Strangers from a Different Shore
For
Carol,
Dana, Troy, and Todd

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"Get Labor First": The American Errand into the Wilderness

On the island of Kauai in 1835, a young man from Boston visited a small sugar mill where he noticed the presence of a few Chinese workers. William Hooper had been sent to this remote tropical island, still in a state of nature, by a Honolulu mercantile firm founded by New England businessmen. His mission was to establish the first sugar plantation in Hawaii. Hooper belonged to Euro-American efforts to colonize the islands, which had been unknown to whites until Captain James Cook had accidentally sailed across the archipelago in 1778. The Chinese laborers, the Yankee enterpriser reported to his company on March 28, worked six days a week, "making about 210 lb sugar per day & molasses by the cord. They could make four times as much by increasing the size of kettles. . . . They have to work all the time — and no regard is paid to their complaints for food, etc., etc. Slavery is nothing compared to it."¹

A few months later, Hooper began operations for his plantation. Initially he hired twenty-five Hawaiian natives, and, on September 12, he noted in his diary: "Laid out a piece of land supposed to contain 12 acres to be cultivated with cane." He was pleased with his small but nonetheless portentous effort to transform the lush wilderness into ordered rows of cane fields. A year later, in his diary, he proudly listed his accomplishments: twenty houses for the natives, a house for the superintendent, a sugar mill, and twenty-five acres of cane under cultivation. He also recorded the moral purpose behind his energetic enterprise:
Just one year to day since I commenced work on this plantation, during which I have had more annoyances from the chiefs and difficulties with the natives (from the fact of this land being the first that has ever been cultivated, on the plan of free labour, at these islands) than I ever tho’t it possible for one white man to bear, nevertheless I have succeeded in bringing about a place, which if followed up by other foreign residents, will eventually emancipate the natives from the miserable system of “chief labour” which has ever existed at these Islands, and which if not broken up, will be an effectual preventative to the progress of civilization, industry and national prosperity.... The tract of land in Koloa was [developed] after much pain...for the purpose of breaking up the system aforesaid or in other words to serve as an entering wedge...[to] upset the whole system.²

A “white man” determined to advance the “progress of civilization,” Hooper soon became frustrated by the inefficiency and recalcitrance of the Hawaiian laborers and began to employ a few Chinese. He quickly saw the enormous potential of an immigrant Chinese labor force. In a letter to Ladd and Company in 1836, he advised: “We may deem it at a future day, necessary to locate some halfdozen Chinese on the land, if the establishment grows it will require them. The superintendent cannot feed the mill, boil the juice, make sugar, etc., and to trust it to the natives is worse than nothing.” Two years later, Hooper urged his company to import Chinese laborers. “A colony of Chinese would, probably, put the plantation in order,” he predicted, “to be perpetuated, sooner and with less trouble than any other class of husbandmen.”³

Ten years later, shortly after the war against Mexico and the annexation of California in 1848, an American policymaker called for the importation of Chinese laborers to the United States. In his plan submitted to Congress, Aaron H. Palmer recommended the development of steam transportation in the Pacific and the establishment of San Francisco as the center of American trade with China. Connected by railroad to the Atlantic states, San Francisco would become the “great emporium of our commerce on the Pacific.” Chinese laborers, Palmer continued, should be imported to build the transcontinental railroad as well as to bring the fertile lands of California under cultivation. “No people in all the East are so well adapted for clearing wild lands and raising every species of agricultural product...as the Chinese.”⁴
Both Hooper and Palmer shared a peculiarly white-American world view. Like John Winthrop before them, they felt a moral compulsion not to let the land “lie in waste.” Their vision of Chinese cultivating cane in Hawaii and building railroads and clearing lands in the West reflected a significant theme of American history — what the perspicacious scholar Perry Miller described as “the errand into the wilderness.” From the very beginning, the English settlement of America embraced a sense of mission. The colonists had come to remake the new world in their own image. The process, as it turned out, would be both ideological and economic, involving the cultural and physical transformation of the terrain. During the nineteenth century, the errand was extended westward across the Indian lands and Mexican territory to a new Pacific frontier. By 1848 the United States was poised on the western edge of the continent, ready to advance the “entering wedge” of its market civilization into Asia. Five years later, Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed his warships into Edo Bay and coerced Japan at cannon point to open its doors to American “friendship” and “commerce.” In 1898 the United States annexed the Republic of Hawaii and forcefully took the Philippines away from Spain.5

