

tations with their Asian competitors just as imperial Japan fought and conquered their countries of origin. Finally, this form of nationalism suppressed internal diversity, thrusting heterodox lives, acts, and ideas into the rubric of middle-class citizenry that it strove to construct in the ethnic collectivity. Rather than repelling white supremacy with nationalist indignation, leading immigrants forged an identity of being "honorary whites" around the notion of proper "Japanese" thinking and conduct, and they successfully persuaded the rest of the community to acquiesce to it. Thus, even in the pro-Japan activities of the Issei can be seen a deep-seated desire for inclusion in America. Viewed from this standpoint, the idea of divided loyalties, which the immigrant paradigm presupposes in the problem of immigrant nationalism, simply does not hold up.

This study raises questions and unravels assumptions about race, nation, migration, and history that have misled many scholars into thinking in terms of bounded definitions and essentialized categories. Much of human experience resists being framed into the confines of national histories, and that is most true of immigrants—including Japanese—whose lives unfold somewhere long before they actually immigrate. Although challenging national histories and nationalist historiographies from the Issei's transnational perspective, this study nevertheless does not conclude with an emancipatory vision of escape from, or an inspiring story of opposition to, the tyranny of the national.²⁹ The most prevalent version of Japanese immigrant transnationalism articulated their profound anxieties about being excluded from white America, being marginalized in the society in which they lived, and being subordinated as the consequence of racist legislation. Unlike black "double consciousness," for example, the Issei's politics of dualism did not stem from ambivalence about the singular nationality of a racist regime and a diasporic self-understanding that aspired to transcend it.³⁰ Transnationalism instead allowed Japanese immigrants to strategize new terms of national belonging through their claims to their imperial Japanese heritage. Rather than seeking to overcome the constraints of the American state with cosmopolitanism, the Issei spun the meanings of racial authenticity and cultural respectability only to the extent that they did not subvert the integrity of the nation or disrupt the racial order of U.S. society. This paradox—the potency of the national in transnationalism—is the central theme of Japanese immigrant history before the Pacific War.

Part I

Multiple Beginnings

I

Mercantilists, Colonialists, and Laborers

Heterogeneous Origins of Japanese America

Emigrants (*imin*) and colonialists (*shokumin*), just like the phenomena of emigration (*imin*) and colonization (*shokumin*), are often confounded. . . . Colonialists embark as imperial subjects with a pioneer spirit under the aegis of our national flag for state territorial expansion; emigrants act merely on an individual basis, leaving homeland as a matter of personal choice without the backing of sovereign power.¹

In 1910, a Japanese immigrant (Issei) journalist commented on the prevailing "confusion" over those conceptual categories. Not only were the people of Japan guilty of this, the writer asserted, but his compatriots in California also erroneously identified themselves as "colonialists" not "immigrants."² This confusion characterized the historical trajectory of Japanese emigration to the United States, as well as the heterogeneous nature of the early Issei society. Specifically, the weaving of colonialism into labor migration, or vice versa, formed a crucial backdrop against which thorny relations developed among Issei, between them and white residents, and between the expatriate Japanese community and their home state. The transnational history of Japanese immigrants in the American West therefore must begin with an analysis of the ideas and practices that underlay those confusions and contradictions.

Popularized after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, "emigration" and "colonization" were new concepts borrowed from the West, which the Japanese

political elite and intellectual class came to use interchangeably in their discussion of the most pressing national tasks: national formation and expansion.³ The dissemination of these ideas to the emergent citizenry through the press, political organizations, and academia was central in the making of a modern empire in Japan. The very notion of emigration or colonization had not even existed under the closed-door policy of the Tokugawa feudal regime. The exodus of various classes of Japanese for Hawaii and the mainland United States after the 1880s prompted the intelligentsia for the first time to seriously contemplate the meaning of popular emigration in tandem with the nascent ideas of national expansion.

In order to explain the nature of early Japanese expansionism with which the practice of emigration was tightly intertwined, it is necessary to delve into three interrelated contexts: geopolitics in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan's incorporation into the international network of capitalist economies, and the formation of the modern nation-state. First, Meiji Japan's entry into modernity coincided with the era in which Western powers had been engaged in fierce colonialist competitions in East Asia and the Pacific Basin. During the 1880s, a new style of imperialism became the vogue as the West sought direct control of overseas territories, replacing the emphasis on hegemonic control in trade to link the metropolis and its colonies. In Southeast Asia, the French took over Indochina, and the British established footholds in Burma, while both powers scrambled for Africa. The Pacific and northeastern Asia subsequently emerged as another sphere of imperialist competition. During and after the Spanish-American War of 1898, the United States acquired Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guam, while the Germans took over the hitherto-neglected Spanish possessions of Pacific island chains in Micronesia and Melanesia. In the meantime, since the mid-1800s, China had become a major battlefield for Christian missionaries and merchants from Europe and the United States.

