived here on the Empress of Australia to join their respective husbands in various parts of Canada. Officers of the ship said that never before had they experienced such a large party of picture brides on the ship's passage list. The brides were the cynosure of all eyes on their arrival there, their national head dress, brilliantly-colored kimonos, small feet encased in wooden sandals and their painted red cheeks making them striking characters among the European-attired passengers, as they wended their way to the immigration officers in the large dining room.¹

¹ "Picturesque Brides Arrive From Japan" Daily Colonist March 10, 1926.

Although she had arrived a decade before the *Empress of Australia* docked in Victoria, Tami Nakamura's recollections were undoubtedly shared by these late brides. Nakamura recalled that everyone was filled with excitement as the ship entered the harbor. Brides and grooms were introduced for the first time on the dock by a man who was responsible for these introductions.²

The anticipation of what awaited them in this strange new land soon evaporated and for many, the first shock of reality occurred when they met their grooms. Nishikawa clearly remembered the sight of the new husband:

I was really surprised at the time. . . . An introducer told me, 'that man, that one (is your groom),' but the man did not look like the man in the picture in my hand. It did not look him at all. I told the introducer that the man would not be my groom, something was wrong, so I will go back to Japan by this boat. But the introducer said, 'No, no, it was not wrong, because his name was same. Get off from this boat.' But I said, 'No, I can't.' It was really funny to recall that time but I was upset. . . . I asked my husband why it was so different, then he said that the picture was [taken] ten years ago. He had been in Canada for ten years. You see, he worked and worked in Canada, so he did not look [like] the same man in the picture. He said, 'If I sent you a picture of such a man who looked awful, you would not come.' I was really surprised at that time.³

Mr. Nishikawa was not the only one who sent a picture of when he was young. A gap of ten or more years between a groom's claim and reality was common. Like Nishikawa, many picture brides could not believe that these men who looked so old were their

² Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 58.

³ Born in 1894. Nishikawa came to Canada as a picture bride from Kumamoto-ken in 1916. Ibid., 58, 59.

husbands. At least Nishikawa had sent a photograph of himself: others had sent pictures of more appealing men.⁴

Not surprisingly, disappointments did not end on the dock. After a joint wedding in a church in Victoria, most couples went to new homes where the brides quickly found that conditions were often worse than what they had left behind in Japan. Having arrived in November 1907, Koto Kawamoto recalled her first impression of the Fraser Valley in Hammond:

A week later he [my husband] finally appeared. It was in the middle of November and pouring rain. At the Port Hammond train station, his brother-in-law came with a wagon to meet us. Bouncing up and down, we traveled a bush road. At the end of it I noticed, what to me were, strange shacks. So even in Canada, I thought, there must be beggars. Then our wagon stopped before the smallest shack of all, and I was told, "This is your house."⁵

Almost two decades later, Moto Suzuki had a similar experience. Arriving at a cannery company's house in 1925 Steveston, Suzuki was, at first, confused:

When I came [in 1925], it was like a wild field or like in the mountains. The grass was this high [high-high]. There was a boardwalk around the house and the grass was so long, it swayed from side to side. It looked like a deserted wild place, like where fox might be living., I'm from farm country, but even near my village I'd never seen a place like this. Back home we used to have a little storage shack in the field; I felt as though I were living in that shack.⁶

⁴ Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" *Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin* vol. 30, no. 1. (January, 1988): 26. See also, Midge Ayukawa, "Neither Wataridori nor Dekasegi: Early Japanese Women Building New Lives in Canada," in *Japan in Focus*, ed. Jacob Kovalio (Toronto: Captus Press, 1994): 269.

⁵ Immigrated to Canada in 1907. The Japanese Canadian Centennial Project, *A Dream of Riches 1877-1977*, (Toronto: Dread Naught, 1978), 18, 19.

⁶ Daphne Marlatt ed., *Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canada History* (Victoria, British Columbia, Aural History, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1975), 18.

There was, however, no time for the women to grieve because most wives started to work immediately. A picture bride, Hukushima who was upset to see her miserable sawmill bank house in Townsend about five miles from New West Minister, said, "But I didn't have time to think about being surprised. There was work to do right away. The very next morning I got up at four and worked at cooking and washing [for workers]." ⁷ Suzuki, who was shocked to see her shack, recalled, "When I came to [Steveston] I was almost six months pregnant. It was July, fishing season, so I started to work in the cannery before August." Ishikawa who wanted to be a midwife in Canada, said, "Right after coming to Canada, I started working as a midwife in the Japanese area of Vancouver. I was busy from that day on." ⁸

Ishikawa's daily routine around 1925 was typical of Japanese women in the sawmills of British Columbia. Married to a foreman at a sawmill employing 30 to 60 single male workers, Ishikawa recalled:

I got up at four in the morning to cook their three meals. The workers insisted on starting the day with rice. I'd start serving rice, miso soup and pickles. For lunch, I got some help to have the food ready at noon on the dot. We'd cook a dish with fish or meat. At three o'clock I'd start heating the bath. I was the last one to get into the bath every night, then I'd clean it. Between times I did the cleaning and washing, then I went to bed at one or two in the morning. It was my job to collect room and board money from the workers, too. Then I'd order the food; that was up to me too. ⁹

For her efforts, she was paid \$2.00 for meals and \$2.00 for laundering from each worker.

Like Ishikawa, many wives in lumbering areas were in charge of cooking, housekeeping,

⁷ Born in 1892, and came to Canada in 1914. Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 49.

⁸ Ibid., 107.

and sometimes managing camp finances while ordering food and collecting money for room and board.

Tami Nakamura who came to a farm in Mission in 1916, had a very similar experience:

In four months, May to September, all kinds of strawberries come out, one after the other. Those months, it's war. My work was cooking and supervising meals for the pickers. I'd get up at four in the morning, cook rice and miso soup, and feed everybody. It was food for 40 people at least, so we had a cook, but it was a lot of work just to manage the house. Anyway, I was busy every day and I had no spare time at all. . . . all kinds of people were forever going in and out, and I used to make their three meals a day, and their washing. There were no machines in those days, so I scrubbed away with my hands.¹⁰

Farmers' wives did very similar work to that done in sawmill camps. There were no labour-saving devices. Therefore, both laundry and cooking required manual work. It is no wonder that she 'had no spare time'.

Women's work in shingle camps in the deep wilderness mountains was physically and mentally more difficult than women's agricultural work. Ito Imada worked as the cook and laundress at such a camp near the Indian Arm of Burrard Inlet in 1911. Because she was the only woman among the workers, she and her husband had to share their tent with other male workers. She recalled, "I had a hard time in there because I was shy, still

⁹ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada, (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995) 112.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

young, besides we were a new couple at the time.”¹¹ In addition to the difficulty, she had to struggle to sleep on a poor straw bed covered only with a blanket.¹²

Imada's labours continued after moving to a shingle camp located ten miles from Vancouver. She cooked, cleaned and laundered for the camp workers. Everyday, she hauled enough water from the river to the new camp to wash twenty-two kilograms of rice. Moreover, the camp's isolation and the resulting difficulty in obtaining a variety of foods required considerable effort to cook varied meals. For cooking, she was paid \$1.00 per person per month and the same for the laundry, but this money was not paid until the end of the contract period.¹³ Even so, her later experiences in a shingle camp near Stave Falls on the north side of the Fraser River were physically harder than the earlier domestic labour. Here, she cut cedar bolts as her husband's partner using an eight-foot buck saw. Many oral histories recalled wives and their husbands working as partners cutting shingles in the mountains.¹⁴

The daily work of fishermen's wives was also difficult. Women cooked and washed for bachelors living in cannery company bunkhouses as did wives who worked in the sawmill bunkhouses. Those who married fishermen worked long days in the canneries standing on cold floors. For example, women employed at canneries in Steveston usually washed or canned the fish. Once they packed twenty-four cans in each box, they received a punch on their ticket. At the end of season, usually in late

¹¹ Memoirs by Ito Imada, handwritten in Japanese, in an inventory of the papers and records in the Japanese Canadian collection (Vancouver, British Columbia: the Special Collections, University of British Columbia) Box 3. See also, Mitsuru Shinpo, *Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku*. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 68.

¹² Memoirs by Ito Imada.

¹³ Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" *Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin* vol. 30, no. 1. (January, 1988): 28.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

November, the punches were counted and for each 150 punches, they were paid 3 dollars. Women who washed the fish earned 15 cents an hour. Although well organized, this method of payment did not mean that the women worked regularly. Suzuki said, "Whenever the fish came in, they let us know by whistle, no time limit, night or day. Sometimes five hours, sometimes ten hours a day."¹⁵

In the early days in Steveston, if the husband did not find a suitable fishing partner, the wife went on the boat with him. Kaneda for example, lived in a canning company house and recalled that she and her husband went out at 4:00 am, and lowered and raised the nets five times with each of the two daily tide changes. Moreover, she continued fishing even after she became widowed, and since her 16 years old son was too young to obtain a fishing license, she assumed her husband's license and continued until her son was twenty.¹⁶

Oral histories also recalled Japanese immigrant wives working off-season and weekends. For example, Tanaka- Goto and her husband cut trees on Salt Spring Island for firewood and sold it in town every weekend.¹⁷ Most fishermen's wives at Steveston also worked on strawberry farms. They planted strawberries in spring and harvested them in

¹⁵ Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" *Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin* vol. 30, no. 2. (February, 1988): 26, 27.

¹⁶ Issei women such as Kaneda were not the only ones who worked on boats. Nisei (next generation of Japanese) women also fished with their parents. Catherine Lang, *O-Bon in Chimunesu*. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1996), 125.