Like Mark Twain’s Connecticut Yankee, Hooper and Palmer wielded both Protestant morality and technological power in the service of American “progress.” In Twain’s story, the Connecticut Yankee travels backward through time to King Arthur’s court. He quickly takes command and transforms this idyllic and pre-industrial society into a modern world of railroads, steamboats, telegraph systems, and smoking factories. The Yankee also puts everyone to work, for in his new regime, imbued with a spirit of capitalism and armed with technological knowledge, there is to be no idleness. Even the religious hermit, standing all day on a pillar and constantly bowing his body to his feet in prayer, is not allowed to pray without being productive. A system of elastic cords is attached to him and his movements are utilized to power a sewing machine. “Necessity” would rule in the Yankee’s kingdom. Similarly, Hooper and Palmer were representatives of an expansionist America. Determined to bring a modern industrial order of productivity to the Pacific frontier, they confidently thought America’s “destiny” was “manifest”: the West would become a great locus of “industry and national prosperity.” Crucial for this transformation would be the entry of “strangers from a different shore” — from China as well as Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and India.6
"Get labor first," sugar planters in Hawaii calculated, "and capital will follow." During the second half of the nineteenth century, they ushered in a modern economy and made sugar "King." Mostly American businessmen and sons of American missionaries, the planters transformed this archipelago into a virtual economic colony of the United States. They were instrumental in arranging the 1875 Reciprocity Treaty between the governments of Hawaii and the United States, which permitted the island kingdom to export sugar to America duty free. Investments in cane growing became a "mania," and the production of sugar jumped from 9,392 tons in 1870 to 31,792 tons ten years later to nearly 300,000 tons in 1900. Between 1875 and 1910, cultivated plantation lands multiplied nearly eighteen times, or from 12,000 to 214,000 acres. Sugar was Hawaii's most important export: in 1897, a year before the United States annexed the islands, sugar exports accounted for $15.4 million out of an export total of $16.2 million.  

Before this tremendous growth of the sugar industry could occur, planters had to find labor. They were reluctant to invest capital in sugar production as long as they had to depend on Hawaiian labor. Native workers were not abundantly available because their population had been declining precipitously for several decades. Moreover, Hawaiian workers generally were not easily disciplined; farming and fishing offered them alternative means of survival. In 1850 planters founded the Royal Hawaiian Agricultural Society to introduce workers from China. Two years later, after the arrival of the first Chinese contract laborers, the president of the society predicted: "We shall find Coolie labor to be far more certain, systematic, and economic than that of the native. They are prompt at the call of the bell, steady in their work, quick to learn, and will accomplish more [than Hawaiian laborers]." To satisfy their demand for labor, planters scoured the world — mainly Asia, but also Europe — in search of workers.  

Planters viewed laborers as commodities necessary for the operation of the plantation. To their labor suppliers, the Honolulu mercantile houses such as Castle and Cooke and Theo. H. Davies and Company, they submitted requisitions for men and material. On July 2, 1890, for example, the Davies Company sent C. McLennan, manager of the Laupahoehoe Plantation, a memorandum acknowledging receipt of an order for
bonemeal
canvas
Japanese laborers
macaroni
a Chinaman

In another letter to McLennan, January 3, 1898, the Davis Company confirmed a list of orders, which included: "DRIED BLOOD [fertilizer]," "LABORERS. We will book your order for 75 Japanese to come as soon as possible," and "MULES & HORSES." On October 12, 1894, William G. Irwin and Company wrote to George C. Hewitt of the Hutchinson Plantation to acknowledge receipt of orders for pipe coverings, insulators, bolts, bone meal (three hundred tons), and Chinese laborers (forty men). On May 5, 1908, the vice president of H. Hackfield and Company sent George Wilcox of the Grove Farm Plantation on Kauai a letter with itemized sections listing, alphabetically, orders for

Fertilizer
Filipinos.