Meiji Japan, a latecomer, joined this international scramble for new territories and export markets, not only because its leaders felt that the "civilized" had to accept manifest destiny to partake in the practice of colonization, but also because they believed that proactive expansionist endeavors would be imperative in defense of Japan's fragile security.⁴ The nation had been on the receiving end of Western imperialism, when it had been forced to open to international commerce in 1854 by U.S. warships under Commodore Matthew Perry, but Japan had diverged from other Asian nations because of its quick "success" in acclimating to the geopolitical environment. No sooner had Emperor Meiji formed a new government in 1868 than imperial expansionism began internally and externally, resulting in the colonization of Hokkaido (1869) and Okinawa (1879); the seizures of Taiwan (1894), south Sakhalin (1905), and Kwantung Province (1905) in northern China; and then the annexation of

Korea (1910). In the meantime, the country fought two successful foreign wars, first with China in 1894-1895 and then with Russia in 1904-1905.⁵

Migration constituted a pivotal part of these state endeavors, both in policy and in practice. Hokkaido, the first colonialist project, was brought under national control by settling with a domestic population. Before the restoration of the emperor's rule, the Tokugawa warrior regime had only loosely incorporated Japan's northern island, but with increasing threats from Russia, the Meiji state embarked on the official colonization of Hokkaido in 1869, modeling it after the conquest of the North American "frontier" by the United States.⁶ While building a basic infrastructure and industrial facilities, the government encouraged displaced former *samurai* and peasants in the main islands to immigrate to the new frontier, where the transplanted could farm in peacetime and defend the northern borders in wartime. When the state permitted the departure of common laborers in 1885 for Hawaii and, later, for the U.S. mainland, many officials and educated Japanese viewed their migration in terms similar to the contemporaneous movement of surplus populations to Hokkaido and other new territories.⁷

Japan's late adoption of a capitalist economy further contributed to the blurring of the boundaries between emigration and colonization. Although the nation turned itself from a feudal society into a major military power within the span of a few decades, the development compounded the integration of Japan into the international capitalist network, rendering it perpetually dependent for markets and capital on more advanced industrial economies, particularly the United States. Given its relative underdevelopment, Japan often served as a source of cheap workers for the more advanced economies, transferring manual labor to Hawaii, the American West, and to a lesser degree, various European colonies in Southeast Asia and the plantation economies of Latin America.⁸ Insofar as it also enhanced the competitiveness of imperial Japan's economy, the cheapness of domestic labor dovetailed with Japan's own colonialist projects, leading to significant overlap in socioeconomic characteristics between Japanese immigrants in other countries and colonial settlers within the empire.⁹ Although the movement of Japanese across the Pacific transpired between the sphere of Japan's sovereign control and that of another nation-state, it was this overlap that caused U.S.-bound emigrants to be often confounded with colonialists who moved and lived "under the aegis of our national flag."

Tokyo's effort to consolidate state control over its populace provided the third context in which expansionism and emigration were interlocked. Aside from setting up formal state apparatuses and a unified capitalist economy, Meiji nation-building sought to make imperial subjects out of village-bound peasants, who would act voluntarily for the benefit of the emperor and the national

collectivity.¹⁰ In accordance with this mandate, as the Meiji elite often stressed, emigrants were expected to obey the call of their nation as citizen-subjects. Just as the state dictated that the obligations of every imperial subject included such acts as paying taxes from meager income, working fourteen hours a day under hazardous conditions, and dying while fighting a foreign war, so Meiji leaders defined emigration as a patriotic duty in support of Japan's expansionist cause, whether commercial, political, or territorial. The colonialist discourse therefore usually assigned a nationalist meaning to the act of emigration on the premise that the masses shared the same dedication to the state's collective purpose. Importantly, while it created another point of intersection between colonialism and emigration, the nationalist presumption blinded the elite to the fact that most emigrants of rural origin viewed their endeavors from the standpoint of personal interest without much regard to the purported duties of the imperial subject. Subsuming popular individualism under nascent nationalism, the elite vision of emigration-led expansionism contradicted the logic of most ordinary emigrants and planted the seeds for discord, which would later grow among Japanese residents in the American West.