¹⁷ Oral history with Kiyoko Tanaka-Goto by Maya Koizumi, Videocassette, (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1972), 68:1-4.

early summer, while they went to work in the canneries.¹⁸ A number of these women also worked as housekeepers in Euro-Canadian homes, in the off-season.¹⁹

Many continued their labours outside of the home even during pregnancy. For example, Nakamura cooked and supervised meals for forty strawberry pickers during her pregnancy in Mission around 1917.²⁰ Suzuki arrived in Steveston six months pregnant and began working at the cannery right away. She recalled her first birth: "And the midwife said, 'A first birth will take a long time. The baby won't be here for a long while yet. Well, it was 1 a.m. when I went into the hospital, and the baby came right after that. In those days women worked until the baby came. It was harder to make a living then.'" For her part, Tokue Maeda recalled that working with the fish in a store at Steveston gave her terrible morning sickness.²¹

In most cases women delivered their babies at home and often thought themselves fortunate if they were attended to by midwives. Husbands frequently assisted during childbirth. Miyo Hayashi, who settled in Raymond in Alberta around 1930, remembered that:

When I had my babies, I never had a doctor. My oldest son and daughter were born on the ranch, so a nurse helped me out. On the farm, I never saw a doctor even though I knew that I was pregnant, and my husband always delivered the babies. So all of them were born at home. To get the bed ready for the birth, I used to sew together some cloth I'd brought from Japan, then sit on it to have the baby. I made a crib out of our

¹⁸ Oral history with Itono Hamano by Maya Koizumi, Videocassette, (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1972).

¹⁹ For example, Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 136.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 137.

²¹ Daphne Marlatt ed., Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canada History (Victoria, British Columbia, Aural History, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1975), 37. Oral history with Tokue Maeda by Maya Koizumi. Born in 1900. Tokue came to Canada from Yalayama-ken in 1912. Videocassette, (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1974), 2397:1-4.

old wicker trunks, and got the small things ready. I'd read Japanese magazines like *The House-wife's Companion*, and that's how I knew what childbirth was about."²²

Some women had no assistance. Isa Koyoda recalled " Oh yeah, of course I had my babies in our house. No problem. I washed and boiled water, and then did it. Because Papa [her husband] went to the farm already, so I did it by myself. When he came back from his work, everything was done."²³

Further, these women went back to work within a week of childbirth. They often worked with their babies strapped on their backs, or they put their infants in wicker basket cots and left them at home. In the latter case, the mothers then had to run home on breaks to feed their babies. Nakamura recalled, "When the babies got a little bigger, I used to put them in a small box and take them into the fields, and they were beside me as I picked berries."²⁴ Isa Koyoda carried one baby on her back and brought one small child to the farm.²⁵ Women worked in the woods usually left their babies in their cabins or deposited the babies on tree stumps nearby. For example, Sato Yoshida fixed her baby on her back tightly and with her husband cut cedar bolts using an eight-foot saw.²⁶ In the canneries, women worked carrying their babies on their backs or placed them down near

²² Born in 1902. Miyo Hayashi came to Canada as a picture bride from Kagoshima-ken in 1923. Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 166.

²³ Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 149.

²⁴ Tomoko Makabe, *Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada*. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 139.

²⁵ Born in 1896. Isa Koyoda came to Canada as a picture bride from Shiga-ken in 1917. Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 150.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

them.²⁷ Later, canneries in Steveston provided a day care house and mothers took turns looking after the children.²⁸

Housework and food preparation also were women's work, but they were not easy. For example, in the early days in Steveston, Japanese community shared a water tap for drinking water. According to Moto Suzuki, because the taps only dripped, everybody left the buckets at the tap. And when her own bucket was filled, she brought the bucket to her house to fill her container. Furthermore, because most houses did not have washing machines, she and other Japanese wives had to wash all clothes by hand using wash boards.²⁹ They also made clothing as seen in this example:

(in winter time) We have to put woolen underwear on the kids, clothes over that, and woolen jackets and stockings. Nowadays you can buy what you want, but in those days I used to make everything by hand- the children's clothing, everything, and things like work shirts.- we all borrowed one pattern in turn, adjusting the pattern to fit larger or smaller people.³⁰

Usually sewing and mending were done on rainy, windy, or cold days when the women could not work outside.³¹

Sewing skills were also a source of income. For centuries, one of the basic skills a young Japanese woman learned before marriage was sewing, and the tradition of learning to sew remained part of marriage preparation within the Japanese community in Canada. Many women were in charge of the altering and pressing work of Japanese immigrant-

²⁷ Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 18.

²⁸ Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin vol. 30, no.2 (February, 1988): 27.

²⁹ Ibid., 27. See also, ed. Daphne Marlatt., Steveston Recollected: A Japanese-Canada History (Victoria, British Columbia, Aural History, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1975) 18.

³⁰ Ibid., 18.

³¹ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 67, 172.

owned dressmaking businesses in Vancouver. And by the 1920s, a number of sewing schools were established in Vancouver area by the Japanese entrepreneurs. These schools instructed women in pattern drafting, fitting and sewing, as well as tailoring. In time, Issei women were replaced by Nisei girls in the schools although they were not attending in anticipation of marriage. Because Japanese Canadian women were rarely hired outside of their own community, sewing skills that could be used in Japanese run business were considered to be very practical. Many Nisei girls in the 1920's and 1930's went to sewing school rather than high school.³²

Other skillful women among Japanese immigrants in Canada were beauticians or midwives. For example, Masue Tagashira went to a barber school to support her family after her first husband fell into a deep depression following an accident at work. Although unable to speak English, she persevered, believing that all she needed to know was how to cut hair and shave. She worked at a barbershop on Main Street in Vancouver after she got a certificate and made 15 dollars a month.³³ Ishikawa worked as a midwife after she discovered that her husband was mentally ill. After obtaining a divorce in 1919, she lived alone in Vancouver, and managed to support herself quite well. She usually got paid from \$30 to \$40 for each birth, but if people who needed help could not afford it, she worked for nothing. Around 1920, a Japanese doctor in Canada appealed to the government to prevent midwives from practicing if they did not have Canadian midwife

³² Nikkei Images vol. 1, no.3(July, 1996): 3,4.

³³ Immigrated to Canada from Saga-ken in 1927. Nancy Knickerbocker, First Generation. (Vancouver: Asia Pacific Initiative, 1990), 47.

There was another Japanese immigrant woman who went to a barber school. She continued to go to school even during her pregnancy. After she graduated, she owned a barber shop in a mill town in British Columbia. She lived behind the shop so she could do her housework and at the same time keep an eye on the children as she cut hair. Oral History with Kuri Takenaka by Maya koizumi. Videocassette, (Victoria: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1974).

qualifications. In 1921, Ishikawa quit her work as a midwife, and moved to a sawmill near Prince George with her second husband and his thirty sawmill workers.³⁴

Stories of Japanese women who came to Canada do not display only their physical work but also their strong will to survive the hardships in their new country. Haruko Kobayakawa worked hard to improve her lot. Kobayakawa came to Canada in 1921 to avoid being a farmer. Ironically, her new life in Canada, like that of other picture brides, was more primitive than in Japan. Still, she worked where she found herself. She recalled, "I did farming for five years. I don't want to end up as a farmer. I don't want to waste what I learned in Japan."³⁵ By 1927, however, she became a Japanese language teacher in the Nisei community, and a few years later, still seeking something to do for herself, she entered a sewing school in Vancouver. After she mastered sewing, she trained many other women. Clearly, this woman achieved what she wanted and moved beyond the circumstances in which she found herself upon arrival.³⁶

Not only Kobayakawa, but also many other Issei women, overcame difficult situations with their strong will. For some women, despite the realization that North America was not a dreamland, returning to Japan was not an option. As one picture bride, Ishikawa said, "I never went to back to Japan, until the children were grown. I came here against people's objections, so I couldn't go back until I became self-supporting."³⁷ Another picture bride, Tome became a widow at age thirty-eight after her husband's

³⁴ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural history of Ontario, 1995), 67, 172.

³⁵ Oral history with Haruko Kobayakawa, Videocassette, (Vancouver, British Columbia: the Japanese Canadian Archives), No: 94/74.021, 94/80.041a-b.

³⁶ Oral history with Haruko Kobayakawa.

³⁷ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 106.

accidental death. The oldest of her six children was only eleven years old and Tome's husband had spent all their money on gambling. When her mother and older brother heard of her tragedy, they urged her to return to Japan with her children. She refused because she had "come to Canada in the first place in opposition to her family's wishes."³⁸ Having come to Canada against their families' wishes, they would not be driven back to Japan no matter how harsh their choice proved to be. Failure would bring shame on their families and only when they had made their mark, could they return to Japan.

Tagashira also surmounted her painful time. One day, she found that her husband had murdered one of their children and tried to kill himself using a gas pipe.³⁹ Their youngest baby had already died and her husband died nine months later in the Provincial Mental Hospital. After news of his death reached Japan, Masue's mother sent money to pay her passage home. However, she did not go back to Japan. Recalling her situation years later, Tagashira remembered thinking that "Obviously a widowed mother of two would be a big burden on her family. I didn't want to depend on anybody else. I had to fight my own sorrow and stand up for myself. I told my mother, 'Some day when it is spring again in my life I will come' and I sent the money back."⁴⁰ She did not escape from her suffering but chose to face it.

³⁸ Nancy Knickerbocker, First Generation. (Vancouver: Asia Pacific Initiative, 1990), 110.

³⁹ Nancy Knickerbocker, First Generation. (Vancouver: Asia Pacific Initiative, 1990), 110. According to Tagashira, he did so because he thought it would be too much struggle for her to take care of him and many children by herself.

