



PROVINCIALIZING EMPIRE

Ōmi Merchants in the Japanese
Transpacific Diaspora

JUN UCHIDA

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Provincializing Empire

Ōmi Merchants in the Japanese Transpacific Diaspora

Jun Uchida



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This project began with a discovery I made a dozen years ago. As I was wrapping up my first book on colonial Korea, it dawned on me that many entrepreneurs and exponents of the Japanese empire hailed from a single province, Ōmi (present-day Shiga prefecture), and their network stretched far beyond the Korean peninsula. I too learned that while I grew up in Japan familiar with the famed peddlers of Ōmi, many U.S. colleagues had barely heard of them. These revelations led to my aspiration to write a new history of empire through a provincial lens, extending my research horizons spatially to the Chinese continent and across the Pacific to North America, and temporally back to the Tokugawa archipelago.

Along my ensuing journey through uncharted and unfamiliar archives, I have incurred numerous debts to scholars and colleagues who began crossing conventional boundaries of scholarship far ahead of their field. Kären Wigen has been my muse from the inception. She was also part of a dream team of historians who read the first draft of my book manuscript: Priya Satia, David Howell, and Jordan Sand (who also reviewed a revised manuscript later). I thank them for their valuable feedback and inspiration, and Jenny Martinez of the Stanford Humanities Center for organizing a manuscript workshop, despite being held days after the Capitol insurgency in January 2021.

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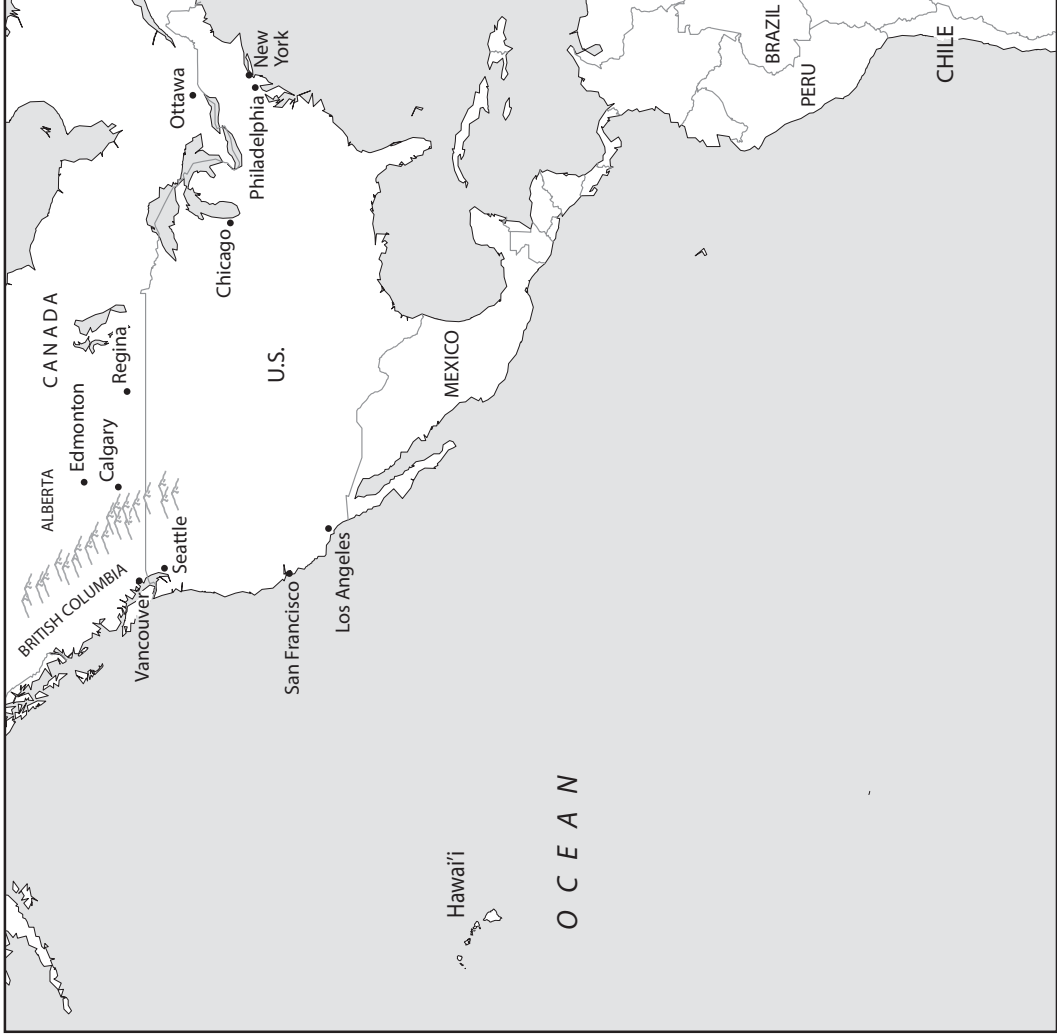
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This book was completed under the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic and political disruptions of unimaginable scale. Resurgent nationalism and racism also conjured unsettling parallels with what I’d been reading on pre-1945 immigration, much as they exposed my own ignorance of Asian-American history. Still, I feel truly blessed to live in a community where I could continue working, surrounded by friends and family. My mother, Keiko Uchida, has always been my rock and interlocutor, and my dear neighbors, Ingrid Fryklund and Mark Lewis, have practically adopted me while cut off from my family in Japan. Above all, an army of librarians, archivists, and staff on both sides of the Pacific have worked daily behind the scenes to sustain our intellectual life through the relentless crisis. This book would not have been written without their support, to which I am forever indebted.



MAP 1. Japan and the Pacific world (showing the main areas of business, travel, and discourse by Omi-Shiga people). Map by Bill Nelson.

Introduction

Located at the heart of the Japanese main island, the province of Ōmi (present-day Shiga prefecture) is famous for many things. Japan's largest lake occupies about 16 percent of its land. Adjacent to Kyoto and once the seat of the imperial palace, Ōmi also produced its share of diplomats, monks, and scholars of (trans) national stature, who coursed the maritime circuits of exchange in East Asia. But of all the historical luminaries associated with the province, no figure has exerted more dominant influence over the cultural identity of Ōmi than its itinerant peddlers, the so-called Ōmi *shōnin* (merchants). Well known for their entrepreneurial success in long-distance trade, Ōmi *shōnin*, with their iconic image of hawking wares on a balance pole (*tenbinbō*), are a fixture in local and popular histories of early modern Japan (fig. 1). In the heyday of their commerce, when foreign trade was sharply limited by the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867), the wholesale activities of Ōmi merchants extended the length of the archipelago, circulating local specialties and commodities to and from areas as far as Ezo (Hokkaido) in the north and Kyūshū in the south (map 2). In the process, they helped spur rural production along the trade routes, bringing distant markets into expansive networks of translocal exchange. Their commercial prowess and techniques of long-distance trading not only resembled the diasporic vigor of overseas Chinese and European Jews, some scholars argue, but also anticipated the operation of modern-day corporations.

This book tells the story of merchants from Ōmi who, having traversed the early modern Japanese archipelago, ventured far across the sea from the turn of the twentieth century. Tracing their lives and careers over the *longue durée*, it considers some of the epochal processes that integrated Japan into the globalizing world—empire, diaspora, capitalism, war—through a regional lens. Rather than becoming relics of the bygone era, I argue, Ōmi merchants and their descendants played a pivotal role in these developments by extending the frontiers of commerce and migration around and across the Pacific. In turn, these businesspeople helped



FIGURE 1. Reenactment of itinerant peddlers from Ōmi in the Tokugawa period. Courtesy of the Archival Museum of the Faculty of Economics, Shiga University, Japan.

fuel the global economy, creating and coursing its networks and flows alongside or ahead of the state—and crafting their regional identity in the process.

The global history of Ōmi shōnin is a story of how provincials shaped the increasingly connected world, even while swept by its currents and crises. Generations of scholars in Shiga have devoted themselves to excavating the commercial exploits of their ancestors. But they have done so largely within the bounds of local and national history and the tradition of place writing invested in highlighting regional uniqueness. My contention is that the story of Ōmi shōnin, when placed in broader frames of analysis, can address questions relevant to all scholars concerned with provincial lives navigating a fast-changing world. In what ways can we understand such global phenomena as empire, emigration, and capitalism on the scale of a region? How do we tell a provincial history of commerce and industry in a transnational and transimperial context? How, indeed, might we bring the disparate archives of the local and the global into dialogue, without rehashing a familiar tale of conflict and difference? The history of Ōmi merchants provides new insights into these questions. Their documentary traces offer not only a vista of larger interlinked processes of capitalist modernity and mobility but an extended horizon from which to plumb their local origins and mediations below and beyond the national level.

For all their historical significance, Ōmi merchants have garnered little attention from scholars outside Shiga; they remain virtually unstudied abroad.¹ Even less known are their fates and activities after the fall of the Tokugawa regime, a central question that animates this study. It is commonly held that Ōmi merchants entered the twilight of their career after 1868. They faced precipitous decline amid Japan's rupture into modernity, the story goes, while the new Meiji government, in alliance with big *zaibatsu* (business conglomerates), commanded center stage in building their country as an industrial and imperial power. But existing records reveal a more complex story.

Away from the Tokyo metropolis, provincial merchants of Kansai (see map 2), many from Ōmi, continued to lead and dominate the cotton textile industry, which drove Japan's export-led economy into the 1930s. Ōmi merchants also remained actively involved in the economy of Hokkaido, where they had managed fisheries for their samurai owners. From the turn of the twentieth century, moreover, many fanned across the ocean, operating spinning mills in the treaty ports of China, expanding trade to Southeast Asia, and launching new retail businesses in Korea and Manchuria. The entrepreneurial legacies of Ōmi peddlers, too, lived on to inspire their young progeny to venture abroad, whether as students and businessmen in colonial Asia or as immigrants to North America.

Unearthing the overlooked role of Ōmi merchants in the early modern economy is, then, but part of a more ambitious aim of this book: to write them into imperial and global history by tracing their evolution across time and space. Having trekked the Tokugawa polity, as I demonstrate, merchants of Ōmi continued to search for new markets and opportunities, pushing the boundaries of Japan's nation and empire outward. They were joined by a new generation of Ōmi-Shiga natives, who pursued a variety of careers around a growing Japanese diaspora that stretched from Seoul to Vancouver. It was in the course of linking their homeland to overseas circuits of exchange that they cemented a claim of shared ancestry in Ōmi *shōnin*. Far from fading into oblivion, indeed, Ōmi merchants and their lineal and self-proclaimed descendants operated at the forefront of expansion, plying their custom and ethos of border crossing in a new, transnational context. The local and the global were seamlessly entwined in the lives of provincials, as were the past and the unfolding present, in a new history of Ōmi *shōnin* that I seek to tell.

ŌMI AS A GLOBAL PLACE

Like many other prefectures on the periphery of modern Japan, Shiga-ken is still referred to by its older label Ōmi (or more colloquially, *Gōshū*), one of the sixty-six provinces (*kuni*) that constituted the administrative map of the archipelago from the eighth century to the end of the Tokugawa period. This area sits roughly in the center of the Japanese main island, Honshū, and encompasses Lake Biwa, the largest lake in the country. The surrounding land is bordered by mountains,

including Mt. Hiei to the west, on which stands Enryakuji, a historically powerful monastery overlooking Kyoto. And a sprawling alluvial plain lies east of the lake, where commercial farming and cottage industry developed early.

The natural environment has accorded Ōmi a special place in national history. Located close to the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara and intersected by the Nakasendō, an inland passage that connected Kyoto to Edo, Ōmi had been a region of great strategic importance to military rulers, courtiers, and religious establishments since antiquity. A crossroads of trade between western and eastern Japan, Ōmi had also served as a gateway to the continent. It was settled by ancient immigrants and traveled by diplomatic envoys, whose designated passage in the Tokugawa era became permanently inscribed in the local terrain as the Korean Highway (Chōsenjin kaidō), which branched off of the Nakasendō (see map 3 in the next chapter).

In contrast to landlocked regions such as Shimoina in present-day Nagano,² the littoral Ōmi was a “space of flows” that had always conveyed “a global sense of place.”³ Throughout its history, Ōmi’s extroverted character was embodied and exhibited by the cross-cultural lives of its prominent natives—including Onono Imoko (dates unknown), who mediated early Japanese contact with the Chinese and Korean dynasties;⁴ Ii Naosuke (1815–1860), who signed a treaty in 1858 to open Japan’s ports to American trade; and Nakae Tōju (1608–1648), “the sage of Ōmi” who founded the Wang Yangming School of Neo-Confucianism in Japan. Yet none of them rivals the Ōmi shōnin in popular imagination and identification with the province as the reigning icon of its cosmopolitan bearing.

Although Ōmi has largely escaped their attention, English-language scholars have, for decades, engaged in efforts to reclaim the local vis-à-vis the center.⁵ They have depicted regions as key players in Japan’s transformation, hitherto discounted by nation-based narratives, by examining how they interacted and negotiated with, and often spoke back to, the political capital. Ōmi was one of many regions whose identity was shaped by such local-center interplay. But it was also a complicated periphery that saw itself as the nation’s core, long after its political significance had waned. Even after its administrative incarnation as Shiga Prefecture in 1872, Ōmi was kept alive in popular sentiments and local texts, from gazetteers to school songs, that claimed its uniqueness in the economic culture of the archipelago, its centrality in national geography and polity, and its primordial ties to the continent.

Such “practices and idioms of regional identification”⁶ capture the politics of place-making that immersed Ōmi-Shiga and other provinces, which were rendered into peripheries of a new nation centered on Tokyo.⁷ Ōmi remained a culturally salient, if politically subordinate, identity in the post-restoration era, not least because local boosters strove to ensure that their homeland would not devolve into the obscured fringe of the modernizing Japan. One of their strategies was to brand Shiga as the birthplace of Ōmi shōnin, the regnant symbol of native

enterprise before the arrival of Perry. A more ambitious agenda called for exporting its famed merchants and their offspring abroad, where they might reenact their early modern glory and revive the name of Ōmi on a global stage, beginning with the neighboring territories in Asia.

These efforts did not always proceed smoothly; Shiga had its share of internal dissension, as elsewhere on the national terrain. Nevertheless, they gave Ōmi, a mere congeries of domains before 1868, an identity more coherent than it had ever before possessed. The spirit of enterprise and adventure, along with the ideals of industry, economy, and endurance, were valorized by local writers as kernels of Ōmi identity every inhabitant was presumed to share. As we will see, the genealogical discourse on Ōmi people always pointed back to their “shared” ancestral origins in itinerant peddlers, a metaphorical pilgrimage bridging their proud past and their uncertain present and future. Their transoceanic visions and movements that ensued, consequently, signified the expanding scales on which the legacy of Ōmi shōnin was projected, as ever-wider geographies fell within Japan’s sphere of interest.

RETHINKING THE HISTORY OF JAPANESE CAPITALISM

Since the Meiji period, the study of Ōmi merchants has been the virtual preserve of scholars based in Shiga, occupying a small niche in the field of Japanese economic history. The earliest works cobbled together biographies of prominent local men—hagiographic narratives that outlined the origins and lineaments of Ōmi shōnin “past and present,” who were hoped would lead Japan “at the forefront of global commercial warfare.”⁸ From the 1920s, Ōmi merchants’ activities were contextualized as part of provincial history through the publication of local gazetteers. Academic inquiry, too, began in earnest among a group of scholars led by Kanno Watarō (1895–1976) at Hikone Higher Commercial School, an early hub for research on Japanese commerce.⁹ Historical and ethnographic in nature, their works on family precepts and store codes, supplemented by interviews with local merchants, parsed the trading activities and philosophy of Ōmi shōnin as a distinctive category of entrepreneurs. Their postwar successors at Shiga University, Egashira Tsuneharu and Ogura Eiichirō, delved further into the methods of business and accounting deployed by Ōmi merchant families ahead of their time. These works form the corpus of what are considered classics today.¹⁰

In contrast to the positive reappraisal of their Tokugawa-era commerce, however, most of these early studies painted a markedly pessimistic picture of Ōmi merchants post-1868 as losers of the Meiji revolution. This popular perception is linked to an equally entrenched narrative of Japan’s industrial revolution as led by the “developmental state” and big zaibatsu in Tokyo. Their partnership, to be sure, proved dynamic and enduring. Going beyond laying the basic economic

infrastructure, the Meiji government had an unusually visible hand in creating Japan's first industrial enterprises, from silk mills to coal mines and shipyards. Most of them were sold off in the mid-1880s to private entrepreneurs, who then leveraged their resources and political ties to transform them into industrial empires of their own. The most prominent among these *zaibatsu* families—Mitsui and Mitsubishi—began their careers as “political merchants” (*seishō*) in the 1870s and 1880s.¹¹ In an embryonic state of Japanese capitalism, they provided the crucial funds and services needed for the Meiji policy of primitive accumulation to “build a rich and strong nation” (*fukoku kyōhei*).¹² In turn, these merchants obtained lucrative contracts, direct subsidies, easy credit terms, and other forms of government largesse that allowed many to diversify and consolidate their family enterprises into giant conglomerates. By World War I, the collective dominance of *zaibatsu* sprawled across all sectors of the economy—from banking, trade, shipping, and mining to iron and steel, shipbuilding, and manufacturing.¹³

Largely written out of this master narrative is the role of provincial merchants in Kansai. From the Meiji to the early 1930s, Japan's export-led economy was built on the light industries of silk and cotton. These sectors, however, “remained outside the orbit of the *zaibatsu*,” which invested far less in textile manufacturing than in the making of steel, machinery, and ships.¹⁴ Employing the majority of factory labor before 1935, the cotton industry was significantly directed by the private enterprise and investment of merchants based in Osaka and its vicinity.¹⁵ As economic historians have recently stressed, indeed, industrial revolution was a regional rather than a national phenomenon. But in the case of Japan, it was led by the textile industry, where the “native merchants of Kansai” had figured centrally since the Tokugawa era.¹⁶

When probing these continuities further, another horizontal network emerges from a group of powerful Kansai merchants, one bound by native-place ties to Ōmi. Scanning a roster of leading textile firms, one is struck by how ubiquitous Ōmi merchants were: they were involved in every part of the industry, from the import of raw cotton to production and the wholesale, retail, and export of finished goods.¹⁷ Not only did they participate in the management of big spinning companies in Osaka, which were founded without government aid.¹⁸ Even more significant was their role in marketing, a skill many families had perfected as peddlers of textiles and other mass consumer goods before the age of industrial capitalism. Although Mitsui Bussan is well-known as the largest trading firm, many Ōmi merchants also restructured their family concerns or pooled their capital to launch “cotton trading companies”—an institution as distinctive to Japanese capitalism as *zaibatsu*—which played a critical role in capturing foreign markets for domestic spinners. By the late 1920s, as observers noted, Ōmi merchant capitalists formed a powerful business clique or “tribe” in Japan's industrial economy that resembled, if not rivaled, the organization and influence of a *zaibatsu* family.¹⁹

Taking cues from the new history of capitalism, but shifting its focus from the Atlantic to the Pacific, this book proposes to rethink the geography and chronology of capitalist Japan through the lens of businesspeople—a relatively understudied group in the economic historiography of both oceanic worlds centered on the mill and the machine.²⁰ To focus on provincial merchants in Kansai is also to interrogate the relationship between business and political power beyond the bourgeois alliance of Tokyo and zaibatsu families. As compared to the new industrial dynasties in Kantō, the old merchant aristocracies of Kansai were characterized by relative distance and autonomy from the political center.²¹ They cultivated government authorities and stayed active in local politics, but none of them came to match the proximity to state power and influence of major zaibatsu, cemented by ties of patronage, marriage, and political money.²²

Yet the activities of Kansai merchants were no less intertwined with Japan's national interests and imperial ambitions. Business was tightly meshed with colonial politics in East Asia, where cotton goods, a significant share of which were handled by Ōmi merchant firms, led in expanding the frontiers of commerce, following as well as advancing the flag. Ōmi-born businessmen perceived their trade as fulfilling higher national goals—and some sought and attained a greater voice in imperial affairs—as much as obeying the dictates of their family ancestors to stay focused on commerce. The collective action of Kansai merchants vis-à-vis foreign rivals and their collaboration with the colonial regimes in Korea and Manchuria each demonstrated an inextricable link between imperial expansion and industrial capitalism, a dynamic seen across the global history of cotton, masterfully told by Sven Beckert.²³

Treating Ōmi merchants as political and not just economic actors, I seek to show how individual exploits and organized activities of provincials played a part in shaping the political economy of the Japanese empire and its connections to the global world of capitalism.²⁴ Economic historians based in Shiga have already done foundational research in this direction. Since the 1990s, their longitudinal studies have mounted a powerful challenge to the old hypothesis of decline, examining modern corporations created by or descended from Ōmi merchant families that have survived to the present.²⁵ Suenaga Kunitoshi and Seoka Makoto have taken this inquiry further, tracking a young generation of Shiga natives who left their homeland to manage a company's branch, launch a retail store, or sojourn in various overseas locations.²⁶ My study draws on this specialized body of research, integrating it into broader frames of analysis offered by the new historiography of capital and empire. In doing so, I also balance the “rediscovery of the state” in recent studies of Western capitalism²⁷ with a stronger call for shifting our attention off-center, to view the globalizing process from a regional perspective. Eschewing the narrative of “success” characteristic of place writing, this book retells the story of old and new Ōmi merchants as the global history of connections and interactions—of capital, trade, empire, and emigration—lived and shaped by provincial actors.

TOWARD A DIASPORIC PERSPECTIVE

My starting point for analyzing Ōmi merchants and their descendants is to conceptualize their history and genealogy in terms of a diaspora.²⁸ I will deploy the term in two senses. First is a specific framing of the long-distance activities of Ōmi merchants as a trading diaspora. Second is a broader usage of the concept, to bring within its compass the far-flung lives, networks, and movements of Ōmi-Shiga people across the early modern and modern eras of cross-border exchange.

To most scholars of Ōmi shōnin, my conceptual framework would seem bold and unorthodox, but the notion of trading diaspora is apt for characterizing the early modern activities of Ōmi merchants for several reasons. Although they were technically classed as farmers, their primary income derived from sojourning outside the home province for an extended period of time, with the intention of eventually returning to Ōmi (where they kept their families). In an era when the Japanese terrain was encumbered by travel restrictions, merchants of Ōmi traversed disproportionately long distances.²⁹ As itinerant peddlers, most of them initially ventured to the eastern and northeastern provinces in Kantō and Tōhoku, toting local manufactures of Ōmi such as mosquito nets and hemp cloth, along with textile goods from the Kyoto-Osaka region. For their return journey, they purchased local commodities and specialties of these distant provinces to sell en route to and back in Kansai. After accumulating a certain amount of capital this way, Ōmi merchants set up shop in key commercial destinations. Some diversified their business into moneylending; others continued peddling in search of new markets.

Through seasonal treks between their home and distant markets, Ōmi merchants developed their own trade routes and transport networks that crisscrossed the archipelago. And their wholesale activities created new linkages between the Kyoto-Osaka region and the hinterlands, from Kyūshū to Hokkaido. This is better seen as external trade than as commercial traffic within a bounded economy. In a polity that mandated village residence for all rural commoners, the peripatetic merchants of Ōmi inhabited a distinctive cultural milieu shaped by absence and mobility.³⁰ Operating across a federation of domains with clearly defined borders and semiautarkic economies—quasi-“states’ within a ‘state’”³¹—these provincials were engaged in a type of cross-cultural trade with strangers under the Tokugawa realm. Their success as “extra-provincial income earning merchants” (*takoku kasegi shōnin*) has also spawned a proverb dear to generations of Shiga people: just as the tiny sweetfish (*ayu*) of Lake Biwa would grow in size if released in rivers outside the province, so the merchants of Ōmi would not make it big unless they ventured beyond the home turf.³² A provincial perspective afforded by merchants of Ōmi, in short, draws for us a new national geography of economic exchange.

For the central role they played in the growth of interregional trade, money economy, and capital accumulation, merchants of Ōmi were (and still are) frequently compared to Chinese migrants and European Jews,³³ “two of the most

prominent entrepreneurial minorities in the modern world.”³⁴ As entrepreneurial “outsiders” (*gairai shōnin*),³⁵ Ōmi shōnin occupied commercial, moneylending, and other specialized niches in a “foreign” economy. Spatially and economically, they constituted a kind of borderless community,³⁶ with networks of stores extending across multiple provinces, while remaining socially anchored in Ōmi.

In their amphibious operations, and in their relationship to the native place especially, Ōmi merchants appear most akin to the diasporic Chinese in their provincial variety.³⁷ Seafaring merchants and migrants from the southern coasts of Fujian and Guangdong are well-known and often evoked as a comparator.³⁸ But overland commerce within the borders of the Tokugawa polity more closely resembled that of sojourner-merchants from Shanxi and Huizhou, who, from their peasant origins, expanded their trading networks in the Qing territorial empire.³⁹ Inland and overseas, scholars have noted, the mobility of Chinese as cross-cultural traders and laborers entailed not so much exile or displacement as dispersion. Unlike the Jewish expatriate community, “a prototypical diaspora” shaped by the loss of the homeland and “uprootedness,”⁴⁰ Chinese migrants stayed connected to their native land through a nexus of social institutions and family or place-based ties, what Philip A. Kuhn has conceptualized as a cultural “corridor.”⁴¹ This spatial metaphor can be extended to the *modus operandi* of Ōmi shōnin, who plied on land and at sea and sojourned in distant communities without being assimilated by them. Far from being diluted, their sense of belonging to the homeland was heightened by their diasporic activity and a host of practices to reify and reinforce bonds of kinship.⁴²

By no means, however, were Ōmi merchants “stateless” actors or free-market agents, as Philip D. Curtin’s formulation of “a trade diaspora” might suggest.⁴³ As members of the merchant class, they were thoroughly integrated into the political and ideological order of the Tokugawa regime; they also needed official permission and often relied on samurai patronage to operate in outside domains, where many served as purveyors, moneylenders, and town elders. But when looking across the early modern world, dependence on the state did not necessarily appear to work against or undermine the agency of diasporic traders.⁴⁴ This was certainly the case for Ōmi merchants in Tokugawa Japan: they prioritized their family business as dictated by their progenitors and guided by their Buddhist belief, while rendering services as demanded by political authorities. And they carried this pragmatic spirit into the modern era—especially to the empire, where they found themselves obliging as much as taking advantage of the strong state presence.

Family and business records of Ōmi merchants suggest a broad, if unarticulated, grasp of the territorial and ethnic boundaries of the early modern polity they traversed. As some Tokugawa scholars have ventured, the movements of people, goods, information, and ideas had already bound the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago into a set of extra-domainal relations within a national frame, or in the provocative observation of Ronald Toby, “nation” in advance of the onset of “Nation” in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵ The full articulation of the identity of

Ōmi people vis-à-vis the national center awaited the advent of mass print and education. Yet Ōmi merchants, through their transborder activities, which extended to the northern and southernmost reaches of the archipelago, developed a keen awareness of belonging to a larger polity composed of multiple sovereignties.⁴⁶ To attend to their diasporic past, I submit, is to address a critical dialectic between continuity and change in Japan's transformation into a modern nation-state.

In the second sense in which I deploy the term *diaspora*, it refers to visions, movements, and linkages of Shiga natives across national borders in the intertwined contexts of imperialism, capitalism, and migration, a temporal focus of this study. If modern Japan began as “a nation of provincials,”⁴⁷ one could equally speak of its overseas extension as an empire of regions. From old and new studies that track the flows of people, goods, and money abroad⁴⁸ emerge distinctly regional contours of expansion, as illustrated by the demographic makeup of migrants in each territory. Since the late Tokugawa period, soldiers and farmers from Tōhoku had crossed the Tsugaru Strait to settle in Hokkaido and Karafuto, while many Okinawans, joined by poor tenant farmers from Tōhoku, sailed southward to take up seasonal labor in Taiwan, Micronesia, and Southeast Asia.⁴⁹ Throughout the colonial period Kyūshū, Chūgoku, and Kansai natives formed a dominant stream of migrants to the Korean peninsula,⁵⁰ and an even greater number of agrarian colonists from central Honshū (especially Nagano) flocked to Manchuria in the 1930s.⁵¹

Meanwhile, a number of scholars have dissected the demography of Japanese diagonally across the ocean to speak of multiple “diasporas” emanating from the nation's peripheries—be it Okinawa,⁵² Toyama,⁵³ or Yamaguchi⁵⁴—charting the flow of local inhabitants to colonial territories in Asia and sites of labor migration in Hawai'i and the Pacific Coast regions of America.⁵⁵ I join these scholars in talking broadly and loosely of an Ōmi diaspora, a network of people bound by shared cultural heritage and regional sentiment through which goods, capital, and ideas also circulated beyond the national frontier, linking Ōmi to various overseas destinations. What set this diaspora apart from other provincial trajectories was its supposed origins in the trading diaspora of Ōmi forebears already in the business of border-crossing on the home islands—a genealogical discourse deployed actively for Japan's expansion from the Meiji era onward.

As Adam McKeown, Robin Cohen, and others have shown, the concept of diaspora, when used flexibly or adjectivally, opens up a horizon of new analytical possibilities to rethink transnational processes as diverse as labor migration, cross-cultural trade, and colonial settlement by providing “a needed supplement to nation-based histories.”⁵⁶ Its analytic purchase has been expanded still further by Steven B. Miles in his recent global history of Chinese diasporas. Miles has usefully distilled the essence of diaspora as “a claim of belonging, an assertion of connection to a homeland,” while warning against treating it as “a bounded entity.”⁵⁷ Following his lead, I discuss Ōmi merchants' activities not as a single diaspora but in terms of “diasporic trajectories”—diverse and overlapping networks that emanated from specific locales around Lake Biwa, which only gradually congealed

into an idea and identity of Ōmi. More broadly, diaspora offers a productive way to historicize the expansion of Ōmi people beyond the assumed dichotomy of “internal” and “external” migration—not least because this was also how local thinkers in Shiga made sense of their community and history.⁵⁸

Although Ōmi merchants emerged in conditions specific to Tokugawa Japan, their history addresses issues generic to diasporic traders in the early modern and modern world. Looking past their obvious differences in size and scale of operation can broaden our understanding of trading diasporas beyond the existing typologies, based primarily on ethno-religious groupings and centered on the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean (the “classic diasporas” of Jews, Armenians, and Greeks). The story of Ōmi shōnin, like that of Shanxi merchants in the Qing empire, is a history of how long-distance traders, who operated largely within the borders of a “national” polity, fashioned a distinct community and identity around commerce away from the homeland.⁵⁹ My greater focus and contribution perhaps lies in tracing the “afterlife” of this diasporic community into the modern era, to probe its articulation and integration with the nation-state and industrial capitalism from the late nineteenth century, a usual coda to most existing studies. On this issue, the post-Tokugawa history of Ōmi merchants would seem to align with recent scholarship on Eurasian trade, which demonstrates the resilience and adaptability, not presumed demise, of diasporic traders and their family- or place-based business strategies in the age of global and managerial capitalism.⁶⁰ The present study adds to the ongoing debate by showing, among other things, that closed networks of trust—which became an obstacle to market expansion and diversification for the Julfan Armenians and Multani Indians⁶¹—could be a lasting source of strength for Ōmi merchants, as it was for Chinese and other diasporic communities, in the changing world of trade and industry.⁶²

At the same time, what I discuss below is a more complicated diaspora: a trading diaspora that evolved into multiple forms of transoceanic activity, a diaspora as genealogy- and place-making, a diaspora made in imagination and in dialogue with these early modern diasporas around the globe. In deploying a diasporic perspective, indeed, the book’s interventions extend beyond the analysis of Ōmi merchants and their business methods. Its broader purpose is to bridge what I see as three long-standing disciplinary divides in the study of Japanese activities overseas: between the early modern and the modern, between the local and the global, and between colonization and emigration.

BETWEEN EARLY MODERN AND MODERN

The first dichotomy this book seeks to challenge is an old but enduring temporal division between early modern and modern. Whereas historians elsewhere have often searched deep into the early modern past for an explanation of industrial growth, scholars of the Japanese empire have rarely looked prior to the Meiji era. Most existing studies view empire as a modern state project, treating the nineteenth-century

“opening of the country” as the onset of Japan’s colonial activity. Yet a generation of early modern historians following Amino Yoshihiko⁶³ have demonstrated that overseas engagement was hardly a post-1868 phenomenon. Far from being isolated or landlocked (as a conventional focus on rice-cultivating farmers would have us believe), the Japanese had been active as a seafaring people and embedded in transoceanic processes of exchange since at least the medieval era.⁶⁴

Drawing on the insights of these historians, this book traces the activities and legacies of Ōmi merchants across the Tokugawa-Meiji divide to illustrate how a modern empire, in conception and in practice, was built on an early modern template of expansion. Unpacking this dynamic process of fusion offers us a more nuanced explanation, one that assumes neither simple displacement of the local nor the “beginning” of empire in the Meiji period. If Japan’s capitalism developed on the industrial foundations laid by regional economies of Tokugawa,⁶⁵ I contend, so its overseas empire drew on the pattern and ethos of “foreign commerce” demonstrated by traders of Ōmi and elsewhere. This was also how local and national leaders construed expansion around the turn of the century (chapters 3 and 4). Scholars have long shown the Meiji Japanese to be avid students of Western colonial practices, but this narrative of borrowing reveals as much as it obscures. Overseas expansion for Japan entailed not merely catching up with the imperial West but also living up to the entrepreneurial legacy of its provincial ancestors—from the merchants of Osaka, Kyoto, and Nagasaki who sailed to the South Pacific in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to those from Ōmi who journeyed across the archipelago under the Tokugawa regime.

An often-cited case in point was Ōmi merchants’ involvement in the Tokugawa colonization of Ezo, or Hokkaido. As commercial agents for the Matsumae domain, merchants of Ōmi sold manufactured goods from the mainland to the indigenous people of Ainu in exchange for fish, fertilizers, and other local products, using large cargo ships to transport these commodities along the Japan Sea lanes to and from the Kinai (Kyoto-Osaka) region. This interregional trade ushered in the capitalist transformation of Hokkaido’s fishing industry, as David Howell has shown, but it also wrought a devastating impact on the Ainu culture and ecology, as detailed by Brett Walker.⁶⁶ In a triumphalist narrative that has lingered well into the postwar era, local leaders in Shiga and the Meiji bureaucrats upheld the role of Ōmi merchant “pioneers” in Hokkaido as a historical precedent for overseas expansion—or conquest of the indigenous economy by foreign capital from the Japanese mainland (chapter 2).

The example of Hokkaido serves as a good point of departure for uncovering critical continuities amid revolutionary changes in the centuries-long trajectory of Japanese capitalist and colonial activity. The core chapters of this book investigate how diasporic pursuits of Ōmi merchants, having culminated in Ezo, were subsequently *transmuted into* various forms of expansion overseas, from foreign trade and emigration to work, study, and travel abroad. In this process of reconfiguration, a new diaspora of Shiga people emerged across Asia and the Pacific. Tracing the

transoceanic lives of these provincials also contributes to decentering nationally scaled narratives of modernity: it reveals how practices and principles of regional commerce, inherited by merchant families or invented anew by Ōmi boosters, carried across 1868 to bolster Japan's project to become a world power.

Above all, it allows us to better capture how expansion was understood locally. From the vantage point of an elongated horizon, Shiga natives often described their far-flung endeavors, whether in colonial East Asia or Canada, as a logical extension of the entrepreneurial spirit of their Ōmi forefathers. For direct descendants of merchants, overseas business was not fundamentally different from overland commerce in anything but scale and scope of operation: a matter of grafting new knowledge onto their tradition of trading across distance and enlarging their business, rather than venturing into completely uncharted territory. Borrowing the conceptual vocabulary from Kären Wigen and other historical geographers, the core chapters (in parts II and III) attend to these spatiotemporal dynamics of *grafting* (or braiding the local with the global) and *rescaling* (reconfiguring tradition on a variety of scales) in analyzing the changing economic life of Ōmi people from the late nineteenth century.⁶⁷ Conceiving of the global capitalist economy as a complex “spatiotemporal system,” I aim to show in high resolution how these processes played out in the internal operations of merchant (and migrant) families—and how their scalar adjustments to the age of “time-space compression” mirrored Japan's metamorphosis from an island nation into a transoceanic empire of capital.⁶⁸

Highlighting continuities, however, does not mean postulating a simple and linear progression from the premodern to the modern era. My concern with tracing the lives and genealogies of Ōmi merchants lies as much in the evolution of their business activities as in how they were narrated, represented, and mobilized for new purposes. In particular, I pay attention to the dialectic between practice and discourse in unpacking the invention of the Ōmi *shōnin* (including the very etymology of the term). By the nineteenth century, their influence was felt in every sector of the Tokugawa market economy. Ōmi merchants had become a virtual synonym for enterprise, and their success an object of envy, as expressed in the epithet “Ōmi dorobō, Ise kojiki” (Ōmi thief, Ise beggar).⁶⁹ Strictly speaking, however, the phrase “Ōmi *shōnin*” did not exist before Meiji.⁷⁰ Coined most likely in the last decades of Meiji, “Ōmi *shōnin*” was a neologism on the order of *koku-min* (nation or people). It was, indeed, one among many invented traditions of the era, the most notable of which was the emperor system, whose evocation of Japan's “ancient past” masked a strategic fusion of imported and inherited practices and symbols of regal authority. Recasting rupture *as* continuity was a strategy also deployed by local leaders and scholars in Shiga, to make the Ōmi *shōnin* “an unproblematic part of received Tradition.”⁷¹ As later chapters will make clear, Ōmi merchants as a social category emerged in the context of local struggles to adapt to revolutionary change while seeking to restore Ōmi's place in national life as a

fount of enterprise. The overarching function of *Ōmi shōnin*, a historical artifact invented by nativist discourses and practices, was to essentialize regional identity across a fragmented local geography: to bring all people of Ōmi descent, with lineal or lateral ties to merchant families, into a single genealogy, where commerce signified both a celebration of and a return to common ancestral origins.⁷²

BETWEEN LOCAL AND GLOBAL

The conceptual separation between local and global is the second dichotomy this book calls into question. Its aspiration is to provide a methodology for studying the seldom-paired histories of region and empire by highlighting their dynamic and unexpected intersections. I want to illustrate how to rethink empire on the scale of a region and, conversely, to understand how regional identity took shape in the global and imperial context—a two-way exercise in “provincializing empire.”⁷³ Since Japan’s empire took shape through its integration into global circuits of exchange, this exercise enables us to examine the worldwide forces of capitalism and imperialism as entangled with and refracted through the transnational lives of provincial actors. My methodology here resonates with Sebouh David Aslanian’s call for microscale analysis of the global, or “a global microhistory,” one that productively combines the Braudelian concern with continuities in the *longue durée* and microhistory’s attention to human agency. Focusing on “unusually cosmopolitan individuals who led ‘global lives,’” as Aslanian does in his study of Armenian merchants from New Julfa,⁷⁴ I want to explore the global processes of expansion and exchange that shaped the “spatial multiplicity” of Ōmi people.⁷⁵

Historians of Japan have scrutinized center-periphery relations after 1868 to show how region, once “apart from the nation,” gradually became a locus of national belonging through cooperation and contestation with Tokyo.⁷⁶ Fewer scholars have considered how empire became a space of regional identification—that is, how regional identity was shaped and reinforced through overseas and diasporic experience. If consolidation of regional identities facilitated national integration, my contention is that so, too, did it contribute to imperial expansion, which drew on local attachments both inherited and invented. In spearheading this line of inquiry, Martin Dusingberre and Catherine Phipps have each taken a deep dive into a regional level of engagement with the empire,⁷⁷ while Michael Lewis and others have usefully brought the local and the imperial into a single analytic of “local [or municipal] imperialism.”⁷⁸ Addressing a dynamic national frame has downplayed, their works reveal that local boosterism, in its parochial guise, did not preclude enthusiasm for overseas expansion; quite the contrary, the two impulses remained closely entwined.

Building on these and other exemplary studies that place localities in global circuits of exchange,⁷⁹ this book takes an explicitly regional approach to expansion. It focuses on how empire was shaped from its margins and in local spaces, while

heeding the less-studied reverse dynamic—how region itself was brought into being in imperial and transnational contexts.⁸⁰ A place with “a global sense of place,” Ōmi provides a fitting location for illustrating this process. In analyzing provincial visions and reverberations of empire, I will treat Ōmi and its archive as a local-global nexus⁸¹ where commerce became a powerful signifier of regional identity as well as affinity with the world’s leading diasporic communities. When calling on fellow natives of Shiga to aspire abroad, local proponents of expansion frequently brought their merchant ancestors into comparison with global trade diasporas, from the aforementioned overseas Chinese to the Hanseatic merchants of medieval German cities, identifying in them a compelling, if contrived, logic of equivalence.

A similar interplay between local and global is discerned in a variety of texts left by other residents of Shiga—from travel accounts and newspaper columns to student essays and course syllabi. My analysis will zoom in and out from macro-level developments to micro-level experiences as it weaves together an array of private and published archives. Juxtaposing family genealogies and biographies with company histories and government publications, for example, reveals previously overlooked encounters and connections between Ōmi and the world. So does integrating insights from other regional centers of the globalizing economy into analysis. Treating Ōmi merchants’ “uniqueness” as inherently comparative allows us to identify seldom considered parallels and aspects of cosmopolitanism in their business culture, from methods of cross-border trade and risk management to the enduring role of kinship and religion in enterprise. Recasting provincials as players in world history, this study contributes to the ongoing work of explaining the local in connection with, rather than opposition to, the imperial-cum-global and elucidating their mutually constitutive dynamics.⁸²

BETWEEN COLONIZATION AND EMIGRATION

Finally, the ideas and activities of Ōmi people reveal previously understudied linkages between colonial expansion and overseas emigration, a central agenda in the growing field of transpacific history.⁸³ Joining scholars such as Eiichirō Azuma and Takashi Fujitani, whose pathbreaking works have bridged the two distinct histories of imperial Asia and immigrant America,⁸⁴ I propose to explore their intersecting geographies and chronologies, as they emerge from the maritime visions of local ideologues of empire (chapters 3 and 4), the global marketing networks of Ōmi-based trading firms (chapter 5), and the transpacific encounters between Ōmi-born merchants in Asia and immigrants in North America (chapters 6 and 7). Wherever relevant, I also investigate the racial and gendered dynamics of capitalism⁸⁵ that underlay the histories of colonists and emigrants on both sides of the imperial Pacific.

Like the study on the Okinawan diaspora, I will treat two Ōmi diasporas—“one within the Japanese colonial empire and one beyond”—as parts of a connected

process of overseas activity of Shiga people in a larger Pacific world.⁸⁶ Such distinctions were elided in the minds of many who crossed the sea; despite their varied statuses in host societies as immigrants or colonists, they typically imagined themselves as part of a diaspora rooted in the common ancestral home of Ōmi. The overall vision of expansion shared by local boosters was also diasporic rather than narrowly imperialistic, in the sense that they were concerned less with amassing overseas territories than with scattering Japanese goods, capital, and people around the globe—though they never ruled out military conquest as part of an arsenal of strategies for expansion.⁸⁷ The result was a frequent conflation of colonization (*shokumin*) and migration (*imin*), which remained conceptually distinct in the minds of Meiji policy makers but inextricably bound in the eyes of local boosters in Shiga, who viewed projecting Japan's national power and sending Ōmi merchants abroad as a mutually reinforcing symbiosis.

PROVINCIALIZING EMPIRE

The chapters that follow collectively represent a twinned attempt to write a global history of Japanese expansion through a provincial lens and to write the nation's provincials into world history. I propose to do so by showing how Ōmi merchants and their heirs circulated around the globe and, more significantly, how their commercial legacies translated into various modalities of expansion that took Shiga natives across the sea in both rhetoric and reality. In reconstructing their networks of trade, business, travel, and migration, I will examine each facet of their overseas activity as an interface of previously disconnected histories: the provincial archives on Ōmi, the national records of expansion, and the global history of capital, empire, and diaspora. How Ōmi merchants and their offspring navigated these multiple scales of experience is part of a larger story of the Japanese transpacific diaspora that provides the backdrop for the book.

I begin with an overview of the history of Ōmi *shōnin* in chapter 1, considering their genesis and the causes and consequences of their geographical mobility as itinerant peddlers. Through periodic comparison with diasporic traders elsewhere in the early modern world, I identify the business methods and maxims that made border-crossing merchants from Ōmi both distinctive and characteristic of the Tokugawa era. Chapter 2 zooms in on their role as agents of the Matsumae domain's trade in Ezo.⁸⁸ The growth of Hokkaido's fishing industry fueled the capitalist transformation of Tokugawa Japan as well as its colonizing endeavors on land and at sea, where the regional economies of Ainu labor and Ōmi capital met. As Ōmi merchants dominated local commercial rights from the eighteenth century into the nineteenth, Hokkaido became an integral part of their trading diaspora based in Honshū. By channeling mainland goods into Ezo, operating fisheries with indigenous Ainu labor, and building infrastructures, they promoted Matsumae's expansion vis-à-vis the ethnic "other" and helped to demarcate the northern borders of the early modern Japanese polity.⁸⁹

Moving on to the Meiji period, chapter 3 examines the early vision of maritime Japan as articulated by an Ōmi-born nationalist, Sugiura Shigetake (1855–1924)—an influential yet overlooked opinion maker whose discourse on expansion harked back to the genius of his provincial ancestors. Through editorials for mass dailies, Sugiura proposed redirecting Japan’s colonial drive from Hokkaido to the Chinese continent and islands in the South Pacific, with Ōmi shōnin as an economic vanguard setting the template for their countrymen to follow. In the hope of transforming a sedentary community of farmers into a seafaring nation of traders and sailors, he called on all Japanese—from scions of merchants to social outcasts—to venture abroad. Japan must build its strength beyond the archipelago, he argued, to surpass the imperial West and the diasporic Chinese in the global economy.

Like many Meiji ideologues, Sugiura construed “overseas expansion” in the broadest possible terms, encompassing everything from foreign trade to education and emigration, while viewing military conquest ancillary to commerce. All coalesced into a global vision of creating a Japanese diaspora around the Pacific world. With this conceptual map in place, the remainder of the book will explore four main areas of activity through which Ōmi merchants and their descendants strove to carry on their tradition of expeditionary commerce abroad: vocational training to nurture a new breed of “global Ōmi shōnin,” overseas trade and production of cotton textiles, retail business in colonial East Asia, and mass immigration to North America.

Sugiura’s call was energetically taken up by teachers in Shiga, intent on educating a new generation of businessmen ready to compete in the global marketplace. Chapter 4 examines these efforts by focusing on the prefecture’s two leading commercial schools: Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō (also known as Hasshō) and Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō (or Hikone Kōshō). Both schools expressly trained their pupils as successors to Ōmi shōnin by integrating peddling and other local customs into modern vocational curriculum. A close analysis of course syllabi reveals how the wisdom of Ōmi merchants informed their pedagogical emphasis on practical training and fieldwork, as well as extracurricular activities. More broadly, Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō functioned as institutional hubs of local imperialism. Through a network of alumni working in China, Manchuria, and Korea, both developed close ties to the continent, building a vast archive on colonial and overseas affairs. Faculty and senior students were also dispatched to the Asian mainland, the moving frontier of Japan’s multiethnic empire they trekked and surveyed for knowledge and control, with a renewed sense of mission as global Ōmi shōnin.

The alumni of these schools joined a growing number of Shiga people, who shared and mobilized a claim of descent from merchant ancestors to seek new opportunities abroad from the Meiji era. Many families drew on the diasporic lessons of Ōmi forebears to advance into trading activities or launch new businesses; others, mostly of peasant background, translated their legacies into sojourning abroad. Chapter 5 investigates the role of Ōmi merchants in Japan’s textile industry,

highlighting their dominance in import-export trade.⁹⁰ A historical center of hemp production and part of the industrial complex of Kansai, Ōmi became the cradle of textile firms, the most powerful of which constituted the so-called Gōshū zaibatsu. At its center was the Itō Chūbē family from Toyosato who founded Itōchū, the provincial forerunner of Japan's general trading companies. Focusing on the Itō family enterprise, I show how Ōmi merchant capital expanded to the Chinese continent to lead Japan's "cotton imperialism," while building trading networks around the Pacific and beyond. The seemingly remarkable trajectory of Itōchū from merchant into multinational owed as much to managerial innovations as to the old strategies of family capitalism: capitalizing on kin and native-place ties, without jettisoning what the Itō family regarded as the cardinal maxims and practices of Ōmi shōnin.

Building on their long expertise in textiles, Ōmi merchants also spearheaded a retail revolution across Japan's colonial empire in East Asia. Chapter 6 explores the case of Minakai, launched by Nakae Katsujirō (1872–1944) and his brothers from Kondō (Gokashō), who moved their family business to Korea shortly before it was annexed by Japan in 1910. Minakai's transformation into a department store—indeed, the empire's largest chain by 1940—took inspiration from the transpacific tour of North America by president Katsujirō in 1924. Katsujirō's discoveries of Western mass retail, as well as the grim realities of Asian immigrants chronicled in his diary, provided the key impetus for Minakai's rapid expansion and active cooperation with the colonial state in the years to follow. I also compare Minakai to a rival chain, Chōjiya, founded by another family of Ōmi ancestry, whose network of branches similarly extended into Manchuria and North China by the 1930s. By spreading a new culture of consumption centered on the metropole, the two stores joined other department stores in advancing the colonial goals of assimilation and accumulation. Yet their retail dominance derived not only from state patronage but, as I show, also from the methods and principles of long-distance commerce pursued for generations by their Ōmi forefathers.

Shifting the focus from Asia to North America, chapter 7 traces the movements of Shiga people across the Pacific to the Canadian West. Most immigrants hailed from the eastern shore of Lake Biwa—a historic birthplace of Ōmi merchants—and settled in Vancouver. Forming the largest Japanese community, Shiga natives supplied the majority of sawmill labor and dominated the retail districts of Japantown. And despite their parochialism, they led mercantile expansionism through recurrent waves of white exclusion in British Columbia, earning the moniker "the Jews of the Orient." Their immigrant diaspora was sustained by a chain migration of family relations and fellow villagers, their frequent Pacific crossings forging a "cultural corridor" through which money, goods, ideas and faith shuttled between two sides of the ocean. Using the case of Isoda and other "emigrant villages," I also analyze the transformative impact of immigration back home. From the gender imbalance and a flow of remittances to cosmopolitan lifestyles of returnees and their children, each phenomenon embodied and evoked the diasporic past of Ōmi shōnin.

To trace the lives and careers of Ōmi merchants and their offspring in the diverse realms of trade, industry, retail business, education, and emigration is to track the ever enlarging contours of a diaspora that—as Shiga-born natives came to render it—built on and extended their regional “tradition” of expeditionary commerce across multiple spaces and scales. Together, their visions and activities represented a resolutely local project of expansion that placed people of Ōmi descent at the heart of Japan’s transoceanic imaginary. What follows is an alternative story of empire as manifested in local practices, institutions, and discourses designed to boost the status of Shiga while serving national goals. Spawned by this dialectic, the Japanese transpacific diaspora was saturated with the regional interests as well as the global aspirations of the nation’s provincials.

PART ONE

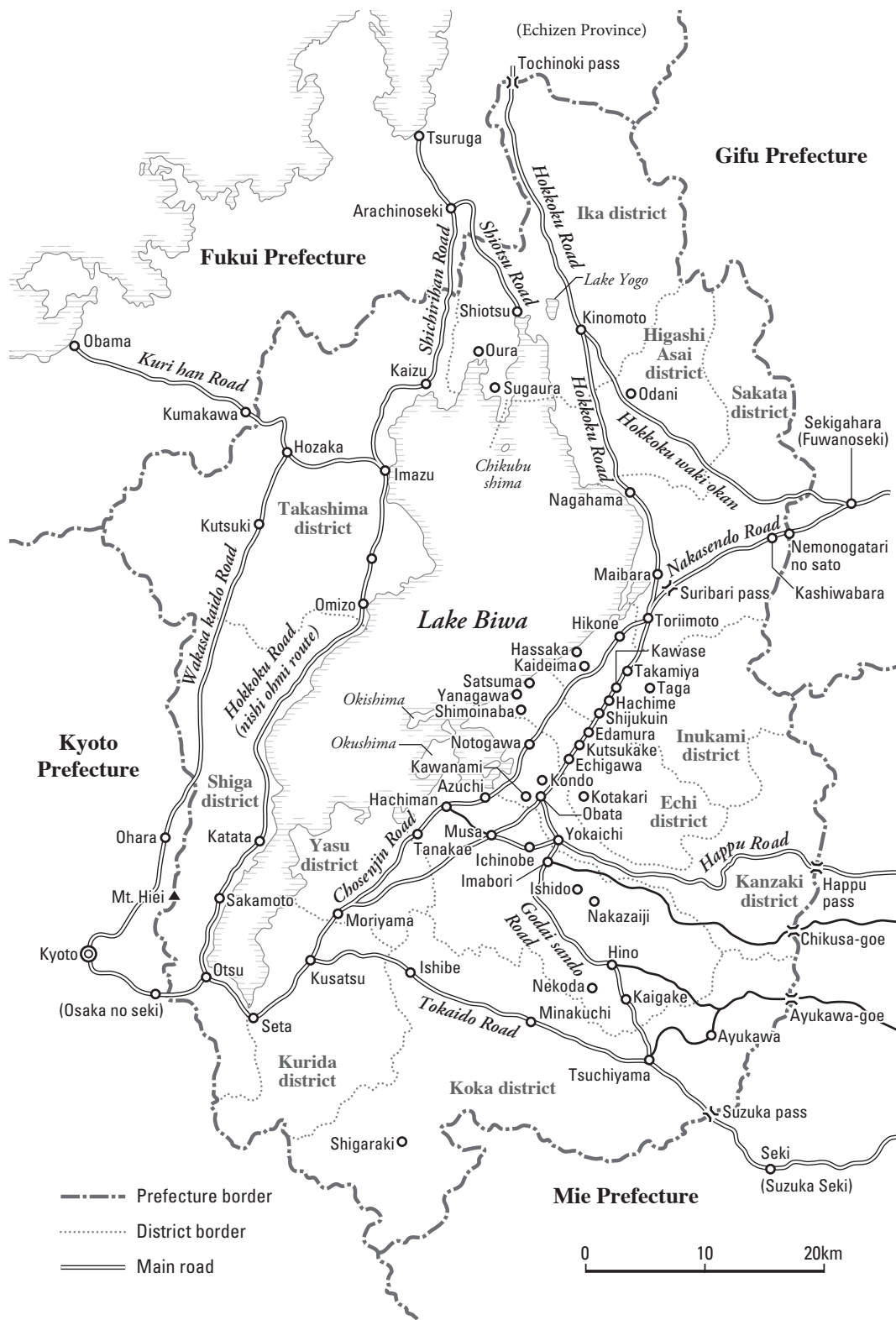
Ōmi Merchants in the Early
Modern Era

The Rise of Ōmi Shōnin as Diasporic Traders

Why did so many long-distance merchants hail from a single province of Japan? Since as early as the Meiji period, this historical puzzle has captured the imagination of generations of Japanese writers. Early commentators spilled much ink over the origins of Ōmi shōnin, tracing them to hard-pressed peasants,¹ former warriors,² even ancient immigrants from the Korean peninsula.³ Beyond speculating about their provenance, scholars have also pondered the regional particularities—geographical, political, and economic—that made Ōmi conducive to the rise of merchants in a predominantly agrarian society. The explanation lies in a fortuitous conjunction of these locally specific and shifting circumstances that constituted Ōmi as a place.

Among the well-documented factors, Ōmi's geographical placement and its network of transportation offers the first set of clues.⁴ Located roughly in the center of the archipelago and close to the imperial court in Kyoto, Ōmi since ancient times served as a crossroads between the west and the east. Overland routes to the west connected Ōmi to the economically advanced regions of Kyoto and Osaka, while the three major turnpikes—Tōkaidō, Nakasendō, and Hokkoku Kaidō—linked the province to eastern Japan and Hokuriku. The waterways of Lake Biwa also conjoined with three roads leading to the port cities of Obama and Tsuruga on the Japan Sea coast, from which ships sailed eastward to Ōu and Ezo (map 3).⁵

Its proximity to Kyoto—and the fact that Ōmi itself had briefly hosted Emperor Tenchi's palace in 667–672—also made Ōmi politically important as a space of transit for various groups: imperial envoys to and from the Chinese continent,⁶ provincial warlords who vied for control over the eastern approach to Kyoto, and the Korean embassies to the Tokugawa shogunate that used a designated passage known as the “Korean Highway.”⁷ According to a recent study by Sujung Kim, Ōmi was enmeshed in a larger network of continental Buddhist culture and trade (which



MAP 3. Shiga Prefecture (Ōmi Province), showing hometowns and trade routes of Ōmi merchants. *Note:* Gamō district is an unlabeled area encompassing Hachiman and Hino. *Source:* Suenaga 2019, 40. Reprinted with permission from Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture.

she calls the “East Asian Mediterranean”), forged by an influx of immigrants from Silla from the late fourth to the seventh centuries.⁸ All of these ensured that Ōmi remained a hub of commerce and national politics throughout Japanese history.

But geography alone does not suffice to explain the growth of market activity and mobility among peasants, which was tightly controlled by feudal authorities. The recorded activities of merchants in Ōmi date as early as the Kamakura period (1185–1333), when peasants in the Kinai (Kyoto-Osaka) region forayed into part-time commerce by forming *za* (guild-like trade associations). Having obtained monopoly rights to trade in return for paying taxes to local proprietary lords (especially Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei), members of *za* began peddling their wares throughout Ōmi and in the neighboring provinces. Their border-crossing activity, registered in occasional turf disputes over the use of mountain passes to Ise,⁹ increased after these medieval markets were abolished by domain warlords and gradually replaced by *rakuichi* (free markets) and *rakuza* (open guilds) in the sixteenth century. The creation of a castle town in Azuchi by Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), who sought to gain control of the fertile plains of Ōmi as a base from which to launch unification efforts, had the effect of further spurring commerce along the southeastern shore of Lake Biwa.¹⁰ Local authorities also encouraged the growth of merchants; Ōmi-born lord Gamō Ujisato (1556–1595) turned the mountain-girt town of Hino into a free market under his reign.

Contingency played an even bigger part in opening avenues to commerce in areas far beyond Ōmi. These opportunities came with the abolition of castles or fief transfers of daimyo, which occurred often during this period of political transition. When Gamō was transferred to Ise Province, for instance, many townsfolk of Hino followed their beloved lord to the castle town of Matsusaka, where he created a new ward to house them and their commercial activities.¹¹ A similar pattern of mobility was discerned in the townspeople of Hachiman, many of whom had relocated from Azuchi in the wake of Nobunaga’s fall. The removal of the lord of Hachiman, Toyotomi Hidetsugu (1568–1595) in 1590 (and of his successor within five years of his arrival) led to the demolition of Hachiman Castle, providing yet another occasion for the unmooring of local residents. They ventured out to Edo, some even as far as Ezo, in hopes of “reviving their declining commercial fortunes.”¹²

Scholars today have moved beyond a simple search for origins—an exercise in linear history of reading them back into the medieval past when “Ōmi shōnin” did not yet exist as a category. But they continue to agree on one central point: the peak of the activity of itinerant merchants from Ōmi lay squarely in the Tokugawa era, a period of peace and stability from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries that brought unprecedented prosperity to a land torn by a century of civil war. The entrepreneurial merchants of Tokugawa, some insist, were qualitatively different from their medieval antecedents, who traveled in armed caravans to nearby towns and cities and operated “conservatively” on the basis of monopoly

privileges.¹³ A pithy definition of Ōmi shōnin, offered by a prolific writer of their business history, Suenaga Kunitoshi, highlights their operation much further afield: “extra-provincial income-earning (*takoku kasegi*) merchants, who peddled and managed stores far outside of Ōmi Province while keeping their family home in Ōmi.”¹⁴ In short, what we now understand as the Ōmi shōnin—an itinerant peddler who daringly trekked across the archipelago carrying merchandise on a balance pole—was more a product of the Pax Tokugawa than a carryover from the medieval world of closed markets. If so, the question still remains: what enabled and motivated so many merchants from Ōmi to venture beyond their provincial borders during the two and a half centuries of Tokugawa rule? We must begin by understanding their growth as part of a countrywide phenomenon: expansion of commercial and industrial life across the early modern archipelago. Making sense of their cross-border activity and its unusual scale in an era of domain monopolies also requires broader points of reference. What follows is a preliminary attempt to place merchants of Ōmi in global and comparative context, which invites a fundamental reconceptualization of their mobility as diasporic traders.

ŌMI MERCHANTS IN THE TOKUGAWA ERA

Castle demolitions and fief transfers, which purportedly supplied dislocated residents the initial incentive for peddling, augured a broader realignment of the Japanese political economy. The establishment of the Tokugawa bakufu (shogunate) in 1603, and prolonged stability that ensued, promoted greater economic integration of the country, which was crisscrossed by expanding networks of transportation and infrastructures for commerce. In the eighteenth century, farmers across Japan were drawn into a well-developed system of interregional markets, with a good number of rural families engaged in part-time manufacturing for urban consumers. The rise of cottage industries was particularly prevalent in the Kinai region, economically the most advanced part of Japan. Located in the Kinai basin, Ōmi both benefited from and took part in the region’s overall growth, which accelerated after 1700.¹⁵ Local peasants had, from the medieval era, begun producing tea, tatami matting, ceramics, lacquerware, hemp cloth, and mosquito nets, and these became the central articles for peddling, along with the cotton goods of Kinai.¹⁶ By the Tokugawa period, most local farm families engaged in by-employments, with nonagricultural earnings constituting as much as 40 percent of household income.¹⁷ “Tens of thousands of people . . . made their living from weaving,” lifting the villages out of “wilderness,”¹⁸ as an Ōmi sericulturist, Narita Jūbē, observed in his *Yōsan kinuburui* (1813).

It was in this context that merchants from Ōmi set out for distant lands in large numbers, forging new networks of exchange and bringing more residents along the Nakasendō highway into export industries. It roughly coincided with the “prosperous age” under the Qianlong reign (1736–95), when commercialization

and population growth propelled the overland expansion of Shanxi and Huizhou merchants, along with the trade diasporas of Hokkien and Cantonese overseas.¹⁹ The mobility of Ōmi merchants, which spanned a wider geography than the average distance traveled by Tokugawa farmers (and is likened by some scholars to that of daimyo in the system of alternate attendance [*sankin kōtai*]),²⁰ owed to their proximity to the commercial heart of Kinai but also to Ōmi's unique political economy. As a critically important region adjoining Kyoto, Ōmi was strategically divided by the Tokugawa shogunate into a multitude of small fiefs and estates, owned by a remarkable total of 254 proprietors, a situation quite unseen in other provinces. The largest domain in the province was Hikone, held by the Ii family. But Ōmi also seated eight smaller domains in addition to a host of lands owned by extra-provincial daimyo, the Tokugawa shogunate and its liege vassals, the imperial family, and religious establishments such as Enryakuji. These landholdings were randomly scattered across the province; in the most extreme example, one village was divided among as many as eleven proprietors.²¹

In addition to this fragmented state of jurisdiction (a condition that extended to the Kinai at large), Ōmi represented a sort of anomaly in the system of domainal economies (*ryōiki keizai*) governed by the principle of self-sufficiency. The political pluralism under the Tokugawa regime encouraged many of the over 250 domains (*han*) to pursue “aggressively mercantilist policies,” which, paired with sharp restrictions on foreign trade, turned their fiefdoms into semiautarkic economies.²² In contrast to the case of Shimoina (studied by Kären Wigen), Tosa (studied by Luke Roberts), or Hirosaki, Yonezawa, and Tokushima (studied by Mark Ravina), none of the nine daimyo resident in Ōmi consistently adopted a policy of *han* autonomy or a mercantilist ideology of *kokueki* (prosperity of the country) centered on the domain.²³ From very early on, for instance, the Zeze domain allowed local farmers to engage in nonagricultural production outside Ōmi as a means of paying taxes.²⁴ Even the largest Hikone domain, which strictly regulated movements in and out of villages, began to relax its physiocratic policy in the mid-Tokugawa period, eventually permitting farmers to hawk local manufactures during the agricultural off-season.²⁵ In the case of one local estate belonging to the imperial family, villagers apparently had no trouble traveling or peddling beyond the province, assured of easy access to passes required to go through the barrier stations installed on the main roads leading to Edo.²⁶

This lack of domainal cohesion—a phenomenon that scholars have described as “non-domainality” (*hi-ryōgokusei*)²⁷ or “parcellized sovereignty”²⁸—rendered political boundaries porous enough for local inhabitants to cross frequently.²⁹ Ōmi peasants seized on the ensuing opportunities to expand their commercial horizons beyond the home province. The local domainal lords had no reason to prohibit such activities. They could maintain a good source of revenue through contributions the peasants made from their “foreign” commercial earnings, in addition to annual rice taxes.³⁰ Their high mobility further suggests that a “consciousness

of common membership in a “Japanese state” developed early among itinerant merchants from Ōmi.³¹ As they traversed the administrative boundaries of the early modern polity—alongside other Tokugawa commoners who circumvented a web of official restrictions to go on pilgrimage and recreational travel³²—Ōmi merchants experienced “a Nihon in motion.” They did so practically—as operators of retail and wholesale stores and as daily users of inns, post stations, and highways—and conceptually—as readers of maps, travel guides, and urban directories that listed these spaces of exchange, binding their users as a collectivity.³³ As a result, they developed a multiscale awareness of operating within a federation of localities, while sharpening their sense and claim of belonging to Ōmi. As in the experience of Huizhou sojourner-merchants in late Ming–Qing China, whose “sense of home-place identity” emerged through traversing a “centralized empire of distinct localities,” the two processes went hand in hand.³⁴

Not surprisingly, their cross-border mobility, which belied the Tokugawa principle of village residence,³⁵ was perceived as a threat to social order in some distant domains that merchants from Ōmi penetrated over time. In the Kaga domain, for instance, their activities were seen to interfere with its efforts to cultivate economic self-sufficiency. By the mid-nineteenth century, Ōmi peddlers “were lending money” to villagers on the Noto Peninsula to engage them in the production of hemp yarn for export. Indebted to these merchants, local producers were “forced to sell their thread at low prices.” To wean its economy away from outside capital, the Kaga domain endeavored to redirect the supply of locally produced yarn to the manufacturers of Noto *chijimi* (hemp cloth), a regional specialty.³⁶ The example shows the extent to which wholesaling merchants from Ōmi had extended control over the industrial economies beyond the Kinai region. Operating lines of credit out of the financial hub in Ōmi, their peddling circuits connected these spatially separated sites of production and helped to draw hinterlands into integrated networks of trade that encouraged commodity manufacture for extra-domainal markets.

The peddlers from Ōmi, like itinerant tradesmen in the Qing empire, encountered still greater hostility from Confucian and agrarian critics of commerce. They condemned consumption as extravagance, viewing the goods imported by merchants as emblems of moral decay. In a 1754 memorial submitted to the lord of Sendai, Ashi Tōzan (1696–1776) complained: “Recently merchants from other provinces, especially from Gōshū [Ōmi] have flocked” to the domain to entice local farmers with a range of merchandise, from “medicine and fancy goods, [to] cotton and silk cloth.” By selling on credit articles of daily use the peasants would have produced themselves and siphoning off their money, Ashi bewailed, peddlers from Ōmi endangered the domain’s self-sufficient economy and seeded poverty among its people.³⁷ His invective against merchant capital was echoed by another Confucian scholar, Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728), who objected to nearly everything, including cottage industry, that took labor away from agriculture.³⁸

Nonetheless, changing economic realities increasingly rendered agrarianist policies obsolete. Throughout the Tokugawa period, local authorities attempted at one time or another to limit or ban merchant and manufacturing activities in the rural areas or “to restrict permanent out-migration from the farming communities,” but all these efforts were in vain.³⁹ Lords of Ōmi and the abutting provinces of Kinai more often than not let the forces of the market take their course. Taking advantage of these circumstances, Ōmi peasants one after another left for peddling, alone or in small groups of two to three, carrying local products to distant markets, where they would eventually set up shop and diversify. The peak of their commerce corresponded with the rise of the credit and money economy from the mid-Tokugawa on, when large-scale networks of interregional trade grew to knit the country together. Ōmi natives operated at the center of this expanding world of commerce as retail merchants, moneylenders, and manufacturers, who epitomized the entrepreneurial skills and vigor associated with the Ōmi shōnin, as they came to be so collectively known by the Meiji era.

SUBCATEGORIES OF ŌMI SHŌNIN

Although the proportion of peasants who left Ōmi for long-distance commerce was significant and rising over time, not all who tried their luck at peddling returned in glory. Those who achieved success hailed largely from a handful of districts located east of Lake Biwa (map 3), where local farm families, compared to residents in the rest of Ōmi, relied more heavily on by-employments, the prime motor of rural industrialization.⁴⁰ Three main “diasporic trajectories”⁴¹ emerged to connect particular locales in eastern Ōmi to particular destinations away from home: those from Hachiman, Hino, and the broader “East Lake” (*kotō*) region.⁴²

The earliest to emerge were merchants from Hachiman, once a castle town under the lordship of Toyotomi Hidetsugu, which, after his downfall, evolved into a purely commercial city. Hachiman merchants sold mosquito nets,⁴³ straw matting, cloth, piece goods, and paper. They were the first to set up shop along the streets of Nihonbashi, a mercantile heart of the shogunal capital of Edo. One of these pioneers was Nishikawa Jingorō I (1549–1644). From his humble beginnings as a fishmonger in Echigo, Nishikawa opened his own shop in 1586, selling Ōmi specialties of hemp mosquito nets and tatami matting. Having peddled in the Noto region, he expanded his business to Edo. His successors further burnished the store’s reputation in Nihonbashi by cultivating a mass market among the townsfolk. In what was then a bold sales strategy, Jingorō II had the drab mosquito nets “dyed in light green” to appeal for its “coolness,” which was rewarded with “an explosive demand” in the summer. In such small innovations lay the opportunity for business expansion. More merchandise such as bows, fancy goods, and futon were added by the next generations of Jingorō, who laid the foundation for today’s Nishikawa Sangyō, a leading manufacturer of bedclothes.⁴⁴

Many natives of Ōmi apprenticed with these thriving merchant houses and later became big themselves. Mori Gorobē (?-1703) clerked at Ban Denbē's store before peddling tobacco on his own and eventually opening a dry goods store in Edo.⁴⁵ Mori represented the upward mobility of peddlers from Hachiman, which caught the attention of the popular writer Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693). These Hachiman natives attained their stature, explained Ihara, by steadily scaling up their trade and opening branches in multiple provinces to purvey Ōmi's famed hemp cloth, a popular gift to bakufu officials;⁴⁶ some also "supplied striped cloth every year" to retailers in Kyoto or sold tatami matting in Osaka.⁴⁷

By the Tempō era (1830–1844), a contemporary scholar, Okada Bun'en (Kei; 1780–1860), observed, Hachiman merchants came to possess "vast marketing networks that extended not only to Nagasaki and Satsuma in the west and Tsugaru in the north, but farther still to Matsumae, Hakodate, and Ezo." In all of these places, he noted, they typically "opened a shop or transported goods [of various origins] over land and sea, earning enormous profit beyond the reach of merchants from other provinces."⁴⁸ Easy access via Lake Biwa to the port towns of Obama and Tsuruga afforded Hachiman residents ample opportunities to sail along the Japan Sea coast to the northeastern region of Ōu. Many set up shop in the castle town of Morioka and then moved on to Ezo, where they came to trade with the Ainu (chapter 2).

Prior to the official restrictions on foreign trade in the 1630s, a few daring natives of Ōmi apparently crossed the ocean to reach even more faraway lands. Surviving trade documents suggest that merchants from Obata of the Kanzaki district had been involved in overseas trade with Annam (Vietnam). Since the Ashikaga period (ca. 1336–1573), some had also sailed from the port of Sakai to China and the South Pacific for trading purposes.⁴⁹ Among the most celebrated "overseas pioneers" who became part of local and national legend were from Hachiman.⁵⁰ Nishimura Tarōemon (1603–1651) joined other Japanese merchants in the officially sponsored "vermillion ship trade" with Vietnam.⁵¹ Okachi ("Shamuroya") Kanbē (1566–1649) allegedly mastered a special technique of dyeing in Siam and returned home to sell printed cotton cloth he christened "Siam dye."⁵² Although records of their activities remain spotty, these provincials may be counted among the early modern globetrotters: along with Hokkien migrants and the Spaniards directing the Manila galleon trade, Ōmi natives, too, coursed through the widening circuits of exchange across the Pacific and helped form Japan's earliest trading diaspora in Southeast Asia.⁵³

Trailing slightly behind Hachiman natives were merchants from Hino.⁵⁴ Having prospered as the castle town of Gamō Ujisato, Hino momentarily lost its vigor after Gamō was relocated to Aizu. But his transfer created new commercial contacts between Hino and the northeastern provinces, prompting local merchants to form a guild (*nakama*) in the late seventeenth century. Hino merchants handled a different set of local specialties: lacquerware, patent medicines, and tea, in addition to cloth and textile goods purchased in Kyoto. The epithet *Hino no senryōdana*⁵⁵

captured their distinctive strategy of setting up myriad small shops throughout the country. They are estimated to have ranged from 260 to 440, of which 170 survived into the Taishō era (1912–1926),⁵⁶ concentrating in Kantō and Kinai. In 1690, Hino merchants of all sizes coalesced to form the Hino ootōban nakama (Association of Hino Merchants on Duty) with the blessing of the Tokugawa. In recognition of their role in interregional trade, the shogun guaranteed as policy timely settlement of credit accounts across the diverse domains they conducted business. Members of the association also coordinated their activities along the Tōkaidō and Nakasendō highways by staying at designated inns, where they exchanged the latest news about prices and local markets, settled payments, and entrusted their cargo to fellow merchants from Ōmi.⁵⁷ These inns, which helped to sustain the diasporic trajectory from Hino to eastern and northern lands, illustrate how a subcommunity of Ōmi merchants employed ties of native place to overcome the perils of long-distance trading voyages. As seen also among overland and maritime Chinese migrants in the Qing empire, native place was construed flexibly and mobilized on a variety of scales, from a hamlet to the whole province, in organizing commerce away from home.⁵⁸

Hino merchants were equally known for their contribution to large-scale brewing and the production of lacquerware. Merchants from Hino and elsewhere in Ōmi launched and operated most of the sake breweries in Kantō. The famed lacquerwares of Aizu, Shinshū Iida, and Nagoya, too, are said to owe their origins to Hino merchants. Indeed, so many of their descendants lived to carry on their commerce that, one 1922 gazetteer quipped, “Aizu may as well be called a colony of Hino shōnin.”⁵⁹ Medicine was another area of specialty that took them far and wide beyond the home province. The most enterprising was Shōno Genzō (1659–1733), who, after peddling to Echigo for some time, ventured into manufacturing. With money borrowed from relatives, Shōno in his mid-twenties opened a shop to sell a dozen medicines of his own concoction. Especially popular was Kannōgan. As its reputation grew, the medicine was sold on commission through a network of stores (*tokuyakuten*) that by 1856 stretched from Ōu province to Shikoku, a retail strategy of franchising that anticipated modern-day pharmaceuticals.⁶⁰ Kannōgan spread the name of Hino across the country—and around the Japanese transpacific diaspora in the twentieth century⁶¹—until it rivaled Hangontan sold by the famed medicine peddlers from Toyama.⁶²

But none of the Hino merchants rivaled the scale and scope of business achieved by Nakai Genzaemon I (1716–1805). Having peddled medicine since nineteen to recover his family’s diminished fortune, Nakai opened a pawn shop in Shimotsuke and then moved to Sendai, where he began trading in safflower and raw silk. He steadily expanded his wholesale business, building branches in neighboring cities and stretching his network westward to Osaka, Chūgoku, and Kyūshū. As became customary for Ōmi storeowners, Nakai placed a manager at each store, and he himself returned to Ōmi to direct all branches from the residence of the stem

family. By the time of his retirement in 1794, Nakai operated some fourteen stores through which commodities of various locales circulated between Tōhoku and the Kyoto-Osaka region, while managing a brewing business on the side.⁶³

Merchants from Hachiman and Hino were followed by those who hailed from the eastern shores of Lake Biwa: Gokashō and Noto River in the Kanzaki district, and the region along Echi River in the Echi district. Collectively known as East Lake (*kotō*) merchants or Gokashō merchants, they burst onto the commercial scene in the late Tokugawa period, surpassing their Hachiman and Hino counterparts in number after the Meiji Restoration. As late developers, East Lake merchants carved out a niche for themselves by avoiding the trading networks of established merchant houses; they operated on side streets rather than main roads, selling mass consumer goods on consignment to merchants in rural hamlets.⁶⁴ Plying their trade from Matsumae in the north to Shikoku and Kyūshū in the south, they supplied hemp cloth and other local manufactures of Ōmi in exchange for silk, hemp, and safflower from Kantō, Shinano, and Ōu.⁶⁵

One of the most esteemed merchants was Matsui Kyūzaemon III (Yūken) (1770–1855) of Kanzaki. Matsui from a young age engaged in peddling raw silk and textile goods, as expected of a second son of a merchant family. After years of toil, sustained only by religious devotion that became part of local lore, he set up shop in Edo and Kyoto, soon opening branches in Fukushima and Osaka.⁶⁶ Tonomura Yozaemon V (1682–1765) was born into a wealthy peasant family, but he too chose peddling as a career, selling hemp cloth. After initial struggles, Tonomura expanded his business from Osaka to Edo, using horses and couriers to transport a cargo of merchandise for his store. This move, taken before many in the same trade to overcome distance, kickstarted its ascent into a leading cloth wholesaler, Tonoyo.⁶⁷

Echi River produced its own cast of entrepreneurs. Among the most ambitious was Kobayashi Ginemon II (1800–1873), who peddled straw hats and cloth from the age of fifteen. Around 1828, Kobayashi began manufacturing dyes by importing safflower from Tōhoku; three years later, he opened a textile wholesaler called Chōjiya (later Chōgin) in Edo. The enterprising Kobayashi continued to diversify his business by opening money exchanges in Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto. At the same time, he cultivated ties of patronage with the lord of Hikone, Ii Naosuke (1815–1860), who designated his store as an overseer of the domainal fisc. For his close relations with Ii (who would become the great elder of the shogunate), his store would endure a financial setback during the final chaotic years of Tokugawa rule. But Chōgin managed to come through and maintained its status as a powerful merchant house long beyond the restoration.⁶⁸

Merchants from regions in Echi abutting the lake (specifically the villages of Satsuma and Yanagawa) also joined Hachiman merchants in crossing over to the northern island of Ezo or Hokkaido.⁶⁹ More is discussed in the next chapter, but these merchants, in the spirit of translocal unity, formed a trade association to

facilitate the Matsumae domain's trade with Ainu, serving as its shipping and marketing agents. The most successful ones became managers of fisheries that drove the Matsumae export economy. They built large vessels to transport their marine products to the Japan Sea ports and ferry back to Ezo a variety of mainland goods that reached deep into the Ainu communities.

The last to emerge were merchants from the districts of Inukami and Sakata. Many of them, like the owner of Chōgin, survived the turbulent years of restoration to thrive in the modern era of open trade. Merchants from Inukami belonged to the lineage of East Lake merchants who mainly traded in dry goods and Ōmi hemp cloth. One of them was Itō Chūbē I (1842–1903), whose family in Toyosato Village had sold fabrics for generations. After peddling hemp cloth with his elder brother in Kyūshū, in 1872 Chūbē I opened a store of his own in the commercial town of Senba in Osaka—the precursor to a trading firm, Itōchū (chapter 5). By the time Chūbē arrived in Senba, apparently, merchants from Ōmi had all but colonized the commercial town, sending its original inhabitants into steep decline after the restoration.⁷⁰ Those from Sakata specialized in the famed crêpe (*chirimen*) of Nagahama and fertilizers, as did Ōmura Hikotarō (1636–1689). Having worked as a lumber dealer in Kyoto, Ōmura switched his career to dry goods and moved in his late twenties to Edo, opening a modest wholesale store, Shirokiya, on the street of Nihonbashi. As a storeowner, Ōmura periodically reinvested the capital, once it had accumulated to a certain level, into enhancing the range and quality of merchandise, a strategy continued by his successors to transform Shirokiya into one of Edo's finest drapers within two generations.⁷¹

METHODS OF CROSS-BORDER TRADE

Merchants from Hachiman, Hino, and the East Lake districts in essence represented subcategories of Ōmi shōnin, reared on the rich and variegated social geography surrounding Lake Biwa. Although they hailed from different locales at different times, each developing their own traits and areas of specialization, they all clustered on the eastern shore. Home of many itinerant merchants, the eastern littoral of Ōmi constituted a kind of “ecological frontier,” a dividing line between mobile and sedentary communities shaped by their varied resource endowments.⁷² From a long-term perspective of maritime East Asia, it was an integral part of the “East Asian Mediterranean” (where Japan's largest lake, Biwa-ko, “functioned as an inland sea,” according to one scholar), comprised by littoral and coastal communities that produced many border-crossing traders and possessed their own cultures of migration.⁷³ Although this metaphor cannot be stretched too far in the Tokugawa era of limited foreign contact, placing Ōmi merchants in broader context helps us ponder their distinctive business culture without exaggerating their uniqueness. When juxtaposing their biographies sketched out above, their career arcs converge on a set of practices, customs, and ethics that made them a

sui generis community of long-distance merchants. Yet their unusually far-flung operation, we learn, was also underpinned by business methods and maxims that were characteristic of merchants not only in Tokugawa Japan but in the early modern world of cross-border exchange at large.⁷⁴

Regardless of their regional origins, merchants of Ōmi who left their vital traces in local memory invariably began as humble peddlers. If merchants elsewhere also began this way, Ōmi natives never ceased peddling even after setting up shop, turning each commercial destination into a new point of departure. Peddling was at once a mode of business expansion and a means of conducting market research, filling the manifold functions of a modern-day business trip.⁷⁵ While creating commercial networks across distance, they gathered critical information on foot by observing firsthand what was produced and consumed in various localities to gain a comprehensive and tangible sense of market supply and demand.⁷⁶

The defining feature of Ōmi shōnin as itinerant peddlers was their expansive geographical operation, which scholars have variously described as “*kōiki shikōsei*” (wide-area orientation),⁷⁷ “cosmopolite-ness,”⁷⁸ and “*hi-ryōdosei*” (non-territoriality).⁷⁹ This was the corollary of Ōmi’s non-domainality noted earlier, where sovereignty and territoriality could not be readily mapped onto the lives of local inhabitants, especially among sojourning merchants. In a phenomenon also seen throughout the global history of capital, the expanding scales on which commerce spread over time transcended the administrative “matrices of state territoriality”⁸⁰ that shaped the mercantilist policies of most domains. I call the modus operandi of Ōmi merchants “diasporic” to underscore their spatial dispersion across the Japanese archipelago and beyond. As long-distance entrepreneurs, they embodied “the spatial peculiarity of capital,” mobility that obeyed its own logic in traversing the fragmented Tokugawa polity. Viewed through a comparative lens, they appear less anomalous and more typical of diasporic traders, who were engaged in varying degrees of cross-cultural exchange around the early modern world.⁸¹ Their commercial activity, which stretched across the Tokugawa realm, involved crossing clearly delineated political boundaries, forbidding physical barriers on land and sea, and widely divergent local customs and mutually unintelligible dialects in a federation of largely autonomous fiefdoms where traveling merchants—or anyone from outside the village or province—were treated as strangers.

The multiscalar activities of Ōmi merchants, in turn, shaped their distinct identity as “local cosmopolitans,” to borrow from Enseng Ho’s study of Hadrami *sayyids* in the Indian Ocean: lives and sense of belonging defined as much by their integration into host societies as their translocal mobility.⁸² Such “translocality” also shaped lineage and other practices of “rooted mobility” among Huizhou merchants, who forged and traversed new social spaces between the home and host places across late imperial China.⁸³ Some adventurous souls had already exhibited this character through their involvement in maritime trade before the mid-seventeenth century. But it was ironically under the Tokugawa regime of

limited foreign trade that merchants of Ōmi manifested their diasporic orientation fully, when they mediated the growth of a market economy and cottage industries, processes driven almost entirely by domestic demand before the 1860s.

Once cultivating a clientele in a region, Ōmi merchants typically established a small store (*demise*) there and moved on to the next peddling destination, where they might build a branch (*edamise*). Even then, they continued peddling in search of new markets. A precept followed by one merchant family urged its members to “establish branches in every place where people live and eat within a radius of three leagues.”⁸⁴ Successful merchants expanded their business by establishing a web of *demise* and *edamise*, run by kith and kin, which ramified like a family tree across provincial borders.⁸⁵ Ōmi people peddled away from home, initially during off-seasons in farming but increasingly (as long-distance commerce was officially permitted and even promoted) throughout the calendar year.

But while their locus of business activity lay outside Ōmi, they remained rooted in the home province—what Uemura Mashiro has termed *zaichisei*. Not only did they establish their stem family (*honke*) and keep their wives and children in Ōmi, but they also remained enmeshed within kinship and native-place ties through customs of labor recruitment and apprenticeship. After launching several stores, Ōmi merchants typically returned home, entrusting their daily operation to managers (*shihainin*), who were family relations or fellow Ōmi natives. Though they settled back in Ōmi, storeowners made a tour of branches regularly to inspect their performance and local market conditions. In the case of the Nakai Genzaemon family, whose business network spanned multiple provinces, the family head spent a good couple of months, from spring to autumn, inspecting remote branches located in Kantō and Tōhoku.⁸⁶

In short, the diasporic identity of Ōmi merchants as local cosmopolitans was shaped by a complex relationship between *space* (i.e., sphere of their business activity, driven by the logic of continual and borderless expansion) and *place* (i.e., a fixed ancestral home in Ōmi that doubled as the business headquarters). Their place of origin and space of work remained geographically separated but genealogically intertwined, not unlike the case of foreign merchants or seasonal migrants, their cosmopolitanism deriving from their provincialism.⁸⁷ Family strategies adopted by Chinese migrant communities, from the inland province of Huizhou to the southeastern coasts of Fujian and Guangdong, demonstrated this logic, with multiplex ties of consanguinity, native place, and dialect binding the spatially dispersed loci of commerce and seasonal labor well into the age of mass migration.⁸⁸ So, too, the spatial workings of Ōmi commerce resembled the “‘multinodal’ but monocentric network” of Armenian merchants from New Julfa. These “transimperial cosmopolitans,” according to Sebouh Aslanian, operated across the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean but traded within even tighter networks of trust based almost exclusively on native-place ties to New Julfa. For the Armenian merchants, as for Ōmi shōnin as explained later in this section, long-distance

trading required not just high mobility but a fixed center at home as well as sedentary nodes outside, “anchor points” for the circulation of capital, personnel, and information.⁸⁹ It was also through this mechanism that itinerant peddlers simultaneously developed a grasp of the larger geo-body of Tokugawa and forged a sense of belonging to Ōmi: multiple and overlapping loyalties that characterized their disposition as expansive and parochial in equal measure as local cosmopolitans.