In their orders for laborers, planters systematically developed an ethnically diverse work force as a mechanism of control. During the 1850s, they used Chinese laborers to set an "example" for the Hawaiian workers. Managers hoped the Hawaiians would be "naturally jealous" of the foreigners and "ambitious" to outdo them. They encouraged the Chinese to call the native workers "wahine! wahine!" [Hawaiian for "women! women!"]

Three decades later, realizing they had become too dependent on Chinese laborers, planters turned to Portuguese workers. "We need them," they explained, "especially as an offset to the Chinese. . . . We lay great stress on the necessity of having our labor mixed. By employing different nationalities, there is less danger of collusion among laborers, and the employers [are able to] secure better discipline." Meanwhile, planters initiated the importation of Japanese laborers as "the principle check upon the Chinese, in keeping down the price of labor." During the 1890s, planters recruited laborers from both China and Japan, thinking "discipline would be easier and labor more tractable if Chinese were present or obtainable in sufficient numbers to play off against the Japanese in case of disputes."

Diversity was deliberately designed to break strikes and repress
unions. Complaining about the frequency of strikes on plantations where the workers were mostly from the same country, plantation manager Robert Hall recommended a “judicious mixture [of nationalities] to modify the effect of a strike.” Similarly manager George F. Renton advised his fellow planters to employ as many different nationalities as possible on each plantation in order to “offset” the power of any one nationality of workers. Bluntly stating the planters’ divide-and-rule strategy, manager George H. Fairfield declared: “Keep a variety of laborers, that is different nationalities, and thus prevent any concerted action in case of strikes, for there are few, if any, cases of Japs, Chinese, and Portuguese entering into a strike as a unit.” On September 26, 1896, in a letter to planter George Wilcox, H. Hackfield and Company stated confidentially: “Regarding the proportion of Chinese and Japanese laborers we beg to advise, that the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association and the Bureau of Immigration have agreed upon 2/3rd of the former and 1/3 of the latter. For your private information we mention, that the reason for this increasing the percentage of the Chinese laborers is due to the desire of breaking up the preponderance of the Japanese element.”

Four years later, however, planters could no longer import Chinese laborers, for Hawaii had been annexed to the United States and federal laws prohibiting Chinese immigration had been extended to the new territory. Worried the “Japs” were “getting too numerous,” planters scrambled for new sources of labor. “There is a movement on foot [sic],” wrote the director of H. Hackfield and Company to planter Wilcox on December 22, 1900, “to introduce Puerto Rican laborers, and also some Italians, Portuguese, and Negroes from the South. . . . We would ask you to let us know at your earliest convenience how many laborers of each nationality you need.” A year later, planters transported two hundred blacks from Tennessee to Hawaii.

But planters preferred to “mix the labor races” by dividing the work force “about equally between two Oriental nationalities.” Consequently, they turned to Korea as a new source of Asian labor, and they developed a plan to import Koreans and “pit” them against the “excess of Japanese.” In 1903, they introduced Korean workers on the plantations, certain the Koreans were “not likely to combine with the Japanese at any attempt at strikes.” An official of William G. Irwin and Company, a labor supplier, predicted: “The Korean immigration scheme which has been inaugurated will in due course give us an element which will go far towards not only assisting labor
requirements but will be of great service in countering the evil effects in the labor market caused by too great a preponderance of Japanese.” A planter, angry at Japanese workers for demanding higher wages, asked William G. Irwin and Company to send him a shipment of Korean laborers soon: “In our opinion, it would be advisable, as soon as circumstances permit, to get a large number of Koreans in the country . . . and drive the Japs out.”