During the years between 1885 and 1907, when most male emigrants left for Hawaii and the United States, the ideological terrain of Meiji Japan was indeed a diverse one, with competing ideas developing in tandem with the political process of nationalizing the Japanese people. There were three major currents of emigration thought that directly affected the early development of Japanese America. Roughly corresponding with the class origins and mental worlds of the Issei, they were mercantilist expansionism, Japanese-style manifest destiny, and an ideology of striving and success. The heterogeneity of the Japanese emigrant population also provided a background for contentious relations and identities within their communities, based on how individuals, with varied degrees of national consciousness, understood their ties to the homeland, as well as their role and place in their adopted country.

Mercantilist expansionism helped form what was to become the core of urban Issei leadership in the Pacific Coast states. Rather than seizing colonial territories by military force, proponents of this position aspired to establish footholds of international trade at foreign locations, to which Japan could send its export goods while exercising indirect forms of economic domination. The leading advocate was Fukuzawa Yukichi, who took the lead in the learning of things Western and the development of entrepreneurial culture in Meiji Japan. In 1884, dreaming of British-style commercial hegemony in the Pacific, Fukuzawa promoted Japanese export business by the way of entrepreneurial migration to the United States. Through his private Keio academy and commercial newspaper, this foremost scholar of "Western studies" sought to impress his ideas upon the emerging urban bourgeoisie in Tokyo.¹¹

Fukuzawa believed that there was an imminent need to shore up the Meiji policy of "enrich the nation, strengthen the military." With a weak industrial base and a small domestic market, Japan in the mid-1880s badly needed to increase its exports to develop foreign exchange holdings. While propagating trade as essential to solidifying the fiscal basis of the state and its military, Fukuzawa defined emigration as a cardinal means of promoting commerce with the United States. Specifically, he anticipated that Japanese immigrants in key American trade ports would serve as a "commercial linkage between their homeland and their new country of residence."¹² In a commentary entitled "Leave Your Homeland at Once," Fukuzawa justified his advocacy of entrepreneurial emigration in terms of the British success:

In considering the long-term interest of the country, the wealth that [English traders abroad] have garnered individually has become part of England's national assets. The land they reclaimed has turned into regional centers of English trade, if not its formal colonial territories. This is how Great Britain has become what she is today. In a similar vein, [a Japanese emigrant] shall be regarded as a loyal subject. For while sacrificing himself at the time of national crisis is a direct way of showing loyalty, engaging in various enterprises abroad is an indirect way of discharging patriotism. . . . When examining the example of Englishmen, no one would fail to see [that emigration] shall lead to the enrichment of Japan as well.¹³

Not everyone, however, was capable of taking up such an endeavor, in Fukuzawa's opinion. He restricted the practitioners of entrepreneurial migration to the United States to a narrow range of educated, middle-class Japanese, for the national "enrichment of Japan" was contingent upon whether or not emigrants possessed the dispositions with which to remain loyal imperial subjects even on foreign soil. Fukuzawa believed that such individuals should be given an opportunity to leave for "the land of boundless opportunities," because he felt that their intellect, talent, and "superior racial qualities" would ensure their ascendancy in American society. Focusing on people of warrior background, Fukuzawa's emigration discourse offered no room for common people of rural origin, whom he frequently ridiculed as lacking national consciousness and modern sensibilities.¹⁴

Despite, or perhaps because of, such exclusive elitism, Fukuzawa's mercantilist expansionism had a profound impact on the early Issei community in the American West. Understandably, the business-minded, educated youth were most susceptible to his ideas. Disseminated in Keio classrooms, at public lectures, and through newspaper editorials, Fukuzawa's call for entrepreneurial emigration motivated a number of his early students and others to jump into

export-import businesses between Japan and the United States. Some went to New York City to pioneer in the silk trade with Japan as early as 1876, while others rushed to West Coast cities for other opportunities.¹⁵ After the establishment of San Francisco's first Issei import business by one of Fukuzawa's disciples around 1880, a number of individuals followed suit in the ensuing decades and formed a small but pivotal merchant class in early Japanese America.¹⁶ According to one observer, "[T]he many successful Japanese immigrants whom I met during my 1907 trip . . . told me that [Fukuzawa's] extolment of emigration had inspired them to come to the United States."¹⁷ Another source reported that more than 1,000 Keio graduates had emigrated to the United States by 1906, noting the presence of Keio alumni associations in San Francisco and Seattle.¹⁸ As their mentor had taught them, these Issei businesspeople tended to view the significance of their ventures as much in terms of Japan's national interest as in terms of their own personal achievement. Many subsequently returned home to pursue distinguished careers in the Japanese corporate world, but those who remained in the United States formed the core of Japanese immigrant leadership, backed by their wealth and close ties to Japanese diplomats and the social elite in Tokyo.¹⁹