As a method of accumulating capital, Ōmi merchants employed a distinctive sales strategy known as *mochikudari akinai*, efficient wholesale-style peddling of local products during their travel to and from commercial destinations. During their early phase of peddling, most merchants trekked to the provinces in Kantō and Tōhoku, hawking manufactures of Ōmi and finished goods from the Kyoto-Osaka region. For their return journey, they purchased raw materials and local specialties of these eastern and northeastern provinces (collectively called *noboseni* [goods going up]), to be sold en route to and back in Ōmi and its vicinity. *Mochikudari akinai* was not a one-time business. As Suenaga Kunitoshi explains, “It required traveling every year to a province or region they had laid their eyes on, and cultivating a clientele (among local merchants) where they had no prior face-to-face contact.”⁹⁰ For Ōmi merchants who traded with strangers rather than fellow villagers, uppermost in their minds was gaining trust and acceptance among the locals—a task made all the more critical by the use of Ōmi natives in running their distant branches.

Enterprising merchants, who set up shop in multiple key places of operation, carried out *mochikudari akinai* on a greater scale—a commercial method known as *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi*, literally “rotating products of the provinces.” Utilizing the distribution and information networks between branches, the strategy of *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi* coordinated supply and demand across long distance and duration, allowing merchants to monitor and take advantage of the price differentials between regions.⁹¹ Hachiman merchants had by the early nineteenth century perfected this technique of conducting trade on both legs of their journey on a wide geographical scale. For instance, the scholar-official Okada Bun'en explained that they “bring over local specialties of Kyoto, Osaka, and the entire provinces of the west, not to mention products of Ōmi, to the eastern provinces for sale. On their return journey they purchase *hakama* fabric of Sendai, striped cotton textiles of Shimotsuke, safflower of Dewa, trendy textile goods of Jōshū [Kōzuke] and Kiryū, and kelp and herring roe of Ezo, (all of which) to sell off in Jōshū and the western provinces.”⁹²

Before the age of wheels and telegraph, commercial exchange in Japan and elsewhere was embedded in what Jonathan Levy calls the “space-time of the physical economy—the temporal rhythms and geographical settings of production, distribution, and consumption.”⁹³ The production of crops and commodities—from hemp in Ōmi to herring in Hokkaido—grown, harvested, and sold at different times and in different provinces, generated space-time discontinuities in

production and marketing,⁹⁴ which remained unsynchronized well into the Meiji period. They were compounded by a distinct configuration of the Tokugawa political economy, where material goods were traded across segmented spaces with varying regulations on cross-border exchange set by individual domains. For Ōmi merchants as long-range distributors, opportunities for profit accrued from these space-time disunities that existed between seller and buyer in the parcellized and mountainous terrain of Japan. The physical and political obstacles to communication and transportation, for instance, allowed merchants, with their exclusive knowledge of markets in other provinces, to “set prices of goods at will” capitalizing on the ignorance of consumers. Likely engaged in this practice of monopolistic pricing, one Ōmi merchant, Kawashima Matabē, told his peddling companion while crossing Usui Pass, “If there were five or six tall mountains like this one, the profit would be all the more,” thinking it “most regrettable that there was only one.”⁹⁵ Far from free-market advocates, they were cousins of the long-distance merchants in “Old-Regime capitalism” described by Fernand Braudel, who strove “to keep supply and demand so effectively separated that the terms of trade were entirely dictated by [themselves].”⁹⁶

In forging new frontiers for commercial exchange, Ōmi shōnin also consigned their cargos, shipped in bulk, to local merchants for sale and sought their aid in procuring regional commodities in turn. The strategy of *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi* grew out of a translocal network of these business partners, who were non-Ōmi people.⁹⁷ The importance of trust and social capital among medieval merchants has long been noted. But shared lineage by no means guaranteed the success of a trading diaspora, as Francesca Trivellato has demonstrated through the case of Sephardic merchants. Their cross-cultural trade was facilitated, but not ensured, by intragroup trust; cooperative credit relations with a broad array of non-Jewish agents, to whom key business decisions were entrusted, proved more reliable.⁹⁸ Although Ōmi merchants relied more heavily on kin and native-place ties, the creation of trust with strangers was equally critical to their success and survival as “outsiders” in their business loci. As their network of stores and the range of merchandise grew, some big merchants managed provincial branches by pooling capital from multiple investors (from local merchants as well as the home village), a prototype of the joint-stock venture called *norai akinai*. It was a strategy to supplement one’s limited capital as much as to disperse risks to offset uncertainties that arose from diversifying business and trading across distance.⁹⁹ Through this partnership, the merchants also shared management assets, among them trust, customers, specialties, and domestic servants (*hōkōnin*) dispatched to oversee branches. This form of business cooperation was prevalent among merchants from Hino.¹⁰⁰

As the well-studied case of the Nakai Genzaemon family shows, some of these merchants adopted a sophisticated system of double-entry bookkeeping in running their business. Their method of reporting profit and loss—entering

each transaction as a debit in one account and a credit in another on a balance sheet—resembled but developed entirely independently from the European counterpart.¹⁰¹ One of Nakai's joint ventures—to export dry goods of Kansai to the Ōu region and import raw silk, in turn, for local textile manufacturers in Kansai¹⁰²—demonstrated another progressive aspect of Ōmi commerce. It stipulated not simply that dividends be allocated according to the amount of capital invested in the partnership but that additional contributions (*tsuikakin*) be assessed likewise in the case of business loss. Equivalent to the “unlimited liability of a modern corporation” that holds all partners liable for debts, this obligation made Nakai's venture also comparable in operation to the East India Company, which assessed such mandatory contributions on a pro rata basis.¹⁰³

Merchants from Ōmi occasionally found themselves competing with one another over provincial markets, as evinced by not a few instances of conflict between Hino and Hachiman natives or rivalries between individual stores.¹⁰⁴ Apart from cultivating trust with the host community, generating networks of trust and solidarity among themselves involved effort and delicate negotiation of their boundaries. It was a matter of equal or greater concern to Julfan Armenians, who used only fellow Julfans as trading agents. In the northern borderland of the Qing empire, sojourner merchants of Shanxi relied similarly on native-place ties, transferring the tradition of temple-centered self-governance (*she*) from their villages to foster business cooperation and collectively cope with “the precarity of frontier life.”¹⁰⁵ As businesses expanded, so did the daily costs of running branches. To keep overhead low, Ōmi merchants often consigned their goods to fellow peddlers from home, rather than trading on their premises. To minimize internecine competition, too, they formed mutual trade associations (known as *kumiai* and *kō*)¹⁰⁶ in provincial centers of their operation, which in some cases became joint ventures.

Ōmi merchants, once established, proffered advice as well as capital to novices and young villagers seeking to start a business of their own. Even when they defaulted on loans, the merchant lenders customarily accepted a rewritten “promise to repay when one's business improved [at an indefinite time] in the future.”¹⁰⁷ In another gesture of their camaraderie, as noted earlier, merchants from Hino utilized a network of inns designated for overnight guests from the same locality.¹⁰⁸ These inns and other diasporic institutions like mutual trade associations constituted a vital part of Ōmi information networks, along with flows of business correspondence and family letters that similarly sustained the far-flung communities of Sephardic Jews, Armenians, and Hokkien Chinese and their “social and cultural integrity” across borders.¹⁰⁹

Many Ōmi merchants diversified their careers over time by adding different businesses to their portfolio. Big merchants, once attaining a measure of wealth, typically used that reserve of capital to engage in moneylending, a strategy commonly adopted by diasporic traders around the world. They opened pawnshops and money exchanges in the cities of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto, catering to a diverse

clientele ranging from daimyo down to impoverished samurai and peasants.¹¹⁰ The *Seji kenmonroku* (A Record of Worldly Affairs Seen and Heard; 1816), an anonymous commentary on cultural life in Edo, noted the ubiquity of money exchangers from Ōmi. Along with their rivals from Ise, they ran “many varieties of shops named ‘Ōmiya,’ reported the author, “from pawnbrokers and money exchangers to sake dealers.” “Their head stores and branches, [managed by] family members, continue to prosper,” while their owners resided back home in Ōmi, “year after year gathering in enormous profit from Edo without expending much effort.”¹¹¹

If this multinodal-cum-monocentric network of Ōmi stores resembled the operation of Julfan traders and their Multani Indian counterparts,¹¹² the internal organization of their home headquarters had much in common with fellow “lineage businesses” in the greater Kyoto area.¹¹³ Ōmi merchant households followed a variation of the system of labor hierarchy and apprenticeship shared broadly by their western neighbors. Although harnessing kinship ties was customary in early modern commerce, Ōmi merchants took particular pains to hire apprentices from their home village or its vicinity. The closer to the stem family, the more favored and trusted they were to manage distant branches in the future. The apprentices were nurtured and trained through a system locally known as *zaisho nobori* (returning home). In what amounted to a lifelong apprenticeship, male store clerks typically began as *decchi* in their early teens and advanced through the ranks of *tedai* and *bantō*. After working for about twenty years, they eventually became a manager and set up a branch family in the early to mid-thirties, when they were permitted to marry.¹¹⁴ Stationed in faraway branches, apprentices rarely saw their families in Ōmi. Depending on their rank, they were allowed to return to Ōmi once every five to seven years for a period of about fifty days (including the days of travel).¹¹⁵ During this period of homecoming, each employee’s performance was evaluated by the store. Ideally, they would resume work and get promoted as a result of a review, but in the case of poor performance, they were retrained by the stem family in Ōmi or simply discharged. Dropout rates were high. In the Tonomura Uhē family, for instance, more than half the 179 apprentices hired between 1856 and 1907 left the store within five years of employment for a variety of reasons: death, illness, “misconduct,” dismissal, and “running away.”¹¹⁶ In the all-male shop environment, the temptation was also great for apprentices to “occasionally slip out of the house at night to play (with geisha) at tea houses”¹¹⁷; the discovery of such misdeeds could send them back home.¹¹⁸ Thus, while allowing employees to reunite with their families, the system of *zaisho nobori* functioned more critically as a mechanism for identifying superior prospects and weeding out the incompetent. But herein lay the irony built into this system of “perpetual dependency” on the employer: the more successfully an apprentice performed, the more delayed was his manhood—that is, the masculine imperative to have a family and a store of his own.¹¹⁹

Another practice common to the greater Kyoto area was to place emphasis on merit rather than heredity (or primogeniture) in selecting the head of the family

business. In an Ōmi merchant household, everyone from lowly store clerks to managers was held to high standards of conduct. Established houses followed a strict policy of replacing an errant master with another relative or an elder employee. This practice of “forced retirement” was codified and sanctioned by their family creeds, which defined maintaining the family fortune as a moral duty to their ancestors.¹²⁰ Even the omnipotent head of a household was not spared the blame for business failure, especially when understood as the moral failings of individual character (such as dissipation and neglect), rather than the inevitable corollary of risk taking.¹²¹ Although rare, such forced dismissals do appear in some family records. The eighth head of the Nishikawa Jingorō family was compelled to retire in 1812, having squandered the store’s reserve money and neglected his managerial duties. Pressured by their own clerks and apprentices, a few heads of other Ōmi merchant houses were discharged on the grounds of fecklessness.¹²²

This style of business, which gave every employee a stake in management, also made the role of women indispensable to merchant households in Ōmi and its vicinity. Whether housemasters or servants, Ōmi merchants could not have conducted their duties were it not for the help of their wife, who took care of the home in her husband’s recurrent absences—for such a long stretch of time, indeed, that wives of Hino merchants sojourning in eastern Japan were dubbed “Kantō widows” (*goke*). In addition to raising children, wives of employees had to manage a family budget and handle all interactions with the stem family. As for wives of storeowners who routinely conducted a tour of stores and branches for several months to half a year,¹²³ their responsibilities were boundless. Apart from managing her own family, the wife of an established merchant also managed daily aspects of business, such as shipping food and supplies to distant branches and handling their money and merchandise stock stored at a warehouse back home. She was solely responsible for taking care of new apprentices, whom she helped to hire; she not only sewed their kimono, robes, and aprons but also taught these children practical skills (reading, writing, arithmetic) and ethics. While engaging them in various household chores, the wife evaluated the abilities of individual apprentices before assigning them to specific branches, which involved making managerial decisions about who should serve which positions and where. At times she took charge of “reforming” employees who had fared poorly by drilling them in the ways of commerce and family tradition, in the hope of returning them to work. In the event of the death of the master, the wife’s tasks further multiplied, as she had to ensure the survival of the family business by anointing and nurturing a successor.¹²⁴ In a spatial division of gendered labor, one that also underpinned “split families” of Chinese migrants, Ōmi women assumed a critical role in managing business as well as nurturing human capital required for diasporic commerce.¹²⁵

To prepare for these duties, well-to-do families in Ōmi began sending daughters of marriageable age to apprentice with an established merchant household. During this period of service (known as *shiofumi*), a young woman waited on the

master and his wife as “a head female servant” and learned manners and skills essential for becoming the wife of an Ōmi merchant. These skills involved hosting visitors and long-term guests, including men of letters like masters of tea and flower arrangement.¹²⁶ The importance of cultivating sociability was codified by some family creeds. The Fujii family code (1902), which drew on “customs inherited from the family ancestors,” provided detailed instructions for wives and especially mothers on educating children and serving as a “moral exemplar.” Designed to “nurture future business partners,” they encouraged mothers to “go outdoors and travel” with their children as an opportunity to teach them new knowledge.¹²⁷

If Ōmi merchants were agents of the emerging market economy governed by the logic of competition, so were they products of political patronage. In an era of domain monopolies, the success of merchant houses was necessarily dependent on the good will of local lords, who granted them permission to trade in the first place. Even more so were itinerant peddlers, who expanded their business turf by plying in distant communities without preexisting ties or initial feudal protection.¹²⁸ Local domain authorities commonly lent support to Ōmi merchants by granting them trading privileges and access to markets in return for license fees, levies, and various forms of financial contribution. Given their chronically stretched coffers, many daimyo turned to highly capitalized merchants from Ōmi as a source of credit to keep up their consumption or undertake public works projects. And in many cases, the merchants obliged by serving as moneylenders and financiers to the provincial lord. The result was a relationship of interdependence, reflective of the Tokugawa realities of the merchant and samurai classes at large, in which the former enjoyed advantageous connections to the latter, while generally refraining from politics and respecting the feudal status quo.¹²⁹ This appears to have been part of a broader pattern discerned among early modern diasporic traders, according to Philip D. Curtin—though their distance from politics should not be equated with political indifference.¹³⁰ The way some merchants of Ōmi were woven into the feudal structure of power resembled the “symbiotic relationship” Shanxi and Huizhou merchants formed with the late imperial state. Salt merchants of Huizhou maintained their dominant status in the government monopoly by making extra-tax “donations” to the Qing’s privy purse. More “expansionist” were Shanxi merchants, who played a central role in frontier trade and governance on the Mongolian steppe. They also developed an empire-wide network of remittance banking that from the mid-nineteenth century began to serve local gentry and officials.¹³¹

For Ōmi merchants, whose family creeds often explicitly admonished against meddling in politics, connections to political power could work both ways. On the one hand, they brought commercial privileges and official patronage, as enjoyed by Kobayashi Ginemon in his close ties with the Hikone domain. On the other hand, they could impose an onerous burden on the merchants, many of whom ended up having to write off bad debts of their increasingly impoverished samurai

clientele. A mutually binding relationship with the regional lord could even lead to the family's ruin, as happened to Nakai Genzaemon, a pawnshop owner from Hino. The Nakai family was ensnared in credit relations with the Sendai domain, whose authorities abused their demand for *onkokuon* (a return of one's debt of gratitude to the country) to have their debts revoked. As the domain's financial situation grew worse, Nakai was compelled to annul his request for repayment in exchange for the right to bear a surname and a sword. Unable to extricate itself from the domainal treasury and its deepening trouble, Nakai's store in Sendai eventually went bankrupt.¹³²

MAXIMS OF ŌMI SHŌNIN

In a practice borrowed from the samurai class, Ōmi merchant households set down codes of business practice for all members to follow in family creeds (*kakun*), accompanied by a more detailed set of store regulations (*tensoku*).¹³³ To historians of Ōmi shōnin, these are among the trickiest documents to read: they are rules of conduct, not records of their actual deeds. Biographies left by their families offer us anecdotes and fragments of lived experience, but prone to adulation, they seldom contain evidence of profiteering members or wayward sons. Keeping these limitations in mind but without entirely discounting the elocutionary force of these in-house documents, I will attempt to unpack a set of maxims that merchants from Ōmi were *expected* to observe in trading across distance.

Tokugawa writers and guidebooks advised travelers to other provinces to be mindful of being in unfamiliar territory and respectful of “local language and customs.”¹³⁴ So did Ōmi merchants, reminding their posterity to beware of their station as outsiders during their sojourn. This mindset as “foreigners”¹³⁵ engaged in cross-cultural trade can be traced to the family creed of a hemp merchant from Kanzaki, Nakamura Jihē II (1684–1757). One article reads: “When peddling in a foreign province, think of serving and bringing joy to all people in the province, instead of thinking only of your own affairs or coveting high profit” and “maintain faith in the gods [*kami*] and Buddha at all times.”¹³⁶ In these words left to his adopted heir in 1754, Nakamura stressed the larger duty of Ōmi peddlers as “servants of the people,” one that required deepening religious belief and checking personal greed. “Commerce is the work of Bodhisattva,” intoned Itō Chūbē I, another celebrated pious merchant from Ōmi. He expounded on the spirit of *kyōson kyōei* (coexistence, co-prosperity), reportedly preaching to his employees daily that “the value of commerce was to benefit both the seller and the buyer, and to fill the needs of society in accordance with the wishes of Buddha.”¹³⁷

The words of Nakamura and Itō capture the central ethos of Ōmi merchants, which is often summarized in terms of *sanpō yoshi*: “three-way satisfaction for the seller, the buyer, and the community.” Coined by a postwar scholar Ogura Eiichirō, *sanpō yoshi* means that business should not only benefit the parties involved in a transaction but also promote the overall welfare of society. The concept

underscores the premium Ōmi shōnin as long-distance traders placed on service to the broader public beyond the temporal authorities. In accord with the Shin-Buddhist doctrine of *jiri-rita* (profiting both self and others),¹³⁸ they were expected to treat their business as a public good rather than a profit-making enterprise: to “deliver merchandise to places with a shortage.”¹³⁹

Paired with the spirit of service was the principle of *hakuri tabai* (low profit, large return) that guided Ōmi merchants who dealt in mass consumer goods. One clause in the house code of Nishikawa Jingorō, dated 1807, stressed the policy of “selling many at low margin” and “at fixed prices instead of haggling”; it admonished against hiking prices even in times of shortage to avoid doing anything harmful to society.¹⁴⁰ A book of “directions” compiled in 1856 by the Tonomura Yozaemon family¹⁴¹ summed up “the ultimate essence of business” as “selling at low prices to the point of regretting.”¹⁴² Though altruistic in rhetoric, *hakuri tabai* was another savvy strategy adopted by Ōmi merchants to ensure their success in the long run. It was in this vein, one suspects, that Tsukamoto Sadaemon II (1826–1905), a Gokashō merchant from Kanzaki, reversed his sales policy from “high profit, small volume” to “low profit, large volume” after inheriting his family business in 1851.¹⁴³

Prominent merchants from Ōmi gave generously in times of need, ostensibly abiding by another Buddhist ethic, that of *intoku zenji* (secret acts of charity [are good]). They built bridges and roads and put up streetlamps, made large donations to local shrines and temples, and distributed rice to the poor during periods of bad harvest.¹⁴⁴ They also assisted those in dire straits by helping them find work or foregoing their debt payments. And to the extent possible, Ōmi merchants renovated or repaired their stores during recession as a way to help boost the local economy. The translocality of sojourning merchants demanded they demonstrate their commitment to both home and host places through these acts of charity. Rendered as a means of repaying the communities to whom their success owed, their contributions to public projects in business locales were assuredly calculated to gain the trust of locals and allow entrepreneurial “outsiders” to operate in their midst.¹⁴⁵ Making good deeds in accordance with one’s fortune was stressed by Nishikawa Riemon (1591–1646), a merchant from Hachiman. As his house code held, a family “would prosper if righteousness [*gi*] were prioritized over profit”¹⁴⁶—or to put it the other way around, a merchant should strive to become a man of virtue as his business prospered.

This emphasis on ethical obligation resonated with the philosophical agenda of Tokugawa thinkers who emerged from the eighteenth century to justify the moral worth of commerce. To a largely merchant audience in Kyoto, Ishida Baigan (1685–1744) preached the “study of the heart” (*Shingaku*), defining wealth as righteous and its accumulation intrinsically beneficial to “society” and in accord with “Heaven’s will” (which echoed the notion of “enlightened self-interest” in English classical liberalism).¹⁴⁷ While Ishida stressed devotion to mundane duties as a path of enlightenment, merchant-scholars of the Kaitokudō Academy in Osaka (1726)

searched through Confucian texts for an alternative epistemology to locate virtue in their commercial endeavors.¹⁴⁸ Ōmi merchants were exposed to, if not directly taught, these ideas, which elevated merchants without fundamentally eroding the Tokugawa order centered on the samurai class.¹⁴⁹ One study points to their many parallels with long-distance merchants of Shanxi, who also embraced the Confucian values of honesty and loyalty and “an ascetic ethic” to legitimate and apprehend the status of merchants relative to warriors and bureaucrats.¹⁵⁰ Sojourner merchants of Huizhou went further, deploying the image of their native place and themselves as exemplars of Zhu Xi Confucianism to justify their economic dominance in the eyes of hostile locals.¹⁵¹

Emphasis on frugality and diligence, if ubiquitous in Tokugawa merchant houses, was codified as the *raison d'être* of Ōmi shōnin; they were instructed from a young age to regard hard work as their calling and a path to salvation. The majority followed the Shin sect of Buddhism (Jōdo Shinshū), whose doctrine stressed these very qualities to reconcile the pursuit of profit with religious devotion. For its emphasis on “diligence and economy, and an inner-worldly asceticism” and for its separation of political obligations to one’s feudal lord from religious values, Shin Buddhism has been called “the closest Japanese analogue to Western Protestantism.”¹⁵² This Protestant analogy would work only if one made sweeping assertions about the religion and its relationship to “economic rationalization” regardless of doctrinal differences or treated “extraordinarily generalized phenomena like self-discipline or individual spiritual autonomy . . . as theological universals.”¹⁵³ The flaws in this Weberian comparison aside, Ōmi merchants came to be closely associated with these highly idealized traits as devout practitioners of Shin faith (their modern successors, as we will see, would relish the exercise of finding such alleged affinity). Their biographies, indeed, read like morality tales, each of which portrays the family founder as an exemplar who made a religion of industry and austerity or, as one commentator put it, made “diligence the flesh and perseverance the bone.”¹⁵⁴

For his descendants and admirers alike, Matsui Kyūzaemon III was Shin Buddhism incarnate. Matsui’s store was named Hoshikyū, and its trademark depicted a balance pole with two dots above and below denoting stars, both central symbols of diligence in Ōmi. According to his biography, the logo signified “a dedication to work and perseverance” wherein “one leaves in the morning carrying a balance pole with stars over him [i.e., before dawn], and returns in the evening treading stars [i.e. after dusk].” Matsui apparently “put this trademark into practice” daily, whether peddling afar or working at home. His industry was matched only by his frugality. For all public occasions, he “never once wore silk,” “putting on nothing other than hand-woven cotton,” and wearing straw sandals (instead of rain- or snow-clogs) in all weathers.¹⁵⁵

Though such a life of extreme economy was portrayed as an expression of piety, the family creed of Nakai Genzaemon made no effort to hide a profit motive behind the daily preachings of frugality: “If you want to make money, you must

first of all be thrifty and dedicate yourself to commerce, abstaining from banquets, amusements, and extravagance, and maintaining good health.”¹⁵⁶ While shunning “wasteful expenditures,” merchant devotees “lavished money on donations” to shrines and Shin-sect temples that dotted the landscape of Ōmi, with a particularly dense cluster east of Lake Biwa.¹⁵⁷ The “Ōmi merchant ethos” was reared in this religious milieu rich in the historical influence of Rennyō,¹⁵⁸ but driven no less by the desire to enrich one’s own family and boost its fortune.

Merchant house codes often harped on the need to obey the government and observe its laws, but the ultimate loyalty of Ōmi merchants lay with their progenitors. “The house itself is a sacred entity,” observed Robert Bellah, where “all members including the living head” considered themselves, first and foremost, servants or “clerks [*tedai*] of the ancestors” to whom they owed their gratitude and service.¹⁵⁹ For Ōmi merchants to run a family business meant to maintain their patrimony in a shrine of commerce, as it were. But this seemingly timeless sense of ancestral duty, in fact, gained in weightiness over time: as the family tree grew more branches, a thickening network of stores served to reinforce the importance of the stem family as a central unit of Tokugawa economic life.¹⁶⁰ Beyond a religious commitment, ancestor worship was part of a strategy of maintenance and growth to Ōmi merchant houses, who understood business as a “semisacred” form of labor demanded by the family.

Many basic tenets of the Ōmi commercial philosophy outlined above were echoed by merchants elsewhere. Interwoven with Buddhist precepts and elements of Confucian and Shinto thought, the house codes of Mitsui and other merchant families in Edo or Osaka demonstrated a similar mix of economic pragmatism and conservatism. They preached devotion to commerce, reminding the progeny that family business took precedence over all other obligations including government service, while cautioning them against risky ventures and urging them to guard family fortune.¹⁶¹ What permeated their family creeds was an overarching ethic that had internalized “the moral philosophy of the samurai class”: its emphasis on “diligence, frugality, obedience to the government, and concern for the reputation of the house.”¹⁶² The effect of this imitation was to portray merchants as no less virtuous and righteous than the Confucian-minded warriors who considered commerce beneath their station. In short, the house codes did for their employees what the aforementioned thinkers such as Ishida Baigan did for the Tokugawa merchant class at large.¹⁶³ To the extent that merchant houses abided by a shared ethic and concern to justify their worthiness, then, Ōmi shōnin represented not so much a regional peculiarity as a universal aspiration for recognition as the early modern merchant at his finest:¹⁶⁴ one who steadfastly applied himself to work by following the dictates of family, religion, and society as a whole.

. . .

For all their commonalities with tradesmen elsewhere, merchants from Ōmi came to be perceived widely in Tokugawa Japan as being in a class of their own. Their

competitors from the neighboring province of Ise also operated beyond its borders, but their activities were largely limited to Edo.¹⁶⁵ Collectively, Ōmi peddlers came to distinguish themselves as diasporic traders, a geographically dispersed group of merchants bound by their own networks of markets, transportation, capital, and trust. Admittedly many fewer than the Greek, Jewish, Armenian, or Chinese merchants who operated across seas and continents, Ōmi shōnin, I submit, were different in scale but not in kind from these early modern contemporaries. They developed broadly similar strategies, logic, and organization of cross-border commerce that come into view when considered parallel to, rather than in isolation from, one another. Within the circumscribed context of the Tokugawa polity, Ōmi merchants forged a loosely organized network through which they coordinated risky, long-distance trading voyages, exchanging market information, lending money to one another, pooling capital to launch joint ventures, and in some cases, chartering and building ships to transport cargos, as we will see below. In the way some large storeowners coordinated demand and supply over multiple provinces and semiautonomous fiefdoms, Ōmi merchants also anticipated the operation of modern trading firms¹⁶⁶—much like their European counterparts trading across the eastern Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and Northern Europe.¹⁶⁷

By the early nineteenth century, Ōmi merchants had not only spread themselves far and wide across the archipelago; they had been firmly lodged in Japan's biggest cities, which functioned as nodes of their trading diaspora. They were involved in "virtually every business transaction in Osaka,"¹⁶⁸ the central entrepôt from which goods were distributed to the rest of the Tokugawa realm. The thoroughfares of Honmachi in Osaka and Sanjō in Kyoto were lined by large and small stores named Ōmi-ya, while merchant tycoons like Nishikawa Jingorō and Tonomura Yozaemon ensconced themselves at the heart of Edo's Nihonbashi district, carrying their cachet well into the Meiji period.¹⁶⁹ Through their pawnshops and money exchanges, Ōmi merchants also provided a crucial source of funds for samurai, who increasingly strained to maintain their standard of living. And they extended credit to daimyo, if with grudging obedience, so frequently that one scholar has called Ōmi "the center of finance" in the Tokugawa money economy.¹⁷⁰ A status shared by Osaka, Ōmi's role as financier placed its merchants modestly in the company of merchant-bankers of Shanxi, whose remittance business made the northern hinterland the financial hub of the Qing, or their counterparts of Frankfurt, who supported royal and princely excess and carried their influence into the twentieth century, along with a reputation for greed, acumen, and "efficiency."¹⁷¹

Ōmi merchants' influence was also visible in provincial urban centers. Their trading activities helped to spread the process of rural industrialization and regional specialization at both ends of their journey. In marketing the products of their home province and its vicinity, Ōmi merchants fostered the growth of local cottage industries such as sake brewing and the manufacturing of medicine and lacquerware, techniques they transplanted to their business locales in Kantō

and Tōhoku. By penetrating distant sites of production and transporting their commodities up and down the archipelago, they also boosted interprovincial trade and connected the advanced economies of Kinai to markets as far away as Matsumae and Kyūshū.

In sum, Ōmi merchants facilitated the process of economic integration under the Pax Tokugawa by mediating all aspects of its market economy, from commerce and manufacturing to finance: the growth of Japanese “capitalism from within.”¹⁷² The same mercantile policies that harnessed residents of many domains to the production of export commodities called the diasporic Ōmi shōnin into being. Unburdened by similar obligations at home, they operated between semiautarkic economies, capturing a share of wholesaling rights over the export of local products for distant markets. Conversely, unrelenting quest for profit allowed Yamanaka Riemon (?–1879) to even break into Tosa’s protected economy, winning the exclusive right to purvey hemp cloth to the domain that upheld a universal ban on wearing silk.¹⁷³ In integrating dispersed spaces and smaller units of production into a larger circuitry of exchange, itinerant merchants of Ōmi epitomized the role of “circulating capital” that shaped most early modern economies “in the period before industrialization.”¹⁷⁴ As they extended their capital over a wide geography, so did they exert indirect control over rural industries and labor, as illustrated by the case of the Noto Peninsula.

This control spread from the main islands of Honshū across the waters to Hokkaido. Claimed by the Tokugawa rulers in the 1650s, the northern frontier of *Ezo*—a term used to refer to its Ainu inhabitants as well as their land—was the site of early Japanese colonization and settlement “overseas” along with the southern Pacific region. Matsumae domain’s consolidation of this frontier encouraged an extension of trading networks by Ōmi merchants into Ainu territory—not unlike the way diasporic trajectories from Shanxi stretched along and across the Inner Asian frontiers of Qing state expansion.¹⁷⁵ Among the first to set up shop in Matsumae, merchants from Ōmi fueled and financed its export industry and inshore fisheries, which worked profound and devastating effects on the Ainu communities. The forces of the market and colonialism intertwined in their subsumption of native labor to mainland capital, turning Hokkaido into yet another node of their trading diaspora.

At the Nexus of Colonialism and Capitalism in Hokkaido

In the first decades of Tokugawa rule, when peasants of Ōmi began making seasonal treks to the Kinai and Kanto plains, some journeyed farther north in search of greater fortune. Among the earliest to arrive on the island of Ezo, or Hokkaido,¹ was Okada Yazaemon I (1568–1650). Born into a family that traced its lineage to the warrior Ōmi Genji Sasaki-shi, Okada was one of many peasants who, during the unification wars, relocated to Azuchi and then to Hachiman, where they began peddling after Hachiman Castle fell. What followed in his career would become the typical trajectory of Ōmi merchants who eventually made their way in Hokkaido. Having plied his trade in Mutsu Province, Okada crossed the Tsugaru Strait to pursue new business prospects in Fukuyama, the castle town of the Matsumae domain located on the southern tip of Hokkaido. He gained the patronage of a Matsumae vassal to open a store, selling dry goods and kitchenware to local residents. Soon, he also began extending loans and supplies to Matsumae officials who owned trading posts (*basho*) in the Ezochi—the vast land of Ainu that lay beyond the borders of a coastal Japanese enclave in southern Hokkaido (Wajinchi) (see map 4 later in this chapter). In lieu of loan repayment, the samurai owners over time entrusted Okada with the shipping and sale of marine products traded by Ainu at these *basho*. Year after year he shuttled between Matsumae and Ōmi until his death in 1650. His successors, sometime in the early eighteenth century, began netting even greater profits by taking over the operation of fisheries in the trading posts of Otarunai and Furubira, all of which employed Ainu as a labor force. Adding several more fisheries to its management, the Okada household in ensuing decades joined the ranks of fishing entrepreneurs who would steer Hokkaido's export trade until the end of Tokugawa rule.²

Following the discussion in the previous chapter, I conceptualize Ōmi merchants' activities in Hokkaido, as they themselves did at the time, as a spatial

extension of overland commerce to the sea. This was cross-cultural trade, in the literal sense, insofar as it involved trading with the maritime Ainu. Yet what had commenced as reciprocal trade relations soon morphed into colonial ones. As their activities expanded to the management of fisheries, merchants from the mainland began to ruthlessly exploit Ainu labor as proxies of Matsumae rulers. The career of merchant contractors like Okada, who made a fortune on the backs of Ainu labor, reveals how early modern Hokkaido became a critical interface of colonialism and capitalism, coeval phenomena that are often studied separately and conventionally dated well after the Tokugawa period. Their activities spanned both land and sea spaces, showing how the exploitation of marine resources unfurled in tandem with that of land and its inhabitants. Their increasingly capitalist mode of production, turning trading partners into semi-servile labor, also sheds further light on the “proto-industrialization” of Tokugawa Japan, elucidated by David Howell’s definitive study of the herring fishery. The territorializing impulses of the early modern state combined with the contrasting drive of merchant capital toward “the elimination of spatial barriers to its circulation.”³ This “deterritorializing drive of capital”—which left the Ainu increasingly decoupled from the land, even as they remained conflated as “Ezo” in Japanese parlance—also paved the way for Japan’s “pelagic empire”: exploitation of oceanic environments that stretched across the Pacific from the late nineteenth century.⁴ Considered in this transpacific context, Hokkaido for Ōmi merchants was as much the northernmost end of their early modern trading diaspora as it was the first frontier of their expansion across the sea.

EARLY DOMINANCE OF ŌMI MERCHANTS IN THE MATSUMAE ECONOMY

When merchants from Ōmi began arriving on the southern shores of Hokkaido in the early seventeenth century, the Matsumae clan had been steadily consolidating control over the island through its exclusive right to trade with the Ainu. Granted by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1604, the trade monopoly provided a central source of revenue for the domain, located in a land ill-suited for agriculture. The Matsumae lord apportioned this monopoly right to his ranking vassals by granting trading posts, or *basho*, in the Ezochi. Initially, the samurai proprietors of *basho* dispatched their own trading vessels to the Ezochi every summer to exchange a variety of mainland goods—from rice, sake, and tobacco to clothes, pans, and needles—for marine products, pelts, falcon feathers, and Ainu handicrafts. Fishing also grew as an ancillary part of *basho* activity, eventually forming another pillar of the Matsumae economy.⁵

Merchants from the mainland, who had opened shops in the authorized ports of Fukuyama, Hakodate, and Esashi, made advances of capital and goods to

Matsumae basho owners to facilitate their trade with the Ainu. In chronic debt, the samurai soon handed control of their trading posts over to their creditors. The merchants obtained the privilege of trading at basho in exchange for an annual fee (*unjōkin*), whose amount and terms were stipulated in a contract, ordinarily good for a period of three to seven years.⁶ For both merchant contractors and their samurai patrons, this was a beneficial arrangement. While the merchants obtained trade monopolies and official protection, the Matsumae vassals could outsource the risks of trading and fishing on distant shores to these skilled and capital-rich merchants and simply collect *unjōkin* as their income.⁷ As the system matured, a virtuous cycle developed for those at the apex of this northern economy: one where fisheries drove trade in goods, which in turn shored up the finances of the domain and enriched its commercial agents.

The Matsumae trade with Ainu in its early years took place within the framework of reciprocity between the two parties.⁸ As the volume of trade grew, however, the Matsumae began exercising their territorializing impulse to restrict the Ainu mobility. Ainu desire to reclaim their autonomy was but part of a complex chain of factors leading to Shakushain's War of 1669–72, a large-scale rebellion against the Japanese. Triggered by border disputes between rival chiefs over fishing and hunting grounds, the war had deeper roots in an "ecological conflict" that had been brewing since the Ainu began being woven into market relations with Matsumae's trading posts.⁹ After quashing this Ainu revolt, the Matsumae rulers installed physical barriers to stake out the boundary between the Wajinchi and the Ezochi, to separate the realms of the civilized and the barbarian. The Ainu were now prohibited from leaving the Ezochi, although the border remained porous for the Japanese to cross with passes.¹⁰ Through these filters designed to serve economic interests of the domain, the unbridled forces of merchant capital continued to penetrate the Ainu communities, increasing their dependence on trade goods. Merchants from Ōmi ferried the bulk of these goods from the mainland, used to open the Ainu lands to trade and conquest.

For at least a century, the economic life of Matsumae domain was dominated by Ōmi merchants. The first to arrive in Hokkaido were villagers of Yanagawa, Satsuma, and Hachiman, who began operating actively during the era of Kan'ei (1624–43).¹¹ Their diasporic trajectories into Hokkaido represented a geographical extension across the sea of their wholesale-style peddling on the main islands: *mochikudari akinai* and its more elaborate form, *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi* (chapter 1). As exemplified by the profile of Okada Yazaemon, this two-way commercial journey involved transporting and selling mainland goods in Matsumae and buying and shipping local products of Hokkaido for distribution in the Kyoto-Osaka region. As their business expanded, they built a more permanent base in Matsumae, opening branches and grouping themselves as the Ryōhama-gumi (Shore-to-Shore Association, christened in reference to the origins of its members from the eastern littoral of Ōmi). This was an example of *noriai akinai*, business

partnerships formed by Ōmi merchants to undertake long trading voyages. Members of the Ryōhama-gumi typically divided cargo among themselves for transport instead of using their own boats, to apportion the risk and costs of sea damage “in the absence of maritime insurance.”¹² Pooling capital and resources, these partnerships were formed sometimes to fund single projects like shipbuilding.¹³

In the early years when wholesalers (*ton'ya*) had yet to fully emerge, the Ryōhama-gumi merchants quickly extended monopolistic control over distribution networks linking the regional economies of Hokkaido and the main island of Honshū. Residents of Matsumae, samurai and commoner alike, came to depend on their stores for daily necessities, from rice and kimono to kitchenware and medicine.¹⁴ In the early 1710s, according to a family record of Tatsuki Shinsuke, the Matsumae domain “ordered the Ryōhama-gumi under his leadership to handle the entire export of Hokkaido products.”¹⁵ Likewise, they procured trade goods from the mainland for the Ainu trade, almost singlehandedly. A Matsumae official noted retrospectively in 1818, “Ōmi stores imported goods worth as much as five or six thousand ryō, . . . supplying not only local residents of Matsumae but even trading posts in the Ezochi, to the exclusion of merchants from other provinces.”¹⁶

Ōmi merchants dwarfed other tradesmen in part because they were the first to arrive in Hokkaido and in part because they arrived in large numbers.¹⁷ Their business in the far-flung domain was shored up by strong ties with the home province. Stores in Matsumae were run more or less the same as in the rest of Japan: as branches of larger operations “headquartered” in Ōmi, the location of the owner’s stem family. In early years of the Hokkaido trade, Ōmi merchants themselves operated the stores, but as time passed, they were entrusted to managers (who typically adopted the family name of their owner).¹⁸ The Nishikawa Denemon family in Hachiman, for the years documented in its archive, recruited exclusively Ōmi natives as managers of the Matsumae branch. The majority of clerks and apprentices, too, were followers of Shin Buddhism born in Hachiman (or the East Lake district); they were trained and allowed to travel back home, according to the Ōmi custom of *zaisho nobori*.¹⁹ As a founding member of the Ryōhama-gumi, Okada Yazaemon spent heavily on training apprentices back in Ōmi before dispatching them to Hokkaido, enforcing discipline and loyalty through store rules well into the Meiji period.²⁰

As was so often true for merchants in the early modern world, official patronage was indispensable to the success of Ōmi merchants in Hokkaido. Matsumae authorities conferred on the Ryōhama-gumi many privileges, one of which was almost unrestrained mobility in and out of the domain. Merchants from Ōmi were technically classified as transients,²¹ but in practice they were treated like permanent residents; both managers and clerks were permitted five-year residence for business, easily renewable after each term.²² The Ryōhama-gumi also enjoyed tax exemptions and reductions. The Matsumae treasury was founded on the domain’s ability to levy taxes (called *okinokuchi kōsen*) on commodities leaving and entering

the three customs offices in Fukuyama, Esashi, and Hakodate. In 1748, when the domain implemented a 1 percent tax on all sales of imported and exported goods, the Ryōhama-gumi's cargo between Tsuruga and the ports of Matsumae was largely exempted from the import tax.²³ Though they incurred sales tax upon selling imported items as merchandise, members of the Ryōhama-gumi were permitted to pay the tax office directly without having to go through *ton'ya* as other merchants did.²⁴ An official record of tax collection, dated around 1810, shows they were granted preferential treatment in certain categories of goods as well. Cotton goods, accessories, and household items "imported by Ōmi stores" were assessed a fixed tax "regardless of market prices," whereas merchandise sold by others was subject to taxes based on sales value.²⁵

As men of capital, Ōmi merchants were among the first to invest in the nascent fishing industry in Hokkaido. Shortly before the herring were due to make their yearly migration from the Sea of Okhotsk, the merchants would advance cash, fishing gear, rice, salt, miso, and other goods to Japanese fishers in the Wajinchi—loans to be paid off with a share of the catch in the spring.²⁶ Akin to the putting-out system on farms in nineteenth-century Japan, this monopsonistic arrangement created by supply lending (*shikomi*) bestowed on the Ryōhama-gumi almost exclusive rights to market the herring and other fish harvested in the waters surrounding Fukuyama and Esashi.²⁷ Hachiman merchants operated at the center of these credit networks that extended to wholesalers in Osaka and its vicinity. Their dominance was registered in the increasing volume of herring cargo they exported to the mainland: what averaged under 350 tons in the period of 1712–16 surged to over 1,500 tons per year in the early 1730s.²⁸ "Apart from the Ryōhama merchants many others from Ōmi also set up shop to handle supplies for fishing and trade in the Ezochi," observed Hezutsu Tōsaku in his record of travel to Matsumae, *Tōyūki* (1784). They were trailed by migrants from "Noto, Kaga, Echigo, Dewa, and Sado,"²⁹ who could not help but operate in the shadow of merchants from Ōmi.

Hezutsu also credited the Ryōhama-gumi with commodifying Hokkaido's marine life.³⁰ Besides smoothing the herring's pathway to markets in the mainland, Japanese merchants brought many other species, such as salmon and trout, into commercial production. In particular, Ōmi merchants took the initiative in marketing kelp harvested in inshore waters near Hakodate. Through their network, Hokkaido kelp was shipped for the first time as a commodity to central Japan, via the port of Tsuruga and across Lake Biwa, and sold to wholesalers for consumption in the Kinai region. With earnings from this sale, Ōmi merchants purchased cotton and other local goods and sailed back to Matsumae for another round of exchange. "Over the course of this trade repeated year after year, Matsumae's kelp began to spread" across the mainland in the early eighteenth century.³¹

By the mid-1700s, their distribution network had reached the opposite end of the Japanese archipelago, linking Hokkaido to Nagasaki. Okada Kohachirō, born into a branch family of Okada Yasoji (Yazaemon), was reportedly among the first

to begin shipping kelp and sea cucumbers. Initially envisioned as substitutes for silver to prevent its outflow, these marine products soon became key exports for the China market, which integrated the Tokugawa regime into the wider world of global exchange.³² From 1741 to 1754—before the Tokugawa regime established its monopoly over the marine product trade in the 1780s—Ōmi merchants held a monopoly on the Matsumae export of dried sea cucumbers (*iriko*) to Nagasaki, among other baled goods (*tawaramono*) bound for export to China.³³ In a kind of “dormant partnership,” Nishikawa Denbē from Hachiman assumed sole responsibility for managing all aspects of the trade, from purchase to export and sale of the product, and twenty other “partners” had ownership stakes but took no active part in business, instead simply sharing in the profits and losses (incurred by shipwreck, for instance).³⁴

As their trading activity and networks continued to thicken, the Ryōhama-gumi merchants developed their own shipping route that stretched all the way back to their home province. For conveying the fish catches in Hokkaido down along the Japan Sea coast, they jointly chartered cargo vessels (known as *nidokobune*), most of which were operated by boatmen in Tsuruga, Kaga, and Echizen. Once unloaded at the port of Tsuruga, these products were transported overland and through a mountain pass to the northern ports of Lake Biwa and then ferried across the lake to a wholesaler in Ōtsu. Through this seasonal trading orchestrated by the Ryōhama-gumi, a Hokkaido-Tsuruga-Ōtsu network developed to link the northern waters to the littoral of Ōmi.³⁵ Before the mid-eighteenth century, these *nidokobune*, which claimed the bulk of Matsumae’s trade with the mainland, exclusively handled Ōmi merchants’ cargo. A contract signed between the two parties prohibited boatmen from handling other merchants’ cargo for the entire duration of their employment. The Ryōhama-gumi issued specific instructions as to the number of vessels, the volume of cargo, shipping destinations, and methods of conveyance. And they met with boatmen, shipping agents, and wholesalers at the port of Tsuruga every year to coordinate cargo shipping to and from Hokkaido. In short, Ōmi merchants maintained strict supervisory control of owners of *nidokobune*, who effectively served as their handmaid in the Hokkaido marine trade.³⁶

Members of the Ryōhama-gumi also pooled money to build and operate a cargo vessel of their own. The earliest documented record of their cooperation shows that in 1733, Nishikawa Denemon, Hirata Yosaemon, and three other Ōmi merchants built and managed such a vessel, *Keiei-maru*, for shipping salmon from the Ezochi to the port of Sakata.³⁷ This was another example of *noriai akinai*, a strategy to offset heavy overhead costs and high risks involved in constructing and operating a fishing vessel.³⁸ More broadly, it signaled the beginning of their long-term evolution as seafaring merchants.

In their modus operandi, merchants in charge of the Matsumae trading posts—who came to be called basho contractors (*basho ukeoinin*)—are likened by historians of Tokugawa to the European chartered companies that operated in

Africa, Asia, and the Americas from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Sponsored by feudal power, both obtained monopoly rights to trade in foreign lands in return for the payment of tribute and other obligations. And both conducted their trade relatively free of interference from the home government.³⁹ Some scholars have pushed the comparison further back in time to the Hanseatic League, an association of northern German towns and merchants which dominated trade in the Baltic and the North Seas from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. The boundaries between land and water blurred in the activities of Ryōhama-gumi, as they did in the maritime operations of the Hansa merchants who controlled regional distribution of stockfish. And as Ōmi merchants evolved into ship-owning contractors, they reshaped the coastal areas of Ezochi into their commercial outposts (fig. 2), not unlike the way their German counterparts had once transformed the Scandinavian and Baltic regions into their “economic colonies.”⁴⁰ Mastery of the sea (and its products) by means of commercial association, a tactic pioneered by the Hanseatic league, found its echoes in the northern waters of Hokkaido, where merchant contractors staked out the foundations of Japan’s pelagic empire.⁴¹

THE GROWTH OF THE BASHO CONTRACTING SYSTEM

By the late eighteenth century, merchants from the mainland had pushed the frontiers of their activity further north, opening new fisheries in areas as far as Kunashiri (the southernmost island of the Kurils) and Karafuto (southern Sakhalin).⁴² In the course of this territorial drive, they moved from the realm of distribution to production and began directly operating fisheries themselves. For Ōmi merchants, their passage to processors of fish paralleled the career arc of their fellow peddlers in the mainland, who advanced into manufacturing such as sake brewing and the production of medicine (chapter 1). As David Howell has shown, the foray of merchant capital into production signaled the beginning of the capitalist transformation of Hokkaido fisheries, one accompanied by a shift in emphasis from trading with the Ainu to employing them as wage labor.

From the time merchant contractors began supervising fishing operations, they relied heavily on Ainu workers. A contemporary observer, Sakakura Genjirō in his *Hokkai Zuihitsu* (1739), offered a sense of how this system of contract fisheries came into being in the early eighteenth century. Merchants from Ōmi and northeastern provinces of Tōhoku, hitherto confined to the Wajinchi for commerce, gradually penetrated the remote interior, where they “entered into contracts with nearby Ainu villages. Having paid taxes to the Matsumae, they controlled and engaged the Ainu in fishing, and shipped their catches” to the mainland.⁴³ In the trading post of Otarunai managed by Okada Yazaemon, all eight fisheries (opened at various points from the early eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries) employed Ainu, many of whom were settled closely around the *unjōya* (central office of

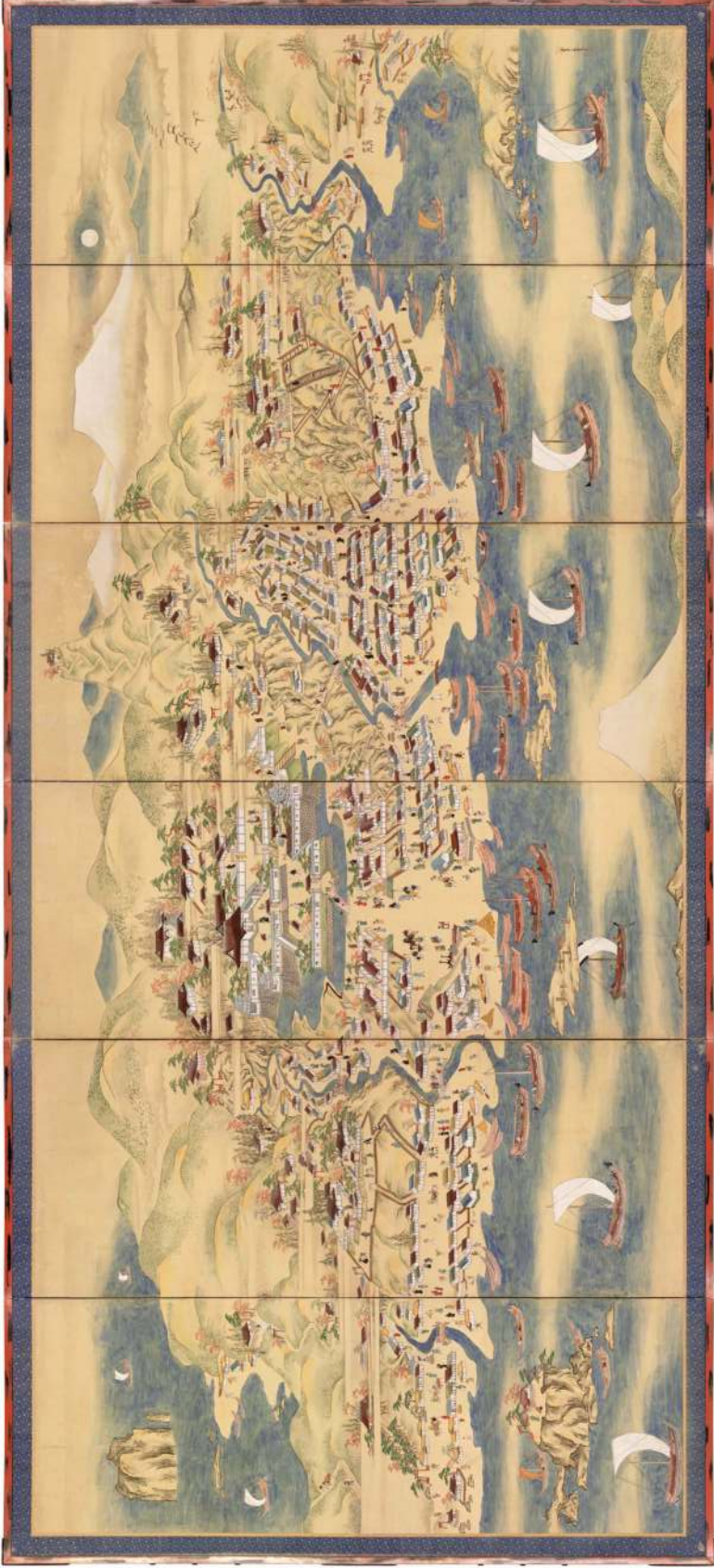


FIGURE 2. Matsumae *byōbu* (screen), reportedly commissioned by Okada Yazaemon to bear witness to the splendor of his Matsumae store (Ebisuya) for posterity. Spanning the six-panel folding screen is a panorama of the town of Fukuyama, with the Matsumae Castle complex atop a hill, viewed from the southern approach, where the waters bustle with vessels of all sizes and origins. The shoreline bristles with tile-roofed merchant houses, their family crests imprinted on their storefronts and warehouses. Many of these belonged to trailblazing merchants from Ōmi, wealthy by the time of the screen's production in the mid-eighteenth century. The screen served as an emblem of Ōmi merchants' dominance, celebrating the soaring prosperity they brought to the castle town of Matsumae. *Source*: "Matsumae no bunkazai" (<https://www.town.matsumae.hokkaido.jp/bunkazai/detail/00001825.html>). Courtesy of Matsumae Town Folk Museum.

a trading post). Fishery managers taught Ainu new ways to fish, using nets, to increase the catches. Over time they enlarged the scale and scope of operation by hiring Ainu in and out of basho and adding Wajin fishers to the crew.⁴⁴

As the Matsumae fisheries passed into the hands of merchant contractors, Hokkaido was transformed into “a colony of exploitation”—a capital-intensive regime of resource extraction using native labor.⁴⁵ Though local histories of Ōmi shōnin are largely silent on this issue, records abound on the ruthless exploitation of Ainu by fishery contractors and their clerks, who behaved with “an air of condescension as proxies of the Matsumae.”⁴⁶ Managers, overseers, and interpreters—who operated basho at the behest of contractors—were also surrogate rulers; they used any combination of threat, deceit, and brute force to put Ainu to work, mostly to manufacture oil cakes, for little or no compensation in some trading posts. Their abuses festered until another rebellion broke out in 1789. This time the Ainu furor was directed at the contractor Hidaya Kyūbē (whose family was from Hida province) and his employees in the distant fisheries of Kunashiri and Menashi, where the most egregious excesses were reported. Forced to work for the contractor “until the snow began to fall,” the Ainu had no time to produce for themselves or to store supplies for the winter, leaving many on the brink of starvation.⁴⁷ Moreover, Japanese men, from overseers to sailors, routinely violated Ainu women, turning fisheries into what Ann-elise Lewallen calls “intimate frontiers,” where rape and other atrocities were perpetrated with impunity.⁴⁸ Abusive trading practices by merchants, such as manipulating the exchange rate and degrading the quality of trade goods, had also been known for some time, but none prompted the Matsumae authorities to intercede for Ainu.

Although limited in scale and quickly “subdued,” the 1789 revolt ushered in a key turning point in the Matsumae political economy. As the event coincided with the revelation of Russian southward expansion along the Kuriles, the bakufu moved to bring the eastern Ezochi under its direct control in 1799; in 1807, the western Ezochi was also added to its jurisdiction. For Ōmi merchants, however, it signaled more than a transfer of political authority. The onset of direct bakufu rule served to accelerate some developments already afoot that would spell the end of the Ryōhama-gumi’s near monopoly on Matsumae trade. Signs of decline had begun to appear in its membership, which fell steadily from thirty-one in 1758, to twenty-four in 1762, and to eleven in 1786. It stood at a mere six in 1818.⁴⁹ By then, five Ōmi stores nearly or over two centuries old had shut their retail businesses in Matsumae to work as basho contractors full-time.⁵⁰

So alarmed were Matsumae authorities by the exodus of Ōmi merchants that they launched a probe into its underlying causes in 1817. According to their findings, the declining catch of herring in the coastal waters of Wajinchi from the 1780s was partly to blame; the Ryōhama-gumi merchants mainly bought catches of small fishers in Esashi and its vicinity for export. More detrimental was the arrival of new merchants in the mid-late eighteenth century (Hidaya being one of

the earliest to arrive). These fishery contractors, who possessed large boats of their own, “began importing goods directly from Kyoto, Edo, and Jōshū,” bypassing the Ryōhama-gumi. Meanwhile, “many small retail stores . . . cropped up all over the city” to supply rice, grains, and other necessities to local residents, making Ōmi stores no longer as “indispensable” as before.⁵¹ Their activities steadily undercut the Ōmi shōnin’s grip on the distribution of Hokkaido products, as registered in the decreased herring cargoes handled by Hachiman merchants in the 1750s–60s. The Ryōhama-gumi also felt their status ebb as their tax exemptions were phased out by 1789.⁵²

Most of the big merchants arrived from Edo and Osaka, some in response to Tanuma Okitsugu’s plan to promote the development of Hokkaido in the 1780s. In contrast to the Ryōhama-gumi, who mainly managed the trading posts of Matsumae vassals in the western Ezochi, these new merchants (such as Suhara Kakubē and Date Rinemon) became powerful contractors by taking over large trading posts owned by the Matsumae lord in the remote eastern reaches of Ezochi. Amid these developments, a transfer of the Ezochi to bakufu control in 1799—and the attendant loss of Matsumae patronage that had buoyed Ōmi merchants’ monopoly—was the final straw.⁵³ New competition in Matsumae forced out many small and middling merchants from Ōmi and elsewhere in the mainland.⁵⁴

On the other hand, the relative slide in the Ryōhama-gumi’s status signified further institutional consolidation of basho contracting. When the bakufu extended its control to eastern Ezochi in 1799, two parallel forms of contracting—proxy trade with the Ainu (*akinaiba ukeoi*) and contract fisheries (*gyogyō ukeoi*)—were formally merged into a single system of *basho ukeoi*.⁵⁵ This amalgamation codified what was already in practice at many trading posts, where the same merchant family oversaw the exchange of goods ashore and resource extraction at sea. The survival of merchant contractors from Ōmi hung on maximizing this land-sea linkage in their diasporic business. In subsequent decades, as the management of trading posts was consolidated into fewer hands, bonds of native place that had held the Ryōhama-gumi together gradually dissolved in the face of new divisions between big and small capital. Although small and midsize merchants languished, those who survived the competition continued to wield significant influence in the Matsumae economy, graduating to even more powerful careers as basho contractors in the nineteenth century.⁵⁶

The largest among these Ōmi merchants were the aforementioned Okada Yazaemon I, the founder of Ebisuya, Nishikawa Denemon I (1627–1709) of Sumiyoshiya, and Fujino Kihē I (1770–1828) of Kashiwaya. All three built their careers as powerful merchants in Matsumae within a single generation, serving as official purveyors with the perquisites of samurai status.⁵⁷ By the Tenpō era, their successors were ranked among the wealthiest merchants in the entire domain, with Fujino on top with a capital of “30,000–40,000 ryō,” followed by Nishikawa, and Okada, who shared third place with several other contractors.⁵⁸ Okada and

Nishikawa were also founding members of the Ryōhama-gumi. By the time Fujino arrived more than a century later in 1800, the fourth generations of Okada Yazaemon and Nishikawa Denemon⁵⁹ had taken the helm of their respective family businesses, whose mainstay now was running contract fisheries in the western Ezochi.⁶⁰

Fujino Kihē had a more unusual trajectory. A latecomer from Ōmi who never joined the Ryōhama-gumi, Fujino vaulted into the ranks of basho contractors in 1806, when he took over the supervision of Upper and Lower Yoichi. Whereas the main fisheries managed by Nishikawa and Okada were confined to the seaboard of present-day Otaru, Fujino developed a niche in remote areas along the coast of the Sea of Okhotsk, taking charge of the contract fisheries in Sōya, Monbetsu, Abashiri, and Shari in 1808, as well as Kunashiri in 1817.⁶¹ After the Matsumae resumed control of the Ezochi, Fujino further added to his portfolio Rishiri and Rebun(shiri) in 1823 and Nemuro in 1832, which became his main business base (map 4). The meteoric rise of Fujino as a contractor, in fact, paralleled the spectacular fall of Takadaya Kahē from Awaji. Takadaya left a mark in the annals of Tokugawa diplomacy, having been kidnapped by the Russians during the Golovnin incident of 1813. The Takadaya family was banished from Matsumae in the wake of revelations about Kahē's secret agreement with the Russians: that Russian vessels would not plunder Takadaya's ships and upon encountering each other at sea, they would confirm their identities by a show of flags (*hataawase*). As a result of Takadaya's dismissal, some of the family's prized possessions passed into the hands of Fujino: the trading post of Nemuro, the most lucrative among the confiscated fisheries, and three of the largest vessels Takadaya had owned.⁶²

ŌMI MERCHANTS AS FISHERY CONTRACTORS

How did Ōmi merchants manage the trading posts as basho contractors? Just as they placed managers in charge of their stores in the Wajinchi, Ōmi merchants delegated the daily operation of trading posts to local managers. Stationed at the central office, or *unjōya*, each manager was aided by a team of an interpreter (*tsūji*), a bookkeeper (*chōyaku*), and overseers (*bannin*) who supervised all activities at the fisheries.⁶³ In a typical Ōmi family involved in the Hokkaido trade, a well-defined division of labor existed between the Matsumae branch which, in coordination with the headquarters in Ōmi, handled the shipping and marketing of basho products in the mainland,⁶⁴ and the *unjōya* of a trading post which oversaw the fishing and processing of catches at sea. Most contractors hired Ōmi natives customarily to manage their Matsumae stores, but over time some placed the *unjōya* in the hands of experienced locals in Hokkaido or Tōhoku. Whereas native-place ties dictated the choice of managers to ensure close cooperation between Matsumae and Ōmi, the trading post's office prioritized technical skills and local knowledge of Hokkaido required for operating fisheries on site.⁶⁵



MAP 4. Fisheries managed by Ōmi merchant contractors in early modern Hokkaido. Map by Bill Nelson.

Most fisheries administered by Ōmi merchants, as elsewhere in the Ezochi, harvested herring, which was processed into food and especially fertilizer for export. The fertilizer increasingly replaced dried sardines on Japanese farms and turned herring into a commodity of high market value that drove the contract fisheries and filled Matsumae coffers.⁶⁶ Along with the fish, herring roe (*kazunoko*) was “loaded onto ships of various provincial origins” in Esashi, reported the *Matsumae Ezoki* (1717), and “transported back to the Chūgoku and Ōmi regions” for wider consumption.⁶⁷ Some fisheries diversified their operations into other species such as salmon, trout, and cod and harvested modest quantities of sea cucumber and kelp as well.⁶⁸ Fujino Kihē, the contractor for Nemuro, was particularly active in expanding the production of kelp. Upon discovering lush kelp forests within the fishery in 1832, Fujino “dispatched some 50 Ainu” to harvest, selling the product

“for 40 ryō per 100 koku in Osaka.” This incidental venture evolved into a significant business, as opportunities to market the product increased over time.⁶⁹

While multiplying fishing operations, big Ōmi merchants began operating boats of their own (*tebune*), which signaled a major development in the pattern of *basho* contracting in the nineteenth century.⁷⁰ Among the earliest merchant contractors to foray into shipping business was the Nishikawa family. In the 1740s, when Nishikawa’s Matsumae store started running boats commercially, its *Daifuku maru* navigated the following route: after departing Matsumae, the vessel first docked at the port of Sakata, where it sold trout and other products of Hokkaido and loaded soybeans; it then continued on to Shimonoseki, where it off-loaded the soybeans and purchased salt for the return voyage; after reaching Matsumae, the vessel sailed further north to the trading post of Mashike.⁷¹ Nishikawa operated a total of four vessels in 1779.⁷² By 1859, all products of Oshoro and Takashima were transported to Tsuruga by six Japanese-style boats owned by Nishikawa’s store, and their shipping business accounted for a substantial portion of its income.⁷³

Even more impressive in scale of operation was Fujino Kihē. In 1805, just before opening his store in Matsumae, Fujino already had in his possession seven Japanese-style boats. Their number doubled by 1839, and less than twenty years later the Fujino family commanded a fleet of twenty. Like Nishikawa’s, Fujino’s boats most likely carried to Hokkaido salt and other raw materials required for curing the fish and straw mat for packing and transported back to the mainland catches and products from the fisheries.⁷⁴ In other words, ships became an integral part of the production process, beyond a simple means of conveyance.

From the perspective of Ōmi commerce, trading by boat may be construed as a maritime equivalent of *sanbutsu mawashi*—a distinctive wholesale strategy employed by Ōmi merchants in trading across the Japanese mainland. The shipping route charted by Nishikawa’s *Daifuku maru* illustrates this point clearly: it combined the export of Hokkaido products and the import of mainland goods, conducting trade during the voyage to and from ports of call in the archipelago.⁷⁵ A terrestrial business strategy transposed to the ocean, the operation of *tebune* also took advantage of the parcellized space-time of the Tokugawa economy. For Ōmi merchants, as noted in chapter 1, continual extraction of profit hinged on regional differentials in prices generated by a gulf of distance and time that lay between the Hokkaido supply and the Honshū demand sides of the market. Nishikawa leveraged them in the years leading up to the Restoration (1864–68), when the price of fish fertilizer soared on the mainland as the production of cash crops expanded against a backdrop of falling currency value.⁷⁶ This strategy allowed Ōmi merchants in Matsumae to reap large profits in the area of distribution, in the same way that their mainland counterparts procured local goods along the trade route to sell at higher prices at either end of their journey.

But along with profits, the risks of long-distance commerce on land were also mirrored and multiplied in the sea. If the principle of “low-margin, high volume

sales” drove the seasonal treks of Ōmi peddlers, the ethos of big reward at high risk characterized the operation of *tebune*. According to Tabata Hiroshi’s analysis of the Nishikawa family’s account books for the period between 1859 and 1870, the net profit from its shipping business (28,754 ryō) far exceeded the total income from contract fisheries (16,744 ryō).⁷⁷ This may be interpreted as the contractor’s retreat from capitalist production in favor of conservative investment in distribution, yet what appeared to be low-risk behavior masked the continual challenges of operating ships. In the early years, not all vessels survived the journey home. Between 1774 and 1792, Tatsuki Shinsuke, a contractor for Furuu and Bikuni, lost to a storm five boats of his own as well as the Matsumae domain’s official ship, each loss dealing a devastating blow to his business.⁷⁸ Despite technological advances in the nineteenth century, risks of maritime voyage remained high, as demonstrated by the frequency of shipwrecks that dented Nishikawa’s profit; the family lost five out of eight vessels in the year 1866 alone.⁷⁹ While Fujino similarly lost five ships in 1840, on numerous occasions his vessels also rescued crew members of a capsized boat adrift on the sea, during voyages to and from the fisheries in the Ezochi.⁸⁰ Moreover, a range of hazards and uncertainties bedeviled fishermen, including the vagaries of weather and the erratic course of herring shoals. All of these demonstrated nature’s impact on fishing, even as improved vessels and gear amplified the human impact on the marine ecosystems of Hokkaido.

These risks naturally increased as vessels ventured far off shore or closer to the Russian border in pursuit of fish, prompting contractors from Ōmi to join forces. From 1837 to 1841, for example, three Ōmi merchants—Fujino Kihē II, Nishikawa Junbē (of the Nishikawa Denemon family), and Okada Hanbē (manager of Okada Yazaemon’s store)—formed a “dormant partnership” under the fictitious name Ōmiya Sōbē to manage the fifteen fisheries on the island of Etorofu, inherited from Takadaya’s successors. The three merchants divided the profits and losses according to an investment ratio, as a means to consolidate capital and to offset risks of running fisheries at a far-flung location, among them bad catches, maritime accidents, and attacks from Russian vessels.⁸¹ The partnership reflected their continued reliance on native-place ties as the best hedge against potential loss. Nonetheless, it was dissolved after four years, having sustained a considerable deficit due to elevated costs of supplying the fisheries.

The relatively high turnover in the management of Etorofu demonstrated that distance continually stood in the way of operating remote fisheries at a profit. Yet distance, too, was an opportunity to make a fortune that justified the risk, so Ōmi merchants continued to turn it to their advantage. To maximize profits from the northern trade, the operation of *tebune* often led to the opening of a branch in the entrepôt of Osaka. Located at the nexus of marketing and consumption, the Osaka branch in effect supplanted the functions of local wholesalers by directly handling the distribution of fertilizer and other Hokkaido products in the mainland. Consolidating land-sea linkages in the supply chain this way, big

contractors of Ōmi strove to achieve vertical integration in their newly expanded operations, from harvest and production in Hokkaido to shipping and marketing on the Honshū mainland.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the fishing industry in Hokkaido underwent a technological leap with the introduction of pound traps, much larger and more efficient than gill nets used by individual fishers.⁸² Ōmi merchant contractors actively embraced and invested in this technology. In 1852, Nishikawa ordered the overseer of the Takashima basho to manufacture a pound trap for herring, the first of many they would deploy around the fishery.⁸³ Seven years later, Nishikawa owned a dozen pound traps at the Oshoro fishery and six at Takashima; considering that each net required about twenty men on two vessels to operate, he most likely employed several hundred fishers in total.⁸⁴ The conversion of fisheries from seine to pound trap also helped increase production in Nemuro. In 1855 the contractor Fujino “had a pound trap manufactured and experimented with its use for the first time.” Once improvements were rewarded with increased landings in 1860, he equipped boats with pound traps at every fishery, to good effect.⁸⁵ At the Otarunai fishery under Okada, use of pound traps boosted catches to yield an annual average of 40,000–50,000 koku, burnishing its status as the largest fishery in western Ezo.⁸⁶

The spread of pound traps showed how technological innovation unfolded in response to the increased pool of wage labor from midcentury Tōhoku.⁸⁷ Around the same time, individual fishers in the Wajinchi, faced with inshore decline in herring stocks, began “chasing herring” up north, which led to more permanent habitation along the coast of the Ezochi. By 1859, many fishers had settled in Oshoro and Takashima, working on sections of the shore that lay outside the sphere of Nishikawa’s operation. In exchange for permission to fish (and settle) in these basho, as elsewhere in western Ezochi, the fishers paid 16 to 20 percent of their catches or processed products (known as *nihachiyaku*) to the contractor while keeping up to 80 percent as their income.⁸⁸

The growth of catches at the fisheries managed by Okada and Nishikawa owed significantly to the operations of these migrant fishers in the last half of the nineteenth century. *Nihachiyaku* came to account for a particularly large portion of the Nishikawa family’s income. Scholars have cited this dependence on the feudal right to collect access fees—and a declining share of production vis-à-vis other forms of investment such as shipping business—as proof that contract fisheries had not yet crossed the threshold of capitalism. Nor could the labor power of Ainu (and Wajin) in an enclosed system of production be considered “free” in a Marxist sense. The merchants’ operation of fisheries exhibited at best a hybrid character: in the words of Tabata Hiroshi, it was as much “a collateral for the maintenance of feudal privilege” as an investment in production—or as David Howell put it more succinctly, “not quite capitalism.”⁸⁹

Nevertheless, when we shift our concern from the nature of labor to focus squarely on the process of change, it becomes clear that Ainu labor had been

fully integrated into a system undergoing capitalist transformation in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁰ We need only look at how organized fishing impinged on coastal and marine ecosystems of Hokkaido. On the one hand, the basho contractors' extractive operations in spawning habitats forced Ainu to subsist on rivers increasingly stripped of salmon and eventually to turn to wage labor at Japanese-run fisheries. On the other hand, increased fishing pressure contributed to depleting the herring stock around the Wajinchi—one of the underlying factors that drove many members of the Ryōhama-gumi out of Hokkaido. Initially localized to the southern coast, resource degradation spread to the Ezochi as Japanese fishers shifted their effort northward and the use of pound traps and larger boats intensified the harvest. No less affected were coastal woodlands. At contract fisheries, fishing and felling trees for fuel went hand in hand to support an ever-expanding scale of production; around large fisheries like Furubira deforestation was serious enough to cause soil erosion well before the onset of industrial forestry.⁹¹ The contractors from Ōmi played no small part in all of these developments—and soon found themselves having to grapple with their consequences. By the time fisheries completed their capitalist transformation in the Meiji period, Japanese fishers big and small were harvesting in an overtaxed ocean at a level that no longer allowed fish populations to regenerate.⁹²

AINU LABOR AT FISHERIES

If the ecological impact of fisheries was one metric of the capitalist-cum-colonial exploitation of native habitats, their changing labor practices was another. The introduction of pound traps especially raised the scale of manpower needed to run fisheries. Although the contractors turned increasingly to migrants from northern Honshū to fill their labor needs, Ōmi merchants continued to depend on Ainu for fishing. By the nineteenth century, trading posts collectively operated like a colonial enclave economy, whose primary function was to produce exports for the mainland, using a mix of free Wajin and semiservile Ainu labor.⁹³

In the western Ezochi, the declining Ainu population and increasing migration of Wajin workers began to transform labor practices at contract fisheries that had already grown in size and complexity. By the 1850s, the trading post of Takashima managed by Nishikawa had become a large manufacturing complex embracing multiple fisheries, where herring and other kinds of fish harvested in nearby waters were dried, salted, and rendered ashore. The trading post had an unjōya of 580 square meters in size; its grounds housed nineteen Ainu dwellings and eighty-two sheds of Wajin fishers and moored 206 fishing vessels.⁹⁴ Apart from the overseer and other full-time clerks who worked and slept on the premises, two categories of Wajin labored alongside Ainu at Takashima: skilled Japanese (including carpenters) were supplemented by migrant fishers from the Wajinchi, just as the local Ainu from the basho were joined by those hired or “loaned” from elsewhere to engage in fishing.⁹⁵

Exchanging or “loaning” Ainu labor between basho appears to have been quite common in the western Ezochi, where contractors “sometimes turned to their colleagues in the east” in the context of Ainu population decline.⁹⁶ In November 1833, for instance, the manager of the Usu fishery promised Nishikawa that he would send thirty Ainu men and ten Ainu women to Oshoro for herring fishing the next spring. Another contract, signed in May 1857, arranged to loan twenty Ainu workers from Shiraoi to Takashima for a period of three years for a total wage of sixty ryō—though much of this advanced payment was most likely pocketed by the fishery manager.⁹⁷

During the three months of the herring season, Takashima employed considerably more Ainu labor than other fisheries and mobilized them intensively from the beginning of harvest to the end of production. The rest of the Ainu residing in the basho performed a kind of corvée labor throughout the year: processing catches on shore, gathering firewood and timber in the mountains, and transporting earth and rocks. Ainu women were assigned to some of the work in the mountains and miscellaneous jobs around the unjōya, as well as delivery of goods to officials. For all the heavy demands on their labor, the Ainu were given very few holidays; apart from New Year, *umsa* (J., *omusha*), and festivals, they were allowed only about a week of break in January and again in December.⁹⁸

From early on, contract fisheries appointed Ainu men to leadership positions, not unlike “chiefs” invented in colonial Africa, to bring more indigenous people into the workforce.⁹⁹ As a form of remuneration, both titleholders and common Ainu were offered various material “gifts”—cotton cloth, rice, sake—at the *umsa* ceremony, held typically at the end of each fishing season.¹⁰⁰ *Umsa* was an integral part of the Japanese policy of accommodation, or “benevolent rule” (*kaihō* or *buiku*).¹⁰¹ From the time merchants took over the management of fisheries, they had pledged to “attend to the responsibilities of benevolent rule” and “avoid unjust conduct toward Ainu,” as phrased in a contract signed between Nishikawa Denemon and the Matsumae owner.¹⁰² After the Ezochi was placed under bakufu rule in 1799, *umsa* was transformed into an annual event to gather all the Ainu at the central office of a trading post, where they were read official rules and instructions¹⁰³ and were appointed to or dismissed from various posts, rewarded for good conduct, and so forth. In short, *umsa* functioned as a political lever for coopting and controlling the Ainu, “a ritual exchange of pledge between the ruler and the ruled” that empowered the Japanese to dispense their duty of benevolence by fiat.¹⁰⁴

Ōmi merchant contractors understood and exploited this mechanism to procure a steady supply of Ainu labor for their fisheries. In the case of the Tatsuki Shinsuke family, who had managed fisheries in the western Ezochi since the eighteenth century, generations of Shinsuke made sure to ship large quantities of rice and miso to each basho and “stock up daily necessities” for the purpose of “caring for Ainu,” to which “the natives [*dojin*] responded by submission,” according

to a family genealogy. Tatsuki was duly acknowledged for his contributions to “benevolent rule” by Matsumae and Hakodate officials.¹⁰⁵ By periodically dispensing “gifts” to Ainu—not only elders but widowers, filial sons and daughters, the sick and the old—the contractors subjected native men and women to continual exploitation in and around the fisheries.

Ainu labor was even more critical to the operation of distant fisheries in north-eastern Hokkaido, which were reached by few fishers from the Wajinchi. Around 1810, Shibatani Shirōbē, another contractor from Yanagawa, managed a total of nineteen trading posts from Kunashiri to Yamukushinai in the eastern Ezochi, employing 339 clerks. Each trading post hired a greater number of Ainu men and women from nearby *kotan* (Ainu villages)¹⁰⁶—typically in the hundreds, but at several basho in excess of a thousand. As for the trading posts facing the Sea of Okhotsk, Nemuro employed 1,163 Ainu (582 men and 581 women), and Yūbetsu 1,439 Ainu (715 men, 724 women). Ainu households in each fishery were settled in close proximity and kept under the unjōya’s watch as a reservoir of cheap labor.¹⁰⁷ As fishing became a year-round endeavor, Ainu huts became a permanent fixture; Monbetsu and Yūbetsu each counted some “50 Ainu huts” on the premises, reported Matsuura Takeshirō (1818–1888).¹⁰⁸ Merchant contractors also applied the Matsumae policy to restrict Ainu mobility within the Ezochi to their own trading posts. Fujino forbade Ainu in all his fisheries from “exchanging even a single product with seamen and others” or “visiting other basho” without the unjōya’s permission, declaring each a “punishable offense.”¹⁰⁹

After the Ezochi was “returned” to Matsumae rule in late 1821, the domain increased oversight of these fisheries located near the Russian border by dispatching functionaries from the newly created office of *kinban*.¹¹⁰ Under this system, managers of trading posts were required to obtain approval of kinban for administering all matters pertaining to Ainu—from the appointment of elders¹¹¹ and the “loan” of workers to outside fisheries to the provision of medicine and preventive measures against epidemics.¹¹² The traffic of paper to and from the office of kinban indicated that it had the teeth to enforce the principle of benevolent rule in the Nemuro fishery by the time Fujino Kihē took over its management in 1832.¹¹³ Ainu in these distant trading posts were mobilized extensively for coastal guard and defense, too. These duties at each basho fell to a heterogeneous group of Ainu, Japanese migrant fishers, and clerks of the fishery office, who worked at the behest of kinban officials. A greater number of local Ainu than Wajin, known by name to fishery managers, were appointed to assist kinban as lookouts and even interpreters.¹¹⁴

Fujino worked closely with the Hakodate magistrate and northeastern domains to reinforce security in the trading posts.¹¹⁵ However, the contractor apparently came to view the presence of officials in his fisheries as a nuisance. In 1849, Kihē IV, who had recently succeeded to the post of contractor, and his manager at the Nemuro fishery submitted a petition to the municipal authorities in Fukuyama.¹¹⁶

Not only did they request a reduction in the payment of fees to kinban officials, but they asked the authorities not to “interfere” in their governance of Ainu, suggesting local Ainu had been spoiled by “excessive official care and attention.” A family record elaborated later: “They [Ainu] lie to officials about matters, whether right or wrong, ranging from their contractor to their own well-being, and the officials believe what they say. Every time [that happened] officials would summon the contractor and interrogate him, and if he dared correct them, they would bristle at him for being disrespectful, or revoke his contract.” This was why Fujino and his manager asked the authorities to “leave the duty of caring for Ainu to the contractor entirely.”¹¹⁷

For their part, Matsumae officials were rather inconsistent in enforcing the principle of benevolent rule. Six years earlier, in 1843, when Fujino was entrusted with the management of the Etorofu fishery, the Matsumae lord in his correspondence licensed Fujino to treat the Ainu as he saw fit, “since, as you know, the Ainu are never satisfied no matter how well you treat them.”¹¹⁸ The authorities certainly appear to have adopted a policy of noninterference toward another trading post in Fujino’s hands, Monbetsu, where kinban were never dispatched. Fujino and his manager treated Monbetsu as nothing less than a “supplier” of seasonal Ainu labor. Free of bureaucratic oversight, the Monbetsu fishery was particularly notorious for shipping its Ainu workers to remote islands off the coast of the Ezochi. Since an epidemic in 1804 had wiped out much of the native population in Rishiri and adjacent Rebun(shiri), fishing labor on these islands was provided mostly by the Ainu dispatched from Monbetsu.¹¹⁹

Along with Monbetsu, Shari, another basho that fell under Fujino’s control, performed a similar function. When Fujino took over Kunashiri in 1817, he did not have enough workers to run it, so his manager “dispatched some people to Shari and recruited several dozen Ainu.” These Ainu were promptly relocated to the coasts of Kunashiri to “open several fisheries and engage in fishing” in addition to “tilling the soil.”¹²⁰ This makeshift practice appears to have become a seasonal regime of indentured labor by the time Matsuura Takeshirō visited the Ezochi on a state-sponsored mission in the late 1850s. In his interviews conducted with over one hundred Ainu, one aggrieved Ainu named Ukenashi, who worked in the Shari basho, detailed the horrifying excesses of Japanese fishery operators. Ainu men and women in the area, once they reached the age of sixteen or seventeen, were dispatched to the islands of Kunashiri and Rishiri for an indefinite period of what amounted to *de facto* slavery. Save in cases of illness, they were not permitted to return home or ever see their parents again by the contractor and his manager, who kept the able-bodied working into their thirties and forties. Overseers and Japanese fishermen also appropriated young Ainu women as their “concubines,” forcing them to abort when they became pregnant, while dispatching their husbands to far-off fisheries to exploit as they wished. The overworked Ainu who had fallen ill were not given any medicine or food and virtually left to

starve to death.¹²¹ Since the Ainu had last risen against the Japanese in this remote region, profit-seeking managers had clearly fallen back into the pattern of abuse, masked by their purported adherence to benevolent rule.

In 1855, prompted by rising Ainu hostility and a renewed concern for security after Perry's arrival, the bakufu brought the Ezochi once again under its direct control.¹²² Having reevaluated the merits of assimilation for national defense, Japanese authorities also reversed the earlier policy to now permit Ainu to marry outside the trading post, use rainwear and sandals, and learn and speak Japanese.¹²³ These measures implemented for the purpose of accommodation, however, did little to remedy the labor practices at many fisheries. Because the dispatching of Ainu labor could not be banned for managing distant fisheries, the bakufu instead required contractors to submit an "employment plan" for official approval. One such plan, submitted in July 1856 by the Sōya fishery's office, revealed a year-round regime of labor mobilization and transfers as hitherto pursued under Fujino's reign.

According to its outline, Ainu men and women from Monbetsu—108 in Sōya and 80 in Rishiri and Rebun—would all be gathered in Sōya after the summer fishing. Some 20 of these Ainu would be returned to Monbetsu for harvesting salmon, and the rest (some 160 workers) would be employed in fishing at Sōya. After that, about 70 Ainu would be shipped to Rishiri and Rebun for labor the following year, while another 20 in Sōya would be mobilized for winter work. The rest would be returned to Monbetsu, but the fishery hoped to dispatch them again to Sōya or Rishiri and Rebun as soon as the start of the new year.

A draconian schedule to keep the Ainu labor lashed to a mechanism of extraction was not limited to Fujino's fisheries. The following October, the Hakodate magistrate was compelled to issue yet another set of instructions, having already admonished basho contractors on the proper ways to trade with, hire, and compensate the Ainu.¹²⁴ His statement explicitly banning "exploitation" was directed at contractors of Monbetsu as well as Ishikari and Teshio—places the magistrate singled out for "the most relentless use of Ainu labor." Repeated official injunctions against abandoning the obligations of benevolence betrayed the fact that contractors kept defying them, following their own rules of conduct. This, in turn, underscored the official inability to fully rein in the merchants, who kept the government financially afloat, baring the fraught nature of the contract-fishery regime, where the state acted as but a fitful arbiter of native affairs. In truth, the Matsumae economy had become too reliant on fisheries and their operators to abolish this system of revenue generation, even though identified as the root cause of Ainu misery. The bakufu acknowledged as much.

It was for this reason that the bakufu blamed the brutality of individual contractors without entirely dismantling the system, which was kept in all but two basho after 1865. One of these two trading posts was Otarunai, long entrusted to the Ōmi merchant Okada Yasoji. As the Hakodate magistrate explained,¹²⁵ what impelled the abolition of basho contracting in Otarunai was none other than its

manager, Okada Hanbē. Among his many crimes the magistrate detailed, Hanbē was “stingy and cruel” and “poisonous in the extreme in his treatment of natives as well as [Wajin] settlers.” “Steeped in old customs, Hanbē gave no thought to promoting people’s welfare,” his selfish pursuit of profit at odds with the bakufu policy to develop and assimilate Hokkaido to the mainland. Prompted as well by the fishery’s swelling population,¹²⁶ Okada was discharged as a contractor, and Otarunai transformed into an administrative equivalent of a village on the mainland.¹²⁷

If the villainous deeds of managers like Okada ran afoul of the policy of “caring for Ainu,” one might pause here to recall that they also sat awkwardly with the very code of conduct Ōmi merchants had set down in their family creeds (see chapter 1). For the duration of its century-long tenure as a basho contractor, the Okada family is known to have been among the most faithful followers of Ōmi customs and precepts.¹²⁸ So how to reconcile the realities of abuse in fisheries with Ōmi merchants’ professed commitment to ethical commerce rooted in their Shin Buddhist belief? The family records of Fujino and Tatsuki pass no comment on the ethics of using Ainu labor; merchant contractors likely regarded provision of material goods, especially rice, as a gesture of altruism to Ainu, though these goods were essentially wages owed for their fishery labor.¹²⁹ As entrepreneurial outsiders in Matsumae, as in other business locales, Ōmi merchants also displayed their gratitude to the host society through donations and various acts of philanthropy in times of fire or famine.¹³⁰ But such efforts to gain acceptance from strangers, the sine qua non of diasporic commerce, appear to have lost their cultural meaning beyond the boundaries of the Wajinchi. As scholars have noted, the Ainu existed outside the social categories of the Tokugawa status order that was premised on a binary division between the civilized and the barbarian.¹³¹ Records of fishery practices suggest this perception informed the Japanese treatment of Ainu everywhere, with no scruples about labor abuse. Like status categories, central tenets of ethical commerce in Ōmi were upheld within the civilized confines of Wajinchi—but if they ever were extended to the Ezochi, it was only in the prescribed form of gift giving, divested of religious meaning and subsumed under the political strategy of “benevolent rule.”