⁴⁰ Oral history with Masue Tagashira, Videocassette (1908-1991), (Vancouver, British Columbia: the Japanese Canadian Archives), no: 96/166.004, 94/74.020, 94/74. 081a-b, 94/80. 013a-b. See also, Nancy Knickerbocker, First Generation. (Vancouver: Asia Pacific Initiative, 1990), 48.

Life in Canada forced some women to take on responsibilities that went beyond prescribed gender roles. In 1900, Kawamoto and her husband rented uncleared land on a mountain for berry farms. The terms of the loan said that if they could not finish clearing the land and harvesting the berries they had to pay a financial penalty. They attempted to fulfill the contract but never made a profit. Despite her husband's wish to rent the land again, Koto convinced him to purchase it. Having thought the matter over throughout the night, she decided borrowing \$1,600 dollars to buy the land offered a brighter future. "I was the person who had this idea, so I thought that even if I did not sleep every night I have to work and return our debt."⁴¹ Besides working on their own land, she and her husband worked as labourers for a local farmer. Kawamoto worked on the farm until two days before the birth of her child. After the child was born, she left the baby in their cabin and went back to work, returning only once a day to nurse. Moreover, every day, she worked half an hour longer than she was supposed to. Her employer was impressed with her hard work, and gave her a man's wage as a special reward. She recalled, "When I got a check of same amount of money as my husband, I [wept] tears of joy."⁴² Thus, Kawamoto made a bold decision, convinced her husband, and lived up to her responsibility.

For some, life in Canada was characterized as "bearing the unbearable".⁴³ Ito Imada moved from place to place with her husband and their children. But wherever they

⁴¹ Essay of Koto Kawamoto, written by her handwriting in Japanese, in an inventory of the paper and records in the Japanese Canadian collection (Vancouver, British Columbia: the Special Collections, University of British Columbia), Box 7.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ This phrase was quoted from the title of a master thesis by Dr. Ayukawa. Michiko Ayukawa, The Memoir of a Japanese Pioneer Woman: Bearing the unbearable, (M.A. thesis, University of Victoria, 1990). She is a woman who wanted to have a big house as had her friend.

moved, her husband took all her pay for gambling and drinking. Once she had an opportunity to go back to Japan, however, her husband did not send any money. When she realized that there was no place for her in Japan, she returned to Canada determining that “this time, I have to go through to survive in Canada, at any cost.”⁴⁴ In order to establish her life in Canada, she sought out a job and became her husband’s sawing partner in a cedar single bolt camp. Initially, her husband ignored her request saying “with such a woman’s body (you can’t make this physical work).” The next morning, she wore his size-eight shoes, put rice inside of them, and tied them up tightly with ropes. These shoes made her fit to work in snow and on steep slopes without slipping. She started to notch a tree. Finally her husband agreed and they worked together. They saved one thousand dollars, yet again he spent all the money on gambling. She recalled her feeling at the time, “I cried behind my children. I tried hard not to cry, but could not stop my tears. Even though I knew his bad habit of drinking and gambling I came back to Canada. So it’s my fault. I continued to work hard without any complaints.” However, they saved money, her husband did not waste their earnings on gambling next time. By the late 1930s, her family were prosperous farmers in Haney. They had sixteen acres of hops, berries and other fruits and eighty acres of uncleared land, a new house and new furnishings. They even managed a trip back to Japan.⁴⁵

What changed her husband’s behavior might have been her hard working and her strong determination to survive in Canada. One picture bride said, “[before I came to

⁴⁴ Memoirs by Ito Imada, written by her handwriting in Japanese, in an inventory of the papers and records in the Japanese Canadian collection (Vancouver, British Columbia: the Special Collections, University of British Columbia) Box 3. See also, Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 83.

⁴⁵ Memoirs by Ito Imada.

Canada] My father said, 'Anyway this is a picture marriage, so we don't know what [the] personality of your husband is. But it depends on you if he goes to be a bad person or good. Depends on women, men can go bad direction or good direction. So, in your early marriage, you should obey your husband, then gradually should initiate him to a direction, which you like.'"⁴⁶ Imada and Kawamoto (who decided to borrow money to buy a piece of land) might have been subordinate wives and then might have changed to dominate their husbands. At least, at a strategic point in their lives, these wives led their husbands. These women's experiences demonstrate that the husband did not always dominate the relationship. Another picture bride Hukushima said, "It [a marriage] depends on how you act, for the marriage to become a success."⁴⁷ Thus, despite the Meiji ideology that emphasized female subordination, Japanese culture provided a space for women to play active, determining roles within their marriage.

So, unlike their image in the mainstream historical literature and contradicting the percepts of Meiji gender ideology, Issei women were positive and forward-looking women who shouldered responsibilities and lived up to their word. They did not retreat in the face of hardship but moved ahead. Some might say that they had no choice but to surpass hardships because they knew that their parents or relatives could not support them financially. Even when their families in Japan wanted them to come home, they refused their entries. Issei women did not see themselves as victims but as survivors. As well, despite the rigidity of Meiji gender ideology, in Canada, Issei women were certainly able to take on male roles when needed. Clearly gender roles were not fixed. Indeed, the

⁴⁶ Miyoko Kudou, *Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 83, 84.

rigidity of that Meiji gender ideology may have been a reaction to the enormous change in people and lives brought about as a result of industrialization at home. The need for women to work, and in some cases, to take charge of their families in Canada may have simply seemed an extension of their experiences at home except that, in Canada, women's contributions were needed even after marriage. The words of fathers such as "anyway this is a picture marriage, so we don't know what [the] personality of your husband is. But it depends on you then gradually [you] should initiate him to a direction which you like."⁴⁸ show that they expected women to take on greater roles than the ideology indicated.

Surely, many Japanese women in Canada lived under such difficult conditions, but not all necessarily had hard lives. Some became wealthy and had an easier time. Their experiences however do not fit the typical lives of most of the Japanese wives in Canada. For example, Sugae Suzuki married a man who had a bathhouse and rooming house on Powell Street in Vancouver, and who employed a cook and a seamstress who sewed custom made coats. She also had a nursemaid for her children. Every weekend, an instructor of flower arrangement and tea ceremony (these skills are part of a bride's traditional training for homemaking) came to her house to train her. She rarely helped at the bathhouse. Kikuno Kitagawa also had an easy life. Her husband was a businessman working for the Nippon Silk Company. After arriving in Victoria, she and her husband spent a few days in Vancouver and then moved on to Calgary by train where they lived in

⁴⁷ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada, (Toronto: Multicultural history of Ontario, 1995), 48.

⁴⁸ See previous page.

a two-room suite at the Park Hotel. When she had her baby, she stayed in a hospital for three weeks.⁴⁹

The fact that many women performed both paid and unpaid labour demonstrates the financial difficulties of surviving in the new land. Only wealthy wives were able to afford to stay at home and look after their families. They alone were able to embrace an image of devoted wives and nurturing mothers whose place was in the home where they were dedicated to their husbands and children. The lives of most wives were not like this. Japanese immigrants worked long hours for low wages that were often 30 percent lower than those of Caucasian workers.⁵⁰ As a result, while valued by employers they were also fearsome competitors in the labour force. In prewar British Columbia, people of English background organized many groups to persecute Asians. As the Japanese immigrants were persecuted and their places of work restricted, the struggle for survival in the new land became even more difficult. As a consequence, they had to work harder than ever.⁵¹ Under such a circumstance, the Meiji gender concepts, that women took care of their own families in the home as wives and mothers and men worked outside as income earners, were nothing but an ideal for the Japanese pioneers in Canada. Both men and women had to be "labourers" in order to survive.

⁴⁹ Immigrated to Canada in 1917 at the age of nineteen as a picture bride from Wakayama prefecture. Kikuno Kitagawa came to Canada as a picture bride in 1926. Midge Ayukawa, "Nikkei Pioneer Women" Japanese Canadian Citizens Association Bulletin vol. 30, no.3(March, 1988): 26, 27. See also, Miyoko Kudou, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 49.

⁵⁰ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural history of Ontario, 1995), 13.

⁵¹ Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 118-141. See also, Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians," Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 395-420.

Despite the importance of their work, women's labour did not seem to be valued in the Japanese community as whole. Seldom did women alone obtain high status nor were they praised by their community. Ultimately, their status depended on their husbands' status. The Encyclopedia of the Japanese in Canada compiled in 1921 included only women who were married to ministers and successful businessmen, and provided only feminine modesty and familial dedication. Here, middle class experience and Meiji gender ideology held sway and dominated the perception of Japanese women as docile and dependent, completely obscuring the experience of rural or working class *Iseii* women.

While most widows remarried and established new lives, other women never married. Immigrating to Canada as a picture bride in 1915, Hana Murata was determined to make her way by herself in Canada after her second marriage ended unhappily in 1921. She later recalled that "I was 26, but I got to feel I'd never go back to Japan again, and I was going to work no matter what."⁵² Working as a housekeeper for forty-five dollars a month in Victoria for five years, she saved most of her income except for the money she sent to her mother in Japan. She then enrolled in a sewing school in Vancouver for a year, found work in a dry-cleaning store for a year, and eventually opened a dry-cleaning shop on Broadway in 1927. She managed preparations for the opening with her broken English, and secured a store license without asking for anyone's help. Remembering her labours, she recalled that "All the money I'd saved up, I spent,

⁵² Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 80.

and it was expensive to open the store. It was so long ago I don't remember how much it cost, but for sure, I managed by myself without borrowing."⁵³

Murata's effort was considerable when compared to others who managed similar businesses. There were about forty Japanese dressmakers in Vancouver in the late 1920s and their businesses were operated by men who could afford modern machinery. Many women who engaged in this business were partners of their husbands or worked at home as part time employees. Murata recalled, "It was a business, but still it was manual work, and it was all I could manage just with my two hands. It was work with deadlines, so I had to finish by a certain time. A lot of nights, I worked till the sun came up."⁵⁴ She bought three sewing machines and put motors in them. According to her, all customers were Caucasians, and many Salvation Army uniforms were brought in. She charged one dollar for cleaning two suits. The charge for sewing was \$1.50 for a skirt, \$2 or 3 for a dress, and \$6 or 7 for a suit. Furthermore, even with her busy work, she improved her English at a United Church.⁵⁵

Despite the presence of Anti-Japanese sentiment, she managed her business without problems:

I used to hear there was a lot of discrimination in Vancouver, but that had nothing to do with me. I don't know why people don't like Japanese. When I read the Japanese newspapers, they were always talking about people being anti-Japanese, but personally I didn't feel it one bit. Even when I was in business, I didn't feel any discrimination or prejudice. All customers were nice, and not a single one would have discriminated. In 20 years there was only once when a customer wouldn't pay the bill, so practically all the white people were honest with me, too.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid., 82.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 83, 84.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 84.