But the Korean labor supply was cut off when the Korean government prohibited emigration to Hawaii in 1905. A year later, the planters began bringing laborers from the Philippines, a U.S. territory acquired from Spain after the 1898 war. Labor recruiter Albert F. Judd, displaying the first group of Filipino laborers on the dock in Honolulu, promised that if the Filipino were treated right, he would be a “first-class laborer,” “possibly not as good as the Chinaman or the Jap, but steady, faithful and willing to do his best for any boss for whom he has a liking.” Shortly afterward planters imported massive numbers of Filipino workers. The 1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement restricted the emigration of Japanese laborers and the 1909 Japanese strike threatened planter control of the work force. During the strike, on July 28, 1909, the labor committee of the Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association reported that several hundred Filipino laborers were en route to Hawaii: “It may be too soon to say that the Jap is to be supplanted, but it is certainly in order to take steps to clip his wings [and to give] encouragement to a new class [Filipinos] . . . to keep the more belligerent element in its proper place.” Again, like the Chinese and Koreans, the Filipinos were used to control and discipline Japanese workers. One planter, for example, complained to C. Brewer and Company about the high wages demanded by the Japanese laborers on his plantation. On August 7, he wrote to the company: “If possible for you to arrange it I should very much like to get say 25 new Filipinos to put into our day gang. . . . In this way perhaps we can stir the Japs a bit.” Twenty days later, he wrote again, stating that he was very pleased to receive the shipment of thirty Filipinos and that he hoped he could use them to bring the Japanese workers to “their senses.”

Like the planters in Hawaii, businessmen on the U.S. mainland were aware of the need to “get labor first.” Many of them saw that advances in technology had transformed Asia into a new source of labor for American capitalism. Steam transportation had brought Asia to America’s “door” and given American industries access to
the "surplus" labor of "unnumbered millions" in Asia. "Cheap" Chinese labor was now "available." In an article entitled, "Our Manufacturing Era," published in the Overland Monthly in 1869, Henry Robinson described California's enormous economic potential: it had every variety of climate and soil for the production of raw material, a nearly completed railroad, an abundance of fuel and water power, markets in Asia and the Pacific, and an unlimited supply of low-wage labor from China. "If society must have 'mudsills,' it is certainly better to take them from a race which would be benefitted by even that position in a civilized community, than subject a portion of our own race to a position which they have outgrown." Robinson concluded: "If Chinese labor could be used to develop the industries of California, it would be the height of folly to forbid its entrance to the Golden Gate." A California farmer stated frankly that he could not get white labor to do stoop labor in the fields: "I must employ Chinamen or give up." Noting the need for Chinese workers for the railroads, agriculture, and manufacturing, San Francisco minister Otis Gibson reported in 1877 that there was a constant demand for Chinese labor all over the Pacific Coast because reliable white labor was not available at wages capital could afford to pay.16

Like the planters in Hawaii, employers of Chinese labor and their supporters had also devised a divide-and-control strategy. Railroad builder Charles Crocker described how Chinese workers could help to defuse the white labor movement by offering white workers hopes of becoming capitalists themselves: "I think that every white man who is intelligent and able to work ... who has the capacity of being something else, can get to be something else by the presence of Chinese labor easier than he could without it. ... After we got Chinamen to work, we took the more intelligent of the white laborers and made foremen of them. Several of them who never expected, never had a dream that they were going to be anything but shovelers of dirt, hewers of wood and drawers of water are now respectable farmers, owning farms. They got a start by controlling Chinese labor on our railroad."17

But the Chinese could also be pitted against and used to discipline white workers. E. L. Godkin of The Nation predicted that the importation of Chinese labor would become a favorite method of resisting white workers' strikes now that American capital had within its reach millions of Chinese "ready to work for small wages." In California, a traveler reported in 1870: "In the factories of San Francisco they had none but Irish, paying them three dollars a day
in gold. They struck, and demanded four dollars. Immediately their places, numbering three hundred, were supplied by Chinamen at one dollar a day.” Capital used Chinese laborers as a transnational industrial reserve army to weigh down white workers during periods of economic expansion and to hold white labor in check during periods of overproduction. Labor was a major cost of production, and employers saw how the importation of Chinese workers could boost the supply of labor and drive down the wages of both Chinese and white workers. The resulting racial antagonism generated between the two groups helped to ensure a divided working class and a dominant employer class.18