Yet, as recent studies remind us, the Ainu were not docile labor at the contractor’s disposal. Hints of resistance in the form of attempted escape or work sabotage were recorded in a journal kept by the office of the Takashima fishery. One of the most daring acts of defiance occurred in April 1866, when a twenty-seven-year-old man named Sehoki ran away from the fishery. Having evaded capture for nearly two months, Sehoki was finally discovered in Shiraoi, about fifty miles away from Takashima.¹³² At a time when contractors were faced with a looming labor shortage, individual actions of Ainu like Sehoki’s could short-circuit, if not completely subvert, the operation of a contract fishery.

A singular focus on tragedy also prevents us from seeing how the Ainu seized on opportunities, however fleeting, to trade in the more open waters outside the

control of merchant contractors. As early as 1807, the Ishikari Ainu were reported to be selling their salmon catches to commercial vessels. Although the Yoichi Ainu were prohibited by their contractor from doing so, many nonetheless operated beyond his grasp, trading secretly with junks and boats plying to and from the fishery. They even ventured to other trading posts, especially Oshoro, to harvest salmon or herring, using their distinctive fishing methods.¹³³ At the Sōya fishery, some Ainu men proactively took on seasonal fishing labor and turned a profit, exchanging their catches with the basho contractor for mainland goods.¹³⁴ Examples of such enterprising Ainu, using their own boats and vernacular knowledge of fishing, abounded in the 1850s, showing a segment of the Ainu population remained unconquered, carrying on their way of life in the interstices and margins of the contract-fishery regime.

THE ROLE OF MERCHANT CAPITAL IN COLONIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Ainu refusal to surrender autonomy, however, was far outpaced by the changes wrought by the Japanese on their land and sea. As so often in colonial archives, the narrative of “development” (*kaitaku*), along with the trope of “abundance” in resources, reigns in Japanese records of early modern Hokkaido. Ōmi shōnin figure prominently in these accounts as trailblazers who pushed the edge of civilization into the northern borderland, where barbarism had prevailed and riches had long lain untapped.¹³⁵ The families of Fujino, Nishikawa, and Okada were among the most avid chroniclers of their role in ushering Hokkaido into modernity. Not only did they contribute to developing the Wajinchi as an economic and cultural extension of the mainland; they also used their wealth and power to transform trading posts into towns and transportation hubs—relatively fixed infrastructures that provide “a geographical scaffolding for the circulation of labor-power, commodities and capital on multiple scales.”¹³⁶ Through the territorialization of capital, Ōmi merchant contractors laid the foundations for territorial colonization of Hokkaido, blazing a trail for Japan’s modern state and capitalists to follow.

As seen in colonial frontiers, from the American West to the Sino-Mongolian borderland, towns and infrastructure in Hokkaido grew in tandem with trade and resource rushes. Stores run by big merchants from Ōmi and smaller merchants from Hokuriku and Tōhoku were the lifeblood of the castle town of Fukuyama. Wholesale and warehouse merchants also formed guilds, and others opened inns to assist their activities, marketing products freshly harvested in the Wajinchi or ferried from the Ezochi. The growth and settlement of these migrants brought greater stability to the domain, as indicated by the rise in home ownership among Ōmi merchants.¹³⁷ Powerful merchants from Ōmi and elsewhere also served in the upper echelons of municipal administration as town elders (*machidoshiyori*). They supervised townspeople and distributed ordinances at the behest of a

magistrate,¹³⁸ an intermediary role similarly performed by Shanxi merchants in the frontier entrepôt of Hohhot, who helped integrate the northern borderland into the Qing regime.¹³⁹

By the late eighteenth century, as many a visitor noted, the three ports of Matsumae bustled with commercial vessels from the mainland, even as far as Shikoku and Kyūshū. The traffic of migrants, ships, and goods had created a channel through which cultures of various provinces flowed into the Wajinchi. Furukawa Koshōken, who joined a party of bakufu inspectors to visit the Japanese enclave in 1788, marveled at its growing prosperity in his *Tōyū zakki*. Among the townspeople in Esashi, he wrote, one sees no signs of “the hinterland” but rather refined “customs of the Kyoto-Osaka region,” transmitted by merchants from Ōmi and its vicinity. Furukawa noted the good quality of housing, people, and language spoken in Esashi and Fukuyama, unrivaled by other places he had passed through since departing from Edo.¹⁴⁰

Like diasporic traders elsewhere, merchants of Ōmi also brought mainland gods and deities with them. Temples and shrines were “diasporic institutions” of equal importance to lineage or native-place associations through which migrants maintained spiritual ties to the homeland.¹⁴¹ Devout followers of Shin Buddhism, Ōmi merchants founded a branch temple of Nishi-Honganji in Esashi (Esashi Betsuin), whose edifice was reportedly made of lumber shipped from the home province.¹⁴² In 1864, when a fortress was erected in Hakodate to guard the Tokugawa realm against foreign incursion, Fujino and other merchants provided the funds for constructing a Tōshōgū shrine in its vicinity to worship the Tōshō Daigongen (Tokugawa Ieyasu posthumously deified) as “a tutelary god for the land of Ezo.”¹⁴³

Merchant contractors, as agents of the state, also helped carry its territorializing impulse into the Ezochi. Although the authorities never systematically promoted its settlement, migrant fishers began creating “permanent fishing villages” on the western seaboard of Hokkaido.¹⁴⁴ And when it became officially permissible in the mid-1850s, the bakufu and Matsumae domain ordered managers and overseers to relocate their wives and children from the mainland to their trading posts, not least as a means of preventing their mistreatment of Ainu women as “concubines.”¹⁴⁵

Basho contractors, for their part, refashioned their fisheries into coastal labor enclaves, using their own money and manpower to build physical infrastructures for more efficient extraction and processing of marine resources. In the western Ezochi, Ōmi merchants like Nishikawa and Tatsuki invested heavily on transport systems—roads, mountain passes, levees, bridges—to link fisheries scattered along the coast, in the hope of reducing periods of overland transport and regulating flows between land and sea. At the behest of the Hakodate magistrate, Fujino Kihē also reclaimed a swath of land that sprawled from the trade office of the Nemuro fishery to the southern Pacific coast and further to Atsubetsu in the west.¹⁴⁶ Making these investments to reshape the land and tighten its linkage with its maritime surroundings so as to “speed up the spatial circulation of commodities” was key to enhancing profitability and capital accumulation.¹⁴⁷

The opening of Otaru was credited to two basho contractors, Okada Yazaemon and Nishikawa Denemon, their stores “standing face to face astride the Okobachi River,” which flowed through the heart of the emergent port town.¹⁴⁸ When Matsumoto Kichibē, a vassal of the Akita domain, visited Otarunai around 1859, he found the fishery astir with “thousands of merchants” running dry-goods stores, groceries, inns, and restaurants, which had replaced the temporary street stalls of earlier years. He counted a total of five towns, ringed by outlying districts that included an Ainu *kotan* (village), a prostitution quarter, and three temples, and as many as five hundred houses within the precincts. The office of the trading post exuded affluence of its own. Having plenty of “beautiful” rooms with wide corridors and surrounded by a dozen warehouses, Matsumoto wrote, the unjōya’s grand structure housed a legion of overseers where “even servants and wives all look prosperous.”¹⁴⁹

Like the three ports of the Wajinchi, fisheries of the Ezochi were increasingly dotted with religious sites to perform rituals transplanted from the mainland. Many Inari shrines in Hokkaido trace their origins to crude edifices built by basho contractors and their managers to pray for safe and bountiful harvests. One shrine in Kamoenai Village, attributed to Tatsuki Shinsuke, was reportedly constructed by transferring the “deity of Itsukushima” from the Inland Sea of Japan; “fishermen’s families as well as Ainu were made to worship” the deity as a tutelary spirit of the fishery.¹⁵⁰ A network of ancestor worship stretched from Ise Shrine in central Japan to reach the remotest island of Rishiri, where, under Fujino Kihē’s reign, Kitami Shrine was built to enshrine the sun goddess Amaterasu.¹⁵¹

By the early nineteenth century, Matsumae’s Wajinchi had become a mosaic of provincial Japan, where the urbane “culture of the Kyoto region imported by big merchants from Ōmi” melded with the coastal culture of Hokuriku sailors and Tōhoku peasant-fishers.¹⁵² But development was only half the story. The grafting of mainland institutions went hand in glove with the uprooting of Ainu communities. The steady influx of capital and migrants eroded Ainu’s traditional economy, transforming their lands and increasing their appetite for Japanese goods, which pushed many Ainu into a cycle of fishery labor. This inexorable process of cultural disintegration, chronicled by Brett Walker, was punctuated by periodic outbreaks of smallpox and other epidemics, making Ainu one more peripheral community in a global story of ecological upheaval.¹⁵³ By the time Fujino Kihē took over the management of Nemuro in 1832, the local Ainu population had fallen by fully 40 percent since 1808, from 1,219 to 741. In the next twenty-five years under his reign, some inland *kotan* near the fishery vanished altogether. The Akkeshi Ainu had registered an even more precipitous drop to total a mere 200-odd by the 1850s.¹⁵⁴ Matsuura Takeshirō, however, attributed these signs of depopulation not to cycles of epidemics but to the cruelty of basho contractors, who left the Ainu with few alternative means of sustenance.

In sum, the relentless drive of merchant capital and the territorializing impulse of the early modern state conjoined in the basho contracting system to lay not only

the basis for Japan's pelagic empire but much of the groundwork for full colonization of Ainu lands and people. So enfeebled were the Ainu by the end of Tokugawa rule, indeed, that the new Meiji government could assert its sovereignty over their lands "with little resistance" from below.¹⁵⁵ Viewed as "a dying race," the Ainu were subjected to the demographic fate of being assimilated or annihilated in the course of Japan's full embrace of capitalism. As Cedric Robinson once provocatively observed in the context of the Atlantic world, the advent of capitalism extended, rather than displaced, feudal social relations into modern forms of racial difference and bondage.¹⁵⁶ The post-Tokugawa story of Ainu in the Pacific world would seem to support Robinson's contention, illustrating an inextricable link between racial capitalism ("the entanglements of racial differentiation and capital accumulation"¹⁵⁷) and settler colonialism. Historians of Hokkaido have called attention to a similar relationship between settler colonization and primitive accumulation, treating both as part of the Meiji policy to build a "capitalist nation-state" by mobilizing "farmer-soldiers" (*tondenhei*).¹⁵⁸ When taking account of its prehistory and the role of private capital, however, we are compelled to view, from the perspective of the racialized Ainu, that their condition of bondage neither started nor ended with the modern regime that embraced Western ideas of capitalist modernity and "American-style settler colonialism as a model for national development."¹⁵⁹ More accurately, the Meiji modernizers inherited from their Tokugawa predecessors a changing geography of commerce and industry, along with a community ensnared in a mechanism of accumulation and exploitation. The co-colonization of Hokkaido, instigated and sponsored by feudal power in alliance with merchants, continued into the Meiji era, just as a racialized system of surplus extraction persisted under the guise of freedom.

THE END OF BASHO CONTRACTING IN THE MEIJI ERA

By the mid-nineteenth century, the three merchant contractors from Ōmi—Nishikawa, Okada, and Fujino—had established themselves as fishing entrepreneurs, living a life ensconced in wealth from the Hokkaido trade. But their status began to falter after the Tokugawa shogunate ended its two and a half centuries of rule. The most significant setback was the loss of their basho contractor's status. On the heels of the Meiji Restoration, the system of contract fisheries was dismantled across the island by the newly established Hokkaido Development Agency (Kaitakushi). For a while, the former contractors continued operating fisheries as before, many in their new capacity as agents of the Kaitakushi.¹⁶⁰ But their share of catches continued to fall as migrant fishers flooded into the area to pursue herring with pound traps. Their difficulties only grew after 1870, when merchant contractors were stripped of their right to collect access fees on which their business had come to depend.¹⁶¹ As the partnership of merchant capital and feudal power

dissolved, unleashing new forces and competitors in Hokkaido, the performance of fisheries managed by the three Ōmi merchants began to fluctuate wildly, while their shipping business stagnated.¹⁶²

During these volatile years, Fujino and Nishikawa consolidated land-sea linkages in their family business by further advancing a strategy of vertical integration between Hokkaido and Kansai.¹⁶³ At the same time, they responded to new uncertainties in the fishing industry by diversifying. They branched out into retail commerce and canning, invested in steamship lines, and forayed into farming, taking part in the Kaitakushi's land development projects in Hokkaido.¹⁶⁴ The most enterprising was Nishikawa family under Teijirō (the tenth head, 1858–1924), who also participated in the state project of deep-sea fishing in northern waters, one of the first ventures of Japan's pelagic empire.¹⁶⁵

After the turn of the century, however, signs of strain in their fishery business became ever apparent, and diversification began to yield a diminishing rate of return. To avert further losses, both Fujino and Nishikawa over the next decades drastically scaled back their operation of fisheries and other new areas of investment.¹⁶⁶ In the most spectacular sign of all, the Okada family became effectively bankrupt in 1901. The seeds of Okada's descent had been sown when it lost the two fisheries of Otarunai and Furubira, which had claimed the lion's share of family income. Like Nishikawa and Fujino, Okada made a foray into new ventures such as farming and steamship service, but few generated expected returns on costly investment. Okada also engaged in some fishing in Southern Sakhalin, but the Russian ban on the entry of Japanese fishers in 1899 cut off a crucial source of income, making it impossible for the family to stay in business.¹⁶⁷

WHITHER ŌMI SHŌNIN?

The three former contractors in Hokkaido represented a cross-section of Ōmi merchants, navigating a tectonic shift from the era of feudal patronage to one of free-market exchange. Their colleagues elsewhere in Japan similarly struggled through the transition. Big merchants, first of all, were mired in the political turmoil that marked the final years of Tokugawa rule. Some fell victim to a spate of violence carried out by imperial loyalists, following the 1860 assassination of Ii Naosuke (lord of Hikone and then chief minister of the shogunate), who had signed a treaty with the United States to open Japan's ports, without the court's approval. In Nihonbashi in Edo, a traditional turf of Ōmi shōnin, some two hundred *rōnin* broke into merchant houses and exacted funds for "chastising the barbarians" from across the Pacific. Chōjiya Ginzaburō (of Chōgin) was among the merchants in Kyoto and Osaka targeted for attack by a roaming band of *rōnin* for their "crime" of selling imported goods. These shop owners pleaded for life, as a fellow merchant recorded in his diary, pledging not to trade with foreigners in Yokohama and Nagasaki.¹⁶⁸

Many merchants, too, bore the costs of the civil war that ensued. Those tied to domainal treasuries, like Nakai Genzaemon who had lent his services to the Sendai domain, were forced to meet the hefty demands for war funds and after the fighting ended in 1869, to settle debts with the new Meiji government. If Nakai's demise was collateral damage of the political revolution, others fell prey to more far-reaching realignments in the economy. In Osaka and other cities, the rise of new entrepreneurs forced many Ōmi merchants to downsize or close their stores altogether.¹⁶⁹ But perhaps the greatest existential threat came with the advent of the telegraph. As noted, the advantages of *mochikudari* lay in its practitioners' ability to seize access to market information ahead of others in the parcellized geography of early modern commerce. In the age of time-space compression, however, merchants everywhere "knew prices in markets at the port of destination before they shipped their goods"; corporeal goods began to be traded as "conceptual entities," "abstract[ing] financial exchange from the space-time of the physical economy."¹⁷⁰ As the prospect of exploiting regional disparities further dimmed with the spatial integration of markets and commodity prices around the globe,¹⁷¹ Ōmi shōnin were stripped of their competitive edge—indeed, their *raison d'être* as diasporic traders.

The eclipsed status of Ōmi merchants appeared to mirror that of their province, renamed Shiga Prefecture in 1872. The official removal of the national capital to Tokyo had the effect of relegating Shiga to a periphery on the new map of Japan, spawning a rumor, taken seriously by local leaders, that Shiga would soon be merged with Kyoto.¹⁷² Nowhere was this more manifest than in the prefectural capital of Ōtsu, whose long-held status as a regional transport hub plummeted after the 1889 opening of the Tōkaidō Railway, which bypassed the city. With downward trends pronounced everywhere by a harnessing of regions to a nationally scaled regime of accumulation, contemporary observers lamented the apparent inaction of local merchants, whose skills began to atrophy.¹⁷³ Their decline seemed to present a sharp contrast to the rise of the House of Mitsui and other "political merchants," many already established in Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto, who amassed even greater wealth by forging personal and preferential ties to the new Meiji leadership. Some families skillfully parlayed government favor and enterprises they received into huge financial and industrial combines, known as *zaibatsu*, by the 1910s.¹⁷⁴ Even the largest merchants of Ōmi, who had served as purveyors and moneylenders to provincial lords, did not have the job security and opportunities enjoyed by these political merchants spawned by the Meiji state policy and patronage.¹⁷⁵

At first glance, the story of Ōmi merchants after the fall of the Tokugawa seems to parallel the fate of trading diasporas around the world. As Philip D. Curtin has claimed, the early modern diasporas of Armenians, Sephardic Jews, and others ceased to play a role as they transitioned to the twentieth century: they "worked themselves out of existence" "as [increased] commercial ties reduced the cultural

differences that called them into being in the first place.” In other words, the contraction of space and time lessened the need for cross-cultural brokerage in the dawning age of global capitalism.¹⁷⁶ But after a period of grave uncertainty, Ōmi merchants and their descendants, in fact, enjoyed a long afterlife to join Japan’s new entrepreneurial class and stay relevant in myriad ways overlooked by scholars.

In the early Meiji period, many Ōmi merchants like Fujino and Nishikawa launched a flurry of initiatives in and out of Shiga, creating banks, trading corporations, and modern factories at the encouragement of the governor.¹⁷⁷ Although most of these early ventures were short-lived, they pushed past the growing pains to keep pace with the new era. Hino merchants revived their fraternal organization, publishing a roster of designated inns along the Ise highway in 1875.¹⁷⁸ Impoverished samurai sent their sons to apprentice with merchant families, while enterprising locals strove to modernize Ōmi’s cottage industries, from hemp cloth and mosquito nets to the silk crêpe and velvet of Nagahama.¹⁷⁹ These efforts were followed by larger initiatives of national importance in the textile industry, as we will see.¹⁸⁰

Rather than the last gasp of Ōmi shōnin, these activities should be seen as the beginning of a new chapter in their long history of enterprise. For if some merchants still fell by the wayside, an even greater number expanded their business activity after the last samurai revolt against the new government was crushed in 1877.¹⁸¹ According to local gazetteers, merchants from the three districts of Echi, Kanzaki, and Gamō opened nearly a thousand stores outside Shiga (table 1).¹⁸² They were concentrated in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto but also spread over the archipelago, with a significant cluster in the new frontier towns of Hokkaido, where merchants kept arriving from Ōmi, “with a momentum far surpassing those from other provinces.”¹⁸³ The historical mobility of Ōmi people also persisted in an outflow of young workers and sojourners outside the prefecture.¹⁸⁴ More notable, though far less acknowledged, were the forty-eight who moved abroad to open business in Korea, Manchuria, China, and Taiwan. Nine provincials had even ventured across the ocean to set up shop in North and South America.¹⁸⁵

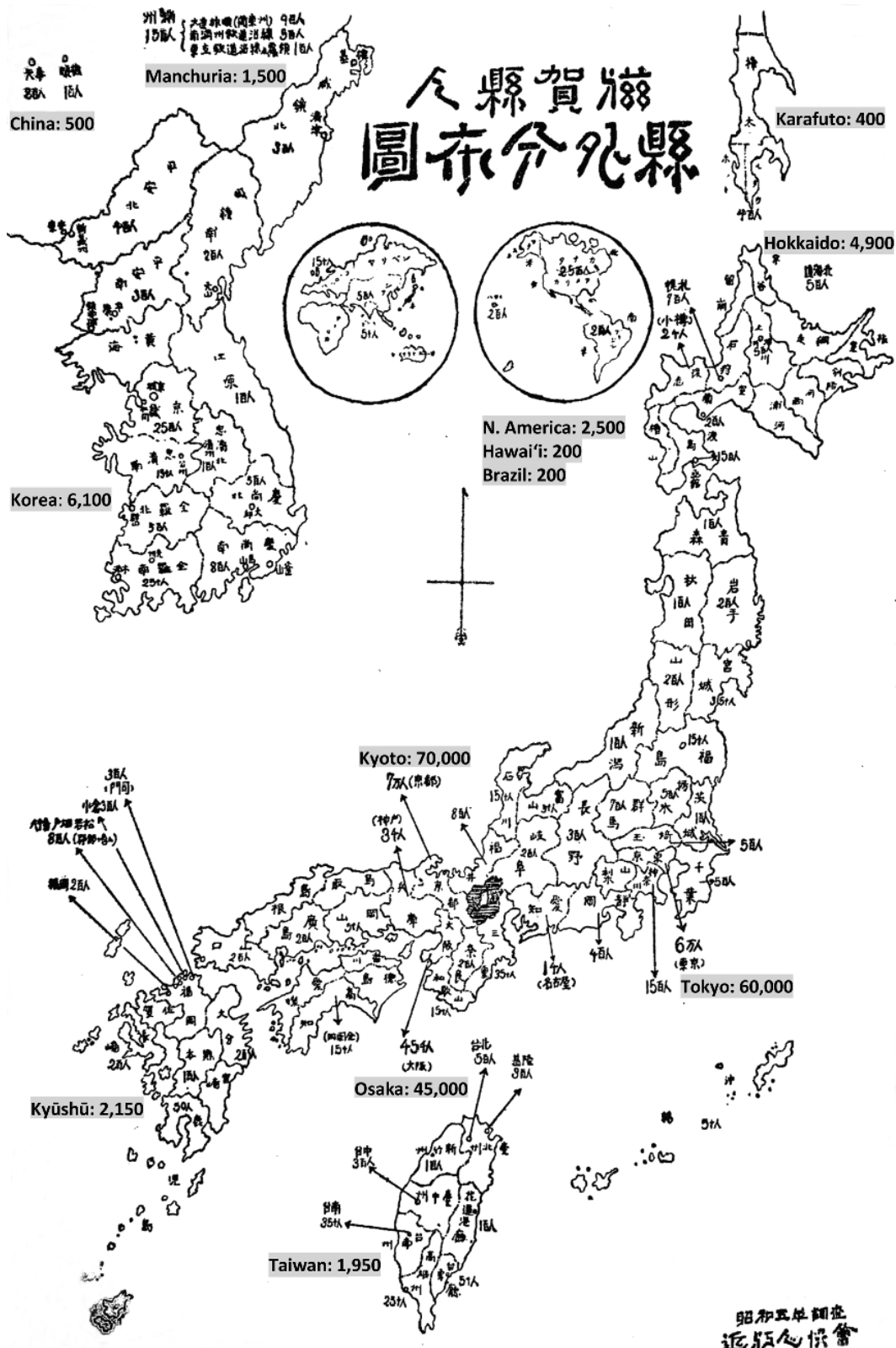
These statistics begin to tell a story of a larger community of Ōmi natives who looked beyond Hokkaido to pursue new opportunities in the broader Pacific world. Tracing their footsteps—as one native-place Association of Ōmi People did in 1930 (map 5)—reveals that a significant number operated at the front lines of export and import trade (chapter 5) and retail commerce (chapter 6) in colonial East Asia as well as Southeast Asia, where, as Seoka Makoto has observed, the “far-flung orientation” of Ōmi shōnin found its utmost manifestation.¹⁸⁶ A new breed of Ōmi shōnin were also annually dispatched by local schools to the Chinese continent for commercial research and training (chapter 4). Fewer merchants journeyed to North America, but their entire village might follow them to form a sizable community of immigrants who engaged in commerce and labor as proud sons and daughters of Ōmi (chapter 7).

TABLE 1 Stores opened outside the prefecture by merchants of the Echi, Kanzaki, and Gamō districts

Location and period ^a	Echi			Kanzaki			Gamō			Total
	Tokugawa	Meiji	Taishō	Tokugawa	Meiji	Taishō	Tokugawa	Meiji	Taishō	
Osaka		41	73	3	33	36	4	24		204
Tokyo	2	44	61	4	47	35	11	12	1	217
Kyoto	2	22	38	4	42	28	5	5		146
Hokkaido/Karafuto		28	9		30	16	1	14		98
Tōhoku		1	1		2		3			8
Kantō		13	17	2	8	10	88	64	5	207
Chūbu	1	14	12		5	4	21	17	3	77
Kinki	1	9	8		5	6		6		35
Chūgoku/Shikoku		2	3			2		1		8
Kyūshū		24	16		3	4		3		50
Asia										48
China		1				1			1	
Manchuria		2	4		2	1		3		
Korea		7	4		10	6		3		
Taiwan			1		2					
America										9
United States			1		1			1		
Canada		2	2			1				
Peru		1								
TOTAL	7	211	250	13	190	150	133	143	10	1,107

SOURCE: Adapted from table 1 in Suenaga 1997, 2, with data from the following sources: Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 308–42; Ōhashi Kimzō (jō-kan) 1928, 1195–218; Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken), vol. 5 (1922), 881–97.

^aTokugawa (1603–1867); Meiji (1868–1912); Taishō (1912–1926).



MAP 5. A transpacific diaspora of Shiga people (based on survey conducted in 1930 by the Association of Ōmi People). Source: Ōmijin Kyōkai 1930.

At the same time, what it meant to be a merchant from Ōmi changed as Japan began to project its power through these border-crossing activities. Traders and business owners abroad saw themselves as modern stewards of what they upheld as “Ōmi merchant tradition,” peddling mass consumer goods on supranational scales in service of their empire. Some in textile trade undertook a more fundamental rescaling from commercial to industrial capital. And many Shiga natives ventured across the Pacific, with a new claim to Ōmi’s entrepreneurial inheritance. The chapters that follow are, therefore, concerned less with how local practices and values remained intact after 1868 than with how they were reshaped, repurposed, and mobilized by people of Ōmi descent for the novel goal of overseas expansion.

The very term *Ōmi shōnin* took shape in the context of their burgeoning engagement with the transoceanic world, another point missed by the simple narrative of decay. Used interchangeably with *Gōshū shōnin*, the term entered the popular Japanese lexicon most likely in the Meiji period, becoming a cultural pronoun in use ever since. So did the past exploits of Ōmi merchants gain renewed significance on the cusp of Japan’s global emergence. One man of letters, born and raised in Ōmi, used the new power of the press to direct public attention away from Hokkaido to the southern waters of Nan’yō as the “proper orientation” for Japanese activity.¹⁸⁷ Mapping a grand vision of maritime Japan, he also gave voice to the hope of local boosters in Shiga that the famed merchants from east of Lake Biwa would resurrect their economic preeminence in Asia and in the far corners of the world. It is with this vision that we begin our exploration of the transpacific diaspora of Ōmi people.

PART TWO

Ōmi Merchants as a Model
of Expansion

A Vision of Transpacific Expansion from the Periphery

In late nineteenth-century Japan—between the time the country fully opened its ports to trade and the time it began building oceangoing steamers in its own shipyards—empire was a fertile ground for imagination. One place that loomed large in Meiji colonial discourse was Nan'yō (the “South Seas”). Its distant promise as a tropical utopia inspired a flurry of writing, firsthand as well as fictional, about southbound voyages to islands “still unclaimed” on the map of the globe. “Our future lies not in the north, but in the south, not on the continent, but on the ocean,” journalist Takekoshi Yosaburō declared in a popular account of his 1909 journey to Nan'yō, urging his readers to join in the grand task “to turn the Pacific into a Japanese lake.”¹ But Takekoshi's famed call for southern advance (*nanshin*) was built on a generation of Japanese thinkers before him—many all but forgotten—who had begun to outline strategies for transforming their insular nation into a maritime empire.

One of the young visionaries who gave shape to such hazy dreams of overseas glory was Sugiura Shigetake (also Jūgō; fig. 3). Born and raised in the province of Ōmi, Sugiura was one of the earliest Japanese to advocate expansion beyond the colonization of Hokkaido. In contrast to his better-known contemporaries such as Takekoshi, Sugiura “operated behind the spotlight” for most of his life as a “hidden patriot,” according to one biography. Yet his career arc reveals a man who imposed his vision everywhere on the Meiji public sphere, serving as educator, journalist, Diet member, nationalist, and Pan-Asianist before spending his last years as an ethics tutor to Crown Prince Hirohito.² Of the many identities Sugiura donned, his role as an early exponent of empire remains most unexplored, in spite of the fact that his ideas filled the national dailies he edited in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

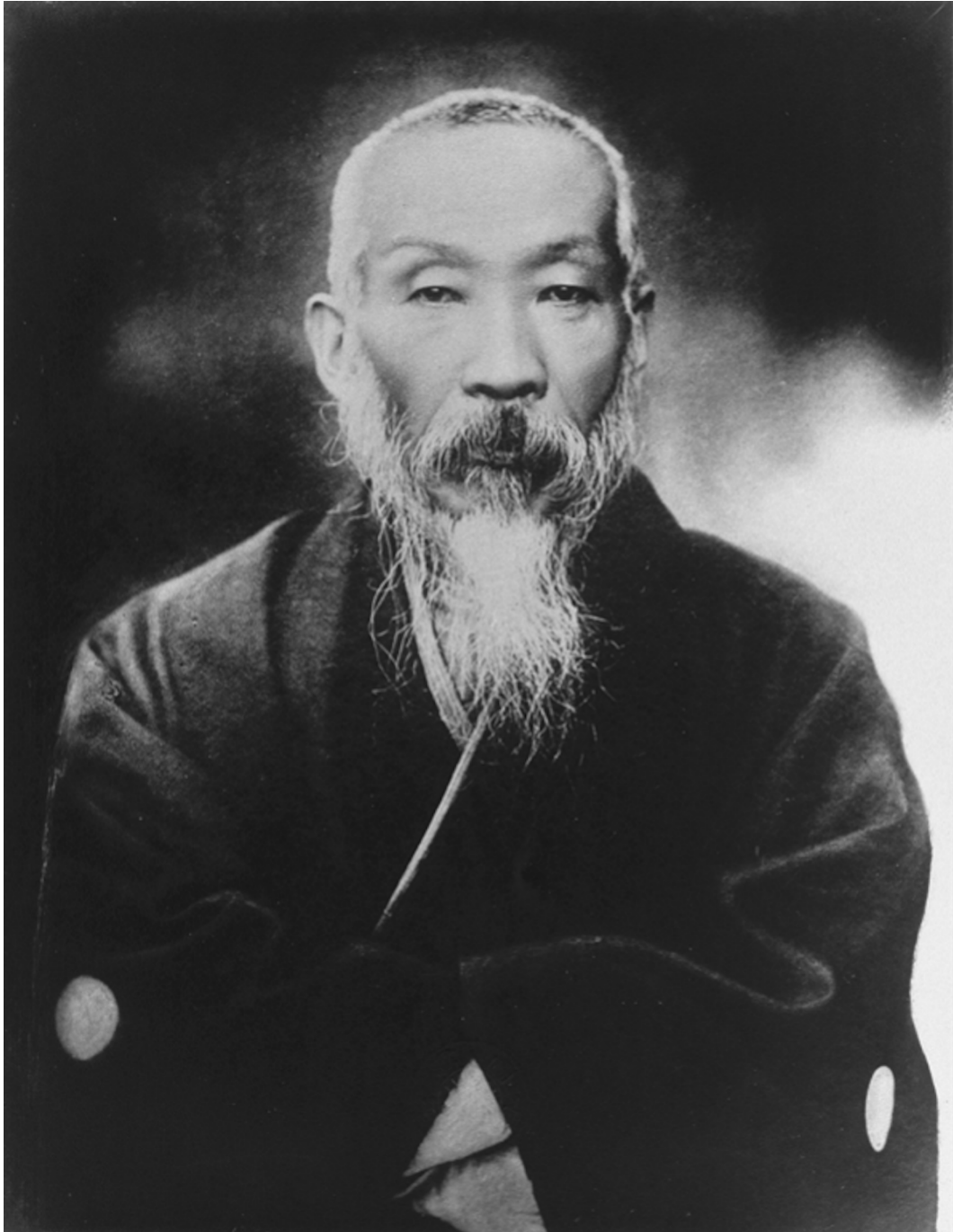


FIGURE 3. Sugiura Shigetake (Jūgō). Source: *Kinsei meishi shashin, sono 2* (Osaka: Kinsei Meiji Shashin Hanpukai, 1935), National Diet Library Online, Japan.

In outlining a possible route of expansion to the south and across the Pacific, Sugiura brought a vast array of territories within his purview, from the islands of Micronesia to South America. More often than others, however, he looked at the world of empire through a provincial lens rather than the familiar eyes of Tokyo. At a time when national attention was riveted on the West, Sugiura turned to unlikely

sources of inspiration for expansion: merchants in his native home of Ōmi and their Chinese counterparts across the sea. In addition to pairing these diasporic traders as a model of mercantilist expansion, he placed socially marginalized communities known as *burakumin*, another carry-over from the early modern era, at the heart of his proposal for southern advance. Taken together, Sugiura's writings offered a vision of provincializing "expansion" across the sea, where the nation's new peripheries, rather than the metropolis, would play a leading role. It was, above all, a call to action directed at fellow natives of Ōmi: to reenact their legacy of diasporic commerce on the global stage of capitalist and imperial expansion.

SUGIURA'S EARLY LIFE AND JAPANISM

Sugiura was born in 1855 to a Confucian scholar in Zeze domain of Ōmi Province.³ Having studied both the Chinese classics and Dutch learning, he was selected by the domain in 1870 to advance to Daigaku Nankō (forerunner of Tokyo Imperial University), where the brightest students assembled from around the country. His cohort included Komura Jutarō (1855–1911), a "trusted friend" who would later join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From 1876 to 1880, Sugiura studied chemistry in England as one of ten exchange students dispatched by the Ministry of Education. Four years abroad helped seed the ideology he would come to call "Japanism" (*Nihonshugi*). As he later reminisced, "I studied extremely hard, with a belief that it was necessary to learn Western culture and institutions in order to uplift the Japanese from their savage status, while also nurturing their Yamato spirit to keep off the Westerners." Reflective of his own eclectic learning, his Japanism would stress a practical fusion of the two—"kokusui hozon, gaisui yu'nyū" (preservation of national essence, importation of foreign essence)—as a key strategy of national strengthening.⁴ This idea of braiding new and old would similarly infuse his vision for Ōmi merchants and their descendants.

During his overseas study, Sugiura developed a "conviction to pursue education as a career," which began shortly after his return in 1880. Sugiura established two schools that would define his life's work as the "Educator of Meiji." One was Japan Middle School (formerly Tokyo English Institute), which was, in both nomenclature and curriculum, an institutional emblem of his Japanist pedagogy. Another was Shōkō Academy, which he opened at his abode in Tokyo. One of many private academies run by Meiji-era nationalists, Shōkō Academy gathered local youths, joined by many aspirants from Shiga prefecture, to study and live together in a dormitory.⁵ Its illustrious graduates included Yamamoto Jōtarō (1867–1936) who, after a long career with Mitsui Bussan, actively cooperated with Japan's hardline policy toward China as a member of the Seiyūkai and president of the South Manchurian Railway Company in the late 1920s.⁶

In addition to managing the two schools, Sugiura forayed into journalism, becoming a chief columnist for *Yomiuri shinbun* in 1885. He devoted the next

several years to writing editorials to disseminate his ideas of Japanism, as well as to denounce the Meiji state's compromised approach to revising the unequal treaties with the West. Like-minded young conservatives soon gathered around Sugiura to organize the Seikyōsha (Society for Political Education). It became an influential platform through which they castigated the oligarchs for falling short of abolishing extraterritoriality, warned against rampant Westernization, and argued for "Japanism at all costs" to put an end to Japan's self-colonization.⁷

After a brief stint in politics as a Diet representative from Shiga in 1890, a disaffected Sugiura resumed his attack on the government as an associate editor for *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*. This time he targeted the issue of "mixed residence" (*naichi zakkyo*), or the freedom of foreigners to reside in Japan's interior, which had been set forward by the Western powers as a precondition for treaty reform. To prepare for this prospect, he stressed, "nurturing the spirit of independence among the people" and "expanding armaments" were national priorities. When Japan signed a new treaty in 1894, he added its "urgent need" to cultivate industrial strength so as to "compete with [foreigners] in commerce and manufacturing." All these goals of national self-strengthening could be advanced by a mass effort of the Japanese to expand overseas, Sugiura argued. So did members of the Seikyōsha. They called for exporting more Japanese goods, capital, and people, as their concern increasingly shifted from a search for *kokusui* (national essence) to its diffusion across Asia.⁸

JAPAN AS A MARITIME EMPIRE AND ŌMI MERCHANTS AS PIONEERS

By the time Meiji Japan joined the race for overseas markets and territories, the world seemed entirely dominated by Western powers, leaving few uncharted lands to the new entrant. This did not deter the Japanese from giving free rein to their imagination, however. Seeing the ocean as a global arena of national ascendancy, Meiji political leaders, military officers, and opinion makers brought a wide range of lands under their scrutiny as potential markets and sites of migration and labor—not only East Asia, but also the South Pacific, Southeast Asia, Australia, and Central and South America. From their writings emerged a new understanding of Japan as a transoceanic empire: one that would dominate the Pacific through a network of shipping, trade, business, migration, and settlement. Viewing these activities as part of a holistic package of "expansion"—and conflating their meanings in the discussion of Japan as an oceanic nation—was typical of nationalist thinkers concerned with *kokusui* at the time.⁹ Sugiura and other like-minded nationalists embraced in their thought a variety of regions, from Hokkaido and Korea to Canada and Mexico—in short, theirs was a vision of constructing a Japanese diaspora across the Pacific.

Sugiura's editorials on expansion represented this early and crude outlook on the world, centered on the ocean. In an August 1887 issue of *Yomiuri*, he lamented

“how woefully small Japan looks on the map of the world” but observed nonetheless that modest-sized nations such as England, Spain, and Holland had managed to develop maritime empires, owing to their ability to navigate and trade across the seas. Hoping Japan would follow their example, he proposed that the Meiji government establish “a colonial ministry” to supervise all overseas affairs “from the jurisdiction of Hokkaido and the Ogasawara islands, to the migration and settlement of Hawai‘i” and “investigate methods for developing other colonies.”¹⁰ Seven years later in 1894, when conflict with the Qing erupted over the Korean peninsula, he continued to insist that Japan as a maritime nation expand not only its navy “but also its sea-lanes and shipping in peacetime” for promoting foreign trade and emigration.

Sugiura conceived of expansion not necessarily as military conquest but in broader and more “peaceful” terms of global trade, shipping, and migration—what many Meiji contemporaries identified as the central pillars of Western strength. Undoubtedly inspired by Victorian Britain at the height of its imperial glory, he wished to see Japan become “a great island empire,” “an empire of free trade” in which the merchant marine would carry Japanese goods and traders to far corners of the world.¹¹ Buried in his call for expansion was a criticism of government leaders for obsessing about treaty revision or discussing arms expansion while ignoring a more urgent task: promoting industry and enterprise. There was no better way for Japan to “cultivate the foundation of the state” and “maintain national sovereignty,” Sugiura argued, so as to stand on an equal footing with Western nations.

To be sure, the Meiji leadership had already set forth industrial strength as the nation’s priority after touring the advanced countries of Europe and America. The Iwakura mission of 1871–1873 impressed upon its members an inseparable link between industrial growth and imperial power. And they returned equally convinced that the state must orchestrate these efforts, since “Our people are particularly lacking in daring.” Dismissing the *laissez-faire* capitalism of Adam Smith in favor of the German model of active state intervention in the economy, the Meiji “developmental state” thus took charge of building and operating everything—from railroads and telegraphs to silk mills, iron mines, and shipyards—until they were passed into private hands in the 1880s.¹²

Sugiura similarly felt the Japanese were not ready to compete with foreigners, though his vision of self-strengthening emphasized promotion of commerce rather than production of “the necessities of a military nation.” Nor did he discount the state’s role in nurturing Japan’s capitalist economy in its infancy. It was the government’s task to “investigate markets” abroad, he reckoned, while “guiding” Japan’s untutored merchants; “lacking national awareness,” they were prone to “seek quick profit, mishandling goods and inviting mistrust.”¹³ Overseas expansion was, in his view, as critical as domestic industry for making a modern Japanese citizenry, infused with a sense of patriotism and national duty. Each hinged on the state’s initial support and leadership, before Japan could fully pursue the free-trade ideal.

That it was imperative for Japan as a small nation to expand for survival was a consistent theme in Sugiura's writings—logic also found in countries like Egypt, subject to unequal treaties yet eager to build an empire of their own.¹⁴ The idea of refashioning Japan as an “oceanic nation” for this purpose found many adherents. Sugiura's intellectual cousin and fellow journalist Fukumoto Nichinan (born Makoto, 1857–1921) expounded in a series of articles on the “urgent necessity” of developing Japan's shipping industry in the face of Western competition.¹⁵ A decade earlier, he had also crossed over to Hokkaido, seeking to settle a group of former samurai to develop the land as a bulwark against maritime Russia. Although this project ended in failure, Fukumoto quickly turned his attention southward after befriending Sugiura and embarked on yet another colonial venture in the Philippines.¹⁶ For the goal of strengthening and enriching their nation, other journalists and political leaders similarly stressed promoting the shipping industry, along with colonization and trade. With such an arsenal of strategies in mind, Shiga Shigetaka argued for “creating commercial new Japans [*shōgyōteki shin Nihon*] everywhere across the sea,” envisioning Japan as the leader of the Pacific.¹⁷

In sum, the ocean—or what was broadly referred to as “overseas” (*kaigai*)—was an extension of the modernizing home islands: a space where Japan would build its economic strength, nurture its human capital, and turn itself into a rich, mighty country. These concerns combined with the looming Malthusian specter of population growth outstripping food supply, giving further impetus to the argument for expansion abroad.¹⁸

At the same time, Sugiura and other Meiji thinkers called attention to Japan's vaunted history of transoceanic expansion, one that dated back to long before the nineteenth century. Underlying their maritime imaginaries was a desire to revitalize an “indigenous tradition of expansionism,” chronicled in the adventures of Japanese merchants, warriors, and seafarers in the South Pacific and elsewhere from the fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries.¹⁹ A typical account appeared in an April 1885 bulletin of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. Bemoaning that few countrymen “have ventured abroad to engage in trade” since the opening of Yokohama, the author alerted readers to the golden era of maritime activity in the first decades of the seventeenth century: “our merchants, full of enterprising spirit, frequently traveled to Taiwan, Cochin [China], Siam, and Cambodia,” creating “colonies” where, in Siam alone, “as many as eight thousand Japanese, male and female, plied their trade.”²⁰

At work in this narrative was a broad strategy deployed by the new Meiji leaders of “radical nostalgia”: “the invocation of the distant past to promote radical change in the present.”²¹ In the ministry's telling, the natural expeditionary impulses of Japanese people had lapsed under the Tokugawa shogunate, whose ban on foreign travel made merchants “cowardly.” But merchants from the province of Ōmi (also Gōshū) represented a notable exception. Against all odds, the author noted, Gōshū merchants carried on the spirit of expedition and built a fortune by “braving the

mountains and high seas,” much in the way that “English merchants garnered wealth and allowed their island nation to lead the world.”²² In “an opinion on the promotion of industry,” the ministry more explicitly urged Japanese merchants to reflect on the feats of Ōmi shōnin:

Famous business magnates in today’s Gōshū such as Hoshikyū and Beni’ichi initially began with a mere 3 or 4 ryō to traverse the provinces. Already during the era of Keichō (1596–1615), [Ōmi merchants] visited regions as far afield as Matsumae, and in the course of their travel inspected local sentiments, customs, and so forth, and purchased goods suitable to local tastes. . . . They not only built enormous wealth in one generation but transmitted their business methods to posterity as well as throughout the entire province of Ōmi, to the point where Gōshū has come to be known as our country’s England.²³

This rousing call to action was redirected by Sugiura to his fellow natives of Ōmi. One of his editorials for *Yomiuri*, couched as a “plea to the merchants of Gōshū,” began with his wonted homage to their Tokugawa predecessors. “Gōshū merchants are the best businessmen” Japan had ever seen before Meiji, he proclaimed, men of daring who also pioneered expansion across the sea. They “ventured out to work in the western and eastern provinces, even as far as Ezo and Matsumae,” “transporting their products to the ports of Echizen and traveling further on to Shikoku and Kyūshū to amass a huge profit.” Not in the slightest did they mind trekking to these places, even though to reach the far corners of the archipelago at the time was “more difficult than it is to sail to Europe and America today.” Now that railroads and steamships had developed to “make Japan much smaller,” he advised their descendants in Shiga, “You must not content yourselves with conducting business within [its national borders].” It behooved them, instead, to look beyond Hokkaido and “take the initiative in trading with Europe and America, not to speak of neighboring countries like China and Korea.” Only by scaling up their commerce to the global level of exchange—by “building on the ancestors’ legacy to fly the Japanese flag across the seas”—he averred, could they “maintain the reputation of Gōshū merchants” and let their “name blaze like the sun.”²⁴

A decade later, Sugiura found himself making the same entreaties to members of the Association of Friends from the Homeland of Gōshū. He was not certain Ōmi merchants were “carrying on the keen will of their forebears and giving fullest play to their ability.” To be sure, their influence was visible along “the streets of Nihonbashi lined by a row of giant stores named Ōmi-ya,” as well as in “Hakodate and Sapporo,” where they had “built magnificent branches.” But these stores, spatially confined to their traditional turf, seemed to be relics of inherited riches rather than signs of newly earned success. “The illustrious name of Ōmi shōnin resides with expeditionary commerce,” Sugiura asserted, reminding his fellow provincials of the charge placed upon them: “Oh, heirs to Ōmi shōnin, what will happen to your stature without exerting yourselves and pressing forward vigorously?” He was not alone in voicing this concern. The governor of Shiga also

detected worrisome signs of decline among denizens of Ōmi, who appeared “more concerned with protecting their ancestral wealth than with rising up in society through education.”²⁵

Sugiura’s appeal to Ōmi natives culminated in an energetic push for expansion abroad. To prepare Japan’s new generation for this task, first and foremost, Sugiura argued for vocational education, a focal point of his campaign when he ran for the Diet in 1890.²⁶ In another article addressed to merchants of Ōmi, he urged them to “take a good look at the commercial world,” where old knowledge and apprenticeship no longer sufficed “to maintain a superior position.” “Common sense as merchants of a civilized nation” must be grafted onto their native tradition of trading across space: “an understanding of global affairs” sufficient to assess “how the outcome of the Sino-Japanese War would affect our economy, or how the collection of war bonds would relate to our financial community.” For commercial training on the ocean, he also advocated increasing merchant marine academies to inculcate young men with skills of navigation that they might “search for markets around the world.” So critical was the diffusion of “oceanic thought” in his view that he later proposed incorporating long-distance navigation into annual field trips for middle schools.²⁷

Through his newspaper editorials, Sugiura extended his message to “merchants around the country,” evoking Ōmi shōnin as a veritable template for “working in foreign countries.” But even these famed traders “have not progressed very far,” not least because “to board a ship for overseas travel” remained “extremely difficult” for civilians. As one solution to this logistical issue, Sugiura advanced a strikingly original proposal: to leverage warships as commercial vessels, an idea most likely inspired by the 1886 voyage of his fellow Seikyōsha founder Shiga Shigetaka (1863–1927) to Nan’yō. Specifically, he proposed that the navy’s training ships, which had begun to cruise the South Pacific in 1875, carry merchants in addition to its cadets “as a way to open trade and communication with the islands of Nan’yō as well as with Australia, South America,” and other markets on the Pacific Rim. Such ready access to marine transportation, he envisaged, would enable “those with the spirit of Gōshū shōnin” to “study the tastes of foreigners, manufacture goods suitable to them, and sell them directly” without having to rely on Chinese merchants, who dominated access to world markets.²⁸

Sugiura’s idea of doubling the function of Japan’s precious few warships—repurposing an essential tool of empire for mercantile expansionism—was elaborated later by Fukumoto Nichinan. He proposed building new cruisers, armed with cannons and ready to be deployed for battle, that would ordinarily operate as commercial vessels.²⁹ The use of the navy’s training ships was taken to yet another level when a Seikyōsha leader, Miyake Yūjirō (Setsurei; 1860–1945), sailed the southern Pacific in 1891; the crew, he later recollected, literally “searched in vain for a tiny island marked ‘unclaimed’ on the English sea map, hoping to acquire it for Japan.”³⁰ These nationalists, united in a goal to overcome cultural subservience to

the West, were among the nation's first civilians to voyage through Nan'yō, indeed, to find passage back to their "Japanese" roots that they believed lay in the ocean.

In order to propel more civilians into overseas commerce, Sugiura urged Meiji leaders to build infrastructures of support, including "a comprehensive plan to export Japanese goods" and "a commercial museum to display domestic and foreign merchandise." In his version of a strategy of import substitution, he particularly emphasized the export of Japan's traditional manufactures, matching each product to a specific foreign import, such as sake (to counter Western alcohol), raw silk (to counter cotton), and tea (to counter sugar). A focus on cottage industries, which reflected the embryonic state of Meiji capitalism, was echoed by Seikyōsha writers who argued for promoting rural entrepreneurship, rather than an urban-based bourgeoisie allied with the Tokyo government.³¹ For developing Japan as a trading and manufacturing empire, Sugiura also looked to Ōmi merchants as a historical precursor and a model for conducting transit trade: to capture the flow of foreign goods via Japan to sell on the global market. Considering that "alcohol, dry goods, and timber reportedly sell very well at the ports of China and Korea," he suggested, as a first step in promoting their export, "why not follow the precedent of Ōmi merchants and venture out to foreign countries to undertake aggressive peddling [*oshiuri*]?"³²

This idea of overseas peddling—a stretching across the ocean of the provincial custom of Ōmi—later became one of Sugiura's recommendations for educational reform. In a *Tokyo Asahi shinbun* editorial in 1894, he proposed that vocational schools, now found in "every port and city," incorporate peddling into their curricula and extend it to overseas locations. As potential sites of such "on-the-ground commercial training," he insisted, schools must choose "distant rather than nearby places, starting with China, Korea, Russian Vladivostok, Siam, and so forth, and gradually expand it to more faraway lands," so that students could also gain maritime expertise. Sugiura's idea of rescaling the Ōmi merchant tradition through wider, global circuits of exchange struck a chord with local teachers. Hachiman Commercial School, the first vocational institution in Shiga, not only integrated peddling into its curriculum but seriously contemplated extending this practice abroad—an idea that would materialize on the eve of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, as we will see in the next chapter.³³

OVERSEAS CHINESE AS A DIASPORIC MODEL

In calling for overseas trade or stressing the importance of navigation, Sugiura joined a chorus of Meiji thinkers who embraced an ocean-centered view of expansion. His attitudes toward the continent were more complicated. In a wide spectrum of opinions that emerged in the volatile geopolitical context of East Asia in the 1880s–1890s, Sugiura embraced a distinctive brand of "Sinic" Pan-Asianism, one that insisted on "amity with China" even at the expense of Japan's interests

in Korea.³⁴ In the face of Western encroachments on the continent, he argued, Japan and China must unite in leading a racial alliance of Asians against white imperialists, instead of bickering over the Korean peninsula³⁵—a stance shared by his affiliates in *Seikyōsha*, who were among the first intellectuals to conceptualize Asia as a cultural and racial unit in this vein. At the core of their Pan-Asian emphasis on solidarity with China, in fact, lay a quite pragmatic concern to expand Japanese economic interests on the continent. Hence, Sugiura alerted his countrymen to China’s “unlimited reserve of purchasing power” and urged them to “seize commercial rights [there] to preempt the Westerners” by studying local ports and products.³⁶

Nonetheless, Sugiura steadfastly insisted on Japan’s partnership with the Qing, amid increasingly hawkish cries for settling their rivalry over Korea, which culminated in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. And he continued to uphold this position even after China’s defeat and subsequent departure from the peninsula—when many Pan-Asianist advocates began to demand unifying Asia under Japan’s leadership and its national priorities, no longer viewing China as an equal partner.³⁷ Sugiura considered unity with China so critical and Korea’s future prospect as a sovereign nation so dim that he proposed in the wake of the war that Japan “withdraw completely” from affairs of the peninsula.³⁸

If this suggestion sounded out of sync with the dominant public opinion, it was also at odds with the policy of Sugiura’s now powerful friend and diplomat Komura Jutarō, who brokered the negotiations for the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895. To Sugiura and many thinkers outside the Meiji ruling circle, however, the issue of national security vis-à-vis Korea often took a backseat to the more fundamental task of economic self-strengthening.³⁹ This mercantile concern endured, along with his emphasis on amity, after the humiliating Triple Intervention exposed the weakness of Japan’s diplomacy, engendering new doubt about its credentials as the leader of the “yellow race.” Sugiura’s lasting respect toward the old master was partly explained by his veneration of Confucian culture cultivated during his early years. His vision of expansion, by contrast, reserved particular admiration for the Chinese in the present, especially their ability to expand overseas, which appeared unshaken by the Qing military defeat in 1895.

What impressed him and other Meiji thinkers was the extraordinary success of the Chinese in spreading themselves around the globe through trade and emigration, areas in which the Japanese were seen to lag. When the Japanese set out for work abroad, indeed, Chinese merchants had already built extensive trading networks across the Pacific, including Japan’s own treaty ports (the existing diaspora in Nagasaki, as well as new communities in Yokohama and Kōbe, where predominantly Cantonese merchants engaged in import-export trade).⁴⁰ From the time he began writing for *Yomiuri*, Sugiura praised the Chinese character as being “full of ambition to venture afar, resolutely overcome the high waves, and not in the least loath to live in foreign lands, abilities that we Japanese could never match.” By dint

of hard work and perseverance, demonstrated in the face of recent exclusion in the United States, he noted, “the Chinese have already built trust in the realm of commerce around the world.”⁴¹

A careful reader would recognize that the diasporic portraits of Ōmi shōnin and “overseas Chinese” (*kakyō*) regularly blurred in Sugiura’s narrative. What he respected the most about the Chinese character—resilience, perseverance, and trust—corresponded, almost word for word, to the cardinal qualities he celebrated of Ōmi merchants. Cross-border mobility, shored up by ties to the native place, characterized them both as local cosmopolitans. In one *Yomiuri* article, he more explicitly noted “resemblance between Gōshū merchants and Chinese merchants,” whose sharp business tactics “could even make European traders cower.” To corroborate their affinity (and, by implication, the ability of Ōmi natives to compete in the global marketplace), Sugiura further relayed the opinion of an unnamed “friend” who had recently visited China: “Those who wish to do business in China would never succeed,” he wagered, “unless they began as Gōshū merchants had done before.” Chiding his countrymen for “not paying attention to their formidable [Chinese] rivals,” Sugiura urged reinvigorating the Ōmi tradition of expeditionary commerce for the nation: to “update the old customs of Gōshū merchants, eradicate the evil custom of aping Westerners when going abroad, and devote ourselves solely to pursuing profit.”⁴²

In Sugiura’s editorials, the weaknesses of his fellow citizens were often cast into sharp relief by their juxtaposition to overseas Chinese. If the globe-trekking Chinese were akin to Ōmi merchants, he intimated, contemporary Japanese had become too insular to bear any resemblance to their own forebears. They “are given to being ‘bossy at home but timid elsewhere,’” he rued, thanks to the Tokugawa legacy of national seclusion, which made most countrymen “introverted” and “loath to work away from home.” By staying put on the home islands, the Japanese forfeited national profit and prestige, allowing the diasporas of Cantonese, Hokkien, and Hakka to monopolize the sale of their own manufactures in overseas markets, whether in San Francisco or South America.⁴³

But no nation faced a greater competition on its home soil than the United States of America. Although China had a trade deficit with the U.S., when taking account of its contract laborers in the Pacific Northwest and the remittances they sent home, Sugiura observed, “The total value of exports can be said to exceed that of imports.” In this calculation the country most exploited by the Chinese was America; through “singular devotion to work and savings,” they dominated the local labor market, “siphoning off the largest amount of dollars.” In light of the recently growing flow of Japanese labor across the Pacific, he predicted that if these migrants worked as hard and lived as frugally as the Chinese, they would “most assuredly incur the same treatment” of exclusion. But this would be a cause for “celebration” rather than lament, a sign that “they had successfully won the competition” with white workers at the lower end of the wage scale.⁴⁴ The Japanese

should thus “take advantage” of Chinese exclusion, argued Sugiura, and step into their place to labor “without losing face as members of a sovereign nation.” According to this remarkable logic, racial exclusion became an index of success in constructing a transpacific Japanese diaspora. By the same token, he added, Japan must proceed with caution in permitting “whites” to live in its interior; just as the United States was faced with the consequences of having allowed Asian immigrants into its territory, so Japan would risk social disorder and the loss of national essence (*kokusui*).⁴⁵ Cultivating economic strength through trade and emigration offered the only sure bulwark against such turmoil.

On the topic of emigration, Sugiura found himself disagreeing with his Seikyōsha friends. Seeing “a conflict between the Eastern and Western races” on the horizon, they had rallied together behind the idea of inter-Asian unity and struggle against white imperialism since the early 1880s.⁴⁶ But the Seikyōsha leaders toned down their optimism for emigration as they gained more understanding about the severity of Asian exclusion in the Pacific Northwest—an understanding that Sugiura, as well as the rest of the Meiji public, sorely lacked.⁴⁷ The sanguine prospect of transpacific emigration was dismissed by Fukumoto Nichinan after learning about the plight of immigrants in the U.S. During his studies at Stanford University, Nagasawa Setsu (Betten; 1868–1899), too, muted his enthusiasm for emigration, having observed firsthand white discrimination against fellow Japanese, which he frequently reported in articles he sent back to Seikyōsha.⁴⁸ As Sugiura must have surely known, a trickle of fellow Shiga natives began crossing the Pacific in this period, soon becoming a stream to the Canadian West (chapter 7). But their fate in the white settler society was clearly not the focus of Sugiura’s concern in his diasporic vision of expansion.

In the final months of the Sino-Japanese War, Sugiura declared to his fellow Shiga natives that a larger battle awaited them in the realm of commerce. “Even though our brave imperial army may destroy the Chinese empire, the Chinese people will not perish,” he asserted. Nor would “the powers . . . be foolish enough to remain neutral in the coming economic war” to be waged around the world. “At this critical juncture,” he asked his readers, “whose duty is it to secure commercial supremacy in the Orient with an abacus?” The answer was none other than “our Ōmi shōnin, descendants of expeditionary merchants.” “If you have inherited anything from your ancestors,” Sugiura exhorted the people of Ōmi, “you owe it to them to stake a claim on the battlefield of the global economy.”⁴⁹ Expansion, he suggested, was in their DNA.

Following Japan’s victory, Sugiura urged all Japanese—not only the gentlemanly class of bureaucrats and capitalists but the general public—to “make full use of the trade treaty” newly signed with the Qing to advance into the area of overseas commerce. Viewing it as key to “preparing for treaty revision,” Sugiura also connected his support of mercantile expansion more explicitly to his abiding concern with Japanism. “The so-called progress” Japan had made thus far was “nothing more

than an imitation” of Western things, which “has generated a tendency to despise the indigenous and revere the foreign.” Decades of cultural borrowing from the West, in short, emasculated the nation. Prescriptions for resuscitating the indefatigable spirit of “*Nippon danji*” (traditionally masculine Japanese men) were to be sought in a rescaling of domestic commerce to global trade of transoceanic scope. In anticipation of “mixed residence,” he argued, “we must compete with the great powers in enterprises of all kinds” at home and abroad, mustering “the indomitable spirit” once demonstrated by merchants of Ōmi. Overseas expansion, in other words, was a means of Japanese cultural renewal, consonant with his vision of braiding the best of new and old worlds. Having adopted and digested the “material merits of Western culture,” he declared, “we must make a new departure in order to surpass foreign products.” It was time for Japan to become a power in its own right.⁵⁰

Even as his contemporaries began to speak of China’s decline in the late 1880s and 1890s, Sugiura treated the Qing as a competitor who had still many lessons to offer Japan, not a mere object of assistance (*hozen*) as viewed by most Pan-Asianist thinkers.⁵¹ China may have ceded political leadership in Asia, but Japan remained on the fringes of the global market dominated by diasporic Chinese. “It is patently clear that to seek to rival and reign over these people requires no ordinary strategy,” he observed at the turn of the century.⁵² Sugiura’s vision of expansion, too, stayed focused on commerce, even as the Meiji state “reverted to the policy of promoting heavy industry” and machine making following the Sino-Japanese War. Local merchants of Kansai, meanwhile, began to “reduce their dependence upon their [Chinese] mentors,” “develop[ing] their own capacity, resources, and connections” to the world economy, including markets of the Asian mainland.⁵³ Sugiura invested much hope in merchants of Ōmi for edging out the Chinese from the path of Japanese expansion; it permeated the house code he drafted for the Tsukamoto Sadaemon family, reminding its members that “the rise and fall [of their business] can even affect the state’s fortune.”⁵⁴ Apart from North America, nowhere was the Chinese economic power more entrenched than in the South Seas, or Nan’yō, a region of great interest to Japanese traders and emigrants but one not without redoubtable obstacles to overcome in the decades to follow.

“SOUTHERN ADVANCE” AND ITS UNLIKELY AGENTS

Sugiura’s colonial discourse, overall, reveals three contrapuntal vectors of Japanese expansion: the maritime, the continental, and the transpacific. Of the three, the continental orientation has occupied center stage in historical writing on the Japanese archipelago since ancient times, generating a “terrestrial bias” common to studies on modern empires.⁵⁵ Less pronounced but equally significant in Meiji imaginaries was what Eiichirō Azuma calls “transpacific eastward expansionism,” which envisioned “emigration-led colonization” in Hawai’i and the Pacific Coast

region of America.⁵⁶ As noted, this eastward movement would find expression in Shiga people's emigration to Canada, but it was only vaguely entertained in Sugiura's proposal to supplant Chinese labor in white America. More explicitly, he made a case for advancing this task in the southern Pacific Ocean.

A counterpoint to his argument for amity with China was precisely his focus on Nan'yō as the proper locus of Japanese colonial activity. For several decades before policy makers set their minds on the Chinese continent as a security concern, Nan'yō occupied the hearts of many journalists, politicians, intellectuals, and naval officers. They argued for redirecting Japan's territorial drive from the northern island of Hokkaido to the southern tropics, a call for "southern advance" (*nan-shin*) that reverberated into the 1910s.⁵⁷ As early as 1886, Sugiura editorialized that the tiny island nation of Japan "must expand its territory" by "choosing a prospective colony in the East Indies." In addition to utilizing the navy's vessels, he proposed creating a trading firm like the East India Company to "open contact with the region"; thereby, he hoped, Japan would "at least reach the level of Holland and Spain," if not the imperial grandeur of England and France.⁵⁸ In the recent past, the English and Dutch East India Companies themselves had become maritime powers, building trading outposts across Asia. These "trading-post empires" commanded the Asian waters before transitioning to territorial rule in the mid-late eighteenth century.⁵⁹ No doubt Sugiura had a similar process in mind for Japan's diasporic traders, viewing mercantile capital as the pathway to territorial colonization.

Sugiura's argument for southern advance found a more dramatic outlet in *Hankai yume monogatari* (Tale of a dream of Hankai), a novella he co-authored with Fukumoto Nichinan in 1886.⁶⁰ Like many Meiji writers who turned the South Pacific into an object of popular curiosity and romantic adventure, Sugiura borrowed the power of fiction to advocate expansion. But he made an unlikely community its protagonists: Japan's minority group known as *burakumin*, social outcastes who were more pejoratively labeled *eta* and *hinin* in the Tokugawa period. Presented as the dream of a recluse, this fantastic tale unfolds around a speech delivered at an assembly of burakumin people. The leader of the burakumin begins by deploring the discrimination they have historically endured (much like India's outcastes and Europe's Jews), citing their mixed descent from the ancient Korean kingdoms and Ezo (Emishi) and their "custom" of butchery and meat-eating. Their predicament continues, he bemoans, even after the Emancipation Edict of 1871 declared them "commoners" in name and in law. "So long as we stay in the [Japanese] empire, we will never be treated as equal by this society," avers the leader, who subsequently proposes an "extraordinary measure": to "build a [new] nation" in the Philippines.⁶¹ As a first step toward colonization, he calls for sending an army of ninety thousand able-bodied men to supersede the aging Spanish ruler and liberate the natives from colonial tyranny. Once the islands, and the hearts of locals, are secured, he explains to an enthusiastic audience, the rest

of the burakumin people will follow to engage in a variety of enterprises and build the ground for their new homeland.

Sugiura made the kernel of his argument more explicit in several editorials he penned for *Yomiuri*. Although he criticized the ongoing injustice against the *shin heimin* (new commoners, a euphemism for outcastes coined in the Meiji period), he frankly acknowledged it as “a long-standing custom that cannot be dispelled overnight.” Given the failure of law to protect and liberate them, implied Sugiura, there was no remedy to be sought in a society inured to inequality. “Rather than feeling indignant in vain” at home, members of *shin heimin* would be better off relocating abroad to make a living, using their “strong bodies and capacity for endurance, nurtured by meat-eating.” Evoking the Malthusian rationale of securing a source of foodstuff and an outlet for Japan’s surplus population, he addressed “the gentlemen of *shin heimin*”: “If you opened a New Japan, you would not only recover your honor but also help project Japan’s prestige overseas” and contribute to the strategy of “raising Asia” (*kōa*)—a three-fold mission of advancing the nation’s liberal, imperial, and Pan-Asian projects at once. By appointing burakumin to spearhead this task, Sugiura hoped to recast a colonizing venture as an emancipatory project, for the former outcastes as much as for the Filipinos.⁶²

Hankai yume monogatari was both distinctive and characteristic of the times. The novella stands out among Meiji writings in linking the issue of discrimination against the burakumin directly to southern expansionism.⁶³ Yet it was also typical of an emergent genre that Robert Tierney has termed “folklore imperialism,” where fact and fiction conspire to offer a compelling utopian scenario: a fantastic metamorphosis of outcastes into heroic pioneers who emancipate themselves by freeing their Asian brothers from European rule.⁶⁴ The narrative was punctuated by deep-seated (and spurious) claims about burakumin, among them their alien origins and “meat-eating custom” that made them racially distinct and physically fit for laboring abroad—fit enough, Sugiura implied, to compete with the diasporic Chinese.⁶⁵

Sugiura’s proposal more broadly captured an epochal challenge facing Meiji Japan: to meet the twin imperatives of fostering “liberalism at home and imperialism abroad.” Understood as essential rather than contradictory pursuits of a modern civilized nation, both schools of thought were, scholars have long revealed, of a piece with belief in reason and historical progress.⁶⁶ In the eyes of Sugiura and his contemporaries, more glaring contradictions lay between liberalism and vestiges of “feudalism” at home: the limits of the law in guaranteeing equality to all, bared by persistent prejudice against former outcastes.⁶⁷ A subtext for the utopian tale of southern advance was a grim portrait of Meiji Japan as a society whose promises of modernity and freedom had fallen short. Conceived in this context, the resettlement of burakumin abroad was essentially a strategy of social imperialism:⁶⁸ to export a problematic population issuing from the failure of emancipation, an idea that, in fact, had a broad appeal across the Pacific.⁶⁹

Far less obvious but equal significant is what linked Ōmi merchants and outcastes, who inhabited a critical part in Sugiura's colonial thinking. The idea of mobilizing each community for overseas expansion reflected his personal roots in Shiga, which had one of the largest burakumin communities in prewar Japan.⁷⁰ Both groups were portrayed as newly liberated from the shackles of feudalism to aspire beyond the national borders. If Ōmi peddlers and outcastes, unmoored from agrarian society, had been disdained by the Confucian-minded elite in the Tokugawa era, so were their "continental origins," in a rather ironic coincidence, similarly entertained by local scholars in Shiga⁷¹ (who also noted Shin Buddhism as their shared religion of choice). Sugiura's proposal revealed a specific concern to resuscitate non-samurai classes, rather than the declassed samurai who became the target of state and early migration programs. Former outcastes and peddlers were linked, above all, by an agenda to overcome their respective marginalities vis-à-vis the political center: the burakumin's status as noncitizen and the status of Ōmi-Shiga as a new "periphery" of Japan. Sugiura's vision of transpacific expansion charted a particular spatiotemporal sequence: the northern colonization of Ainu lands pioneered by Ōmi merchants, to be followed by the southern advance of former outcastes. If the dream of a hermit was enacted as outlined in his novella, indeed, it would have turned the burakumin into true successors of the diasporic Ōmi shōnin.

Nonetheless, their commonalities quickly fade when considering the place that the burakumin, along with the Ainu, were perceived to occupy in the new nation-state: a racialized surplus population. In the Meiji-era fiction, as in government policies, the burakumin were targeted for export at the same time that the Ainu were marked as a "dying race"—the very group exploited by Ōmi merchant contractors in colonial Hokkaido as discussed in chapter 2. When their lived and imagined realities (including supposed distant lineage from Ezo/Emishi) are thus juxtaposed, the hidden dynamics of racial capitalism—which worked to exaggerate, not rupture, preexisting modes and social relations of production into racial difference⁷²—come into view. Sugiura's idea of redirecting the colonizing effort from Hokkaido to the South Seas extended not only the capitalist project of settler colonization but the very task of extracting surplus value from one racialized labor to another. From the perspective of the Meiji capitalist state guided by fear of overpopulation, it would mean applying a "spatial fix" to the threat of surplus bodies,⁷³ deemed useful for projecting Japan's sovereign power abroad but superfluous to its national polity.⁷⁴

The idea of using marginalized people for the dual purpose of accumulation and colonization had many contemporary and global parallels.⁷⁵ Rather than insist on their full social integration, political leaders often sidestepped the question and sought an overseas outlet for the productive deployment of their labor, in effect exporting the contradiction to a colonial hinterland. This marriage of social imperialism with racial capitalism would have left the former outcastes, along with

the “former natives,” as the Ainu were labeled, literally if not legally outside the boundaries of “the Japanese.”⁷⁶ For the descendants of expeditionary Ōmi shōnin, by contrast, to venture abroad meant to (re)claim their place, not outside but at the center of the national community. In Sugiura’s discourse, this regionalist agenda ultimately took precedence over the issue of social equality for burakumin.

Although *Hankai yume monogatari* received mixed reviews from the press,⁷⁷ it enthralled some young men of Meiji. Suganuma Teifū (1865–1889), who read the novella while studying at the University of Tokyo, brought a copy back to his hometown of Hirado, where local school pupils excitedly “competed to devour” the story. And to these young advocates of southern advance, he evidently proposed “organizing troops to prepare for an expedition, in order to open a place to work for the men of Hirado.” Suganuma’s desire to travel to the south was so strong that he quit his job at Tokyo Higher Commercial School and left for the Philippines in May 1889, where he was joined by Fukumoto Nichinan.⁷⁸ Although Suganuma’s death from cholera brought a sudden end to their grand scheme of building a Japanese enclave on the islands, his vision of *nanshin* was inherited by a friend and journalist colleague, Kuga Katsunan (1857–1907). Chief editor of *Tokyo denpō*, Kuga would advocate mass colonization of the Philippines, underscoring the alleged “Malay lineage in the Japanese race.”⁷⁹

In the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, Sugiura argued more forcefully for shifting Japan’s focus from the north to the south, proposing “Taiwan as a stepping-stone” for advancing into the East Indies and the Nan’yō islands.⁸⁰ So did Tokutomi Sohō (1863–1957) and his Min’yūsha colleagues, who envisioned the creation of “new Japans” across the South Pacific region. Their discourse had significant purchase on the Meiji public, alerting them to the profitability of southern advance and turning their attention, if momentarily, from domestic political battles to the shared goal of expansion.⁸¹ Although the rhetoric of *nanshin* garnered little sustained support from government leaders, whose concern for national security pivoted toward the continent, it shaped the emerging debate on northern advance (*hokushin*) versus southern advance, which culminated in a protracted competition between the army and the navy. Aspirations to establish naval hegemony in the western Pacific would begin to materialize after World War I, when Japan took control of the former German possessions in Micronesia.⁸²

. . .

Spanning the last decades of the nineteenth century, Sugiura Shigetake’s colonial discourse offers a portal into some of the central concerns that drove Japan’s rise as an oceanic nation-empire. In part unique in his provincial attachment and in part emblematic of the Meiji ideological milieu, Sugiura’s writings stitched together fluid and inchoate ideas about nation building, capitalist modernity, and Pan-Asian unity that grew out of Japan’s halting efforts to join the world powers. In the capacious Japanese understanding of Western strength, imperialism was but one of a

wide repertoire of strategies for projecting national power abroad: from trade and shipping, arms and diplomacy to overseas migration and settlement. This inclusive approach to “expansion in all directions”⁸³ framed Sugiura’s maritime vision. To the terms of transpacific history, his writings adumbrated Japan’s metamorphosis from an island nation into an oceanic empire: one that turned the northern Pacific into a space of economic exchange and cultural solidarity against the West, and the South Pacific into a site of colonization and settlement. What linked the two was the capitalist regime of extraction targeting Japan’s racialized minorities.

A search for national essence also led Sugiura deep into the annals of Japanese history. For Sugiura and his *Seikyōsha* friends, empire signified not so much a rupture into modernity as a return to Japan’s ancestral origins as a seafaring community, while breaking with the more recent Tokugawa past of perceived inertia. Overseas expansion had a longer and more complex genealogy than the rise of imperialism in the late nineteenth century, one that could be tracked across the ocean linking Japan to the distant shores of *Nan’yō*. This dynamic tension between continuity and discontinuity infused Sugiura’s understanding of the Pacific as a logical maritime extension of *Ōmi* merchants’ activity across the early modern archipelago.

Sugiura’s diasporic vision revealed a strong undercurrent of regionalism in Japanese colonial thought—echoing a long-standing claim in Guangdong and Fujian that their provincials boasted an oceanic culture and “tradition of venturing abroad” nurtured independent of Western influence.⁸⁴ In virtually every proposal for expansion he penned, Sugiura evoked the venerable *Ōmi shōnin*, often in tacit comparison with overseas Chinese, as a model for his countrymen to follow. Calling attention to these local cosmopolitans, he hoped, would fillip a shared memory of border-crossing vigor, a trait allegedly embedded in the Japanese character, while fashioning the legend of expeditionary pioneers. Beyond the political leadership of ex-samurai, he viewed private enterprise as key to capital accumulation and colonial adventure, a project awaiting the initiatives of the nation’s provincials. Sublimating regional exceptionalism of *Ōmi* into cultural essentialism of the Japanese ethnos, Sugiura made an emphatic call for provincializing the national project of expansion.

After the turn of the century, the focus of Sugiura’s career shifted from journalism to education.⁸⁵ His Pan-Asianist credentials led to his appointment in 1902–1903 as the head of the *Tōa Dōbun Shoin* (East Asian Common Culture Academy) in Shanghai: an academy designed to train young Japanese as “China hands” who would aid their country’s military and business operations on the continent. Although ill health cut short his tenure, Sugiura continued to support its activities—suggesting that his earlier, romantic notion of racial and cultural unity gave way to a more pragmatic concern to prioritize Japan’s imperial interests by the turn of the century.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, his vision of expansion, along with the mythologization of *Ōmi shōnin*, would be taken up and energetically carried

forward by his followers and fellow Shiga natives. His vision of stretching the Ōmi custom of expeditionary commerce around the globe resonated powerfully with local boosters seeking to reclaim their place at the center of national life. Among their paramount tasks was educating a new generation of Ōmi shōnin, who would open and expand frontiers of capital, trade, and industry, as their ancestors had done, across the sea.

The Production of Global Ōmi Shōnin

In the 1880s, Japan embarked on a mission to catch up with the world's capitalist empires in the name of *shokusan kōgyō* (increasing production and promoting industry). While the role of the private sector led by zaibatsu in the economy grew rapidly, “entrepreneurial daring,” the Meiji leaders rued, was sorely lacking in commoners, long inured to submission to the samurai elite.¹ They alerted the young nation to the diasporic peddlers of Ōmi as a source of inspiration. In its “Instructions to Children of Merchants,” the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce held up “Gōshū shōnin” as exemplars of risk-taking urgently needed for the new era of global exchange.² The mass dailies joined a growing chorus, some directly urging Ōmi natives to take their trade across the sea, “just as they had once traveled to and from Ezo.”³ This task of rescaling the nation's economic life, they agreed, demanded training Japanese youth in modern knowledge and skills of international commerce. Local leaders in Shiga answered their call by creating vocational schools, most notably Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō (Hachiman Commercial School; hereafter Hasshō) in 1886 and Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō (Hikone Higher Commercial School; hereafter Hikone Kōshō) in 1922.

Though separated by several decades, Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō were founded on a shared ambition to nurture a new breed of Ōmi shōnin who could compete in the global marketplace—and to prevent Shiga from becoming an obscured margin of the nation's rising empire. Both aspired to train their students as global Ōmi shōnin, able at once to bolster Japan's imperial interests and boost the name of Shiga. This multiscalar project, to advance empire-building and place-making in tandem, would build on the work of regional forefathers. Proudly sited at “the nucleus of Gōshū shōnin,”⁴ each school embraced a pedagogy of grafting modern and overseas knowledge onto the rich provincial heritage of expeditionary commerce. This local-global synthesis shaped their unique curricula, as well as research labs and field trips to Asia, each activity forging direct channels of contact between Shiga and the world. Growing encounters in and out of the classroom with foreign

people, cultures, and markets, in turn, inspired deeper inquiry into the diasporic past of Ōmi ancestors. These interlocking activities reinforced a sense of calling among the students as worthy successors to Japan's entrepreneurial pioneers who would lead the nation across the sea.

A MILITARY ACADEMY FOR ŌMI SHŌNIN

The prefecture's first commercial school (and one of the nation's first),⁵ Hasshō came into being at a time when most merchant houses still believed "commerce is not something to be learned" from books.⁶ As the fervor for utilitarian knowledge spread across Japan, however, local notables and merchants who served on the Shiga Prefectural Assembly threw their weight behind vocational education, lest "our province of Ōmi lose its cachet someday."⁷ Hasshō was created with the full backing of the prefectural governor Nakai Hiroshi (1838–1894). A new generation of Ōmi merchants trained by Hasshō, Nakai hoped, would advance Japan's effort "to develop industry and ward off foreign imports,"⁸ a threat he considered larger than Western imperialism.

From its conception, Hasshō was designed as a school for and by Ōmi merchants. Supported by politically powerful benefactors,⁹ Hasshō quickly built its reputation as an "incubator"¹⁰ or "a military academy [*shikan gakkō*] for Ōmi shōnin," as one journalist famously dubbed it later, for its impressive roster of graduates who moved on to become captains of industry.¹¹ The school's avowed mission was to "train commercial warriors who can stand on the front line of industry." As the founders acknowledged, it required significantly "renovating the people of Gōshū," not merely replicating their commercial tradition.¹² While valorizing age-old merits of Ōmi merchants—thrift, diligence, perseverance, astuteness—they also vowed to remedy their propensities for "isolation," "suspicion," and "parochialism."¹³ This tripartite critique, which emerged alongside their collective reputation for business acumen, became entrenched in the local idiom, as it was applied more generally to "Ōmi people." Hasshō's mission was understood as part of a broader agenda to reconcile their dueling characteristics of cosmopolitanism and parochialism, ostensibly inherited from their merchant forebears.¹⁴

Although Hasshō embraced such a nativist aim, and the majority of students were locals, it was open to any male with a primary school diploma. Hasshō enrolled an increasingly diverse cohort of students from across the country, lured, as many alumni later recalled, by the brand of "Ōmi shōnin" the school claimed to own.¹⁵ By the mid-1920s, the name had spread far beyond its provincial locale, with students hailing from Okinawa and Hokkaido as well as Korea, Taiwan, and China.¹⁶ The student demographics also ranged widely, from teenage apprentices "sporting an apron" to "gentlemen clad in second-hand Western dress" in their early twenties. The challenge confronting teachers of Hasshō was, as the school

put it, “how old natives of Ōmi should educate new merchants of Ōmi,” a concept still in flux.¹⁷

The portrait of the “new Ōmi shōnin” the principal had in mind was one of local cosmopolitans, who would build on the “traditional spirit of enterprise” to “aspire abroad.”¹⁸ This vision of reconfiguring provincial heritage on a supranational scale underlay Hasshō’s motto to “promote trade and overseas expansion,” construed as a tradition “bequeathed by our ancestors.”¹⁹ It also infused the verses in the school song, composed in the wake of Japan’s heady victory over Russia in 1905:²⁰

印度の珠玉アラビアの／香りも集めん南洋の／珊瑚琥珀も欧の西／
送らん道や幾万里／潮と共に船を駆る／貿易風の名もよしや

Collect the jewels of India and the scent of Arabia / And the corals and amber of
Nan’yō to ship to Europe / Across tens of thousands of miles / Riding the ship along
the tides /In the name of a trade wind.

At first glance, Hasshō’s three-year program looked like a curriculum of any other commercial school in Japan: ethics, reading, English, calligraphy, math, bookkeeping, commercial correspondence, commercial geography, commodities, commercial economy, commercial law, commercial training, and gymnastics.²¹ Among all these subjects, Hasshō students spent the greatest number of classroom hours on English, a cosmopolitan language of commerce, mastery of which would give Japanese cotton spinners the edge over their Chinese counterparts in importing the latest Western technology.²² Students in all three years devoted six hours per week to studying English, with a native speaker every semester.²³ In courses like Commercial Geography, English texts were used as primers. The high quality of language training “unseen in other schools” became a major draw for prospective students.²⁴

As the spheres of Japan’s trade and territorial interests expanded, so did Hasshō’s courses on East Asia. Following the Russo-Japanese War, which brought a surge in Japan’s textile export and migration to the continent, Chinese was added to the core curriculum. The school also created a supplementary program for immersion in Chinese language and commerce²⁵ and began organizing an annual field trip to Asia for its upperclassmen. In the 1920s, as its graduates moved into the textile industry en masse, especially into retail and trading sectors,²⁶ Hasshō offered specialized courses on China and East Asian geography and history. From 1928 senior students were required to enroll in two hours of practical training in textile goods, a historical focus of Ōmi commerce.²⁷

While using primers on modern commerce, Hasshō also turned to local entrepreneurs as purveyors of wisdom. Leveraging its location in Hachiman, the home of many prominent merchant families, the school frequently invited Ōmi-born leaders from the front lines of trade and business to impart “knowledge of the real world” to its pupils. Among the regular guests were school benefactors Itō Chūbē II (1886–1973) of Itōchū, a textile trading firm, and Iba Sadatake (1847–1926), a

manager of Sumitomo (the sole zaibatsu headquartered in Osaka).²⁸ A Hasshō alumnus himself, Itō made particularly generous donations and periodically visited his alma mater to lecture on such topics as “the promotion of efficiency” and Japan’s cotton trade with India (in which Itōchū was directly involved, as discussed in chapter 5).²⁹ Hachiman had no shortage of local luminaries and models of cosmopolitan Ōmi shōnin making their way through global circuits of exchange.

PEDDLING AS A STRATEGY OF EXPANSION

Hasshō embraced a recognizably unique pedagogy of braiding old teachings and new techniques of trading across distance. Of the two commercial customs of Ōmi—peddling and apprenticeship—incorporated into its curriculum, peddling became an acclaimed idiosyncrasy of Hasshō. The practical rationale for engaging students in this time-honored practice was “to make them understand the value of money” and “foster a fine custom of thrift.” Its overarching aim was emphatically nativist: “to boost our Ōmi shōnin’s natural talents and disposition, rouse them to action by drawing inspiration from the great feats of our forefathers, and nurture the spirit of adventure.”³⁰ These values were treated not as mere abstract concepts enshrined in merchant house codes but as knowledge to be derived from the “bodily” experience of peddling on foot.³¹ From summer peddling on the home islands to annual field trips to the continent, we will see, peddling was variously scaled to pass on this wisdom of Ōmi merchants. Just as the global spread of capitalism appeared to pronounce them obsolete, itinerant peddling was infused with renewed significance as a vehicle for local boosterism.

In one of the first trials conducted in August 1892, Hasshō students, divided into groups of two to eight, peddled miscellaneous goods consigned by local suppliers in Shiga. According to the prefecture’s record, “Many students engaged in retail sales in the countryside, while others, having procured cocoons, raw silk, and tea, traveled from Ōtsu to various places daily.” In a gesture of simulating “overseas trade,” one group targeted foreigners vacationing at Mount Hiei and “achieved considerable results” selling envelopes, photographs, and articles of daily use. Upon hearing of their success, reportedly “merchants of Ōtsu one after another set out for the mountain to follow their example.”³² Hasshō students’ peddling trips also attracted wide publicity. When some seniors traveled to Tokyo in the summer of 1897, an English-language paper, *The Kobe Chronicle*, reported on their trading journey with excitement:

The Shiga Commercial School in Omi has made a new departure in practical commercial training. Mr. Tutaro [sic] Hatano and one assistant teacher, with four students of the third-year class, came up to the Capital a few weeks ago, with about 200 yen worth of Hamachirimen (a kind of Japanese crêpe), and letter-paper. These they hawked about the streets and speedily disposed of their stock of goods. They left Tokyo a few days ago, quite satisfied with the success of their first attempt in trade.³³

Peddling became an annual affair, a virtual rite of passage to the world of commerce for upper-class students to complete over the summer before graduation.³⁴ And the trip was continually scaled up to cover larger swaths of the archipelago. Beyond the neighboring cities of Kyoto, Osaka, and Kōbe, peddling destinations extended to as far as Chūgoku and Kyūshū.³⁵

Summer peddling appears to have met its pedagogical ideal of Ōmi merchanthood to the satisfaction of teachers. According to a school record of the 1892 trip, students not only learned the nuts and bolts of commerce but apprehended the value of money upon discovering that, when the total proceeds were divided among team members, the net profit per person amounted to a trivial sum.³⁶ For others, lessons gained from the peddling journey stayed with them long enough to shape their lifelong career. One such student was Tsukamoto Kōichi (1920–1998) from the class of 1938, who later founded a lingerie manufacturer, Wacoal, with fellow Hasshō alumni. In the summer of his fourth year, Tsukamoto teamed up with his classmates to make the rounds of the countryside, pulling a handcart loaded with piece goods procured from his father's store in Kyoto. In the wilting heat of August, they applied themselves as peddlers of Ōmi with gusto. Tsukamoto increased the value-added by sewing the cloth into aprons and bellybands, with the help of his mother, a move that rewarded the team with a handsome profit. The overall experience taught him the importance of hard work, creativity, and the sheer joy of doing business, Tsukamoto wrote decades after graduation, ruminating on the seeds of his entrepreneurial success.³⁷

On the heels of the Sino-Japanese War—which led to the opening of more treaty ports in China and Japan's acquisition of Taiwan as well as its increased sway over Korea—Hasshō teachers began exploring the idea of stretching the parameters of summer peddling to these territories. Doing so would “enable merchants of Gōshū to individually assist the state, no less than do soldiers in the army,” as they summoned up a vision of local imperialism.³⁸ By engaging students in this “ancestral custom” on a continental scale, Principal Hatano Shigetarō also hoped they might accordingly upscale their ambition to venture overseas, rather than settle for jobs with foreign trading agents in Japan.³⁹

Hatano's call for rescaling would have resonated with many Ōmi merchant families. Their custom of making young boys go peddling as a rite of passage steadily lost its meaning as the growth of transportation compressed the space and time of travel between head stores in Ōmi and their provincial clientele. Against this backdrop, as Seoka Makoto has observed, an alternative method of training the offspring of Ōmi merchants emerged by the turn of the century: sending them off to “the continent,” a loose reference to China, Korea, and Manchuria in contemporary parlance. Fujii Zensuke IV (1873–1943), who crossed to Shanghai to study Chinese, and his brother Hikoshirō, who enrolled at Hasshō, were among the scions of merchant families who acquired such overseas training before entering the world of business.⁴⁰ And the Fujii brothers would have been aware of Sugiura Shigetake's “plea” to young men of Ōmi to advance beyond national borders (chapter 3).