Murata's oral history did not mention any particular Japanese who helped her business. Despite the dominant Anglo-Saxon British Columbian anti-Japanese feeling, the people who supported Murata were not her own community people but Caucasians.

Her struggle was not only with financial survival, but also with the Japanese Canadian community's criticism toward her. Japanese immigrants strongly expected that all respectable Japanese women should be married and financially supported by men. Particularly before the war, a Vancouver Japanese language newspaper, Minshu, frequently printed articles which centered on the idea that women should be wives and mothers.⁵⁷ Under the circumstances, although Murata had many relatives who successfully ran businesses in British Columbia, none of them helped her. She recalled, "The Japanese won't help you at all, even if you're down [on] your luck."⁵⁸ That could be easily guessed by the fact that she had no Japanese customers. She was stigmatized by the restricted Japanese society and spent her life outside of the community.⁵⁹

Thus, Murata, with no particular education, resources and supporters lived alone in Canada. She learned western sewing as an occupation, and continued the work, with only her hands and primitive sewing machines. Murata's life was very unusual among Issei women. However, her experiences were significant. Not only was she a single career woman, but she survived and managed the business for many years with only

⁵⁷ Minshu (Daily people). Minshu is a Japanese language news paper published in Vancouver. For example, 1 December 1941, "Marriage under the war time series no 2. - Marriage is important, because we are now cells of the State, and the cells become a nucleus for next generation. Therefore, couples must have duty and glory under the circumstance." Also, 4 December 1941, "Marriage under the war time series no 5. - Women who dress up are idiots, because it changes valuable marriage to valueless. . . . Women have to be educated to be respectable wives."

⁵⁸ Ibid., 81.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 71.

Caucasian customers in the middle of Vancouver while most Japanese helped each other under the anti-Japanese storm.

Before the majority of wives immigrated to Canada, some Japanese women were already working as prostitutes in mining and railroading towns such as Nelson, Cranbrook, and Calgary. According to the report of Nagata who traveled to British Columbia in 1908, there were four Japanese brothels in Nelson. The first person who opened a brothel in this area was a Japanese man, Iseo. He brought four Japanese women from Yokohama, and managed the business. When he had made enough money to go back to Japan, another Japanese man took over this business. In Cranbrook, a woman, Tune opened a brothel, then around 1900, Rikuzo Huta and his wife ran brothels. The Huta couple married in Hawaii and moved to Canada in 1896. They managed their brothels at night and a sawmill factory during the daytime.⁶⁰

These brothels were self-regulated. For example, prostitutes in Nelson and Cranbrook were not allowed to take Japanese customers, because procurers were concerned about serious relationships developing between prostitutes and customers. Also, most Japanese brothels bribed the local police, consequently prostitutes did not need to pay high fines if they were convicted.⁶¹ As entertainers, the prostitutes encouraged their customers to spend money. For example, at brothels in Cranbrook, the price of a glass of whisky was 25 cents. Usually a customer was asked to buy few rounds of drinks for the prostitutes who were chatting with them. As planned, five or six dollars were soon out of the customer's pocket. While the prostitutes were dancing and singing

⁶⁰ Tairiku Nippo (Continental Daily News), 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 30 November 1908, 3-5, 24-29 December, 1908.

⁶¹ Tairiku Nippo, 27 November 1908.

for the customer, he selected his favorite one. After a negotiation, and if they could agree on a price, they retired to a private room. Depending on whether the coupling lasted a few hours or the entire night the rate could range \$2 to \$10. Regardless, most prostitutes made only twenty dollars per month.⁶²

With the increase of the Japanese immigration to Canada, Japanese brothels appeared in urban areas. There were four or five brothels on Alexander Street in Vancouver by 1912. According to a witness, Japanese laborers wearing hats to hide their faces, formed long lines in front of the brothels every Saturday evening. The fee for a prostitute was one dollar an hour, while the average earning of Japanese workers in that period was \$1.50 a day.⁶³ The method of business in a brothel in Vancouver was simpler than in brothels in Nelson and Cranbrook. For example, in 1925 a brothel on Hastings street was a two-story house. On the first floor, while a customer sat on a chair, prostitutes slowly paraded in front of him. If the customer liked one of them, he raised his hand when she was passing. She was then delivered to him in a second floor bedroom. Apparently, if they spent even half an hour together, somebody knocked on the door and told them to hurry up.⁶⁴

Tsune Huta, who owned three brothels in Cranbrook with her husband, does not seem to have been the type of woman who was forced to work as a prostitute. Rather, she seems to have become reconciled to the life of a prostitute. She worked, not only as a madam, but also as a prostitute in their brothels. Besides working there, she and her sister-in-law earned money as prostitutes on the train from Cranbrook to Fernie or

⁶² Tairiku Nippo, 24-27 November 1908, 8, 11 January 1909. See also, Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 54-57.

⁶³ Miyoko Kudou, Yugirou ni furu yuki ha. (Tokyo: Shoubunsha, 1983), 175, 176.

Macleod. Moreover, she always looked for new places for her business. She visited Fernie after the fire in 1900 to see if there were any opportunities to open a business. Shohei Nagata, who wrote 'Brothels- exploring report' in the newspaper Tairiku Nippo, mentioned that "Tsune is farsighted on the business."⁶⁵ Clearly, she was an aggressive businesswoman.

Nagata's report repeatedly mentions Huta's unyielding character. Huta seems to have been possessive of her clients. When Huta and her husband opened the business in Cranbrook in 1896, there was already a brothel in the area owned by a Japanese woman, Tomi. Because Tomi had a local policeman as her lover, her brothel did not have much trouble and her business was quite successful. However, when Huta opened the "Yokohama house", Tomi's business began to unravel. There was no licensed prostitute system, so a local police imposed fines. Encouraged by Tomi, her lover required Huta to pay the highest fee among prostitutes in the area. Supposedly, Tomi expected Huta to accept this harassment to avoid making her immoral occupation public. However, rather than being bullied, Huta appealed to another police officer over the unfair fee and Tomi's lover was forced to resign from the police force.⁶⁶

Like Huta, Kiyoko Tanaka-Gotou also actively worked as a prostitute. After arriving in Canada in 1914 at the age of nineteen as a picture bride, she worked on a farm in Duncan, and then later, on Salt Spring Island. She saved every penny for four years through jobs such as cleaning chicken coops and laundering for a hotel. Recalling those days, she said "I slept only about 4 or 5 hours a day and was working the rest of the

⁶⁴ Miyoko Kudou, Kanashii metsuki no hyouryusha, (Tokyo: Shuueisha, 1995), 204,205.

⁶⁵ Tairiku Nippo, 4, 5 December 1908. See also, Miyoko Kudou, Yugirou ni furu yuki ha, (Tokyo: Shoubunsha, 1983), 126, 127, 147, 148.

time.” Having saved two thousand dollars, she left her husband, went to Vancouver, and bought a brothel on the corner of Powell and Gore Streets with three other Japanese women. The business thrived. But when she required medical attention for venereal disease, she returned to her husband in Kamloops. Mr. Gotou kindly looked after her and paid for her medical expenses until she recovered. Reciprocating his kindness, she stayed with him for five years, cooking and doing the laundry for his Canadian Pacific Railway construction crew. When she returned to Vancouver in 1927, she once again operated a brothel, but this time on West Hastings Street. She hired twelve prostitutes, all of different nationalities, and until 1941, maintained the business by bribing the police chief and paying Japanese agents to obtain young girls.⁶⁷

In some cases, husbands and wives engaged in prostitution as ‘pimps and prostitutes.’ The case of Koma Sawada and her husband indicates a strong bond as a couple. Koma was born in 1884. She married Torakichi Sawada and went to Seattle in 1902, and then moved to Nelson and Cranbrook. In Seattle, Sawada became a prostitute and her husband a pimp. Sawada had a baby with a Caucasian customer, which Torakichi took to his hometown in Japan for his mother to care for. According to interviews with his relations, he seems to have told his mother that the baby came from his Caucasian girl friend. Torakichi’s mother often shaved the boy’s red hair, so he would not be ridiculed as a ‘mixed boy’ among neighborhood children. The experience of Koma and Torakichi

⁶⁶ *Tairiku Nippo*, 18 January 1909, 2 February 1909.