A more colonialist discourse on emigration overtook mercantilist expansionism from the 1890s on, when the international scramble for colonies reached its nadir in the Asia-Pacific region. The main theme of the new position revolved around the control of a foreign land through mass migration.²⁰ Historian Akira Iriye aptly summarizes this Japanese-style manifest destiny:

The line between emigration and colonization was rather tenuous. Most authors, advocating massive overseas emigration, were visualizing the creation of Japanese communities overseas as centers of economic and social activities closely linked to the mother country. . . . Though the outright use of force was not envisaged, such a situation would be much closer to colonization than to mere emigration—like the massive English colonization of the North American continent. Thus, "peaceful expansionism" did not simply mean the passive emigration of individual Japanese, but could imply a government-sponsored, active program of overseas settlement and positive activities to tie distant lands closer to Japan.²¹

Called "a new Japan," "a second Japan," "a new home," or "an imperial beginning," the American West attracted keen attention from a group of Issei intellectuals and students in the late nineteenth century. They took part in the larger current of public discourse that set forth three different directions for expansion. Advocates of northward expansion represented imperialistic ambitions on the Asian continent. Influencing army strategists, it paved the way to the two major wars with China and the Russian Far East and the subsequent

influx of Japanese migrants into Manchuria. A harbinger of Japanese naval operations during the First World War, southward expansionism derived from an interest in extending maritime trade into the southwestern Pacific, especially Micronesia. Unlike these two ideas that soon merged into the official state colonialist projects, transpacific eastward expansionism focused on emigration-led colonization without the support of military forces, envisioning the conquest of the overseas hinterland through the transplantation of Japanese masses. The imaginary map of this colonialist vision included Hawaii, the Pacific Coast regions of the United States and Canada, and Central and South America.²²

Published in 1887, one of the earliest guides to "going to America" contended that North America should be as much a frontier to the Japanese as it had been to the Europeans. "The United States," the Issei authors noted, "is a land for new development, which awaits the coming of ambitious youth. Come, our brethren of 3,700,000! . . . When you come to the United States, you must have the determination to create the second, new Japan there, which also helps enhance the interest and prestige of the imperial government and our nation."²³ Yet, contrary to other Japanese who harbored naked territorial ambitions over other parts of the New World, Issei advocates of Japanese manifest destiny were generally compelled to practice their belief within the confines of existing American power relations. When they rushed across the Pacific in the late nineteenth century, the rigid racialized hierarchy between the white ruling class and cheap labor from Asia had already taken hold on the Western land as the result of Chinese exclusion, and the commanding power of American westward expansionism was about to swallow up Hawaii and other Pacific islands. With no possibility of Japanese ascendancy in the game of mastering the Western frontier, the Issei's Americanized rendition of peaceful expansionism primarily sought to carve out semiautonomous spheres through the building of a collective economic base, the control of farmlands, and the construction of Japanese settlement "colonies," under the established order of the white racial regime.²⁴

Toward the late 1890s, a clear pattern of domestic entrepreneurship emerged from the expansionistic Issei intelligentsia. Seeking capital consolidation and ethnic mobilization, many looked to integrate common Japanese laborers, who had hitherto lived in a separate world. In San Francisco, Seattle, and Portland, as well as in smaller regional towns, this ushered in the formation of a class of professional Issei labor contractors. Not only did they promote the influx of additional laborers from Japan, but they also played a major role in increasing landed Japanese communities by facilitating settlement farming in rural districts.²⁵ In this way, Issei expansionists were being incorporated into the agricultural economy of the American West, conveniently filling the labor vacuum created by Chinese exclusion, as suppliers of farm hands and tillers of undeveloped land.