More than a means of commerce, peddling also had broad strategic significance for Japan's emergent empire in Asia. Principal Hatano's plan to extend peddling abroad met with enthusiastic support from Vice-Minister (and later Minister) of Foreign Affairs Komura Jutarō—not least because he himself had recently experimented with using peddlers on the Korean peninsula. During his sojourn as interim minister of Korea in 1895–1896, Komura assembled a band of armed Japanese peddlers who called themselves Keirin Shōgyōdan.⁴¹ As he explained to the principal, this association was ostensibly formed to remedy the dismal state of Japanese migrants, who engaged in dubious commercial practices, risking diplomatic trouble. Not unlike Ōmi shōnin, members of Keirin Shōgyōdan fanned out to the provinces, hawking miscellaneous goods, while gathering economic intelligence, which appeared to be its true mission. The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce cautiously supported their activities by granting a subsidy in exchange for “research reports” on how Japanese goods and merchants fared vis-à-vis foreign competitors.⁴²

Examples of the military use of spies disguised as peddlers abound in Japanese history, from the Warring States period to World War II; one general and later prime minister, Tanaka Giichi (1864–1929), even entertained a wild theory that itinerant merchants of Ōmi doubled as undercover agents, conducting military reconnaissance for the Tokugawa shogunate.⁴³ The association of peddlers with espionage also found its way into popular discourse. One army correspondent for *Yomiuri shinbun* used Ōmi merchants as a metonym for spies when explaining the Japanese maneuvers on the continent orchestrated by the general chief of staff Kawakami Sōroku (1848–1899) in the months leading up to the Sino-Japanese War.⁴⁴ For espionage work and the role of interpreters, Kawakami also recruited students at the Japan-China Trade Research Institute (Nisshin Bōeki Kenkyūjo) in Shanghai, headed by a Pan-Asianist, Arao Sei (1858–1896; he had once served as an interpreter-cum-spy for the army general staff).⁴⁵ A seventeen-year-old “Ōmi merchant” in training, Fujii Zensuke was part of this institute's cohort of 150 young men⁴⁶ tapped for these duties during the war.

Arao's work in China may have, in fact, directly inspired the creation of Keirin Shōgyōdan in Korea,⁴⁷ but Komura's scheme backfired completely. According to a consular report, Keirin Shōgyōdan turned out to be no more than a congeries of “the uneducated and the unpropertied,” who “imitated the British East India Company, styling themselves as Warren Hastings, or a caravan of traveling merchants in Sub-Saharan Africa.”⁴⁸ The peddlers used threats of violence to sell shoddy goods and phony medicines only to “swindle the poor [Korean] people,” the Japanese consul of Inchōn complained to Komura in July 1897.⁴⁹ As the notorious practices of Keirin Shōgyōdan spread nothing but anti-Japanese hostility, in 1898 the Tokyo government ordered the organization to disband, in effect ceding ground to Chinese merchants in the interior.⁵⁰ In light of this recent debacle, Komura told the Hasshō principal, “I wholeheartedly endorse the idea of engaging the children of Gōshū shōnin who have the education, capital, and mettle” in

overseas peddling.⁵¹ Respectable merchants of Ōmi would, he hoped, spearhead Japan's economic expansion and also restore its national prestige, badly tarnished by unruly migrants. Although Hasshō's plan for overseas peddling was placed on the back burner for financial and logistical reasons, the school would soon start dispatching students to the continent in the name of field research, as we will see.

HIKONE KŌSHŌ: A GROWING NEXUS BETWEEN SHIGA AND THE CONTINENT

Just as Hasshō was settling into its role as educator of new Ōmi shōnin, a local call for advanced vocational learning materialized in Hikone Kōshō, founded in 1922 with the support of powerful merchants.⁵² At its inauguration, Principal Nakamura took care to emphasize the symbolic importance of school's locale. The home of the late Ii Naosuke, Hikone was also "the birthplace of Ōmi shōnin,"⁵³ he declared, as if to forestall the kind of inter-district rivalry seen over the relocation of Hasshō in 1901.⁵⁴ The student body of Hikone Kōshō was broadly similar to that of Hasshō. Mostly precollegiate, the students⁵⁵ hailed predominantly from Shiga and Kansai; they were joined by a small but increasing number of young men from the rest of Japan and overseas.⁵⁶ The latter group included not only foreign-born students in East Asia, but expatriate Japanese from the immigrant diasporas in the United States and Hawai'i.⁵⁷ Their growing presence at both schools signaled the dispersal of Shiga people across the Pacific, as well as overseas reach of their place.

Hikone Kōshō's curriculum, in its basic contours, was an elaboration of Hasshō's, focused on commercial training and language study.⁵⁸ Advanced students could take electives where they might learn the how-tos of export trade or simulate the management of a department store.⁵⁹ A special one-year program was also created in 1926 for those seeking to master a minimum set of practical knowledge and skills requisite for business.⁶⁰ In keeping with its vision of training global Ōmi shōnin, Hikone Kōshō offered a number of core courses on overseas affairs. Surviving course syllabi provide a glimpse of what these courses aimed to achieve, many of them taught by Tanaka Shūsaku (1885–1963), a geographer by training. One of his lectures on commercial geography surveyed economic topographies and infrastructures of China, India, Indochina, Nan'yō, East Africa, and North and South America, which corresponded to major export markets for Japan's textile goods. These same regions were also studied from the perspective of "colonization and migration" in an elective, capped by a discussion of Japan's current policies in the Pacific. Following the 1931 invasion of Manchuria, Tanaka's class on overseas economic conditions, whose coverage extended to Turkey and Persia, became a requirement for second-year students.⁶¹ Taken together, Tanaka's courses offered his students a broad taxonomic knowledge of Japan's present and potential sites of business and migration, designed to facilitate trading with strangers as members of "an empire of free trade."

Following the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War, this global curriculum converged more sharply on East Asian affairs. In 1939, Hikone Kōshō launched the Chinese Program (later restructured as the East Asian Program). Modeled roughly on Japanese-run business schools like Tōa Dōbun Shoin in Shanghai, the Chinese Program reflected a new ambition of Hikone Kōshō to train China specialists who could “function directly without Chinese middlemen.”⁶² Every semester, students in the program dedicated seven to eight hours per week to Chinese, a comparable amount of time students in the Regular Program spent on English. The coursework also demonstrated the growing importance of Nan’yō, whose economies were dominated by the migrant diasporas from Fujian and Guangdong.⁶³ Above all, it was shot through with a concern to “dissect the Chinese national character.”⁶⁴ Among a set of standard courses offered by Ōtani Kōtarō, who had transferred from Tōa Dōbun Shoin to kick-start the program, were lectures curated to make the Chinese “intelligible” to future business and government leaders.⁶⁵ His “Theory on the Chinese Ethnicity,” as sketched in the syllabus, professed to unpack their “propensity for herd-like self-protection” as well as their congenitally “unstable” and “infantile” traits—the obverse of the Japanese “vigor” taught in another class on cultural history.⁶⁶ Framed from the Orientalist perspective of a ruling race poised to subdue the Other, Ōtani’s lecture, characteristic of his generation, stamped an intellectual sheen on the idea of their racial difference.⁶⁷ By this time, the iconoclasm of Sugiura Shigetake’s Confucian regard for China had indisputably become an anachronism.

Meanwhile, Hasshō had begun developing its own ties to Tōa Dōbun Shoin. Many Hasshō graduates, envisioning a career on the continent, went on to the academy in Shanghai to immerse themselves in the study of Chinese.⁶⁸ This trend, set in motion by the first Sino-Japanese War, reflected a broader movement among the native merchants of Kansai to reduce their dependence on Chinese intermediaries.⁶⁹ Many graduates of Tōa Dōbun Shoin, in turn, were recruited by textile firms owned by Ōmi merchants, with trading and manufacturing operations in China (see chapter 5). The resulting two-way traffic of students, faculty, and alumni, along with their ideas about “Chinese ethnicity,” spun an increasingly dense web of institutional and ideological linkages between Shiga and Shanghai, just as local traders forged their own networks to the China market.

ANNUAL FIELD TRIPS TO ASIA

Shiga’s connections to the continent deepened as the extracurricular activities of Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō straddled Japan’s East Asian empire. From around the turn of the century, vocational schools in Japan began organizing field trips for the purpose of “commercial inspection.” They were intended to give students the opportunity of learning about distant localities including their “practices of commerce, market conditions, people’s sentiments, geography and customs.”⁷⁰ From

nearby and far-off prefectures, the trips extended to overseas locations, especially after the Russo-Japanese War.⁷¹ Hasshō began taking its seniors to the continent following Japan's annexation of Korea. Likewise, Hikone Kōshō organized such a trip almost every summer, building it into the Chinese Program later.⁷² School excursions to colonial East Asia received various forms of logistical support from the Imperial Army and the Ministry of Education as well. The South Manchurian Railway Company (Mantetsu) and the Government-General of Korea provided discounts on train fares and accommodations along their routes of travel, while the Japan Tourist Bureau offered guided tours in many cities.⁷³

For the offspring of Ōmi merchants, as the two schools would have explained to their pupils, the continental trip was both an overseas extension of the regional custom of peddling and a proxy for apprenticeship on the home islands. Each trip was designed around a number of practical purposes traditionally fulfilled by local merchant families. As part of “commercial field inspection,” for instance, students and faculty throughout the tour collected samples and documents related to “local customs, sentiments, and commerce, as well as politics and economy,” what itinerant peddlers from Ōmi had learned by observation while trekking across the early modern archipelago.⁷⁴ Each trip also allowed its participants to make a preliminary inspection of areas of interest and look for potential sites of employment, the way Ōmi merchants had used seasonal treks to assay distant markets and branch locations.⁷⁵ In short, the continental trip embodied their tried and tested logic of combining long-distance peddling with market research. Training global Ōmi merchants, the teachers believed, must be grounded in this bodily practice, from which to gain experiential rather than cerebral knowledge of trading. Grafted onto this vernacular wisdom was a new understanding of fieldwork, which emerged among human scientists in interwar Japan, as the pathway to “objective” knowledge.⁷⁶ This epistemological conceit was shared by many faculty who believed field research brought them and their profession in close proximity to the “authentic” native experience. For their students, however, each trip to Asia was designed for a more lofty goal: to survey lands and people they would govern as the future business and political elite of Japan's empire.

Like summer peddling, the overseas school trip doubled as a rite of passage for “global Ōmi merchants” in training. By the late 1920s, its geographical scope had expanded to include southern China, Taiwan, and the Philippines, though it remained oriented to the continent, with a particular focus on Manchuria after 1931. Field trips organized by Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō (especially the Manchurian and Korean portions) had many overlaps with other group tours from Japan. Typically, their travel itinerary included the obligatory rounds of old battlefields and cenotaphs, where students paid homage to the spirits of fallen Japanese soldiers and their “heroic sacrifices” for the empire. The solemn pilgrimage was paired with visits to the former palace grounds, mausoleums, and other “relics” of the Qing and Chosŏn dynasties, which had receded into the past, the juxtaposition

implied, ceding the present to imperial Japan. Students also went on a guided tour in each colonial city, with an itinerary mixing icons of Japanese power (Shinto shrines, schools, the Government-General headquarters) with engineered spaces of bourgeois recreation and refuge (parks and arboretums). On the Manchurian leg of the journey, they viscerally experienced the furious pace and “sound of construction” resonating along the sprawling belt of Japanese settlement from Dairen (Dalian) to Shinkyō (Xinjing/Changchun) and Harbin. The built environment was again rich with symbolism, not missed by the provincial visitors. Wide thoroughfares lined by corporate and official buildings in “European style” defined the booming core of each city,⁷⁷ while “unlimited reserves of natural resources” in the interior, displayed at the Manchuria-Mongolia Resources Hall, beckoned young pioneers. Shepherded to sites of mineral and resource extraction in Fushun, students saw oil being extracted from the earth and coal transported by “tough” and “naked Chinese coolies”⁷⁸—racialized bodies of “forced and free [migrant] labor” that built almost the entire infrastructure for the South Manchurian industrial-military complex.⁷⁹ These destinations—staples of imperial tourism carefully curated in guidebooks to shape what travelers saw and understood—collectively staked a claim on the continent as a seamless extension in space and time of Japan’s modernizing nation, while declaring its native inhabitants “out of place.”⁸⁰

Embedded in this itinerary centered around monuments of national glory was a provincial atlas of belonging: a thriving network of Shiga natives plying their career abroad. The field trips of both Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō were interspersed with pilgrimages to banks, government offices, firms, and retail businesses where many recent graduates had landed their overseas jobs. These alumni, joined by other Shiga-born migrants, greeted, hosted, and assisted the students at all points along their journey. In almost every city they visited in Korea, for instance, they stopped by Minakai, a clothier-turned-department store owned by the Nakae family from Ōmi, for tea and sweets (chapter 6).⁸¹ In the treaty ports of Shanghai, Tianjin, and Qingdao, both schools made the rounds of branches of major textile firms and mills, many bankrolled by Ōmi merchant capital, that fueled Japan’s cotton empire (chapter 5). Together, these destinations chartered a budding community of global Ōmi shōnin: a network of kin and native-place ties splayed out over the continent, with the proud alumni pushing the frontier of commerce by enacting Ōmi customs, values, and spirit of adventure. To these self-proclaimed descendants of entrepreneurial peddlers, their far-flung endeavors in the empire signified not simply a geographical extension of commerce, but a genealogical rescaling of “ancestral tradition.” What the students saw and ruminated on later in travel essays was a diaspora of Shiga natives reified as much by “a claim of [local] belonging” as by their striving for a place on the map of Japan’s imperium.⁸²

Throughout their tour, visitors from Hasshō and Hikone also actively networked with commercial schools in colonial Korea and Taiwan, Tōa Dōbun Shoin in Shanghai, and the Daidō Academy in Shinkyō (a training center for Manchukuo

officials).⁸³ Their itinerary and records of travel mapped an empire-wide web of schools, harnessing the power of fieldwork for a common mission of educating the future leaders of Asia. Perhaps no school took this mission more seriously than Tōa Dōbun Shoin. Every summer its graduating seniors entered the arid and rugged terrain of the Chinese interior for field research. Armed with nothing but a backpack, they braved the punishing heat to collect data, samples, and economic intelligence for as long as several months.⁸⁴ Approximating the scope of Manchurian expeditions by state-commissioned surveyors, the famed “Big Trip” was a significantly scaled-up version of the continental trip of Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō that modeled the experience and wisdom of an itinerant peddler. Combined with year-round circuits of faculty research in Asia, the expeditions launched from Shiga integrated the two provincial schools and their pupils into another circuitry of relationships, wiring them directly to the imperial nexus of knowledge and power.

The growing Shiga diaspora on the continent also allowed Hasshō to realize its bold pedagogical vision of overseas peddling. On the eve of the Manchurian Incident, in August 1931, a caravan of six Hasshō students, accompanied by two professors, conducted this quintessential Ōmi custom for the first time beyond the Japanese archipelago.⁸⁵ Exact details are not available, but we have a rough sense of how it worked. During the twenty-two days of overland travel, the young merchant trainees from Hasshō targeted the cities of Shanghai, Dalian, Fengtian (Hōten), and Seoul for peddling, in addition to “inspecting local market conditions.” On each occasion, they “sold local specialties of Shiga Prefecture” most likely to local residents as well as Japanese settlers. Though the scope of business was modest, the continental scale of this undertaking was not. Thanks to the logistical support lent by local branches of the alumni association,⁸⁶ their overseas peddling proved a success, the school reported. Not only did the trip give its participants the first taste of trading on foreign soil, but it generated an unexpected profit of eighty yen, which was added to Hasshō’s “fund earmarked for research on Chinese affairs.”⁸⁷

What did the students and teachers see and learn in Asia? Hikone Kōshō left a particularly rich archive of their observations on China and Manchuria, where the future of Japan’s empire lay, as many wrote, beyond the Korean peninsula.⁸⁸ The students, once setting foot on the continent, beheld its vast and “borderless” expanse stretching beyond the horizon, conjuring Eurasia as the diasporic “stage of our future activity” (even as they were reminded of how small their country was).⁸⁹ Although much of their journey took place within the ambit of the Japanese settlement, they also witnessed its cultural influence spreading past its edge into local lives and communities. In the “sovereign” state of Manchukuo or in the Chinese quarters of Shanghai, the students “discovered to our joy Japan-made goods adorning local storefronts,” a testament to their “remarkable expansion overseas.”⁹⁰ In a variation of the classic pattern of trade following the flag, their essays reported, capital and commodities blazed the continental trail for imperial ideology to follow. At Port Arthur, Uematsu Isao and his traveling companions

delighted in listening to “Manchurian” children “sing Japan’s national anthem,” while in Inner Mongolia they relished the sight of local students discussing the Pan-Asian “ideal of *kyōson kyōei*” (coexistence, co-prosperity) with their Japanese teachers.⁹¹ They observed at first hand the empire making inroads in assimilating native children.

The travel narrative changed key when it turned to their passing encounters with ordinary Chinese on the streets, on trains, and at local markets—encounters that confirmed as well as complicated the Orientalist preconceptions the students had imbibed back home. Some first-time visitors wrestled with the complexities of Chinese ethnicity or Manchukuo as a political space,⁹² but most students seemed content to view the locals through a Manichean lens of civilized and backward nations. “In the midst of civilized transportation facilities” in Shanghai, Ogura Keijirō identified “the conservative Chinese character manifest” in their use of outmoded “rickshaws and unicycles.”⁹³ Many marveled at the cosmopolitan landscape of Shanghai, Harbin, or Dairen crisscrossed by “fresh roads of tarmac radiating from the large square,” but once they stepped into the backstreets, they felt as if they were being pulled back into “a completely different era.”⁹⁴ The same was true for the countryside they sighted from the train windows. While crossing the border area of Kando, Mekata Eizō saw some shacks standing along the newly laid tracks. Impressed as he was by their “robust ability to live” in such a harsh environment, he posited their native occupants led a “primitive” existence enmeshed “in nature.” “Not knowing electric lights, and not knowing trains and automobiles, or revues and cinemas at all, they rise with the sun and go to sleep with the sun. Because that’s how they go on living, they are not the enemy of the Japanese.”⁹⁵

Overall, the visitors from Hikone depicted the continent as a land fractured by different temporalities, pitting the modernity of Japanese and foreign settlements against the static alleys and barren fields inhabited by natives, their supposed inertia lurking just beneath the façades of progress. If their travel narrative tended to efface Chinese residents from the urbanized centers, declaring them “out of place” in their own land, it simultaneously treated China—as imperial ethnographers would treat rural Korea or aboriginal territories in Taiwan—as embodying some immutable cultural essence.⁹⁶ Along with “backwardness,” a dominant leitmotif was disunity. Professor Abe Akira opined that “a lack of unity” permeated all aspects of China, from its chaotic variety of currencies to regional dialects and nationalist movements riven by “contradictions between ideal and reality.”⁹⁷ His observation was seconded by a student, Yamashita Katsuji, who saw disunity inscribed everywhere on the local terrain: in the multiethnic Shanghai (the “disorderly and haphazard jumble” of a city) and in the “remarkable and frightening opposition” between city and country he glimpsed from the train en route to Nanjing. No sooner had Yamashita arrived in the city than he found the most tangible evidence yet in “the redundant walls” surrounding this ancient capital, the trappings of the old dynasty that physically and psychologically “obstruct (national) unity.”⁹⁸

Viewed from the distance of an imperial gaze, the Chinese across the continent appear in most travel records as “coolies,” or “the silent and unhappy masses toiling under warlords” whom none but the Japanese army and capital could rescue. Behind the modern veneer of Dairen “lay coolies like corpses taking a nap,” reported Uematsu Isao, who was “amazed by the dullness of their nerves.”⁹⁹ In the eyes of Matsutani Tsunezō, the Chinese in Manchuria, from stevedores and packhorse drivers to ordinary residents “sitting idly by,” appeared utterly devoid of political ideals. “I wonder if they harbor any big hope or much interest in independence,” he mused, concluding without so much as a chat with a Chinese person that “they care little about the world other than their own ease and happiness.”¹⁰⁰ Dehumanized as an unthinking herd or racialized bodies driven by instinct rather than intellect, local inhabitants were reduced further still to sensory impressions in student accounts of the Chinese quarters. While wending their way through a warren of residential alleys and storefronts in Shanghai, many students reported, they were “assaulted with a strange smell as well as eeriness.”¹⁰¹ Uematsu mocked the “Chinatown” as “a palace of dust, flies, and odor, amply reflective of the ethnic color and affect [*jōcho*] of the Chinese.” Rather than a site of commercial research, the market often became a cultural shorthand for their “lack of hygiene” and “vulgarity.”¹⁰²

Student essays, in short, had all the hallmarks of what the writer Kawamura Minato has called “popular Orientalism”: a gaze that seeks and sensationalizes (by means of enumerating) the “savage,” “strange,” “vulgar,” and “primitive” across the Asia-Pacific world of “natives,” whose discovery, in turn, served to uphold Japan’s fragile claim to “civilized” status.¹⁰³ Yet their certitude of superiority was often dampened by a withering critique of local settlers. Both faculty and students noted in dismay the “feeble” state of Japanese migrants and merchants in particular.¹⁰⁴ Professor Harada reserved his harshest criticism for the residents in Dairen, a city built and dominated by Mantetsu, a quasi-state railway company that ruled the region with the Kwantung Army. Local Japanese stores had become too dependent on Mantetsu, like “sickly children,” observed Harada, citing the commercial district their “foster parent” put up in a bid to “rescue them under assault from Chinese merchants.” The migrants must pull themselves up by their bootstraps, he wrote, calling attention to the vast clientele of “Manchurians” they neglected and “treated coldly.” Echoing his colleague, Abe Akira deplored how the Japanese huddled together only to “engage in mutual destruction.” They should cater to strangers rather than fellow nationals by venturing beyond the railway settlements, he argued, and advance the task of assimilating “the thirty million people of Manchuria [to] Japanese culture.”¹⁰⁵

Students also noted a conspicuous lack of will among Japanese migrants to settle permanently, their penchant for “*ikkaku senkin*” (get rich quick) and their “*dekasugi* [sojourner] mindset” on full display.¹⁰⁶ Matsutani Tsunezō made his point by citing the aphoristic words of an unidentified Western thinker: “The sine qua non

of colonization is to bring a hoe, women, and the Bible.”¹⁰⁷ Many perceived women as critical to settling the empire, but not without some misgivings. During his visit to Manchukuo, Taoka Kasuhiko acknowledged the role of prostitutes who “bravely” stood at the forefront of Japanese expansion, but he felt “embarrassed and sad” that “our policy of migration and colonization” should rely on them.¹⁰⁸ More serious, he reported, was the “marriage problem” among Manchurian-born Japanese women. One Mantetsu employee, for instance, relayed to Taoka that “I cannot bring myself to purchase a wife locally,” resolving instead “to import one from the metropole.” In a swipe at settler women, the employee grouched that those reared on the continent “detested labor” and depended on “coolies and maids,” leading an “open and liberal” lifestyle antithetical to the ideals of Japanese womanhood. His sentiment was evidently shared by “one hundred young men” whom Taoka “met and interviewed along the railway line from Dairen to Harbin.”¹⁰⁹

Interestingly, these unsettling encounters with Japanese migrants elicited contrasting commentary on the Chinese as a historically expansive race, their current political status notwithstanding. Some students took care to distinguish between China as a state and the Chinese as an ethnic group—much in the way Sugiura Shigetake had done in his editorials. The Chinese were “tremendously active ethnically, although they are meager nationally” (*kokkateki*), observed Matsutani Tsunezō. And he could not resist juxtaposing the sorry state of Japanese merchants he had witnessed in Manchukuo with the “Chinese spirit of venturing anywhere.”¹¹⁰ Horie Yoshikazu took a more long-term perspective. Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, he wrote, were but part of a string of spaces the Han Chinese had penetrated historically, a conduit for their multidirectional passage leading northward to Siberia and southward to Nan’yō, where they constituted an unrivaled mercantile diaspora.¹¹¹ China may have sunk into stagnation and disarray, but its countrymen overseas kept their homeland afloat through steady flows of remittances.¹¹²

From the travel accounts of students and faculty, indeed, emerge not one but two Chinas: one vigorously expanding overseas, the other languishing on home soil. Portraying the Chinese as expansive and regressive in equal measure, their observations exposed flawed assumptions about the internal coherence and homogeneity of their “national character.” Yet in their studied comparisons with Japanese migrants, the Chinese also functioned as a “metaphorical mirror” held to the nation’s “insular self,” as Ōnaka Etsu put it in his essay.¹¹³ In fact, everywhere the students traveled and studied—continental Asia, the South Seas, and even southwestern Japan that belonged to the “Sinosphere”¹¹⁴—they took note of the “competitive resilience” or “transgressive mobility” of Han Chinese engaged in “low-end globalization” beyond state-defined borders.¹¹⁵

Student essays are peppered with such exercises in an inversion of Orientalism, whereby deficiencies of the self were laid bare through the lens of the other’s “greatness.”¹¹⁶ Yet far from inhibiting, their critique of the empire emboldened

the students. Many returned from a journey of self-discovery on the continent, determined to advance the “task of overseas expansion” by “reforming the character of migrants” and “cultivating the expansive potential” of the Japanese.¹¹⁷ The discovery of “the native” had the effect of fostering a collective sense of entitlement to Asia as members of a “civilized” race, a dichotomy so pervasive as to blur the genres of popular and academic writing in interwar Japan.¹¹⁸ And just as assuredly, the students affirmed their regional stakes in Japan’s imperial project. In projecting their own ambitions and assumptions onto the land and bodies of local inhabitants, they developed a distinctive sense of pride as veritable heirs to the Ōmi shōnin, in command of the future of Japan’s ever-growing diaspora. This regionally inflected sense of commitment to the empire was articulated through their research and extracurricular activities back on campus.

SCHOOL AS ARCHIVE

“Overseas expansion has been our nation’s policy since its provenance,” declared the student leaders at Hikone Kōshō. “As history has shown us, becoming the ruler of the world requires, above all, ruling the seas!”¹¹⁹ Such was the sentiment shared by those returning from the continent who led the research community on campus. Observations and other records of their field trips, along with material collected or donated by alumni, were fed into growing archives at Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō. Hasshō had a dedicated Research Laboratory on Korea and Manchuria. When made open to the public in 1940, it held a vast compendium of information (including over three thousand documents and samples) on “our country’s overseas trade and colonial migration and settlement” as well as “politics, economy, education, climate, manners and customs of [our] new markets.”¹²⁰

Hikone Kōshō took its research mission to another level. Embracing some prominent experts in its faculty, the school operated in multiple capacities as a research institute, an archive, and a “commercial and industrial lab and clinic.”¹²¹ In addition to dispatching faculty on “fact-finding missions” to the continent, Hikone Kōshō systematically collected the latest data on overseas affairs from businessmen, scholars, and army officers passing through the prefecture. The school then made the information available to interested parties, such as local village officials seeking reference material on, say, conditions in South America for prospective or current immigrants from their district. The faculty with relevant expertise, too, proffered counsel to those planning to expand their business abroad and responded to queries from local firms about trading with foreign countries.¹²² Other professional services included translation of foreign-language documents (such as a boarding pass for a steamship bound for North America and a death certificate of a villager who had immigrated to Vancouver).¹²³ Requests like these increased with the growth of a Shiga diaspora across the Pacific.

Beyond serving as a repository of information, Hikone Kōshō aspired to be a producer of knowledge. Almost every higher commercial school in Japan had

a research division,¹²⁴ but Hikone Kōshō made it its “unique mission” to integrate the local with the global, creating a research lab on Ōmi shōnin and another on colonial and overseas affairs in the 1930s.¹²⁵ It fostered an environment that allowed students to blend the ancestral teachings and cosmopolitan knowledge of commerce seamlessly into their training as global Ōmi merchants.

The study of overseas affairs was led by faculty researchers and a group of committed seniors who launched the Foreign Affairs Research Society (hereafter FARS) in 1930 (fig. 4). Besides “charting the global flow of (Japanese) goods and commodities,”¹²⁶ FARS embraced a broad aim, framed around a Malthusian concern about overpopulation, to encourage more countrymen “to seek new frontiers across the sea.” With nearly three hundred members by May 1933,¹²⁷ FARS proselytized its vision energetically on and off campus, seeking to “stimulate the innate disposition of the Yamato race.”¹²⁸ In coordination with a colonial research lab,¹²⁹ FARS organized lectures, debates, and workshops on a monthly basis, where students and interested faculty gathered to ponder various “strategies for promoting Japanese expansion” such as through the textile trade, as well as obstacles to be overcome.¹³⁰ At one forum convened in the wake of Japan’s takeover of Manchuria, the faculty advisor of FARS, Tanaka Shūsaku, discussed with students “the Chinese lack of understanding about our country,” showing them anti-Japanese textbooks and propaganda leaflets he had brought back from a recent research trip.¹³¹ For guest lectures, the student leaders took advantage of a revolving door of visitors to Hikone—from an army officer stationed in Shanghai to a representative of the indigenous Tungus people of Karafuto—to gain firsthand insights into Japan’s imperial affairs.

Embracing the motto “From Study to Action!” FARS also unfurled a series of outreach efforts in Shiga to “correct local perceptions of overseas.”¹³² Faculty members periodically gave public lectures across the prefecture. In addition to disseminating their research through a bulletin, FARS also joined hands with the Research Division to organize free community “film screenings on foreign countries,” each event drawing as many as nine hundred attendees, including primary school pupils and housewives.¹³³ Their most ambitious collaborations were exhibitions.¹³⁴ One, held in 1933, reconstructed the transpacific lives of Japanese migrants in Manchuria and South America, stringing together documents, pictures, and product samples from their labor diasporas furnished by the Ministry of Colonial Affairs, Mantetsu, and emigration companies.¹³⁵ More elaborate was the three-day exhibition about the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of July 1937, which attracted nearly ten thousand visitors. Replete with statistics, maps, charts, and “spoils of the war,” the exhibition combined a mission to enlighten visitors on China’s resources and textile industry with a commemoration of Japan’s victories; photographs of the fallen soldiers from Hikone, each enlarged for floor display, created a haunting tableau of interlinked loyalties to the national and local homelands, “moving many visitors to tears.”¹³⁶ Using the unifying power of spectacle, FARS’s community events brought the far-flung empire home and provincials of Shiga into its tightening

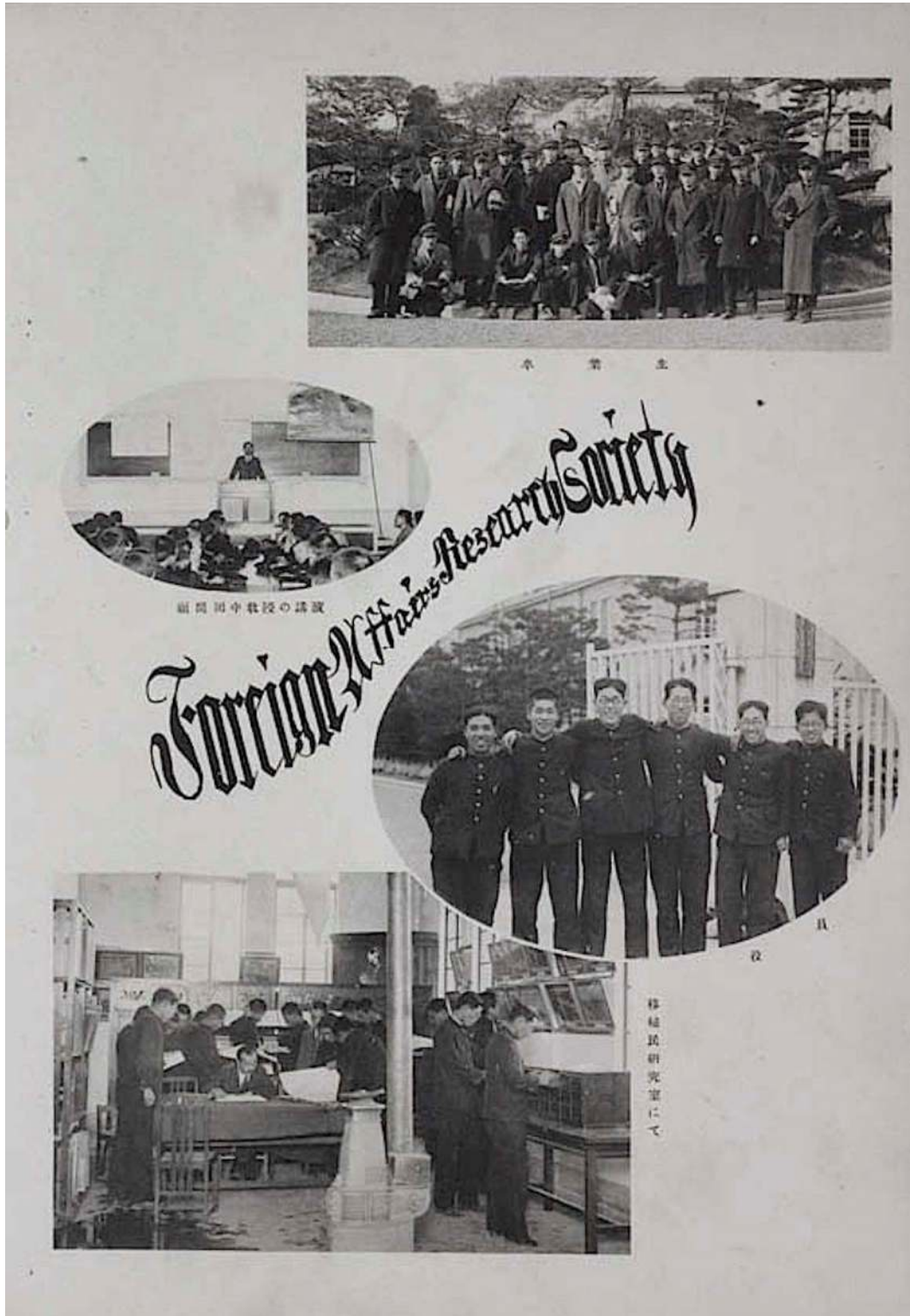


FIGURE 4. Members of the Foreign Affairs Research Society. Source: H.C.C. 2596 (Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō sotsugyō arubamu, Honka dai 11-kai, class of March 1936). Courtesy of the Institute for Economic and Business Research, Shiga University, Digital Archive.

embrace. Supported in part by the prefecture, their scale and popular reception underscored the rising profile of Hikone Kōshō as a regional hub for imperial knowledge production and dissemination.

Closely entwined with the study of overseas affairs was the research on Ōmi shōnin. A key topic of “native-place education” in Shiga since the Meiji period,¹³⁷ the history of Ōmi merchants was integrated, formally or informally, into students’ training at both Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō. From the time they entered school, Hasshō pupils were drilled in the biographies of “self-made” business tycoons, canonized in a booklet “four to five centimeters thick,” which they carried as “the bible on Ōmi shōnin.”¹³⁸ Their counterparts at Hikone Kōshō dived more deeply into the commercial feats of their “ancestors.” In 1928, a group of faculty researchers and Shiga-born students launched the Association for Research on Ōmi Merchants,¹³⁹ avowedly propelled by their feared descent into obscurity. The faculty leader, Kanno Watarō, put it plainly: since they transitioned to the modern era, “merchants of Ōmi have fallen into a condition unworthy of the label Ōmi shōnin. . . . Our duty [then] is as much to clarify the achievements of their predecessors as to admonish” and “inspire many to rise up” today.¹⁴⁰ If their “decline” was gauged in inflated contrast to their “glory” in the Tokugawa period, Kanno’s call spoke to a broader concern shared by community leaders: that local merchants had yet to take ownership of their cultural inheritance and restore Shiga at the center of the national economy.

Armed with this tacit goal of rebranding Shiga by way of rehabilitating its merchants, a team of researchers led by Kanno set out to retrace the footsteps of their Tokugawa forebears.¹⁴¹ Targeting the five districts of Gamō, Echi, Inukami, Sakata, and Kanzaki, they made the rounds of established Ōmi merchant households, seeking access to their family records and account books.¹⁴² Other students at Hikone Kōshō were also brought into research projects over the summer. They fanned out across the hamlets east of Lake Biwa, with index cards in hand, visiting local merchant families and searching their warehouses for documents, specimens, stories, and testimonies.¹⁴³

In the fall of 1928, the fruits of their research were showcased for the wider public to view at the Exhibition on the Records of Ōmi Shōnin, held at the Shiga Prefectural Commercial Museum in Ōtsu. Walking through the exhibition, which resembled an industrial fair in its scope and coverage, was like turning the pages of a Who’s Who in Ōmi. Arrayed across the museum were local products, textile goods, and other merchandise samples provided by large and thriving companies of Ōmi lineage. Visitors also were guided through portraits of local luminaries and their family genealogies, accompanied by various tools of commerce—from the “balance pole” to house codes, account books, and promissory notes from provincial daimyo—or reified tokens of Ōmi merchants’ diasporic vigor. The displays staged in multiple galleries celebrated their regional diversity as much as their collective national significance: contributions made by merchants of Hachiman

and Hino to modern commerce, by skilled artisans of Hino to the cottage industry, and by seafaring traders from Yanagawa, Satsuma, and Hachiman to the development of Hokkaido (as captured in the “Matsumae screen” in chapter 2, fig. 2). Featured alongside these Tokugawa pioneers was a newly rising generation of Ōmi merchants in the empire, the most prodigious being the Nakae brothers of Kondō Village, who operated Minakai, with a network of branches spanning the Korean peninsula.¹⁴⁴ Replicated at other exhibitions, stories of their exploits across the early modern archipelago yielded a compelling tableau of “Ōmi shōnin [who] built the indispensable foundation upon which our nation’s economy achieved extraordinary growth after Meiji.”¹⁴⁵ Their post-restoration activities were made epic as an unfolding tale of diasporic merchants seeking to “recover their laurels” on the continent and across the sea.¹⁴⁶

Juxtaposed with these images of virility were a few photographs of women, which occupied a tiny yet significant part of the exhibition (fig. 5). In these choreographed scenes of Ōmi womanhood, wives of Ōmi merchants are depicted immersed in household chores (reeling thread, doing laundry, sewing) while taking care of their children, in the “absence of their husbands and sons toiling in foreign lands.” The photographs, accompanied by excerpts from textbooks, spotlight the mundane labor and sacrifice of women left behind, with a caption exhorting the visitors: “We must not forget that behind each Ōmi merchant’s success lies the hidden service [*naijo*] rendered by a housewife.”¹⁴⁷ Although men and women occupied separate spheres of the home and the market, their juxtaposed images worked to highlight their interconnectedness, rather than dichotomy, that sustained an Ōmi merchant’s household.

The overall effect of these exhibitions may be best understood if conceptualized as “mnemonic sites”: “material vehicles of meaning” designed to create a new national memory centered on Ōmi shōnin by collapsing their remote and recent pasts into a unified set of symbols (the balance pole as a signifier of their diligence, for instance). Commemorating present accomplishments of their successors served to enhance this sense of continuity.¹⁴⁸ Representing their diasporic practices, customs, and values as the “folklore” of Ōmi, the exhibits embodied the organizers’ desire to construct the notion of Ōmi shōnin as the shared patrimony of Shiga people: to create an identity that encompassed yet transcended localities and their histories within the province.¹⁴⁹

THE DISCOURSE ON THE ŌMI SHŌNIN AND HIS ORIGINS

These mnemonic devices also shaped the narrative framework for what would become the orthodoxy in economic history of Ōmi. Much of the prewar canon was authored by Kanno Watarō, who organized the exhibits and headed a research lab on Ōmi shōnin.¹⁵⁰ Kanno marshaled the same array of material to publish reams of research papers and lectures, culminating in his thesis that established



FIGURE 5. Wives of Ōmi merchants engaged in household chores. *Source:* Shigaken Keizai Kyōkai, *ge-kan*, 1930, photographs 247, 250.

long-distance peddlers of Ōmi as indigenous precursors of capitalism.¹⁵¹ Beyond academia, Kanno and his faculty colleagues joined the popular media, textbooks,¹⁵² hagiographies, and local gazetteers in crystallizing the very idea of “Ōmi shōnin”¹⁵³—a neologism born of Japan’s search for indigenous roots in expansion—and animating genealogical discourses on their origins. Collectively, these texts and practices of place-making worked together to keep Ōmi merchants’ legacies alive by searing them into the fabric of national memory.

While the term quickly took root in the popular vernacular, the idea of the Ōmi shōnin was increasingly paired with that of his wife, as exhibited in figure 5.

Framed in terms of the proverb *naijo no kō* (rendering assistance [to the husband] from inside [the home]), the trope of a grass widow—who maintained her family and spousal fidelity, “training future Ōmi shōnin” on her own—became a “distinguishing” emblem of Ōmi womanhood in local discourse. Its real-life exemplars, mostly wives of prominent merchants, were eulogized in a roster published several years later by two (male) principals of local women’s schools. In what became typical of this genre of texts, the authors valorized the obscured labor of women to which men’s success owed. But they did so without eroding the patriarchal authority of merchant households, far less challenging the coding of the public sphere of business as fundamentally male. “*Naijo*’ cannot mean anything other than ‘laboring behind the scenes’ to fulfill its true import,” the principals insisted.¹⁵⁴

Nor was Ōmi womanhood entirely a male invention; wives of Ōmi merchants themselves actively participated in its construction. One of them was Tsukamoto Sato (1843–1928), a learned daughter of a prominent merchant in Gokashō village. After her husband’s death, the seventy-seven-year-old Sato used her own money to establish Tankai Women’s Business College in 1919, with the aid of Sugiura Shigetake and other female educators.¹⁵⁵ Although its details remain unknown, the college was likely designed as a female counterpart to incubators of Ōmi shōnin like Hasshō: to institutionalize the customs and lessons daughters traditionally learned in an Ōmi merchant household. Its founding aim, as Tsukamoto’s biography tells us, was to groom local women for their future task of rendering *naijo* to their Ōmi merchant husbands: to nurture “commercial common sense and skills in managing daily business.”¹⁵⁶ While the school’s emphasis lay on mastery of housewifely skills, local educators and merchant families also endorsed a broader public role for women in philanthropy and social education.¹⁵⁷ In this respect, the Ōmi discourse on *naijo* was a regional variation of the official gender ideology of “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*).¹⁵⁸ But its interlocutors in Shiga saw themselves as reclaiming distinctly local traditions of femininity, which appeared threatened by the modish “Western” ideas of women’s rights and equality. Posited as “naturally endowed with economic thought, endurance, and chastity,” Ōmi women, they extolled, embodied unique virtues that shored up the entrepreneurial vigor and “virility” of their tradesmen.¹⁵⁹ Just as the Meiji ideologues of empire and boosters of Shiga borrowed the iconic power of Ōmi merchanthood for regenerating the nation and their native place respectively, so, too, local educators anointed Ōmi women as the bedrock of Japanese womanhood, from which both entities derived their strength.

If the Ōmi shōnin became a signifier of entrepreneurial daring, and his wife of domestic femininity, their partnership offered a compelling portrait of virtuous commerce in the national idiom, reinforcing a reputation already earned by the Meiji era.¹⁶⁰ For their part, Ōmi natives embraced the two halves of this newly reinvented identity, viewing cross-border mobility increasingly as part

of their received tradition. Indeed, Shiga people of all backgrounds and careers came to claim a straight line of descent from common merchant ancestors, even so remotely related as being from the same prefecture (chapter 7). Faculty and student research at Hikone Kōshō lent a historical basis to the claim that natives of Ōmi-Shiga “had since olden times demonstrated a marked tendency to expand beyond the province,” showing how “a great number of them continue to this day to operate outside the province/country” (*kuni*).¹⁶¹ Their avowed mission was partly to foster this “traditional spirit of migration” among Shiga people as a way to “boost the development of local culture and industry.”¹⁶²

The notion of the historically migratory character of Shiga people grew out of a search for the origins of Ōmi shōnin. Among the various theories put forth was that Ōmi shōnin were descended from ancient immigrants from the Korean peninsula and the Chinese continent. According to Kanno, who inferred from Japan’s foundation myths in the eighth-century chronicles *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki*, they had settled around Lake Biwa and had become naturalized as Japanese.¹⁶³ Kanno’s theory also partly derived from the fact, now substantiated by archaeological evidence, that Ōmi was a vital node in transoceanic Buddhist networks that spanned the “East Asian Mediterranean”¹⁶⁴—though the alleged link between continental immigrants and Ōmi shōnin has no basis beyond the level of conjecture.

His faculty colleague Hashimoto Sainosuke traced the origins of Ōmi shōnin even further back to the age of Emperor Tenchi. In so doing he also ventured that Lake Biwa was the birthplace of the Yamato race, an earthly locus for “the upper world” of deities presided over by the sun goddess Amaterasu. Drawing on local legends and folklore, Hashimoto tried to illustrate how toponyms of the region east of Lake Biwa, osmotically “transferred and grafted across the archipelago” through centuries, “became permanently inscribed on local lands,” before they were “reassembled into ‘Japan’” in the modern period.¹⁶⁵ It was no accident that this eastern littoral was the cradle of Ōmi shōnin.

Conceptualizing the region as “a miniature map of Japan,”¹⁶⁶ Hashimoto portrayed Ōmi as the nation’s cornerstone, and “Japan” as a toponymic replica of primeval Ōmi. In a symbolic act of rescaling—or provincializing national identity to appropriate the nation and simultaneously assert a local identity—his theory recast the origin story of the Japanese ethnos as the historical dispersal of Ōmi people and their culture. To redefine the nation as a province splayed across the imperial realm was to reconfigure “a geometry of power” between center and periphery, or to pull the locational center of gravity in nationhood back to Ōmi.¹⁶⁷ Its appeal to local boosters, seeking to keep Ōmi alive and relevant to national life long after its importance had diminished, can be easily imagined. Indeed, so popular was this theory of Ōmi Takamanohara that it was integrated into the official narrative on the prehistoric origins of Shiga Prefecture at “the 2,600th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese empire.”¹⁶⁸

ON DIASPORA

The two intertwined projects of Hikone Kōshō, to research overseas affairs and Ōmi shōnin in parallel, were brought into a singular vision of expansion by Tanaka Shūsaku, a faculty advisor to FARS. Before joining Hikone Kōshō in 1923, Tanaka had studied topography at Kyoto Imperial University and worked for the South Manchurian Railway Company, where he researched and wrote extensively on Manchuria and Inner Mongolia.¹⁶⁹ Tanaka's tenure at Hikone Kōshō, which lasted for twenty years, until 1943,¹⁷⁰ represented the most fertile period in his scholarship on colonial geography, a relatively new field in prewar Japan in which he left his imprint as a trailblazer.¹⁷¹ While commanding a deep knowledge of continental and overseas affairs, he also participated actively in the study of Ōmi shōnin. His influence, visible everywhere in the activities of FARS, straddled the two research projects, making him the school's foremost evangelist.

Emblematic of this local-global synthesis was Tanaka's 1924 essay, which ruminated on the littoral origins of Ōmi shōnin in the comparative context of "foreign expansion" (*taigai hatten*).¹⁷² To a "conventional view" that highlighted feudal oppression and the lack of arable soil as factors driving many inhabitants out of Ōmi to peddle for a living, Tanaka presented an alternative, geographical explanation emphasizing "the role of littorals" (*suigō*). Endowed with Japan's largest lake and waterways akin to the Mediterranean littoral, Ōmi was topographically inclined to breed maritime traders, "as a pivotal passage to the east, the west, and the north" through which local inhabitants "gradually and unconsciously left for foreign lands." One need only look at the global history of maritime expansion for the influence of littorals. From "the merchants of Athens and Phoenicia" to "the residents of Holland" and "the lagoon city of Venice," he wrote, people's overseas activity was buoyed up by their proximity to water. An even closer parallel to Ōmi was found in China's coastal provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, and Guangdong, "whose people, for centuries, have lived on the water as overseas Chinese" (*kakyō*).

In another essay, Tanaka placed Ōmi merchants and European maritime empires on a plane of equivalence, likening the peddlers' quest for "new markets in virgin lands" to Western missionaries' activities around the world. If religious faith propelled the European search for "new frontiers," he wrote, "the indomitable spirit of pioneers" guided Ōmi's religion of commerce, as it were, pushing its boundaries outward to "as far as Hokkaido and Nan'yō, a feat that by no means pales in comparison with the achievements of Europeans overseas."¹⁷³

Such a spirit, however, was "seldom seen in our nation's empire" today; the Japanese overseas amounted to a mere 600,000 as of 1924.¹⁷⁴ Arguing for more "migration and colonization abroad," Tanaka called attention to the border-defying flow of ethnic Germans as an example, especially after he spent a year (1928–1929) at Leipzig University. Singling out Germans as "the most expansive race among

the whites,” he explained their capacity to expand and reach outward in terms of “*kōgaisei*,” best translated as “diasporic character.”¹⁷⁵ *Kōgaisei* could take political and economic forms of domination, but its most potent expression, as exemplified by the Germans, was spreading cultural influence by resettling around the globe (what he called “cultural imperialism”). Drawing on the work of German geographers, Tanaka traced the growth of a German diaspora in a sweeping narrative, from an overland colonizing drive in Central and Eastern Europe and the rise of the Hanseatic League in the medieval era to mass immigration to the Americas in the nineteenth century. Although their country lost every overseas possession in the aftermath of World War I, he noted, a diaspora of Germans, twenty million strong, had by then “transplanted their unique culture” to all corners of the world, from the South Pacific and Africa to “the riverside of the Volga in Russia.”¹⁷⁶ And all this was accomplished “without the backing of the home government” or without being assimilated into host societies to maintain their remarkable spirit of “*Auslandsdeutschtum*” (Germandom abroad).¹⁷⁷ German colonial activity not only antedated the empire of a nation-state born in the nineteenth century but outlived its demise after the Treaty of Versailles. The tragic irony that the Nazi policy of *Lebensraum* promoted racial expansion of their diaspora to displace and exterminate another—the Jewish diaspora that originally informed the concept of *kōgaisei*—was not even registered in Tanaka’s writing.

“What about the Japanese? Do our people have such *kōgaisei*?” By all means, Tanaka declared. Extending his thesis on littoral Ōmi to the entire archipelago, he was writing in the 1930s that Japan, “girthed by sea on all four fronts,” was no less topographically gifted than Germany to expand abroad. The diasporic character of Japanese was etched across their history—from the activity of medieval pirates (*wakō*) along the southern Chinese coasts to Hideyoshi’s invasion of the Korean peninsula, followed by the early Tokugawa’s vermillion-ship trade with the islands of Nan’yō, where merchants and mercenaries together built “Japantowns”—centuries of continental and maritime exploits also covered in Tanaka’s course on cultural history.¹⁷⁸ Though momentarily stifled by the shogunal ban on foreign travel, the “pent-up” energies of Japanese were unleashed by the “opening of the country” in the Meiji period. In a remarkable case of atavism, they set out, once again, for distant shores around the Pacific as emigrants, traders, and entrepreneurs.¹⁷⁹

Just as the Germans had historically demonstrated their ability to expand on land and at sea, argued Tanaka, the Japanese too had such twinned capacity for “amphibious expansion.”¹⁸⁰ This was a concept that he borrowed from a journalist-scholar, Arthur Dix (1875–1935)¹⁸¹ and also identified in the geopolitical thought of Iwata Kōzō (1907–1994), who taught at the Army Accounting School. According to Iwata, the Japanese ethnicity was made up of “continental” and “maritime” characteristics—the former bequeathed by ancient immigrants from the continent (*Izumo zoku*), the latter ingrained in descendants of the sun goddess Amaterasu (*Tenson zoku*)—supplying two vectors of expansion.¹⁸² For pursuing amphibious

expansion like the Germans (which, for Iwata, meant parallel development of the navy and the army¹⁸³), Tanaka advocated a policy of “*Auslands Japantum*,” so named after *Auslandsdeutschum*.¹⁸⁴ Specifically, he envisioned extending Japan’s colonizing drive from Manchuria to Brazil and Argentina—“a new inter-imperial flow” spawned by the U.S. exclusion of Japanese immigrants¹⁸⁵—after visiting South America following his sojourn in Germany. Having long “welcome[d] our migrants” on its plantations and in its mines, South America was, in his view, a Manchuria on the opposite side of the Pacific, “vast and sparsely populated,” “relatively free from external pressures,” and “endowed with natural riches.” Yet “cultivation of new frontiers” in Japan’s transpacific diaspora demanded a close alliance of labor, capital, and knowledge.¹⁸⁶ This task rendered “our mission at Hikone Kōshō” all the more critical for galvanizing local merchants into action. “It is no coincidence that I stand on this lakeshore of historical splendor to call for overseas expansion,” he mused, seeing it as a geographical destiny of Ōmi people.¹⁸⁷

By 1940, Tanaka’s interest had shifted to the South Pacific, a new focus of Japan’s military ambition. The Japanese had long strained to break the hold of Chinese merchants, mainly Hokkien and Teochiu, in Southeast Asia.¹⁸⁸ Treating overseas Chinese as a monolithic group of “*kakyō*” (Ch. *huaqiao*), many observers found in them what Tanaka saw in ethnic Germans: a diasporic model and competitor. Over the course of the 1930s, students and faculty at Hikone Kōshō brought the diasporic Chinese in Nan’yō under growing scrutiny, seeking to unpack their success behind the sobriquet “Jews of the Pacific Ocean.”¹⁸⁹ Among their oft-cited strengths were fortitude, cohesion, diligence, frugality, and ties of native place and kinship (the latter also translated into political activism, as demonstrated through anti-Japanese boycotts and financial support for the Nationalist Party).¹⁹⁰ Yet overseas Chinese were not without their shortcomings. Their “conservatism” and adherence to “traditional customs,”¹⁹¹ it was noted, blinkered them to the point of stifling innovation—a salutary reminder for merchants of Ōmi whose perceived affinities with the Chinese might predispose them to the same weakness.¹⁹² As for their methods of accumulation, the Chinese in Nan’yō amassed their greatest profit “by operating between natives and whites” as brokers and middlemen. But just as willingly, they engaged in labor of all kinds that neither whites nor Japanese would deign to do—as day laborers, rickshaw pullers, waiters, cooks, and janitors—before advancing into retail.¹⁹³ Using a metaphor of “termite infestation,” one faculty rated the Chinese mode of economic penetration far “more destructive than military conquest or capital takeover by any European power.”¹⁹⁴

Faced with such a formidable rival, the long-standing Japanese agenda of elbowing out Chinese middlemen would materialize only after the military occupation of Nan’yō. In 1942, when the Imperial Army had completed the conquest of Southeast Asia, Tanaka wrote, with new confidence, that the path was cleared for “hordes of [Japanese] industrial warriors” to take over the local economies.

The sole obstacle standing in their way, he suggested, was the issue of acclimatization to the tropics. But the Japanese were no less endowed than the Chinese with a robust “constitution to withstand high temperatures and humidity,” reassured Tanaka. Their “mixed” origins as a fusion of maritime and continental peoples, he argued, conferred on the Japanese an innate genetic advantage in acclimatization—something, in his view, that was lacking in most whites, who were susceptible to neurasthenia in the tropics.¹⁹⁵

. . .

Graduates of Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō became part of the swelling ranks of young men schooled in methods of modern and international commerce, who helped drive Japan’s capitalist empire.¹⁹⁶ True to their training as global Ōmi shōnin, many of them found careers in foreign trade or moved abroad for work or advanced study. Most were based in Kansai, but close to 10 percent of each school’s alumni by the early 1940s lived and worked in overseas locations around the Pacific: Manchuria, Korea, China, Taiwan, and Nan’yō, as well as British India, the United States, and Canada.¹⁹⁷ The transoceanic flow of Hasshō graduates first crested in the mid-1910s, a period of notable expansion of Ōmi merchant businesses abroad,¹⁹⁸ with some two hundred alumni engaged in import-export trade or employed at foreign branches of Japanese companies.¹⁹⁹ Some moved on to Tōa Dōbun Shoin or enrolled in Mitsui Shoin in Beijing (a Chinese-language program created by Mitsui Bussan for its employees) to further hone their expertise as China hands.²⁰⁰ At home and abroad, the majority of Hasshō graduates found their livelihoods in the cotton textile industry. As the school cemented its reputation, a growing number of spinning and trading companies visited campus, seeking to recruit fresh graduates.²⁰¹ By 1941, their disproportionate influence in the textile industry “unmatched by other schools” came to define Hasshō’s “uniqueness,” adding further luster to its claim as incubator of new Ōmi shōnin.²⁰²

No less impressive were Hikone Kōshō alumni, whose 1933 roster already spanned the Pacific Rim from Seoul to Vancouver.²⁰³ Hikone Kōshō sent some of its best graduates to big business, with companies of Ōmi lineage absorbing the greatest number.²⁰⁴ It furnished a regular supply of new employees to Mitsui Bussan and other trading firms, as well as to textile concerns of all kinds. The school also produced more than a handful of civil servants and administrators, otherwise supplied by imperial universities. Abroad, while some alumni carved out a career for themselves as business proprietors, many worked for stores owned by Ōmi merchants or overseas branches of Ōmi-lineage firms, such as Minakai.²⁰⁵ Noteworthy, too, was the job placement of foreign-born graduates. Four Korean students in the class of 1934–1935, for instance, all landed prestigious jobs at banks, a financial co-op, and the Korean Railway Company.²⁰⁶ They effectively joined the ranks of the colonial bourgeoisie.

In sum, Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō together produced a significant number of “new Ōmi shōnin” who forayed into the world of global commerce and imperial politics. Both schools effectively functioned as organs of local imperialism, where empire-building and place-making had been closely knotted since their inception. Not only did they serve as regional nodes for national expansion, dispelling any notion Tokyoites might hold of the empire’s tenuous impact on provincial life. Their influence and connections also extended beyond the ambit of provincial schools, through overseas networks of alumni and institutional cousins in Asia, embedding their faculty and pupils directly into Japan’s continental project.

For nurturing global Ōmi shōnin—an aspirational category that did not yet fully exist—Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō designed their curricula around modern knowledge and skills of foreign trade but without displacing the existing commercial tradition. In and out of the classroom, provincial wisdom and global knowledge of business remained intertwined in students’ training. Inherited customs of Ōmi were integrated with vocational courses, and their application was continually upscaled from the home islands to the continent. Both schools engaged their pupils in vicarious experiences of the Ōmi peddler—from summer peddling to fieldwork in Asia—reenacting his expeditionary *modus operandi* on expanding scales and frontiers of Japan’s empire. During their research trips in Asia, students and faculty also witnessed new Ōmi merchants in action, a budding diaspora of Shiga natives carrying on the entrepreneurial legacy of their forefathers abroad. Though fraught with tension, their encounters with Chinese overseas or Japanese migrants on the ground only led to their enthusiastic embrace of imperial mission as descendants of Ōmi shōnin.

What infused the research activities and archives of Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō, as a result, was an emphatically regional understanding of expansion. Through a comparison with global diasporas, they celebrated the unbound genius and enterprise of Ōmi merchants as Japan’s border-crossing pioneers. More broadly, they portrayed Ōmi people as a diasporic people since time immemorial, eminently fit for the task of leading the nation abroad. This genealogical discourse spread widely through local texts, exhibitions, and other mnemonic sites, placing the current and past ventures of Ōmi exemplars on a continuum. Collectively, their records of triumph and travail across the *longue durée* found an eager audience in Shiga and helped to create the legend of Ōmi shōnin as it was still taking shape—and increasingly beyond Japan’s national borders.

Like their regional forebears, many Shiga-born graduates of Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō pursued lifelong career in the textile industry, a trend that lasted beyond 1945. One of the most prominent was the aforementioned Itō Chūbē II, a member of Hasshō’s class of 1903 who became one of the school’s central benefactors. Son of an “East Lake merchant,” Chūbē II inherited his family’s textile business upon graduation, and developed it into a trading and industrial enterprise of multinational scope. Part of the last generation of itinerant peddlers but among the

first to venture overseas, the Itō family represented a larger turning point in the global history of Ōmi shōnin. Starting with the story of Itō, the rest of the book will follow the transnational lives and careers of Shiga people, who translated the teachings of Ōmi shōnin into three key areas of cross-border activity: cotton trade and production for world markets, retail commerce in colonial East Asia, and labor migration to North America. As envisioned by local boosters since the Meiji era, these provincials plied across Japan's transpacific diaspora, at the front lines of business, trade, industry, and capital investment. So, too, they appropriated the national project for their own ends, rendering the empire in distinctly regional terms: as a renewed commitment to expansion pioneered by their common ancestors in Ōmi. Real and fictive, these offspring of Ōmi shōnin together constituted a new and growing lineage of local cosmopolitans who deemed their diverse and far-flung endeavors a spatial and scalar extension of shared diasporic heritage.

PART THREE

Ōmi Merchants across
the Transpacific Diaspora

The “Gōshū Zaibatsu” in Japan’s Cotton Empire

Long after Itōchū became a trading behemoth—ranked among the Fortune Global 500 and second only to Mitsubishi until recently, when it outstripped its rival to become Japan’s biggest trader¹—the company still proudly claims to be “descended from an Ōmi merchant” and “values the spirit of ‘sampo yoshi.’”² That merchant was Itō Chūbē, a peddler of textiles from Toyosato Village. Known as the “last Ōmi shōnin,”³ Chūbē began his career in the twilight of Tokugawa rule and opened shop in the cotton metropolis of Osaka on the heels of the restoration. He soon set about expanding his business abroad, kickstarting its transformation into a pioneering trading firm. Itōchū was ushered into being by his son and namesake, with an understanding of overseas trade that became etched permanently in the company’s sense of identity: a rescaling of ancestral business, rather than its displacement, from the local to the global theater of competition.

To trace the Itō enterprise across the two generations of Chūbē is to track the history of Japan’s textile industry from the vantage point of a region. The family and corporate archives illustrate the role of provincial actors and traditions previously not visible in national and global histories of cotton textiles—a driver of Japan’s industrial capitalism in the first half of the twentieth century. Central here is the question of continuity versus change. Historians have long stressed the Tokugawa legacy as the basis for modern industrial growth, focusing on the role of the countryside and enterprising farmers—not to speak of the costs borne by young female textile workers—while paying comparatively little attention to merchants.⁴ On the other hand, many scholars, liable to accept the supposed declension of Ōmi shōnin, have taken for granted the leadership of the developmental state and its bourgeois allies after 1868.⁵ Provincial merchants remain on the sidelines in this Tokyo-centered narrative of industrial revolution, pride of place given to the big conglomerates of Mitsui and Mitsubishi. As is well known,

these zaibatsu dominated the heavy industries—shipbuilding, iron and steel, locomotives, munitions—that also fueled Japan’s imperial expansion in Asia.⁶

But beneath this partnership of industrial dynasties and policy makers operated many provincial actors who supported Japan’s metamorphosis into a capitalist empire from below.⁷ While the heavy industrial sectors continued to depend on state support and subsidies long after the initial period of gestation, the cotton textile industry drew on the private entrepreneurship and long expertise of merchants in Kansai. Mostly based in Osaka, a city built by merchants who “nourished little respect for politicians,” these provincials, along with their better-known competitors in Lancashire, became major players in the world cotton market, a story buried in the global history of capitalism.⁸ Even more obscured is the emergence and existence of the “Gōshū zaibatsu,” a loosely organized network of Ōmi-born merchant capitalists and entrepreneurs primarily engaged in the textile industry.⁹ Although the term *zaibatsu* is usually reserved for the likes of Mitsubishi and Mitsui, the collective influence of Ōmi merchant capital in the industry was powerful enough to garner recognition as constituting a provincial zaibatsu of its own.¹⁰ Viewed as “too risky a venture” and long “shunned” by big zaibatsu, cotton manufacturing “became a secondary pole of financial capitalism” to be occupied by merchants and industrialists of Kansai.¹¹ They formed a powerful cotton lobby to exert monopolistic control over the supply chain, where Ōmi merchants left their mark as importers of raw cotton, owners of mills, and distributors of finished goods.¹²

The global microhistory of Itōchū, too, deepens our understanding of family capitalism. Characterized by close family control over ownership and management, this form of enterprise enjoyed resilience from the early modern era, as it did among merchant diasporas, otherwise assumed to have died with the rise of nation-states.¹³ Comparable to the case of British merchant firms,¹⁴ Itō’s centuries-long trajectory provides a window into two connected processes of change across scale and through time: how traditional merchant houses evolved into multinationals—the so-called general trading companies (*sōgō shōsha*)¹⁵ in Japan—and how the modern organizational form in international business developed as a blend of old and new practices. Neither a purely Meiji creation nor a full-blown general trading company like Mitsui Bussan before 1945, Itōchū offers a critical provincial perspective on these processes missing from existing scholarship.¹⁶

Nor did family capitalism ineluctably give way to a more advanced and rational form of “managerial capitalism,” a transition purportedly spearheaded by pre-war zaibatsu.¹⁷ For its ability to manage risk and generate a high degree of trust in response to market failure, Harold James points out, family capitalism proved historically durable and particularly effective in times of political and economic upheaval.¹⁸ This was amply borne out by the Itō enterprise. It relied on the advantages of family control, not just skilled managers, to survive moments of great uncertainty and risk endemic to the cotton trade and empire, even capitalizing

on these turning points to diversify and expand. By twinning imported practices with inherited traditions of doing business—a process of grafting that drove the capitalist transformation of cotton weaving in Kansai at large¹⁹—Ōmi merchants became a dominant force behind Japan’s rise in the global economy, but without undermining their provincial foundation.

The overseas expansion of Ōmi merchant capital was part and parcel of a larger story of Japan’s cotton imperialism in Asia. Textile trading firms like Itōchū became key agents of expansion vis-à-vis the diasporic Chinese, developing their own links to colonial and world markets and perfecting the technique of direct trading.²⁰ While supplying captive markets in East Asia for the domestic textile industry, which began moving production offshore, Itōchū and other members of the Gōshū zaibatsu, too, diversified from trading into manufacturing. Led by spinning companies in Osaka, cotton capital joined hands with a rising Pacific empire to open new frontiers of production, from the Chinese continent to the southern islands of Nan’yō. Ōmi merchant capitalists were at the forefront of these developments, fueling Japan’s ever-widening ambitions across the ocean.

THE RISE OF THE GŌSHŪ ZAIBATSU

For the goal of overcoming the unequal treaties with the West, Meiji Japan strove to build an industrial and capitalist economy on a par with England. Key to this effort was the promotion of textile production and trade. A prime motor of industrialization along with silk, cotton goods—textiles, threads, and yarns—became the most important element in Japan’s policy of import substitution. But if the state took the initiative in building mills and importing advanced technology, the impetus for transforming agrarian Japan into an exporting nation came from cotton merchants in Osaka and its vicinity. In the 1880s they pooled their capital to launch a dozen spinning companies, the largest of which was Osaka Spinning. Founded at the encouragement of the famed entrepreneur Shibusawa Eiichi, Osaka Spinning spearheaded the mechanization of production by operating Japan’s first private mill with “10,500 spindles from Lancashire.” It was only after their hard lobbying that the Tokyo government, more inclined to protect the interests of farmers, fully rallied behind the nascent cotton industry. Having coalesced to form the Japan Spinners Association in 1882, the cotton merchants and industrialists mounted a spirited eight-year campaign to repeal the government’s export tax on yarn and the import tariff on raw cotton. With their goals accomplished in the 1890s, the association evolved into a powerful cotton lobby centered on Kansai.²¹

More merchants of Ōmi soon joined the association, providing the financial wherewithal needed for marketing and exporting cotton goods abroad.²² Adjoining the cotton-growing complex of Osaka, the province of Ōmi itself was a major producer and exporter of textiles, especially hemp cloth. The inherited geography of textile trade and finance made Ōmi-Shiga a significant pole of capital

investment. Although its status was somewhat exaggerated through a comparison to Manchester,²³ the Meiji state actively tapped local expertise, capital, and networks to promote Japan’s textile industry.²⁴ Encouraged by prefectural governors, Ōmi merchants based in Osaka created many textile companies, while building spinning mills in their home districts of Shiga.²⁵ The industry in its early years was driven by this pattern of cooperation between local officials of samurai background and established merchants of Ōmi, bound by a patriotic goal to counter foreign imports that had begun to flood the domestic market.²⁶

Emblematic of their cooperation was Kanakin Weaving (1888), Japan’s first company specializing in “coarse cloth” (*kanakin*). Its founders included an array of powerful Ōmi merchants, but members of the Abe family clan from Notogawa, who had for generations traded in hemp cloth, held its effective leadership.²⁷ Kanakin Weaving exported most of its cloth to Korea, with Abe Fusajirō (1868–1937) personally leading the company’s effort to break into the continental market. When it faced rising competition from two big spinners in Kansai, in 1906 the three companies resolved to form an export cartel, and Kanakin Weaving then merged with Osaka Spinning to corner the Korean market for Japan-made cloth. The newly consolidated Osaka Spinning continued to embrace Abe and other Ōmi merchants in its board, including Fujii Zensuke and Tatsuke Masajirō (1863–1933; Itō Chūbē’s nephew).²⁸ After eight years of steady growth, the company merged with another in 1914 to become the industrial giant Tōyō Spinning, with Abe assuming the presidency (and becoming chair of the Spinners Association) in 1926.²⁹ These initiatives exemplify how some of the largest modern industrial enterprises grew out of old merchant networks rooted in Kansai.

Ōmi merchants who had begun operating in Korea well ahead of these spinners came to market their products as well. Among the most entrepreneurial was Fukunaga Seijirō (1864–1935). He crossed over to Pusan in 1886 to take over his uncle’s grocery business, Takase Store, but soon switched its focus to cotton goods, targeting Koreans clad in traditional white dress. Fukunaga sought to undercut the dominance of Chinese merchants by importing cotton cloth directly from Manchester. After annexation, he devoted himself to selling a new line of fine cloth made by Osaka Spinning and other Japanese companies. Takase Store reportedly came to handle as much as 80 percent of Japan’s cotton trade in Korea after World War I. Fukunaga led a growing community of expatriate merchants who, with the help of the Japanese-controlled Bank of Korea, mediated an emergent pattern in Japan’s trade to import raw cotton and export yarn and cloth to its sphere of influence in East Asia.³⁰

As domestic production and the export of yarn increased in the 1880s and 1890s, so did the need to import raw cotton. Faced with a tide of foreign imports, Japan’s success in cotton industrialization hinged on how best to minimize the cost of purchasing the raw material from around the Pacific world—both cheaper cotton from China and finer-quality cotton from British India and the United

States—which absorbed the majority of production costs.³¹ Drawing on their stock of knowledge in textile wholesaling, many Ōmi merchants participated in the creation and management of Japan’s earliest companies to import the much-needed cotton for domestic spinners. Naigai Wata (1887), with Abe Hikotarō (1840–1904) as the founding president,³² and Nippon Menka (1892) in Osaka, soon rose alongside Mitsui Bussan (1876) to lead this effort, determined to lessen dependence on foreign agents in Kōbe.³³

More distinctive was Gōshō Co. (1905), a joint-stock company born of rare collaboration among “trueborn Ōmi shōnin,” including the aforementioned trio, Abe Fusajirō, Fujii Zensuke, and Tatsuke Masajirō, who had by then accumulated years of experience in spinning companies.³⁴ After focusing for a decade on importing Indian and American cotton, Gōshō actively cultivated export markets for Japanese cotton yarn and cloth, opening branches across China (Shanghai, Hankow, Tianjin, Hong Kong, Dalian) as well as in Calcutta.³⁵ When it began expanding into Southeast Asia following World War I,³⁶ Gōshō ranked alongside Nippon Menka and Tōyō Menka (founded by another Ōmi native and a graduate of Hasshō, Kodama Ichizō [1881–1930]³⁷) to form the “Big Three,” which dominated Japan’s textile trade with “offices in all the cotton centers of the world.”³⁸

Owing to this synergy between cotton spinners and trading firms—forged by merchant capitalists, many of Ōmi origin, to an extent unseen in Lancashire—Japan’s cotton goods claimed a dominant share of the home market by 1890,³⁹ and their exports soon exceeded imports.⁴⁰ By 1900, Japanese manufacturers had overtaken their British and U.S. competitors in supplying the majority of China’s yarn and cloth imports.⁴¹ Having rid themselves of Chinese compradors ahead of their Western rivals, Japanese spinners proved themselves equally capable of forming a united front; they organized an export cartel vis-à-vis English textiles in Korea and American cotton cloth in the Manchurian market, surpassing them both from 1909.⁴²

The global spread of Japanese textiles also spurred what the historian Sven Beckert has termed “new cotton imperialism”: the expansion of cotton production beyond the home islands to overseas and colonial territories.⁴³ Cotton textiles cemented a link between industrial capitalism and empire, none tighter than in Japan’s economy led by the light industrial sector into the mid-1930s. As the industrial revolution kicked into gear, Japan moved beyond cotton marketing to pursue two interrelated projects in colonial Asia. One was the expansion of cotton-growing to Korea to supply the metropolitan industry and world markets—an effort extended to Nan’yō during the Asia-Pacific War. Japan’s cotton empire, much like its Western counterparts, was driven by a desire to achieve raw-material independence for the nation.⁴⁴ Japanese leaders particularly “hoped to disentangle themselves from the British Empire”—an ambitious goal given that India supplied more than 60 percent of its cotton imports by 1909. Shortly after Korea became Japan’s protectorate in 1905, politicians joined forces with bureaucrats and

spinners to expand cultivation there by launching the Korean Cotton Corporation in Osaka, with a branch in Mokp’o. Powerful Ōmi merchant capitalists like Tatsuke Masajirō also participated in the colonial venture.⁴⁵ By advancing loans to Korean peasants or sending agents to purchase cotton directly from growers, the corporation procured for metropolitan spinners “much of the raw cotton produced in the peninsula’s southern cotton belt.” For drafting Korean farmers and fields into cultivation, Japanese administrators drew on the best practices of rival cotton regimes—in the German Togo, the French Soudan, and the British Sudan—from “agricultural experiments to improve yields and quality” to “state supervision of the selling of the crop.”⁴⁶

The second project of Japan’s cotton empire, pursued most rigorously in the treaty ports of China, was a territorial expansion of cotton manufacturing. For the merchants of Kansai, it was also bound up with their own effort to liberate themselves from Chinese intermediaries, or “the Levantines of Asia”⁴⁷ of mainly Cantonese origin ensconced in treaty ports. Such opportunity arrived after the Sino-Japanese War, when the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895 granted the victorious Japanese the right to build and operate cotton mills in China, besides gaining access to new markets. But most spinners didn’t move their production offshore until World War I, when Japan’s cotton exports to China began to fall in the face of new competition from Chinese factories and rising wages at home.⁴⁸ One Japanese industrialist after another arrived to buy or build their own mills in treaty ports—collectively known as *zaikabō*—taking advantage of low labor and production costs. With the exception of mills owned by Mitsui Bussan, a complex of *zaikabō* that emerged in Shanghai was effectively an overseas extension of the Osaka cotton industry, led by Naigai Wata⁴⁹ and the Big Three. They came to dominate the Chinese cotton-spinning industry so quickly that by the early 1920s “the price of yarn in the Chinese market was being determined on the Osaka [Three Staples] Exchange,” “the central nerve system of textile Japan” run by many Ōmi merchant brokers.⁵⁰ Less obvious but also crucial was the penetration by Ōmi capital of the Chinese cotton industry as founders, managers, and shareholders of these firms—a territorial drive that would be extended to North China by Itōchū.

These textile industrialists and the monied class of capitalists from Ōmi together wielded influence as the Gōshū zaibatsu in Japan’s cotton empire (table 2). By 1930, business expansion of “Gōshū people” driven by native-place ties apparently was so remarkable in the eyes of some observers as to prompt dubious speculation about their Jewish origins.⁵¹ Ascending fast to the top of this clique in the 1910s and 1920s was Itōchū. In contrast to Gōshō, Naigai Wata, and others that began as importers of raw cotton, Itōchū had its origins in textile wholesaling, the defining province of Ōmi shōnin since the Tokugawa period. Itō Chūbē was a relative newcomer to Osaka, where Ōmi merchant stores of long standing—among them Inanishi, Hoshikyū, Mataichi, Chōgin—already controlled the cloth market, retaining their clout well into the 1930s.⁵² Yet Itō was one of the earliest wholesalers

TABLE 2 Key members of the “Gōshū zaibatsu”

Sector	Company	Founding Year (Location) ^a	Founder(s) / President	Other Ōmi-Born Executives
Textile wholesale	Tonoyo 外与	1700 (Nara)	Tomomura Yozaemon V	
	Morigo 森五	1714 (Edo/Tokyo)	Mori Gorōbē	
	Hoshikyū 星久	late 18th c. (Kyoto)	Matsui Kyūzaemon III	
	Abeichi Shōten 阿部市商店	19th c. (Kyoto; Osaka)	Abe Ichirōbē & Ichitarō	Abe Ichirōbē X (of Abe Ichirōbē Shōten Co. 1925), Fusajirō, and other Abe Clan members.
	Inanishi 稲西	1813 (Osaka)	Inamoto Riemon & Nishimura Jūrobē	
	Chōgin 丁吟 (formerly Chōjiya 丁子屋)	1831 (Edo/Tokyo)	Kobayashi Ginemon II	
	Yamanaka Shōten 山中商店	1807 (Kyoto); 1860 (Osaka)	Yamanaka Riemon	
	Maekawa Shōten 前川商店	1867 (Osaka); closed in 1926	Maekawa Zensaburō / Yasuke	
	Marunaga Shōten 丸永商店	1879 (Osaka)	Fuwa Eijirō	
	Kitagawa Shōten 北川商店	1891 (Yokohama) → 1898 (Osaka)	Kitagawa Yohei	
	Mataichi 又一	1920 (Osaka) -hived off from Abeichi Shōten	Abe Ichitarō III	Abe Clan members
	Tatsuke Shōten 田附商店	1902 (Osaka)	Tatsuke Masajirō	
	Fujii Shōten 藤井商店	1907 (Kyoto)	Fujii Hikoshirō	
	Koizumi Jusuke Shōten 小泉重助商店	1915 (Osaka)	Koizumi Jūsuke III	

(Continued)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Sector	Company	Founding Year (Location) ^a	Founder(s) / President	Other Ōmi-Born Executives
	Takase Gōmei Co. 高瀬合名会社, Osaka Branch	1917 (Pusan, Korea)	Takase Seitarō	Fukunaga Seijirō
	Tsukamoto Shōten 塚本商店	1920 (Tokyo; merged a cognate Tsukamoto Co. founded in 1892)	Tsukamoto Sadaemon	
	Marubeni 丸紅	1921 (Osaka; originated from Benichū founded in 1872)	Itō Chōbē VII	Furukawa Tetsujirō; Tatsuke Masajirō
Trading	Gōshō 江商	1905 (Osaka)	Nose Shichirōbei, Kitagawa Yohei, Abe Fusajirō, Fujii Zensuke, Tatsuke Masajirō	Abe Ichitarō IV (president as of 1928)
	Itōchū Shōji 伊藤忠商事	1918; 1921 (Osaka; originated from Benichū founded in 1872)	Itō Chūbē II	Itō Takenosuke, Nakamura Shintarō, Fujino San'ichi, Itō Kōtarō
	Tōyō Menka 東洋綿花	1920 (Osaka)	Kodama Ichizō	Tatsuke Masajirō
Spinning	Ōmi Hemp Yarn Spinning and Weaving 近江麻糸紡織	1884 (Ōtsu) → after mergers, Teikoku Hemp Spinning, 1907 (Tokyo)	Abe Ichitarō, Ikari Yazaemon, Shimogō Denpei, et al.	
	Naigai Wata 内外綿 ^b	1887 (Osaka)	Abe Hikotarō (founding president)	Abe clan members
	Kanakin Weaving 金巾製織	1888 (Osaka); merged by Osaka Spinning in 1906	Abe Ichirōbē (pres); Abe Ichitarō, Koizumi Shinsuke, Nakamura Jihē, Nishikawa Teijirō	Abe Fusajirō, Fujii Zensuke, Tatsuke Masajirō
	Ōmi Canvas 近江帆布	1897 (Hachiman)	Mori Gorōbē, et al.	Nishikawa Jingorō, Nishikawa Shōroku, Abe Ichitarō, Fuwa Ejirō

Maekawa Woven Cloth 前川織布	1908 (Osaka)	Maekawa Zensuke
Tōyō Spinning 東洋紡績	1914 (Mie)	Abe Fusajirō (president: 1926–1935) Hikotarō
Kureha Spinning 呉羽紡績	1929 (Osaka)	Itō Chūbē II Toyoda Risaburō, Itō Takenosuke
Shōwa Rayon 昭和レーヨン	1929 (Osaka)	Abe Fusajirō
Manufacturing Nishikawa Jingorō Shōten 西川甚五郎商店/ Ōmi Mosquito Nets Manufacturing 近江蚊帳製造	1586 (Hachiman) → (Edo/Tokyo)	Nishikawa Jingorō XI
Finance Osaka (Three Staples) Exchange 三品取引所	1894 (Osaka)	Tatsuke Masajirō (founding member) Kitagawa Yohei, Kawabata Torakichi, Obara Urin, Yamada Tomekichi, et al.
Bank of Ōmi 近江銀行	1895 (Osaka); closed in 1928	Koizumi Shinsuke, Yamanaka Riemon, Itō Chūbē I, Shimogō Denpei, Nakamura Jihē, Tsutsumi Sōhei, Abe Ichirōbē, Abe Shūkichi

SOURCES: Jimji Kōshinjo 1903, 1915, 1928; Daiyamondosha 1928, 1930, 1934; *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*; Takaya 1907; Hirase 1911; Ōsaka Furitsu Shōhin Chinretsujō 1919; Okamoto 1930; Ōsaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932; Senji Seisan Rengōkai 1943; Shigaken Kyōikukai 1951; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969; Shiga Kenshi Hensan Inkaei 1980; Enami 1989, 1990; Denda 1993.

^aFor stores founded esp. in the Tokugawa period, “(Location)” refers to where the first of many “branches” was opened by an Ōmi merchant (whose peddling career began earlier and whose head-quarters remained in Ōmi). It also corresponds to the main business base after founding, unless otherwise noted. In established merchant families, it was customary for the family head to inherit the name of the founder; the generation of a successor is specified only where confirmed by sources.

^bNaigai Wata was not strictly a member of the Gōshū zaibatsu, but is included here for its close ties to the network of Ōmi merchants (including its founding president and executive members from the Abe family).



FIGURE 6.
Itō Chūbē, the
founder of Itōchū.
Source: Itochu
Corporation,
“Shōnin no gunzō”
(<https://www.itochu.co.jp/ja/about/history/gunzo.html>). Courtesy of
Itochu Corporation.

to expand abroad, building the basis for a multinational firm on the strength of his ancestral business.

PERSONAL CAPITALISM OF ITŌ CHŪBĒ, THE FOUNDER

The Itō family homestead was located in Toyosato Village (Hachime) in the Inukami district. Chūbē (fig. 6) was born to a landed farmer, whose ancestry traced to the Ōmi Genji military clan. He undertook commerce on the side,⁵³ and by the time Chūbē was born in 1842, peddling dry goods had become the main family occupation. From 1853, the year of Perry’s arrival, Chūbē joined his older brother in peddling in nearby villages. When he turned fifteen in 1858, Chūbē began accompanying his uncle on more distant sales trips and soon ventured on his own to Osaka and Kishū selling hemp cloth. That year is designated as the founding

year of Itōchū—a gesture signifying the emphasis the Itō family placed on its identity as the Ōmi shōnin.

According to the family genealogy, Chūbē from early on demonstrated keen business instinct and an uncanny ability to turn crisis into an opportunity. Having ventured into a new market in northern Kyūshū,⁵⁴ Chūbē expanded his business turf to Chōshū in the midst of civil war, shipping in hundreds of rolls of cloth for the stranded local merchants.⁵⁵ His career took a further turn after the collapse of the Tokugawa shogunate in 1868. The international treaties that swiftly followed brought “black ships, foreigners, and foreign merchant houses” to our shore, he recalled later, “as if Japan has suddenly shrunk.” This space-time convergence, along with the radical adjustment of worldview it prompted, animated the wide-eyed Chūbē with an ambition to scale up from domestic to foreign trade.⁵⁶ “Seeing no future” with itinerant peddling, in 1872 Chūbē left for Osaka to pursue his new dream by opening a dry goods store, Benichū.