⁶⁷ Born in 1896, and came to Canada as a picture bride in 1914. Tanaka-Gotou said one of the reason she decided to go to Canada was to look for her father who had not come back from San Francisco. She found her father with aid of newspaper advertisements and the Japanese counsel and sent him home. Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter ed., “Opening Doors: Vancouver’s East End”, in *Sound Heritage*, vo. viii, no. 1 & 2. (Victoria: Aural History Program, Ministry of Victoria, 1979), 102-105.

shows that this couple chose 'prostitute and pimp', as their occupation in order to make a living in Canada, but this choice did not diminish their relationship.⁶⁸

The Sawada couple's experience may have been fairly common. Japanese immigrants normally obtained jobs through 'Japanese bosses' in Canada. However, for those who went out from the Japanese community, it must have been difficult to access the system. In fact, according Nagata, many runaway couples engaged in this business in the interior of British Columbia. Also, Tairiku Nippo mentions eloping couples on an almost daily basis during Nagata's tour among the brothels of the Japanese community.⁶⁹ For these people, prostitution might have been the only way to survive in Canada. Even though they had no choice to engage in this type of business, the bond between husbands and wives must have been as strong as in other Japanese immigrant people.

Clearly, not all prostitutes were happy and there were many sorrowful stories. Hoping to be a foreign student, Matsu, a daughter of a wealthy landowner in Japan, was deceived and brought to Canada by a Japanese pimp. The 19 year-old girl was forced to work as a prostitute in a brothel in Calgary, then Nelson. According to Nagata's report, even after the brothel closed and changed to a boys' dormitory, her parents still sent Japanese books and magazines suited to a young girl every month. Another prostitute Chiyo Ishida was brought to Canada by an infamous Japanese procurer in 1906 instead Ishida believed that she was coming to Canada to learn western sewing techniques. She was then immediately taken to Nelson by an another procurer. Moreover, as soon as her pregnancy was discovered, she was sold to a brothel in Calgary from where she and her

⁶⁸ Born in 1884, and came to Canada from Shiga prefecture through Seattle in 1902 or 3. Miyoko Kudou, Kanashii metsuki no hyouryusha. (Tokyo: Shueisha, 1995), 48, 55, 228-233.

⁶⁹ Tairiku Nippo, 25 November 1908.

Chinese lover tried to flee, but were quickly caught by the brothel pimp. A brief respite provided by the Salvation Army ended when she was seized by another pimp on the way to Vancouver. She was eventually sold to a brothel in Saskatchewan where she died soon after.⁷⁰

The experiences of Ishida had surprising conclusions. When she stayed until the Salvation Army, her Chinese lover visited and eventually proposed marriage. However, she turned down his proposal. Ishida's behavior mirrored that of Waka Yamada who became a prostitute in the United States. Not only was Yamada deceived to coming into the United States by a male brothel agent in 1902, she was forced to work as a prostitute in a Seattle brothel under the nickname, Oyae of Arabia. A year later, she fled to San Francisco with Mr. Tachii, a Seattle correspondent of a Japanese journal who, alleging financial difficulties asked her to work again as a prostitute. The night before she was to start to work, she escaped and sought out the refuge of the Chinese Mission Home. Although Tachii frequently visited the mission house with a priest to see Yamada, she flatly refused. After repeated rejections, Tachii committed suicide in front of the priest. Historian Tomoko Yamazaki claimed that Yamada fled with Tachii because she wanted to free herself from the position of sexual slave, not because of love or a desire to marry Tachii.⁷¹ Like Yamada, Ishida may have used her lover in order to obtain her freedom. If their escape succeeded and they became free, then she could, in turn, leave him. Thus,

⁷⁰ Chiyo Ishida came to Canada in 1906. *Tairiku Nippo*, 22-27 January 1909.

⁷¹ The writer, Tomoko Yamazaki is Historian of Japanese women. Waka Yamada was born in 1879, and came to Seattle in 1902 from Kurigahama village in Kanagawa-ken. Tomoko Yamazaki, *Ameyuki san no uta*. (Tokyo: Bungeishunzyuusha, 1978), 107-124, 129, 130.

some prostitutes may have shrewd although they were regarded as unintelligent victims of men.⁷²

There is another unexpected story relating to brothels. Suzuki was a unique pimp in Nelson. He was an English teacher in Japan, and came to North America at the age of thirty to work for the Toyo Bank in Seattle about 1908. A few years later he resigned the work and became a pimp because he wanted more time for reading. In fact, when Japanese journalists happened to visit the brothel he was cooking a meal for his prostitutes while reading the London Times. Moreover, he was a member of two famous academic groups in England. When he worked in Rossland as a pimp he publicly argued against the idea of the 'Yellow Peril' that western civilizations and populations could be overwhelmed by numerically superior Orientals. Suzuki was clearly exceptional but his life indicates that people entered the world of prostitution for a variety of reasons. Also, his experiences seem to indicate that people who were involved in the prostitution might not be negative. In fact, according to Nagata, some prostitutes confidently declared that they would gain fame and fortune by going back to Japan with money and marrying intelligent men. Clearly, these people were not victims.⁷³

Some prostitutes may have been pitiful women who were deceptively brought to Canada, where, sadly, they died. However, some prostitutes were shrewd and professional businesswomen who chose prostitution as their profession in order to

⁷² Miyoko Kudou, Yugirirou ni furu yuki ha. (Tokyo: Shoubunsha, 1983), 217,218. Tomoko Yamazaki, Ameyuki san no uta. (Tokyo: Bungeishunzyuusha, 1978), 107-124, 129, 130. Tairiku Nippo, 23, 25 January 1909. See also, Yuji Ichioka, The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924. (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 33,34. Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 56. Shinpo stated "Needless to say, education level of prostitutes were low." Also, Nagata often uses derisive expression on the explanation of prostitutes in his reports in the Tairiku Nippo.

⁷³ Tairiku Nippo, 1,2 December 1908, 15 January 1909.

survive in a new land. At least these women were not the type of people who despised their fate and were hopeless about changing it. Rather they seemed to seek opportunities to obtain better lives. A couple of cases indicate that those who were deceived were not the prostitutes, but the men who seemed to deeply love them. Thus, some prostitutes did not come under the stereotypical image as passive victims of men. Moreover, although prostitutes were portrayed as social outcasts in the Japanese pioneer history in Canada, they shared the strong interpersonal bonds and willingness for hard work of the other pioneers.

The experiences of minority women such as prostitutes and single women did not follow Meiji gender expectations. While most emigrant wives stayed in Canada demonstrated that they were more than passive and obedient wives, these minority women boldly rejected the precepts of Meiji womanhood. Although the Japanese community stigmatized these women, their ambition and dramatic experiences should be considered as those of professional and businesswomen.

Then, one might wonder what interests of the Japanese immigrant community were served by stigmatizing these women. People obeying the Meiji education regarded the behavior of prostitutes and single women as 'sheer selfish indulgence', because those women were not financially dependent on men or sexually modest. But it may not be merely that the women's behaviors went against the Japanese immigrants' adherence to the Meiji gender ideology. By hiding the existence of these minority women, the Japanese male leaders of the community may have been appealing for their legitimacy from non-Japanese counterparts as well as to men in their own community. Under these

structures, the women's existences were ignored and the image of them was constructed as negative.

In conclusion, women stepped outside of Meiji stereotypes as soon as they arrived in Canada. Despite the Meiji genderization, the relationships between men and women were as complicated and subtle as all female/male intersections. The conditions in their new land must have placed even more weight on the value of this shifted relationship. Clearly, these women resisted the gender expectations of both Meiji government and Japanese Canadian community.



3. Women working in a salmon cannery in Steveston, 1910.



4 Women working in a salmon cannery in Steveston 1913

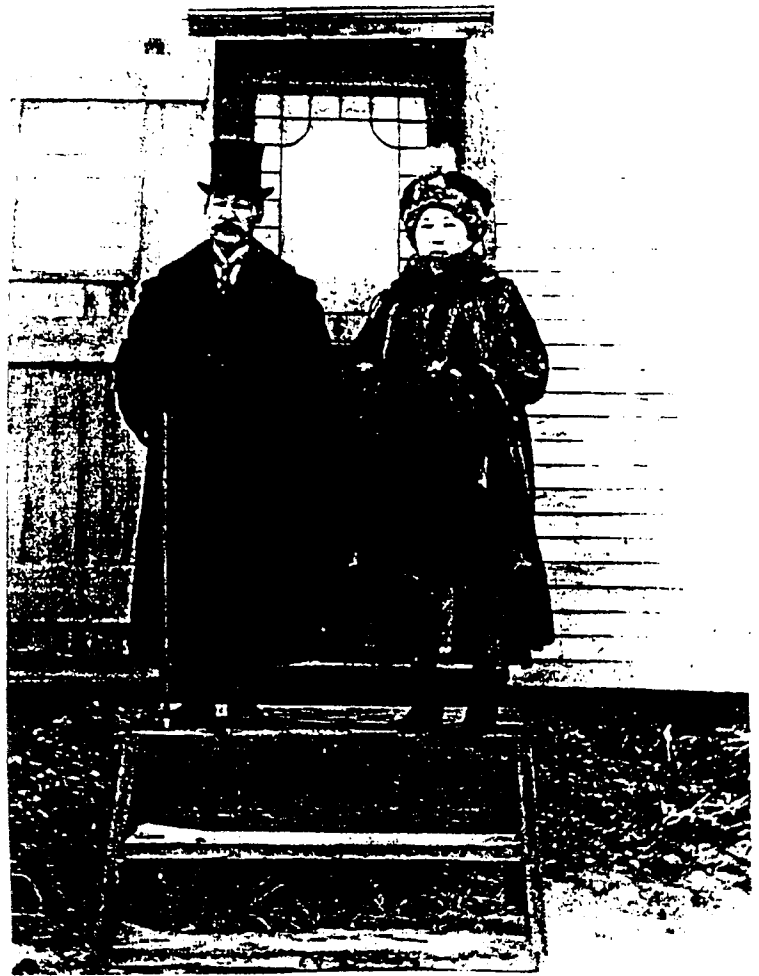


5. Sewing school in Vancouver, 1920.



6. The late Mrs. Haruko Kobayakawa at her sewing machine.

7. Mr. Rikuzo and Mrs. Tuneko, 1919



8. Personal effects of Japanese prostitutes in a brothel in Nelson.



9. Prostitutes of Cranbrook pose with young visitors from a nearby settlement.

Chapter 4. Political activities: resisting Orientalization

In British Columbia, there was strong hostility toward Japanese immigrants. Anglo-Saxon British Columbians argued that the Japanese were 'non-assimilable' and undercut the wages of Caucasian workers. Under this anti-Japanese feeling, some Japanese immigrant women tried to lessen the tension between Japanese and Caucasians. They did so on one hand by introducing British Columbians to Japanese culture and on the other, by adopting elements of western culture. In this way, some *Issei* women were actively involved in political matters.