Six years after the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese labor was introduced: sixty Japanese were brought to Vacaville to pick fruit. During the 1890s, the demand for farm labor rose sharply with the development of sugar-beet agriculture. By the turn of the century, farmers in California were complaining about tons of fruit and vegetables rotting in the fields as a result of the labor shortage, and increasingly they were employing Japanese to meet their labor needs. Testifying before a congressional committee in 1907, sugar-beet king John Spreckels said: “If we do not have the Japs to do the field labor, we would be in a bad fix, because you know American labor will not go into the fields.” Farmers saw another advantage in the use of Japanese labor. “The Japs just drift — we don’t have to look out for them,” explained an official of the California Fruit Growers’ Exchange. “White laborers with families, if we could get them, would be liabilities.”19

By then, however, farmers were facing demands for higher wages from Japanese workers. In 1907, the California Fruit Grower complained that “the labor problem” had become “extremely troublesome.” Labor was in shortage and employers had been forced to increase wages. What was needed, the journal recommended, was the introduction of Asian-Indian laborers. “Not long ago a small colony of full-blooded Sikhs arrived from India, some of whom are now working in Fresno vineyards. . . . A report is current that a scheme is on foot [sic] to railroad these people into the United States by hordes. . . .” A year later California farmers employed Asian Indians as “a check on the Japanese,” paying them twenty-five cents less per day. Shortly after the introduction of Sikh laborers in 1908, John Spreckels told a congressional committee that “if it had not been for the large number of these East Indians coming in there . . . we would have had to take all Japs.”20
During the 1920s, farmers turned to Mexico as their main source of labor: at least 150,000 of California’s 200,000 farm laborers were Mexican. An official for the California Fruit Growers’ Association praised the Mexican workers. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, they were “not aggressive.” Instead they were “amenable to suggestions” and did their work obediently. Fearful Mexicans would be placed on a quota basis under the Immigration Act of 1924, growers began to import Filipino laborers, for the Philippines was a territory of the United States and represented an unimpeded supply of labor. “The Filipinos,” reported the Pacific Rural Press, “are being rushed in as the Mexicans are being rushed out.” In 1929 the Commonwealth Club of California stated that the “threat of Mexican exclusion” had created an “artificial demand for Filipino laborers,” the “only remaining substitute in the cheap labor field.” A representative of the Watsonville Chamber of Commerce told an interviewer in 1930: “We don’t want the Filipino and Mexican excluded. Raising the crops that we do it is necessary to have a supply of this labor.”

Nor did California farmers want other groups of workers excluded, for a racially diverse labor force enabled them to exercise greater control over their workers. Frank Waterman of the state employment agency told an interviewer in 1930 how farmers could get a maximum amount of work out of Japanese and Chinese workers: “Put a gang of Chinese in one field and a gang of Japanese in the next, and each one works like hell to keep up with or keep ahead of the other.” Noting the presence of Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, Asian Indian, Portuguese, Korean, Puerto Rican, and Filipino farm workers, the California Department of Industrial Relations reported that growers preferred to employ “a mixture of laborers of various races, speaking diverse languages, and not accustomed to mingling with each other. The practice [was] intended to avoid labor trouble which might result from having a homogeneous group of laborers of the same race or nationality. Laborers speaking different languages [were] not as likely to arrive at a mutual understanding which would lead to strikes.”