Chūbē’s quick ascent in the cotton trade thereafter owed as much to his business acumen as to political turmoil of the 1870s. The last major samurai rebellion of 1877 in particular created a spike in demand for textile goods, fetching higher prices in the context of shortage. The war and its aftermath brought a roaring trade to Benichū, with “customers fighting over goods like hungry beasts,” a former clerk recounted, when Chūbē was even dubbed “Mr. Saigō” after the rebel leader. Chūbē braced himself for the repercussions, however. To hedge against an impending recession, he took a “cash-only policy,” while dispatching clerks to buy up government bonds. And he “blithely earned a fortune” when commodity prices slumped to a third or half of their value in the early 1880s, as the Finance Minister’s deflationary policies sent many into bankruptcy.⁵⁷

Chūbē soon began to diversify his business. He opened a Kyoto branch that specialized in dyed fabrics and another store in Osaka to sell woolen fabrics imported directly from London. In 1892, furthermore, he entered the cotton yarn market by launching a thread and yarn store from which Itōchū would emerge. Around the same time, Chūbē made forays into transpacific trade, still an uncharted territory for most Japanese merchants. In partnership with his nephew, Sotōmi Tetsujirō, he started a trading firm in Kōbe, setting up an office in San Francisco to market Japanese textiles and miscellaneous goods. The two men also turned their eyes to the Chinese continent. In the wake of the Sino-Japanese War, they joined hands with other Ōmi merchants to open a textile business with an office in Shanghai, importing raw cotton and exporting Japanese yarn. Each of these overseas ventures represented an attempt to bypass foreign trading agents in Japan’s treaty ports and their hefty commissions, deemed a hindrance to its economic sovereignty.⁵⁸ Driven by a sense of patriotic mission, both the undertakings in San Francisco and Shanghai, nonetheless, proved fleeting. It would take another generation for the Itō family to acquire the business know-how of Western traders and “skills needed to deal effectively with Chinese merchants” in the global arena.⁵⁹

Chübē, meanwhile, consolidated the basic architecture of store management. When opening shop in Osaka, he set down the Itō Store Code to clarify the rights and duties of all employees; like its Tokugawa-era precursors, it incorporated Buddhist emphasis on “harmonious cooperation” and “cultivation of personnel.”⁶⁰ Grafted onto these age-old precepts was the modern idea of “open discussion.” Among the most innovative aspects of Chübē’s store was the introduction of “a system of deliberative assembly” in 1885.⁶¹ Chübē gathered employees of all ranks every month to discuss every facet of the store’s business, from market trends to selection of merchandise and adjustment of prices.⁶² The inspiration came from the Charter Oath of 1868. The Itō store policy stipulated that “all affairs shall be decided by public opinion” (*banki kōron ni kessuru*), language borrowed directly from the first article. The ongoing Movement for Freedom and People’s Rights, too, influenced Chübē’s eagerness to solicit opinions from junior clerks, an idea foreign to traditional merchant houses. Not only were clerks encouraged to express their views freely and candidly, but all decisions pertaining to the store’s business were made by a majority vote, which could not be overturned “even by the house master.” Indeed, Chübē carried out a “democratization of management,” as the company history bills it, fully “five years before the opening of the first imperial assembly.”⁶³

What appeared to be inventions of the Meiji era also built on some long-standing Ōmi merchant customs. Itō stores, for instance, adopted the use of “double-entry bookkeeping,” and the policy of “dividing profit into three parts” (*mitsuwari*)—that is, dividends for the stem family, a reserve fund for the main store, and dividends for clerks.⁶⁴ The latter policy of profit sharing reflected a universal concern of family-run businesses to extend the benefits of store growth to employees in order to maintain their work motivation and corporate loyalty.⁶⁵ All Itō stores also hired and trained clerks according to the inherited system of apprenticeship, *zaisho nobori* (chapter 1). Chübē employed exclusively Ōmi-Shiga natives, relying on recommendations of relatives as well as village mayors and school principals, who informally vetted prospective hires.⁶⁶ Although apprenticeship was rigorous and the dropout rate high,⁶⁷ every employee was treated as a family member who entered into a relationship of trust and lifelong loyalty to the Itō clan.

After placing his stores on a firm footing, Chübē delegated them to head clerks or managers, while he himself lived in Toyosato Village—like generations of Ōmi merchants who had remained anchored in their places of origin as masters of households, village headmen, and benefactors to their communities.⁶⁸ Equally critical to the Itō family’s business was the role of his wife, Yae (1848–1952). As expected of women in Ōmi merchant houses, Yae assumed responsibility for new hires and apprentices for all Itō stores. At the stem family’s home, she taught them manners and basic skills—reading, writing, and the use of the abacus—necessary for clerks. On behalf of managers, she carefully assessed the individual character of apprentices and dispatched them to stores as befitted their aptitudes. Admittedly,

her myriad responsibilities for the daily upkeep of stores were menial: “purchasing rice to be shipped to each store, preparing pickled vegetables and plums, selecting and trimming leaf tobacco for clerks,” and sewing and washing the clothes and futon mattresses of employees.⁶⁹ But Yae, a woman of sturdy build and exceptional health, also cut an impressive figure in a masculine work environment. She “alone took charge of purchasing Ōmi hemp cloth,” the mainstay of family business in its early years and handled a huge volume daily, giving instructions to couriers who began loading the cloth “from 3 a.m.” “Rather than a full-time housewife or a mother,” as Chūbē II later reflected on his mother’s dominant influence, the wife of an Ōmi merchant was his inseparable “business partner.”⁷⁰ Such partnership, to be sure, was premised on the “invisible” agency of Ōmi women (*naijo*) within the strictures of a patriarchy as discussed earlier. Still, the centrality of Yae—who outlived her husband by fifty years, performing many roles well into her eighties—and other wives of local renown appears to complicate a simple equation of the rise of capitalism with institutionalized exclusion of women, skilled male managers dislodging female relations in family-run enterprises.⁷¹

The overall operation of Itō stores may be summed up in terms of personal or family capitalism,⁷² with their ownership and management in the hands of the patriarch and his family. Chūbē managed his stores collectively as “a cooperative,” as he explained to his employees, each invested in the essential duty to bolster Itō’s name and fortune.⁷³ His paternalistic policy treated clerks not as a labor commodity but “as if his own children” (many of whom testified later, citing times of illness or sukiyaki parties and outings that dotted their social calendar). Keen to embed their religious belief into the fabric of their family firm, contemporary Quaker businessmen pursued similar strategies, translating “the brotherhood of man” into their duty to ensure the welfare of employees, along with egalitarian relationships and rituals in the workplace. Nonetheless, if the Quaker ethic empowered the workers to demand better wages and labor conditions, Chūbē’s benevolence demanded complete subjugation of the self to the Itō family.⁷⁴

Insofar as Ōmi merchants conceived of their trade as protecting ancestral wealth first and foremost, the family offered not a mere buffer against the volatile market, but potentially “an alternative locus of loyalty . . . to the state.”⁷⁵ Yet Chūbē and his successors took care to stress corporate loyalty as coextensive with loyalty to the nation. “A fervent imperial loyalist,” Chūbē considered the survival of his family store, like that of Japan’s “family state” centered on the emperor, an obligation of each member and a debt to his ancestors (to whom business performance was reported annually in front of a mausoleum). “To fulfill one’s work faithfully is the basis for true loyalty to the country,” Chūbē used to tell his son.⁷⁶

Frugal, hardworking, pious, nimble, self-reliant, and “loathe to put his name out in the open”—these traits thought to be the hallmarks of Ōmi shōnin punctuate the hagiographic records of Chūbē. Oral and written testimonies of his family, friends, and former employees offer a glimpse, at least, of Chūbē’s style

and temperament as a store owner. Chūbē reportedly demonstrated by personal example what he wished to instill in his clerks, especially the Ōmi precepts of thrift and diligence. In daily life, his biography tells us, Chūbē betrayed no signs of wealth, wearing casual padded kimono even to business meetings and insisting on simple meals. And like his Tokugawa antecedents, Chūbē habitually lectured his sons and employees on the perils of speculation, for it would be to risk the entire family.⁷⁷

Yet Chūbē apparently liked to deploy “gambling” as a metaphor for business. On New Year’s Day, for instance, he would gather his family, clerks, and housemaids to play a card game, closing the evening with the following words of wisdom:

Gambling requires making quick calculations. . . . The key to commerce is to watch the movements of the enemy’s hands and of your own. And always concentrate your mind. . . . The difference in one card, one point, determines the overall outcome. One who loses in gambling is a loser in life.⁷⁸

Analogizing business to a game of chance, Chūbē explained his trade as a form of entrepreneurial daring that demanded focus, agility, and precision.⁷⁹ The ability to manage risk was essential to cotton trade, whose market volatility epitomized what Jon Levy calls “the economic chance-world of capitalism.”⁸⁰ Cotton merchants should be attuned to price fluctuations as well as to the “latest fashions,” Chūbē would tell his clerks, even encouraging them to visit the pleasure quarters for this purpose.

Like many pious Ōmi merchants before him, Chūbē led his family business as a life of religious devotion. His typical day began with prayers, as did each of the three meals, when all employees would “solemnly lay their chopsticks in front of the Buddhist altar,” according to a former clerk at the Kyoto store.⁸¹ Not content with visiting local temples, Chūbē also invited prominent monks to offer a sermon to his employees, customers, and friends every month.⁸² As a follower of Shin Buddhism, Chūbē ardently believed in commerce as a public good. This idea had contemporary parallels; Christian entrepreneurs, for example, drew no normative distinction between business and social service in their justification of free enterprise. If an evangelical ethos of altruism powered American capitalism, as Bethany Moreton has shown,⁸³ the ideal of *kyōson kyōei* (coexistence, co-prosperity) fueled the personal capitalism of Chūbē, who sanctified commerce as “the work of Bodhisattva” to meet the needs of society.⁸⁴ Construing business as charity also offered a way for Ōmi merchants to reconcile the seemingly contradictory pursuits of religious devotion and risk taking: acts of piety that do not expect any return and acts of investment that do. This concern may have, indeed, guided Chūbē and other Ōmi merchants who launched and funded many insurance companies in the Meiji period.⁸⁵ Their underlying “impulse ‘to save the people,’” according to the historian Tetsuo Najita, can be traced to the Tokugawa-era *kō* (mutual aid cooperative). It is not surprising that risk-taking merchants of Ōmi, who had pioneered this cooperative practice, should also take entrepreneurial initiative in insurance, a modern

financial instrument that arose with a novel, corporate style of managing risk in the age of capitalism.⁸⁶

Shin-Buddhist Followers’ Life Insurance was among a raft of corporate ventures in which Chūbē invested surplus capital from the mid-1880s to diversify his business portfolio. A surviving record of his investments conveys a sense of financial prudence. Each business was evaluated thoroughly and quickly struck off the list when judged inferior. In some cases, Chūbē bought the company’s shares under his manager’s name—a variation of a well-known strategy to avert investment risks by using the names of fictitious persons.⁸⁷ But he also made an exception to ventures bearing the name of Ōmi. None involved higher personal stakes than the Bank of Ōmi, created in 1893 to support local merchants in the cotton industry⁸⁸—that is, to “internalize” finance within the network of the Gōshū zaibatsu (much like a large zaibatsu was centered around a bank). When a crushing recession struck in 1900, Chūbē, despite failing health, assumed the presidency to rescue the bank from the verge of bankruptcy, “lest it be a disgrace to Ōmi shōnin.” Reportedly working around the clock, even going so far as to personally collect deposits on a rickshaw, he managed to put the Bank of Ōmi once again on a secure footing. But the arduous task also took its toll on his health. It was the last major feat Chūbē accomplished before his death in 1903.⁸⁹

By the final years of Chūbē’s life, the Itō family became a diversified enterprise, engaged in wholesale of kimono fabrics, direct import of woolen cloth, domestic trading of cotton yarn, and export of cotton goods, with a budding marketing network across the East China Sea. Chūbē also had joined the ranks of business magnates in Osaka, his name appearing alongside other renowned Ōmi merchants in a roster of “millionaires” in the local press. When Chūbē passed on, he left the thriving business to his heir, Chūbē II (born Seiichi, 1886–1973).⁹⁰ If his father had been “a paragon of Ōmi shōnin,” as one metropolitan daily eulogized him in 1916, Chūbē II represented “the Gōshū shōnin of the new era,” “one who shatters the typical conservatism of Ōmi merchants, yet exhibits their merits at their finest.”⁹¹ Hagiographic rhetoric like this appeared in print frequently, as the Itō family increased its national and international profile under Chūbē II’s reign. What began as a boosterist discourse on Ōmi shōnin would find new affirmation in the meteoric rise of the Itō enterprise, with legend-making spurring business expansion, and vice versa, in a self-reinforcing dialectic.

OVERSEAS EXPANSION OF THE ITŌ ENTERPRISE UNDER CHŪBĒ II

When Seiichi succeeded to the family business as Chūbē II, he was all of seventeen years old, with still a year left in Hasshō. After his graduation in early 1904, Chūbē II began learning the fundamentals of the trade by apprenticing in the head store, at his mother’s insistence. Yae “made him start as a regular employee,” sending him to do menial work like packing and shipping rather than easing him into a

managerial post.⁹² As a young heir, Chūbē II initially struggled to implement his vision of store reform; the idea of hiring school graduates, despite his being one, was still anathema to senior managers. More insurmountable, he recalled years later, was the “deification” of his father among long-serving clerks. Chūbē I’s personal capitalism, they would stress, was distinguished by his ability to balance bold innovations with received customs, risk-taking with restraint, without swinging to either extreme.⁹³ This founder’s “spirit” of braiding new and old would be upheld by his successors. Accordingly, Chūbē II “eschewed radical reforms” and opted to introduce small changes at a time, such as the use of bicycles for visiting clients. Hardly unique, his personal struggle symbolically captured, at a micro level, how the “industrial revolution” unfolded in Japan (and elsewhere) through a series of small adjustments and incremental steps, rather than a total rupture with the past.⁹⁴ But Chūbē II “also acted behind the managers’ back,” he admitted later, secretly learning English, for example.⁹⁵

Perhaps Chūbē II’s most open act of rebellion was his decision to study industry in England from 1909 to 1910.⁹⁶ He spent the better part of the year in London, reading on his own and conducting some business for the store,⁹⁷ punctuated by periodic jaunts to Europe. Toward the end of his stay, Chūbē II enrolled in a polytechnic in Yorkshire, visiting local mills in his spare time to learn the mechanics of operating spinning machines.⁹⁸ And he grew convinced that “Japan should produce more rather than rely on foreign imports”⁹⁹—an ambition that would translate into his foray into textile manufacturing later. The time abroad also afforded Chūbē II a chance to take stock of his identity as an Ōmi shōnin through a comparative lens. In his correspondence with the store, for instance, he attributed the “extraordinary development” of Germans (“dubbed Europe’s Chinese”) to their values of “diligence, frugality, and perseverance,” nurtured in his view by history and geography similar to those of “our homeland of Gōshū.”¹⁰⁰ Thus linking Ōmians, Germans, and Chinese in a global genealogy of expeditionary people—not unlike the way the geographer Tanaka Shūsaku teased out a shared “diasporic character” from their migrant trajectories (chapter 4)—Chūbē II expressed equal admiration for his English hosts. Their nationalist consciousness, high public morality, and “strong sense of duty toward work as one’s calling,” he observed, accounted for “British expansion around the globe.” Weaned on similar values in a Shin-Buddhist household, Chūbē II identified strongly with the ethical foundations he perceived to govern the industrial West at all levels, “from one family and one store, to the entire state”—what his contemporary Max Weber famously tagged the “Protestant work ethic.” “Our Itō family should incorporate some aspects” of these “advanced nations,”¹⁰¹ he added, with a vision of rescaling the capitalist system for application to his own stores in Kansai.

During the six years of Chūbē II’s apprenticeship and study abroad, the Itō enterprise, overseen by senior managers, rose in leaps and bounds across Japan’s burgeoning East Asian empire. The Russo-Japanese War gave Japan control over

Korea and a leasehold in southern Manchuria, and its cotton spinners new captive markets on the continent.¹⁰² The Itō Store jumped on the bandwagon, setting up an export division to handle an accelerating flow of Japanese cotton goods. Foreign offices were opened in Seoul and Shanghai to trade directly with local cotton yarn and cloth merchants, dislodging Chinese and Korean middlemen. In response to a worldwide recession the following year, the Itō Store moved to unify its stem and branch family businesses under a clan organization, the Itō Chūbē Headquarters—an act of consolidation modeled on the Mitsui zaibatsu. The managers also decided to make foreign trade, along with the ancestral business of textile wholesaling, the twin pillars of the Itō family enterprise. Further corporate restructuring followed in subsequent years to accommodate a steady upswing in business that extended to the Philippines, where a Manila branch was created to export Japanese cotton goods and import abaca (Manila hemp).¹⁰³

By the time Chūbē II fully assumed the helm after returning from England, foreign trade had been firmly spliced onto his family business. And the Itō Store soon came into its own as a dominant player in Japan’s cotton imperialism.¹⁰⁴ In the years leading up to the annexation of Korea, Itō had already forged a close relationship with Kongiksa (J. Kyōekisha), a trade association of Korean cotton merchants organized by a Japanese businessman and political fixer, Nishihara Kamezō (1873–1954).¹⁰⁵ When it was reorganized in 1909 as a Japanese-Korean joint stock company under Pak Sūng-jik (1864–1950), the Itō Store provided fully half of its capital. Its multiethnic board embraced several Itō employees, with Takai Hyōzaburō—son of a prominent Hino merchant and a Hasshō graduate—assuming a managerial role through 1945.¹⁰⁶ Taking advantage of low freight rates, Kongiksa played a key role facilitating the penetration of Japanese cloth via Korea into the Manchurian market; for this purpose, an export cartel was formed in 1914 by Japan’s leading cotton trading companies under its leadership. More broadly, Kongiksa assisted the “yen diplomacy” of the Terauchi cabinet (1916–18): to bring China and Manchuria into its financial orbit by means of political lending, much of it negotiated by Nishihara himself. In his scheme to extend a yen-based gold-exchange standard beyond the Korean peninsula,¹⁰⁷ the Itō Store “alone handled the export of Japanese cotton cloth via Kongiksa,” whose branches in Manchuria doubled as exchange offices for the Bank of Korea’s gold notes, a primary instrument of “economic advance” into the Chinese interior.¹⁰⁸

The First World War also marked a watershed in the global spread of Japanese textiles. Disrupted flows of cloth goods from Europe created a golden opportunity for Japan to penetrate the export markets across Asia—from the Yangtze River delta to the Indian subcontinent—and expand its trade further to the Americas, the Middle East, and Africa.¹⁰⁹ Not ones to waste time in seizing the moment, Itō managers restructured their stores into an unlimited partnership (Itōchū Gōmei Kaisha; C. Itoh & Co.) to vigorously advance into the global marketplace.¹¹⁰ The wartime demand for textile goods continued to outpace supply, with a momentum

that transformed its trading division almost overnight. When it “had grown to twice the size of its parent company,”¹¹¹ in late 1918 a new joint-stock company, Itōchū Shōji (hereafter Itōchū), was created to handle its import-export business, and another to focus on kimono fabrics of Kansai. Beyond textiles, an array of new merchandise—fertilizers, grain, machinery, iron, steel, and automobiles—began coursing through its marketing network, which stretched from the treaty ports of China (Shanghai, Hankow, Tianjin, and Qingdao) to Manila and Calcutta, and as far as London and New York.¹¹² The Itō family was now set on the path to a general trading firm.

Restructuring a family business on a joint-stock basis, as many textile firms did during the wartime boom, may have signaled a transition to managerial capitalism in a maturing industry. But rather than a “one-way track from family firm to dispersed ownership”¹¹³—associated with the Mitsui zaibatsu, which pared down its merchant origins while consolidating its enterprises in heavy industry¹¹⁴—a more apt metaphor for the evolution of Ōmi merchant stores is grafting. In the case of the Itō Store, corporate restructuring did not diminish family control. In fact, concrete steps were taken to ensure family ownership, similar to those implemented by the founders of zaibatsu in the Meiji era but superseded by managerial innovations over time.¹¹⁵ In addition to creating the Itō Clan Association, for instance, the “Family Constitution” (1915) was set down to stipulate the joint ownership of Itō enterprises among the six families. To protect their assets within the clan, C. Itoh & Co. was revamped to serve both as a holding company and as “the general headquarters” for two joint-stock companies as well as overseas affiliates like Kongiksa. All employees took an oath of allegiance to the Itō clan to honor “master-servant relations” and never engage in business outside the family enterprise.¹¹⁶

At the same time, Chūbē II hastened to reassure his long-time employees, as well as clients and suppliers, that the way of the Ōmi merchant would remain sacrosanct: “nothing would substantially change” about the parent company as a family-centered “cooperative” or its core values bequeathed by the founder.¹¹⁷ The Itō family adopted modern corporate forms, not to supplant its traditional values and practices but to serve as a *vessel* for them—a strategy likewise deployed by diasporic Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia—to operate more efficiently in the global capitalist economy.¹¹⁸ Hence, Itō family members themselves continued to direct their expanded companies—in contrast to the founders of zaibatsu, who from the start hired and appointed talented college graduates to manage the family enterprises on behalf of their owners.¹¹⁹ In the midst of global expansion, Chūbē II also displayed strenuous regionalism. He preached the merits of apprenticeship as the key to competing with Western nations, when C. Itoh & Co. had some two hundred young men in its charge. He personally interviewed job candidates, showing an avowed preference for Shiga-born natives “endowed with the Gōshū merchant’s ethos and ability to persevere.”¹²⁰ Even as the company began hiring

school graduates in and out of Shiga, talent never completely replaced descent as a criterion for filling executive and managerial posts.¹²¹ Nonetheless, those who met both criteria were actively recruited and promoted. They included several alumni of Tōa Dōbun Shoin (chapter 4), who oversaw major foreign offices and bureaus of Itōchū.¹²² In addition to language skills, these “China hands” came equipped with specialized product knowledge and access to the latest information on overseas affairs, which lowered the costs of entering an uncertain market.¹²³ A growing cadre of such professional employees, who spent long careers abroad, formed an important managerial layer being grafted onto the Itō family ownership.

Just as the Itō family enterprise began leveraging its expertise to operate competitively in the global marketplace, however, the onset of a recession in 1920 threatened to wipe out its wartime profits. The stock market crash in March inflicted a critical blow to the company and other budding trading firms, which, unlike large zaibatsu, had no banking subsidiaries of their own. As demand cratered, sending the cotton market into a tailspin, the Itō family found itself saddled with cancelled contracts, returned merchandise, and debts. For most of the 1920s, which witnessed violent swings in global demand, its business remained “erratic” or “dismal.”¹²⁴ Its textile wholesale business suffered a staggering net loss of 30 million yen and its foreign trade a net loss of 5 million yen, forcing Itō to suspend the payment of dividends for several years.

Faced with an unprecedented crisis, Chūbē II and managers moved quickly to avert bankruptcy. Fortunately, their business had by this time grown too big to fail in the eyes of the government, the Bank of Japan, and other lenders, who proved willing to work out a “bailout” plan. Itō executives undertook major corporate restructuring, with layoffs across the board. Following the dissolution of C. Itoh & Co. as a parent company, its textile wholesale business was merged with a cognate store (founded by Chūbē I’s elder brother) to become Marubeni (1921). Its trading company, Itōchū, was left in the proprietorship of Chūbē II, but significantly downsized to focus on the old business of exporting cotton yarn and cloth to China. Its overseas division was hived off to create Daidō Trading (1920); it was placed under two Shiga-born managers (former classmates at Tōa Dōbun Shoin) to concentrate on southern Pacific trade through the existing branch in Manila.¹²⁵

This division of labor may have signaled a move away from the founder’s vision of creating an integrated trading firm. Yet family or personal relations stayed actively involved in the management of all three companies, rather than retreating into honorary positions like the founders of Mitsui.¹²⁶ While recruiting talented men of non-Shiga origin into managerial ranks, the Itō enterprise overall hewed to the practices of family capitalism to minimize risk in times of upheaval.¹²⁷ The postwar crisis drew the Itō family members and loyal Shiga-born employees closer to one another; the gradual recovery of textile business in the overseas market would further illustrate the resilience of family firms.

ITŌCHŪ'S ENTRY INTO COTTON IMPERIALISM
IN CHINA

During the prolonged recession of the 1920s, Chūbē II led the divided Itō family enterprise by adopting a "strategy to pursue commerce and manufacturing in parallel." For a traditional Ōmi merchant household, this policy signified a bold rescaling from commercial to industrial capital. For Japan's industrialists at large, the interwar decade signaled a new stage in cotton imperialism, when the territorial ambitions of the army merged with the forces of capital to push the frontier of empire deeper into the Chinese interior.

In the throes of an unfolding crisis, Itōchū unexpectedly entered into textile manufacturing, where it found a silver lining. Chūbē II was tasked with rebuilding a textile firm in Toyama Prefecture that had become insolvent and unable to pay for the spinning machines it had ordered from England through Itōchū. To deliver it from collapse, he created Toyama Spinning in 1921 and successfully steered the company out of the red, returning the mill to profit five years later. The technical knowledge of spinning that Chūbē II had acquired in England stood him in good stead, he later recounted.¹²⁸

His foray into spinning turned out to be equally fortuitous in paving the way for Itōchū's own recovery, which hinged on expanding its business in China. Shortly before the war's end, Itōchū partook in the joint purchase of a failing American-owned spinning firm in Shanghai.¹²⁹ As the first Japanese investment of its kind, this venture stimulated a rush of direct investment in Chinese spinning and weaving mills, giving rise to a complex of zaikabō. The participation of Ōmi merchant capital was significant. Between 1918 and 1922, most of Japan's major textile companies, including Naigai Wata and the "Big Three," expanded their cotton production to Shanghai or Qingdao, using internal reserves accumulated during the wartime boom. The 1919 revision of China's import tariff schedule, combined with rising production and labor costs in Japan, also spurred cotton industrialists to fully exploit the treaty privilege granted to Japan in 1895. Manufacturing in the treaty ports, free from the effects of tariffs, they could cater directly to the Chinese market and operate mills at lower costs—ensured by access to raw cotton and "a vast reservoir of inexpensive labor, unprotected even by the mildest sort of social legislation."¹³⁰

The Itō family entered the fray but from a different node. In 1926, Chūbē II established the Dafu Company in Tianjin, specifically to manage the struggling Chinese-owned Yu Da Mill, entrusted to him by the quasi-state Oriental Development Company (hereafter ODC).¹³¹ As the first zaikabō to set up shop in North China, the Dafu Company pioneered and led the northern expansion of Japanese cotton capital on the Chinese mainland.¹³² Launched in the midst of heightened political unrest, however, it had a rocky start. The ODC had taken over the management of the Yu Da Mill just two years prior, only to encounter a major strike

in the summer of 1925. Recently unionized and led by young Chinese Communist Party members, the Yu Da workers were among the thousands who struck at Japanese-run mills that year, as anti-imperialist demonstrations swept China’s urban centers following the May Thirtieth Incident (triggered by the police shooting of a Chinese worker at Naigai Wata’s mill in Shanghai).¹³³ The ensuing tide of labor protests that jolted zaikabō in 1925–1927 also laid bare some frailties in the Japanese approach to managing mills, as detailed in a consular dispatch to the Foreign Ministry. Wedded to metropolitan customs, Consul Arita noted, Japanese managers “ignore the Chinese character, customs, and tradition,” seeking to “mold [the workers] in their own image.” On-site supervisors engendered no less antipathy and misunderstanding, since they could not communicate in Chinese. “By contrast, foreign-run factories appoint trustworthy Chinese as foremen,” observed the consul, rating this system “far superior” to that of Japanese zaikabō designed to extend direct managerial control over mill labor.¹³⁴

Building on reforms made by the ODC,¹³⁵ Chūbē II set out to ameliorate management-labor relations at the Yu Da Mill, after spending a month putting the damaged factory in order. One of the first steps he took was to appoint Japanese and Chinese staff to oversee some fifteen hundred millhands.¹³⁶ Chūbē II made sure to place a manager “who is quite trusted by the Chinese,” for the absence of such personnel had cost the ODC dearly. For this post, he chose Uematsu Shinkei, a “China specialist” trained at Tōa Dōbun Shoin, who had previously superintended several Chinese branches of Itōchū.¹³⁷ In injecting his expertise into management, Chūbē II appears to have taken to heart the consul’s emphasis on “studying the Chinese character and sentiments thoroughly in order to spiritually bind them to our side.” Though whatever “expertise” Uematsu brought to the company likely drew on racialized stereotypes to make the Chinese amenable to control and discipline, as designed by Japanese-run business schools and trainee programs attached to zaikabō (chapter 4).¹³⁸

Chūbē II himself was heavily involved in the management of Yu Da Mill. He made a business trip to Tianjin at least once a year between 1926 and 1930 to rationalize and invest in its plant and machinery.¹³⁹ Within half a year of operation, the mill had tripled its production of yarn, until it was “running 35,712 spindles day and night.” The Dafu Company actively developed new markets across China, later adding “Toyota-style spindles” to ramp up production, as a strategy to combat the effects of world depression.¹⁴⁰ Throughout these early years, however, the mill’s operation suffered disruptions wrought by civil war (especially Chiang Kai-shek’s “northern expedition” of 1926–1928). The Dafu Company also endured periodic “exactions of levies” by competing warlords who occupied Tianjin in the years leading up to the Guomindang unification of 1928.¹⁴¹ Although the company still reported growth in net profit—thanks in part to a platoon of the Japanese garrison stationed for security in the region¹⁴²—the Yu Da Mill was subjected again to outbursts of hostility following the Kwantung Army’s invasion

of Manchuria in 1931. When a riot broke out in Tianjin that November, the imposition of martial law, combined with "agitation by bad workers," forced the mill to shut down for the next five months.¹⁴³ Late in 1932, the Japanese campaign to capture the province of Rehe caused breaks in production and a surge of Chinese boycotts. Compounded by a ban that some provincial authorities imposed on trading in Japanese currency, the Dafu Company reported "almost no sales" for the first half of 1933.¹⁴⁴

After the battle in northern China ceased in May, however, the market recovered gradually, and the prices of raw cotton fell due to a bumper crop. Capitalizing on these trends, the Dafu Company launched an all-out effort to "sell to clear old inventory," while enlarging the mill's operation. By this time, too, "years of reform and discipline have taken hold," reported the managers, who had since 1932 "strictly banned labor unions and selectively employed good-natured workers" to quiet dissent and increase labor efficiency.¹⁴⁵ Higher labor productivity was one of many advantages *zaikabō* enjoyed over Chinese- and foreign-owned mills, sustaining their "internal competitiveness" through the years of uncertainty. The Dafu Company, for its part, enjoyed further "advantages of scale" via the stewardship of Itōchū; its ample capital supplies as well as vast marketing and information networks enabled Dafu to procure raw materials at lower costs, swiftly incorporate new technology, and flexibly adjust its mill operation to changing market conditions.¹⁴⁶

The company's buoyant growth from the mid-1930s was tied to the Japanese military drive in North China. Trailing its path, Japanese textile companies, hitherto clustered in Shanghai, streamed into Tianjin to buy up struggling Chinese mills or build new ones.¹⁴⁷ From the perspective of "bettering Japan-China relations," the Foreign Ministry also considered it "an extremely opportune moment" for Japanese capitalists to "rescue" local mills, apparently as requested by Cao Rulin and other Chinese leaders, by "following the example of the Dafu Company."¹⁴⁸ Amid a wave of Japanese takeovers of Tianjin's mill ownership, in 1936 Chūbē II cooperated with the ODC again to buy up an adjacent mill, Bao Cheng. Tianjin Textiles was established to operate the mill, along with Yu Da, under the directorship of Uematsu.¹⁴⁹ In Japanese-occupied Shanghai, on the other hand, his company deployed more strong-arm tactics. According to a British consular dispatch in 1938, Itōchū and another Japanese firm tried repeatedly to "coerce" the Chinese owners of the Pioneer Knitting Mill into joint management; a letter sent to the mill by Itōchū's director, Kunugi Toraji, demonstrated "a veiled threat" behind "the general tone . . . of sweet reasonableness and cooperation for mutual benefit."¹⁵⁰ By the end of 1936, more than half the Chinese-owned mills in Tianjin had changed hands, spawning a virtual replica of the *zaikabō* nexus in Shanghai, where "raw cotton was traded in Japanese currency." When the Japanese occupation of Tianjin commenced in the summer of 1937, the local textile industry was

all but monopolized by Japanese spinners and trading firms, priming Tianjin as a northern outpost of their cotton empire.¹⁵¹

Driven by a combination of metropolitan capital, foreign technology, and native labor, *zaikabō* and their “uniquely Japanese” trading agents like Itōchū¹⁵² functioned in many ways akin to cotton empires of the West. No less enmeshed in the dynamics of racial capitalism, Japanese mill managers operated a labor regime of distinctly colonial character: one that exploited the low costs of Chinese workers and lax laws to run mills longer than in Japan (almost on a twenty-four-hour production schedule).¹⁵³ Central to mill operation was the use of women—a practice transferred from the metropole, both to keep production costs down and to create a disciplined and docile labor force. Compared to Shanghai, mills in Tianjin initially employed far fewer women—no more than 10 percent of the workforce in 1929—but the influx of Japanese capital significantly altered the gender demographics. At the Yu Da Mill, between 1929 and 1938 the number of female workers more than quadrupled, from 123 to 530. The Bao Cheng Mill in 1938, shortly after Chūbē II took over, employed as many as 650 women who accounted for 35 percent of the workforce. The percentage of women in Tianjin’s cotton mills would reach nearly 40 percent; however, as elsewhere in China, they were paid less than men.¹⁵⁴

Another cost-cutting strategy was the use of child labor. Desired as another source of compliant labor, children represented roughly one-third to two-thirds of workers in Japanese-occupied Tianjin, many tapped from the increased pool of war refugees.¹⁵⁵ Business records of the Dafu Company do not state explicitly, but the “apprentices” (*yōseikō*) who lived in the factory’s dormitory under close watch of wardens and foremen were most likely children. The practice of employing very young boys for no wages was as prevalent in Tianjin as it was familiar to Ōmi merchant houses like Itō. But this custom did not sit well with the optics of global capital exploiting child labor in the treaty ports (which appear to have raised unease, if not scruples, among foreign millowners). Alert to the prospect of international opprobrium, some Japanese-run mills tried to make this “apprentice” system more palatable by offering “elementary education” to children on the premises, as did a mill owned by Abe Fusajirō in Shanghai.¹⁵⁶

In the meantime, Itōchū widened its own dominance by building a close working relationship with Japanese-owned mills, offering them preferential loans on raw cotton purchases. By the mid-1930s, Itōchū powered the cotton empire as “the largest Japanese distributor of cotton textiles and the largest Japanese purchaser of raw cotton in China.” Naigai Wata, which topped the phalanx of *zaikabō* in spinning capacity, acquired its raw materials almost entirely through Itōchū.¹⁵⁷ In addition to investing directly in production through Dafu and Tianjin Textiles (which soon scaled up its mill operation by integrating spinning yarn with weaving cloth), the Itō family effectively consolidated its grip on China’s cotton industry at both ends of the supply chain.

INTERWAR DECADES: BORDERLESS EXPANSION
AND DIVERSIFICATION

During the interwar decades of the 1920s and early 1930s, Itō’s textile empire also became entrenched in colonial Korea, while expanding its trading activity across Southeast Asia. And as the world emerged from depression, Itōchū once again dived into the global marketplace, extending its networks beyond the western Pacific. Indeed, the three vectors of expansion—continental, maritime, and transpacific—that had framed the Meiji-era discourse on oceanic Japan (chapter 3) also fueled the increasingly global and borderless operations of the Itō family enterprise.

On the continent, the key projects of Japan’s cotton imperialism—textile manufacturing and marketing—found new policy significance in colonial Korea under Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige, who energetically promoted industrialization of the peninsula in the early 1930s. At his encouragement, Korean mills operated by Tōyō Spinning and other textile giants began enlarging their manufacturing of cotton cloth for the China market. The same “low-wage production complex” that drove zaikabō in China soon grew around these mills to operate beyond the reach of metropolitan factory laws.¹⁵⁸ Itōchū, too, ventured into weaving in 1932, launching Chōsen Textiles to manage a mill in Kyōnggi Province. Headed by Takai Hyōzaburō, with Pak Sūng-jik as auditor (the two men who managed Kongiksa), the company specialized in rayon textiles. The production of artificial fiber, an industrial milestone, was not coincidentally pioneered by Ōmi merchant capitalists, who built a cluster of factories to turn the southern end of Lake Biwa into a “rayon kingdom.”¹⁵⁹ Equipped with 1,500 looms, Chōsen Textiles’ mill was “the largest of its kind in Korea,” and its products, marketed by the Seoul branch of Itōchū, reached consumers in China and Manchuria as well as Nan’yō and India.¹⁶⁰

Through Pak Sūng-jik, Itōchū also cultivated close business ties with the Kyōngsōng Spinning and Weaving Company (Kyōngbang). As the largest manufacturing concern owned by a Korean family, Kyōngbang epitomized the native bourgeois partnership with the colonial state and Japanese textile capital. Reprising its role for zaikabō in China, Itōchū served Kyōngbang in dual capacity as a low-cost supplier of raw materials and machinery and a sales agent for its cloth. In the spirit of inter-ethnic cooperation, Itōchū and its subsidiary, Kureha Spinning (created in 1929),¹⁶¹ also provided Kyōngbang with technical expertise, sending Japanese engineers upon request and offering its new hires “on-the-job training” at a factory. Through equity investment, moreover, Itōchū helped Kyōngbang build an integrated weaving-spinning mill in southern Manchuria. “The first example of large-scale Korean industrial capitalist expansion outside Korea itself,” it signified “surrogate imperialism” by Korean elites in the Japanese-run state of Manchukuo. To market its product, Kyōngbang also routinely used other Japanese firms of Ōmi lineage (including Gōshō, Tōyō Menka, Takase Store, and Mataichi).

These business relations illustrated the extent to which Ōmi merchant capital had penetrated the colonial economy, consolidating cross-border linkages between Korea and Manchuria, while drawing powerful local allies into Japan’s continental project.¹⁶²

Parallel to its northern drive in continental Asia, the Itō family spearheaded the southern Pacific expansion of Japanese cotton exports from Kansai, the pivot of intra-Asian trade that eclipsed the port of Yokohama.¹⁶³ Since opening a Manila branch in 1910, boasted one guidebook, the Itō Store’s trading activity had a bracing effect of rebuilding transpacific ties between Japan and the South Seas that had existed “three hundred years earlier.”¹⁶⁴ From the mid-1910s, as Japan’s trade with the Philippines grew, the Itō enterprise began actively exploiting economies of scope, diversifying into the production of commodities it traded. For example, Chūbē II invested in the production of abaca and lumber by supporting a colonial venture of his cousin, Furukawa Yoshizō (1888–1985), in Davao.¹⁶⁵ Launched in 1915 with the capital and resources provided by Itōchū and its Manila branch, Furukawa Plantation quickly established a dominant position in Davao’s abaca industry, controlling nearly half the hemp business by the end of World War I. From 1920 on, Furukawa Plantation closely coordinated its activity with Itō’s new company, Daidō Trading. Furukawa supplied the product, information on local plantations in Davao, and introductions to Filipino elites, while Daidō Trading channeled funds as needed for cultivation and marketing. This mutually beneficial arrangement led to their collaboration in the production of ramie in the 1930s and a merger of their accounts on the export of Davao hemp in 1940.¹⁶⁶ Just as Dafu and Tianjin Textiles served as the northern outpost of Itō’s family empire, Furukawa Plantation functioned as its southern arm, with hemp symbolically tying the old manufacturing center of Ōmi to the thriving enclave of Japanese planters in Davao. As a trailblazer who helped build this immigrant colony (the largest in Southeast Asia by 1940),¹⁶⁷ Furukawa would have done Sugiura Shigetake proud, fulfilling his vision of (re-)creating a Japanese diaspora in the Philippines through a combination of labor, trade, and emigration (chapter 3).

Itō’s companies also expanded business to the Dutch East Indies, mainly selling Japanese cotton cloth to Chinese wholesalers, as they did in Manila. On Java and other islands, Daidō Trading adopted a hands-on strategy, reminiscent of *mochikudari* (chapter 1), of selling goods it imported directly to consumers, while branch employees carefully studied local markets and tastes. The success with these “cash sales embedded in localities” bred a further strategy of “peddling by truck” from village to village across the Philippine islands in a feedback loop.¹⁶⁸ Moving beyond trading and investment in abaca, Itōchū by 1935 was engaged in the production of rubber in Borneo and palm oil in Sumatra, deploying a veritable army of workers made up of “six thousand natives and one hundred Japanese.”¹⁶⁹

Having come out of the recession with a new capacity to earn profit, Itōchū also launched a renewed bid for global expansion. The advantages of a trading

firm that developed vertical integration with manufacturing were leveraged fully in the context of low (dollar-yen) exchange rates after 1932—the “golden age” when Japan unseated England as the world’s biggest exporter of cotton cloth.¹⁷⁰ At home, Itōchū scaled up its ancestral trade by consolidating its hold over “a nation of weavers”—small and mid-size family concerns mostly of Tokugawa provenance—through special contracts to serve as a sole agent both for supplying raw cotton and selling and exporting their piece goods. Abroad, Itōchū redoubled its effort to cultivate markets in the western Pacific and beyond. In addition to reopening offices in Seoul, Calcutta, and New York, Itōchū set up shop in Bombay and P’yōngyang, and expanded aggressively into the Manchurian market on the coat-tails of the Kwantung Army’s takeover.¹⁷¹ While Japan began pursuing its autonomous course of imperialism, its cotton traders pursued their own capitalist logic of “borderless expansion” to search for new commercial frontiers beyond areas of Japan’s sovereign influence.¹⁷² As the world economy was divided into trade blocs, Itōchū joined other firms in capturing markets outside the dollar and sterling zones for cotton goods that replaced raw silk as Japan’s principal export. Its trans-pacific trade increased rapidly through new offices in the Dutch East Indies, South America (Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Peru), and Australia; by 1941, its marketing network had reached as far as Mombasa and Baghdad.¹⁷³ Opening branches went in tandem with diversifying product lines through routes of direct and transit trade: staple fiber, rayon, pulp, and wool, as well as medicine, automobiles, machinery, leather, grain, and metals by 1940.¹⁷⁴ These non-cotton products, handled by new departments created within Itōchū, were layered onto the core family business in textiles. The trade flowed in all directions and across borders through its multinodal but monocentric mesh of branches emanating from the “home headquarters” in Ōmi. This was a structure of diasporic commerce inherited from the Tokugawa predecessors (chapter 1), but it also increasingly approximated the multi-subsidiary system of leading zaibatsu.¹⁷⁵

If Itōchū’s quest for new markets around the globe helped fuel Japan’s cotton empire, its corporate influence, too, commanded an impressive reach of its own. Since the late 1920s, Chūbē II had led the community of Osaka cotton traders in petitioning the government for resolution on such pressing issues as the Chinese tariffs and boycotts of Japanese goods.¹⁷⁶ The company’s rising stature also gave his loyal lieutenant, Itō Takenosuke (1883–1947), an elevated platform from which to shape public opinion through national press and business forums, where he sat alongside big zaibatsu bosses.¹⁷⁷ In the 1930s, when Itōchū and Marubeni joined three other textile firms to form the “Big-Five of Kansai,”¹⁷⁸ these provincial merchants began operating in greater capacity as the empire’s industrial leaders, rubbing elbows with high-ranking bureaucrats. In 1932, the year Manchukuo came into being, Chūbē II was appointed by the Colonial Ministry as one of the civilian commissioners tasked with strengthening the new state’s “economic communications with Japan.”¹⁷⁹ Two years later, Takenosuke and a fellow Ōmi merchant, Abe

Fusajirō, greeted the British Industrial Mission to Manchukuo as representatives of Japan’s cotton industry; in a gesture befitting free-trade imperialists, they welcomed “foreign capital into land to develop its industrial activity for benefit of Far East and Entire World,” as newspaper headlines trumpeted.¹⁸⁰

Chübē II and Takenosuke also participated in Japan’s trade negotiations with British India, where the two cotton empires collided over the issue of import tariffs. When the Indian government decided to treble the import duty on Japanese textiles in 1933, Japanese manufacturers responded by declaring their plan to boycott raw cotton from India. Chübē II joined the official delegation to India, where the two countries held trade talks for one hundred days, before they eventually reached an agreement on a more open exchange of Indian cotton for Japanese piece goods.¹⁸¹ This first “official” duty abroad for Chübē II was not to be the last.¹⁸² Takenosuke also took part in subsequent civilian-level trade negotiations with India.¹⁸³ Setting his sights on South America as an overlooked market, moreover, Takenosuke toured the vast continent as one of the “cotton ambassadors” accompanying Japan’s 1935 economic mission to Brazil. This paved the way for Itōchū’s increased investment in transpacific trade, linking Manchuria to South America as Japanese migrants had already begun to do from the mid-1920s.¹⁸⁴

WARTIME EXPANSION OF THE “ITŌCHŪ ZAIBATSU”

By the mid-1930s, the Itō enterprise had completed its process of rescaling from commercial to industrial capital. “Few in Japan’s business history have achieved a reversal of fortune as spectacular as that of Mr. Itō Chübē,” one study of zaibatsu reported effusively. This rescaling did not entail a dethronement of family capitalism by salaried managers, as seen in the case of giant zaibatsu. Mitsui and other industrial combines began issuing public shares of key subsidiaries from the late 1920s, but Itō’s core enterprises remained, in essence, privately held and unlisted until the eve of Pearl Harbor. Nor did the Itō family ever lose its focus on cotton goods. To the contrary, the success of the “Itōchū zaibatsu” rested firmly on its traditional merchandise, explained another observer. Chübē II “has not only engineered his comeback by means of ancestral commerce, but has gained a fresh foothold in manufacturing,” building a “textile kingdom comparable to Tōyōbō and Kanebō.”¹⁸⁵ Having shored up the Itō family through times of crisis, critics approvingly noted, “Ōmi merchant tradition” was now being melded with industrial capitalism to serve as the springboard for global enterprise. This radical synthesis of new and old worked to revitalize Itō’s business as well as the popular discourse on Ōmi shōnin, as attested by the euphoric media coverage, hailing the birth of industrial merchants like Chübē II as a new legend in the making.

It was not long, however, before the Gōshū zaibatsu found themselves in another period of turmoil. The outbreak of war with China in 1937 brought Japan’s textile industry under state control never before endured. To deal with an impending

TABLE 3 The Itō family enterprise: Principal firms and overseas subsidiaries (ca. mid-1930s)

	Company (year of creation)	Location (HQ)	President	Managing director(s)
Principal firms	Itōchū Shōji 伊藤忠商事 (1918; 1920)	Osaka	Itō Chūbē II	Itō Takenosuke
	Marubeni Shōten 丸紅商店 (1921)	Osaka	Itō Chōbē	Furukawa Tetsujiro
	Daidō Trading 大同貿易 (1920)	Kōbe	Itō Kōtarō (chairman)	Nakamura Shintarō, Tanaka Kakei
	Kureha Spinning 呉羽紡績 (1929)	Osaka	Itō Chūbē II	Inoue Tomizō
Overseas subsidiaries	Furukawa Plantation 古川拓殖 (1915)	Davao, Philippines	Furukawa Yoshizō	
	Dafu Company 大福公司 (1926)	Tianjin, China	Itō Chūbē II	Uematsu Shinkei
	Tianjin Textiles 天津紡績 (1936)	Tianjin, China	Itō Chūbē II	Uematsu Shinkei
	Kongiksa Co. 共益社 (1909)	Seoul, Korea	Pak Sŭng-jik	Takai Hyōzaburō
	Chōsen Textiles 朝鮮織物 (1932)	Sihŭng, Korea	Takai Hyōzaburō	

SOURCE: Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 428–83; Higuchi 1940, 250–55.

NOTE: In Japan, Itōchū also owned several direct subsidiaries (in textiles) and a dozen affiliates across the diverse sectors of textiles, pulp, chemicals, steel, and mining by 1940. Kureha Spinning embraced its own subsidiaries in textiles.

shortage of supply, the government enforced limits on the use of raw cotton, requiring “mixed yarn spinning with rayon staple fiber.”¹⁸⁶ To channel the country’s scarce foreign currency into munitions and heavy industries, wartime authorities also restricted overseas trade in textiles, curtailing the operation of spinning companies following Pearl Harbor.¹⁸⁷ War impinged on trading firms like Itōchū in more complicated ways. On the one hand, the introduction of an “import-export linkage system” placed spinning companies directly in charge of importing raw cotton and exporting finished goods themselves. This significantly undercut the role of trading firms, which were steadily dissolved into state-controlled networks of distribution and later rationing.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, big traders had the resources to adapt to the exigencies of a command economy. Itōchū responded quickly by embracing a new roster of affiliated companies to handle an expanded volume of strategic materials—from lumber and steel to chemicals and machinery—and signing agency contracts with manufacturers in war-related industries. By investing in these industries with significant shares of military demand but no organic connection to its textile business, Itōchū proactively pursued diversification—that is, grafting industrial capital onto its commercial substratum to ensure its survival and growth.¹⁸⁹ War fueled industrial capitalism, and industries fueled war, turning cotton merchants into all but military subcontractors.¹⁹⁰

A year into the Sino-Japanese War, the prospect of export trade with China seemed ever upward. Acknowledging that the state had practically displaced textile wholesalers in Japan, Itō Takenosuke proclaimed in a house magazine Itōchū’s policy to “devote ourselves to exports” by expanding retail and sales across China “to the extent possible.”¹⁹¹ In Manchuria as well, Itōchū continued to serve as a designated sales agent for textile goods even after industrial control was extended. Its export performance showed steady earnings for the period of 1937–1941, with an average rate of return of over 50 percent each year.¹⁹² The cognate store Marubeni also embarked on a rescaling of its own. Having anchored itself to the ancestral business of selling kimono fabrics in Japan, Marubeni diversified its merchandise “with an ambition of a department store” into hardware, medicine, and foodstuff and sought overseas sales routes in “yen-bloc markets” through its new offices in China and Manchukuo.¹⁹³

As the state and private sectors blurred in the wartime economy, so did the boundaries the Itō family had traditionally drawn between business and politics. Itō executives began to speak not merely as cotton merchants but as industrial experts who could better guide policy makers. Shortly after the military occupation of Tianjin, Chūbē II contributed an opinion in a business magazine, stressing official-civilian collaboration in “developing North China” and proposing the creation of “a special polity” like Manchukuo. But such projects, in his view, could not be entrusted to zaibatsu interests or quasi-state corporations like Mantetsu and ODC. Instead, Chūbē II argued, “executives of textile firms” like himself—cotton

merchants who "know about textiles more than any bigshot in Mitsui, Mitsubishi or Sumitomo"—must be brought into the venture.¹⁹⁴

Fueling the machinery of Japan's wartime empire, Itōchū soon became part of its brain trust. Culled from a dwindling number of traders, Chūbē II and his men became a fixture on state-level forums on trade and industrial control, which extended to matters of governance. Appointed the president of Itōchū in January 1940, Takenosuke chaired one such committee that year, urging speedy construction of a trade diaspora in Nan'yō. Only by "transplanting commercial immigrants deep in local villages," he argued, could Japan "trade with the natives in peace" while "dislodging overseas Chinese" and "lay a permanent basis for the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere."¹⁹⁵ As the imperial army completed its conquest of Southeast Asia in early 1942, he developed this idea into an overt argument for colonial domination. Echoing Meiji-era proposals for wedding social imperialism to racial capitalism in southern advance (chapter 3), Takenosuke called for sending the "unemployed but talented" Japanese to seize control of the economies in Nan'yō: they would rule over the natives and the Chinese as their new masters, "exploiting both groups as menial labor."¹⁹⁶

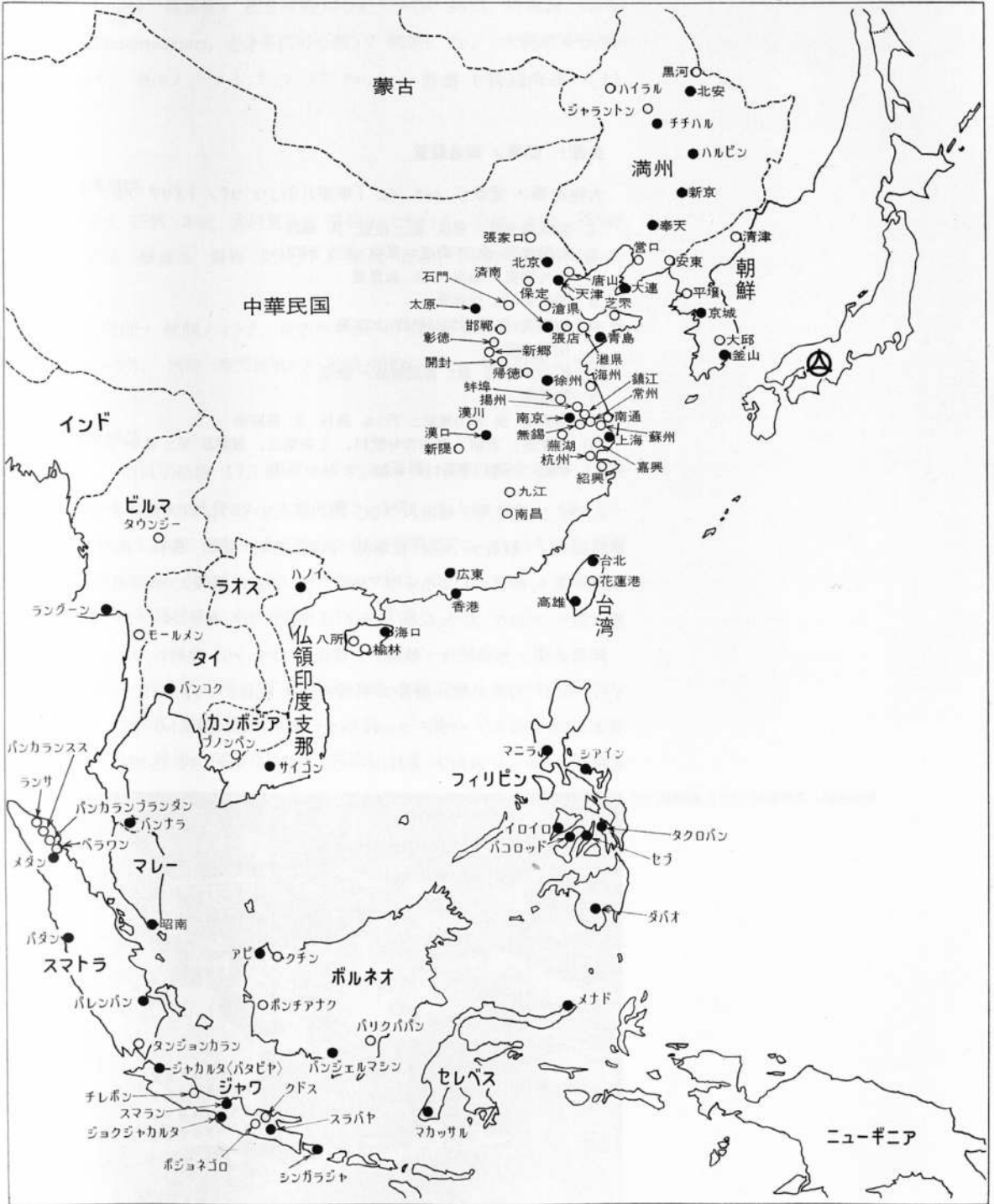
By 1940, the Itō family enterprise had become a hydra-headed conglomerate, composed of Itōchū, Marubeni, Daidō Trading, and Kureha Spinning, with its tentacles stretching through a web of affiliates and subsidiaries into heavy and chemical industries. Prompted by intensification of industrial control at home and trade embargoes abroad, Chūbē II and Takenosuke moved toward unifying the two principal family firms, Itōchū and Marubeni, and merging with a steel trading company (owned by a close friend of Chūbē II's) to expand their business in the munitions and strategic industries. These steps eventuated in the creation of Sankō Co. in September 1941. Breaking with the principles of family capitalism, Sankō aimed to "gradually make public offerings of shares of the three hitherto largely privately owned companies" and raise the capital needed for Japan's "goal of constructing an advanced national defense state." Embracing a total of 3,900 employees, Sankō did over one billion yen's worth of business per year, becoming a "first-class trading firm alongside Mitsui Bussan and Mitsubishi Shōji."¹⁹⁷

Three months later, when Japan launched a full-scale war in the Pacific against the United States and Britain, global commerce quickly unraveled. After 1941, the import of raw fibers all but ceased and domestic textile business vanished. With trade also suspended in offshore markets that became enemy territories, Itō managers were appointed to semiofficial organs in charge of controlling trade within Japan's newly expanded Pacific empire.¹⁹⁸ As they completed their transition from purveyors to partners of the state, Itō companies and their resources were harnessed ever more tightly to the production of war supplies. Working alongside other trading firms, they operated a variety of factories at military command to manufacture textiles and miscellaneous fibers, as well as automobiles, iron and steel, rubber, chemicals, and ships. In China and Manchuria, their overseas

branches supplied the troops with essential commodities (procured “without Chinese middlemen”), while distributing textiles and other “incentive goods” to local villagers for boosting their production.¹⁹⁹

A similar range of tasks that amounted to military contracting was performed in colonial Taiwan and Nan’yō. In occupied Southeast Asia, Daidō Trading, among all the firms, handled the largest volume of business for the navy through the vast marketing network it already possessed. Furukawa Plantation was mobilized to work with other members of the Itō family enterprise: it joined Kureha Spinning in the Philippines to produce hemp goods as well as wooden vessels and machine tools and aided Sankō in the cultivation of ramie in Borneo.²⁰⁰ Textile companies were further pressed into service on these islands, which became new production frontiers in Japan’s cotton empire.²⁰¹ In a renewed quest for “self-sufficiency in raw cotton in the Greater East Asia,” the Imperial Army in early 1942 unveiled an ambitious “Five-Year Plan” to double the production of ginned cotton in Nan’yō. Kureha Spinning was drafted along with other firms to grow cotton on the Philippine islands of Luzon, Negros, and Mindanao.²⁰² An army official told the company representatives to “stand ready to fight a long war,” “procuring raw cotton as needed for the empire” with the metropolitan stock in finite supply.²⁰³ A year later, Chūbē II was ordered to transfer twenty thousand spindles and one loom from Japan to the island of Java, where his Kureha Spinning began operating mills to supply part of regional demand, “sourcing as much fiber locally as possible.”²⁰⁴ By then, domestic production of textiles had virtually ceased in Japan, where factories, including those owned by Itō, were being scrapped and their spindles and looms delivered to the government to make weapons, ships, and aircraft.²⁰⁵

To increase the capital reserves for the whole gamut of projects commissioned by the army (which extended to manufacturing gunpower), Sankō merged with Kureha Spinning and Daidō Trading to form Daiken Manufacturing in late 1944. In its size and scope of operation, Daiken Manufacturing marked a milestone in the Itō family enterprise—and “a rare merger of commercial and industrial capital” in the wartime pattern of integration within, not across, industries. The new company embraced in its orbit over one hundred affiliates and subsidiaries that traversed the empire (map 6) in the combined sectors of trading and manufacturing: production and distribution of textiles, chemicals, oils, fuel, iron and steel, aircrafts, ships, machine tools, automobiles, rubber products, and lumber, as well as management of mines, forestry, and stockbreeding.²⁰⁶ Daiken put the Itō family business on track to become a zaibatsu conglomerate on the order of Mitsui and Mitsubishi. Yet, even as the ratio of textiles to non-textile products in its enterprise structure dipped—it was estimated to be 85:15 on the eve of the Pacific War—the business stayed focused on this ancestral core, setting the “Itō zaibatsu” apart from other industrial combines.²⁰⁷ Though captive to military demands, ownership control of the Itō textile enterprise, including its overseas affiliates, also remained firmly in the hands of family and its loyal employees;²⁰⁸ by contrast, the



MAP 6. Daiken Manufacturing and its overseas branches (1945). Source: Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 165. Courtesy of Itochu Corporation.

closed ownership structure of older and bigger zaibatsu continued to “crumble” in the course of wartime diversification into heavy industry.²⁰⁹ From the perspective of Chūbē II, Daiken Manufacturing in fact represented a family reunion: the culmination of his long-standing dream to reunify all the Itō businesses, separated since 1920–1921.

But almost as soon as it reached this zenith, the whole enterprise crashed. The transoceanic flow of commodities between Japan and Southeast Asia, already sabotaged by war, had nearly dried up by the time Daiken Manufacturing came into being. Its business in Manchuria also ground to a halt after the military draft of Japanese settlers commenced in April 1945, leaving too few employees to tend its branches. Meanwhile, the company headquarters in the metropole sustained serious damage from Allied bombs. The main store in Osaka was completely destroyed during the Great Osaka Air Raid of March 14; ten branch offices, three warehouses, three factories, and five company dormitories were all bombed or burned in the months leading to Japan’s surrender.²¹⁰ After 1945, Daiken Manufacturing would be summarily dismantled, along with other zaibatsu trusts, by the Allied Occupation, bringing Japan’s one-time cotton empire to an abrupt end.

. . .

Founded by the last generation of Ōmi shōnin, the Itōchū enterprise was at once singular and symbolic of the role of merchant capital in the textile industry. Itō’s trajectory from provincial peddler to multinational firm had few parallels in Japan’s economic history.²¹¹ A trailblazer for overseas trade, Chūbē I’s activities may be seen to have catalyzed the transition from the early modern means of cross-border exchange to a modern corporate form. Through the years of boom and bust that followed, his family business was continually upscaled by his successors to build a textile enterprise of transnational scope. A confluence of global and national developments, as well as realignments in the cotton market in the 1930s, further propelled the rise of Itōchū as an industrial conglomerate, a process accelerated by war.

At the same time, the global rise of Itōchū was but part of Ōmi’s long tradition of entrepreneurship. The circuits of capital flowing through Japan’s textile trade since the Tokugawa era converged on Ōmi and its well-heeled families. By the 1930s, the Itō family sat at the apex of this Gōshū zaibatsu—a battalion of merchant capitalists who, through their shared and overlapping ties to Ōmi, fueled Japan’s cotton industrialization and its integration into the world economy. Their initiatives underscored the remarkable durability of Ōmi merchants in the textile industry, much as they illustrated their capacity for change. As their trading and manufacturing activities followed as well as pushed the boundaries of Japan’s capitalist empire, the Gōshū zaibatsu became the driving force of expansion from the cotton metropolis in Kansai. The Itō enterprise spearheaded cotton imperialism in North China and to some extent in Southeast Asia, while its marketing network

tracked the path of Japanese textiles around the globe, spanning seas and continents on the eve of Pearl Harbor.

From the *longue-durée* perspective, the “Itōchū zaibatsu,” as it was called by the 1930s, represented both the culmination of Ōmi merchant tradition and a radical departure from it. As seen elsewhere in this book, an overarching dynamic underpinning the Itō enterprise across the two generations of Chūbē was a rescaling of tradition: a gradual expansion in the scope and scale of ancestral trade from the domestic to the global marketplace, a stretching across the empire and beyond of family business that continually drew on values, customs, and social and kin relations rooted in Ōmi. The Itō family never strayed far from its focus on textiles, even as it actively pursued diversification and branch expansion—themselves part of the traditional arsenal of strategies to manage risk. Even at the peak of global expansion, the Itō enterprise retained much of the old structure of a family firm, with its methods of management, ownership, and employment embedded in a dense weave of kin and native-place ties. These networks of trust functioned in varying political and market environments from the Restoration era to total war as proven insurance against uncertainty.

To be sure, the Itō enterprise grew in fits and starts. As the early years of Chūbē II’s headship made plain, each stage of business expansion involved an intricate process of negotiation and amalgamation with family tradition. Through periods of growth and crisis, he abided by what he prized as Ōmi customs and values, while adopting a “modern style of management to completely dispel the image of a [traditional] Senba merchant sporting a sash and an apron,”²¹² as one critic noted. Hence, within the company, master-servant relations persisted alongside meritocracy, apprentices alongside school graduates, textile wholesale alongside overseas trade. This dovetailing of early modern and modern forms of commerce—seemingly incommensurate practices, values, and ethos forged in different temporalities²¹³—explained the strength of Itōchū as a family concern and enabled its rise as a multinational firm.

The Itō enterprise after 1945 continued to reinvent itself in the face of adversity. At the end of the war, all its foreign branches were closed and overseas assets confiscated.²¹⁴ In December 1949, at the order of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), Daiken Manufacturing, along with other zaibatsu, was broken up, and Itōchū, Kureha Spinning, and Marubeni became independent corporations.²¹⁵ Compared to the giant conglomerates, however, Itōchū made a relatively fast recovery. The more swift and drastic dissolution of Mitsui and Mitsubishi and their trading companies (targeted by the SCAP for their close ties to the military) left the vanquished empire with Itōchū and several other firms of predominantly Ōmi lineage—Marubeni, Gōshō, Tōyō Menka and Nippon Menka—as “virtually the only ones experienced in foreign trade.” Under this rather fortuitous circumstance, their business expanded quickly to fill the temporary void in handling textiles as well as metals, machinery, and foodstuff among other products.²¹⁶ These

companies reaped even greater profit when the Korean War erupted in 1950. Itōchū, with its global network of suppliers, capitalized on the ensuing procurement boom to provision the United Nations forces, while diversifying its product lines into petroleum, machinery, aircraft, and automobiles. Buoyed also by the policy of *zai-batsu* revival with the onset of the Cold War, Itōchū reconstituted its grid of overseas branches to expand, once again, into the rapidly growing world economy.²¹⁷

A century after Chūbē I had opened his first store in Osaka, his postwar successor continued to pay obeisance to the founder’s legacy. From 1960 to 1974, when Itōchū would become a full-fledged *sōgō shōsha* in the league of Mitsui Bussan, the company was still presided over by a Shiga native and a Hasshō alum, Echigo Masakazu (1901–1991), backed by Chūbē II as advisor. Near the end of Echigo’s tenure, however, Itōchū began to shed its characteristics as an Ōmi merchant firm. Its Tokyo branch became a co-headquarters along with the Osaka store, signaling a shift in business away from Kansai. The executive board was also filled with many non-Shiga people, without connections to the Itō family.²¹⁸ And as the company made inroads into manufacturing and information technology, the share of textiles in total sales declined to less than 20 percent by the end of the 1970s.²¹⁹

These changes notwithstanding, prewar areas of strength continued to shore up Itōchū’s postwar growth as a multinational firm. In 1972, when Japan and China restored their diplomatic relations, Itōchū was granted permission, before any other trading company, to do business in the People’s Republic, leveraging its prewar experience and knowledge of the vast market. As well, the company maintained a commanding position in the trading of textiles into the 1980s.²²⁰

In recent decades, Itōchū’s global rise has prompted the company to embrace its provincial origins more strategically. In the early 1990s, no sooner had Itōchū been crowned the nation’s largest trading firm than Japan’s economic bubble burst, ushering in a multi-decade recession. Itōchū spent a decade recouping its losses through rigorous corporate restructuring, while diversifying its overseas portfolio.²²¹ In the process, the company’s investment in timber trade and other extractive activities in Southeast Asia, masked by commodity chains forged via “odorless capital,” came under public scrutiny and international criticism.²²² As *sōgō shōsha* increased their footprint on the trail of global capital expansion, Itōchū mounted a campaign to revamp its image as a modern incarnation of the Ōmi *shōnin*. In 2012, for instance, Itōchū pledged its full capital support for rehabilitating hemp plantations in the province of Sorsogon in the Philippines—an example of foreign direct investment pioneered by colonial trading firms in the nineteenth century and pursued by Furukawa Plantation in pre-1945 Davao. Launched at the centennial of Itōchū’s Manila branch, this project was also couched in terms of “corporate social responsibility,” a modern variant of the Ōmi principles of ethical commerce and service. Itōchū’s investment promised not only sustainable production but also “local development,” including a fight against poverty and “preservation of the environment.”²²³

Today, global Itōchū appears as eager as ever to broadcast its provincial identity, appropriating the Ōmi merchant ethos of “three-way satisfaction” (*sanpō yoshi*) as its “corporate mission”: In keeping with “the business philosophy of our founder, Chubei Itoh I,” “each individual employee . . . will remain grounded in our merchant spirit, and . . . aim for better business operations that are good for the seller, good for the buyer, and good for society.”²²⁴ This provincial pride is also drilled into new recruits of Itōchū (and Marubeni) during their mandatory visit to Itō Chūbē Memorial Hall in his birthplace of Toyosato.²²⁵ Adopting the iconic peddler as its corporate brand, Itōchū continues to present itself as a local cosmopolitan in the vanguard of splicing inheritance and innovation.

Ōmi Merchants in the Colonial World of Retail

In the long history of textile production in Kansai, as we have seen, merchants of Ōmi circulated locally woven fabrics to the farthest reaches of the archipelago, a role they inhabited across the Tokugawa-Meiji divide to shore up Japan's cotton industrialization and empire. If the dominance of Ōmi-born capitalists in wholesaling built on the foundation laid by their Tokugawa predecessors, so did their edge in retail. Many contemporary department stores in Japan evolved out of dry-goods stores opened by provincial merchants and peddlers in the early modern era. Their American counterparts charted a similar trajectory from "peddlers to grand emporiums," according to one classic study. Rudimentary forms of mass retailing were first "erected on the hunched backs of the all-purpose itinerant peddlers," before being perfected by world expos and emporia in the mid-nineteenth century. Having hawked their wares in the countryside, traveling salesmen harnessed their knowledge of merchandising to launch many of America's iconic stores, from Gimbels to Macy's.¹

Peddlers from Ōmi were part of this global history of mass retail. Three of Japan's major department store chains were founded by or descended from families of Ōmi lineage: Takashimaya, Shirokiya (now Tōkyū), and Seibu. Although launched by a rival Ise merchant, a fourth chain, Mitsukoshi, claimed distant Ōmi ancestry in the paternal line of the founder's family, and a fifth, Daimaru, since its beginning as a dry-goods store in Kyoto, has also absorbed much influence of Ōmi merchants.² But of all the Japanese retailers active before 1945, none rivaled the success of a sixth Ōmi firm, Minakai.

Minakai was founded by the Nakae family from Kondō of the Kanzaki district, home to many prominent merchants, nestled behind the low mountains in the Eastern Ōmi Basin. Around the turn of the century, these East Lake merchants (chapter 1) began plying their wares across Japan's emergent diaspora, from

colonial Taiwan to Vancouver.³ The majority set up shop in Manchuria and especially in Korea's expatriate Japanese community. The Nakae family specialized in textile goods, as did many fellow merchants from Ōmi. But the Nakae distinguished themselves by transforming their ancestral trade into a department store within a single generation—indeed, the largest in scale of all Japanese emporia by the 1930s.

Provincial merchants from Ōmi played a dominant, though rarely acknowledged, role in making this global retail form part of the fabric of urban life. To illustrate their leadership that extended to the continent, I will also bring into discussion a cognate enterprise, Chōjiya, whose founder descended from an Ōmi family and whose retail trajectory paralleled that of Minakai.⁴ Both stores ascended to the apex of retail economy in colonial Korea, where politics and business were tightly bound. Their family and corporate archives offer portraits of Ōmi shōnin, who led transnational careers to serve as much their nation's empire as their own ancestors. In upscaling their family concerns into department stores, Minakai and Chōjiya helped extend the hegemonic reach of Japan's imperium, while simultaneously deepening their regional identities as expeditionary traders. Their retail evolution illuminates further the spatiotemporal dynamic explored in the foregoing chapters: how the diasporic practices and ethos of Ōmi merchants were repackaged to advance Japan's project of capitalist and imperial expansion.

Their foray into mass retail, in turn, sheds light on the role of consumption, often eclipsed by a Marxian focus on production, in colonial governance.⁵ The activities of department stores in Korea demonstrate the manifold ways their owners buttressed the Government-General's policies of capitalist development and cultural assimilation, which remained closely meshed as a strategy to counter the growth of local nationalism.⁶ Following new historians of capitalism who conceptualize businesspeople as "political, ideological, and cultural agents," I will show how Minakai and Chōjiya, through the sales of mass consumer goods and other services rendered, helped to shape and drive the colonial political economy.⁷

In keeping with Ōmi tradition, both merchant families remained moored in their places of origin but relocated much of their business abroad. For expanding their scale and scope of operation, Minakai and Chōjiya, like other Japanese dry-goods stores, sought inspiration in the global world of mass retail. What motivated the president of Minakai, in particular, was his 1924 inspection tour of America, which coincided with the peak of anti-immigrant fervor. He kept a detailed log from the time of departure. Later circulated as *A Record of an Ōmi Merchant's Travel to the West*, it offers us a rare personal and provincial lens through which to reconstruct a global microhistory of retail that spanned the Pacific world. His travel journal and Minakai's subsequent metamorphosis into a department store reveal a complex dialogue unrolling across the gulf of time and space, between the teachings of Ōmi forebears and new lessons offered by modern retail pioneers

in the United States. By the end of the 1930s, Minakai had reached the zenith of success with its business extending into Manchuria and North China—a moment of glory that, nonetheless, would prove as short-lived as the wartime empire it serviced.

THE BEGINNINGS

Having for generations lived in Kondō, situated at the geographical heart of Ōmi, the Nakae family traced its ancestry to warlord Oda Nobunaga, one of Japan's national unifiers who built a castle in Azuchi (just west of Kondō) in the 1570s. Since the late seventeenth century, the Nakae had traded in kimono fabrics and accessories, a part-time business that became the mainstay of family income under Katsujirō I in 1824. It was the eldest of his four grandsons, Katsujirō III (born in 1872; hereafter Katsujirō), who would move this business abroad.⁸ No sooner had he graduated from primary school than the young Katsujirō began his career as a peddler, going into service with a cloth wholesaler that his older sister had married into. He traveled to the neighboring provinces of Mino, Ise, and Owari to undertake *mochikudari akinai* (chapter 1), hawking products of Ōmi, shipped ahead of time, by toting them on a balance pole. He was soon joined by his younger brother, Tomijūrō, who would act as Katsujirō's second-in-command in managing Minakai. Katsujirō inherited the family business upon his father's death in 1897.⁹

When the Russo-Japanese War erupted, the four Nakae brothers decided to stake their family fortunes on the Korean peninsula. In the midst of the conflict in early 1905, they opened a sundry-goods store named Minakai in Taegu, one of the satellite cities that developed along the newly laid military railway lines. After catering to Korean residents for a few years (and opening a branch in Chinju, where a relative owned a business), the Nakae changed their focus to the sale of kimono to align with their ancestral business, targeting the city's growing Japanese expatriate population. Following Japan's annexation of Korea in 1910, Katsujirō moved the head store to Seoul (Keijō), where the new colonial government established its seat of authority.¹⁰

Meanwhile, a few months into the war, another merchant family of Ōmi pedigree arrived to set up its first overseas store in Pusan. Chōjiya was founded by Kobayashi Genemon, born into a family of East Lake merchants from the Echi district, whose progenitors included Toyotomi Hideyoshi's loyal vassal, Ishida Mitsunari. Having helped his older brother open a dry-goods business in 1831 in Edo—which later became the renowned Chōgin (chapter 2)—Genemon launched his own store in Kuwana in Ise Province, a location he had eyed while peddling along the Tōkaidō and Nakasendō. Chōjiya purveyed armor, swords, and clothing to the domainal authorities in Ise, Owari, and Minō but switched to Western guns and Western clothes on the eve of the Restoration. This new venture was expanded by Genemon's adopted son, who incorporated the use of sewing machines, and

subsequently by his grandson, Genroku (1867–1940), who would take the family enterprise across the sea.¹¹

Genroku displayed his talent for commerce early on, beginning his career at the age of fifteen like Katsujirō. He was trained directly by his grandfather from Ōmi, Genemon. A man with a sturdy frame, Genemon was, even in his seventies, apparently fit enough to take the young Genroku on peddling trips and “hoist me on his shoulders while hauling a load of merchandise,” he later recalled.¹² Genroku became the head of Chōjiya in 1900, when he turned twenty-four,¹³ more or less the same age at which Katsujirō inherited his family business. Genroku’s decision to move to Korea was inspired by a meeting with another Ōmi merchant, Takase Seitarō. The first East Lake merchant to open a grocery business in Pusan in 1887, Takase later entrusted his store to his nephew, Fukunaga Seijirō (chapter 5), a distant relation of the Kobayashi family.¹⁴ With the help of Fukunaga, Genroku opened a Pusan branch in 1904 and, like the Nakae brothers, later moved his business base to Seoul.

While catering primarily to local Japanese settlers and sojourners (who numbered over 170,000 by 1910), both Minakai and Chōjiya cultivated ties of patronage to the new officials and staff of the protectorate government (1905) and its successor, the Government-General of Korea (1910). For Chōjiya that had been purveying Western goods to Mie Prefecture (formerly Ise Province), it signified a rescaling of service from the home turf to the new colonial frontier,¹⁵ and, for Minakai, new proximity to state power reminiscent of “political merchants” tied to the Meiji oligarchs (chapter 1). The paradoxical impact of this relationship, felt across the service industry, was to constrain the merchants’ autonomy but also expand their mobility, as would become apparent in the course of the Governor-General’s rule.

In the case of Minakai and Chōjiya, shortly after they opened for business, supplying clothing to bureaucrats, soldiers, and Korean aristocrats became their main occupation.¹⁶ In 1907, when Emperor Kojong, under Japanese pressure, abdicated to the crown prince Sunjong, Chōjiya “alone received all the orders for manufacturing Western dress to be worn by the staff of the Korean Royal Household Office” (apparel that was modeled after the official attire of the Japanese Imperial Household Agency). By outfitting the Korean court in the garb of the Japanese monarchy, Chōjiya lent a symbolic hand in transferring power to the new colonial overlord. With the establishment of the Government-General in 1910, Chōjiya was flooded with official orders for uniforms (as was Mitsukoshi, which had opened a sub-branch in Seoul in 1906)¹⁷; a purveyor’s department was created to meet the state’s sartorial demand, which averaged a hundred thousand pieces of clothing per year.¹⁸ Minakai, too, developed a dual clientele, catering to Japanese residents and serving the needs of official patrons, including the Seoul Municipal Government and the Chōsen Army.¹⁹

Emblematic of the classic pattern of trade following the flag, the business fortunes of Minakai and Chōjiya continually expanded as the machinery of the

colonial state grew. Once establishing themselves in the colonial capital, both stores actively set out to build a network of branches, concentrating on major Japanese enclaves such as Pusan, Wŏnsan, and P'yŏngyang. During the 1910s, Minakai created a new branch every few years, with a purchasing department (*yōtatsu-bu*) in Kyoto and the head store in Seoul to oversee its entire Korea operations.²⁰ Chōjiya's pace of expansion was equally impressive. By the time it became a joint stock corporation in 1921, Chōjiya had extended its business to Manchuria (Dalian and Harbin), while keeping a sales office in the home city of Tsu as well as a store in Wakayama and creating a purchasing department in Osaka.²¹ Its marketing network even stretched to Far Eastern Siberia, where Chōjiya began supplying woolen fabrics to local retailers when World War I interrupted imports from Europe. In the decades that followed, stores bearing the names of Minakai and Chōjiya continued to ramify over the continent, where farmers, soldiers, and capitalists together plotted pathways for Japanese expansion.

STORE MANAGEMENT

As the family businesses of Minakai and Chōjiya expanded overseas in parallel, their merchandise, too, began to intersect. Minakai advanced into the sale of Western dress and Chōjiya into kimono, eventually converging on the path to a full-service department store by the late 1920s. But while extending the frontiers of modern retail, their methods of store management stayed grounded in Ōmi traditions. Simultaneously localized and splayed across the continent, their retail expansion in Korea demonstrated a spatiotemporal dynamic similar to the operations of the Gōshū zaibatsu, which powered Japan's cotton empire from the old merchant capital of Kansai (chapter 5).

Minakai, in particular, cast itself as a faithful heir to the Ōmi shōnin in all aspects of its business. The stem family's residence, which functioned as the headquarters of Minakai, remained in the birthplace of Kondō, where Katsujirō ensconced himself as the president from around 1916. His three younger brothers also built their family homes in Kondō, while managing overseas branches in Korea and later in Manchuria and North China.²² Even after settling back in Kondō, Katsujirō made the annual rounds of branches on the continent; during each visit, he stayed with the local manager to inspect the store and offer advice to individual employees, an important traditional duty of an Ōmi business owner.²³ Many other diasporic practices devised before the Meiji period continued to bolster the family business. Minakai's method of central purchasing (*tairyō shiire*), a task entrusted to Tomijūrō, for instance, derived from the age-old logic governing Ōmi peddlers' wholesale activity to generate profit by taking advantage of the time lapse between the purchase of raw materials and the sale of finished goods: to increase the value-added for retail, after acquiring rolls of cloth in Kyoto, the store would wait for the prices to go up, when the fabrics would be "manufactured

into order-made kimono.”²⁴ Likewise, Minakai’s method of management accounting inherited a long-standing custom from the Tokugawa era to charge about 10 percent interest on one’s own operating capital, which effectively became the target profit for each branch store to meet every year.²⁵

Kinship ties, so critical to the operation of Ōmi shōnin and diasporic traders elsewhere, proved equally or more crucial to their successors in the colony. In a pattern shared by mercantile migrants from southeastern China, Ōmi business-owners continued to rely on both patrilineal and affinal relatives and native-place connections in running their stores and branches at home and abroad.²⁶ From managers down to clerks and apprentices, Minakai’s corporate hierarchy was dominated by Shiga natives. Its executive board was cemented by consanguinity—the four founding brothers, their sons, and close family relations, who also preferred to recruit employees from the home prefecture, especially from the native district of Kanzaki.²⁷ Much like the case of Itōchū discussed in the previous chapter, Minakai operated according to the principles of family capitalism. The patriarchal head of a family firm, Katsujirō was described in and outside the company as an “affectionate as well as a strict father” to his employees, who were subordinated to the role of “maintaining his fortunes forever.”²⁸ The logic of family control was reflected, above all, in how Katsujirō and his brothers conceived of their ancestral business and values as the heirs to Ōmi merchants.

Minakai remained true to its Ōmi heritage by maintaining the apprenticeship system even as most large retail stores in Japan abandoned the custom in favor of recruiting higher-school graduates.²⁹ Both Minakai and Chōjiya also hired women (fig. 7)—who moved increasingly after World War I into traditionally masculine spaces of labor—but treated them as temporary and supplementary to the androcentric workplace. Every year the stores trained a stable of young male clerks—in the case of Minakai, at its headquarters in Kondō for a period of about one month.³⁰ They were housed, fed, and clothed in the company’s tailor-made uniform (which doubled as store advertisement) and were rigorously instilled with a sense of loyalty to the company. Minakai trained about forty fresh recruits every year at the individual homes of the four Nakae brothers in Kondō. Under close supervision of the Nakae matrons, young clerks studied math and proper attitudes in addition to learning about Minakai before they were dispatched to branches.³¹ As had been true during the Tokugawa years, one could be discharged if deemed unfit for the job anytime during the apprenticeship.

Once training was completed, the lives of employees and their families were closely tethered to the company. Commuting was allowed only for those who brought their wife to the branch location or obtained the manager’s consent; all other employees, especially single ones, were expected to live in the company compound, as required by merchant houses since the Tokugawa era. In accord with the Ōmi custom of *zaisho nobori* (chapter 1), employees were permitted to go home for a ten-day vacation after the first four years of work, then after three years,



FIGURE 7. Minakai's clerks. *Source:* Undated photograph stored at Minakai Co., Hikone, Shiga. Courtesy of the Archival Museum of the Faculty of Economics, Shiga University, Japan.

and subsequently every other year. In the living-in system akin to the “mercantile monastery” for shop assistants in Britain, the daily behavior of clerks was monitored through an intricate web of regulations, including a curfew and a ban on the use of cash. In addition to the use of honorifics to address seniors, their decorum was ensured by an elaborate dress code that stipulated what to wear literally from head to toe: haircut, hat, clothes and shoes. Even marriages and adoptions required the company president's approval.³²

Minakai's overall principles of management were laid down in the company's “Rules” (*Kensoku*).³³ A neo-traditional text modeled after Tokugawa-era house codes, “Rules” embodied Minakai's aspiration to pursue its “ancestral tradition” on an empire-wide scale. It begins by outlining the “Minakai spirit” in its first five articles,³⁴ each with an authoritarian bark, accompanied by an explication of its meaning to be internalized by all store employees:

1. Revere the state, respect the humanity, and have honesty as purpose:

Loyalty and patriotism, worshipping one's ancestors, and discharging one's filial duties are our country's time-honored customs. . . . We Minakai, reflecting on our ancestors' achievements, must dedicate all our energy to our calling, embrace honesty

as the most important purpose of merchants, and cooperate and unite to achieve the respectable mission based on the policy of commercial service to the state.

2. Respect the elder and love the junior colleagues:

We Minakai respect the order of old and young, and take pride in living as one large harmonious family.

3. Promote bodily health as well as perseverance:

We Minakai should be seen as a training ground for nurturing a healthy mind and body and cultivating perseverance and patience, in order to aspire to the status of a winner.

4. Always pursue the good habits of thrift and hard work:

Ikkaku senkin [get-rich-quick] behavior must be absolutely shunned by entrepreneurs. Instead, modest living, industry, hard work, and savings must be followed in order to create future capital, raise a family, and obtain prestige [*na o ageru*]. We Minakai aspire to master and pursue the respectable custom of daily thrift.

5. Daily make efforts to cultivate creativity to improve and develop further, and avoid lagging behind the trends of the times:

Particularly those who engage in commerce must make sure to keep abreast of the trends of society and internal and external circumstances, in order to expand one's business. We Minakai pay careful attention to this point to provide appropriate facilities and ample guidance, and try at all times to take the initiative and secure dominance.

The core maxims of Ōmi shōnin are invoked by every clause in the canons of Minakai, which combine old and new loyalties to the family and the state into a single mission of “commercial service” to Japan's empire. These five articles were paired with the “Instructions of the President,” which preached perseverance, self-restraint, and frugality, as well as positivity and enterprise. By making all clerks recite these “precepts passed on from our Ōmi merchant forebears” every morning, Minakai owners underscored their shared patrimony and duty of carrying forward their diasporic legacy on the new “business frontiers of Korea, Manchuria, and China.”³⁵ Many Ōmi merchants in the colony, even after attaining a fortune, we are told, continued to abide by these ancestral dictates. Katsujirō and Genroku each reportedly set an example by refraining from smoking and drinking entirely. Fukunaga Seijirō, the “founding father of the cotton trade” in Korea, was well known for polishing the shoes of his employees on a daily basis.³⁶

As the practices and maxims of Minakai illustrate, expanding family business overseas entailed more than a flow of Ōmi merchant capital from Kansai to the continent. To borrow from Doreen Massey, it also involved “the stretching out over space of relations of power” (constituted by ties of kinship and native place, trust, and customs) that emanated from the home village—and these spatially

extended relations themselves constituted Ōmi as a place.³⁷ Business expansion led to a spatial reconfiguration of economic functions—including ownership, management of branches, and supervisory control over labor—but all of them continued to reside in the hands of family. Nor did future expansion result in a loss of attachment to Ōmi. As with the case of other Ōmi-lineage stores, the management of Minakai remained strategically “localized”; its overseas competitiveness derived from social relations rooted in the ancestral home of Kondō, the business headquarters since the Tokugawa era.