The first half of this chapter investigates how anti-Japanese sentiment and the image of the Japanese were constructed in British Columbia. We begin with the contradiction between 'image and reality' centering on the larger background of anti-Japanese feeling in the province. Not only was the image of *Issei* women different from their own experiences, the image of Japanese immigrants in Canada also was far from their own experiences. The latter half of this chapter explores how Japanese immigrant women resisted the exclusion.

From the turn of the twentieth century, various official and unofficial measures tried to limit both the number and the civil rights of Japanese immigrants in British Columbia. For example, the Gentleman's Agreement of 1928 reduced the maximum number of Japanese immigrants per annum to four hundreds and also ended the practice of importing picture brides. Although the exclusion was not absolute, this agreement severely restricted the number of Japanese immigrants and choked the birth rate by restricting Japanese female immigration. The reduced fishing license program of 1925

introduced by the Department of Marine and Fisheries stripped close to one thousand licenses from the West Coast Japanese. The program eliminated nearly 50 percent of Japanese controlled licenses and forced an increasing number of fishermen to take up farming in the Fraser Valley and other occupations. Having made the adjustment, the Japanese were undercut again. Provincial politicians began urging the passage of laws such as California's Alien Land Act that excluded Japanese nationals from property ownership. Furthermore, since many professional organizations were required to hire only workers who were voters, the disenfranchised Japanese of British Columbia were shut out of careers such as law and pharmacy.¹

Politicians' statements and newspaper articles showed much agitation among the province's residents about the Japanese. For example, the Vancouver Daily Province on September 9, 1907 said:

We are all of the opinion that this province must be a white man's country. . . we do not wish to look forward to a day when our descendants will be dominated by Japanese, or Chinese, or any color but their own. . . We are an outpost of the Empire, and that outpost we have to hold against all comers.²

By 1937, Japanese spy stories in British Columbia were at epic proportions. For example, it was rumored that a secret Japanese arsenal existed in the coal-mining town of Cumberland, though an investigation by police revealed nothing. Until the Pearl Harbor

¹ Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians," Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 400. See also, Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 138. See also, Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 142. See also, Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 69.

attack by Japan, such malicious stories and agitation were widespread through the media and conveyed by word of mouth.³

Among those who expressed anti-Japanese sentiments particularly politicians, the dominant image of the Japanese was of a dangerous and aggressive enemy. Politicians, rather than the people, "saw the 'Japanese problem' as a useful tool to enhance their status and win favors in Ottawa."⁴ Ann Gomer Sunahara, in The Politics of Racism, argues that a small group of politicians strengthened the impression of the Japanese as being a dangerous and aggressive enemy in order to plant fear of the Japanese people in white British Columbians' minds. Sunahara wrote:

Ian Alister Mackenzie was the impetus behind the Liberal Party's anti-Asian campaigns in British Columbia. . . . By 1941 Mackenzie had been in politics for twenty-one years. In that entire time, with one notable exception, he had endorsed every anti-Asian proposal raised in the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament and in cabinet.⁵

² Province, September 9, 1907. See also, Patricia E. Roy, A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 63.

³ Japan's military threat toward Canada particularly the West Coast side, was indicated as the final reason of the whites' fear toward the West Coast Japanese. As the western world had become aware of Japan's military strength during the Russo-Japanese War, white British Columbians tended to see the West Coast Japanese the same way as Japanese in Japan. They saw the West Coast Japanese as a part of Japan which had strong military strength to be able to menace Canada and the British Empire. The Japanese were said to have that they had strong patriotism toward their country and loyalty toward the Empire, and were well trained to be soldiers. As the talk about the possibility of war between the United States and Japan came up among the British Colombians, the Japanese residents in British Columbia were seen as an enemy within, and as a consequence, seen as dangerous. Patricia E. Roy, A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 259-260. See also, Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 104-105. Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians", Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 399. See Also, Peter Ward, "British Columbia and the Japanese Evacuation", Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 442.

⁴ Ann Gomer Sunahara, The Politics of Racism: the Uprooting of Japanese Canadian during the Second World War. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981), 16-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-7.

Patricia Roy also notes the way the Liberals encouraged a fear of the Japanese arguing that if the Liberals were elected, they would increase their efforts to defend the coast against the Japanese. In at least one Victoria riding such fear mongering was successful.⁶ In this way, the white residents in British Columbia may have been, as Sunahara suggests, “manipulated by a political process that used fear and war hysteria in a very cynical and calculated way.”⁷

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the war, only a slim majority of popular petitions regarding the West Coast Japanese demanded their full removal from the province.⁸ Though politicians encouraged fear of the Japanese, this feeling nonetheless existed among White British Columbians who worried about losing their jobs, money and self-confidence. Most of the population was of British origins.⁹ Attitudes developed in the context of the British Empire encourage the belief among British settlers in the superiority of ‘whites’ over any other races. British settlers also were determined to preserve the British identity of their most aptly named province. But, Japanese labour was cheap and Japanese workers soon found a niche in the burgeoning resource industries of British Columbia. Companies preferred to hire the Japanese for bigger profits and as a result, Caucasian labourers thought that they were pushed out. The Anglo-Saxon British Columbians began to fear that the Japanese would eventually monopolize employment. The willingness of the Japanese to invest in land or business

⁶ Patricia E. Roy, “British Columbia’s Fear of Asians”, Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 398-9.

⁷ Ann Gomer Sunahara, The Politics of Racism: the Uprooting of Japanese Canadian during the Second World War. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981), Book cover.

⁸ Between 1941 and 1942, the Office of the Prime Minister King got 48 petitions, but only 28 letters demanded the removal of Japanese in British Columbia. Besides, in the letters, 20 letters came from areas which had no contact with Japanese residents in British Columbia. Ibid., 34.

further alarmed the population.¹⁰ The progressive lifestyle of the Japanese challenged, for some, the notions of 'white' supremacy and sparked even more fear.

Under these circumstances, Japanese immigrant women were easy targets of attack from anti-Japanese agitators. The picture bride practice was assailed as an uncivilized 'Asiatic' custom, and the women were criticized as barbarians who wed without regard for morality or love. Also, their high birth rate was a disquieting matter to the white residents of British Columbia, because the increasing population of the 'yellow' races would hinder the preservation of 'white' traditional morals and religious values.¹¹

One Japanese women's group tried to lessen the friction between the Japanese community and the rest of British Columbia. The women's association, 'Hujinkai', was

⁹ Ken Adachi, The Enemy That Never Was: A History of the Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 37.

¹⁰ Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 103, 111-2. See also, Charles H. Young and Helen R. Y. Reid, The Japanese Canadians. (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1938), 172. See also, Patricia E. Roy, A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 83. See also, Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians", Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 399.

¹¹ Yuji Ichioka, "American Nadeshiko: Japanese Immigrant-Women in the United States," Pacific Historical Review vol. 49, (1780): 355. White British Columbians thought that the increasing population of the Japanese race warranted the difficulty of the preservation of their traditional moral and religious values. As early as 1911, the ratio of Japanese men to women in British Columbia was about 5 to 1. But within ten years, it shrunk to 2 to 1, and thereafter it was reduced even further. Because the most female immigrants were marriageable age, the annual Japanese birth rate during 1920s and 30s was two times that of norms in British Columbia, and their yearly rate of natural increase was from 3 1/2 to ten times that of the provincial average. By 1941, almost 30 percent of the Japanese community had been born in Canada. Needless to say, this fact of rapid growth of their population surprised the white British Columbians, but, there was more something to grow the whites' fear. In the early 1900s, the allegation of that west civilizations and population could be overwhelmed by numerically superior Oriental people was spread among British Columbians. Through the allegation and the fact of the high birth rate of the West Coast Japanese, the whites' concern to maintain white British Columbia became serious. Patricia E. Roy, "British Columbia's Fear of Asians", Reading in the History of British Columbia, selected Jean Barman and Robert A.J. MacDonald, (Vancouver: Open University, 1989), 397-98. See also, Peter Ward, White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Oriental in British Columbia. (Montreal and Kingston. London. Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 109-10. See also, Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 55.

formed around 1920, by Etsu Suzuki and his partner Toshiko Tamura. Suzuki was well-known interpreter whose literary works included the translation into Japanese of the English version of Leo Tolstoy's War and Peace. Suzuki came to Canada in 1917, and worked as a journalist with the Tairiku Nippo, a Japanese newspaper published in Vancouver. Toshiko was a famous novelist in Japan. Suzuki and Toshiko were an eloping couple and came to begin a new life.¹²

Both Suzuki and Tamura were feminists, but Suzuki particularly was an adherent of gender equality. Soon after Suzuki settled down in British Columbia, he formed a labour union to organize *Issei* workers, and the 'Hujinkai' belonged to the Union. The regulations of Suzuki's Labour Union said that women had equal duties and the same rights as men in their activities.¹³ Moreover, Suzuki clearly remarked in his editorial in Tairiku that "You [Japanese man], your brain which believes that women is inferior than you [men], does not belong in this modern society."¹⁴

In one of the activities of the 'Hujinkai,' every May Day, each member had an opportunity to speak publicly in the Japanese Canadian community hall. One member, Yukie Hukumoto recalled that:

Because women gave speeches standing in front of people, often we were teased. But Mr. Suzuki said not to worry, "Our country, Canada, is free to speak, so unhesitatingly do it." When we were debating with men, first we were heckled, so sometimes forgot what we wanted to say, but we became used to it. Our motto of the debate usually

¹² Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 26. See also, Miyoko Kudou, Vancouver no ai. (Tokyo: Domesu Syuppan, 1982), 9, 10.