The Asian labor migrations to Hawaii and the United States represented an “industrial reserve army.” But the actual operation of this labor supply was more complex than Karl Marx had imagined: it was transnational and racial. International labor migrations occurred within what Immanuel Wallerstein called the “modern world-
system" of capitalism. Constituting the center of commerce and manufacturing production, "core" nations like the United States, England, France, Spain, and Portugal penetrated politically and economically the less-developed, "semi-peripheral" areas of Asia, Africa, and Latin America in their search for new markets, raw materials, and sources of labor. European and American colonialism disrupted economies there and also increased problems of poverty. The "necessities" of the "modern world-system" powered international labor migrations, "pushing" workers from Africa and Asia and "pulling" them to Latin America, the West Indies, and the United States. As Lucie Cheng and Edna Bonacich have argued, Asian labor immigration to America took place "under capitalism." Actually, so did the movement of European laborers to this country. But coming from "a different shore," Asian immigrants constituted a unique laboring army of "strangers," to use Georg Simmel's term: of alien origin, they were brought here to serve as an "internal colony" — nonwhites allowed to enter as "cheap" migratory laborers and members of a racially subordinated group, not future citizens of American society.23

But the context of the "modern world-system" and its economic forces only partly explains the Asian migrations to America. While the Asian immigrants did not choose the material circumstances of their times, most of them still made choices regarding the futures of their lives and therefore made history. The laborers themselves had their own view of "diversity": they did not come here to fill the "orders" of businessmen, which listed requisitions for labor and fertilizer. Nor did they come to be pitted against workers of other nationalities and to break strikes, nor to depress the wages of white workers, nor to be the "mudsills" of American society. Though driven by "necessity," they were also stirred by "extravagance." What were their "spacious dreams" and their "overblown hopes"?24

Tan Heung Shan and Gam Saan

They went as wah gung, Chinese laborers, as sojourners hopeful they would be able to work in a foreign country and return home rich in three to five years. They had given names to their lands of destination — Tan Heung Shan (the "Fragrant Sandalwood Hills") for the Hawaiian Islands and Gam Saan ("Gold Mountain") for California. Beginning in the 1840s and 1850s, they departed by the tens of thousands — about 46,000 to Hawaii in the second half of the nineteenth century and about 380,000 to the U.S. mainland between 1849 and 1930. The Chinese already had a long history of movement
overseas. By the seventeenth century, there were 10,000 Chinese in Thailand and 20,000 in the Philippines. Chinese migrants defied the laws of the central governments of the Ming and Ch’ing dynasties, which prohibited overseas travel on pain of death. But the greatest outflow of Chinese occurred in the nineteenth century: between 1840 and 1900, an estimated two and a half million people left China. They went to Hawaii and the United States as well as to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia, the West Indies, South America, and Africa.

Most of the Chinese migrants to the Kingdom of Hawaii and the United States were from Guangdong (Kwangtung province). Many of them sought sanctuary from intense conflicts — the British Opium Wars of 1839–1842 and 1856–1860, the peasant rebellions such as the Red Turban Rebellion (1854–1864), the bloody strife between the Punti (“Local People”) and the Hakkas (“Guest People”) over possession of the fertile delta lands, and class and family feuds within villages. “Ever since the disturbances caused by the Red [Turban] bandits and the Kejia bandits,” a government report noted, “dealings with foreigners have increased greatly. The able-bodied go abroad. The fields are clogged with weeds.” Forced to flee from the violence and turmoil, they felt “pushed” from their home country.25

One Chinese migrant described this expulsion:

In a bloody feud between the Chang family and the Oo Shak village we lost our two steady workmen. Eighteen villagers were hired by Oo Shak to fight against the huge Chang family, and in the battle two men lost their lives protecting our pine forests. Our village, Wong Jook Long, had a few resident Changs. After the bloodshed, we were called for our men’s lives, and the greedy, impoverished villagers grabbed fields, forest, food and everything, including newborn pigs, for payment. We were left with nothing, and in disillusion we went to Hong Kong to sell ourselves as contract laborers.