In paying homage to their ancestors, however, Minakai managers also gave regional tradition a modern rendering. Viewing business as an analogue of war, they turned their store into what they dubbed “a commercial army” (*shōsengun*). Minakai referred to all male employees as “commercial warriors,” vested with “a mission” to contribute to the family’s fortune and “render patriotic service to the nation”³⁸—intertwined loyalties also stressed by the paterfamilias of Itōchū. Their salaries and work assignments were determined according to “ranks” assigned to all posts in the company, which corresponded with the army ranking system. Thus, Katsujirō was the company president as well as a “marshal.” Tomijūrō, who oversaw all of Korea’s branches, was a “general,” as was Jungorō, who managed the Seoul store. The head of a purchasing department was a “major general,” and other division chiefs were “lieutenant colonels.” Below these officers were rank-and-file clerks, with “privates” at the bottom, where most new male recruits began their career. According to the testimony of a former employee who joined Minakai in 1928, “Someone like me who had only graduated from primary school started as a ‘commercial warrior private,’ and advanced in rank after each year to a ‘private first-class,’ and then to a ‘lance corporal.’” As they moved up the ladder, the color of the badge on their livery changed. This was an updated practice of merchant households, where sartorial distinctions traditionally reflected differences in status and stages of manhood among shop employees.³⁹ Periodically, the company newsletter posted in ranking order the names of all Minakai employees stationed across the empire. Knowing this, “we all used to work hard, looking forward to advancing through this system.”⁴⁰

The color-coded scheme, a modern military hierarchy grafted onto old master-servant relations, apparently worked as designed. One newspaper in the mid-1930s attributed Minakai’s success to this incentive system through which the store “maintains a good chain of command and control over five hundred employees in perfect order.”⁴¹ Minakai’s invention partly reflected the political milieu of interwar Japan with rising army dominance, but a military structure for clerk training had been a long-standing feature of Western retail as well. Since the late nineteenth century, many business leaders in the United States had adopted army-style organization for training clerks and instilling what they regarded as white, Protestant, middle-class values of discipline, obedience, and esprit de corps.⁴² The attendant practices of racial exclusion, as integral as class differentiation to

the operation of a capitalist economy,⁴³ also existed on both sides of the Pacific. Just as African-American clerks were excluded from promotion at most retail establishments, Koreans, who came to represent as much as a third of Minakai's employees, were treated as "quasi-commercial warriors" (*jun shō senshi*), a status they shared with clerks without a school diploma, and were kept off the managerial track. But consigned to the lowest status were women of both ethnicities, simply called "female clerks" (*onna ten'in*), who were placed outside of the corporate hierarchy.⁴⁴ Under the patriarchal regime of Minakai, gender evidently trumped race, which otherwise governed its multiethnic labor force. Managers limited personal freedom and possessions of all, but the ranking system worked to reassure Japanese male clerks their place above Korean colleagues by offering a way to accumulate "masculine capital." As for female clerks, ethnic differences were elided into a single body for exclusion: positioned at the rear of the commercial army, they were enjoined to give of themselves to the corporate family but relegated to a role of assisting the male vanguard, as expected of women in an Ōmi merchant household (chapter 4).

In another parallel with American retailers and in a nod to their Tokugawa ancestors, Minakai and other stores of Ōmi lineage blended business with religion as a unified pursuit and object of devotion. The archetypal merchant, Itō Chūbē, as noted earlier, taught his employees that "commerce is the work of Bodhisattva."⁴⁵ Scarcely less pious, his counterparts in Korea—from Fukunaga Seijirō to Kobayashi Genroku and Nakae Katsujirō—lived by the same mantra, chanting a prayer to Amida Buddha with their employees day and night.⁴⁶ "Every morning before opening the store," a former Minakai clerk recalled, "all employees, after cleaning one's assigned work space and the entire store, would sit in front of the Buddhist altar and recite a sutra, before having breakfast."⁴⁷ Clerks at Chōjiya were assembled by Genroku daily to conduct what amounted to a Buddhist ceremony in its solemnity and the use of a *mokugyo* (a wooden drum used in a temple), observed one impressed monk in Kyoto.⁴⁸ Minakai and Fukunaga's store also closed for a day in November to pay gratitude to ancestors (*hōonkō*) by inviting monks from a local temple.⁴⁹

In welding faith and business, Genroku stood out even among his devout peers by embracing what he called "the Buddhist commercial way." Chōjiya, he explained, operated on the basis of the spirit of *butsuon hōsha*, literally "transferring Buddha's compassion directly to customer service."⁵⁰ After it made a fresh start as a department store in 1929, all employees, who took an "oath" of loyalty, were handed a copy of Genroku's instructions compiled in a self-edited booklet, *The Light of the Mind* (*Shinkō*). It expounded Chōjiya's "generational commitment" to spreading "great and virtuous deeds" in society while seeking "salvation." Emphasizing mutually beneficial relationships among the store, suppliers, and customers, the text articulated Chōjiya's version of *sanpō yoshi*, the Ōmi merchant ethos of three-way satisfaction for the seller, the buyer, and the community at large (chapter 1).

Like Itō Chūbē, Genroku managed his store as “a cooperative,” making all employees shareholders with common stakes in maintaining the family business.⁵¹ His personal capitalism also translated into paternalistic devotion to clerks, who were provided with shelter (dorms), vocational training, and spots in the company cemetery. This commitment took on additional political salience in the colonial context. In the policy and public discourse on assimilation, the Buddhist concept of *kyōson kyōei* (coexistence, co-prosperity) became virtually synonymous with *naisen yūwa* (harmony between Japanese and Koreans), a central trope of “cultural rule” in the 1920s. No doubt alive to this resonance between his commercial creed and the Government-General’s policy of accommodation, Genroku hired a substantial number of Koreans at Chōjiya’s factory. In a practice atypical of Japanese storeowners, he even placed a Korean manager, Hwang Chōng-ha, in charge of the department of silk brocades.⁵² At a time when the level of native education and employment remained low, some observers extolled, Chōjiya’s “dedication to young Korean employees went beyond the level of a mere business,” “fostering assimilation” between the otherwise divided ethnic communities.⁵³

Genroku also enjoined his clerks to “value Korean customers” and “take care not to hurt their feelings because of [our] differences in languages and customs.” His directives betrayed a pragmatic concern for Chōjiya’s customer portfolio, with Koreans “who have patronized our store since its foundation” making up a third to half of its clientele.⁵⁴ But more seemed to be at stake, when considering his social standing as a colonial settler and his upbringing as an Ōmi shōnin—and their overlapping sensibilities as “entrepreneurial outsiders.” Such a diasporic mindset was emphasized not least by Genroku’s own ancestor, the founder of the Kobayashi family, Ginemon I (1777–1854). In his last words, passed on to his progeny, Ginemon I articulated the importance of appreciating the broader public amid which itinerant peddlers built their career and trust with strangers.⁵⁵ Even a mere peddler could establish himself and attain recognition, the seventy-eight-year-old Ginemon is said to have told a young head of another Ōmi merchant family, if he worked hard as a member of the society, being mindful of the people around him at all times.⁵⁶

Ginemon was but one of many Ōmi merchants who had, since their Tokugawa heyday, emphasized harmonizing with locals. Showing gratitude through contributions to charities, temples, and public works projects was an imperative shared by diasporic traders wherever they conducted business (chapter 1).⁵⁷ In extending this ancestors’ wisdom to Korea, Genroku and his Ōmi merchant mentor, Fukunaga Seijirō, both earned distinction as devout men of commerce who made a religion of social service.⁵⁸ Through a “cultural corridor” forged between their home and business locales, they not only supported an array of community programs in their birthplaces,⁵⁹ but they performed various “hidden” acts of charity in Korea, from distributing rice to the city’s poor to funding vocational schools and lodging houses for day laborers.⁶⁰ So committed to philanthropy was Genroku—who also

created the Korean Buddhist Association to “spread religiosity” perceived to be lacking in Koreans—that some wondered if Chōjiya’s dispensation of largesse was higher than its dividends.⁶¹

Koreans were hardly the only ones designed to benefit from these deeds. Perpetually in need of legitimacy, Japanese expatriate businesses themselves stood to gain from these calculated acts of beneficence—the same way that the Government-General expected of its efforts to win over Koreans through social and economic investments in the colony. The 1919 March First demonstrations for independence raised the stakes of these efforts—what may be called the colonial dyad of accumulation and assimilation—when settler concern about business security merged with the state imperative of Korean accommodation. In their aftermath, for example, Genroku and Fukunaga joined other prominent settlers in launching two Buddhist institutions, Wakō Academy (Wakō Kyōen) and Self-improvement Hall (Kōjō Kaikan). Their ostensible aim was to “promote moral cultivation of Koreans” through a combination of education and enterprise.⁶² Genroku became personally involved in the latter’s youth worker training program, which offered courses on manufacturing Western dress and shoes. In addition to drafting its curriculum and selecting and remunerating teachers, Genroku placed himself in charge of the marketing and sales of woolen products made by Korean students, even creating a sister company to Chōjiya for this purpose.⁶³ Though “sewn with care,” their clothes were “sold for about half the regular prices of made-to-order articles.”⁶⁴ Vaguely reminiscent of Booker T. Washington’s Tuskegee Institute, Self-Improvement Hall tacitly embraced a paternalistic vision of racial uplift while disavowing politics. And Genroku presumably gained as much from its worker training program: the opportunities to make additional profit on cheap labor while instilling his Buddhist values in Korean youth and to advertise his commitment to spreading the gospel of inter-ethnic harmony. Wrapped in the mantle of Pan-Asian unity, the inner workings of this program did not seem to stray far from the logic of racial capitalism to extract surplus value from a subjugated population in the name of native welfare.

Abiding by the Ōmi ethos of doing good by stealth, Fukunaga and Genroku also categorically refrained from serving on the chamber of commerce, the school board, or any other public office of import. These were central institutions through which local Japanese leaders governed settler affairs and advanced their interests in the colony. As successful business owners, the two merchants often worked with other leaders in the community, but they stayed away from the kind of political activism that could place them at odds with the colonial state, their important clientele.⁶⁵ More often, Ōmi merchants in Korea, as in the Tokugawa era, tried to stay in the good graces of the authority, which meant cooperating with its policies. Much as they kept a low political profile, indeed, their extensive acts of philanthropy did not escape notice.⁶⁶ In 1935, Genroku was recognized alongside other settlers by the Government-General as “a civilian man of merit” who “contributed

to Korean development.”⁶⁷ By then, he had already received numerous other accolades, including a blue medal of merit bestowed by the emperor⁶⁸—which Nakae Katsujirō of Minakai also earned in 1932 for a large-scale donation he made for “the public good.”⁶⁹ Just as such recognition assuredly helped to enhance the store’s business prospects, so too did it testify to the portability of a time-tested tactic of Ōmi shōnin: using philanthropy to curtail the risks accompanying a foreign venture and to ensure its long-term future, one that no Japanese could wager in post-1919 Korea.

AN ŌMI MERCHANT GOES TO AMERICA

If the border-crossing commerce of Ōmi shōnin in the Tokugawa era anticipated the workings of modern trading firms, their wholesale activities did as much to lay the rudiments of department stores. As is widely known, the department store as a global form of mass retail traced its institutional origins to fairs and expositions in Europe and America in the mid-nineteenth century. But the concept of mass marketing and distribution itself was not entirely novel to Ōmi merchants, who had developed the technique of *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi*: circulating bulk consumer goods such as kimono fabrics en route to and from commercial destinations across the country.⁷⁰ Rather than a radical break with tradition, to advance into mass retail for them was to build on the Ōmi custom of selling “in high volume, at low margin”—a practice consonant with the sales principle of department stores.

Chōjiya moved a step or two ahead of its Ōmi rival in this direction, making inroads into Western sundries, groceries, and photographs, as well as laundry business from the Meiji era.⁷¹ For the core merchandise of textiles, the store also adopted a strategy of vertical integration early to begin manufacturing its own clothes, hiring “a renowned dressmaker, Miyazaki Eitarō,” who had mastered sewing in the United States.⁷² Chōjiya offered the latest fashions at lower prices than in Japan, explained its store ads in a Korean daily, importing raw materials directly from Europe and America to avoid “consumer taxes” in the metropole.⁷³ By the early 1920s, the store commanded an empire-wide reputation as “a leader in the industry,” catering to “multiracial” customers in Korea and Manchuria. Chōjiya’s factory, operated by over two hundred Korean and Japanese workers with some fifty sewing machines, churned out several hundred suits per day. Boasting economies of scale few factories could match, Chōjiya pioneered the method of mass manufacturing and the sale of ready-made apparel, observers in and out of Korea noted with praise.⁷⁴

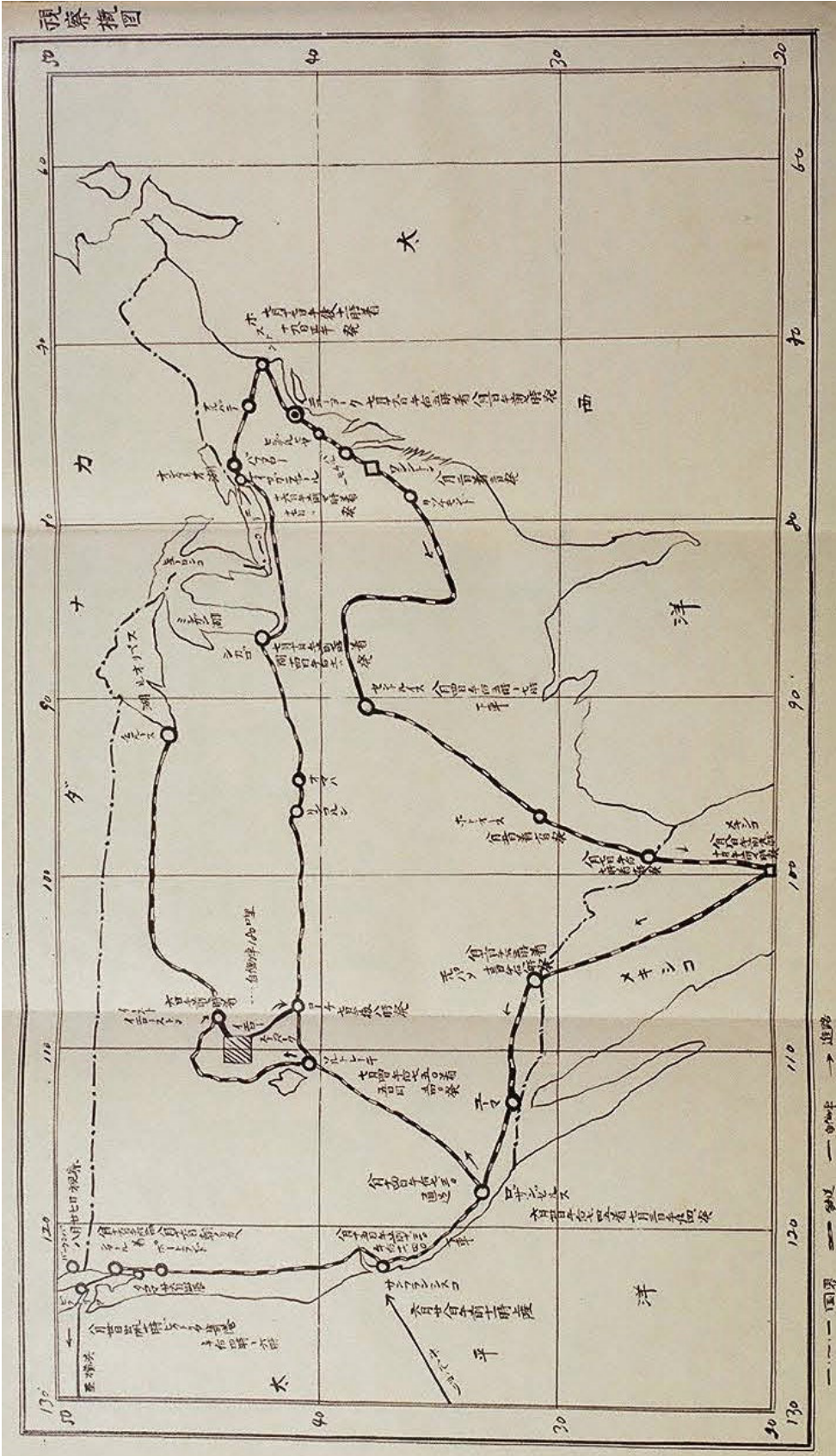
Minakai, by contrast, was slow to move beyond the sale of kimono. A turning point came only in the summer of 1924, when Katsujirō, in his dual capacity as president of Minakai and mayor of Minami Gokashō Village, set out on an investigative mission to America, as many other business leaders had done since the Meiji era.⁷⁵ Katsujirō voyaged across the Pacific, accompanied by Koizumi Seizō (a close

friend of Tomijūrō's), who served as a guide and interpreter, and Seizō's relative, Koizumi Jūsuke III (1879–1945),⁷⁶ an Ōmi-born draper in Osaka. They left the port of Kōbe in early June and returned in late August, after a total of one month on the ship and eighty-one days of cross-continental travel in America, as shown on the itinerary (map 7).⁷⁷

For his “posterity,” Katsujirō left a meticulous account of what he saw and experienced in *A Record of an Ōmi Merchant's Travel to the West* (fig. 8).⁷⁸ This travel diary invites us into the mind of a provincial merchant, anxious to grasp the advanced state of Western retail and “contribute to Minakai's progress and to our nation's commerce,” a twinned determination he penned at departure.⁷⁹ It also offers a window into larger geopolitical issues of the time. His trip happened to coincide with the passage of the Immigration Act in April 1924, which went into effect on July 1, barring the entry of Japanese and other Asian immigrants into the United States. Its impact on his fellow countrymen and its implications for Japan's empire occupy some entries in his journal, otherwise filled with granular observations of American cities and their retail landscape. These documented moments of transpacific contact between imperial Asia and immigrant America, as mediated by his personal encounters on the ground, would supply a key motivation for Katsujirō to transform Minakai into a department store.

Redolent of Meiji-era travelogues such as Fukuzawa Yukichi's best-seller *Conditions in the West* (1870), Katsujirō's narrative of discovery enumerated a roster of Western cultural and social institutions, from parks, libraries, museums, and “grand and magnificent hotels” to factories, speeding automobiles, and high-rises that marked each city's skyline. But what gripped him most were department stores, which stood in all their “splendor” as towering icons of American wealth and power. Since the turn of the century, the country had undergone the first major wave of retail innovations in exterior and interior design as well as merchandising. His excursions to retail stores of all sizes bore witness to their success.

Shortly after landing in San Francisco (June 28), Katsujirō made his first visit, to the Emporium. Filled with wonder, he could only “gawk at the full assortment of goods” on display. As he walked down bustling Market Street at night, he was dazzled again by the brightness of stores “one would mistake for daytime” and the boldness of signboards and advertisements carefully calculated to lure every passerby.⁸⁰ At every retail establishment he entered, Katsujirō trained his eyes on the store layout and architecture. He sketched a map of the sales floor and recorded rough measurements (of the entrance, passageway, and in-store people's movement), seeing a spark of genius behind every design (fig. 8). A particularly important lesson in store design was driven home by a visit to one local variety store, its entrance “engineered in such a clever way that one drifts into the store totally unaware, with eyes fixed on the showcase.”⁸¹ This experience, repeated elsewhere, underscored the role and power of a store's physiognomy, alongside the visual



MAP 7. Nakae Katsujirō's travel itinerary. Source: Nakae, Ōmi Shōnin yōkō no ki, 1924.

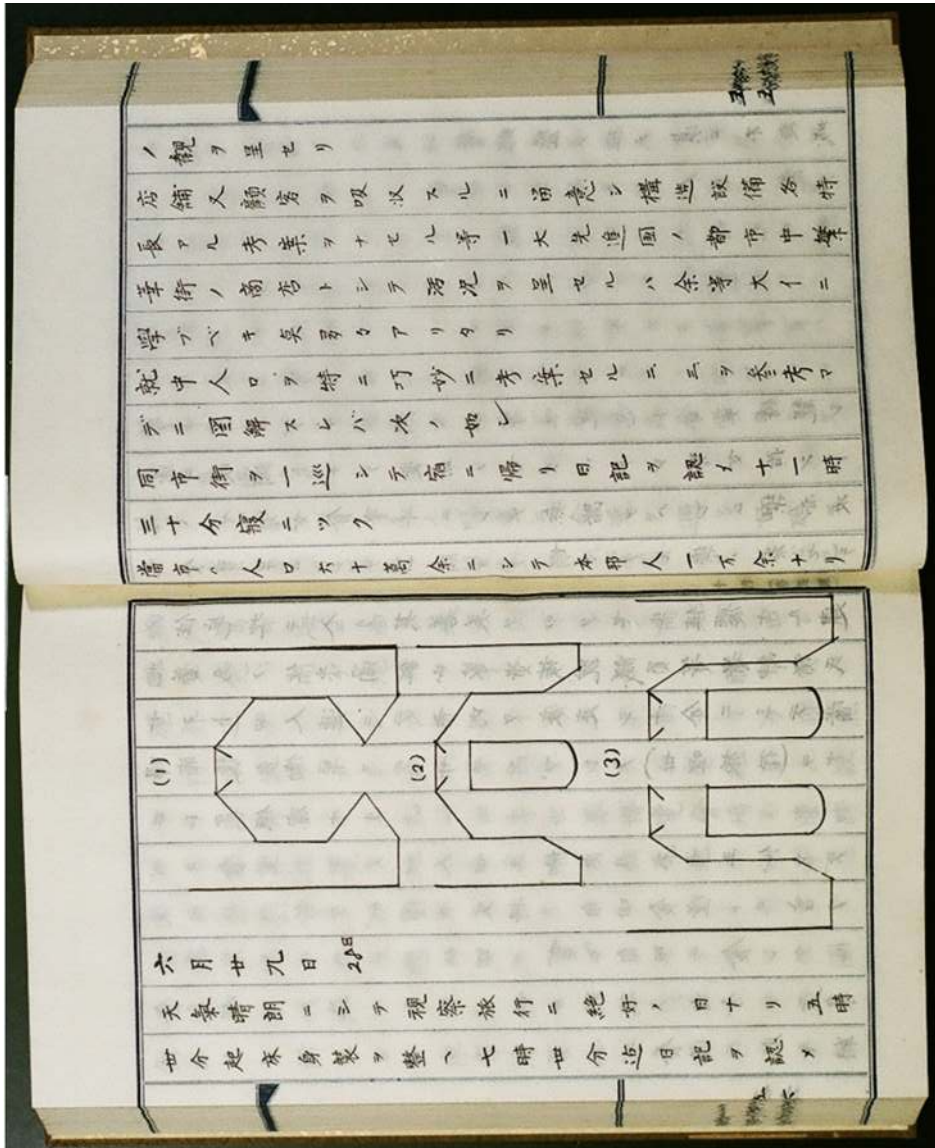
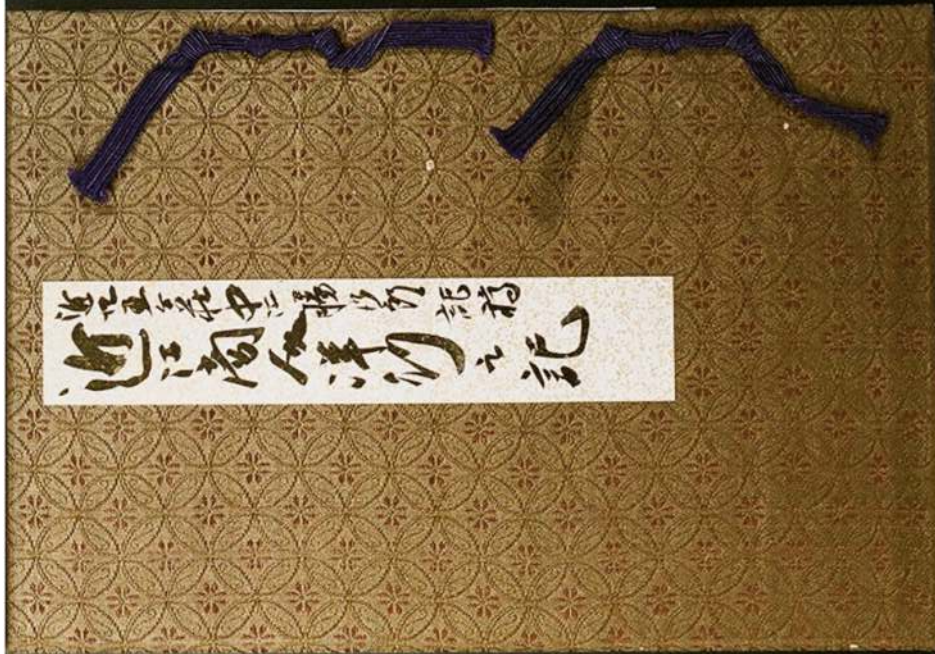


FIGURE 8. Nakae Katsujirō's travel diary. Pages show sketches of a retail store he visited in San Francisco. Source: Nakae, Ōmi Shōnin yōkō no ki, 1924.

plethora of goods, in enticing people to spend—indeed, lending an invisible hand to the growth of consumer capitalism.

In Chicago, Katsujirō visited a higher-class department store, Marshall Field (July 10). Again he studied each floor with a laser-like focus, noting the visually scintillating techniques of merchandise display by the use of lighting, mirrors, and glass cases that Minakai might emulate.⁸² He also took note of the twenty elevators, “marveling” not so much at the technology but “at the fact that women operated them.”⁸³ More surprises awaited him when he visited a mail-order business, Sears, Roebuck & Co. He toured its nine-story brick warehouse, where some thirteen thousand workers maneuvered several hundred wagons to prepare merchandise for delivery. And Katsujirō was “flabbergasted” by the sheer inventory of goods. Its massive sales catalogue, itself a virtual emporium for the low-income and rural households the store targeted nationwide, featured everything from apparel to home appliances and automobiles, a total of three million items, according to the manager.⁸⁴

By the time Katsujirō arrived at Macy’s in New York (on July 22), the novelty of American department stores appears to have slightly worn off. But his excitement was reignited by the grandeur of Philadelphia’s Wanamaker’s (“America’s no. 1 or 2 department store”), which he visited on August 1. Katsujirō gazed at “the beautiful and stately exterior of [its] ten-storied structure, complete with the marble interior.” Dressed in the Italian Renaissance style, the palatial landmark inspired awe in this visitor among many thousands of others, exactly as the building’s designer had intended.⁸⁵

But what ultimately accounted for the popularity of retail stores “everywhere,” he wrote, was the “care, kindness, and politeness with which sales assistants attended to their customers.” To demonstrate this point, Katsujirō referred to his own experience of buying a “color box” in San Francisco. Neatly wrapped and properly delivered to the hotel room before he came back from sightseeing, the purchased box encapsulated the superiority of American retail in his view. The epitome of customer service was the saleswoman who handled his request with alacrity and patience, despite the seemingly insurmountable language barriers. He identified in the figure of such shop assistants the reason for “the [recent] success of American merchants in expanding their activities around the world,” providing “an example we [Japanese] must ardently follow.”⁸⁶

A similar encounter with saleswomen at Wanamaker’s had already inspired a director of Mitsukoshi to begin hiring women around the turn of the century. Katsujirō’s visit to America in the mid-1920s coincided with further systematization of retail training programs; they were now implemented by store managers across the country, with a new recognition of “selling as skilled work” that could make or break a sale over the counter.⁸⁷ These programs encouraged sales assistants to apply what were considered special abilities of women: interpersonal skills, empathy, and responsiveness to the needs of others. This strategic feminization

of the sales force was intended to make the store resemble a home where customers would be treated as guests. In Taishō Japan, department stores also joined hands with the popular press to “commodify female sexuality,” making “shop girls” alongside the merchandise dual objects of voyeuristic desire and their services within easy reach for the masses.⁸⁸

Yet what Katsujirō experienced at these stores—the rise of modern consumer capitalism—was informed as well by the more long-standing notion of Christian stewardship. Since the 1880s, according to one study, many American merchants exposed to “a new wave of evangelical Protestant revivalism” renewed their sense of moral obligation to “cater to the needs of others.” The resulting idea of service as a “profitless ideal” translated into an expanded range of services offered by major retail stores: “returned-goods privileges, easy credit, and free delivery,” which soon became global retail conventions. This service ideology also spurred American managers to devise elaborate employee welfare programs or contribute to charities. Through such acts of benefit to the local community, they sought to reconcile the Christian injunction against wealth with the capitalist pursuit of profit: to burnish their public image as Christian businessmen “committed foremost to the people’s welfare.”⁸⁹

One of these retailers was John Wanamaker, a liberal evangelist whose namesake stores captivated Katsujirō in Philadelphia and New York, only two years after the founder’s passing. Writing against a declensionist view of American Protestantism in thrall to capitalism, Nicole C. Kirk has shown how Wanamaker actively married his faith and business to turn his flagship store into “an instrument for moral reform.”⁹⁰ Harnessing the aesthetic power of its steepled architecture, art, and displays of goods to its fullest effect, Wanamaker operated the store, which he likened to “a cathedral” in both building design and moral authority, to infuse middle-class Protestant values and taste into his employees and customers.⁹¹

The notion of Christian stewardship and service resonated deeply with the commercial ethos of Ōmi merchants, who, like Wanamaker, took their religion and its transformative power seriously. Thus, Katsujirō, while taking note of the ingenious techniques of display or the mechanics of customer service, also plumbed their deeper moral foundations. And he must have found echoes of his own training as an Ōmi shōnin, whose iconic image of steadfastly applying himself to trade mirrored the figure of “diligent and devoted workers, regardless of gender” that he encountered throughout the land of plenty. What he identified as the engine of American capitalism, “hard work” and “enterprise,” were central canons of Minakai recited by its employees daily as “the teachings passed on from our Ōmi merchant forebears.” Attention to customer service, too, approximated their ethos of *sanpō yoshi*, the motto of low-margin sales, and the care they devoted to maintaining the trust of the clientele. Diligence was their *métier*. Katsujirō must have found in the American service workers a Protestant equivalent of the Buddhist ethic of Ōmi shōnin, who regarded devotion to worldly work as their calling and a path to

salvation.⁹² And merchants of America and Ōmi alike sought a moral affirmation in religion, rendering business as an altruistic concern, even an ethical obligation to elevate people's welfare. In short, what were considered Protestant middle-class values aligned with those that Ōmi merchants held most dear. Katsujirō's diary is suffused with such a dialogue, if never explicitly stated, between his regional heritage and retail norms in the Western capitalist economy.

His narrative of admiration for Protestant America, however, veered off to more sobering discoveries. Katsujirō's tour of the Pacific coast region was punctuated by visits to local Japanese immigrant communities en route from San Francisco to Los Angeles and in Mexico City. His travel coincided with the peak of anti-Japanese exclusion drives in the American West, the passage of the Alien Land Laws of 1920 and 1923 leading to a complete ban on Japanese immigration in 1924. While in California, Katsujirō encountered to his dismay the "feeble" status of his fellow countrymen, especially merchants. Local consular officials and Issei leaders, including the secretary of the Japanese Association in Los Angeles, filled him in on the severity of anti-Japanese agitation, explaining how "racial subordination" to whites had become an "inescapable reality" of immigrant life.⁹³

Reflecting on the recent measures to "deprive the Japanese of their right to own land," Katsujirō wrote he was "filled with horror" by the "highhandedness" of American lawmakers, reprising what they had done to the Chinese. Initially welcomed and then expelled, Asians drew the continual ire of white workers, out-competed by the diligence and low wages of immigrants—or labor flows spawned by globalization of capitalism.⁹⁴ Having witnessed the looming realities of exclusion "with my own eyes," Katsujirō scribed a Pan-Asian solution as he "silently shed tears of indignation." Juxtaposing their staggered experiences of exclusion as racial minorities, he called on the diasporic Chinese and Japanese to "join hands in elevating their lives and character." This, he suggested, was the most effective way "to forbid easy justification for discriminating against Asian immigrants,"⁹⁵ enmeshed as they were in the U.S. "geopolitics of mobility."⁹⁶

Katsujirō's proposal here leaves us wondering to what extent he had absorbed the contemporary thinking among Issei leaders and their understanding of racial exclusion. The educated Issei tended to lump together seasonal laborers from rural Japan and the excluded Chinese in the same category of uncivilized people, a perception ironically shared by white exclusionists. Combating the charges of "Oriental unassimilability" was foremost on their agenda. Yet the Issei leaders worried more about "Sinification" of working-class Japanese immigrants (afflicted with gambling) than uniting with the Chinese, as evident in their recent movement for moral reform, informed by white Progressive ideas of "racial uplift."⁹⁷ Katsujirō in his diary displayed a similarly measured assessment of the American rationale for exclusion. Its fundamental cause lay not in simple racial prejudice, he wrote, but in more deep-seated fear of unassimilated immigrants whose "low living standards prevent them from blending with the Americans." Nevertheless, his vague idea of

racial cooperation with the Chinese betrayed at best a superficial grasp of the Issei elite's concern: to negotiate their own terms of inclusion through "claims to their imperial Japanese heritage."⁹⁸ And few Issei elites approved of wholesale assimilation to America, as advocated by some second-generation immigrants, or Nisei; one Issei leader in New York spoke plainly to Katsujirō, saying the Nisei he knew "all act rashly and are frivolous," having "lost the Yamato spirit" on foreign soil.⁹⁹

More contextual reading of Katsujirō's call for immigrant reform yields a glimpse of his core values as a merchant of Ōmi. Just as generations of Ōmi shōnin had cautioned against preoccupation with profit, disciplining their successors to be mindful of the broader public and their "foreign origins," so did Katsujirō as a business owner with vested interests in the empire. This diasporic mindset, one would imagine, informed the way he viewed the predicament of fellow immigrants in America, with particular attention to how they lived and comported themselves in the host society. Besides reopening access to jobs, he reckoned, immigrant reform promised improved social status, trust, and local acceptance, which would, in turn, restore Japan's national prestige.

Public-mindedness was, in fact, a central metric Katsujirō used to gauge the modernity of American society at large. Abhorrence of a backlash against immigrants aside, his diary was full of praise for the high level of "public morality" displayed by ordinary Americans on the trains ("keeping oneself calm and orderly"), on the streets ("treating others with extreme kindness," such as when asked for directions, "regardless of race"), and on the highways ("driving with a spirit of mutual concession"). These mundane examples of discipline, order, charity, and obedience—values shared by Protestant Christians and Shin Buddhists alike—were listed along with "equality between men and women" as among the "strongest impressions" the United States had left on Katsujirō. They were what in his view made "an advanced nation," a "highly enviable" status the Japanese had yet to reach.¹⁰⁰

While he hoped immigrants would aspire to these standards of public morals, Katsujirō also accused the Japanese government of leaving them in the lurch. Policy makers in Tokyo, he bewailed, had pursued a diplomacy both "inept" and "short-sighted," "submitting to the United States to the point of abandoning its fifty years of [effort in] immigration." Although he did not elaborate, Katsujirō appeared to be criticizing the official policy taken since 1908 to discourage labor migration to the Americas, in response to anti-Asian agitation that swept along the Pacific coast. Prompted by concern for amity and national prestige, Japan's "voluntary" retreat, as the historian Paul A. Kramer has observed, simultaneously signaled the ability of United States to instrumentalize its immigration policy to project its national power outward.¹⁰¹ Now that Korea and Manchuria, an alternative focus of immigration, had become an integral part of Japan's empire, Katsujirō argued, "the government must provide support and protection to traders for overseas expansion" outside its sovereign spheres of influence. He especially

stressed the need to rekindle the transpacific flow by exporting “not only manual laborers but also merchants from the capitalist class” to America as state policy. Echoing the mercantilist argument of Issei leaders and anti-exclusion rallies at home, he proposed using commerce as a lever to dispel white prejudice against Japanese immigrants.¹⁰²

Viewed as a whole, Katsujirō’s encounter with white America was Janus-faced, shaped as much by his racial and class identities as by his upbringing in Ōmi, a provincial filter through which he diagnosed its virtues and ills. On the one hand, he reaffirmed the core maxims of Ōmi shōnin through Protestant values implicit in the American culture of capitalism, while recording new lessons in mass retail for his posterity. On the other hand, he condemned its racist mechanism of exclusion and pondered remedies for labor immigrants from the intertwined perspectives of an Ōmi merchant and a member of the colonial bourgeoisie. Katsujirō’s trenchant critique of government policy also represented one of many moments in his diary that bridged the seemingly disconnected migrant frontiers of American West and colonial Asia. One slated for decline, the other in the ascendant, these communities were, nonetheless, viewed as part of the same diaspora: members of a “colored empire,” to borrow from Robert Tierney and Eiichirō Azuma, “entangled in their respective quests for racial survival in white America and for imperial expansion in Japanese Asia.”¹⁰³ Katsujirō’s idea of cooperation between Chinese and Japanese immigrants was born of this entanglement. Though elusive, his Pan-Asian vision in fact augured a larger turning point, wherein a shared sense of victimization by Anglo-American racism would bolster Japan’s claim to leadership as an empire of “colored people” in Asia in the decades to follow.¹⁰⁴

NEW DEPARTURE AS A DEPARTMENT STORE

Katsujirō’s travel diary sketched a vista of entrepreneurial possibility. As he pushed on from one megastore to another, he gleaned more insights and ideas, which were passed on to brother Tomijūrō in his letters home. By the end of the three-month journey, his diary had become a virtual blueprint for refashioning Minakai into a modern emporium. His heartrending encounter with fellow emigrants on the other side of the Pacific added fuel to this ambition. “The department store is the way of our future,” he wagered to his family, who would devote the next five years to making this a reality.

Minakai’s debut as a department store inaugurated a new era in the colonial world of retail. Downtown Seoul came to be occupied by a remarkable five emporia, each dressed in lavish Western architecture. A fierce competition unfolded along the Japanese retail corridor of Honmachi Street among Minakai, Mitsukoshi, Hirata, and Chōjiya,¹⁰⁵ while Hwasin held its ground as the only Korean-owned department store located in Chongno.¹⁰⁶ Minutes of board meetings reveal how the Nakae brothers and branch managers kept a close watch on their rivals,

especially Chōjiya and Mitsukoshi, studying their prices and monitoring dates of their seasonal sales, which were often timed to coincide with Minakai's own.¹⁰⁷ The same was true for store renovation. In late 1929, Minakai's main store—originally launched in “a wooden hut with a mere 18 feet of frontage”—moved into a six-storied edifice of reinforced concrete in “Renaissance style,” complete with a basement and a rooftop, and equipped with an elevator.¹⁰⁸ A year later, Chōjiya reopened in a multistoried building outfitted with “Korea's first escalator,” the same month Mitsukoshi unveiled its own renewal. In 1937, Hwasin broke the record by installing “the largest elevator” in the Japanese empire, in addition to an “electric news” billboard “far ahead of Mitsukoshi and Chōjiya.”¹⁰⁹ Each store carried on incessant renovation and expansion deploying technological marvels, each grander than the last, into the late 1930s.¹¹⁰

While giving its exterior a complete makeover, Minakai significantly enlarged the scope of its business. The store began selling a wider assortment of goods organized into multiple departments: from kimono and Western dress for men and women of all ages, to Western sundries, travel goods, and household articles for daily use. New services and entertainments—a restaurant, an exhibition space, a “children's land”—were also offered all under a single roof (see fig. 9). This pattern of expansion was replicated by Chōjiya and others.¹¹¹ By the late 1930s, Mitsukoshi and Hwasin each had a cinema, a mini zoo, and a rooftop garden with a fountain. By introducing new forms of recreation for both adults and children, department stores shaped the contours of family life among the emerging middle class.¹¹²

The pace of branch expansion, too, accelerated in the 1930s. By mid-decade, Minakai had become “comparable to a first-class department store in the metropole” (a reputation already attained by Chōjiya a decade earlier); its network of branches not only traversed the Korean peninsula but extended into Manchuria, where Minakai existed in many provincial cities as the sole department store.¹¹³ A company guidebook entitled *Korea-Manchuria and Minakai* (1935)¹¹⁴ captured its continental drive in progress, proudly showcasing its branches as thriving nodes of Minakai's retail empire. Starting in Kyoto, where the local staff “handle bulk purchasing for all stores,” the booklet takes the reader on a pictorial journey through Korean cities, blending introductions to Minakai branches with descriptions of the local terrain and historic sites in Pusan, Taegu, Taejŏn, Seoul, Wŏnsan, Hamhŭng, Hŭngnam,¹¹⁵ Kunsan, Mokp'ŏ, Kwangju, Chinju, and P'yŏngyang. Minakai Store, a “multistoried edifice with a white-stuccoed exterior,” occupies the heart of each city, dominated by the state, metropolitan capital, and settlers—an alliance that reshaped the peninsula into a modernizing grid of railways, ports, markets, and sites of production. The narrative further tracks the moving boundaries of Minakai's expansion across the border into Manchukuo. The journey ends in the “cosmopolitan capital” of Shinkyō, a “paradise” born of the Imperial Army's valiant response to “China's unlawful conduct.” Readers learn that Minakai secured “2,000 hectares of land” in the commercial hub of

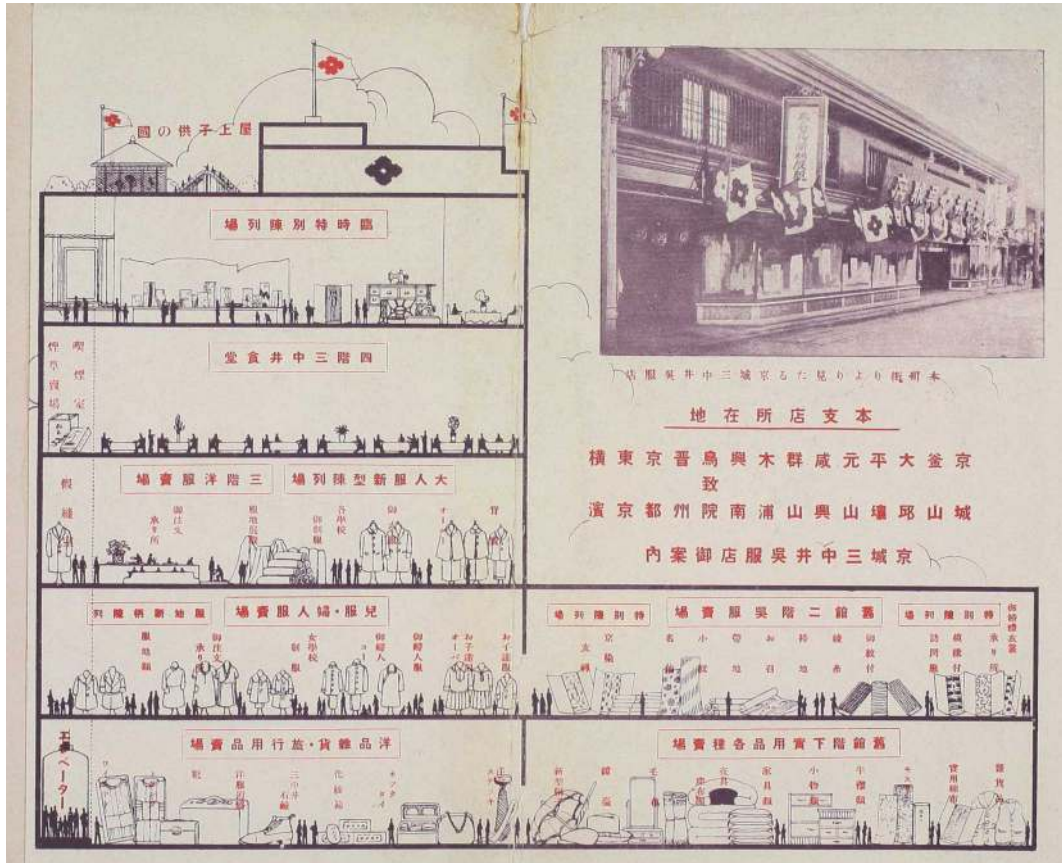


FIGURE 9. A floor guide of Minakai’s main store in Seoul. Items depicted on each floor: miscellaneous articles for daily use, Western sundries, travel goods (first floor); kimono fabrics, children’s and women’s wear (second floor); new-style adult and Western clothes (third floor); restaurant (fourth floor); special exhibition hall (fifth floor); children’s land (rooftop). Source: Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai (Gofukuten), *Minakai Gofukuten goannai*, 1929.

Taitung Street, where its factory “dedicates day and night to manufacturing clothes to meet official orders,” and a brand new four-storied store is slated to fill the rest of the grounds (fig. 10).¹¹⁶

The tour of branches staking out the boundaries of Minakai’s retail empire was also rendered visually in the *Bird’s-Eye View of Greater Keijō*, enclosed in another store guide published on the twentieth anniversary of Japanese rule in Korea. Minakai commissioned a renowned artist, Yoshida Hatsusaburō (1884–1955), to create this map of colonial Seoul centered on Minakai’s flagship store, whose greatly enlarged size dwarfs even the new Government-General headquarters (standing opposite on the converted Kyōngbok Palace Grounds, on the lower left) (map 8).¹¹⁷ It is an iconography of power with two heads—the colonial state and the Ōmi merchant store—forming a north-south axis to encompass the space in between, but the towering structure of Minakai leaves little doubt about who is in command of the modernizing landscape underneath. Positioning it as the fulcrum of empire, with influence stretching into the Manchurian cities of Hōten



FIGURE 10. Minakai Department Store, on Taitung Street, Shinkyō (Changchun) (1930). Minakai is the building in front. *Source*: Main Library of Kyoto University, Rare Materials Digital Archive.

and Dairen (train stops in the upper-left corner) and back to the Tokyo metropolis (in the upper-right corner), the panoramic map of Seoul embodied Minakai's spatial politics, designed simultaneously to inscribe the store's new prominence and to legitimize Japan's cultural authority over the continent. Its sprawling expanse implied that Minakai had brought the colonial capital, as well as the rest of cities along the railway tracks, into the hegemonic embrace of consumer capitalism—and stood ready to expand its reach still further.¹¹⁸

The new operations of Minakai as a department store demonstrated how lessons from Katsujirō's trip to America were woven into the structure of a family firm in Seoul and its branches. Having learned that visibility was a key component of "sensory shopping experience," Minakai managers overhauled the interiors by making maximum use of display cases and show windows, the essential accoutrements of merchandising that had already begun to transform the retail landscape across Japan.¹¹⁹ Novel techniques of retailing were incorporated as well. To attract customers of all classes, for example, the Seoul store held an "all ten-sen sale,"¹²⁰ Minakai's answer to the "ten-cent store" Katsujirō had visited in San Francisco. To "remedy the inconveniences" for rural residents, moreover, Minakai began a sales trip to the provinces (*shucchō hanbai*). Redolent of the mail-order service of Sears, Roebuck & Co., it may also be seen as a modern analogue of itinerant peddling.¹²¹



MAP 8. *Bird's-Eye View of Greater Keijō*, by Yoshida Hatsusaburō. Source: Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai (Gofukuten), *Minakai Gofukuten goannai*, 1929. Courtesy of the Archival Museum of the Faculty of Economics, Shiga University, Japan.

At the same time, new technology was adopted to better apply the commercial wisdom of Ōmi forebears. For instance, wireless communication between the stores in Kyoto and in Seoul and between branch managers in Korea and in Manchukuo replaced the traditional function of peddling as a means of gathering market information and conducting product research. In any capitalist economy, geographers have noted, “space-transcending technologies” are pivotal to “ensuring that commodities are delivered to spatially separated markets, to recoup investments in the shortest time possible.”¹²² This marriage of technology with tradition allowed Minakai to reduce transaction costs between stores and to import a full line of Japanese merchandise, especially kimono, directly from its mecca in Kyoto, unmatched in range by its rivals.¹²³

Hiring educated women became as crucial to managing the day-to-day operation of Minakai as it was to maintaining the store’s progressive image.¹²⁴ Undoubtedly inspired by what Katsujirō had seen at American emporiums, Minakai actively recruited female clerks, Japanese and Korean, who outnumbered male employees in its three largest branches in Taegu, Seoul, and P’yōngyang.¹²⁵ Mostly single women from elite and middle-class families, these “shop girls” represented an emergent category of “professional working women” in the empire. Their growing presence and visibility on one level signaled “a fragmentation of dry-goods business as a masculine space.” Nevertheless, the clerical labor of women continued to be viewed, in accord with the bourgeois ideal, as part of their “training in homemaking before marriage.” Seeking independence from the shackles of “the family” (*ie*), female clerks at Minakai found themselves in but another form of patriarchy, underpinned by the same capitalist logic that prioritized their reproductive over productive labor.¹²⁶

Underneath its modern façade, Minakai continued to operate on the traditional platform built by its Ōmi merchant predecessors. The store motto, recited daily by employees, enshrined their dictums of “trust, reliability, and selling widely at low margin.”¹²⁷ And its provincial identity hardly faded with time. Even as Minakai appeared in a Western architectural form, the stamp of Ōmi remained indelible in its corporate organization (based on kinship and native-place ties), in its supply chains of textile products, and in its internal systems of management, accounting, and employee training.¹²⁸ While reaping economies of scale in marketing and distribution, the old principle of central purchasing—entrusted to the relevant departments in Kyoto, Tokyo, and Osaka—also worked to ensure consistent quality of merchandise across Minakai’s branches in Korea and Manchuria, which were prohibited (by Article 34 of *Rules*) from replenishing their stock on their own.¹²⁹

Inside the store, the relations between management and labor stayed within the framework of family capitalism. Working under the grasp of Shiga-born managers, store clerks of both genders continued to toe the line of discipline and decorum set by Katsujirō, with the Shin Buddhist faith lending a moral buffer to the excess of material life. The result was a widening gulf between the frugality of low-wage

employees and the middle-class lifestyle they promoted and “performed” on the floor, between Minakai’s operation as an extended family and the ideal of the *hōmu* (home) centered on a nuclear family of a *sarariiman* purveyed by its sale of cultural commodities.¹³⁰ Perhaps this paradox itself represented another legacy of the Tokugawa era, when Ōmi merchants operated at the nexus of consumption and saving in the early modern market economy, preaching thrift for their family while propping up the lifestyle of prodigal samurai.

Hewing closely to the teachings of Ōmi shōnin, Minakai also began extending them to local youth in colonial Korea. From 1929, the Seoul store annually hosted vocational school pupils, both Japanese and Korean, male and female, for a period of commercial training in the summer or winter.¹³¹ So did other department stores, many of which hired Korean graduates of elite higher schools as sales clerks.¹³² In the mid-1930s, Koreans accounted for more than a third of Chōjiya’s clerks (136 out of 387), including thirty women, and a quarter of Mitsukoshi’s. Although Minakai continued to prefer hiring Shiga natives, it began recruiting Koreans as well. This followed a growing trend among Japanese-run department stores to target Korean urbanites, beyond their core market of predominantly Japanese salaried white-collar employees.¹³³ As noted, Chōjiya had from early on catered to Koreans, who were known to have adopted Western dress “far more enthusiastically than the Japanese,” who were attached to their kimono.¹³⁴ Minakai too, after its reincarnation as a department store, sought to capture the rising purchasing power of Koreans, retooling its marketing strategy by placing ads in the *Tonga ilbo* and other vernacular papers.¹³⁵ Meanwhile, Hwasin not only employed educated Korean women¹³⁶ but also actively scouted for model clerks trained by Minakai and Chōjiya according to the Ōmi tradition.¹³⁷ Their hiring practices suggest that a growing number of Koreans who entered the service economy were influenced by or at least exposed to Ōmi merchant values and precepts.

DEPARTMENT STORES AS AGENTS OF ASSIMILATION

Operating within a diverse hierarchy of clientele, the two Ōmi merchant stores joined their rivals to play a central role in linking the empire and its multiethnic inhabitants to a global culture of consumption. Their collective social impact was nothing short of revolutionary. In a story repeated the world over, department stores transformed society by leaving not a single facet of local life untouched, explained Date Masao, a Japanese manager of Hwasin.¹³⁸ Not only were they “trend setters” in fashion, but by leveraging “the power of advertising” and spectacle, they also created a fetish for consumption, which moved from the sidelines to the center stage of capitalism—“the enthronement of the commodity” that “glorif[ied]” its “exchange value,” in the words of the cultural theorist Walter Benjamin.¹³⁹

Along with affluence, department stores offered a promise of democratic access to cosmopolitan or “mass-mediated modernity.”¹⁴⁰ In creating entirely new spaces

of consumption, they created novel modes of social interaction. As the work of Se-Mi Oh and others has shown, Koreans from all walks of life, not just Japanese settlers, patronized department stores as customers, onlookers, strollers, and tourists from out of town.¹⁴¹ Students of elite-track higher schools, styling themselves as *Moga* (Modern Girl) and *Mobo* (Modern Boy), frequented local emporia after school to sample the latest fashions or to sip a cup of coffee.¹⁴² Dining at a restaurant in the department store became a weekend ritual for many middle-class families. Even without any intention or means to buy, visitors could freely browse a variety of household goods and curated products on display and ride an escalator in Chōjiya or the giant elevator in Hwasin. The dual appeal of affluence and access created a swelling “pilgrimage” to “the phantasmagoria of capitalist culture,”¹⁴³ selling fantasies of losing oneself in “reveries of consumption,” as the iconoclastic writer Yi Sang (1910–1937) described his own experience wandering to the rooftop of Mitsukoshi.¹⁴⁴

If department stores helped spread a new middle-class lifestyle across differences in ethnicity, class, and gender, however, their seductive allure exposed the colonial society’s fault lines as well. On more than a few occasions, Korean papers warned their readers against the consumer culture centered on Honmachi and its decadent effect on people.¹⁴⁵ Hwasin endured an unflattering portrayal by some critics as “Japanese capitalism painted in Korean colors” for “oversupplying metropolitan goods.”¹⁴⁶ But the most vociferous resistance to department stores came from small and mid-sized retailers, a conflict that also played out in Japan and Manchuria. In late 1929, with all four Japanese department stores poised to expand into the provinces, the *Tonga ilbo* raised the alarm that they would do “grave damage” to local merchants and the indigenous Korean economy.¹⁴⁷ Worried that they might lose their customers to Minakai, Japanese merchants in Taegu, too, mounted a protracted campaign against its “grand new opening,” which they reckoned as an “invasion” of predatory capital into their business turf.¹⁴⁸

In self-defense, managers of department stores often appealed to the notion of co-prosperity and coexistence (*kyōson kyōei*)¹⁴⁹ and, like their Tokugawa fore-runners, broadly portrayed their business as a public good. Having spent decades mastering the techniques of mass production, asserted the president of Chōjiya, his store contributed to “improving people’s clothing,” which “benefits the national economy as a whole.”¹⁵⁰ The “public nature” of the department store, concurred a manager of Hwasin, lay not only in supplying daily needs and offering amusements to anyone who ventured in off the street but also in the variety of services it rendered to local communities. Among them was utilizing its open floor space to hold art exhibits, which doubled “as second schools to artists” and even “outclass[ed] real museums” in their curatorial quality. Serving many public roles rolled into one, the department store operated for a broader social purpose. This spirit of charity evidently extended to store employees, who were among the first to make

donations in times of distress or natural disaster.¹⁵¹ Minakai also tried wherever possible to source local labor and raw materials for refurbishing its branches, just as Ōmi merchants had renovated their stores during downturns to help reboot the local economy.¹⁵² From the perspective of Ōmi-born managers, department stores reified the Buddhist ideal of social service championed by their ancestors. Like Christian businessmen, they seldom treated religion as a mere ploy to increase profit. Nevertheless, if enhancing the store's image as a purveyor of public good was also good publicity, so much the better.

Across the empire, department stores carried the added political charge of helping the state reinforce the hitherto tenuous equation of “modern” and “Japanese” in the eyes of the colonized. If the nebulous policy of assimilation entailed spreading Japanese capital, goods, and culture through which to shape local people's values and attitudes regarding the metropole, the department store was a perfect vessel for that project. For its effort to “reform the Taiwanese aborigines and secure their allegiance,” the Government-General of Taiwan enlisted the edifying power of Shirokiya—its cornucopia of goods and displays of art, technology, and modern living—during their sightseeing tour of Japan, much in the way John Wanamaker used his store to shape people's morality through taste and decorum.¹⁵³ Shirokiya's distant Ōmi cousin, Takashimaya employed prominent *Nihonga* artists to create store designs that telegraphed Japan's cultural uniqueness and strength as a modern nation-empire to both foreign and domestic markets.¹⁵⁴ Their retail counterparts in Seoul viewed their business no less as a vital extension of Japan's imperial mission. Department stores combined a patriotic duty to sell made-in-Japan goods and a political goal to “elevate the level of Korean culture,” mused a manager of Mitsukoshi.¹⁵⁵ Above all, they spread a new understanding of what it meant to lead “a modern cultured life” (*bunka seikatsu*).¹⁵⁶ Among mass consumers in Korea, one paper reported in excitement, Chōjiya's spectacular sales had “overturned the old disdain for ready-made clothes” by demonstrating that, instead, they were “inseparable from the daily life of modern cultured men.”¹⁵⁷ No doubt Chōjiya and Minakai also regarded their hosting of local students for commercial training and the hiring of Korean clerks as advancing this colonial dyad of accumulation and assimilation.

By this time, the faith Wanamaker had invested in the transformative power of mass retail was plain to see across the Pacific. One school student in Shiga, in a 1934 essay, reported on great strides made by “our policy of assimilation” in “narrowing a gap in customs” between Japanese and native inhabitants in the colonies, “laying the groundwork for the expansion of department stores.”¹⁵⁸ The on-the-ground managers, however, viewed causality as running the other way, seeing their stores as doing the work of bridging colonial difference on the state's behalf. Department stores had the power to transform society, a manager of Hwasin ventured, far more than the colonial government: “Everything today pivots on department stores.”¹⁵⁹ For owners and patrons alike, department stores were their empire.

PARTNERS OF THE STATE IN CONTINENTAL
EXPANSION AND WAR

Yet even the giant retailers were far from autonomous agents of change. As new historians of capitalism remind us, businesspeople were always embedded within “shifting power relations” and “rules of exchange . . . set politically,”¹⁶⁰ and nowhere more so than in colonial Korea, ruled by the Governor-General’s decree. The boundaries between private and public spheres in the colonial political economy blurred further as Japan’s military drive intensified on the continent. As seen in the evolution of Itōchū, the partnership of capital with state power—what Katsujirō had advocated in his diary—increasingly took on the characteristics of military contracting, which was all but mandated by war from 1937.

Following the Manchurian invasion of 1931, Minakai and Chōjiya strove to cement their relations with colonial authority as a new focus of business policy. Both consolidated their role as purveyor of clothing to various branches of the colonial government and consumer cooperatives for their employees, amid voices of protest from local retailers.¹⁶¹ The store managers also cultivated direct ties with officialdom. In September 1933, Minakai invited three hundred Government-General bureaucrats to celebrate the grand opening of its new building in Seoul.¹⁶² When Chōjiya completed yet another round of renovation years later, its inauguration was attended by over five hundred local dignitaries, including the mayor and the governor of Kyōnggi.¹⁶³ Each occasion displayed the store’s fortune as inextricably bound up with that of Japan’s continental empire. Both stores in Seoul, too, received visits from the colonial governor himself.¹⁶⁴ Minakai’s company records indicate that Katsujirō and his deputy, Tomijūrō, each developed a personal relationship with Governor-General Ugaki Kazushige (1931–1936), whose term of office not by chance overlapped with the store’s brisk expansion into the Chinese interior.¹⁶⁵

Minakai extended various gestures of support, tangible and symbolic, to the Japanese military. In October 1930, for instance, Minakai donated towels and bars of soap to the eighty-odd soldiers from the two army divisions staying in Seoul, while its clerks sported a special badge to pay obeisance to the Imperial Navy at its twenty-fifth anniversary.¹⁶⁶ Attendance at state and military ceremonies likewise became routine. In 1932, the founding year of Manchukuo alone, managers of the Seoul store joined high-ranking colonial bureaucrats at multiple official venues, celebrating the emperor’s birthday, welcoming “the victorious troops returning” from Manchuria, and commemorating the war dead.¹⁶⁷

At the same time, clerk training became interpenetrated by the military. All “commercial warriors” under twenty-three years of age were required to enroll in Minakai’s own youth training center, which focused on conducting military drills.¹⁶⁸ Chōjiya instituted a similar program for its male clerks,¹⁶⁹ and mobilized its female employees to participate in a variety of war-support activities. A few

months following the Manchurian takeover, these Chōjiya clerks stood on the platform of the Seoul train station to greet members of the Greater Japan Young Women's Association, who had completed their *imon* (comfort) visit with troops of the Kwantung Army, and gave them a patriotic send-off back to the metropole.¹⁷⁰

The onset of the Sino-Japanese War made cooperation with the state as indispensable as it was ineluctable. By then, the alliance of business with colonial power had ripened. Minakai and Chōjiya joined department stores across the empire to spearhead donation drives in support of Japan's imperial cause. Minakai donated nearly 3,000 yen to the national defense fund, while Chōjiya's factory hands contributed a sum of 200 yen out of their modest salaries to "Korea's air defense."¹⁷¹ A few months later, Chōjiya raised the ante by gifting one whole airplane, which was christened "Chōjiya-gō" at an official ceremony held at the airfield in Yōuido.¹⁷²

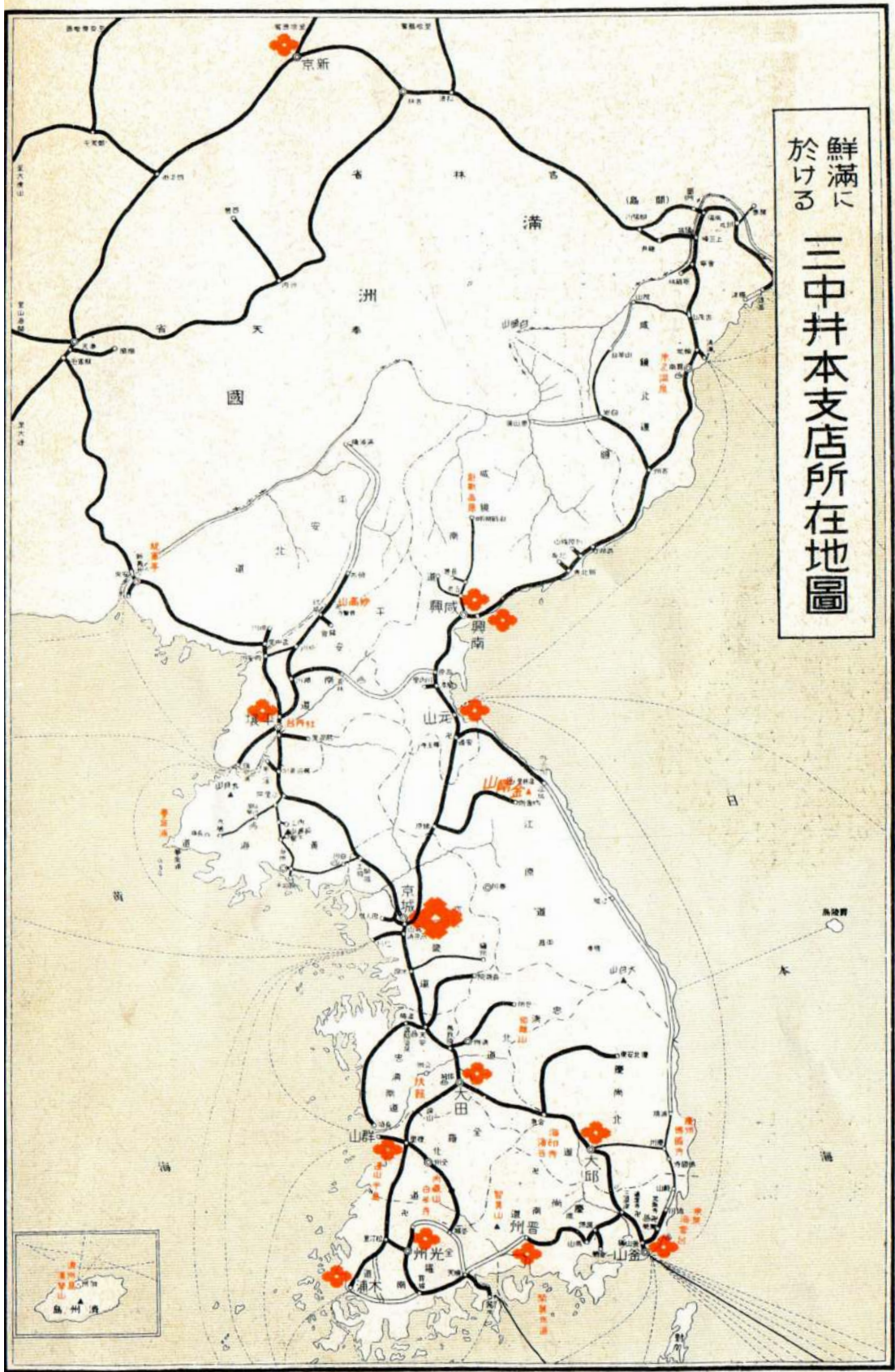
Like department stores and schools in the metropole, Minakai and Chōjiya offered their ample exhibit spaces to connect the home front to ongoing battles on the continent and, after December 1941, in the wider theater of the Asia-Pacific War. Along with sales events, they hosted a series of public displays to promote the central goals of the National Spiritual Mobilization Campaign, from "youth guidance" to "prevention of espionage."¹⁷³ Sponsored by the Government-General, Chōjiya was also accorded the honor of hosting an exhibition on "the 2,600th anniversary of Imperial Japan" in February 1940.¹⁷⁴ When the infamous name-changing campaign commenced that month, both Chōjiya and Minakai "encouraged" their Korean employees to adopt Japanese names, their paternalistic devotion to clerks now subsumed under the wartime policy of "uniting Japan and Korea as one" (*naisen ittai*).¹⁷⁵

These acts of collaboration expanded in tandem with the business of Minakai and Chōjiya. No sooner had the Imperial Army begun pushing into the Chinese interior than managers of both stores vowed to "assist the state" in developing Korea as a "military supply base"; each created an independent corporation in Shinkyō for meeting the daily needs of officials and soldiers stationed in Manchuria and North China.¹⁷⁶ Among the first Japanese emporia to appear in the central retail district of Taitung, East Asia Minakai launched its own drive into the Chinese market from its satellite base in Beijing, following the army's advance to open branches in Nanjing and other occupied cities.¹⁷⁷ The two stores were quickly joined by other department stores of Ōmi lineage in Japan. As part of the military policy in 1938, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry encouraged retail leaders to expand their operations into specific regions, assigning Takashimaya to Nanjing, Daimaru to Suzhou, and Shirokiya to Hangzhou.¹⁷⁸ Eager to recoup losses caused by the shrinking domestic demand, Takashimaya launched a network of branches in some twenty-five cities in China and Korea. Supplying food, apparel, furnishings, and other needs of the army, the South Manchurian Railway Company, and military companies, its business flourished quickly to reach a pre-war peak in 1944.¹⁷⁹

For Minakai, as for its metropolitan cousins, the outbreak of the war proved a bonanza. Nakae Shūgo—Katsujirō's eldest son who had taken charge of the Seoul store in 1939—attributed Minakai's business success, despite rising prices, to two main factors.¹⁸⁰ One was the “imperfect nature of [wartime economic] control.” For example, the Department Store Law of 1937, passed in response to small retailers' demand for bureaucratic supervision of giant emporia in Japan,¹⁸¹ was never enforced in colonial Korea, where department stores remained in close liaison with the state.¹⁸² To be sure, wartime restrictions on the sales of high-end kimono and textiles in general put downward pressure on revenues at Minakai as well as Mitsukoshi. Yet in spite of military control on production and distribution, price regulations, looming shortages of raw materials, and introduction of low-quality substitutes, Minakai's business records indicate a steady rise in its fortunes.¹⁸³ State reliance on department stores for supplying the army and rationing goods also conferred on them a certain measure of business security.¹⁸⁴

Another, more compelling reason offered by Nakae Shūgo was “the improved living standards of workers, especially in Korea's rapidly expanding mining sector, which has boosted their consumption of household articles, furniture, and apparel.”¹⁸⁵ Not unlike Sears and Roebuck, which had launched its chain stores in 1925 to sell commodities its own employees could afford, wartime Minakai came to target low-wage workers as its new clientele.¹⁸⁶ More broadly, Minakai's success owed to a recent “trend toward Japanization of the Korean lifestyle,” one business almanac noted.¹⁸⁷ Local police reports testified to this phenomenon. The culture of consumption, which revolved around department stores and movie theaters, began to blur class and ethnic divides, growing unabated despite official admonishments against luxury and repeated calls for austerity. Colonial emporiums had pledged to support the military but not at the expense of their “consumer-subjects,” whose subversive agency apparently was fed by a competing variety of recreational facilities throughout the war.¹⁸⁸

By the late 1930s, the two family stores founded by Ōmi merchants had outgrown their provincial origins to morph into retail titans of continental scale. Both commanded a network of stores that extended the length of the Korean peninsula and into the bustling cities of Manchukuo and back to the ancestral ground in Ōmi and Kansai (map 9).¹⁸⁹ Neither department store enjoyed quite the cachet of Mitsukoshi, which became a brand unto itself. Yet Minakai's “vigorous ability to expand stands unrivaled,” observers noted, even by Mitsukoshi, which had only one branch in Seoul (1906) and another in Dalian (1928).¹⁹⁰ Minakai's status in the capital of Manchukuo was unshakable. One former Japanese resident reminisced: “When one spoke of department stores in Shinkyō at the time, it was Minakai. In its status as a go-to place for gifts, the store was identical to Mitsukoshi in the metropole.”¹⁹¹ By 1940, Minakai had officially become the largest department store chain in the Japanese empire, with branches on the continent and with a cluster of affiliates and subsidiaries run more or less by the same cadre of the Nakae family's relations.¹⁹²



MAP 9. Minaka's main store and its branches in Korea and Manchuria. Source: Ōhashi Heiei 1935.

Its empire-wide network was also captured in the lyrics of “A Song of Minakai,” composed at the height of business expansion in 1938. Covering the entire chain of Minakai stores in seventeen verses, the song cycle’s final verse extols its Ōmi roots.¹⁹³

Ōmi merchants
As renowned as Lake Biwa
The cornerstone of our Minakai
Is everlasting and indestructible Kondō.

Minakai’s anthem was the latest addition to the expanding blend of new and old techniques deployed to maintain a sense of pride and loyalty among employees to the Nakae family and its ancestors in Ōmi. As its concluding verse suggests, the store continued to frame itself as the finest incarnation of the diasporic spirit of Ōmi shōnin: even as its operations as a department store spanned the Asian continent, Minakai remained forever anchored in its birthplace and its merchant identity.

. . .

Few surpass the wealth and status attained by Minakai and Chōjiya in the prewar history of Japanese overseas retail.¹⁹⁴ Their activities in Korea and Manchuria from the turn of the century charted overlapping boundaries of business and empire, illustrating their co-expansion. Merchant capital trailed and buttressed colonial power, all the while redeploying provincial sentiment to serve a national project. The surviving records of Minakai convey the dynamic of this locally driven imperialism. Minakai’s rise as a department store rested on its adoption of a global form of mass retail, but one accompanied by a novel application of inherited practices and maxims in Ōmi—what I have conceptualized in terms of rescaling and grafting. This body of regional knowledge was given new life and meaning on the continent, where the scions of Ōmi merchants joined their fellow countrymen in shoring up the colonial enterprise while spearheading a retail revolution.

Overseas operations of Minakai and Chōjiya bore an unmistakable imprint of their provincial heritage. Chōjiya’s Buddhist commercial philosophy revealed diasporic sensibilities manifest in a long line of Ōmi merchants. Minakai’s business strategy demonstrated how their customs of cross-border trading were repurposed for continental expansion, even as they were rescaled to the colonial regime of accumulation. Echoes of tradition lingered in all aspects of Minakai’s corporate architecture, from the leadership cemented by kin and the method of accounting to the pattern of recruitment and the system of apprenticeship. For merchant families like the Nakae, the department store was a modern offshoot of Ōmi tradition, rather than a radical innovation.

In a spirit reminiscent of the Iwakura mission likened to a global “shopping spree,”¹⁹⁵ Katsujirō’s transpacific journey mapped a cornucopia of ideas for

modernizing Minakai, and by extension, for making Japan a prosperous and powerful nation. I read his travel diary as an internal dialogue with America, unspooling discoveries on its retail and migrant frontiers, while reaffirming values he cherished as a merchant of Ōmi. Such a dialogue linking the local to the global shaped his spatial multiplicity, a local cosmopolitan who operated a business empire-wide yet remained anchored in the religious and social milieu of Ōmi.

Katsujirō's encounter with two Americas—the global retail pioneer and a marginalized racial diaspora—provided the main impetus for upscaling Minakai into a modern emporium vested with a duty to expand Japan's hegemony. Yet its metamorphosis did not fundamentally disrupt Minakai's strategy of grafting imported ideas onto the inherited know-how of Ōmi *shōnin*. The department store that emerged from the process was not a mere hybrid of existing practices but a new and different (and unpredicted) "blend" possessing "characteristics present in neither of the two original components."¹⁹⁶ Nor did its continental expansion result in a simple "disembedding" of social and economic relations from its place of origin.¹⁹⁷ For Ōmi merchants active overseas, it had the contrary effect of strengthening their place-based ties and loyalties as they were stretched across Japan's East Asian empire.

Minakai's rapid growth in the 1930s underscored the new centrality of department stores as drivers of affluence and national power—and aspirations of their owners as social reformers. With a web of branches sprawling across the continent, Minakai and Chōjiya each served as the harbinger of consumer capitalism as well as the handmaiden of colonial rule, advancing the imperatives of accumulation and assimilation. As the empire's leading retailers, the two stores of Ōmi lineage stood at the front line of merchant capital's collaboration with the state, which crested during the war.

As surely as their active support for the empire boosted their business, however, it also guaranteed their sudden demise after 1945. Department stores headquartered in the metropole, such as Takashimaya and Mitsukoshi, survived the collapse of Japan's overseas imperium to revive their fortunes quickly in the postwar era. By contrast, colonial emporiums like Minakai and Chōjiya never emerged from the rubble of defeat. They lost everything with surrender—not unlike the way some merchants of Ōmi, having relied on official patronage, went under with the fall of the Tokugawa regime. All that Minakai and Chōjiya had built across the vast Asian mainland would vanish as quickly as their business had prospered during the war, leaving only architectural relics of their past grandeur behind.¹⁹⁸

A Shiga Immigrant Diaspora in Canada

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

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

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

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

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

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

TRANSPACIFIC IMMIGRATION OF SHIGA
PEOPLE—AND WHITE BACKLASH

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

ŌMI MERCHANTS IN “LITTLE TOKYO”

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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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

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

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

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



松宮野瀬洋服店

電話ワリニテ試穿せ給

晩市パウエル街三二九
メイド・ツ・メジャーの御注文にも願じます

何故今頃は既製スーツがエライ勢で賣れるのでせうか
「それには幾多の具体的理由があるからであります」

一「第一に良い洋服が安く求められます」
多量生産の結果昔は五十那もした服が今日では其の半額の二十五那位で素晴らしい立派な服を得られますからです

二「スタイルの素晴らしきのは既製服の大特長」
この台社も既製服によつてスタイルの流行を一番早く一般に紹介します、ですから流行を追い人は常に既製品に注目します

三「今頃の既製品は全く良く合ふからです」
大衆服工場では既製スーツが最良の科學的設備によつて、またにも合ふ多様な種類を製造し居ります、其の上野野瀬の洋服は日本人の寸法を考慮しての特別寸法仕立てでありますからピッタリと良く合ふものは別に不思議ではありません

四「仕立に於ても特別寸法仕立以上入念丁寧です」
既製品とせば大体安物か如く前式劣へかを穿る人も御座いまいながら、今頃は有名互ロバート・テイ・エリー・シマンの如き流、六十那もする既製品とどしく白人頭では良れとす、要は仕立の如何でありまして、地の形のくつれはハイ・エントリ・ハンダ・クワイ仕立の既製品ならミシン仕立の特別メイド・ツ・メジャー服より幾つと格段がやつと格段であります

五「百聞一見に如かず」柄やスタイルがどうかと御心配無用、實際出来上つた服をツライされたら一目瞭然、單に小形の服地見本では一寸判りません

六「忙急ぎの節すぐお間に合ひます」
御歸朝出勤間際又は冠婚葬祭等お急ぎの場合でもすぐ御着用を願へますから大層御便利です

七「以上の理由で既製服が御得であります」
但し洋服を真向に取扱うて平常の如くとも御座らず以上を成順へて居ります、弊店こそ御めて御座る事が出来るものと立断いたします

尚ほ御希望の方は寸法を計つての

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

COMBATING WHITE EXCLUSION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE BIRTH OF “EMIGRANT VILLAGES”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“THE JEWS OF THE ORIENT”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

. . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

Building on the legacy of their Tokugawa forebears who bridged land and sea by peddling across the Japanese archipelago, merchants and other provincials of Shiga ventured abroad in the dawning age of global migration, capital, and empire. “Long cursed with flood,” inhabitants of the eastern littoral had completely “conquered the fear of water,” noted one reporter in 1916; now they shuttled between their home and foreign lands “more frequently than vessels plied across Lake Biwa.”¹ Their cyclical and seasonal voyages gave rise to what I have called a trans-pacific diaspora of Shiga people, who, regardless of family lineage or hamlet of birth, claimed the Ōmi shōnin as shared local inheritance.

Scholars for decades have shown how Japan, as a latecomer to imperialism and industrial capitalism, borrowed and adopted Western knowledge, techniques, and language of expansion. Few have explained how the nation’s provincials might have drawn inspiration from their own history of commerce. This book has highlighted the role of merchants of Ōmi, both as a template for and central actors in these processes of global engagement, conventionally framed as state-led projects. By the end of the Tokugawa era, Ōmi merchants had developed a distinctive culture and ethos of “expeditionary commerce” that extended from the mainland of Honshū to the northern island of Hokkaido. Local and national leaders of Meiji Japan turned to these merchants for initiative, exhorting them to not rest on their laurels but to steer the island nation into the global marketplace. Direct and self-proclaimed descendants of Ōmi shōnin responded by launching a flurry of projects, from spinning mills to vocational schools. A young generation of Shiga natives signaled a commitment to pursuing overseas careers as stewards of provincial heritage in Japan’s rising empire in East Asia. Even humble farmers viewed their seasonal work abroad as a seamless extension of ancestral commerce and an integral part of Japan’s imperial project, as they planted a mercantile colony on the Pacific coast of North America. Collectively, their activities and aspirations capture an overlooked dynamic that becomes legible at the scale of a region: how

the sinews of tradition were called up for the national goal of expansion through business, trade, industry, education, and migration.

Provincializing expansion through the lens of Ōmi, this book hopes to open a new methodological horizon for the entangled histories of empire and diaspora. Using diaspora as a conceptual aperture to widen the bounds of local history, my analysis of Ōmi merchants over the *longue durée* has aimed to uncover dynamics hitherto buried or isolated in the scholarship on imperial Japan: continuities from the early modern to the modern era in the process and ethos of border-crossing, and multiple vectors and modalities of expansion that led to the dispersal of Japanese around the Pacific world. In tracing the diasporic praxis and ethos of Ōmi merchants, I have conceptualized their portability across time and space in two broad ways. One is rescaling, a stretching across multiple spaces (local, national, continental, transpacific, and global) of economic activities, customs, values, and social relations rooted in the locality of Ōmi, which themselves were constantly invented anew. The other is grafting, a synthesis of non-synchronous and seemingly incompatible practices associated with new and inherited forms of commerce. I have deployed these spatiotemporal metaphors for elucidating both the role of provincials in overseas expansion and how these provincials understood their part in this process.

Throughout the long history of Ōmi merchants, the textile industry was one area where they left their lasting imprint on national and global scales. When viewed from the perspective of Kansai, the parallel histories of capitalism and colonialism would look interwoven as centuries-long processes led and mediated by regional actors, rather than a rupture from the provincial past instigated by the modernizing state. This long-term approach, taken by scholars of industrial revolutions in Japan and elsewhere, can also be applied to the empire, I contend, if we recognize it as growing out of the same incremental process that drove the industrialization of the Tokugawa countryside. Their interlocking vectors of expansion were first forged on the colonial frontier of Hokkaido. Seafaring merchants of Ōmi fueled the Matsumae regime of contract fisheries, importing textiles and mainland goods in exchange for marine products harvested by indigenous Ainu labor. They were followed by a new generation of Ōmi-born capitalists and industrialists, the so-called *Gōshū zaibatsu*, who spearheaded Japan's cotton imperialism in the treaty ports of China, while capturing markets around the globe. Their cousins in Korea and Manchuria also wielded empire-wide influence through mass retail and aided the colonial project of assimilation by molding a consumer society oriented to the metropole. Few among those who crossed the Pacific had direct merchant lineage, yet these Shiga migrants claiming shared patrimony led mercantile expansionism from their foothold in Vancouver. From Itōchū and Minakai in colonial East Asia to immigrant business owners in Canada, lineal and lateral scions of Ōmi *shōnin* continued to open new frontiers of trade, industry, labor, and migration beyond provincial and national borders. In linking Kansai directly to the world economy,

moreover, they displaced Chinese middlemen, overcame the dominance of foreign agents in Kōbe and Yokohama, and pushed the boundaries of Japanese power far across the sea, at times trailing, at times going ahead of the flag. The provincials of Ōmi-Shiga, in short, became global players on the strength of their lived tradition.

A closer look at some of these individuals and family records reveals how lessons of Ōmi commerce stayed relevant oceans away, braiding old and new in their operations. Store owners across the Shiga diaspora drew on a reservoir of accumulated wisdom about cross-border trading and strategies of business and risk management long known to Ōmi shōnin. Even as their family concerns morphed into modern corporations or diversified into new sectors, traditional bonds of trust proved durable, as did the system of apprenticeship, devotion to Shin Buddhism, and the ethic of social service. The store codes of Itōchū and Minakai continually reminded employees of their rootedness in the ancestral home of Ōmi, scattered as they were across overseas markets and branches. Most Ōmi-lineage businesses also remained within the bounds and dictates of patriarchal family. Kinship, the traditional hedge against the peril of long-distance commerce, shored up their business into the age of capitalism, and native-place loyalty functioned as a bulwark against its “radical uncertainties”²—whether market volatility inherent in the cotton trade, recurrent waves of racial exclusion in America, or general insecurities of operating in foreign markets. Just as risks were enclosed within social and family relations, what appeared to be modern corporate practices, such as diversification and joint stock ventures, were often built on early modern precedents set by Ōmi merchant families.

Provincializing empire also means capturing how provincials apprehended their place in the world on their own terms. Shiga natives, as I have shown, often made sense of regional heritage and of their overseas endeavors in diasporic terms. Whether textile trade, colonial business, or labor migration, each activity was rendered as a modern variant of translocal commerce pioneered by Ōmi merchant forebears, a spatial and scalar reconfiguration of their *modus operandi*. In turn, merchants, migrants, and students, through cross-cultural encounters abroad, reaffirmed their shared identity as the heirs of entrepreneurial pioneers, as they led and partook in the colonization of territories on one side of the Pacific or confronted white racism on the other. Ōmi as a “place embodies a historical layering of crystallized social relations.”³ So too the Shiga diaspora—Ōmi stretched across the ocean—embodied layerings of time, each grafted onto the existing foundation by those laying claim to expeditionary commerce as a defining province of Shiga people.

Their sense of local belonging, far from withering, grew only stronger through their increasingly globalized circuits of trade, work, and travel. While traversing overseas circuits and networks, indeed, the provincials simultaneously wove their place into global geographies and histories of expansion. I have tried to convey how these processes went hand in hand in the far-flung lives

and imaginaries of Shiga people. From a diary and letters of Ōmi businessmen to essays penned by students and teachers in Hikone, regional texts reveal how locally embedded actors were thinking globally about their place in the nation, empire, and the world. Through business, travel, and sojourns abroad, many provincials derived from their encounters transoceanic perspectives on commerce and world power, developing their multiscalar sensibilities as local cosmopolitans. Their private and published writings, in turn, drew analogies between mercantile people of Ōmi and diasporic communities across history, from the Hanseatic League to Jews, German immigrants, and Chinese overseas. Bringing the local into the global and vice versa, the provincials of Ōmi collectively crafted a global sense of their place as they participated in shaping the world of global exchange. Far from a static and fixed space on a map, Ōmi was enlivened by border crossings of its inhabitants, both real and imagined.

Looking at the emergent world of global capitalism through a provincial lens reveals further local-global interplay not registered at the state level. The worldly ethos and paradox of capitalist modernity, for instance, found echoes in the concerns and values shared by Ōmi shōnin: chief among them, how to balance profit making and charity, risk taking and security, faith and business. On their tours of Western nations, Itō Chūbē II and Nakae Katsujirō both conveyed a regionally inflected sense of affinity for Protestant culture and values, identifying in their industrious people an explanation for their ability to expand abroad. Christian businessmen were apostles of thrift and industry not unlike these merchants of Ōmi, who stressed the moral fiber of employees as a requisite for the success of family, corporation, and nation alike. What Ōmi shōnin inherited and passed on, ultimately, was an amalgam of values cherished not only locally but, as Itō and Nakae discovered on their journey, around the industrial world.

The transoceanic flows of provincials can also illuminate anew capitalism as a global phenomenon. To map such movements of Ōmi people around the turn of the twentieth century is to recognize the racial dynamics of the global capitalist system in which they were being embedded. Capitalism's entanglement with race was laid bare in different communities penetrated by Ōmi capital and labor—from the northern lands of Ainu to the fictional colony of *burakumin* in the South Seas, from the Chinese continent to the Canadian West—a transpacific space of flows where Shiga natives became both perpetrators and victims of racial capitalism. As they spread from one side of the imperial Pacific to the other, from a Japanese to an Anglo-Saxon “lake,” their thoughts and activities as colonists and emigrants exposed the racial underpinnings of competing capitalist empires, a powerful ideology of difference bridging the Pacific and Atlantic worlds. What Nakae Katsujirō glimpsed and Shiga immigrants came to embody through these crossings was the ambivalent positionality of Japan as “a colored empire” at once dominant and oppressed in the racially partitioned Pacific.⁴

Tracing provincial lives through global circuits of empire brings into relief another critical point that a nation-based frame has obscured: region had its own distinctive relationship to the world, not routed through the metropolis. The cotton industry that connected Kansai directly to world markets was one manifestation of this autonomy. Ōmi's cultural ties to the continent, as imagined by scholars and created by intra-empire flows of Shiga people, represented another. Littoral Ōmi was but one of many "connected places" in Asia where "maritime networks and mobile livelihoods constructed the community" across multiple generations and multiple scales.⁵ Local educators and boosters of Shiga took this point further, as Japan embarked on building its East Asian empire. They strove to establish Ōmi's centrality in national life and imperial politics, stressing its primordial ties to the continent and urging littoral inhabitants to once again venture across the sea. Even as merchants rallied behind the state goals of industry and empire, they too viewed expansion through a distinctly regional lens: as a chance to revitalize their homeland and rehabilitate the name of Ōmi. Empire spawned complex politics of place-making vis-à-vis the center—as well as among localities within, as they competed over the claim to be *the* birthplace of Ōmi shōnin.⁶ Their overall effect was to reinforce rather than fragment a sense of belonging to both national and provincial communities, their loyalties in coexistence rather than in conflict. Overseas expansion not only bound provincials as a nation but simultaneously deepened their attachment and allegiance to native place.