¹³ Miyoko Kudou, Vancouver no ai. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1982), 188.

¹⁴ Tairiku Nippo, 28 June, 4 July, 9 August 1918. See also, Miyoko Kudou, Vancouver no ai (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1982), 27.

focused on *Nisei*'s franchise."¹⁵

Thus, these women discussed political matters.

These women had a voice not only in their own community but they also tried to reach out to other British Columbians. Led chiefly by Tamura, the 'Hujinkai' members sought solutions for the 'Japanese exclusion' problem.¹⁶ Once a month, Tamura and their members gathered at an office and discussed exclusion. With their desire to take the first step in getting along with white British Columbians, the association held exhibitions to introduce Canadians to Japanese culture. Kin Izumi, the accountant of the association at that period, recalled

Before the war, the exclusion was extreme. Anyway, even if we wanted to merge in the white society, we could not understand English. So, we wanted the white people to know at least that we had these kinds of hobbies. We opened the hand craft bazaar. Once, we had it in the Hotel Georgia. In that period, even if the Japanese only passed in front of the hotel, we were easily excluded. But in such a tendency, we bravely rented a room in the hotel, and had 'Hand crafted bazaar by the Japanese women.'¹⁷

Membership in the women's association grew. Around 1930, the main office in Vancouver had thirty members, while the branch offices had fifteen members each.¹⁸ Tamura organized English language classes, and the members practiced western dancing.¹⁹

As well, Tamura was the first person who officially introduced birth control to Japanese women in British Columbia. Although Caucasians thought that Japanese

¹⁵ Miyoko Kudou, *Vancouver no ai*. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1982), 187.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 185-6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 188.

women wanted to have many children for patriotic reasons, many Japanese women in British Columbia were actually annoyed by having many babies. Yoshie recalled:

There were many Japanese in Kitsilano in Vancouver. But, they had babies one after another and were really annoyed, because it interfered with working. Mrs. Toshiko heard their problem, and taught them about birth-control. The way was, Mrs. Fujisawa, who was a midwife in Steveston, visited Kitsilano and instructed how to do it. . . . People in Kitsilano were very happy to get the information. This is Toshiko's splendid work, . . .²⁰

While some women accepted being instructed by Suzuki and Tamura, other Japanese resisted them. Suzuki and Tamura were sometimes called 'Red', and had difficulties relating to conservative *Issei* communities. According to Izumi, "Toshiko was an intelligent woman but her thought and that period were too separated. Her thought was too forward and that period was too backward."²¹ Minshu - The Daily People, a newspaper formed by Etsu after he resigned from Tairiku nippo was also criticized as 'Leftist' among the Japanese community. It received only marginal support, was chronically debt-ridden and had difficulty meeting the payroll.²² However, the work by Suzuki and Tamura as well as their followers should not be ignored, because many women certainly had an interest in political matters, and publicly discussed them with men. They positively participated in public activities. More than anything else, these

¹⁹ Ibid., 186-9. See also, Roy Ito, Stories of my people: A Japanese-Canadian journal. (Ontario: S-20 and Nisei Veterans Association), 121.

²⁰ Ibid., 187.

²¹ Miyoko Kudou, Shakonzuma: Hanayome ha ichimai no miai shashin o te ni umi o wattatte itta. (Tokyo: Domesu Shuppan, 1983), 108.

²² Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 26. See also, Miyoko Kudou, Vancouver no ai. (Tokyo: Domesu Syuppan, 1982), 187.

women bravely challenged the seemingly insurmountable problem of anti-Japanese feelings.²³

The women who tried to lessen the friction of Japanese exclusion were not only women in the cities or feminist women, but also ordinary mothers in farm areas. In the case of Haney, their work was quite successful through the formation of a Japanese PTA. Since it was established in 1924, Japanese mothers visited schools once a month, and gradually came to have a relationship with the Anglo-Saxon mothers. Also, as Japanese mothers came to know Canadian customs through visiting the school, they made efforts to change their children's appearance. For example, before the PTA was formed, Japanese children wore clothes made from their parents' used clothes, and ate Japanese food at lunchtime, behind the Caucasian children. But soon they were wearing clothes with fancy western designs and light colored fabrics, and ate cakes or pies.²⁴

The relationship between the Japanese and whites in Haney improved through mutual efforts. In 1927, the principal of the Maple Ridge High School appointed a Japanese girl as the May Queen's attendant. After that, some Japanese girls were involved in yearly events. Japanese and Caucasian mothers prepared for the events together, and as a consequence, had opportunities to talk to each other. Moreover, since Japanese girls were involved in these yearly events, the Japanese community became interested in Canadian customs. For example, at Easter and Christmas, Japanese people invited Caucasian families to the Japanese community hall. This kind of event was more popular by the 1930s. For instance, on Thanksgiving Day, Japanese and Anglo-Saxon

²³ In 1936, Tamura returned to Japan and died in 1945 in Shanghai. Rolf Knight and Maya Koizumi, A man of times: The life-history of a Japanese-Canadian fisherman. (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1976), 131.

²⁴ Mitsuru Shinpo, Ishi o mote owaruru gotoku. (Tokyo: Ochanomizu shobou, 1996), 155-6.

families, totaling two hundred people, had a potluck party. And the efforts of the women to reduce the tension between Japanese and Caucasians was not only to try to associate with white society but also to amend the Japanese behaviors that Caucasians criticized. They refrained from working on Sundays in their farms, and stopped carrying out heavy chores, or cultivating with their infants strapped on their backs at least in public. Needless to say, they learned English to communicate with Anglo-Saxon mothers.²⁵

The work of the PTA women in Haney as well as the women's association can be regarded as important. They created ways to try to contact Caucasians, and made efforts to diminish the friction between Japanese and Anglo-Saxons. In doing so, they tried to change Japanese characteristics about which Caucasians complained. For example, Toshiko's birth control instruction was a way of solving one of the reasons of exclusion - a high birth rate. Trying Westernization was a way to amend the Japanese image of cultural inassimilability. Resting from work on Sunday in Haney was a way to ease concerns of the Japanese working too hard and too long. During that period, the Japanese were said to be inassimilable into 'white society' because they were socially, culturally, and racially too different from the 'whites'. These women thought that even if they could not be 'whitened' racially, it would be possible to be 'whitened' socially and culturally. While this may be seen as acquiescence to British Columbian racist ideology, the actions

²⁵ Ibid., 156-7. See also, Toyo Takata, Nikkei Legacy: the Story of Japanese Canadians from Settlement to Today. (Toronto: NC Press Limited, 1983), 69, 72. PTA women in Vancouver also engaged in similar activities. For example, Western Woman's Weekly, recorded:

Japanese PTA had At Home when they entertained visitors from other PTA's. Mr. Brown, principal of Strathcona School spoke "about the valuable work of the Japanese in the district. He referred to the home influence and the care they received in the homes which made them physically, mentally and morally a credit to the school." Japanese tea ceremony was demonstrated.

Western Woman's Weekly, 17 March 1923.

of these women subverted this ideology by showing that cultural change, on Japanese terms, was possible.

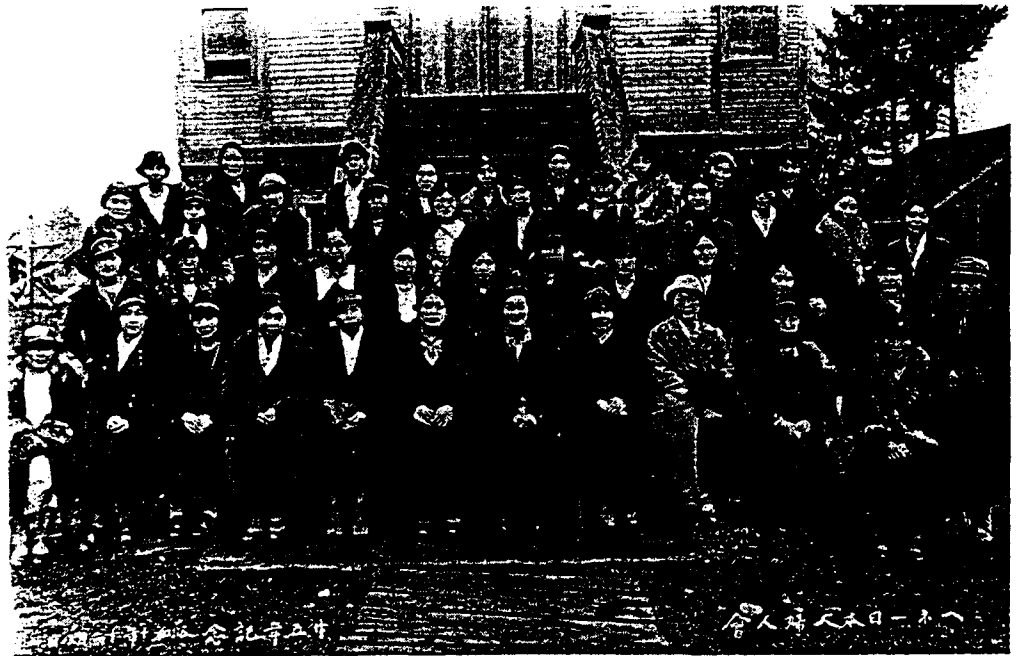
Two points are important in this chapter. The lesser yet significant fact was that the typical image of the Japanese in that period was contrary to what the Japanese acted and thought in reality. The Japanese did not desire to maintain their image as aggressive competitors and enemy aliens. They tried to change these images. The main significance of this chapter is that although the Japanese women's effort did not change Japanese oppression-history on a large scale, they did attempt to ease tension. They participated in political activity and challenged themselves to change their fixed image. They tried as much as possible to solve 'the Japanese problem' and made an effort to learn Canadian customs to associate with Caucasian society. It is ironic that the group significantly contributed to mending the hostile relationship between the whites and the Japanese were picture brides whom British Columbians criticized as immoral barbarians.