Based in Portland, Oregon, Shinzaburo Ban was one of the most influential labor contractors. A former diplomat who came to the United States in 1891, Ban explained to his expansionist friends in Japan that he decided to resign his government position and migrate so as "to help [ordinary workers] obtain farmland for the goal of planting the seeds of large-scale settlements." Calling it "suited the hundred-year scheme of Japan," he elaborated upon his vision of colonization in the Western frontier:

One has to earn money initially as a common laborer, while learning sentiments, mores, and language [of the host society] to shape the unique character of an immigrant resident. To put it another way, he is going to be hired as a laborer at first given the dearth of capital; as time passes by, he will accrue his earnings to invest in land and build a house, making him an independent landholding farmer. Naturally, he will wish to send for family members from the homeland and settle down [in America] permanently.²⁶

Like Ban, a number of expansionistic Issei entrepreneurs took it upon themselves to build "second Japans" as agricultural colonists or as facilitators for others of lesser means, which resulted in the increased landholdings of Japanese in the West. Combined with the business of labor contracting, their "colonialist" practice unfolded without disturbing the existing framework of social relations, and yet many intellectual Issei still interpreted their endeavors in the language of national expansion, or "Japanese development," in America. Such efforts included the formations of the Japanese Village in Dundee (340 acres) and the Nippon Colony in Santa Ana (230 acres) in 1905, as well as of the Yamato Colony (3,200 acres) in Livingston, California, in the following year.²⁷ Farmers of much smaller scale, too, often understood their meager enterprises in similar terms, characterizing them as part of peaceful expansionism. In 1901, one laboring Issei organized a partnership to pool resources for the acquisition of a five-acre "colony" in southern California—a venture by which to, in his words, "emulate the example of the British [Anglo-Saxons] in marching forward in this world of fierce competition."²⁸ These landed colonial settlements—large or small—were emblematic of modified peaceful expansionism in early Japanese America, which funneled the resources of colonial-minded Issei into the cause of Japanese development in Western agriculture.

Unlike the ideas of emigration tied to trade and colonization, the third current of emigration thought, an ideology of striving and success, fit into the mental world of many common emigrants. From the mid-1890s through the following decade, what contemporaries observed as a popular "success boom" swept Japanese society, and emigration to the United States was central to this new social phenomenon. As the print media exalted the American Dream, mass-

produced magazines popularized stories of self-made white men, such as Andrew Carnegie, Theodore Roosevelt, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and John D. Rockefeller. Because "America" became synonymous with boundless opportunities in the Japanese vocabulary of the time, many unprivileged but ambitious youth projected onto these role models their own future trajectories.²⁹ Portraying emigration to the United States as a crucial step, the success ideology catered to the aspirations of the indigent students to work their way through school in the American West and the desire of the rural farming class to make a quick fortune through manual labor there.

Targeting the first group as their audience, Katayama Sen and Shimanuki Hyodayu played major roles in disseminating the ideal of work-and-study in America. Around the turn of the century, these self-proclaimed champions of the struggling urban students incorporated emigration into their respective social reform programs. Buried in the Kremlin as an Asian revolutionary, Katayama began his colorful political career modestly as a reform-minded Christian socialist. His interest in emigration was as personal as it was political, for he had earlier struggled as a student-laborer in the United States. While attending high school in the San Francisco Bay area, Katayama worked as a houseboy, cook, and handyman. Eventually he attended Yale Divinity School, where the ideas of Progressive reformers captivated him.³⁰ After returning to Japan, Katayama was recruited to head an American-sponsored settlement house in Tokyo, from which he promoted emigration as a solution to the lack of educational opportunities for urban adolescents. Also a Christian reformist, Shimanuki during his sojourn on the West Coast was similarly impressed by the possibility of work-and-study in America as an alternative to aimless struggle in Tokyo.³¹ Instead of clinging to the distant hope of "making it" in dire poverty, these two social workers encouraged ambitious youth to leave for the United States for schooling by publishing emigration guidebooks and magazines.³²

When addressed to student-emigrants, the ideology of striving and success was not divorced from the prevailing concern with the national whole that educated Japanese generally shared. Since it was urban literati, like Katayama and Shimanuki, who articulated the meaning of going to America, the success ideology was often worded in the familiar language of "extending national power."³³ Shimanuki resembled a typical expansionist when he argued that it was the inherent "nature" of the Japanese people to go past their national boundaries in all directions, in particular, east across the Pacific, to "plant new homelands."³⁴ Despite an internationalist outlook, Katayama was likewise "first and foremost a patriotic Japanese citizen," who compared one's "loyalty to the emperor and love of country" with "defying the waves of the wide ocean, entering another country, and establishing one's livelihood."³⁵ Influenced by

such an ideology, which subsumed self-interest under nationalism, it was not uncommon for many student-emigrants to merge into the earlier group of expansionist entrepreneurs once they arrived in the American West. Indeed, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, many immigrant farmers, business owners, and regional community leaders emerged from this population.³⁶