Another migrant remembered a battle “between our people and those called Hakkas... These Hakkas had come from the far north many years ago and had settled in a village not far from ours... They were quite different. They spoke a distinct dialect... and their women had natural feet and worked in the fields alongside of their men-folk. They were good fighters, and we had to flee for safety.”26

But most of the migrants were driven by harsh economic con-
tions to seek survival elsewhere, in another country. Forced to pay large indemnities to the Western imperialist powers engaged in the Opium Wars, the Qing government imposed high taxes on the peasant farmers; unable to pay their taxes, many lost their lands. Displaced from the land, they were unable to find employment in the already-limited industrial sector as foreign competition, imposed on China after the Opium Wars, undermined domestic industries such as textile production. The hardships were particularly severe in Guangdong, where the population had increased by 76 percent—from sixteen million in 1787 to twenty-eight million in 1850. The population-land ratio in the province was worse than the national average: 1.67 mou (0.15 acres) per person compared to 2.19 mou. Floods intensified the problem of poverty and hunger. “The rains have been falling for forty days until the rivers, and the sea, and the lakes, and the streams have joined in one sheet over the land for several hundred li [a li being equal to one third of a mile],” the 1847 annual memorial to the emperor reported, “and there is no outlet by which the waters may retire.” Behind the emigrating spirit, an observer explained in 1852, was starvation: “The population is extremely dense; the means of subsistence, in ordinary times, are seldom above the demand, and, consequently, the least failure of the rice crop produces wretchedness.” One of the migrants gave his own account of the painful events leading to emigration:

There were four in our family, my mother, my father, my sister and me. We lived in a two room house. Our sleeping room and the other served as parlor, kitchen and dining room. We were not rich enough to keep pigs or fowls, otherwise, our small house would have been more than overcrowded.

How can we live on six baskets of rice which were paid twice a year for my father’s duty as a night watchman? Sometimes the peasants have a poor crop then we go hungry. . . . Sometimes we went hungry for days. My mother and me would go over the harvested rice fields of the peasants to pick the grains they dropped. . . . We had only salt and water to eat with the rice. 27

Learning about Tan Heung Shan and Gam Saan, many of the younger, more impatient, and more courageous men left their villages for the distant lands. The majority of them were married. The migrants were generally illiterate or had very little schooling, but they dreamed of new possibilities for themselves inspired by stories about the “gold hills.” In 1848, shortly after the discovery of gold at John
Sutter’s mill, a young man in Canton wrote to his brother engaged in the tea trade in Boston: “Good many Americans speak of California. Oh! Very rich country! I hear good many Americans and Europeans go there. Oh! They find gold very quickly, so I hear. . . . I feel as if I should like to go there very much. I think I shall go to California next summer.” A witness in China described the excitement generated by the news of the gold rush: “Letters from Chinese in San Francisco and further in the country have been circulated through all this part of the province. The accounts of the successful adventurers who have returned would, had the inhabitants possessed the means of paying their way across, have gone far to depopulate considerable towns.”

*Gam Saan* promised not only gold to be mined but also opportunities for employment. In the port cities, circulars distributed by labor brokers announced: “Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and make him very welcome. There you will have great pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description. . . . It is a nice country, without mandarins or soldiers. . . . Money is in great plenty and to spare in America.” The Chinese who returned to their villages with money made in Hawaii and America reinforced the excitement of emigration. Sixteen-year-old Lee Chew witnessed the triumphant return of a Chinese migrant from the “country of the American wizards.” With the money he had earned overseas, he bought land as spacious as “four city blocks” and built a palace on it. He also invited his fellow villagers to a grand party where they were served a hundred roasted pigs, along with chickens, ducks, geese, and an abundance of dainties. The young Lee was inspired, eager to go to America himself.

America seemed so beckoning. “After leaving the village,” an immigrant said, “I went to Hong Kong and stayed at a *gam saan jong* [“golden mountain firm”] owned by people named Quan. I stayed there ten days to take care of the paper work for passage. At that time all I knew was that *gam saan haak* [“travelers to the golden mountain”] who came back were always rich.” During the 1860s, a Chinese laborer might earn three to five dollars a month in South China; in California, he could work for the railroad and make thirty dollars a month. A popular saying of the time promised that if a sojourner could not save a thousand dollars, he would surely obtain at least eight hundred. But even with a saving of three hundred dollars he could return to China and become “a big, very big gentleman.” A folk song expressed the emotions of many *gam saan haak*.
In the second reign year of Haamfung [1852], a trip to Gold Mountain was made. With a pillow on my shoulder, I began my perilous journey:

Sailing a boat with bamboo poles across the sea,  
Leaving behind wife and sisters in search of money,  
No longer lingering with the woman in the bedroom,  
No longer paying respect to parents at home.\textsuperscript{30}

But how could poor peasants afford to go to the Kingdom of Hawaii and America? The Chinese migrants were told they did not need much money to get there. They could choose to go as contract laborers to Hawaii: under arrangements made by emigration brokers representing sugar planters, they could have “free passage” to the islands, where they would sign labor agreements to work for a planter for a term of five years and receive in return wages, shelter, food, and medical care.