This chapter uncovered how Japanese immigrants' image was created by powerful groups in society and by the majority of people in the province. At the same time, Japanese immigrants' struggle under these oppressive forces became clear. More importantly, if the term 'resistance' is defined as 'individual's own desires and contest against the ideological forces imposed by the prevailing society', these women's resistance might not be only against British Columbian white hegemonic society, but also against their own male dominant community. In conclusion, these women were not simply domestic workers, did not exist only in the private sphere, and were not ignorant of political matters. Rather, they were crucial to the strength of the Japanese community in the province in the public as well as the political sphere. The Public Peace Law during

that period in Japan prohibited women from political participation. Women were considered irrelevant to politics in Japan, yet they were not and in Canada they were actively involved in the Japanese response to the exclusion.



10. Etsu Suzuki and Toshiko Tamura



11. Haney. 25th anniversary of the
Haney Women's Association, 193-.



12. Japanese Women's Association.
Ocean Falls, B.C. July 1, 1937.

JAPANESE WOMEN'S ASSN, OCEAN FALLS, B.C.
JULY 1, 1937.

Conclusion

There is a difference between the Japanese immigrant women's stereotypical image and the reality of their own experiences. The dominant discourse around picture brides portrays them as young women who were coaxed by their families to marry unknown men for their family's profit, and crossed the Pacific against their will. The image is that of lonely and bewildered women in a foreign country, who devoted their lives to being housekeepers for their families. The other image is of prostitutes who were represented as pitiful women who became victims of illicit business for men's physical satisfaction. Further, scholarly and popular writings have depicted prostitutes and single women as social outcasts. Thus, the dominant image of Japanese immigrant women is passivity.

However, the reality of women's experiences revealed the opposite. The women were not forced to come to Canada by their parents, but rather, many took the initiative and actually came to the country without their families' blessings. What made them want to immigrate to Canada was a desire to move beyond the confines of their present lives. When they discovered that their only means of going to Canada was as brides, they accepted that choice. Moreover, in their oral histories, they made no mention of counting on their husbands to succeed. That is to say, they wanted to marry Canada, not men. Thus, they were hardly dependent, timid, and obedient.

The experiences of the women demonstrated that they were neither simply housewives caring for their own families, nor dependent and obedient wives. Although they realized that life in the new land was harsher than they had expected, they decided to

think positively. Determined to stay, they soon started to work in the woods, on farms, in canneries, or fishing boats, or in white homes doing housework. Some even became entrepreneurs. Most continued to work during their pregnancies. They were essential income earners, not merely housekeepers, and their work was not limited to temporary or assistant contributions. Although some women encountered various difficulties in their lives, they bravely faced these challenges. Convincing, leading, and controlling their husbands, they did not stop seeking to improve their lives. Particularly, Imada's experiences are admirable - she overcame many hardships. They were determined and strong-spirited women. They were, no doubt, active and positive survivors, not passive individuals.

Their contributions to building the Japanese community can be seen in their political activities. Under the frenzied circumstances of Japanese persecution, many women participated in public activities and tried to mend the hostile relationship between the Japanese and Caucasians in British Columbia. They made many efforts to learn Canadian customs and to associate with the white society socially and culturally. These women were not merely private beings or ignorant of political matters.

Similarly, some prostitutes and single women went beyond the prescriptive roles of Meiji ideology and the desired norms of *Issei* men. These prostitutes were not trapped by the conventional ideas of morality or decency, but concentrated on surviving in the new land. Some had strong bonds with their husbands, some were seriously loved by their customers, and some, using their lovers, sought opportunities to obtain better lives. Thus, these women were not passive victims. There were also independent career women. Just as many women demonstrated that they were more than submissive wives,

these women rebelled more dramatically against the Meiji gender ideology. Although Japanese Canadian society excluded single women and prostitutes from their community, they persisted.

Thus, analyzing the experiences of immigrant women, focusing on their motives, daily lives, and political activities, and the experiences of single women and prostitutes show that *Issei* women were far different from their stereotypical image. Women's experiences show that they were active and positive, vigorous, and determined. Passive characteristics such as timidity and docility do not match these descriptions.

The contradiction between the *Issei* women's images and their experiences increased with time, nonetheless the image of women has consistently been of submissive wives, and this image continues. This contradiction existed even when the women were in Japan. While the Meiji government encouraged women to be "good Meiji women", the state demanded them to be cheap labourers in the rapidly growing industries. In this situation, except for a small number of wealthy women, most became factory workers. Ironically, through industrial work these women realized their earning potential. They did not expect to be ideal Meiji women. Instead, they sought new lives in Canada. In material terms, their lives in Canada were worse than they would have been in Japan. All year round they had to work for their families. Moreover, they sometimes led, controlled, or used men in their lives. Ultimately, these women's experiences opposed the Meiji gender ideology.

Why, then, have the stereotypical images of the *Issei* women followed the Meiji ideology? Using ideas of Feminism, one reason seems that Japanese male immigrant leaders desired to maintain male authority over their women in order to display an ideal

feature of the immigrant community in its own history. They might have wanted to demonstrate to men in their own country that they could make a perfect community in their new land. Also, by displaying male supremacy, these leaders sought to appeal to their non-Japanese counterparts for legitimacy. Therefore, a key reason for the continued dominance of *Issei* women's image of passivity seems the Japanese male immigrant leaders' desire for legitimacy both within their own culture and in the eyes of non-Japanese British Columbians. Also, using the ideas of Orientalism, another reason for the persistence of the stereotype of *Issei* women's submission is related to 'white' ideology. Perpetuating the view of British Columbia as a "Whitman's province", British Columbia history has described Japanese immigrants to be passive and obedient toward 'whites'. *Issei* women who belonged to the Japanese community were, as a matter of course, interpreted as submissive women. In conclusion, the image of the *Issei* women was confirmed by both Meiji ideology and Orientalism.

Clearly, much is hidden by the stereotypes associated with *Issei* women. *Issei* women could be submissive wives but they could also take the roles of men as physical labourers and breadwinners. These women do not seem to have taken on these male roles reluctantly. Rather, their active participation both in the means of immigration and in the survival of their community mark them as resistive to the mainstream ideology of both Meiji Japan and the male-dominated Japanese-Canadian community. Just as power resided in the discursive practices of this ideology, so too did it live in the actions and choices of *Issei* women. They made these decisions by and for themselves. Years later, as they told their own stories, they constructed the history of the Japanese-Canadian community. This thesis has sought to contribute to that reshaping. Ultimately, while the

notion of the submissive Japanese woman has retained much influence, even in Twenty-First century Canada, its predominance should not be allowed to overshadow the extraordinary efforts of these women and their resistance.

Afterward

Lastly, I would like to add some experiences after 1941 of some women who were mentioned in this thesis. Haruko Kobayakawa who became a teacher in the Japanese community visited Japan in 1941, and was trapped there and consequently separated from her husband in Ontario until 1948. She was in Hiroshima just the day before the atomic bomb fell and nearly stayed for a visit. Her oral history clearly recalled the years of the tragedy in Japan. Many of her relatives and friends were killed in the bombing. After she came back to Canada, she eagerly acted for the redress movement.¹ Tanaka-Goto who owned a brothel in Vancouver, refused to cooperate when the Japanese were forcibly removed from the west coast in 1942. She was arrested and spent a few months in Ockalla prison before she was shipped off to Greenwood. A few years before the Japanese were allowed to return to the west coast she found her way back and lived in Chinatown in Vancouver, disguised as a Chinese woman.² Hana Murata, a career woman, moved to Toronto in 1944 and bought a house when she opened a dressmaker shop and continued in the business until she turned seventy. She never remarried. Yasu

¹ Oral history with Haruko Kobayakawa, Videocassette, (Vancouver: the Japanese Canadian Archives) no 94/74.021, 94/80.041a-b.

² ed. Daphne Marlatt and Carole Itter, "Opening Doors: Vancouver's East End," in "Sound Heritage" vo.viii, no.1&2 (Victoria, British Columbia, Aural History, Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1979) p105.

Ishikawa who became a midwife but quit the work when she and her husband moved to the Prince George area. During World War II, she returned to become a midwife again in Tashime camp. In 1946, she moved to Toronto, and urged her husband to open a Japanese restaurant. She mentioned her feeling at the time as: "I was in my prime, I'd just turned 50, and wanted to do something more important, to succeed. That was my dream when I left Japan. . . . When I told my husband to get ambitious again and do something big, his spirit picked up."³ Thus, these women still continued to lead challenging lives during and after the war. Although the 'evacuation' took their material possessions, it never took their spirits away. Their experiences encourage me and give me hope. The Yamato-Nadeshiko in Canada, sank their roots deeply, and blossomed admirably.

³ Tomoko Makabe, Picture Brides: Japanese Women in Canada. (Toronto: Multicultural History of Ontario, 1995), 122.

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