The ideology of success had another keen audience: Japan's rural masses. Unlike students, *dekasegi* emigrants of rural origin were mostly indifferent to the valorization of emigration beyond personal or family concerns. For example, a *dekasegi* returnee ascribed her family's emigration decision solely to the "rumor that [it] would pay off handsomely," while another sought to acquire land in his home village and build a "tile-roofed house"—a symbol of wealth in rural Japan.³⁷ Upon his return from California, a migrant worker admitted that he had acted on the words of former migrant workers that one could "make a bundle of money in America." Despite his advanced age and family objections, the fifty-three-year-old took the journey to the unknown land, because he knew he could not have enjoyed "his fill of sweet *sake*" had he stayed put as a poor farmer in Japan.³⁸ These accounts demonstrate no trace of concern for the state, or even for their village communities.

From the standpoint of the government elite and urban intelligentsia, rural Japanese were indeed a great trouble. When a large number of laborers crossed the Pacific for work, the process of molding them into imperial subjects had barely begun at home. Starting in the early 1870s, the Meiji state strove hard to integrate Japan's periphery into its centralized state apparatuses, while inculcating national identity in the population of feudalized peasants. This process entailed the development of suitable ideologies, such as state Shintoism, legally sanctioned patriarchy, and the orthodoxy of emperor worship, as well as the construction of corresponding institutions, including compulsory education and military service. The making of imperial subjects in rural areas was nonetheless uneven and incomplete due partially to the often-strained relationships between the central elite and grassroots leaders. Not until after the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 did the state achieve any notable integration of village Japanese.³⁹

Confined to the realm of his immediate surroundings, the consciousness of a typical Japanese migrant was predicated on what was good for him and his immediate family. As historian Carol Gluck observes, this "alternative social ideology to the official one of collective cooperation . . . enjoined not cooperative community spirit but personal striving and brandished the language not of social harmony but of the Darwinian struggle for survival."⁴⁰ This heresy, which placed the individual over the nation-state, could easily clash with state orthodoxy. Yet, as long as one acted within the preexisting framework or on behalf of one's family and village community, which provided the backbone of the Meiji body politic, the line between the self-effacing imperial subject and

the self-serving individual blurred. Indeed, only after an excess of materialism began to overwhelm the social elite in the early 1900s did Tokyo finally begin to treat the ideology of striving and success as a menace.⁴¹ Labor emigration was part and parcel of this diachronic process, in which the popular logic of success increasingly overrode the national imperative within that ideology.

The departure of *dekasegi* laborers for Hawaii and the United States between 1885 and 1908 signified the zenith of popular pragmatism among ordinary Japanese. In the context of the nation's incorporation into the international network of capitalist economies, the decade of the 1880s ushered in a drastic reconfiguration of its rural economy. What helped to encourage the farming population to emigrate was the overarching effect of commercial agriculture, which alienated so many villagers from their chief means of production, the farmland. These displaced peasants formed a pool of working-class people in need of wage labor. At the same time, the intrusion of market forces into villages opened up the world view of rural residents, allowing some to dream of upward mobility beyond what they could have had under the feudal regime. Depending on varying economic, political, and social circumstances, these developments made some groups of rural Japanese more receptive than others to the idea of going abroad as a way to material fulfillment. The resultant emigrants divide into two major types: distressed contract laborers and entrepreneurial laborers.

Known initially as "government-contract emigrants" (1885–1894) and later as "private-contract emigrants" (1894–1899), *distressed contract laborers* consisted mainly of individuals of "landless or small landowning farming households," who looked to earn American dollars through contract labor in Hawaii.⁴² Transportation to Hawaii and other initial expenses were paid for by the employer. In the two phases, there were 29,069 and 40,230 such emigrants, respectively, who were recruited to work on sugar plantations on three-year contracts.⁴³ When the Japanese government was in charge of recruitment, until 1894, the effort concentrated in a few prefectures in southwestern Japan, such as Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, and Kumamoto, in accordance with the wishes of government and business leaders.⁴⁴ Beneath this political favoritism nonetheless lay a socioeconomic undercurrent that made the ideology of success and striving more influential in some regions than others. The original locations of early contract laborers tended to have undergone a significant transformation from conventional rice farming to the cultivation of commercial crops, like cotton and indigo, as well as the rise of semimechanized cottage industries, since the 1870s.⁴⁵