Over the course of the diaspora's ebb and flow, the Ōmi tradition—the sedimented pasts of diasporic merchants and their self-proclaimed offspring—underwent constant reinvention. The "Ōmi shōnin" was a product of its time and place, born of an anxiety that Shiga people, in their peripheral status, might become decoupled from their vaunted commercial heritage. Through the national press and nativist discourse, the itinerant peddler with a balance pole, supported by his wife behind the scenes, came to stand for an indigenous culture of entrepreneurial daring and the expansive character of the Japanese ethnos. In the case of the Itō family, no sooner had the founder, Chūbē I, passed on than the mythmaking began; while he joined a long line of local luminaries as the "last Ōmi shōnin," his wife, not much later, was canonized in a roster of exemplars of Ōmi womanhood. And from this gendered discourse emerged a broader idea, actively disseminated by local boosters, of enterprise as genetic inheritance of Shiga natives: a commercially gifted people sired in a littoral province, with a record of achievements in maritime Ezo and with inborn skills worthy of the sobriquet "Jews of the Pacific." In a slew of biographies and hagiographies of big men, each success and each story of overcoming adversity continually reassured the public and themselves about their authenticity as Ōmi shōnin. The legend of Ōmi merchants, with all their virtues and warts, took shape through this mutually reinforcing dialectic between discourse and practice across the transpacific diaspora.

All of these ideas persisted into the postwar era, along with hundreds of businesses of Ōmi descent.⁷ Although Minakai Department Store perished with the empire after 1945, Itōchū and its affiliates came through the tumultuous years of transition to flourish as multinational firms. Silk-O-Lina is another, if rare, example of survival on the other side of the Pacific. In a 1954 roster of “Shiga people active outside the prefecture,” Itō Chūbē II appears alongside many others educated as “global Ōmi shōnin” at Hasshō and Hikone Kōshō who contributed to Japan’s postwar recovery and growth thereafter.⁸ And a cohort of drapers have stayed in business likewise to join the company of famous “*shinise*” (long-established stores) more than a century old.⁹

A transpacific diaspora of Shiga people also lives on through a global network of prefectural associations. Launched in 1989, the International Shiga People Association (Zenkoku Shiga Kenjinkai Rengōkai) today embraces members in over seventy locales, from Hokkaido to Vancouver, as well as countries in South America, Europe, and Southeast Asia—a scale unparalleled among provincial organizations in Japan. Members of the association stay connected to their ancestral home through a bulletin and a biannual “world conference of Shiga people” held at a branch location. This gathering of descendants of Ōmi peddlers, as the association identifies Shiga people scattered around the globe,¹⁰ is capped typically by a group dance to the tune of “Gōshū *ondo*” (folk song and dance of Ōmi)—the unofficial anthem of Shiga, whose choreography models the figure of an Ōmi shōnin toiling on foreign soil. Through this diasporic network, too, Ōmi-Hachiman in Shiga maintains a sister-city relationship with the town of Matsumae in Hokkaido, where a Buddhist service is jointly held every year to commemorate “the northern expansion of Ōmi shōnin” in the Tokugawa period.¹¹ Conspicuously absent is any acknowledgment of the exploitation of Ainu labor and lands, considered a “taboo topic” by contemporary boosters of Shiga, according to one local historian.¹² Today, as before 1945, state-sponsored remembrance of Ōmi pioneers, like family genealogies carefully curated for posterity, continues to perpetuate a public amnesia about their role in the history of colonial violence on the northern islands.

At their storied birthplace in Shiga, the material landscape once created by the transpacific flows of immigrants continues to distinguish the Kotō region from its rustic environs. What one visitor to the Kanzaki district had observed in 1931 still rings true: “As soon as you step into these small hamlets, you will be amazed by the rows of rich and powerful homesteads” lining their streets.¹³ These relics of the prewar diaspora are preserved in the town of Gokashō Kondō (today’s Higashi Ōmi City), which, as you approach by bus, looms like an island in the midst of paddy fields. Designated one of Japan’s Important Preservation Districts for Historic Buildings, Kondō is a museum unto itself—a dense cluster of tiled-roof houses with white walls formerly owned by merchant families, including the founder of Minakai, and outsize temples and shrines built by their donations. Such monuments to the past grandeur of Ōmi merchants are etched across the vernacular landscape of Shiga.



FIGURE 14. A scene of Hasshō students on a peddling trip in colonial Korea in the film *Tenbin no uta*. Source: Nihon Eizō Kikaku, 2007. Courtesy of Takemoto Kozue, Office Tenbin, Ōtsu, Shiga, Japan.

One of these living monuments is Hasshō. Elevated in status to a high school after war, Hasshō continues to abide by the Ōmi tradition that has become its trademark, engaging students in peddling over the summer.¹⁴ This rite of passage to merchanthood has even been dramatized in a local film production, *Song of a Balance Pole* (*Tenbin no uta*) (1988). Set in the province of Kyōngju in 1930s Korea, part 2 of the film, whose narrative pivots around postwar reminiscences of a fictional Ōmi-born entrepreneur, reenacts overseas peddling by Hasshō pupils, including the young narrator (fig. 14). Hawking miscellaneous Japanese wares to local villagers, their efforts eventually carry the day, but only after overcoming a series of obstacles: language barriers, hostility to the Japanese, and above all, the students' own cultural misunderstandings and ethnic prejudice. The overall message is to emphasize, as Ōmi merchants have done for generations, acceptance by locals as the key to trading with strangers, a lesson made plain by its colonial setting. The film is used widely for training new company recruits and vocational school students in western Japan.¹⁵

In more recent decades, Shiga people have launched renewed efforts to reclaim the history of Ōmi shōnin as their own. Since Japan plunged into prolonged stagnation in the 1990s, prefectural officials and businessmen alike have trained their attention on Ōmi merchants to reevaluate their legacies and draw lessons for local

renewal in the twenty-first century. And through countless forums convened to this end, their teachings have been all but distilled into the single concept of *sanpō yoshi*, or “three-way satisfaction.” Coined by the scholar Ogura Eiichirō, this credo of balancing the interests and needs of seller, buyer, and society has taken a life of its own. In popular histories of Ōmi merchants intended primarily for businessmen, *sanpō yoshi* is identified not only as a prescription to counter Japan’s economic decline but as an indigenous precursor of the concept of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility)—an ethical alternative to the unbridled pursuit of profit driving global capitalism.¹⁶ Its ubiquity in the media and business literature suggests the term has already taken root in Japan’s corporate society and beyond.

Local boosters in Shiga, meanwhile, have come together to launch an ambitious campaign to “spread the spirit of *sanpō yoshi* worldwide.” A diverse coalition of officials, scholars, corporations, and non-profit organizations¹⁷ have rallied to rebrand their native place around this concept—a mission also advanced through a global network of prefectural associations.¹⁸ Underlying their movement is a desire to preserve the triumphalist narrative of Ōmi shōnin, unblemished by complicity with imperialism and war, as their regional heritage and identity. Among the self-appointed gatekeepers of memory, big corporations of Ōmi lineage have been particularly active in deploying this heritage as rooted cosmopolitans. As global capitalism has come under renewed attack, businesses around the world have seemed more eager than ever to pledge their commitment to ethical governance, aligning their corporate goals with broader movements for labor rights, the environment, racial justice, and social equality.¹⁹ The resonance with *sanpō yoshi* has not been lost on the various stakeholders in and outside Shiga. A global partner of the World Economic Forum, Itōchū has directly appropriated the concept as its corporate mission, leveraging the “signature stories”²⁰ of its founder to market itself as a stronghold of Ōmi merchant tradition. So have many other companies, with or without Ōmi descent, embracing what they take to be an indigenous version of ethical capitalism, putatively rooted in the deeds and maxims of provincial forefathers. Here again at work is a dynamic we have seen played out throughout the book: global flows of capital, labor, and commodities may have shrunk and collapsed space, but they have by no means undermined the centrality of place. The process of inventing tradition goes on, finding its application in our ever-globalizing world.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. With the exception of a recent translation of Suenaga Kunitoshi's popular book (2004; 2019), no scholarly monograph exists in English.
2. Wigen 1995. A focus on Ōmi shifts our attention from well-studied farmers and regions like Shinano-Nagano (Esenbel 2003, 44–45) to previously neglected areas and actors of transnational influence discussed in this book.
3. Massey (1994) 2001, 146–56.
4. Ōmi was also home to Amenomori Hōshū (1668–1755), a Confucian advisor to the Tsushima domain, which handled the Tokugawa shogunate's affairs related to the Korean embassy.
5. Representative works on local history published since the 1990s include Walthall 1998; Brown 1993; Wigen 2010; Howell 1995; Baxter 1995; Roberts 1998; Ravina 1999; Pratt 1999; Lewis 2000; Walker 2001; Hanes 2002; K. Smith 2003; Platt 2004; Dusingberre 2012; Young 2013; Partner 2018.
6. Applegate 1999, 1175.
7. For the example of Shinano, see Wigen 1995.
8. Inoue M. 1890; Hirase 1911, 29.
9. Hikone Kōshō was a precursor of the Department of Economics at Shiga University (1949). The university's Institute for Economic and Business Research, which grew out of Hikone Kōshō's research division (created in 1923), has continued the study of Ōmi merchants for nearly a century to date. Arima 2010a, 143. See also chapter 4.
10. The works of Egashira (1959 and 1965a) are “regarded as the bible among studies on Ōmi merchants.” Uemura 2000, 5; Ogura 1962. Also significant was the research of Miyamoto Mataji (1941 and 1948), who joined the Hikone Kōshō faculty in 1939.
11. One should note that what came to be known as zaibatsu did not all begin as political merchants—for instance, Sumitomo, the only zaibatsu based in Kansai, “never became

involved in the purchase of state enterprises.” Morikawa 1992, 3; Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 32. Nor did all political merchants, many already established in Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka, survive the chaotic years of Meiji to become zaibatsu.

12. Iwasaki Hiroyuki, “Seishō,” *Kokushi daijiten*, JapanKnowledge (<https://japanknowledge.com>); Wray 1984, 5. Save for the Mitsui and Sumitomo families, which originated in the Tokugawa era, the majority of zaibatsu were created in the Meiji era.

13. Flath 2014, 49.

14. Flath 2014, 50–51; Morikawa 1992, 27.

15. Farnie and Abe 2000, 122.

16. Farnie and Abe 2000; also see M. Tanimoto 2006; and Nakamura Naofumi 2015.

17. According to Kanno Watarō (1935, 110), Ōmi merchants handled the majority of the sale of cotton yarn and cloth produced by Japanese spinning companies at the time.

18. The majority of firms founded and supported by the state declined in the 1890s, while those launched by private capital (such as Osaka Spinning) quickly came to dominate Japan’s cotton-spinning industry. Fletcher 1996, 55–56.

19. Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 235.

20. Farnie and Abe 2000, 120. Long after Kozo Yamamura (1969) pointed out this lacuna in scholarship on Japan, several recent works have breathed new life into the genre of economic and business history, including Metzler 2006; Partner 2018; and T. M. Young 2021. Joining these scholars, my research also supplements the rich and important literature on the textile industry and its young female workers (see especially P. Tsurumi 1990; Faison 2007), many of whom labored at mills founded and fueled by merchant capital of Osaka and Ōmi.

21. Sakudō 1997, 180–82; Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 14; Fletcher 1996, 75.

22. Mitsui and Mitsubishi proved particularly adept at forming alliances with both bureaucrats and political parties (widely perceived as “pawns” of zaibatsu interests by the late 1920s), and their political clout penetrated central organs of the state, including the army and the navy. Flath 2014, 49; “Zaibatsu,” *Encyclopedia of Japan*, JapanKnowledge.

23. Beckert 2014a, 404.

24. Beckert 2014b, 326.

25. Suenaga 1997, 5–16 (a roster of these families is extensive: founders of general trading companies [*sōgō shōsha*] such as Itōchū and Marubeni, textile giants such as Tōyōbō and Nishinbō, and manufacturing concerns such as Nishikawa Sangyō). Suenaga Kunitoshi’s pathbreaking work was followed by case studies on Ōmi-lineage firms, such as Chōgin, conducted by a new generation of scholars based in the Economics Department of Shiga University (including Hayashi Reiko, Seoka Makoto, and Uemura Masahiro).

26. For example, see Suenaga 1995 and 2010b, and Seoka 1992a and 1992b. Biographies of these new “Ōmi shōnin” are found in several rosters of important people in Shiga Prefecture—namely, Komai 1923; Okamoto 1935; and Shiga Hinode Shinbunsha Seijibu 1954.

27. This renewed focus on the state since the 1980s is emphasized as “the most important contribution” in the new history of American capitalism (Beckert 2014b, 322).

28. For an insightful discussion of the scholarly debates over the notion of diaspora and its usefulness as an analytical tool for studying the people of Chinese or Japanese descent overseas, see McKeown 1999, 308–13; Arakaki 2002, 26–43; and N. Adachi 2006 (which productively applies the concept to the study of Japanese immigrants and their descendants [*Nikkei*] in America). Among the various interlocutors in this ever-widening

debate on the use and definition of diaspora, I particularly follow the work of Adam McKeown in using the concept “adjectivally” to emphasize not social displacement but dispersion—not so much “indissoluble” identities shaped in exile as “dispersed connections, institutions, and discourses” (McKeown 1999, 311) that stemmed from a claim to a shared regional identity.

29. To be sure, early modern Japanese, from daimyo on their *sankin kōtai* duties down to commoners on pilgrimage and travel, were quite mobile, as administrative barriers to mobility and circulation were not impermeable or always rigidly enforced (see Vaporis 1994). In this context, merchants from Ōmi (and other specialized commercial groups in cities such as Osaka and Nagasaki) may be considered among the most mobile of early modern Japanese. Nevertheless, for most Japanese before the Meiji era, their domain or province constituted their central universe, or “nation” (*kuni*) in early modern parlance (Roberts 1998); this was especially true for residents in “all land-locked basins of Japan” (Wigen 1995, 272).

30. For an insightful discussion of how mobility as well as absence shaped the Hadrami diaspora across the Indian Ocean, see Ho 2007, ch. 1.

31. Ravina 1999, 27–30.

32. “Shin jinkokki,” *Asahi shinbun*, July 20, 1964; “Nihon keiei kikō,” *Asahi shinbun*, August 24, 1973.

33. Egashira 1959, 226, 234; Egashira 1965a, 18; Kawata 1915, 69; Uyamuya 1908, 114–15; “Zaibatsu chōkan (18) Kansai ni yūhi suru Gōshū-kei,” *Ōsaka Mainichi shinbun*, March 20, 1923; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 295–96; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun 1930, 3; Ōya 1959, 279–83 (which dubs Shiga Prefecture “the head temple of Judaism”).

34. Chirot and Reid 1997, 3, 33.

35. Egashira 1937, 275.

36. Here Abner Cohen’s celebrated formulation of “trade diaspora” in his study of the West African Hausa merchant communities (1971, 267) as “a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed communities” comes to mind, as does Philip D. Curtin’s study (1984) that further developed and applied this concept to a range of merchant communities across the preindustrial world. Since their publication, scholars such as Robin Cohen (1997) have adopted and refined their formulation, while many others have critiqued the concept of trade diaspora and its applicability to divergent communities and contexts (Ma 2003, 5). My intention in adopting a diasporic perspective here is not to engage in this theoretical debate over the category of diaspora itself (as an alternative to “network” or “migration”). Rather, as I elaborate below, I apply the term heuristically for understanding Ōmi merchants as a migratory community in global context, beyond the confines of local and nation-centered history and across the early modern–modern divide. By partially salvaging *diaspora*’s Greek etymology in colonization and migration, recent works cited in this Introduction treat diasporas as not simply isolated or victimized groups, but broadly as cultural spaces and networks of people (or “bilateral organisms” [Kuhn 2006, 163, 168]) shaped as much by settlement in foreign societies as by sustained attachment to the homeland.

37. For the purposes of comparison, the following chapters refer to specific merchants and “diasporic Chinese” as appropriate, keeping in mind that the category consists of multiple provincial diasporas.

38. On the Canton junk trade to Southeast Asia, see Van Dyke 2005, ch. 8. The majority of Chinese migrants in pre-1945 colonial Southeast Asia are best described as sojourners

(rather than settlers) who worked abroad with the intention of returning home. Wang G. 2001, 9.

39. Qiao 2017, ch. 2; Miles 2020, 54. See also chapter 1.

40. R. Cohen 2008, 2–4. Neither religious nor racial others, Ōmi merchants were not viciously persecuted as a closed group of “parasites” who threatened the host community—at least until the Japanese began to migrate and settle in North America. See chapter 7.

41. Kuhn 2008, 4, 46. Spawned by a “long-practiced strategy of exporting labor and remitting money back home,” this corridor, or “*a system of labor distribution*,” constituted a cultural space through which migrants, along with money and information, flowed between native place and lands of sojourn, internal or external.

42. Ma 2003, 36.

43. In deploying the notion of diaspora, my aim is not to simply fit the case of Ōmi merchants into the “trade diaspora” paradigm offered by Curtin (1984) and rigorously critiqued by scholars such as Sebouh Aslanian (2011, 11–12), who particularly takes issue with Curtin’s treatment of Armenian merchants as “apolitical” and “stateless” actors. Treating trade diaspora as at best a heuristic category that needs analytical illustration, I employ trade diaspora as a useful comparator for examining Ōmi merchants in relation to other trading communities of the early modern world, without exaggerating their particularities or peculiarity.

44. See McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005.

45. Toby 2001, 197–237; in an ongoing debate his work has sparked, the notion of a unified Tokugawa polity is challenged by Luke Roberts (1998), Mark Ravina (1999), and Robert Hellyer (2009), who emphasize the autonomy of distant and outlying domains. Also see Berry 1997, 547–81; Berry 2006, Conclusion; Yonemoto 2003.

46. See Ravina 1999 for the concept of Tokugawa Japan as a “compound state.”

47. Here I borrow the phrase from Applegate 1990, quoted in Wigen 1998, 242.

48. See for instance, Namikata 1997; Sugiyama and Grove 2001; and Araragi 2008.

49. In the case of Nan’yō, farm immigrants from Okinawa and Tōhoku “consistently furnished the greatest number of immigrants after 1920.” Peattie 1984, 196.

50. Duus 1995, 314–16.

51. L. Young 1998, 328–33. For a micro-study of farm migration from Nagano to Manchuria, see Iida-shi Rekishi Kenkyūjo 2007. For their oral histories after repatriation, see Tamanoi 2009, chs. 2–3.

52. Nakasone 2002. Okinawa presents a slightly different case from other regions as a colonial periphery annexed by Meiji Japan, but it too served as an important outpost of commercial and labor migration to Taiwan and Southeast Asia. For the early history of Ryūkyū and its interactions with the regional hegemon, Japan and China, from “the vantage point of Shuri (capital),” see Smits 1999.

53. Lewis 2000, 191, 234.

54. On Marifu Village, see Kimura K. 1989; on labor migration from Yamaguchi to Hawai’i, see Dresner 2001; on Kaminoseki Village, see Dusingberre 2012.

55. On the Japanese diaspora in Latin America, see N. Adachi 2006.

56. McKeown 1999, 312; also McKeown 2001, 12, 17. Robin Cohen (1997) has pioneered in broadening the application of diaspora to these transnational processes, though he still uses the Jewish experience as the prototype, treating each variation as an essentialized cultural entity. Following McKeown (1999) and Miles (2020), I trace the evolution of transregional

movements, networks, and institutions of Ōmi people, rather than treating them as discrete or bounded diasporas, while noting their internal diversity. For a Japanese-language anthology that explores various forms of overseas migration by the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans in terms of “diasporas in East Asia,” see Chen and Kobayashi 2011.

57. Miles 2020, 12. This definition is offered as a way to address earlier critics of the concept in Chinese studies. Building on the work of Kuhn and McKeown, Miles argues for examining both internal and external migration within the single analytical framework of a “diaspora” by finding parallels and connections between them. This study of Ōmi merchants is similarly concerned with showing how their trading strategies and family practices endured and evolved from the early modern period of “internal migration” into the modern era of global migration.

58. See chapter 4. In the case of China, Miles (2020, 36) speaks of multiple early modern trade diasporas—including Hokkien, Cantonese, Huizhou, and Shanxi—which emerged and endured among specific communities as “cultures of migration” into the modern period.

59. Miles 2020, 60–61. For a systematic comparison of merchants of Shanxi and Ōmi, see Lang 2017.

60. See McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005 (xx, 147–349), which calls into question the thesis of Philip D. Curtin (1984, 230–45), who attributed the demise of trade diasporas to the global spread of Western capitalism. Essays in this 2005 volume demonstrate their continued relevance especially in the service sectors of trade, shipping, and finance, with many involved in the production of textiles.

61. Aslanian 2011, 224–25, 231–32.

62. For the case of diasporic Chinese in Southeast Asia, see Chung 2005, 287–311.

63. Amino Yoshihiko (1928–2004) reconceptualized Japanese villagers on the periphery of the early Japanese archipelago as “coastal people” (*kaimin*) rather than sedentary rice-growing farmers. See, for instance, Amino 1994.

64. Esenbel 2003, 46. Major English-language works include Toby 1984; Smits 1999; Howell 1995; Kalland 1995; Hellyer 2009; Arch 2017; Rüegg 2021. On Hideyoshi’s abortive invasion of the Korean peninsula, see Elisonas 1991; and Walker 2001, 31–35.

65. See Howell 1995; and Wigen 1995. Rejecting the teleological approach to “conceptualizing protoindustrial places as incubators for more ‘advanced’ types of industry,” both works demonstrate how these places became “regions of a fundamentally new kind” (Wigen 1995, 295) and charted divergent paths under a modern regime of accumulation. They offer among the best models for writing a regional economic history of global significance, but my focus lies on regional *actors* rather than regions in tracing economic change across the Tokugawa-Meiji divide.

66. Howell 1995; and Walker 2001. For a pioneering study of the colonization of Ainu in Japanese, see Takakura 1942.

67. Wigen 2010, 8, 125; specifically, she discusses how the modern Japanese state was grafted onto a classical map of *kuni*, the administrative units created in the eighth century (9–14) and how modernization/centralization entailed “a rescaling of the country’s social and political life” (8). The same point has been made by historians of Europe concerned with regionalism (see, for instance, Applegate 1999). In studies on globalization, the concept of rescaling is typically used by geographers to explain scalar shifts in territorial units

of governance (such as cities and states) that have accompanied the expansion of global capitalism since the 1970s (see Brenner 1999, 431–51; Sheppard 2002, 313–15). For the present study, which is concerned less with “multiple spatialities” of state power (Kowalski 2012, 309) than the “spatial multiplicity” of regional “actors’ lives and experiences” (Struck, Ferris, and Revel 2011, 577), I find more useful Doreen Massey’s conceptualization of the economy as having a spatial form, a geography of economic and “social relations of production” “stretched over space,” which becomes more complex with the spread of capitalism ([1994] 2001, 22, 87). Following this definition, *rescaling* in this book broadly refers to a stretching horizontally across spaces and vertically across scales of individual lives, economic activities, social relations, and cultural values, which are rooted in Ōmi but themselves are re-created through each of these spatio-scalar shifts.

68. Massey (1994) 2001, 320.

69. The proverb implied that Ōmi merchants were canny and predatory, while their Ise competitors held the purse strings too tightly. It reflected the mixture of jealousy and contempt that the Tokugawa society harbored toward Ōmi merchants. Kita 1925, 30–36. The term *Ōmi shōnin* has become almost a proper noun today. Ōya 1959, 285.

70. But the term *Gōshū shōnin* appears to have existed before Meiji, according to Egashira 1965a, 1. For example, it appears in an order issued in 1502 by a lord of Echizen Province to boatmen in Tsuruga (*Dōnokawa monjo*), cited in Shiga-ken, vol. 5 (1928c), 310.

71. Fujitani 1996, 223.

72. For the role of genealogy in the creation of a diasporic identity, see Ho 2007.

73. I see this exercise as analogous to the ongoing work of “provincializing Europe.” Chakrabarty 2000.

74. Aslanian 2011. Another model for writing “a global history on a small scale” is the study of Sephardic traders by Francesca Trivellato (2009).

75. Aslanian 2013, 1468 (and 1455n66). Also see Struck, Ferris, and Revel 2011, 573–84.

76. Lewis 2000, 191; Wigen 1998. Also see Goodman 1995. These scholars have shown that regional attachments could facilitate as much as complicate national integration, without discounting tensions that also existed within and between regions.

77. Dusinberre 2012 (on Kaminoseki, Yamaguchi); and Phipps 2015 (on Moji, Fukuoka). While Louise Young in her study of Manchukuo (1998) has shown how empire-building bound the Japanese as a nation, these scholars have emphasized the way it shaped the local dynamics of place-making or brought out regional disparities.

78. Lewis 2000, ch. 5 (on Toyama); Laffey 1975, 8–23. In highlighting the role of the Lyon Chamber of Commerce in French colonial expansion, his essay also illuminates “the continuities and discontinuities in an imperial tradition reaching back from the nineteenth century to the *ancien régime* and the ties of specific cities with particular areas overseas.” Laffey 1975, 8. For a discussion of how the historical identity of Venice as a maritime power was revived as a model of imperial expansion by the newly unified Italy during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Laven and Damien 2015, 511–52.

79. Wigen 1995; Kawanishi, Namikawa, and Steel 2005.

80. For an “outside-in approach” to examining how inter-Asian connections over time and space brought societies and cultures into being, see Ho 2017, 907–28.

81. For an insightful study that provides “a portfolio of methods to study the productive friction of global connections,” see Tsing 2005.

82. McKeown 2001, 5. For an insightful discussion of the “translocal,” see Dirlik 2005.
83. Although “transpacific history” has yet to cohere as a disciplinary field, innovative efforts have been launched in this direction by the work of Matt K. Matsuda (2012) and Lon Kurashige, Madeline Y. Hsu, and Yujin Yaguchi (2014) and other authors in *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 2, special issue: Conversations on Transpacific History (May 2014).
84. Azuma 2005, 2019; Fujitani 2011; Iijima 2018, 2019.
85. For a recent study that proposes “racial capitalism” as a new analytic, see Jenkins and Leroy 2021.
86. Arakaki 2002, 37. Adopting “an international perspective on the study of Japanese transnational migrants and Nikkei” in places ranging from Manchuria and the Philippines to Canada and Latin America, Nobuko Adachi (2006, 7) divides the Japanese diaspora into six subtypes: “*incipient, displaced, model or positive minority, Okinawan, Nikkei, and long-term and permanent-resident diaspora*” (italics in original). An Ōmi diaspora might be classified as another subtype, one that grew out of an early modern trading diaspora and is defined by sub-national attachment to native place.
87. See chapter 3.
88. Howell 1995, 14.
89. On the formation of a Japanese national identity through encounter with the Ainu in the Tokugawa period, see Howell 1994; and Walker 1999. Also see Toby 2019.
90. Even Kanno Watarō, who argued that the power of Ōmi merchants declined after Tokugawa, made an exception for the textile industry. Kanno 1930a, 10–11.

1. THE RISE OF ŌMI SHŌNIN AS DIASPORIC TRADERS

1. Hirase 1911, 11–12.
2. Egashira 1959, 213–14; Harada and Watanabe 1972, 74, 117.
3. Kanno 1928, 81–90.
4. Miura 1922, 418–19, 437.
5. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 798.
6. The most prominent was Onono Imoko (Harada and Watanabe 1972, 28–29, 32–33).
7. Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, 164.
8. Kim 2020, 34–36, 40.
9. They are chronicled in documents discovered at Hiyoshi Shrine (Hiyoshi Monjo Kankōkai 1975, especially 50–159; Nakamura Ken 1981, especially 98, 102–4, 113–17, 131–37, 139–40, 308–9, 392–94).
10. Toyoda 1969, 38. On Nobunaga’s policy, see Sheldon 1973, 7, 32.
11. Kuze 1752, 2. In subsequent years, merchants from Hino continued to trail their former lord to his new posts in the northeastern provinces. Shiga-ken 1928a, 625, 631; *Ujisatoki* 1696, 210.
12. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 802–3.
13. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 801, 791, 798–802.
14. Suenaga 2004, 24.
15. Hanley and Yamamura 1977, ch. 5.
16. Harada and Watanabe 1972, 179–87.
17. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 801, 808.

18. Quoted in T. C. Smith 1988, 204–519.
19. Miles 2020, 53, 71.
20. For the majority of peasants, temporary intra-domain migration (to another village or a nearby city) was far more common than inter-domain migration of a permanent nature. Hanley and Yamamura 1977, 177, 218, 253.
21. Shiga Kenshi Hensan linkai 1980, 803.
22. Wigen 1995, 272.
23. Roberts 1998; and Ravina 1999. But also see Toby 2001, which challenges their argument about domainal autonomy vis-à-vis the Tokugawa shogunate.
24. Fujita 1992, 26–27.
25. Kimura Yoshihiro 1987, 226–27. On the directives issued to local magistrates by the Hikone domain in 1756–57, see Gokashō Chōshi Hensan linkai 1992b, 245–50; Ōhashi Kinzō 1928, vol. 1, 578–80.
26. Shiga Kenshi Hensan linkai 1980, 803.
27. Yasuoka 1959, 142–45.
28. Wigen 2010, 58, 92.
29. Egashira 1959, 234.
30. Uemura 2000, 640–41. Ōmi merchants were technically classified as “peasants” and engaged in outside commerce as “a sideline.”
31. Mitani Hiroshi, quoted in Toby 2001, 202. At the same time, a sense of regional distinction could deepen through the process of inter-domainal exchange. This is demonstrated by merchants who gathered at Edo and developed the rhetoric of *kokueki* (national prosperity) to refer to their local domain or province, not to the entire realm of what constituted “Japan” before 1868. Roberts 1998.
32. Vaporis 1994, especially ch. 6.
33. Berry 2006, 222.
34. Du 2015, 16–18, 59.
35. Crawcour 1989, 584–85.
36. Crawcour 1989, 590; Flershem 1966, 201.
37. Quoted in Egashira 1965a, 2.
38. T. C. Smith 1959, 74–75.
39. T. C. Smith 1959, 76; Hanley and Yamamura 1977, 218.
40. Fujita 1992, 20–23.
41. I draw this concept from Steven B. Miles’s study to refer to specific and “sustained migrant streams” from eastern Ōmi. His work highlights linkages and parallels between “internal” and “external” migration from the early modern period into the age of mass Chinese migration, instead of assuming their analytical distinction (in the patterns of sojourning and settlement, family strategies, and diasporic institutions). Miles 2020, 11.
42. In addition, a distinct group of merchants emerged from the Takashima district on the western shore of Lake Biwa. Many of them migrated to and settled permanently in Morioka in Tōhoku. The most notable example is Ono-gumi of the Ono family; see Enami, vol. 1, 1989, 72–88.
43. The production of mosquito nets flourished from the early seventeenth century. For more details on “Hachiman kaya,” see Ōmi Mafushi Hensan linkai 1975, 111–29.
44. Shiga-ken Gamō-gun Hachiman-chō 1940, 280, 553–54; Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 911–13. For a detailed analysis of the business strategy of the Nishikawa Jingorō family, see Sakudō 1997, 107–29.

45. Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 904; Shiga-ken Gamō-gun Hachiman-chō 1940, 559–60. Ban Denbē I (dates unknown) was another Hachiman merchant who opened a shop in Nihonbashi (Gamō-gun [Shiga-ken] 1922, vol. 5, 741, 745–46, 899–902).
46. Ōmi Mafushi Hensan linkai 1975, 100–105.
47. Ihara's *Oridome honchō chōnin kagami* quoted in Egashira 1965a, 26.
48. Reprinted in Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 746–47.
49. "Suminokura bune," in Ōhashi Kinzō 1928, vol. 1, 1103–7; "Sakai-kō to Ōmi shōnin," in Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 711–15.
50. Kawashima Motojirō 1916, 145–55; Nihon Kaiji Shinkōkai 1942, 47–49.
51. Nishimura sailed to Vietnam on a ship owned by Suminokura Ryōi (a powerful merchant in Kyōto whose family traced its roots to Ōmi) and subsequently settled in Cochin. We know less about his diasporic life than about his attempted journey back home: after two decades of commerce in Cochin, in 1647 Nishimura sailed with all his assets back to Japan, only to be denied entry at the port of Nagasaki on the grounds of seclusion policy. So he left a record of his journey on a votive tablet, to be enshrined at his village shrine in Hachiman, and sailed back to Vietnam. Shiga-ken Gamō-gun Hachiman-chō 1940, 476–86; Gokashō Chōshi Hensan linkai 1992a, 650–52.
52. Shiga-ken Gamō-gun Hachiman-chō 1940, 475–89.
53. Miles 2020, 32; Chang 2012, 8; Wray 2005.
54. For a study of the rise of Hino merchants, see Makino 1928, 464–85.
55. The epithet means that once they accumulated a thousand *ryō*, Hino merchants would open a new shop however small (in contrast with Hachiman merchants, who tended to set up big stores in big cities).
56. Egashira 1959, 72–74; Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 883.
57. Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 358–69.
58. Miles 2020, 72.
59. Kanno 1929, 8; Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 784, 881–97, 915, 926–27; Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 588–92, 685. Takai Sakuemon (1699–1759) and Yao Kihē (1711–1784) were among the most successful.
60. Kōda 2018, 12–13. See T. M. Young 2021, 107–8, on the case of Hoshi Pharmaceuticals.
61. Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 720; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 299 (in the 1920s, Hino annually sold patent medicine worth as much as four million yen, with its marketing network extending to North America, Hawai'i, British India, and "everywhere the Japanese live" [333–34]).
62. These peddlers from Toyama similarly operated across the archipelago, but they emerged much later than Ōmi merchants, handled only a single commodity, and developed under direct protection and control of the domain. Yoshida Tōgo 1914, 441.
63. Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 496–500; Egashira 1959, 73–74; Kimura Yoshihiro 1987, 230.
64. Suenaga 2000, 5.
65. Ōhashi Kinzō 1928, vol. 1, 1113–39, 1160–77; Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 200–304.
66. Matsui 1922, 2–3.
67. Ōhashi Kinzō 1928, vol. 2, 458; Suenaga 1997, 43–47.
68. Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 548–551. For more details on Kobayashi Ginemon and Chōgin, see Suenaga 1997, 21–36; Chōginshi Kenkyūkai 1984.
69. Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 200–11.

70. Torrance 2012, 38–39, 44–45, 50, 68.
71. Shirokiya 1957, 9–16, 76–78. On the management of Shirokiya in the Tokugawa period, see Hayashi and Tanimoto 2001.
72. This concept is borrowed from Curtin 1984, 28, 92; also see Tanioka 1964.
73. Kim 2020, 40. Also see Schottenhammer 2013, 109–44.
74. The following discussion draws and expands on an overview of Ōmi merchants' business methods and maxims in Suenaga 2000 and Suenaga 2004.
75. Suenaga 2004, 107–8; Miller 2003.
76. Employing methods of historical ethnography, the economist Nakagome Masaki argues that Ōmi merchants stressed “knowledge drawn from the bodily experience and practice” of peddling on foot, rather than abstract concepts codified in family creeds. Nakagome 2017, 22–23, 25, 31.
77. Suenaga 2004, 24.
78. Seoka 1989b, 185–86.
79. Egashira 1937, 275.
80. In his study of globalization, Neil Brenner (1999, 435) observes that the creation of state infrastructures has remained central to the process of accumulation in capitalism's long trajectory, but over time the scale on which this “territorialization of capital” occurs transcends the existing units and boundaries of state territoriality. Conceptualizing the economy and the state as “socio-spatial networks of power,” Kären Wigen (1995, 15, 94, 268) similarly shows how a conflict between the two drove the early industrial transformation of Tokugawa Japan.
81. Wigen 1995, 94–96; Curtin 1984. Also see the Introduction for my usage of *diaspora*.
82. Ho 2007, 30. Although by *local*, Ho refers to the diasporic societies (rather than the homeland Hadramawt) where the Hadrami sayyids settled and made their home, his broad definition of local cosmopolitans as “persons who, while embedded in local relations, also maintain connections with distant places” applies well to Ōmi merchants. It captures the way they remained anchored in their ancestral home even as they were economically integrated into host societies, with each branch becoming a point of origin for future expansion.
83. Du 2015, chs. 2–3.
84. A “proverb” in Ōmi, quoted in Arima 2010b, 120.
85. Egashira 1965b, 12–13.
86. Egashira 1965b, 36–42, 816–21.
87. Wigen 1999, 1189.
88. Miles 2020, 38–39, 115.
89. Aslanian 2011, 13–15, 199, also ch. 9.
90. Suenaga 2004, 11.
91. Egashira 1959, 85; Suenaga 2004, 104.
92. Quoted in Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 5, 746–47.
93. Levy 2006, 308, also 314, 324.
94. Here I also draw insights from Henderson 1999, 52–76.
95. Sheldon 1973, 73–74; Kanno 1930c, 22–23.
96. Braudel 1982, 416, quoted in Hein 2020, 739.
97. Ogura 1988, 92.
98. Trivellato 2009. See also Greif 2006, “Introduction.”

99. Egashira 1965a, 154–64. This was particularly important as no centralized credit institutions existed outside of Osaka and Edo. Hanley and Yamamura 1977, 80.
100. Ogura 1991, 66, 75–79.
101. See Egashira 1965b; and Ogura 1962. Nakai's example is part of a larger development in Kansai. Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 18. For a similar system of bookkeeping developed by merchant-bankers of Shanxi, see L. Wang 2021, 32.
102. See the 1766 contract quoted and explained in Egashira 1965b, 39–42.
103. Hasegawa H. 2007, 44–46.
104. Shiga Kenshi Hensan linkai 1980, 828.
105. Qiao 2017, chs. 4–5, and 335–36 (their horizontal ties of trust around *she* contrasted with the institutional basis of merchants from Huizhou or the coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong, who organized themselves around lineages [patriarchal kinship ties]).
106. For a study of the traditional cooperative, *kō*, see Najita 2009, especially ch. 3.
107. Suenaga 2004, 123.
108. Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 395–415.
109. Aslanian 2011, 6, 13–14, also ch. 5; Trivellato 2009; Miles 2020, 82. Business correspondence included accounts kept by branches, which were integrated into the annual settlement of accounts managed by the stem family in Ōmi. Egashira 1965b, 39, 55.
110. Egashira 1959, 92–93.
111. Buyō Inshi 2001, 205.
112. Aslanian 2011, 220–23.
113. Nagata 2005, 25–28.
114. For an explanation of different types of *hōkōnin* and their duties, see Leupp 1994, 41–64. For the case of one draper in Kyoto (Naraya) and its system of apprenticeship, see Sakurai 2011, 115–34.
115. A similar system of managing *hōkōnin* was followed by Ise merchants. Uemura 2000, 589–92. For the case of Hino merchants, see “Ōmi shōnin to decchi seido,” in Inoue Teizō 1937, 104–6.
116. Uemura 1992, 61–62.
117. Each branch store was managed entirely by men who did all the cooking and other chores (except for sewing and laundry, usually entrusted to a local elderly woman). According to Inoue Teizō (1937, 104–5), the absence of women was unique to Ōmi merchant stores. But the clothier Naraya in Kyoto and its branches in eastern Japan, studied by Sakurai Yuki (2011), similarly constituted “androcentric space,” with many clerks from Ōmi in its employ.
118. Suenaga 2000, 50. Kunimitsu Shirō's novel (1977) also offers a realistic portrayal of a young merchant from Ōmi, frequenting brothels during his years of apprenticeship.
119. Sakurai 2011, 116, 133.
120. Suenaga 2000, 227–28.
121. This was also how Kaiho Seiryō and other Tokugawa writers on commerce rendered loss in relation to the moral concept of the “mean” (*chū*). Najita 2009, 48, 56–57.
122. Suenaga 2004, 43–44, 97.
123. Egashira 1965a, 173.
124. Suenaga 2004, 126–27; Takagi 2021, 266–67.
125. Miles 2020, 44–45.
126. Ogura 1988, 116–18.

127. Seoka 1989b, 185, 188.
128. Sheldon 1973, 70; Crawcour 1989, 590–91.
129. Sheldon 1973, 99. Conservatism exemplified by Ōmi merchants by no means meant that Tokugawa merchants remained politically inert, as Tetsuo Najita reminds us (1987, 6). Luke Roberts (1998) demonstrates further that political participation extended beyond the samurai class to commoners in the Tosa domain through the creation of a “petition box.” In response to the failure of government in solving economic crises, commoners developed an alternative vision of their domain as an “economic country” where merchants, rather than samurai rulers, played a central role in serving the “public interest” (1998, especially chs. 5 and 6).
130. See Aslanian’s critique of Curtin on this point (2011, 11–12).
131. Qiao 2017, 21, 268–71; Lang 2017, 75; Miles 2020, 49–50; L. Wang 2021, 28–32.
132. Egashira 1965b, 349–528.
133. For a detailed study of family creeds and store regulations, see Sakudō Yōtarō et al. 1977, 210–57.
134. Vaporis 1989, 464, 467, 478.
135. Egashira 1937, 279–80; Suenaga 2000, 218–20.
136. Reprinted in Ōhashi Kinzō 1928, vol. 1, 1177–78; Suenaga 2000, 214.
137. Furukawa Tetsujirō 1937, 29. The Buddhist idea resonated with the concept of *keiseisaimin* (ordering to save the people) as theorized by Dazai Shundai (1680–1747), who stressed the importance of trade as an alternative mode to agriculture of producing and spreading wealth. Najita 1987, 56–57.
138. Bellah 1957, 119–20; Naitō 1941, 283–85.
139. Ogura 1988, 54; Arima 2010a, 146.
140. “Ōmiya Nishikawa Shōten” in Kitamura 1912, 16.
141. On his work ethic and thrifty lifestyle, see Inoue Masatomo 1890, 275–78.
142. “Kokoroesho” (Ansei 3 [1856]), reprinted in Gokashō Chōshi Henshū Iinkai 1989, 49–51.
143. Suenaga 2010a, 59–60.
144. Ogura 1991, 26–28; Tanaka Shūsaku 1938, 125–33. For the case of the Nakai Genzaemon family, see Park 2014, 1–19.
145. Ramseyer 1979, 209–30; Du 2015, 85–87.
146. Ōmi Hachiman Shiritsu Shiryōkan 1990, frontispiece; Nishikawa Chōji 1980, frontispiece, 14.
147. Kawaguchi 2010, 48–49; Morris-Suzuki 1989, 24.
148. Najita 1987, 10, 15, 18, 35, 57, 60, 87, 93.
149. Serikawa 1985, 73–74.
150. Lang 2017, 75–77 (though Chinese merchants emphasized “filial piety” rather than “loyalty” to abstract authority as the Japanese did).
151. Du 2015, 75–77, 83–85.
152. See Bellah 1957, 122, 126, who draws on the work of Naitō 1941. Serikawa Hiromichi (1997) makes a similar comparison.
153. Amstutz 1998, 743n40.
154. From preface in Hirase 1911, 1.
155. Matsui 1922, 3–4.

156. “Kanemochi shōnin ichimai kishōmon,” reprinted in Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, vol. 2, 533. On the profit motive behind Nakai’s social work, see Park 2014, 6–13.
157. Tanaka Shūsaku 1938, 125–26. The Matsui Kyūzaemon family’s archive contains many letters of thanks from the Higashi Honganji and loan certificates. Tsujii 2016, 142–43.
158. Kubota 2014, 75.
159. Bellah 1957, 122, 124. The expression “clerks of the ancestors” was used in the family creed of Ban Kōkei, the famed scholar of National Learning. Sakudō et al. 1977, 227.
160. Drixler 2019, 68–108.
161. Morris-Suzuki 1991, 22–23.
162. Ramseyer 1979, 214–15.
163. Sheldon 1973, 139–41.
164. Uemura 2000, 9, 11.
165. Kanno 1929, 3; Shaku 1941, 284.
166. Kōda 2013, 31. In the case of Ishikawa Kakutarō (1825–95), his vision of Japan’s first modern company system took direct inspiration from Ōmi merchants by marrying their custom of *shokoku sanbutsu mawashi* with David Ricardo’s ideas of free trade and comparative costs. Hasegawa H. 2007, 2010.
167. For the case of Greek diaspora traders, see Harlaftis 2007, 237–68.
168. Kanno 1929, 2.
169. According to *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 17, 1890 (3), the majority of “wealthy merchant families” in Tokyo hailed from Ōmi.
170. Kanno 1929, 15. As an Ōmi merchant, Kosugi Motozō, noted in his diary in 1865, *goyōkin* (forced loans) paid by three big Ōmi storeowners in Edo—Kobayashi Ginemon, Matsui Kyūzaemon, and Tonomura Uhē—each amounted to 3,000 ryō, a sum indicative of their considerable status attained by that time. Satō Shigerō 1990, 82.
171. L. Wang 2021; Gotō 1939, 192–93; Hein 2020, 735–73.
172. Howell 1995.
173. Hirase 1911, 297; Enami, vol. 2, 1990, 128.
174. Wigen 1995, 294.
175. Miles 2020, 54.

2. AT THE NEXUS OF COLONIALISM AND CAPITALISM IN HOKKAIDO

1. The term *Ezo* was used by the Japanese before 1869 to refer commonly to the Ainu people but also loosely to the northern islands including Hokkaido, the Kuriles, and Sakhalin. In this chapter, I follow the practice of David Howell (1995, 191n2) in using *Hokkaido* rather than *Ezo* as a geographical term to refer to these islands, unless otherwise noted.
2. Tachikawa 1930, 144–45, 147.
3. David Harvey ([1989] 1992) has explained this acceleration of capital circulation or “space-time compression” as a recurring phenomenon in global history at least since the mid-nineteenth century.
4. See W. M. Tsutsui 2013, 21–38; Arch 2017.
5. Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 123–27, 263; Howell 1995, 25–26.
6. Takakura 1942, 62–64.

7. Just how profitable this system became can be gleaned from Sakakura Genjirō, *Hokkai zuihitsu* (1739), which reported that a total of fees collected from merchant vessels and the Ezochi trade amounted to roughly 3,200 ryō (reprinted in Ōtomo 1943, 83). By 1804 the income from the Ezochi trade alone reached 7,000 ryō. Takakura 1942, 65.

8. Takakura 1942, 51, 54; Iwasaki 1998, 234.

9. Walker 2001, 52, 71; Kaiho 1984, 304–5.

10. Howell 2005, 130.

11. Sakakura 1739; and Hezutsu 1784, 43, 326. The first Ōmi merchants to move to Matsumae were Takebe Shichirōemon (1615?–1691), Tatsuki Shinsuke (1581–1632), and Tatsuki Shinbē from Yanagawa and Okada Yazaemon and Nishikawa Denemon from Gamō district. Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 206–7; Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 133–35. According to the Takebe family's record, the flow of Ōmi people into Hokkaidō was spearheaded by Takebe and Tatsuki, who went on an inspective mission to Matsumae together. See *Takebe Motoshige no den*, n.d., 8; Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 3.

12. See two documents cited in Shirayama 1971, 135–38.

13. Letters reprinted in Hokkaidō-chō 1937, 115–16.

14. The samurai's complete dependence on merchants for daily life is documented in Ōhara (ca. 1797) 1944, 137.

15. Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 5.

16. “Ezochi goyō naimitsu tome” (October 1818) 1979, 46–48.

17. Tachikawa 1930, 138.

18. Having shuttled between Hachiman and Matsumae forty-odd times, Nishikawa Denemon II began the practice of placing a manager at the Matsumae store around 1701. Uemura 1985, 8, 79 (table 8); Komai 2014, 123.

19. Uemura 1985, 80–82. For a study of records of these “trips back to Hachiman” by the heads and employees of the Shibatani and the Nishikawa families, along with a list of souvenirs, see Katsura Hiroko 2017.

20. Uemura 1986, 80–82.

21. Although Matsumae was more lax than other domains in regulating flows of people, all transients (*tabibito*) were subjected to rigorous interrogations by the customs officials upon arrival and required to pay taxes on both entry and exit. Howell 1995, 59–60.

22. Itō Takahiro 2008, 39.

23. “Matsumae-han okinokuchi oyakusho kiteisho” (a collection of excerpted documents on taxes between 1690 and 1790) 1859, 78.

24. A memorandum in Wada 1798, 89.

25. Ibara Naoichi et al. ca. 1810, 22–25.

26. Hezutsu (1784) 1943, 326.

27. Howell 1995, 49, 87; “Yorozu eidai oboechō” of the Nishikawa family quoted in Emori 1997, 266.

28. Tabata 2011, 265–66.

29. Hezutsu (1784) 1943, 327.

30. Hezutsu (1784) 1943, 326.

31. *Ōsaka Konbu Nakagaishō Kumiai enkaku*, n.d., 71.

32. Hirase 1911, 79; Shiga-ken Gamō-gun Hachiman-chō 1940, 522.

33. Kanno 1930b, 766; Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 262; Hellyer 2009, 16, 55, 73, 88–90.

34. The partners included Takebe Shichirōemon, Hirata Yosaemon, Makibuchi Kanbē, Okada Yazaemon, Tatsuki Shinsuke, and Nishikawa Denemon. Kanno 1931, 23–25.

35. Nakanishi 2009, 61; Emori 1997, 283.
36. See Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 254–60.
37. Emori 1997, 317–18.
38. Hasegawa H. 2010, 101, 105–7.
39. Takakura 1942, 88–90; Walker 2001, 39.
40. Miura 1922, 435; Toyoda 1969, 89; Bolster 2012, 35, 337.
41. For a similar argument, see Kanno 1930b, 768–69.
42. Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 125.
43. Sakakura (1739) 1943, 45.
44. Tachikawa 1930, 148; Otaru-shi 1944, 49; Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 128.
45. Takakura 1942, 3–4, 53–55.
46. Hezutsu (1784) 1943, 338, 342.
47. See testimonies of Ainu in Kunashiri and Menashi, surveyed in the wake of the 1789 revolt, quoted in Takakura 1942, 104nn12–13.
48. Kimura Kenji (Shikyō) 1793, 36–37; lewallen 2016, 19–37.
49. Emori 1997, 380 (table 5 [1786]), 391 (table 7 [1857]); Ibara Naoichi et al. ca. 1810, 23–25.
50. “Ezochi ikken 3” (n.d.) 1969, 381–82; “Ezochi goyō naimitsu tome” (October 1818) 1979, 51.
51. “Ezochi goyō naimitsu tome” (October 1818) 1979, 48–50.
52. See table 1 in Emori 1997, 256; Tabata 1986, 59–60.
53. Emori 1997, 381, 384; Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 283.
54. “Ezochi goyō naimitsu tome” (October 1818) 1979, 45–52.
55. Kaiho 1984, 323–28; Nakanishi 2009, 62–63.
56. A case in point was the Nemuro basho, one of the largest trading posts in Hokkaido. A roster of contractors for the fifty-year period between 1799 and 1849 shows that, with the exception of 1815–32, the fishery remained under the successive management of three Ōmi merchants. Kimura, *Nemuro ukeoi nensūsho* (1799–1849). According to a record of tax payments in the eastern and western Ezochi, twenty-four of forty-four trading posts, or more than half the basho, were operated by Ōmi merchants in the era of Tenpō (1830–1844) (cited in Tachikawa 1930, 140–41). These documents amply testify that merchants from Ōmi stayed intact, as well as relevant, in a changing economy.
57. Itō Takahiro 2008, 37–38, 53, 93–94.
58. Hakodate-shi 1980, 500–501.
59. Family heads inherited the given names of the founders. For several generations, the name of the head of the Okada family was Yazaemon, but it changed to Yasoji later. Uemura 1986, 28 (table 1).
60. In the early eighteenth century, Okada became a contractor for Otarunai and later also for Furubira, Muroan, and Horobetsu, which remained under his control until 1865. Nishikawa was mostly in charge of two basho, Oshoro and Takashima, which he managed continuously until 1869.
61. Initially Sōya, Shari, Monbetsu and a few other fisheries were placed under the joint management of three merchant families, but Fujino alone took over their management from 1815 on. Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 6, 8; Shirayama 1971, 818–19.
62. Hakodate-shi 1980, 504–6; “Fujino Kihē moto Takadaya Kinbē ato ukeoi hikiuke ikken” 1843.
63. Takakura 1942, 70; Howell 1995, 39.

64. In the case of Nishikawa's Sumiyoshiya, its branch store in Fukuyama also ran a pawnshop and a money exchange on the side, using profits from the contract fisheries. Shirayama 1971, 145.

65. Uemura 1985, 81, 85.

66. Howell 1995, 38; Emori 1997, 257.

67. *Matsumae Ezoki* (1717) 1974, 382.

68. Tabata 2011, 277; Tachikawa 1930, 153.

69. Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 22–33, 71; and Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 710; *Ōsaka Konbu Nakagaishō*, n.d., 20.

70. This took place in the context of the emergence of *kitamaebune*—large commercial vessels that mainly navigated a westward circuit from Osaka to Shimonoseki to Matsumae and back to Osaka—which soon eclipsed *nidokobune* in the Japan Sea. Tabata 1986, 62; Emori 1997, 266–69.

71. “Yorozu eidai oboechō,” quoted in Tabata 1981, 38.

72. Uemura 1985, 92.

73. Nakanishi 2009, 56–57. Although Nishikawa's boats in this period plied mostly between the trading posts in his charge and Matsumae, they occasionally off-loaded catches from his fisheries at the port of Osaka and offered shipping service to other commercial cargo as well. Emori 1997, 268 (table 4), 271, 293; Nakanishi 2009, 69.

74. Nakanishi 2009, 83.

75. I draw this observation from Hasegawa H. 2010, 75.

76. Tabata 1983, 295.

77. Tabata 1983, 318–19.

78. “Tatsuki Shinsuke Kagetoyo,” in Itō Takahiro 2008, 34; Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 6.

79. Tabata 1983, 310–11.

80. See, for example, Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 13–15, 29, 42–43.

81. Hakodate-shi 1980, 507; Shirayama 1971, 142–44.

82. Howell 1995, 272. For a detailed explanation of the differences in fishing by *tateami* and by *sashiami*, see Hokusui Kyōkai 1935, 46–48.

83. Otaru-shi 1944, 57.

84. Nakanishi 2009, 70.

85. Fujino Shiten, (Nemuro) 1887, 71–72, 92–93.

86. The fish catches were largely herring. Tachikawa 1930, 149.

87. Howell 1995, 54.

88. Nakanishi 2009, 70.

89. Tabata 1983, 320; and Howell 1995, 47.

90. Despite his declaration (89–90), Howell's own fine-grained research points to a more nuanced way of approaching capitalism. Particularly instructive in this regard is the recent historiography of capitalism, which has moved away from the strictly Marxist definition of (free) wage labor as a prerequisite for capitalism (while restoring “the centrality of violence and coercion” to its history). See Beckert and Desan 2018, 11. For example, the global history of cotton shows how modern industrial capitalism was driven by a dynamic blend of technology, capital, and enslaved labor. Beckert 2014a.

91. Fedman 2020, 41.

92. Howell 1995, 45, 56, 107–9.

93. In the context of a declining population, “unfree Ainu labor” began to be supplanted by “free Wajin labor,” or a “seasonal proletariat of fishery workers” from northern Honshu,

which Howell (1995, 48, 51) argues was a key aspect of the capitalist transformation of fisheries.

94. *Anzai shōki* (1854), quoted in Otaru-shi 1944, 162.

95. In addition to fishing and processing catches, the Japanese workers were hired to meet short-term labor needs, such as receiving large vessels from the mainland, building and repairing sheds and warehouses, and manufacturing fishing implements. Hasegawa S. 1981, 70–77.

96. Howell 1995, 39.

97. Uemura, 1985, 83–85; Komai 2014, 166–69. The fishery manager extracted fees for labor brokerage and remunerated Ainu not with money but material goods like rice, salt, tobacco, and clothes.

98. Hasegawa S. 1981, 74.

99. Iwasaki 1998, 231–37.

100. At fisheries run by Ōmi merchant contractors, both resident Ainu and those hired from outside received a similar variety of material goods. Hasegawa S. 1981, 75. For the case of Fujino's fisheries, see Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 9; Fujino Shiten (Abashiri) 1886, "Nenchū dojin buikuhō atsukai, dojin yori kaiirehin daika narabini uriwatashihin kakaku (Meiji 5-nen hoka)," 49–68.

101. Coined as the basic principle of Ainu trade and governance, *kaihō* was used interchangeably with *buiku* ("to care for" Ainu) over time. Takakura 1942, 51; Walker 2001, 229. However, a record of trading posts observed that "contractors purport to manage trading posts in the name of Ainu's education, but in fact they engage exclusively in trade." *Tōi shūran* (1801), quoted in Otaru-shi 1944, 41.

102. Quoted in Kanno 1930b, 770.

103. For a list of instructions read to the Ainu in Etorofu, see Takakura 1942, 172–75; and in Fujino's basho, see Fujino-ke 1860, 6–7.

104. Kikuchi Isao 1991, 175–209 (on Nemuro), and 210–49 (Etorofu); and JapanKnowledge, s.v. "Omusha."

105. Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 5–7, 9.

106. Composed of dozens to hundreds of inhabitants, coastal *kotan* were often artificially created to supply Ainu labor to nearby contract fisheries. Howell 2005, 174; Takakura 1942, 27.

107. Ōmi Echigun Kyōikukai 1929, 222–26.

108. Matsuura Takeshirō, *Saikō Ezo nikki* (1846), quoted in Yūbetsu Chōshi Hensan linkai 1982, part 4 (gyōsei, senzen), ch. 1 (yōranki), n.p.

109. Fujino-ke 1860, 6; and Fujino-ke 1868, 3; Tajima 1995, 276.

110. Matsumoto A. 2014, 138n2.

111. On Ainu elders who served in the lower echelons of administration (*kaisho*) and official efforts to coopt them, see Iwasaki 1998, 121–36.

112. Under the direct bakufu rule from 1799, vaccinations became part of the Tokugawa strategy to incorporate the Ainu as "subjects" into the early modern state. Walker 1999, 126–29.

113. Matsumoto A. 2014, 125, 138–39n2, table 2, and the document "Shiryō f: yaku Ainu eno tōyō," reprinted on 131–33.

114. Matsumoto A. 2006, 67–75, 79.

115. Matsumae Chōshi Henshūshitsu 1988, 480–83; Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 73–77.

116. The text of the petition quoted in Komai 2014, 214.

117. Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 53–54.
118. Hakodate-shi 1980, 498–99.
119. “Ainu no kyōsei rōdō,” Yūbetsu Chōshi Hensan Iinkai 1982, part 4, ch. 1, n.p.
120. Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 8–9.
121. Matsuura (1858) 2002, 173.
122. See an opinion submitted by the Hakodate magistrate and his official to the bakufu elder, in Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 722–34; and “Hakodate bugyō Hori Oribe Toshihiro” (1854) 1915.
123. “Ainu dōka seisaku,” Yūbetsu Chōshi Hensan Iinkai 1982, part 4, ch. 1. A detailed proposal for Japanization of Ainu, submitted by the Hakodate magistrate and adopted in 1855, is reprinted in Tōkyō Teikoku Daigaku 1920, 120–27.
124. Hakodate bugyō [to basho contractors in the Ezochi] (April 1856) 1922.
125. Hakodate bugyō (Koide Hozumi) (February 1865) 1944; and a follow-up memorandum (February 19, no year) 1944.
126. Otaru-shi 1944, 120.
127. Hakodate bugyō (Koide Hozumi) (February 1865) 1944, 122; the official order of dismissal, Machidoshiyori to [Okada] Hanbē (February 18, no year) 1944.
128. Uemura 1986, 80–82; Hirase 1911, 42.
129. In a record of the Fujino family, *kaihō* is explicitly defined as the provision of “natives’ *buiku* rice” (*dojin buiku mai*). See Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 54.
130. For the case of Fujino, see Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 15, 18–19, 28, 30, 37; Komai 2014, 220.
131. See, for instance, Howell 2005, 129–30.
132. Hasegawa S. 1981, 82.
133. Tajima 1995, 287–91.
134. Tanimoto 2003, 219–25.
135. For example, see Tsukamoto Y. 1922, ch. 4 (a transcribed lecture by a teacher at Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō).
136. Brenner 1999, 434. The deterritorializing drive of capital, as explained in note 3, is enabled only by the contrasting process of reterritorialization—that is, production of “transport, communications and regulatory-institutional infrastructures” of the state.
137. Emori 1997, 392, 394–95. This trend was likely further encouraged by the Matsumae decision in 1844 to transfer the population registers of all basho contractors to the domain. Tatsuki Shinemon 1845–1846.
138. Emori 1997, 393. On Fujino, see Yūbetsu Chōshi Hensan Iinkai 1982, part 4, ch. 1; and Itō Takahiro 2008, 95.
139. Qiao 2017, chs. 5 and 6.
140. Furukawa K. (1788) 1964, 121.
141. For the case of early modern Chinese migrants, see Miles 2020, 72–74; and Qiao 2017, ch. 4, and 242–49.
142. Shiga Kyōkushi Hensan Senmon Iinkai 2004, 69; also see “*Esashi Nishi-Betsuin Temple*,” <http://www.hokkaido-esashi.jp/modules/sightseeing/content020.html>.
143. Hakodate-shi 1978, 161–63.
144. Kikuchi Junjirō 1912, 15; Howell 1995, 61.
145. Komai 2019, 92.

146. Hokkaidō-chō 1918, 800–801, 803; Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 10.
147. Sheppard 2002, 310.
148. Tachikawa 1930, 143, 150.
149. A travel journal of Matsumoto Kichibē (1859), reprinted in Otaru-shi 1944, 118–19.
150. Tatsuki Shinjūrō 1886, 6; “Itsukushima Jinja,” in Hokkaidō Jinjachō, <https://hokkaido.jinjacho.jp>.
151. His managers also established Benten shrines in the trading posts of Monbetsu, Yūbetsu, and Kunashiri. Umehara 1972, 29; Maeda 2015, 27–28.
152. Ikeda and Miura 2011, 414.
153. Walker 2001, 187.
154. Howell 2005, 126; Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 38–39; Walker 2001, 182.
155. Walker 2001, 228.
156. Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism* (1983) 2000, quoted and discussed in Jenkins and Leroy 2021, 4–6.
157. Destin Jenkins, “Ghosts of the Past: Debt, the New South, and the Propaganda of History,” in Jenkins and Leroy 2021, 185–86.
158. Hirano 2015, 192, 208; Mason 2012, ch. 1.
159. Azuma 2019, 15; Lu 2019, 8, 39.
160. Howell 1995, 43–44.
161. Nishikawa’s account books show that the family was hit particularly hard by the loss of this privilege. Nakanishi 2009, 72. By contrast, the transition to a free-market economy was slower and more gradual at the far edges of northeastern Hokkaido. Both Ainu and Japanese fishers along the coast of Kitami had come to rely so completely on Fujino for their livelihoods that the family effectively commanded the region’s fisheries well into the late 1880s. Kitamino-kuni Abashiri-gun Fuku-sōdai (1877–1878); Fujino Shiten (Nemuro) 1887, 158–59, 182–83; “Bashomochi no haishi,” and “Ainu gyogyōken shutsugan,” Yūbetsu Chōshi Hensan Inkaikai 1982, part 4, ch. 1; Kaitakushi Tōkyō Shucchōjo 1872.
162. Nakanishi 2009, 83; Uemura 1985, 106.
163. Nakanishi 2009, 73–75, 77, 86. At the proposal of the prefectural governor, Nishikawa established a trading firm to purvey fish fertilizers made in Hokkaido directly to peasants in the Ōmi region. Mizuhara 1982, 51; Chikamatsu 1935, 188–92.
164. Tachikawa 1930, 150, 155; Nakanishi 2009, 80, 86; Itō Takahiro 2008, 97.
165. Chikamatsu 1935, 218–21.
166. Nakanishi 2009, 77–80, 86, 88; Uemura 1985, 53–54.
167. Tachikawa 1930, 150; Uemura 1986, 41–43, 80–82.
168. Ōmi merchant Kosugi Motozō’s diary, reprinted in Satō Shigerō 1990, 23, 28–29. Another Ōmi merchant store, owned by Abe Hikotarō and his father, was attacked in Kyoto, though they were spared death. Enami 1989, 231–32.
169. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Inkaikai 1980, 828.
170. Levy 2012, 232, 240. For the concept of time-space compression as a defining and intensifying phenomenon in the global history of capitalism, see Harvey [1989] 1992, chs. 15, 16.
171. For a discussion of “commodity market integration” as one measure of globalization, see O’Rourke and Williamson 2002; and O’Rourke and Williamson 2004, quoted by Aslanian 2013, 1469.

172. Nishikawa K. 1943, 345–46.

173. Ōtsu-shi 1982, 383–85, 392. Although its integration into the world economy may not have led to a kind of “regional inversion” experienced by Shimoina, Shiga was one of many regions that became “peripheries of a Tokyo-centered economy.” Wigen 1995, 3.

174. Sakudō 1997, 181. In addition to providing banking services, Mitsui reaped enormous profits from government contracts in its early years, shipping and selling coal (from the government’s mine) to Shanghai and supplying woolen cloth to the imperial army. The Mitsubishi zaibatsu grew out of the Iwasaki family’s shipping empire, forged in the crucible of civil war and imperialist expedition to Taiwan. Wray 1984, 42–53, 102–8.

175. Sakudō Yōtarō (1997, 182) clearly distinguishes these “political merchants” from the more autonomous “non-political merchants” of Ōsaka and Ōmi, who would lead the cotton textile industry. The only exception is Ono-gumi of the Ono family from Ōmi. Already an established merchant-cum-money-exchanger in Edo, with branches in Kyoto and Osaka, Ono-gumi was appointed by the Meiji government to deal with currency exchange and also participated in the creation of banks. However, Ono-gumi went bankrupt in 1874 after the government tightened control over the use of public funds the family had invested heavily in various industries. Morikawa H. 1992, 9–10.

176. Curtin 1984, 230, 234; also Aslanian 2011, 224. For a recent challenge to this thesis, see McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005.

177. Harada and Watanabe 1972, 250–52, 255–57; Ōtsu-shi 1982, 371–78; Abe Fusajirō (1937) 2012, 66–68. They also pooled capital to launch a company (Kangyō-sha) to promote local industry and provide work for the poor. *Shiga kenshi 9: seiji dai-3, kangyō 7*, microfilm.

178. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 31, 275–76.

179. Harada and Watanabe 1972, 245–46.

180. Nichimen Jitsugyō Kabushiki Kaisha 1943, 4–13.

181. See Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 829–74.

182. Most of these stores opened after 1868 specialized in textiles or brewery.

183. “Hokkaidō de Gōshū shōnin ga taitō,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 25, 1892; Banno 2019, 181–82.

184. This trend is recorded for the period from the 1870s through the 1910s (Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 829–30), but it has “persisted for generations” in Hino into the post-1945 era (*Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, December 18, 2018).

185. Their figures would be greater if overseas branches of businesses headquartered in Japan were included, not to mention stores opened after 1926 and by residents of Shiga outside of the three districts (especially Inukami, which consistently sent the largest number of overseas migrants since the Meiji period). Kawasaki 1986, 70–71.

186. Seoka 1992a, 111.

187. Peattie 1984, 179.

3. A VISION OF TRANSPACIFIC EXPANSION FROM THE PERIPHERY

1. Cited in Peattie 1984, 179. Nan’yō refers to islands of Micronesia or the South Pacific (including countries of Southeast Asia) more broadly. Peattie 1988, xvii–xviii.

2. Dai-Nihon Kyōikukai Shigaken Shibu 1945, 5. For more information on his career as an ethics teacher of Hirohito, see Wetzler 1998, chs. 5, 6; and Bix 2001, 62–99.

3. Sugiura's biographical information in this section comes from the following sources, unless otherwise specified: Sugiura 1916, 14–15; Ōmachi and Ikari 1924; Kaigo 1981.

4. Although Sugiura did not completely identify with the anti-Western brand of Japanism propounded by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takayama Chogyū (Hisaki 1983, 988–90), he shared with Takayama a broad emphasis on overseas expansion in his advocacy of Japanism.

5. Sugiura Jūgō Sensei Kenshōkai 1984, 432–35, 565–79, 605–6; Reitan 2010, 74.

6. Seoka 1989a, 266–67.

7. Ōmachi and Ikari 1924, 233–34. For an in-depth study of Seikyōsha and its precursor, Kenkonsha, see Pyle 1969; Tam 1977; and Nakanome 1993.

8. “Naichi zakkyo no junbi towa nanzo,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, March 18, 1893; “Tsugu gakusei shoshi,” September 9, 1894; Tam 1977, 7.

9. A. Iriye 1994, 48; Hirose 2004, 22.

10. “Shinshuron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 11, 1887.

11. “Kaikoku yodan,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, August 17, 1894; “Tōyō ronsaku,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, October 1, 1886; “Tonansetsu,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 12, 1895; A. Iriye 1994, 8, 44. This vision of peaceful or “liberal expansionism” was embraced by Protestant intellectuals in Japan (Nirei 2012, 75–92), and by Issei intellectuals in the American West (Azuma 2005, 23–24).

12. Pyle 1996, 100–101.

13. “Jōyaku kaisei kaigi enki,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 6, 1887; “Shinshuron,” August 11, 1887; “Mata issetsu,” August 18, 1887; and “Jieiron,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, July 18, 1899.

14. “Shinshuron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 11, 1887; “Aikokushin to enseiteki jigyo,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 2, 1897; Powell 2003.

15. Compiled in Fukumoto 1892. See especially 2, 6–7, 30–52.

16. Fukumoto 1882; Hirose 2004, 40, 44–46.

17. Kuga 1902, 409–10; Hirose 2004, 170–71; Shiga Shigetaka 1887, 194.

18. “Shinshuron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 11, 1887; Sugiura 1895b. This Malthusian argument was a recurrent strain in Japanese discourse on transpacific migration from the Meiji into the postwar era. See Lu 2019.

19. A. Iriye 1994, 18. For more on Japan's transpacific diaspora in the early modern era, see Caprio and Matsuda 2006, 241–413; Tsurumi 1939, 3–129.

20. Nōshōmushō 1885.

21. Ravina 2017, 9.

22. Nōshōmushō 1885.

23. “Kōgyō iken kaidai,” in Nōshōmushō 1884, 101.

24. “Gōshū shōnin ni gekisu,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 28, 1886.

25. Sugiura, “Kono yūmei o ikan” (1894); the governor's interview with *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 20, 1901.

26. “Shōgyō jicchi renshū,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, April 19, 1894; Kido 1890, 292–301.

27. Sugiura, “Ōmi shōnin to gakumon” (1895a); “Shōsen gakkō o kakuchō subeshi,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, May 29, 1892; “Shūgakuteki kōkai,” December 5, 1896. For this purpose, Abe Ichirōbē—an Ōmi merchant engaged in maritime *sanbutsu mawashi* (chapter 2) from Hokkaido to Kyūshū—lent his large cargo ships to marine academies in Osaka and Tokyo in the Meiji period. Seidai Iseki Hōkan Hensankyoku Kansai Shibu 1919, 8–9.

28. “Kokkiron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, January 3, 1887; “Gaikoku bōeki no koto,” January 27, 1887; “Nanyōsaku shoho,” November 22, 1887; “Mata issetsu,” August 18, 1887; Watanabe K. 1983, 48; Schencking 2005, 39.
29. Fukumoto 1892, 21–22; “Tonkaisaku o kōzu beshi,” *Nihon*, January 6, 1892, quoted in Hirose 2004, 190.
30. Pyle 1969, 159.
31. “Gaikoku bōeki no koto,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, January 27, 1887; “Futatabi gaikoku bōeki no koto o ronzu,” January 30, 1887; Kano 1969, 349–53.
32. “Gaikoku bōeki no koto,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, January 27, 1887. For a similar argument advanced by Shiga Shigetaka, see his *Nanyō jiji* 1887, 102, 191–93.
33. “Shōgyō jicchi renshū,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, April 19, 1894; Kawakami 1941a, 380.
34. Hotta 2007, 30, 43–44. For a detailed analysis of his “argument for amity with China” (*zenrinron*) in comparison with other Pan-Asian thinkers, see Uchida 2016, 69–77.
35. “Zoku-zenrinron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 22, 1886; “Nisshi no kankei,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, July 26–27, 1893.
36. “Nisshi no kankei,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, July 26, 1893; “Tōdai motokurashi,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 31, 1887; “Shina tonō kankei,” December 14, 1887; “Shinagaku no hitsuyō,” June 21, 1888.
37. Zachmann 2009, 67–73, 77–88, 115; Hirose 2004, 79–80, 369–70; Saaler and Szpilman 2011, 69, 89–92, 115–17.
38. “Chōsen hatashite kuni to shōsubekika,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, February 19, 1896.
39. A. Iriye 1994, 19–20.
40. Miles 2020, 97–98; also see Ambaras 2018, chs. 1, 2.
41. “Zenrinron”; “Gaiseishin ni toboshiki wa nanni gen’in suruka,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, August 7, 1892. Also see Nagasawa 1893, 11–13; and Mutō Sanji’s observation on Chinese immigrants quoted in A. Iriye 1994, 22.
42. “Shinshōdan,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 30, 1887. For a similar view, see Uy-amuya 1908, 114–15.
43. “Zenrinron”; “Mata issetsu,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 18, 1887; “Shōsen gakkō o kakuchō subeshi,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, May 29, 1892; Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 13.
44. “Beikoku ni okeru Shinajin,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, May 21, 1892.
45. “Gen Nihon nanafushigi no go,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, June 26, 1888.
46. “Zoku-zenrinron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, August 22, 1886; “Nisshi no kankei,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, July 26–27, 1893; Shiga Shigetaka 1887, 6–16; Nagasawa 1894.
47. Amanuma 1986, 26.
48. Nagasawa advocated the permanent settlement of Hawai’i and eventually came to see Central and South America as a more suitable destination for Japanese migrants. See Nagasawa 1893, 29–35, 117–19, 128–32; Hirose 2004, 126, 129–30.
49. Sugiura, “Ōmi shōnin to gakumon,” 1895a.
50. “Shinkoku tsūshō jōyaku no katsuyō,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, August 7, 1896; “Jieiron,” July 18, 1899; “Omoi o tōki ni itase,” August 13, 1900.
51. Zachmann 2009, 77–80, 88, 115; 2011, 115–17.
52. “Shinkoku tsūshō jōyaku no katsuyō,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, August 7, 1896. Also see Fukumoto 1895.
53. Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 11–13.

54. Having drafted its family constitution in 1895, he drew up its family creed in 1919. Reprinted in Meiji Kyōikushi Kenkyūkai 1983, 565.

55. W. M. Tsutsui 2013, 21; Azuma 2019, 18.

56. Azuma 2005, 22–23.

57. Peattie 1984, 173–74; Yano 1975, 64–68; Shimizu 1993, 95; A. Iriye 1994, 20; Matthiesen 2011, 130–32.

58. “Tōyō ronsaku,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, October 1, 1886; “Shinshuron,” August 11, 1887.

59. Curtin 1984, chs. 7, 8, and 231–34. For a study of the Dutch East India Company’s shifting and complex relationship with Tokugawa Japan around the issue of sovereignty, see Clulow 2016.

60. Sugiura and Fukumoto 1886. For a detailed discussion of the novella and its public reception, see Uchida 2016, 82–87.

61. Although he does not state it explicitly, it can be inferred that he is talking about the Philippines. Dai-Nihon Kyōikukai Shigaken Shibu 1945, 1, 8.

62. “Shin heiminron,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, June 5, 1886; “Shin heimin shoshi ni gekisu,” July 3, 1886. The abolition of outcaste status itself was “recast in terms of the global movement toward freedom and liberation” by Meiji leaders. Botsman 2011, 1345.

63. A better-known work that addressed the issue of burakumin was Shimazaki Tōson’s debut novel, *Hakai* (The Broken Commandment), published in 1906. But Sugiura’s *Hankai yume monogatari* was arguably the only work to connect it to the argument for southern advance.

64. See Tierney 2010, ch. 3. Another fictional writing on *nanshin*, with a similar plot to that of *Hankai yume monogatari*, was Yano Ryūkei’s *Ukishiro monogatari* (1890). Sudo 2010, 5.

65. “Yomiuri zatsudan,” *Yomiuri shinbun*, May 25, 1886.

66. Scholars have shown liberalism to be a seedbed of imperialism. See Mehta 1999. Japan’s twin imperatives were also articulated by Tokutomi Sohō and exemplified by Takekoshi Yosaburō’s advocacy of “liberal imperialism,” quoted in Nirei 2012, 83.

67. Botsman 2005, 57–58.

68. The strategy of “social imperialism” was to divert internal tensions caused by the disruptive effects of modernization outward to preserve the existing order and thereby restrict the process of social and political freedom at home. Wehler 1970, 122–23.

69. For instance, African-American and white leaders alike envisioned the Philippines, among other territories, as a site of black resettlement and empowerment. I am grateful to Paul Kramer for pointing out this parallel. See Zimmerman 2010, 63, and ch. 3, on the Tuskegee Institute’s expedition to German Togo.

70. Hisaki 1983, 1029.

71. For instance, see Kanno 1928. One might add that both groups were also compared to Jews, though for different reasons (the ostracized status for burakumin and commercial prowess for Ōmi shōnin).

72. Jenkins and Leroy 2021, 4–5.

73. Such “a spatial fix” would be deployed by the U.S. colonial authorities later to settle the frontier “non-Christian lands” in the Philippines. Lumba 2021, 111–34.

74. In the context of settler colonization of Hokkaido, Hirano (2015, 208–9) argues that the Meiji state’s policy toward the Ainu aimed ultimately at their “erasure” rather than extraction of their surplus labor.

75. The resettlement of burakumin in the frontier towns of Hokkaido was similarly explored in Meiji-period fiction and seriously contemplated since the late Tokugawa period by government officials (including Ōe Taku, who championed the passage of the Emancipation Edict). According to Endō (2009), Japan's policies to send its citizens to Latin America from the 1890s also systematically targeted “marginalized and radicalized social groups” such as poor farmers and burakumin. Also see Geiger 2011 for the immigration to North America of “lower-class” Japanese, including former outcastes.

76. Fowler 2000, 9–10; Harada Tomohiko et al. 1987, 4; Kida 1977, 299.

77. Uchida 2016, 87.

78. Irie 1943, 81–82, 91–92; Fukumoto 1889b; Hirose 2004, 49.

79. Kuga 1888.

80. “Tonansetsu,” *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 12, 1895; “Shoku o tashi, hei o tasu,” July 4, 1895. On Taiwan as Japan's “imperial gateway,” see Shirane 2022.

81. A. Iriye 1994, 46, 48–49; Watanabe K. 1983, 60.

82. Schencking 2005, 44–47, 50–76, 90–105, 201–8.

83. A. Iriye 1994, 43.

84. Hong and Benton 2016, 588.

85. Ōmachi and Ikari 1924, 347–57; Hisaki 1983, 997; Kaigo 1981, 533.

86. Reynolds 1986, 945 (also see ch. 4). A shift in Sugiura's stance is affirmed by his editorials for *Tokyo Asahi shinbun* on September 18, 1898, and October 9, 1899.

4. THE PRODUCTION OF GLOBAL ŌMI SHŌNIN

1. Pyle 1996, 100.

2. “Shōgyō shitei no kun,” in *Nōshōmushō* 1885.

3. See editorials in *Yomiuri shinbun*, March 28, 1886, and January 3, 1887; *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, May 29, 1892.

4. *Hasshō Hyakunenshi Henshū Iinkai* 1986, 49, 59.

5. Shiga-ken 1928b, 346–48 (formerly Shiga Prefecture Commercial School, renamed Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō in 1908).

6. *Hasshō Hyakunenshi Henshū Iinkai* 1986, 10, 12.

7. *Shiga Kengikaishi Hensan Iinkai* 1971, 165, 178–80, 442, 543; Fukanami 1944, 133–34.

8. *HSG* 1941a, 116.

9. *HSG* 1941a, 137–38, 144–45, 267; Kawakami 1941b, 1, 14–15, 27.

10. *Hasshō* alumni include textile magnates Itō Chūbē of Itōchū, Kodama Ichizō of Tōyō Menka (see chapter 5), and Nishikawa Jingorō of Nishikawa Sangyō, famous for its futon. *HSG* 1941a, 239, 242, 256.

11. Ōya 1959, 288–90.

12. *HSG* 1941a, 116, 230; *Shiga Kengikaishi Hensan Iinkai* 1971, 686.

13. *Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō* 1941, 164–65, 174; *HSG* 1941a, 226–27; Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 3.

14. *Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō* 1941, 164–65.

15. Itō Chūbē, “Furui omoide,” in *Shiga Kenritsu Hachiman Shōgyō Kōtō Gakkō Sōritsu 80-shūnen Kinenshi Henshū Iinkai* 1966, 17; *HSG* 1941a, 192. For more on the student demographics, see *Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō* 1941, 186–91.

16. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 186–91 (specifically, between 1926 and 1939, Hasshō admitted or graduated two students from Taiwan, one from China, and one from Korea).
17. *HSG* 1941a, 142, 151.
18. *HSG* 1941a, 367. Also see a petition for school renovation authored by Principal Kitagawa quoted in *HSG* 1941a, 279.
19. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 171; Hasshō Hyakunenshi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 59.
20. Kimura Yoshihiro 1987, 274.
21. *HSG* 1941a, 149–50. The core curriculum remained largely unchanged after it was expanded into a five-year program in 1925. See Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 146–47.
22. Farnie and Abe 2000, 132.
23. See “Honkō kyōka katei no henkan,” in Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 124–55. The revised curriculum in 1925 increased its instruction to seven or eight hours per week.
24. Shiga Kenritsu Hachiman Shōgyō Kōtō Gakkō Sōritsu 80-shūnen Kinenshi Henshū Iinkai 1966, 10, 106; *HSG* 1941a, 151.
25. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 142; *HSG* 1941a, 267.
26. *HSG* 1941a, 267–69.
27. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 148–49, 171. The school also created a “merchandise hall” that housed a research lab on textile goods.
28. Kawakami 1941b, 30, 37, 44.
29. Kawakami 1941b, 21, 66, 89, 99. Another distinguished speaker was William Merrell Vories, an architect who had formerly taught English at Hasshō and founded the Ōmi Sales Company (1920), famous for its ointment, Mentholatum. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 173.
30. *HSG* 1941a, 374–75.
31. Nakagome 2017, 22–47.
32. *HSG* 1941a, 375–76.
33. *Kobe Chronicle*, July 27, 1897, quoted in *HSG* 1941a, 379.
34. Local merchants also treated summer peddling as a rite of passage for their children. One such parent, Itō Chūbē I, “joyously” shared with his business associate stories and letters from his son Seiichi’s peddling journey, “looking forward to his growth.” Abe Fusajirō 1937, 71.
35. Kawakami 1941b, 12, 14, 17, 21.
36. *HSG* 1941a, 377.
37. Tsukamoto K. 2005, 45–47, 76–77.
38. “Honkō seito gyōshō no keikyō,” in Ōmi Shōshōkai, October 1897, n.p.
39. Interview with Ōmi *shinpō*, quoted in Shiga Kenritsu Hachiman Shōgyō Kōtō Gakkō Sōritsu 80-shūnen Kinenshi Henshū Iinkai 1966, 14.
40. Seoka 1989b, 193–95. For a biographical portrait of Zensuke IV (born Zensaburō), see Shiga Hinode Shinbunsha Seijibu 1936, 104; Fujii Shōten Kaiko Gojūnen Hensan Iin 1956, ch. 1.
41. Fukui Saburō and Suzuki Akira (representatives of Keirin Shōgyōdan) to Ōkuma Shigenobu (Foreign Minister), petition, April 12, 1897; Itō Masataka 1941, part 1: *enkakuhēn*, 34–38; Komura’s conversation with Principal Hatano (dated August 1897) quoted in *HSG* 1941a, 378.
42. Gaimushō 1897, 1191–93. For a consular report on the peddlers’ research in South Kyongsang Province submitted to the Foreign Ministry, see Ijūin Hikokichi 1899.

43. Nakao 1923, 207.
44. Nakao 1923, 208.
45. See Tokutomi 1942, 106–8; Schneider 2011, 69–70. Founded in 1890 by Arao, the institute was the precursor of the famed Tōa Dōbun Shoin.
46. Seoka 1989b, 194–97.
47. Before setting up the institute, Arao operated a branch of Rakuzendō, a drugstore that doubled as a lair for *tairiku rōnin* owned by Kishida Ginkō. Yoshida S. 1944, 27–28.
48. Gaimushō 1897, 1194–95.
49. Correspondence, July 29, 1897, quoted in Itō Masataka 1941, 37.
50. Gaimushō 1897, 1193–97; a Seoul chamber of commerce report quoted in Itō Masataka 1941, 38.
51. His conversation with Principal Hatano in August 1897, quoted in *HSG* 1941a, 378.
52. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, March 27, 1923; Kumagawa 1940, 257–60.
53. Nakamura Ken'ichirō 1924, 1.
54. In the spring of 1901, when the prefectural leaders began discussing moving Hasshō to a better location, heated debates ensued among the three districts of Shiga, Kanzaki, and Gamō, each claiming itself as the central birthplace of Ōmi shōnin. The inheritance dispute, as it were, was eventually settled in favor of Hachiman in Gamō. *HSG* 1941a, 234–50; Shiga Kengikaishi Hensan Inkaishi 1972, 814–15; Ōtsu-shi 1982, 119.
55. *HKSGI* 1934–1935, 119–20.
56. Since a few students from Korea began attending from 1924 (*HKSGI* 1924–1925, 90–92), students from abroad had become more diverse by the 1940s (*HKSGI* 1942–1943, 149, 155, 160; *HKSGI* 1943–1944, 140–45, 149–51, 155).
57. *HKSGI* 1936–1937, 118, 121; *HKSGI* 1937–1938, 125, 130; *HKSGI* 1941–1942, 134.
58. See the three-year curriculum (revised in April 1926) in *HKSGI* 1926–1927, 8–11.
59. See the syllabus in Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Kyōju yōmoku* 1931, 74–75.
60. *HKSGI* 1926–1927, 22–24.
61. Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Kyōju yōmoku* 1930, 50, 74; and *Kyōju yōmoku* 1932, 34.
62. Reynolds 1986, 945, 966; the Chinese Program was created after one Hikone Kōshō faculty consulted some officials in the Reformed Government of the Republic of China. *KJK* 6 (March 1939): 10–11.
63. *HKSGI* 1939–1940, 18, 23–27; Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Kyōju yōmoku* 1940 and 1941, back pages.
64. Such classes were already being taught at Hikone Kōshō. See Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Kyōju yōmoku* 1930, 73.
65. Ogura 1984, 82.
66. Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Kyōju yōmoku* 1940, 103–5.
67. Stefan Tanaka 1993.
68. For more on the relationship of Hasshō and Ōmi merchants with Tōa Dōbun Shoin, see Seoka 1992a, 111–58. Perhaps not coincidentally, Hasshō also shared a similar moniker with Tōa Dōbun Shoin, dubbed “an officer training school [*shikan gakkō*] for Japan’s trade with China.” Reynolds 1986, 950.
69. Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 29. In response to the outbreak of war with Russia a decade later, the Shiga Prefectural Assembly also petitioned the governor, asking to dispatch more local students to the academy, stressing “the urgent need to nurture personnel for the

future management of East Asia.” “Tōa Dōbun Shoin ryūgakusei zōin ni kansuru ikensho,” in Shiga Kengikaishi Hensan Iinkai 1972, 1870.