In order to understand the impact of market forces upon rural emigration, it is crucial to take into account when the fortunes of the landed family farmers declined in such economic circumstances rather than noting merely a state of displacement or want. A typical contract emigrant from Hiroshima was either

a household head, his younger brother, or his oldest son, as well as his wife, who sought to work off debts or supplement shrinking family income by three years of hard labor abroad. Such an early emigrant household was among the recent casualties of rapid commercialization in agriculture and Tokyo's deflationary policy. Even though contract laborers tended to be destitute or bankrupt at the time of their embarkation, most had been economically better off prior to the 1880s.⁴⁶ In rural Japan, the initial economic change had taken place with the institution of a national tax system in 1873. Levying 3 percent of the assessed land value on all of the landed households, this tax did not reflect fluctuations in the prices of crops nor the value of the currency. When agricultural prices ascended steadily in accordance with the high inflation of the 1870s, it did not affect most farmers, since their growing income could minimize the monetary burden of taxation in relative terms. However, the drastic deflationary measures of the early 1880s not only shrank agricultural prices by half, but they also greatly increased the tax burden in terms of the deflated currency, sending into default many small family farmers who had spearheaded the early growth of commercial agriculture by borrowing and investing. The crisis that these pillars of village communities suddenly faced explains their rising interest in *dekasegi* work for economic rehabilitation, as well as Tokyo's decision to lift its ban on labor migration in 1885 for popular appeasement.⁴⁷

Motivated by the vivid memory of better days in the recent past, rural Japanese formerly of the middle strata were most inclined to jump at what the system of contract-labor emigration promised: a quick recovery from sudden impoverishment without the requirement of personal financial resources or burden. Rural Japanese of other classes were less likely to take the chance even if information on emigration were available. To the most socially deprived, who had been consistently resourceless, the formula looked less realistic. Having lived without hope since the feudal era, they had accepted their socioeconomic standing as a given and had few aspirations beyond daily survival. Further, their chances of being allowed to leave for Hawaii or elsewhere were slim to nil due to the prevailing official bias against them.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, very few members of the upper strata would be likely to leave their villages, since they were less willing to risk their familiar lifestyles in Japan by going abroad for temporary work than were those who were financially threatened and desperate. Instead, collaborating with the state, the village upper class often encouraged and facilitated the departure of the fallen middle class in hopes that the scheme of self-help would pacify agitated residents and refocus their energy on local economic development.⁴⁹ Official reports indeed attested to the relative success of the contract-labor scheme. According to an 1889 Hiroshima report, "[M]any [returnees] acquired houses and farms, while others used their earnings to start industrial and commercial enterprises" in their communities.⁵⁰ Likewise, offi-

cials of Okayama and Wakayama prefectures noted that some returnees were even pondering the possibility of growing sugar cane and starting sugar-refining businesses in their home districts.⁵¹

Critically, these observations also underscore the changing nature of labor emigration, which became increasingly noticeable in the ensuing decades. A growing number of rural Japanese considered it to be a lucrative area of investment. In the regions where many contract laborers originated, their success convinced other villagers of similar or higher strata to follow suit, thus triggering chain migration to Hawaii and the United States. One-time contract laborers, too, often apportioned their earnings for second trips across the Pacific. To his Hiroshima village, for example, a *dekasegi* emigrant brought back more than \$350 after three years of toiling on a Hawaiian sugar plantation. Out of that money, his family not only paid off debts and set aside some savings, but also laid out \$135 on farmlands and a house, \$20 on furniture, and \$100 on another *dekasegi* term abroad.⁵² When these people paid their own way and embarked on their second transpacific journeys, they were no longer contract laborers bound by specific—and often inferior—terms of employment. Their better economic conditions allowed them to act like the "rational peasant," who was inclined to "make long-term as well as short-term investments" in emigration, rather than the risk-averse "moral peasant" mainly in search of subsistence alternatives.⁵³ Called *free emigrants*, these rural pragmatists put their own resources into *dekasegi* work abroad for higher returns, often heedless of official mandates or guidelines—a change that increasingly troubled the social elite of Japan.