70. Hasshō Hyakunenshi Henshū Iinkai 1986, 50.

71. For some Hasshō students, their first overseas excursion was a 1906 tour of battlefields in Manchuria, organized by the Army and the Ministry of Education for male students at middle school and above. See Ko 2010, 11–30.

72. Kawakami 1941b, 37; *HKSGI* 1939–1940, 62; *Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, November 15, 2005, 24.

73. Soyama 2019, 47–48; Ko 2010, 24; *Nihon Keizai shinbun*, October 22, 2005, 36.

74. “Zai Sen-Man sotsugyōsei kakui no zetsudai naru goenjo o shinsha su,” in Ōmi Shōshōkai, *Ōmi shōnin*, vol. 107 (1934), 184; “Shiryō kifu no orei,” in Ōmi Shōshōkai, *Ōmi shōnin*, vol. 110 (1936), 297–98.

75. Abe Yasunari 2013, 31; *Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, November 15, 2005, 24.

76. Kingsberg Kadia 2020, ch. 1, and 220.

77. *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 94; *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 99.

78. Hashimoto Keizō, “Hōten,” in Ōmi Shōshōkai, *Ōmi shōnin*, vol. 110 (1936): 145–46; *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 30, 41–42; *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 92–93, 100.

79. Driscoll 2010, 25–29, 37–45.

80. K. McDonald 2017, 74–75.

81. See, for instance, “Gonen Man-Sen ryokōki,” and “Zai Sen-Man sotsugyōsei kakui no zetsudai naru goenjo o shinsha su,” in Ōmi Shōshōkai, *Ōmi shōnin*, vol. 107 (1934): 71–72, and 172–73, 176–80; *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 29. Visits to alumni working in Korea and Manchuria are also recorded in *Shōwa-9 nendo Sen-Man-Shi shūgaku ryokō kiroku* (travel itinerary for July 24–August 19, 1934), quoted in an online exhibit by Shiga Daigaku Keizai Keiei Kenkyūjo 2005–2006.

82. Miles 2020, 115.

83. *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 118–19; Uematsu 1937, 95. The Mitsui Shoin’s principal also visited Hasshō to lecture on conditions in China in February 1921. Kawakami 1941b, 56.

84. Reynolds 1986, 963–64; Reynolds 1989, 241–44.

85. Kawakami 1941b, 78.

86. Founded in 1890, Hasshō’s alumni association allowed its members to stay invested in the education of their *kōhai* (juniors). Their bulletin frequently posted alumni profiles and letters offering insights into their jobs, places of work, and daily life in their overseas milieux. See Ōmi Shōshōkai, *Ōmi shōnin*, vol. 110 (1936): 284, 288, 290, 292.

87. *HSG* 1941a, 380–81.

88. Considered part of Japan’s territory, Korea was covered much less in their travel writings than China and Manchuria, which appear to have represented bigger markets and more career opportunities.

89. Abe Yasunari 2013, 34–35.

90. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 12, 90–91; *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 87.

91. Uematsu 1937, 91, 97. Uematsu also noted their diligence, “military” skills, and “looks and characters [that] are completely similar to us,” arguing they “can be deployed safely on the front line of a battle.”

92. Nakajima 1939, 94; Matsutani 1935, 85.

93. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 92.

94. *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 90; *KJK* 7 (March 1941): 23.
95. *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 96.
96. Barclay 2017, 191, 195, 217–18, 229–30; Kingsberg Kadia 2020.
97. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 36.
98. *KJK* 7 (March 1941): 21–24.
99. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 37; *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 90. For a similar observation made by the novelist Natsume Sōseki in his 1909 travelogue, see Kawamura (1993) 2012, 283–84.
100. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 84.
101. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 43; *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 84, 92.
102. Uematsu 1937, 90.
103. Kawamura 2000, 282–83, 286–89, 293.
104. See, for instance, Ōnaka 1933, 34–39.
105. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 36–37, 52–54.
106. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 47–48.
107. Matsutani 1935, 87.
108. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 13. Also see *KJK* 4 (January 1937): 96.
109. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 13–15.
110. Matsutani 1935, 85–86.
111. According to Miles (2020, 101), “much of Chinese migration to Southeast Asia in the age of mass migration can be seen as an extension into the industrial age of family strategies of exporting male labor, of the early modern trade diasporas, and of labor migration and resources extraction for the China market.”
112. Horie 1933, 47–65.
113. Ōnaka 1933, 39.
114. Iriyama 1941, 195–225.
115. Ambaras 2018, 4, 8.
116. Tracking the record of expansion since the time of Hideyoshi’s invasion of Korea, one student went so far as to declare Japan’s continental project “a failure,” when juxtaposed with “the greatness of Chinese” in transplanting themselves across the sea. Nakajima 1939, 94–95.
117. Ōnaka 1933, 40; Matsutani 1935, 86; Uematsu 1937, 101.
118. Kawamura 2000.
119. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 68, 70–71.
120. Kawakami 1941b, 93, 95; Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 172; *HSG* 1941a, 369.
121. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō*, goshūnen kinengō (November 1928): 1.
122. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 2 (May 1928): 7, 9; and 4 (July–August 1928): 3.
123. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 4 (July–August 1928): 3–4; and 5 (September 1928): 3.
124. Abe Yasunari 2006, 187–94.
125. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 2 (May 1928): 8.
126. *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 100.
127. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 71, 92. For its faculty advisors, see *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 103–4.
128. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 68, 70–71; Abe Yasunari 2002, 242.
129. On the Migration and Colonization Research Lab, see Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō Chōsaka 1940, 7, 42–46.
130. For example, see *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 105–6.

131. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 79–81. Tanaka was commissioned by the Foreign Ministry to investigate the economic geography of Manchuria and Mongolia in the summer of 1933. *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 29–33, 115–16.
132. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 83–84.
133. *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 105; *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 96–97.
134. Hasshō also held exhibitions on “Manchurian-Korean affairs” to disseminate “the spirit of overseas expansion” widely. Kawakami 1941b, 87, 93, 121.
135. *KJK* 1 (March 1933): 91; *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 116–17.
136. *KJK* 5 (May 1938): 60–69.
137. For a manual for local primary school teachers, see Yamada Seinosuke 1894, 37–46. The author urges young aspirants to enroll at Hasshō to acquire modern knowledge and skills and help “project the wealth and power of Japan overseas.”
138. Ōya 1959, 288.
139. Ogura 1984, 51; Yoshitani, *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 2 (May 1928): 8.
140. Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Ōmi shōnin shiryō tenrankai gaikyō* (n.d.). For Kanno’s thesis on decline, see Kanno 1941, ch. 17.
141. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 2 (May 1928): 8–9. Their research was also supported by the prefectural authorities and Shiga-born entrepreneurs. Ryōshu Sanjūgonen Hensankai 1958, 56–57.
142. For records of their fieldwork at these merchant families (including Tonomura Yozaemon, Matsui Kyūzaemon, and Fujii Zensuke), see *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 4 (July–August 1928); 5 (September 1928); and 7 (October–November 1928).
143. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 4 (July–August 1928): 5.
144. For some photographs of the exhibition, see Shigaken Keizai Kyōkai 1930.
145. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō* 7 (October–November 1928): 5, 15; and 5 (September 1928): 4.
146. Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, *Ōmi shōnin shiryō tenrankai gaikyō* (n.d.) 1928; Shigaken Keizai Kyōkai 1930 (*jō-kan*), preface.
147. Captions for photographs nos. 247 and 250 in Shigaken Keizai Kyōkai 1930, vol. 2, n.p.
148. Here I draw from Takashi Fujitani’s study of imperial rituals (1996, 11, 100).
149. For an analogous observation on the construction of “heritage” in France, see Kowalski 2012, 311.
150. Ryōshu Sanjūgonen Hensankai 1958, 57.
151. Kanno’s monograph on the history of modern corporations, which earned him a doctorate in 1932, traced their origins to trade associations formed by Ōmi shōnin in the Tokugawa era. Ogura 1984, 51.
152. For example, Matsui Kyūzaemon (Yūken) was cited as a “moral exemplar” in a primary school textbook published in 1906 by the Ministry of Education. Tsujii 2016, 142.
153. The officially commissioned gazetteers on Gamō (1922), Echi (1929), Hino (1930), and other localities (edited by a local scholar, Nakagawa Senzō [1869–1939]) adopted the term *Ōmi shōnin* (in lieu of the hitherto more popular *Gōshū shōnin*). Preface in Gamō-gun (Shiga-ken) 1922, vol. 1, 45.
154. Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 5 (this roster opens with the same photographs of women displayed at the exhibition).
155. Tsukamoto G. 1935, 29–40.

156. Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 52; Tsukamoto G. 1935, 40–42; Takagi 2021, 266.
157. For the case of the Fujii family, see Seoka 1989b, 182–88.
158. See Nolte and Hastings 1991.
159. Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 2–4.
160. This was invoked in the “Instructions to Children of Merchants” issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, and also evident in the Meiji-era press. For instance, see the spirited defense of “Japan’s commercial morality,” which cites Ōmi merchants as paragons, in *Asahi shinbun*, November 18, 1905.
161. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō, goshūnen kinengō* (November 1928): 15. Notice here that the Research Division in this cited passage appropriated the malleability of *kuni* (国) as a spatial term (“to denote a homeland of any scale, from an individual domain to Japan as a whole” [Wigen 2010, 11]; see also Ravina 1999, 29), and left the scalar distinctions between province and country intentionally vague to invoke the extroverted, global sense of their place.
162. *Hikone Kōshō Kenkyūbu geppō, goshūnen kinengō* (November 1928): 1, 15.
163. Kanno 1932, 11.
164. Kim 2020, 34. Also see Chapter 1.
165. Hashimoto 1936; Hashimoto 1935; and Hashimoto 1934. Hashimoto claimed that all recorded events in Japanese history before the eighth century (including Empress Jingū’s “conquest of Silla”) occurred within Ōmi province. Harada M. 1991, 68.
166. Hashimoto 1934, 23.
167. On the dynamic of “symbolic rescaling” in contemporary France, see Kowalski 2012. On “the politics of re-scaling” that occur within “a nested . . . yet partially hierarchical, relationship between scales” that constitute a place (region or nation), see Swyngedouw 2004, 134.
168. See Osaka Mainichi Shinbunsha Ōtsu Shikyoku 1941.
169. “Tanaka Shūsaku kyōju ryakureki,” in Tanaka Shūsaku Kyōju Koki Shukugakai 1956, 3–11. For more on his work at Mantetsu, see Shibata 2010, 301.
170. From 1943, Tanaka worked as a research fellow at the North China Research Institute in Beijing. After the war, he taught at Hokkaidō Gakugei University and Ōsaka Gakugei University. Yamada Y. 1943, 222–24.
171. Miki 2010, 28–29.
172. Tanaka Shūsaku 1924, 1–3.
173. Tanaka Shūsaku 1938, 137–38.
174. Tanaka Shūsaku 1924, 2.
175. Tanaka Shūsaku 1934, 325–26; Tanaka Shūsaku 1933, 342. In advancing this concept, he drew on the work of the historian Sakaguchi Takashi (1872–1928), who described the global diffusion of ethnic Germans in terms of a “diaspora,” likening it to the historic dispersion of Jews (Sakaguchi 1927, 85–87).
176. Tanaka Shūsaku 1933, 344–45.
177. Tanaka Shūsaku 1934, 326–27. For an insightful analysis of the colonial imaginary of the *Auslandsdeutsche* or “German abroad,” see Naranch 2005.
178. *Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, Kyōju yōmoku* 1940, 103.
179. Tanaka Shūsaku 1933, 345–47.
180. Tanaka Shūsaku 1935, 185–206; Tanaka Shūsaku 1939–1940, 10–11; Tanaka Shūsaku 1942, 130. The expansion of Julfan Armenian traders in the mid-seventeenth century also exhibited this “amphibious” character. Aslanian 2011, 220.

181. For a fuller discussion of Arthur Dix and his thought on “geopolitical colonialism,” see Murphy 1997, 91–98.
182. Iwata 1942, 39–40.
183. Satō T. 2005, 128–29.
184. Tanaka Shūsaku 1935, 205–6; also see *KJK* 3 (May 1935): 1–2.
185. Azuma 2019, 17.
186. Tanaka Shūsaku 1933, 341–42. For more details on this view, see Tanaka Shūsaku 1931, 175–213.
187. Tanaka Shūsaku 1924, 2–3.
188. Miles 2020, 100. In the face of boycotts and tariff walls against Japanese exports, in 1928 the Osaka Trade Association had even crafted a proposal to train and dispatch school graduates as “global Ōmi shōnin” to counter the power of Chinese in the region. *Ōsaka jiji shinpō*, October 12, 1928.
189. Yamauchi 1943, 7.
190. Horie 1933, 48–49, 53; Yamauchi 1943, 5, 8, 21, 52.
191. Yamauchi 1943, 19–20.
192. For example, see “Zaibatsu chōkan (18) Kansai ni yūhi suru Gōshū-kei,” *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, March 20, 1923; Yoshida T. 1914, 438; and Sugiura Shigetake’s comparison in chapter 3.
193. Horie 1933, 53–55; Yamauchi 1943, 2, 13–14.
194. Yamauchi 1943, 22. In Thailand, he noted, the locals viewed the overseas Chinese as “worse than Jews to deal with.” Yamauchi 1943, 11, 25.
195. Tanaka Shūsaku 1942, 120, 123.
196. Allen 1978, 32.
197. As of 1939, 304 out of a total of about 3,500 Hasshō graduates plied their trade abroad. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 165, 185. So did 356 out of 4,142 Hikone Kōshō alumni by 1943–44, with the majority in Japan’s colonial territories, but a substantial number also across the Pacific. “Sotsugyōsha shokugyōbetsu,” *HKSGI* 1943–1944, 163, 166. For a post-1945 roster of influential oversea alumni, see Shiga Hinode Shinbunsha Seijibu 1954, 1, 7, 19, 24–25, 57, 80, 123, 132, 156, 170.
198. Following the Russo-Japanese War, the number of “our Ōmi shōnin who own stores abroad” steadily increased, from 34 in 1906 to 243 in 1915. *HSG* 1941a, 268. According to a 1923 roster of “Ōmi natives living outside the prefecture” (Komai Kiichi 1923), the largest number were found in Korea (600), followed by China (including Manchuria) (177), North America (9), Taiwan (7), England (3), Southeast Asia (2), and other foreign countries (3). They also lived in Hokkaidō (264), Karafuto (4), and Okinawa (1).
199. *HSG* 1941a, 368.
200. Kawakami 1941b, 56. For more on Mitsui Shoin, see Huang 2007, 163–79.
201. Although most alumni operated or worked for family-run concerns, their employers also included Japan’s largest textile firms (Tōyō Menka, Gōshō, Nippon Menka) and trading magnates with a foothold in China such as Itōchū. *HSG* 1941a, 268; Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 166.
202. Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō 1941, 170–71.
203. *KJK* 2 (November 1933): 118–22.
204. “Sotsugyōsha shokugyōbetsu,” *HKSGI* 1943–1944, 123–88. According to the aggregate data on alumni from the inaugural class of 1925 to the class of 1933, their largest employers were Nihon Life Insurance, Marubeni, and the Bank of Shiga, followed by Jinju Life

Insurance, textile firms (Gōshō, Mataichi, and Inanishi), and drapers-turned-department-stores (Daimaru and Takashimaya).

205. As of 1933, Minakai was the largest overseas employer of Hikone Kōshō graduates, a total of five, along with the Government-General of Korea and the Manchukuo government. The South Manchurian Railway Company was another employer, and a few graduates also enrolled in the Daidō Academy. Several also worked at Chōjiya and Takase Store in Korea, while Gōshō had a few alumni at its branches in Calcutta, Bombay, and New York. *KJK* 2 (November 1933), 118–22.

206. See “Sotsugyōsei,” in *HKSGI* 1934–1935, 130, 135, 173, 179.

5. THE “GŌSHŪ ZAIBATSU” IN JAPAN’S COTTON EMPIRE

1. *Japan Times*, August 20, 2020.
2. Itochu Corporation, “About ITOCHU: Management Policy, Message from the President,” <http://www.itochu.co.jp/en/about/>, accessed July 17, 2015.
3. Arima 2010a, 144.
4. Farnie and Abe 2000, 120. The few exceptions are Najita 2009; Partner 2018; and T. M. Young 2021. Joining these scholars, my research supplements the rich and important literature on female factory workers (see especially Tsurumi 1990; Faison 2007). They labored under horrendous conditions at cotton mills, many founded and fueled by merchant capital of Osaka and Ōmi that remains largely unstudied. Hōchi Shinbunsha 1931, 225–30.
5. Critical of this bias, Sakudō Yōtarō (1997, 260, 266) contrasts the state-sponsored Mitsui zaibatsu with the “non-zaibatsu” Itōchū which contributed to Japan’s modernization “from the bottom up.”
6. They were joined later by the “new zaibatsu” born of military procurement. Flath 2014, 50.
7. For a re-examination of Japan’s proto-industrial legacy from the perspective of regions, see Tanimoto 2006.
8. Farnie et al. 2000, 4, 12, 14.
9. Kanno Watarō was the first scholar to point out that Ōmi merchants handled the majority of cotton goods produced by Japan’s spinning companies centered on Osaka. Kanno 1935, 109–10.
10. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun, Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun *Ekonomisuto* 1930, 3–30.
11. The zaibatsu involvement in spinning firms was limited to holding some shares, as the Sumitomo family did in Ōsaka Spinning, for instance. Morikawa 1992, 27.
12. Farnie et al. 2000, 13, 125; Fletcher 1996; Hōchi Shinbunsha 1931, 230, 235.
13. See, for instance, McCabe, Harlaftis, and Minoglou 2005 (especially Chung 2005); Liu and Benton 2016, 575–94.
14. Jones 2000, 343.
15. Yoshihara Kunio (1982, 2, 10) defines “*sōgō shōsha*” as “a unique Japanese organization” that “had to deal with many products, . . . engage in both export and import, have offices in various parts of the world, and wield considerable power in the spheres of marketing and finance.”
16. To the extent that the founding families held exclusive ownership of their principal firms, big zaibatsu may be seen as the largest of family-centered enterprises that represented a norm in prewar Japan. Yet they clearly distinguished ownership from management from

the start. In the case of Itōchū and other Ōmi-lineage firms discussed below, ownership and management remained closely fused, and largely within family and native-place networks. Morikawa 1992, xvii, 99.

17. James 2006, 6–7; Alfred Chandler’s foreword in Morikawa 1999, xxiv.

18. James 2006, 8.

19. Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 26.

20. Farnie and Abe 2000, 129.

21. Fletcher 1996, 68–72; Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 28.

22. See Dai-Nihon Bōseki Rengōkai 1927, 77, 82–89.

23. “Kōgyō iken kaidai,” in Nōshōmushō 1884, 101. Osaka also came to be known globally as “the Manchester of the Orient.” Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 33.

24. The Meiji government also promoted cotton exports by providing credit and guaranteeing debts, and other indirect means of support such as subsidies to steamship lines engaged in cotton trade. Beckert 2014a, 404; Fletcher 1996, 73–75; Bratter 1930, 162. As noted, however, the state’s focus shifted to subsidizing the heavy industries after the Sino-Japanese War. Farnie and Nakaoka 2000, 11.

25. Abe Shūkichi 1924; Tsutsui Masao 2013, 21. One of their first ventures was Ōmi Hemp Yarn Spinning and Weaving Company, created in 1884 at the request of Tokyo, which operated Japan’s first mechanized hemp mill. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Inkai 1980, 347–49, 833.

26. Takaya 1907, 163–95.

27. Kumagawa 1940, 24–31, 36–40; Okamoto 1930, 63–64; Shigaken Kyōikukai 2006, 5. The company was the first to sell Japanese *kanakin*, cheaper than more refined English cotton and considered suitable for use by Koreans. Kurumada 1943, 367.

28. The three men, all from Kanzaki, had a tight relationship: in addition to helping found a commercial school in their native district, Abe and Tatsuke campaigned for Fujii who successfully ran for the Diet in 1908. Seoka 1992b, 17, 22.

29. Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 198; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1934, 102; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1953, 120, 136, 139, 147; Kumagawa 1940, 50, 63–68, 102; Okamoto 1930, 64.

30. Kurumada 1943, 47, 52, 77, 81–82, 365, 560; Fuzan Meishiroku Kankōkai 1935, 147.

31. Duus 1989, 92.

32. Naigai Wata Kabushiki Kaisha 1937, 8–11, 151–58.

33. These companies, as members of the Japan Spinners Association (formed in 1882), successfully petitioned the Tokyo government, asking to remove duties on raw cotton imports and yarn exports in the 1890s. See Fletcher 1996, 58–72.

34. Other founders were Kitagawa Yohei (who had apprenticed at Itō Chūbē’s store) and Nose Shichirōbei. Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 71–72; Fujii’s recollection cited in Kumagawa 1940, 222–23. The pride of its regional provenance was rendered in the company’s name, Gōshō 江商 (whose ideograms derived from the character compound “Ōmi shōnin 近江商人”). Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 65, 67.

35. Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 92–93, 96, 107–8, 125, 145, 201, 203, 208, 212–18, 227, 237.

36. Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 231–35; Nanyō Keizai Kenkyūjo 1938, 12.

37. Kodama worked for Mitsui Bussan (after completing its Chinese program) from 1901 to 1920, when its raw cotton bureau was hived off from the parent company to create Tōyō Menka. Okamoto 1930, 48–49.

38. Gōshō Kabushiki Kaisha 1967, 70–71; Seoka 1989b, 179; an observation of Arno S. Pearse from Manchester, quoted in Eckert 1991, 132.
39. Beckert 2014a, 401–3.
40. “Nihon Menpu Yushutsu Kumiai,” kotobank.jp; Kawashima 2011, 49–50.
41. Beckert 2014a, 414, 416. As a source of raw cotton and the most important market for Japan’s cotton goods, China alone accounted for over half of foreign trade in the Taishō period. K. Maeda 1990, 96.
42. Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1953, 121–122, 376; Kumagawa 1940, 50–51; Farnie and Abe 2000, 130, 132, 137–38.
43. Beckert 2014a, ch. 12. Where Beckert focuses on the role of the state, I highlight the role of private merchant capital in this process.
44. Beckert 2014a, 345, 350.
45. Beckert 2014a, 341; Chōsen Mengyō Kabushiki Kaisha 1917, preface, 6–7, 19, 74, 81.
46. Eckert 1991, 134–35; Beckert 2014a, 342.
47. Farnie and Abe 2000, 129.
48. Farnie and Abe 2000, 136.
49. A precursor of *zaikabō*, Naigai Wata built the first cotton mill fully owned by Japanese in 1911. Naigai Wata Kabushiki Kaisha 1937, preface, 36–37; Cochran 2000, 95; Duus 1989, 77.
50. Farnie and Abe 2000, 139; Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 419; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun, Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun Ekonomisuto 1930, 22; Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 419. Tatsuke Masajirō was known as a “shōgun” broker at the exchange.
51. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 295–96. By this time, the characterization of “Gōshū people as Japan’s Jews” appears to have become commonplace. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun, Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun Ekonomisuto 1930, 3; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 295. Also see chapter 7.
52. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 270, 292; Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 417; Osaka-shi Shakai-bu Rōdō-ka 1928, 182.
53. Itō Chūbē II (Seiichi) 1958, 133.
54. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 7.
55. Chūbē’s words in “Keikaroku” (August 1895) quoted in Furukawa T. 1937, 32–34.
56. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 4.
57. Tanaka Ryōzō’s words in “Sendai o Shinobu no kai” quoted in Furukawa T. 1937, 89, 92–94.
58. K. Maeda 1990, 94, 97; Kawabe 1990, 171–72.
59. “Itochu Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 283.
60. Nakamura S. 1955a, 155–56.
61. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 17–23; *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 17, 1890.
62. Itō Chūbē II (Seiichi) 1937b, 52; Tanaka Seikichi’s comments in “Sendai o shinobu no kai,” Furukawa T. 1937, 105.
63. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 20–21. See its press coverage in *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 17, 1890.
64. See Takahashi 1975, 167–93; and Takahashi 1976, 145–87. Also see Chūbē II’s explanation in Furukawa T. 1937, 42–43.

65. Ishikawa 1992, 105.
66. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 40; Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 120; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 32.
67. Around the turn of the twentieth century, the dropout rate was nearly 50 percent. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 40.
68. As the mayor of Toyosato Village, Chūbē enthusiastically advocated vocational school for Ōmi youth, in addition to sending his son to Hasshō (chapter 4). Furukawa T. 1937, 53; Itō Chūbē II (Seiichi) 1958, 146.
69. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 32; Itō Chūbē II (Seiichi) 1937a, 139–40; Nakamura S. 1955a, 170; Abe F. (1936) 1937, 65.
70. Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 31–32; Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 91–92.
71. James 2006, 16. For a comparable case of Fujii Zensuke III's wife, Mie, see Seoka 1989b, 182–85.
72. Personal capitalism is attributed to “atomistic firms often owned and managed by families.” Jones 2000, 12, quoting Alfred D. Chandler, who distinguished between the “managerial capitalism” of the U.S. and the “personal capitalism” of Britain, dismissing the latter as retrograde and treating the former as a logical end point of modern progress.
73. Chūbē maintained ownership control of each store as a private proprietorship in this structure of a cooperative, which was inherited by his successors. See Chūbē II's announcement in an in-house report to Itō stores, *Junpō* no. 332 (December 10, 1918), reprinted in Usami 2013, 55–56.
74. Dellheim 1987, 15–16, 19, 29, 42.
75. James 2006, 12–13.
76. Itō Chūbē II 1937a, 41; Watanabe and Ōta 1935, 92.
77. Abe F. (1936) 1937, 72–73; Furukawa Tetsujirō's comments in “Sendai o shinobu no kai” 1937, 124.
78. Itō Chūbē II 1958, 144.
79. The perception of commerce as a form of gamble was also found in Tokugawa commentaries. Najita 2009, 56–57.
80. Levy 2012, 2, 14–15.
81. Hatta 1956, 176.
82. In 1892, Chūbē was appointed as treasurer of Nishi Honganji, a rare honor even for Ōmi merchants. Ogawa and Fukami 2006, 58.
83. Moreton 2009.
84. Katsura Y. 1992, 197; Itō Chūbē II (Seiichi) 1937b, 41.
85. Ogawa and Fukami 2006, 52, 62; Osaka Mainichi Shinbun, Tokyo Nichinichi Shinbun Ekonomisuto 1930, 26. These included Shin-Buddhist Followers' Life Insurance (Seimei Hoken Kaisha Kyōkai 1936, 633–46) and Nihon Life (Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 312).
86. Levy 2012, 2.
87. Ogawa and Fukami 2006, 53; Uemura 2000, 632.
88. Denda 1993, 1, 26.
89. Tanaka Ryōzō's comments in “Sendai o shinobu no kai” 1937, 102–3; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 26.

90. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 37.
91. *Tokyo Asahi shinbun*, June 15, 1916.
92. “Yae Itoh, the Wife of Chubei Itoh I,” www.itochu.co.jp/en/about/history/yae/, accessed on July 26, 2011.
93. Abe F. (1936) 1937, 73–74.
94. This is a crucial observation made by Nakamura Naofumi (2015) and Priya Satia (2018) in the contexts of Meiji Japan and eighteenth-century England respectively.
95. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 44; Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 199–200.
96. Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 163; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 45.
97. While in England, Chūbē II alighted on some facts that served his store well in the long run. Upon discovering that English trading agents were mere “brokers” and that interest rates for local bank loans were set at least 10 percent lower than in Japan, he bought and shipped to Osaka “mass quantities of high-grade wool directly from wholesalers.” This move to bypass foreign agents enabled the Itō Store to “undersell competitors” and improve its profit margins greatly. “ITOCHU Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 284; *Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha* 1980, 364–65.
98. Most likely in Bradford, a center of woolen production (Usami 2014, 18); Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 335.
99. *Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha* 1980, 362.
100. “Doitsu zakkan (sono ichi),” *Honbu junpō* 30 (June 30, 1910), reprinted in Usami 2014, 15.
101. “Doitsu zakkan (sono ichi)” (1910), in Usami 2014, 24.
102. Tanaka Kiyoshi’s comments in “Sendai o shinobu no kai,” Furukawa T. 1937, 114.
103. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 40–41, 44, 51; Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 47.
104. Beckert’s study is concerned with the state expansion of cotton production to colonies for global markets. I would add that the role of trading firms in marketing and distribution of raw cotton and finished goods was equally important in cotton imperialism.
105. Duus 1989, 347–50.
106. The company imported Japanese cotton yarn and piece goods in exchange for Korean rice, soybeans, and cowhide among other items for export back home. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 49–51. (On Takai, see Shiga-ken Hino-chō Kyōikukai 1930, 769; Okamoto 1935, 37.)
107. Metzler 2006, 57, 102.
108. Metzler 2006, 101; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 50. However, the political goal of “Nishihara loans” to “strengthen Japanese influence in Beijing” backfired completely. Dickinson 1999, 164.
109. *Osaka jiji shinpō*, January 1, 1918.
110. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 56–58; Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 55.
111. “Itochu Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 284; “C. Itoh & Co., LTD” n.d., n.p.
112. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 71–74.
113. Alfred Chandler’s argument discussed in James 2006, 13.

114. This became apparent after its century-long dry goods business was formally separated (as Mitsukoshi) from the core of zaibatsu in 1904. Flath 2014, 49.
115. Morikawa 1992, 43, 114–16, 194–95, 214.
116. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 57–58, 69–70.
117. Chūbē II's announcement in *Junpō* 332 (December 10, 1918), reprinted in Usami 2013, 55–56. Suenaga Kunitoshi (2004, 17) observes that the unique characteristics of Ōmi shōnin “had all but disappeared” in Ōmi-lineage firms by the end of World War I, but Itōchū presents a more complex picture of transition.
118. Chung 2005, 301.
119. Morikawa 1992, 99.
120. *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, April 12, 1916; his interview with *Osaka Asahi*, reprinted in Maruyama and Imamura 1912, 158–67.
121. Among the most important posts were occupied by Nakamura Shintarō in Shanghai (1907–1918), Kodama (later Toyoda) Risaburō in Manila (1912), and Echigo Masakazu in Hōten (Fengtian) (1938). Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 57, 82, 128, 558; Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1977, 40, 52.
122. Most notable were Tanaka Kakei who oversaw the Manila branch and then the London office, and Miyazaki Hikoichirō, who, having worked at the Shanghai office, became a chief of the Kōbe branch in charge of “southern trade centered on the Philippines.” Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 57, 68, 558–60; Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1977, 110–11.
123. Jones 2000, 6.
124. Yoshino and Lifson 1986, 20.
125. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 81, 84; Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 125. While Itōchū, the largest of the three, remained under Chūbē II, he was backed by a completely rejuvenated board of executives (whose average age was thirty-five).
126. Morikawa 1992, 55, 99.
127. James 2006, 12.
128. Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 213; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 96.
129. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 63–64.
130. Duus 1989, 77, 79, 83–85.
131. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi 1927 (the first business report of Da Fu for the period of July 1926–September 1927), 4; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 121; and Tenshin Kōshinjo 1932, 240.
132. Takamura 1982, 219; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 121–22.
133. Hershatter 1986, 211, 215–17; also see “1. Tenshin (Yūdai Bōseki higyo jiken),” n.d.; Cochran 2000, 105, 109.
134. Arita to Shidehara 1926, n.p.; Takamura 1982, 176.
135. “IX: Yu Da Mill” in Arita to Shidehara 1926, n.p.
136. See his handwritten report (October 3, 1926), bundled with Arita to Shidehara 1926, n.p. Although we don't have data on the “25 Chinese staff,” managerial positions were no doubt reserved for the “28 Japanese staff”; this was the case with *zaikabō* in Shanghai where

Chinese staff typically served under Japanese managers to recruit, train, and oversee native workers. Cochran 2000, 114.

137. Tenshin Kōshinjo 1932, 239–40.

138. Naigai Wata and Mitsui Bussan each trained a corps of “China specialists” to employ as mill managers, in lieu of Chinese foremen, for “controlling workers and preventing strikes.” Cochran 2000, 97.

139. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi 1927, 1928, 1930; Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 506–7; Matsumura 2011, 77.

140. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-yonki eigyō hōkokusho” 1930, 4–5; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 121.

141. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-ikki eigyō hōkokusho” 1927, 5–6, and “Dai-niki eigyō hōkokusho” 1928, 7; for more background, see Hershatter 1986, 32.

142. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-yonki eigyō hōkokusho” 1930, 6.

143. This so-called Tianjin Incident was instigated by an army’s scheme to place Pu Yi on the throne of the new state of Manchukuo. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-rokki eigyō hōkokusho” 1933a, 3; Ajia-kyoku Dai 1-ka 1932.

144. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-nanaki eigyō hōkokusho” 1933b, n.p.

145. Kabushiki Kaisha Daifuku Kōshi, “Dai-rokki eigyō hōkokusho” 1933a, 4.

146. Duus 1989, 89–90, 93; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 102.

147. Hershatter 1986, 35–36; Duus 1989, 99; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1953, 389–90.

148. Hirota to Kawagoe 1935, 1–4.

149. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 121–22.

150. “British Consul-General Dispatch on the Pioneer Knitting Mill and Itoh and Co.,” June 1938.

151. Hershatter 1986, 36–37, 142; Duus 1989, 93, 97, 99–100; Takamura 1982, 220–21.

152. Farnie and Abe 2000, 129.

153. *Kokumin shinbun*, July 26, 1930.

154. Hershatter 1986, 55–56, 149.

155. Takamura 1982, 179; Hershatter 1986, 50–53.

156. *Civil Research: Memorandum on Cotton Industry in China* 1928–1929; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1934, 91–92; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1953, 394–95.

157. Cochran 2000, 114; Duus 1989, 77.

158. Beckert 2014a, 417; Tōyō Bōseki Kabushiki Kaisha 1953, 377–79; Eckert 1991, 135.

159. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 337, 340–42, 834–35.

160. Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 461–62.

161. It was formed with the support of Toyoda Risaburō (1884–1952), a former Itō employee who later became the president of Toyota Automobiles. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, May 22, 1929.

162. Eckert 1991, 150–52, 160, 178.

163. *Hōchi shinbun*, December 14, 1935; Sugihara 1986, 715.

164. Yu-Jose 1992, 55.

165. For more information on Furukawa Plantation, see Uchida 2019.

166. Furukawa Y. 1956, 262, 330–31; *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō*, September 18, 1934.

167. Furiya 1993, 10, 155.

168. Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Hensanshitsu 1977, 122–23.

169. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 106–7; *Chūgai shōgyō shinpō*, November 1–4, 1932; *Hōchi shinbun*, December 14, 1935.
170. Farnie and Abe 2000, 142.
171. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 104, 106–7.
172. I adopt this concept from Azuma 2019.
173. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 128, 144–45, 148, 558–61.
174. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 112–19, 140.
175. Morikawa 1992, 212–13.
176. For instance, see a petition to Foreign Minister from Chūbē as a representative of the Association for the Export of Cotton Yarn and Cloth (Itō Chūbē to Shidehara 1927); and a joint petition (Abe Fusajirō and Itō Chūbē to Shidehara 1930).
177. See *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, September 11, 1925; *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, August 3, 1928, and July 1–9, 1936.
178. Sakudō 1973, 187.
179. *Jiji shinpō*, November 13, 1932.
180. English-language supplement to *Osaka Mainichi* and *Tokyo Nichi Nichi* (October 4, 1934), 12, included in “China: Visit of Federation of British Industries Mission to Manchuria and Japan, 1934,” 217.
181. Itō Chūbē-ō Kaisōroku Henshū Jimukyoku 1974, 261–71; Beckert 2014a, 406; Farnie and Abe 2000, 145.
182. See *Rafu shinpō*, August 14, 1933, 6.
183. See *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, September 22, 1933, and February 20, 1934; Katogani 1996, 99–140 (esp. 106, 108).
184. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 144; *Nippu jiji*, April 16, 1935, 7; Azuma 2019.
185. Higuchi 1940, 252–53; Chūgai Sangyō Chōsakai 1938, 427–29, 444–46, 451–52.
186. T. Abe 2005, 3.
187. Watanabe J. 1996, 1–17.
188. The linkage system would be superseded by direct state control over trade. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 132–34, 143.
189. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 146 (table 4).
190. On this dialectic driving the industrial revolution in eighteenth-century England, see Satia 2018.
191. Quoted in Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 142. Accordingly, Itōchū upgraded its offices in Tianjin and Beijing to the status of branches and set up new offices in Central and South China (including Nanjing, Guangdong, and Hong Kong).
192. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 142–43, 146 (table 3).
193. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 150, 159; Marubeni Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1977, 91. Marubeni was managed by Furukawa Tetsujirō (Yoshizō’s older brother).
194. Itō Chūbē II 1937a.
195. *Nihon kōgyō shinbun*, December 25–27, 1940.
196. A twelve-part record of a round-table forum in *Nihon kōgyō shinbun*, March 17–28, 1942.
197. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 150–52, 554.

198. K. Maeda 1990, 108–9.
199. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 157–58, 160–61, 171–81. In 1942 Sankō also launched Chōsen Kureha Spinning in Taejŏn, in cooperation with Kyōngbang, mainly to export textiles to Manchuria and North China.
200. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 179, 181.
201. Nihon Menka Saibai Kyōkai 1940, 1–5, 8–9, 111–18.
202. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 179.
203. “Menka kaihatsu tantōsha ni taisuru keibi kyokuchō kōen” 1942, n.p.
204. Rikugun, July 27, 1942, n.p.; Rikugun Senbika, May 29, 1943, n.p.
205. T. Abe 2005, 3; Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 167, 178.
206. Daiken held the majority shares in nearly forty of them, with a dozen controlled by Itō men of Shiga origin.
207. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 161–62, 166–69; Yoshino and Lifson 1986, 19.
208. Tsuji 1997, 24.
209. The wartime expansion of heavy industrial sectors outstripped the wherewithal of owner families to finance and manage their diverse subsidiaries. Morikawa 1992, 229, 233.
210. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 167, 170, 172–74.
211. Usami 2005, 53.
212. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 270, 292.
213. Ernst Bloch’s concept of non-synchronism ([1932] 1977) may be useful here. Commonly used by Marxist scholars, the concept refers to the persistence of pre-capitalist relations of production in the capitalist economy. Although it has been deployed to highlight uneven or incomplete processes of modernization, my usage highlights the coexistence of early modern and modern forms in family capitalism as an advantage, rather than a handicap, to enterprise. For a similar argument about Shanxi *piaohao* (whose merchant owners transitioned from banking to industrial manufacturing after 1895), see L. Wang 2021, ch. 5.
214. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 171.
215. For a complete list of subsidiaries of Daiken Manufacturing, see SCAP’s memoranda on “Addition of Certain Textile Companies to Schedule of Restricted Concerns,” June 8, 1946.
216. Yoshino and Lifson 1986, 24.
217. “Itochu Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 285; “C. Itoh & Co., Ltd.,” Lehman Brothers Collection, n.d., n.p.
218. Most notable was Sejima Ryūzō, a former Kwantung Army officer, who became vice president in 1972 and chairman in 1978. Katō and Noda 1980, 70.
219. “Itochu Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 285; Katō and Noda 1980, 29.
220. Katō and Noda 1980, 28–29.
221. “Itochu Corporation,” in Pederson 2000, 286.
222. Fedman 2020, 14–15 (quoting Tsing 2005). For more on the role of *sōgō shōsha* in timber trade in Southeast Asia, see Dauvergne 1997; on Itōchū’s current investment projects, see the case study “Itochu Corporation” in the Forests & Finance website.
223. Itochu Corporation, “CSR News 2012-nen,” June 11, 2012; Jones 2000, 348.
224. Itochu Corporation, “Itochu Mission” and “Guideline of Conduct: I Am One with Infinite Missions.”
225. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, May 21, 2018, 29.

6. ŌMI MERCHANTS IN THE COLONIAL WORLD OF RETAIL

1. Hendrickson 1979, 6–7, 12, 19.
2. Kanno 1941, 88–89; Shirokiya 1957, 9, 76; Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 837, 840–43, 865; Kanno 1930a, 11.
3. Suenaga 1997, 284–85, table 6–1.
4. I have briefly discussed elsewhere the activities of Chōjiya's founder, Kobayashi Genroku. Uchida 2011, 179–80, 335, 351–52. This chapter focuses on the operation and management of the store itself.
5. In existing studies on empire, the role of commerce is often neglected in their conflation of imperialism with the rise of industrial or financial capital. Suenaga 1997, 14–16.
6. Eckert 1991; Uchida 2011.
7. Beckert and Desan 2018, 12; Beckert 2014b, 326.
8. “Minakai enkaku shōshi,” in Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938.
9. Hayashi 2004, 28–29.
10. Abe K. 1935, 603; Chōsen Kōronsha 1917, 250.
11. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.
12. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p. The following information on the store comes from this source, unless otherwise noted.
13. Oka 1915, 466.
14. Chōginshi Kenkyūkai 1984, 442.
15. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1058.
16. Also see store advertisements in the following issues of *Hwangsōng sinmun*: October 4 and December 9, 1904, and May 10, September 21, and October 24, 1905.
17. Kabushiki Kaisha Mitsukoshi Honsha 2005, 67.
18. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.
19. Hayashi 2004, 43.
20. “Minakai enkaku shōshi,” in Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 843.
21. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1058.
22. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kensoku*, 1922 (rev. January 1936), 2; Hayashi 2004, 226.
23. For instance, see Minakai managers' minutes: Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, June 20–July 1929, June 9–ca. 20, 1930, March 8–April 8, 1931; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, March 18, 1932, and May 14, 1933.
24. Hayashi 2004, 96.
25. Egashira 1965b, 801.
26. Miles 2020, 115.
27. Hayashi 2004, 29; testimony of Sakaguchi Shigemasa at roundtable forum, recorded in Keijō Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō (dō Keizai Senmon Gakkō) Dōsōkai Sūryōkai 1990, 93.
28. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 833; Abe K. 1935, 603.
29. L. Young 1999, 56; Tamari 2000, 74–75. Only in the early 1930s did Minakai begin actively hiring graduates of commercial schools, as recorded in the company's *Shojiki*, 1932–1936.
30. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kensoku*, 1936, no. 10; Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.
31. Testimony of a former employee cited in Suenaga 1997, 315–16.
32. See Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kensoku*, 1936, nos. 22, 27, 47, 51; and Hosgood 1999. These practices were also common to merchant houses in the greater Kyoto area. Sakurai 2011.

33. The *Rules* were first compiled in 1922 and revised in 1936 (the information here comes from the 1936 version).

34. The five-article “Minakai seishin,” reprinted in Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 831–33.

35. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 831, 833.

36. Kurumada 1943.

37. Massey (1984) 1995, 288.

38. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kensoku*, 1936, no. 9.

39. Sakurai 2011, 120–21.

40. His testimony is excerpted in Suenaga 1997, 315–16.

41. (Tokyo) *Asahi shinbun*, March 25, 1935.

42. Kirk 2018, 105–6.

43. Jenkins and Leroy 2021.

44. Hayashi 2004, 116; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kensoku*, 1936, no. 10.

45. Itōchū Shōji Kabushiki Kaisha Shashi Henshūshitsu 1969, 26–28.

46. Chōsen Sōtokufu, July 1921, 115. Whenever Fukunaga opened a branch, reportedly “he would get a Buddhist altar first, and open the store next.” Kurumada 1943, 218.

47. Quoted in Suenaga 1997, 316; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, June 18, 1929.

48. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1057; Nakamura Kentarō 1969, 170.

49. For instance, see Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, November 27, 1930; *Shojiki*, November 29, 1932, November 4 and 29, 1933. Also, Kurumada 1943, 579.

50. Abe K. 1935, 87. Chōjiya’s Buddhist creed had aspects in common with the Itō Store code: its pairing of “service to Buddha” with “reverence for the emperor,” its emphasis on “the principle of *kyōson kyōei*,” and its incorporation of “Prince Shōtoku’s Constitution to promote harmonious cooperation.”

51. Fujii 1926, 116.

52. This department later became an independent company under Hwang’s presidency. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.; Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1055.

53. Sasaki Taihei 1930, 48–50; Kageyama 1921, 211.

54. By the 1940s, Koreans constituted as much as 60 percent of Chōjiya’s clientele. Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha 1943, 135.

55. Suenaga 2000, 218–23; Gokashō Chōshi Hensan Inkai 1994, 352–414. See also chapter 1.

56. Quoted in Suenaga 1997, 56–57.

57. Uemura 2000, 629; a prefectural record of Ginemon IV’s “Good deed of special note,” in *Shigaken-shi 25: seiji dai-16, zenkō kitoku 1*.

58. Abe K. 1935, 86.

59. In the home city of Tsu, Genroku financially supported a juvenile reformatory, opened a day-care center, built a new crematory, and founded a youth training center and a night school for working women. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.

60. Kurumada 1943, 582–83; *Tonga ilbo*, October 20, 1928.

61. Nakamura Kentarō 1969, 95, 172–73; Abe K. 1937, 59.

62. Kurumada 1943, 162–67; Wakō Kyōen 1927, 79–81; Ōtaniha Honganji Chōsen Kaikyō Kantokubu 1927, 174–75; Aomori 1922, 10–11.

63. Morikawa Kiyoto 1935, 933–34; Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.

64. Sano 1924, 348–49.

65. See Uchida 2011, chs. 5, 6.
66. Abe K. 1937, 59–60; Fujii 1926, 116.
67. Morikawa Kiyoto 1935, 933.
68. Dai-Keijō Kōshokusha Meikan Kankōkai Hensankakari 1936, 61; Chōjiya Shōten 1936, 46–47.
69. Abe K. 1935, 604.
70. See chapter 1.
71. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1058.
72. See newspaper advertisement in *Hwangsōng sinmun*, December 9, 1904.
73. *Hwangsōng sinmun*, September 21, 1905, and March 22, 1908.
74. Sano 1924, 349–50; Kageyama 1921, 211; Oka 1915, 431; Sasaki Taihei 1930, 48–49.
75. A similar trip was taken by a Chōjiya executive (*Tonga ilbo*, June 9, 1928) and founders of other department stores including Takashimaya and Shirokiya. Ōe 1941, 49–50; Okamoto 1930, 114–15; Shirokiya 1957, 285–86.
76. Ōmijin Kyōkai 1930, 84.
77. They visited the following cities: Honolulu, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Salt Lake City, Chicago, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington D.C., New Orleans, Fort Worth, Mexico City, El Paso, Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, Montreal, and Ottawa.
78. Nakae K. 1924a. Most likely written for Minakai’s “in-house use,” this diary also exists in a more detailed version kept in the family (fig. 7), entitled *Seisho nikki* (Clean Copy Diary), along with its shorter draft, *Shitagaki nikki*. See Nakae K. 1924b; Suenaga 1995, 794–95, 809.
79. Nakae K. 1924b, 13.
80. Nakae K. 1924b, 53, 57–58.
81. Nakae K. 1924b, 63–64.
82. Nakae K. 1924b, 116–7.
83. Nakae K. 1924b, 116.
84. Nakae K. 1924b, 127–29. Within a year of his visit, the ground floor of this Sears’ distribution plant would be “converted to a 100,000-square-foot department store, carrying all the items featured in the mail-order catalogue.” Longstreth 2006, 239.
85. Nakae K. 1924b, 157, 171–72; Kirk 2018, 81.
86. Nakae K. 1924b, 64–65.
87. Benson 1986, 147–59.
88. Benson 1986, 130, 148; Tamari 2000, 75, 79. But these gender and class expectations of managers did not always match a growing sense of autonomy and dignity with which salespeople approached their work as a profession (Benson 1986, 165).
89. Leach 1993, 112–13; also Hong 2016, 126.
90. Kirk 2018, 6–7, 10–12, 196.
91. Kirk 2018, 191, 253.
92. Hayashi 2004, 71.
93. Katsujirō gained some relief when visiting Mexico City, where the Japanese consul informed him of Mexico’s prospect as a “fertile” site of “re-migration” for Japanese in the United States. Nakae K. 1924b, 190–91. This view would soon become a consensus among state and private advocates of emigration in Japan. Azuma 2019, 143.
94. Nakae K. 1924b, 77–78; on the concept of a “labour diaspora,” see R. Cohen 2008, 61–68.
95. Nakae K. 1924b, 78. His proposal was echoed by the Japanese metropolitan public who, enraged by the Immigration Act of 1924, called for “a unified racial front against white

Americans.” But it was not entirely shared by Issei, who feared the mundane consequences of anti-Americanism in the homeland. Azuma 2005, 84.

96. Kramer 2018, especially 406–10.

97. Azuma 2005, 38–39, 47–51. The Issei’s vision stressed “a dual process of nationalization”: acculturation to American lifestyle on the one hand and the making of upright imperial subjects on the other.

98. Azuma 2005, 14.

99. Nakae K. 1924b, 84. The real or perceived Nisei delinquency and the need to instill the Japanese spirit in them would become a focal point of Issei debate on their education from the late 1920s. Azuma 2005, 122–34.

100. These impressions are summarized in Nakae K. 1924b, 109–13, 124.

101. Kramer 2018, 397.

102. Azuma 2008, 1194; Azuma 2019, 137–38.

103. Tierney 2010, 18–20; Azuma 2008, 1188.

104. Duara 2003, 77–78; Azuma 2019, 137.

105. The four Japanese department stores also formed a fraternal organization called Hyakuwakai, which met a few times a year. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, March 3, 1931.

106. For the history of Hwasin, see Hwasin Sasimnyōnsa P’yōnch’an Wiwōnhoe 1966; and Hwasin Sanōp Chusik Hoesa 1977.

107. See Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, May 24 and October 24, 1930, and October 22, 1931; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, July 28, 1932.

108. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1062–63.

109. Murakami 1942, 480–84; Ōhashi Ichirō, “Boku Kō Shoku,” in Chōsen Gyōseikai, November 1939, 100. Their provincial branches followed suit. In P’yōngyang, one paper observed, Minakai’s new building, “crowned the largest structure in Western Korea,” “catapulted P’yōngyang into the world of modern metropolises.” *Seisen nippō*, October 21, 1933.

110. For the case of Chōjiya, see *Chōsen shinbun*, July 8, 1937; Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1059.

111. Sasaki Taihei 1930, 48.

112. Kirk 2018, 62–63.

113. Sano 1924, 349; (Tokyo) *Asahi shinbun*, March 25, 1935.

114. Ōhashi 1935.

115. This “town of Chōsen Chisso” invited Minakai to open its branch to serve its employees. Ōhashi 1935, 59.

116. Ōhashi 1935, 92.

117. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai (Gofukuten), *Minakai Gofukuten goannai*, 1929.

118. One newspaper predicted that Minakai “will use Kunsan as the springboard for expansion.” *Gunsan nippō*, September 14, 1933.

119. Kirk 2018, 63; for the case of the Kunsan branch, see *Gunsan nippō*, December 4, 1937. These techniques of merchandising were introduced in Japan by state-sponsored industrial exhibitions and emporiums in the Meiji period. Hatsuda 1993, 7–59, 216–17.

120. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, December 10, 1930 (1 yen was equivalent to 100 *sen*).

121. Comments of Tanaka Ryōzō in “Sendai o shinobu no kai,” in Furukawa T. 1937, 78. This service overcame initial skepticism to earn a reputation for “absolute reliability.” (Tokyo) *Asahi shinbun*, March 25, 1935; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, April 13, 1932.

122. Sheppard 2002, 319.
123. Hayashi 2004, 93. The expansion of Japanese retail businesses was a central factor in the growth of electronic communications in colonial Korea. Yang 2000, 167.
124. In Japan, educated female clerks offered a novel, “positive image of the working woman” vis-à-vis the ever-problematic “Modern Girl.” L. Young 1999, 57.
125. Ōhashi Heiei 1935, 14, 32, 80. According to a June 22, 1933, entry in Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, for instance, Minakai posted a job ad for “150 assistants for sales and cash registers, 50 ‘restaurant service girls,’ and 10 ‘elevator girls.’”
126. Ueno 1990, 10–11, 188–89; Tamari 2000, 75.
127. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 835.
128. Chōjiya similarly continued to “manage its business according to tradition.” Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1057.
129. Hayashi 2004, 97.
130. Sand 2003, 223–26.
131. They hailed from various cities including Seoul, Wōnsan, Pusan, Taegu, and Mokpō. See Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, December 15, 1929, December 10–31, 1930, and July 1–2 and December 6–8, 1931; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, July 1–2 and December 1–5, 1932.
132. For instance, see *Tonga ilbo*, December 9, 1932.
133. Murakami 1942, 476, 481; Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha 1942, 159–60.
134. Jinsen-fu 1933, 1507; Keijō Hinodekai 1989, 62–63. Many enterprising Koreans in this period opened modistes for middle-class urbanites. Lynn 2005, 75–93.
135. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, June 8, 1931.
136. Honshi kisha, “Heigōgo ni okeru Chōsenjin no shinseikatsusō to sono chii,” *Chōsen oyobi Manshū*, October 1935, 96. According to Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, April 5, 1933, Minakai hired three Korean female clerks and one Korean male clerk.
137. The author is grateful to Professor Hayashi Hiroshige of Dōshisha University for this information (e-mail correspondence, July 28, 2002).
138. Date 1936, 96–97.
139. This is how Benjamin explained the transition heralded by world exhibitions in fin-de-siècle Europe. Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999, 7–8, 18, 903, 906.
140. Sand 2003, 15.
141. Oh 2008, 92–101.
142. Sin 2003, ch. 2.
143. Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999, 8.
144. Yi Sang quoted in Kawamura 2000, 95–107, 110.
145. Oh 2008, 83.
146. Ri 1938, 66–67. Such criticism reflected President Pak Hūng-sik’s strategy to transfer Japanese-style management to Korea, appointing several Japanese executives. Hayashi 2004, 171–74, 179. In his post-colonial memoir, however, Pak defended Hwasin’s success as a mark of his nationalism and “the triumph of ethnic [*minjok*] capital.” Pak 1981, 210.
147. *Tonga ilbo*, November 30, 1929.
148. *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, Chōsen-ban, October 24, 1933.
149. For example, see the response of a manager of Minakai’s branch in Taegu in *Fuzan nippō*, March 5, 1936.
150. Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.; Sano 1924, 348.
151. Date 1936, 97.

152. For the case of the P'yöngyang branch, see *Seisen nippō*, October 21, 1933.
153. Shirokiya 1957, 315–16. On the role of the department store (especially Mitsukoshi) through the sale and display of furniture and decorative objects in shaping new bourgeois identity and “taste” in interwar Japan, see Sand 2003, 118–31.
154. Sapin 2004, 317–36.
155. Miwa 1937, 24–26.
156. L. Young 1999, 56. For a discussion of “cultured life” as “an ideal of cosmopolitan modernity,” see Sand 2003, ch. 6.
157. Sasaki Taihei 1930, 48–49.
158. Hori 1934, 753.
159. Date 1936, 96.
160. Beckert 2014b, 319–20.
161. Minakai won tender for purveying clothes to the Tobacco Monopoly Bureau (Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, April 23, 1930), catered to the consumer cooperatives of the Communications Bureau (*Tenchō kaigijiroku*, September 8, 1931) and of the Railway Bureau (Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, April 13, 1932).
162. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, May 20, 1933.
163. Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha 1942, 160; *Tonga ilbo*, September 22, 1939.
164. For a record of visits by Governor-General Saitō Makoto (1919–1927, 1929–1931), see Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, April 22, 1930.
165. For instance, Tomijūrō and his wife were invited by the Governor-General to a meeting on April 22, 1930, according to Minakai's *Tenchō kaigijiroku*. Katsujiro and managers of the Seoul Store also visited Governor-General Ugaki. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, May 16, 1933.
166. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Tenchō kaigijiroku*, October 12 and May 27, 1930.
167. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Shojiki*, April 29 and May 5–6, 1932.
168. This information comes from Shiga Daigaku Keizai Keiei Kenkyūjo (October 12–December 26, 2004); and Suenaga 1997, 316–17.
169. See a picture of the serried rows of clerks listening to Governor-General Saitō's speech in Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.
170. Hong 2016, 140; Chōjiya Shōten 1936, n.p.; Keijō-fu, “Imonshi nyūjō,” *Keijō ihō*, 48.
171. *Tonga ilbo*, July 28, and August 14, 1937.
172. *Maeil sinbo*, October 1, 1937, and May 4, 1938.
173. *Maeil sinbo*, April 21, 1937, October 27 and November 10, 1938, and March 13, 1939; *Tonga ilbo*, October 26 and November 11, 1938, December 1, 1939, and January 21, 1940.
174. *Tonga ilbo*, February 1, 1940. For an empire-wide celebration of this event, see Ruoff 2010.
175. Nakamura Kentarō 1940, 1, 5, 17, 28–29, 38, 45, 51, 53, 70, 81, 94, 98, 102.
176. “Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, Dai 17-kai hōkokusho” (Minakai Co. Business Report, no. 17) 1938, quoted in Suenaga 1997, 318; Hayashi 2004, 125–27.
177. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1056–57, 1059, 1091; Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai oyobi bōkei kaisha gensei*, 1942.
178. Hirano 2004, 306.
179. Fujioka 2011, 2–3. On the expansion of Takashimaya's business activity to Asia (Taiwan, Korea, Manchuria, and China), see Ōe 1941, 144–45, 156–58, 190–92, 200–201, 373, 383–86, 422–29, 433–35, and 444; and Takashimaya 135-nenshi Henshū Iinkai 1968, 38–39, 48–49.

180. “Nakae Shūgo,” n.d., in Han’guksa teit’ōbeisū; Nakae Shūgo 1940, 15–16.
181. L. Young 1999, 67.
182. This also reflected Ugaki’s policy to protect Korea as a space of laissez-faire capitalism against the metropolitan pressure for industrial control. Department stores were advised to make only a good faith effort to take voluntary measures of restraint. *Tonga ilbo*, June 16, 1939.
183. Suenaga 1997, 321–23 (esp. table 6–6).
184. Tōyō Keizai Shinpōsha 1943, 144. In 1940, their cooperation with the wartime regime was institutionalized through the Korea Department Store Association. Keikidō Keisatsu Buchō to Keimu Kyokuchō et al., May 15, 1940.
185. “Nakae Shūgo,” in Han’guksa teit’ōbeisū; Nakae Shūgo 1940, 15–16.
186. L. Cohen 1990, 107, 112–13, 119–20.
187. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1056.
188. Keikidō Keisatsu Buchō to Keimu Kyokuchō et al., March 25, 1941; Keikidō Keisatsu Buchō to Keimu Kyokuchō et al., June 30, and August 29, 1941. Also see *Maeil sinbo*, June 3, 1939. On “consumer-subjects” of imperial Japan, see Silverberg 2006.
189. Minakai also deepened its backward linkages by launching an affiliate firm, Sankō Shōkai (a wholesaler of thick woolen fabrics) in native Kondō, with five branches in Korea. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 836, 843.
190. Nihon Hyakkaten Tsūshinsha 1938, 1063; Kabushiki Kaisha Mitsukoshi Honsha 2005, 67, 121, 123, 160.
191. “Minakai Hyakkaten,” in Shinkyō Shōkō Kōkai 1942, 46; “Nakae Katsujirō,” *Kyoto shinbun*, May 5, 2003.
192. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai 1942.
193. Kabushiki Kaisha Minakai, *Minakai yōran*, 1938, 833–35. The anthem was paired with “A Song of Minakai Store Employees.”
194. Another Ōmi merchant of prominence was Toshima Yūjirō, a graduate of Hasshō who operated a large manufacturer of soy sauce and miso, with a marketing network across Korea and Manchuria. A fervent nationalist, Toshima also was actively involved in local settler politics as an executive of the Seoul Chamber of Commerce, among other institutions. Sasaki Taihei 1930, 331–33; Abe K. 1935, 76.
195. Gordon 2009, 73.
196. Carol Gluck’s observation on “blended modernities” applies well to the dynamic of grafting here. Gluck 2011, 685–86.
197. This is a common observation made by scholars from Karl Polanyi to Arjun Appadurai on the impact of globalization on localities or their transition to capitalism. Brenner 1999, 431.
198. On the postwar fate of Minakai and the Nakae family, see *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, December 20, 2018.

7. A SHIGA IMMIGRANT DIASPORA IN CANADA

1. Kawasaki 1986, 16, 23–24; *SHS*, vol. 8, 2003, 887–89, 890–92.
2. Osaka Mainichi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 352.
3. For a study of nine villages in Inukami that demonstrates this correlation, see Suenaga 1998, 39–46, 53.
4. Miles 2020, 91–92; Kobayashi 1983, 199, 304.

5. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, January 13–14, 1916; Kawasaki 1986, 28, 69.
6. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 75.
7. Banno 2018, 106–7.
8. Azuma 2005; Fujitani 2011; Lu 2019; Armitage and Bashford 2014.
9. Iglar 2013, 9–10; Cushman 2013.
10. Chang 2012, 4, 92. In 1885, mostly Cantonese “Chinese comprised about one-third of British Columbia’s population of roughly 50,000.” Miles 2020, 106.
11. Sasaki 1999, 75–76; Kawasaki 1986, 24, 26–27. For more on transmigration, see Takai n.d.
12. Chang 2012, 12, 14.
13. Jenkins and Leroy 2021, 8, 11.
14. Funabashi 1986, 93–94. While the same mechanism explained the migration from Wakayama, early emigrants from Hiroshima and Fukuoka were contract laborers supplied by an emigration company in Kōbe. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 66.
15. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 79–82.
16. Wakayama sent the majority of its emigrants to North America (10,180 to the U.S. and 1,780 to Canada as of 1921). Wakayama-ken 1957, 115, 119.
17. On the history of immigration from Hiroshima to Canada, see Ayukawa 2007.
18. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 66 (table 1) and 70 (table 3).
19. Sasaki 1999, 110; Kawahara 2006, 18n19.
20. Murayama 1992, 160–61.
21. The recollection of Uyeno Ritsuichi quoted in Ayukawa 2007, 26.
22. Tamura 1992, 174; Kobayashi and Jackson 1994, 43.
23. *Tairiku Nippōsha* 1909, 55, 61; Tamura 2002, 100–101.
24. Tanioka 1964, 134; Matsumiya M. 1984, 160–61.
25. Here I draw on Massey (1984) 1995, 288.
26. Sasaki 1999, 200–201.
27. Chang 2012, 14. On the Seattle-based Oriental Trading Company that recruited workers on both sides of the border, see Chang 2012, 61–81.
28. Quoted in Young and Reid 1938, 169–70.
29. Chang 2012, 67–68; K. Adachi 1958, 3–4.
30. Quoted in K. Adachi 1976, 63, 67; Chang 2012, 89.
31. A series of “Natal Acts” drafted between 1898 and 1908 imposed a literacy requirement on immigrants. These early attempts to check the entry of Japanese were generally blocked by the Dominion Government in Ottawa, on the grounds that they lay beyond the jurisdiction of the provincial government and out of concern that they could harm treaty relations with Japan. Geiger 2011, 100; Ward 1978, 57–58.
32. *Daily Colonist*, September 8, 1907; *Daily News* (New Westminster), September 9, 1907; *Vancouver Sun*, August 12, 1940; *Vancouver World*, September 10, 1907. For a consular report on the Riot and the Japanese counterattack, see Morikawa Kishirō to Foreign Minister Hayashi Tadasu 1907.
33. Chang 2012, 106–10.
34. Sasaki 1999, 182–85; the store ad in *Tairiku nippō*, February 11, 1908.
35. Geiger 2011, 119–120; Sasaki 1999, 107.
36. *Tairiku nippō*, March 25–26, 1909. The CJAs’ activities ranged from certification of migrants to education of their children. Sasaki 1999, 199–200, 250–51.

37. Sasaki 1999, 200–201, 210, 220.
38. “Zairyū dōhō jinbutsukan,” in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 282–83.
39. Son 2007, 8.
40. *Tairiku nippō*, July 3 and 4, 1908. Emphasis in original.
41. Chang 2012, 4, 6, 13, 90; also see Azuma 2005; and Azuma 2019, 21.
42. Ambaras 2018, 8, 15.
43. Kobayashi sei, “Rikkō kenji no honryō,” *Rikkō sekai*, vol. 166 (February 10, 1918): 4.
44. On the Shiga prefectural association formed in 1905, see *Tairiku nippō*, June 22, 1909; and “Kaisoku” (Association Rules), reprinted in Kawasaki 1986, 157–58. For reasons unknown, the association soon became dormant.
45. On the youth groups formed by the villagers of Isoda and Kaideima, see Iso-da Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: shūshin, kōmin, shokugyō-ka kyōdo shiryō,” 460–61; Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 156–57.
46. Miles 2020, 116.
47. This tendency became pronounced in the age of the nation-state with clearly demarcated borders (Ambaras 2018, 13, 57–58), though peddlers from Ōmi had already been treated this way by critics in Tokugawa Japan (chapter 1).
48. As of 1912, over 77 percent of Shiga immigrants in Canada lived in Vancouver, concentrating on Powell Street. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 73.
49. Suenaga 2006a, 728; Murayama 1992, 165.
50. Entry on Ebata Ishimatsu in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 170.
51. K. Adachi 1958, 8.
52. [Gaimushō] February 1912, 68.
53. Entries on Hinatsu Kahē and Yokota Gonji in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 171, 199.
54. Matsumiya S. 2017, 87; Kobayashi 1983, 271–72 (from the content of Kobayashi’s interview, “Mr. A” is most likely his adopted son, Masuo).
55. *Tairiku nippō*, March 9, 1912.
56. Entry on Matsumiya Sotojirō in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 156; Matsueda 1920, 218; Matsumiya S. 2017, 87; “Matsumiya Shōten” in *Tairiku Nippōsha* 1924, 32.
57. Sasaki 1999, 86; *Tairiku nippō*, March 9, 1912.
58. Entry on Matsumiya Yaoko in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 565–66.
59. Entries on Matsumiya Sotojirō and Nose Seihachi in Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 156–57, 217.
60. *Tairiku nippō*, February 23, 1920; Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 3, 32.
61. See store ads in *Tairiku nippō*, April 24, 1939, 5, and June 7, 1940, 8.
62. Matsueda 1920, 218.
63. See store ads in *Tairiku nippō*, September 4, 1923, and September 20, 1940; Matsumiya S. 2017, 88.
64. Matsumiya S. 2017, 100.
65. “Kinga shinnen: heiten no eigyō hōshin ni tsuite,” *Tairiku nippō*, January 1, 1924, 7.
66. See store ads in *Tairiku nippō*, August 18, 1939, and July 26, 1940.
67. It was held by the *Tairiku nippō* “to promote expansion of our compatriots overseas.” *Tairiku nippō*, January 4, February 12, and February 17, 1912.
68. *Tairiku Nippōsha* 1924, 32; Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 156–57.
69. Matsumiya S. 2017, 24–25, 103.

70. Matsumiya S. 2017, 87–88; Ōsaka Mainishi Shinbun Keizaibu 1932, 326–27.
71. On Kagetsu Eikichi, see Kagetsu 2017, “Introduction.”
72. Tairiku Nippōsha 1917, 26. Tamura Trading Firm was the first to export these Canadian products to Japan. *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, July 17–27, 1935. By contrast, the total value of Japanese imports (textiles, tea, rice, ceramics, and mandarin oranges being the most significant) amounted to only a third of these Canadian exports. *Tairiku nippō*, January 30, 1928.
73. Some Shiga migrants did venture into the export sector. The grocer Maikawa Tomekichi, for example, forayed into the export of Canadian lumber, launching an affiliate of Kagetsu Logging Company in Hikone. *SHS*, vol. 3, 518; newspaper ad in *Tairiku nippō*, January 1, 1922.
74. *Tairiku nippō*, May 18 and May 21, 1909.
75. See Kobayashi sei, “Rikkō kenji no honryō,” *Rikkō sekai*, vol. 166 (February 10, 1918): 5; Consul Gomyō (Suna), “Zaika Nihonjin no genjō,” *Tairiku nippō*, January 1, 1925. Also Azuma 2019, 5.
76. Focused on bookkeeping, foreign exchange, and customs procedures, its curriculum was a transpacific, if less rigorous, equivalent of Hikone Kōshō’s one-year program completed by Matsumiya’s son. See the school’s founding prospectus in the supplement to *Tairiku nippō*, March 24 and April 4, 1914.
77. [Gaimushō] February 1912, 69–70.
78. Tamura 2002, 41–42, 76; Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 2, 59; and Nakayama J. 1922, in *KIS*, vol. 3, 63–64.
79. Murata Hana, testimony, in Makabe 1983, 75–96.
80. “Bankūbā Shibu dayori,” in Kinteikai, vol. 2, 1935, reprinted in *SHS*, vol. 9, 470.
81. For example, see biographical portraits of wives of famous Ōmi merchants compiled in Watanabe and Ōta 1935.
82. Many Japanese women also worked as housemaids for white families to supplement their family income, earning wages on the level of male labor migrants. Matsumiya M. 1984, 162–63, 179.
83. *Tairiku nippō*, March 25, 1916.
84. Ambaras 2018.
85. For a standard account of the incident, see H. Johnson 1989.
86. Mongia 2007, 406–9.
87. Kramer 2018, 405.
88. Ward 1978, 130.
89. R. McDonald 1996, 24–25, 35, 60.
90. “Supplement to the Canadian News,” *Tairiku nippō*, May 9, 1914.
91. Matsumiya M. 1984, 178.
92. K. Adachi 1958, 5.
93. Tanigawa, “Paueru gaitō no shū (fujin no kakusei o nozomu),” *Tairiku nippō*, June 12 and June 14, 1920.
94. Yoshimizu n.d.
95. *Tairiku nippō*, July 19 and May 30, 1922.
96. Roy 1975, 116.
97. Ukita Gōji, “Setsu ni dōhō no kakusei o unagasu,” *Tairiku nippō*, April 30, 1920.

98. *Tairiku nippō*, January 7, 1920, and January 20, 1921.
99. (Shinseiin) Ōgashira, “Nihonjin shōten no kaizen o sakebu,” *Tairiku nippō*, July 16, 1920.
100. Geiger 2011, 106–7; Mongia 2007, 403.
101. Roy 1975, 126–27; Anderson 1991, 165–66.
102. “Iwayuru Gōshūjin to kakusei seru shin-Shigakenjin,” *Tairiku nippō*, October 6, 1920.
103. Sumida 1935, 188.
104. Young and Reid 1938, 95; K. Adachi 1976, 114.
105. Shiga Kyōkushi Hensan Senmon Iinkai 2004, 70–79. Shiga immigrants on Powell Street played a key role in the creation of the Japanese Buddhist Association in 1905. Ikuta 1981, 16–21, 24–26.
106. Gonnami 2005, 17–20; Ayukawa 2007, 92. It was later reorganized as the Camp and Mill Workers’ Union.
107. *Tairiku nippō*, May 22, May 26, and June 2, 1920.
108. Tamura 1992, 181, 195–96, 198; G. Nakayama 1984, 168.
109. K. Adachi 1958, 13.
110. *Tairiku nippō*, May 22 and May 27, 1920; *B.C. Federationist*, May 21, 1920.
111. See its ad in *Tairiku nippō*, April 29–June 17, 1920; Sada Taneji, “Suwansonwan no meikyū ni tsuite (3),” *Tairiku nippō*, May 28, 1920.
112. Tamura 1992, 174.
113. Kobayashi and Jackson 1994, 43–44. For a similar dynamic of co-ethnic exploitation by labor subcontractors in Chinatowns in the U.S.-Canadian borderlands, see Hu-Dehart 2012.
114. Ward 1978, 124, 126.
115. Roy 1975, 116.
116. Anderson 1991, 106, 117–19. These included the imposition of a \$50 tax on vegetable peddlers.
117. *British Columbia Labor News*, August 19, 1921, 1.
118. “Shall B.C. Remain ‘White?’” *British Columbia Retailer*, October 31, 1921, 8–9.
119. Roy 1973, 52–53; Roy 1975, 119; *British Columbia Retailer*, October 31, 1922, 9–10.
120. *British Columbia Retailer*, November 30, 1922, 9–10.
121. Ward 1978, 131–33.
122. *Tairiku nippō*, July 7 and August 19, 1922; May 5–6, June 26, and November 14, 1925.
123. *Tairiku nippō*, June 26, 1925. Asked about the “merits and demerits of the Japanese,” whites’ responses to the questionnaire confirmed their deep-seated assumption about the “impossibility or difficulty of (Japanese) assimilation” to Canada.
124. *Tairiku nippō*, November 14, 1925.
125. Nagasawa R. 1928, 27; Sasaki 1992, 74–86; an account of Ryūichi Yoshida in Knight and Koizumi 1977, 58–59.
126. *Daily Colonist*, June 3, 1924, 2.
127. The B.C. legislature subsequently passed an act along the lines drafted by MacInnes (Ward 1978, 135–38), though due to “uncertainty about the Act’s constitutionality, no Board was ever established and the Act was quietly repealed in 1936.” Roy 1975, 123.
128. See “The Oriental Question,” *Retailer*, June 30, 1927, 7, 9.

129. Ward 1978, 138; Sasaki 1999, 107; *Asahi shinbun*, September 1, 1928.
130. Hsu 2004, 126.
131. Sasaki and Shimomura 1993, 74–75.
132. Furukawa Y. (1930) 2014, 35.
133. Tanioka 1964, 3–4.
134. K. Adachi 1976, 18.
135. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, April 29, 1924.
136. Kobayashi 1983, 199, 304.
137. Testimony of Nishimura Rikuo, in Ōmi Shōnin Kenkyūkai 2005, 42.
138. Suenaga 1998, 55; Matsumiya M. 1984, 130.
139. As of 1930, close to half of the population of Isoda (1,756 out of 3,981) lived outside the village, with the overwhelming majority in Canada (830) and the U.S. (158). Kawasaki 1988, 33–34 (tables 3, 4).
140. Kobayashi 1983, 8–9, 190.
141. Quoted in Funabashi 1986, 97–98.
142. “Namigashira,” in *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, September 11, September 13, September 17, September 22, and September 25, 1913.
143. Kobayashi 1983, 291, 301–2.
144. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, January 13–14, 1916.
145. Dusinger 2012.
146. Matsumiya M. 1984, 133–39; Kobayashi 1983, 256, 261.
147. Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: Chiri-ka kyōdo shiryō,” n.d., 466.
148. “Kōeki,” in Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: shūshin, kōmin, shokugyō-ka kyōdo shiryō,” n.d., 460–61.
149. Kobayashi 1983, 291–92.
150. Nozaki 1964, 86.
151. Kobayashi 1983, 183, 220, 222–23. Although his full name is not stated, it is most likely Tonomura Uhē. Uemura 1990, 63.
152. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, April 29, 1924; *SHS*, vol. 3, 266–69; Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: Chiri-ka kyōdo shiryō,” n.d., 466; Matsumiya S. 2017, 65.
153. Interview with “Mr. E, A Household Head,” in Kobayashi 1983, 280.
154. Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: Chiri-ka kyōdo shiryō,” n.d., 466.
155. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, December 17, 2018, 29.
156. Matsumiya M. 1984, 179; Shen 2012, 81.
157. Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō, kyōdo shiryō,” 1931, quoted in Yamashita 1964, 217.
158. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, January 14, 1916.
159. Yamashita 1964, 216–18.
160. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, May 5, May 7, July 2, and July 6, 1924; a manifesto, May 1924, reprinted in *SHS*, vol. 9, 463–64.
161. Azuma 2019, 136.
162. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, January 14, 1916.
163. “Kyōiku keiei shiryō,” Isoda Village Primary School (ca. 1931), quoted in Kawasaki 1988, 34.
164. This reversal reflected a new emphasis on Nisei’s assimilation as Canadian citizens. Kanada Nihonjinkai 1926, 40.
165. Kawasaki 1988, 33–34.

166. “Yomikata, tsuzurikata kyōdo shiryō,” quoted in *SHS*, vol. 3, 597–98.
167. Isoda Shōgakkō, “Isoda Shōgakkō: Chiri-ka kyōdo shiryō,” n.d., 465–66.
168. “Kyōiku keiei shiryō” of Isoda Village Primary School (ca. 1931), quoted in Kawasaki 1988.
169. Kawasaki 1986, 351 (table 26).
170. Nakae K. 1924b, 219.
171. Young and Reid 1938, 123; Ward 1978, 111.
172. Consul Gomyō Suna, “Kanada bōeki wa hijō ni yūbō,” *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, April 13, 1925; Meehan 2004, 42.
173. Imrie quoted in *Osaka Mainichi shinbun*, July 17–27, 1935; Tairiku Nippōsha, “Kanada no bōeki aitekoku,” *Kanada dōhō hattenshi*, vol. 3, 1924, 38–39. On the timber trade, see Fedman 2020, 132.
174. Ward 1978, 58; *Kōbe shinbun*, November 15–18, 1930.
175. Tairiku Nippōsha, “Kanada bōeki no zento,” *Kanada dōhō hattenshi*, 1924, 27.
176. G. Nakayama 1984, 132.
177. Suenaga 2006b, 156–58; and Suenaga 1998, 58–60; Kuwahara 2001, 2–3.
178. *Tairiku nippō*, January 26–27, 1937.
179. Japantown experienced one of the worst stretches of recession in this period. Enami Yoshio, “Kanada no fukeiki,” *Rikkōmō*, vol. 23 (January 1, 1932), 5; “Kanada no zairyū dōhō,” *Rikkō sekai*, vol. 325 (January 1, 1932), 73; “Kanada jijō,” *Rikkō sekai*, vol. 339 (March 1, 1933), 55–57.
180. Ward 1978, 107.
181. MacInnes 1927, 35–36, 51.
182. Conducted by social scientists, the survey was based on fieldwork and interviews with Japanese leaders and other studies, including Rigenta Sumida’s master’s thesis (1935) and CJA’s survey on the Nisei in B.C. Young and Reid 1938, vii, xxviii.
183. Young and Reid 1938, 70–72.
184. Its genealogy stretched back to the early seventeenth century. Zhang 2009, 300–1; Hong and Benton 2016, 588.
185. For instance, see *Daily Colonist*, January 19, 1938, 2; *Tairiku nippō*, February 22, 1938.
186. Testimony of Hirai Shigeru, in Ōmi Shōnin Kenkyūkai 2004, 52.
187. Sasaki 1999, 215–19; Suenaga 2006a.
188. “Shinsō no Maikawa Hyakkaten” and store ad, in *Tairiku nippō*, February 5, 1938; testimonies of Fukuhara Tomiko and Hori Hideo, in Ōmi Shōnin Kenkyūkai 2004, 50, 62.
189. For the case of Maikawa Junko, wife of a store manager, see Kinteikai 1935.
190. *Tairiku nippō*, October 16 and October 18, 1937.
191. *Tairiku nippō*, July 7, 1938; K. Adachi 1976, 184.
192. *Tairiku nippō*, May 28, 1938.
193. Roy 1975, 125.
194. Anderson 1991, 165–66.
195. K. Adachi 1976, 187.
196. Roy 1975, 127–28, 130. But his proposals met opposition from “moderate” council members such as socialist Helena Gutteridge. K. Adachi 1976, 186.
197. Quoted in Roy 1973, 65.
198. Chang 2012, 3–4.

199. Anderson 1991, 129–31.
200. Roy 1973, 63; Roy 1975, 128–29.
201. *Tairiku nippō*, May 28 and July 14, 1938.
202. Court case of *Maikawa Fish Store* (Powell 333), in *Province of British Columbia Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the Year Ended December 31st 1938* (section: “Court Cases: ‘Hours of Work Act’”), 44.
203. *Tairiku nippō*, March 27 and March 29, 1939.
204. *Tairiku nippō*, July 6, 1938.
205. *Vancouver Sun*, August 7, 1940; *Tairiku nippō*, August 7–8, 1940.
206. *Vancouver Sun*, August 13, 1940, 13.
207. *Vancouver Sun*, August 13, 1940, 13; *Tairiku nippō*, August 13, 1940.
208. Canadian Japanese Association 1937.
209. *Vancouver Sun*, August 10, 1940; *Tairiku nippō*, August 12, 1940.
210. For calls on donations, see *Tairiku nippō*, August 19, October 16, October 19, October 28, and November 10, 1937.
211. Miyazaki 1973, 13–15; *Tairiku nippō*, July 14, 1938, and September 27, 1939.
212. *Tairiku nippō*, May 11, July 14, and December 2, 1938, and January 16, 1939; “Zai-Kanada Kanrojinkai shusai senshisha ireisai,” *Minami-Aoyagimura hō*, vol. 8, n.d.
213. K. Adachi 1976, 184–85.
214. For example, see *Tairiku nippō*, December 16, 1939.
215. *Tairiku nippō*, April 3, 1940; its English-language ad in *Tairiku nippō*, June 27, 1940; G. Nakayama 1984, 134; Kuwahara 2001, 4.
216. See its store ad in *Tairiku nippō*, July 12, 1940.
217. Testimony of Horii Hideo, in *Ōmi Shōnin Kenkyūkai* 2004, 62.
218. K. Adachi 1976, 202–4.
219. Kawasaki 1986, 395.
220. Fujitani 2011.
221. Robinson 2009, 132–45, 171–79.
222. A memoir by Kondō Gizō, quoted in Suenaga 2006a, 730.
223. A wartime record of Kinoshita Yoshitomo, reprinted in Kawasaki 1986, 149.
224. “Ōmi no Amerika mura,” *Asahi shinbun*, Shiga edition, January 3, 2005.
225. Robinson 2009, 265–74.
226. Kobayashi 1983, 204 (table 3), 216, 219.
227. A memoir by Kondō Gizō, quoted in Suenaga 2006a, 730–33. By contrast, most immigrants from Hiroshima stayed in Canada. Ayukawa 2007, xix. Shiga natives who did likewise were scattered mainly east of the Rockies. Over the years, however, they reconstituted themselves as a community through the “redress movement” in the 1970s and through the revival of native-place associations. Kawasaki 1986, 160–65.
228. G. Nakayama 1984, 134, 209–10; Kuwahara 2001, 4.
229. Suenaga 2006b, 146–47.
230. Kuwahara 2001, 4; G. Nakayama 1984, 135.

CONCLUSION

1. *Osaka Asahi shinbun*, Kyoto furoku, January 14, 1916.
2. Levy 2012, 22, 168.

3. Swyngedouw 2004, 131.
4. Azuma 2019, 10–11.
5. Tagliacozzo, Siu, and Perdue 2015, 10.
6. See HSG 1941a, 234–50; Shiga Kengikaishi Hensan Iinkai, vol. 2, 1972, 814–15.
7. A survey conducted in the late 1970s counted a total of 548 Ōmi-lineage firms, but the author, Ogura Eiichirō, noting the incompleteness of data, suspects the actual number would be double this figure. Ogura 1981.
8. See Shiga Hinode Shinbunsha Seijibu 1954, 1, 7, 19, 24–25, 57, 80, 123, 132, 156, 170 for Hasshō graduates; and 10, 42, 51, 59, 65, 140, 150 for Hikone Kōshō graduates. Several Shiga-born alumni of Tōa Dōbun Shoin (chapter 4) also appear in Shiga Hinode Shinbunsha Seijibu, 85, 134, 153.
9. Shiga Kenshi Hensan Iinkai 1980, 836; Higuchi 1940.
10. “Zenkoku Shiga Kenjinkai Rengōkai ni tsuite,” <https://zenjiren.com>.
11. See Zenkoku Shiga Kenjinkai Rengōkai, January 2014, 63.
12. Komai 2019, 70, 202–3.
13. “Shagaisen no hattatsu, 1,” *Jiji shinpō*, May 17, 1931.
14. For a record of summer peddling, see Shiga Kenritsu Hachiman Shōgyō Kōtō Gakkō 1994. About more recent years, see *Mainichi shinbun*, Shiga ed., for the following dates: May 8, 2013; July 24, 2013; July 23, 2014; December 7, 2017; July 27, 2018; March 23, 2019.
15. *Tenbin no uta* (1984–1988). Part 2 of this three-part film was partly shot in South Korea, in collaboration with local actors and crew.
16. Suenaga Kunitoshi is a leading scholar who actively promotes this idea. See Suenaga 2005. For a skeptical view, see Usami 2015; and Arima 2010a, 147–48.
17. Launched and led by Shiga Prefecture, this movement has even spawned a research institute dedicated to this mission. See “Sanpō yoshi Kenkyūjo no rinen,” <https://sanpo-yoshi.net/mission/>.
18. See Zenkoku Shiga Kenjinkai Rengōkai, March 2006, 24–39, and July 2008, 20–27. For the efforts of the Saitama branch, see Zenkoku Shiga Kenjinkai Rengōkai, February 2011, 45.
19. For example, see Bergman 2014; Benioff 2019.
20. Aaker and Aaker 2016.

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- HKSGI *Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō ichiran*. Hikone: Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, 1923–1944.
- HSG Kawakami Ujirō, ed. *Hachiman Shōgyō gojūgonenshi*. Hachiman-chō, Shiga: Shigakenritsu Hachiman Shōgyō Gakkō Sōritsu Gojussūnen Kinenkai, 1941a.
- HULNSC Hokkaido University Library, Northern Studies Collections (Hokkaidō Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan, Hoppō Shiryō). Hokkaido, Japan.
- HYCTS Han'guk Yōksa Chōngbo Tonghap Sisūtem (Korean History Data Integration System). Kuksa P'yōnch'an Wiwōnhoe, Kyōnggi-do Kwachōnsi, South Korea. <https://koreanhistory.or.kr/>.
- JACAR Japan Center for Asian Historical Records, National Archives of Japan (Kokuritsu Kōbunshokan, Ajia Rekishi Shiryō Centā). <https://www.jacar.go.jp/>.
- KIK Ritsumeikan Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo, ed. *Kōtō iminmura no kenkyū: Hikoneshi Hassaka, Mitsuya*. A special issue of *Ritsumeikan Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo kiyō*, vol. 14 (March 1964).
- KIS *Kanada iminshi shiryō*. Sasaki Toshiji, kaisetsu. 12 vol. Tokyo: Fuji Shuppan, 1995–2001.
- KJK Kaigai Jijō Kenkyūkai. *Kaigai jijō kenkyū*. Hikone: Kaigai Jijō Kenkyūkai, Hikone Kōtō Shōgyō Gakkō, 1933–1941.
- OSM Ōmi Shōnin Museum, Higashi Ōmi, Shiga, Japan.

- SHS Hikone Shishi Henshū Iinkai, ed. *Shinshū Hikone shishi*. Hikone: Hikone-shi.
- SICOT Usami Hideki, ed. *Shodai Itō Chūbē o tsuibosuru: arishi hi no chichi, Marubeni, soshite shujin*. Osaka: Seibundō, 2012.

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