Between 1895 and 1908, more than 130,000 Japanese—the majority of them *entrepreneurial laborers*—left for the continental United States and Hawaii.⁵⁴ The typical emigrant of this group originated from a better-off rural household, and he preferred to go to the continental United States without his wife.⁵⁵ An average immigrant in California could earn twice as much as a field hand in Hawaii. Given that even a plantation worker was paid four to six times more than a common laborer in Hiroshima, the benefits of choosing labor on the U.S. mainland far exceeded that of going elsewhere and was well worth the initial expenses, which amounted to at least \$100.⁵⁶ For the same reason, many Japanese laborers in Hawaii, "liberated" from three-year contracts as a result of U.S. annexation, opted to go to the Pacific Coast states after 1900 instead of continuing to work on sugarcane fields or returning home. From 1902 to 1907, there were reportedly about 38,000 Japanese remigrants from Hawaii to the American West.⁵⁷

Unlike the contract labor scheme, the new pattern of labor emigration soon came into conflict with the diplomatic agenda of the Japanese state. The massive influx of common laborers from Japan incited anti-"Oriental" agitation

among white Californians, who had excluded Chinese immigrants on the pretext of their economic, cultural, and racial danger. Quickly gathering political momentum, the anti-Japanese movement in the West became such a liability to Tokyo that the Foreign Ministry was compelled to stop the departure of Japanese for the U.S. mainland altogether in August 1900. A partial relaxation of the ban was effected in June 1902, but it excluded "laborers" categorically from the right of passage.⁵⁸ Following this change in emigration policy, when rural Japanese applied for passports, many farmers posed as "businessmen," "merchants," or even "industrialists"—a practice that continued until 1908 with some degree of success.⁵⁹ Others went to Mexico and Canada, from which they entered the continental United States.⁶⁰ Stringent administrative restrictions only led to widespread popular defiance. Viewed from the perspective of officials, such fraudulent passport applications presented a challenge not only to the diplomatic affairs of the state but also to the very authority of the central government.

Military service formed another notable area of popular defiance by entrepreneurial emigrants. Since the 1870s, rural Japanese had resisted conscription in a variety of ways ranging from mass protests to feigned illness. *Dekasegi* emigration offered many youths a safer means to avoid giving up several years of their lives for something other than their personal benefit and family interests. By virtue of their sojourns abroad, emigrant laborers were able to enjoy annual draft deferments; but in exchange they would be subject to mandatory induction into the army upon their return to Japan without a chance of obtaining reserve status. Yet even this restriction could not match the genius of many emigrants, who simply overstayed in the United States until after their eligibility for active duty expired at the age of thirty-two. The Japanese government was particularly concerned with this problem in the early 1900s, for officials considered it to be not only embarrassing but also inimical to national security. During the crisis of the Russo-Japanese War, Tokyo was compelled to order local offices to scrutinize passport applications from *dekasegi* laborers and crack down on draft evasions, noting that "more and more adolescents due to be draftable in 1905 and 1906 have been attempting to go abroad." Popular individualism seriously challenged the elite/national mandate, producing rebellious rural folks who hardly fit the image of the self-effacing imperial subject.⁶¹

The Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907–1908 between Washington and Tokyo was a logical culmination of the struggle between the state and rural emigrants. It primarily addressed the problem of anti-Japanese agitation in San Francisco, which demanded immigration exclusion, but also offered the Tokyo elite a solution to the uncontrollable proliferation of the success ideology among labor emigrants. Under the bilateral agreement, the entry routes from Mexico, Canada, and Hawaii into the U.S. mainland were shut down under an executive

order of President Theodore Roosevelt, and Tokyo limited the issuance of America-bound passports to specific classes of individuals. Aside from international merchants and students of higher education, the qualified emigrants included only spouses and minor children of bona fide U.S. residents. Until the total exclusion of Japanese in 1924, a smaller scale of labor migration continued in the form of family chain migration, including the so-called picture brides, but after 1908 the control of rural emigrants posed far fewer challenges to the central government.

Thereafter, the main stage of struggle between the commanding state and the defiant emigrant shifted from the domestic sphere of Japan to the society of Japanese immigrants. In the American West, Tokyo's diplomatic agents and the local Issei elite, including expansionistic mercantilists, colonialists, and patriotic students, formed a coalition to keep the immigrant masses in line, while ordinary laboring men and women remained largely oblivious to the imposition of nationalist dictates. And behind this tug-of-war stood white Americans, who, as the chief force of political intervention, inadvertently furnished the framework for the intraethnic contestation and ensuing community-building efforts in early Japanese America.