Or they could go to the United States as free laborers under the credit-ticket system. Under this arrangement, a broker would loan money to a migrant for the ticket for passage, and the latter in turn would pay off the loan plus interest out of his earnings in the new country. Chung Kun Ai recalled how his grandfather went into such moneylending as a business venture: “One condition of his loan of $60 was that each borrower was to pay back $120 as soon as he was able to do so. In all, grandfather must have helped 70 young men from our village and nearby villages to migrate to North and South America and also Australia.”\textsuperscript{31}

Describing how the “Chinese poor” were able to come to California, Chinese merchants in San Francisco explained in 1852:

Some have borrowed the small amount necessary, to be returned with unusual interest, on account of the risk; some have been furnished with money without interest by their friends and relations, and some again, but much the smaller portion, have received advances in money, to be returned out of the profits of the adventure. The usual apportionment of the profits is about three tenths to the lender of the money. . . . These arrangements, made at home, seldom bring them farther than San Francisco, and here the Chinese traders furnish them the means of getting to the mines.

Contrary to a popular stereotype and myth, the Chinese migrants were not “coolies.” Thousands of Chinese were taken to Peru and
Cuba as “coolies” — unfree laborers who had been kidnapped or pressed into service by coercion and shipped to foreign countries. But the Chinese migrants in the United States came voluntarily. Some Chinese paid their own way, and probably most of them borrowed the necessary funding under the credit-ticket system. “The Chinese emigration to California,” reported a British official stationed in Hong Kong in 1853, “was, by and large, free and voluntary. The Chinese emigration to California is now almost wholly confined to independent emigrants who pay their own passage money, and are in a condition to look to their arrangements.” William Speer, who worked as a missionary in San Francisco’s Chinatown for decades, beginning in the 1850s, never found evidence that Chinese laborers had been “brought over by capitalists and worked as slaves . . . against their will.” The claim that the Chinese were “coolies,” Speer declared, was a “fiction.”

The Chinese migration also included merchants — daring businessmen seeking new opportunities for enterprise in foreign lands. One of them was the father of Koon Keu Young, my stepfather. While maintaining his business operations in Guangdong, he went to Hawaii, where he opened two grocery stores in Honolulu, importing goods and foods from China. After he had successfully established both stores, he brought two of his sons to Hawaii to run the businesses and then returned to China. Koon Keu Young was only sixteen years old when he arrived in Honolulu and suddenly found himself responsible for the management of a store.

Almost all of the Chinese migrants were men. Single women did not travel alone to distant places, and married women generally stayed home. Len Mau Nin, for example, did not accompany her twenty-one-year-old husband, Len Wai, a contract laborer who went to Hawaii in 1882. She remained behind in Guangdong because one of her parents was blind and she was needed there. “Also most women didn’t want to go to a strange place anyway,” her grandson Raymond Len explained, “and leave the so-called comforts of an extended family.” Moreover, Chinese tradition and culture limited the possibilities of migration for women. Confucianism defined the place of a Chinese woman: she was instructed to obey her father as a daughter, her husband as a wife, and her eldest son as a widow. In Chinese custom, the afterbirths of children were buried in different locations, depending on the sex of the baby — in the floor by the bed for boys and outside the window for girls. This practice signified what was expected to happen to a woman. She would leave the home of her
family, marrying and joining the family of her husband. As a daughter-in-law, she was expected to take care of her husband’s aging parents. “A boy is born facing in; a girl is born facing out,” said a Chinese proverb. A daughter’s name was not recorded in the family tree; it was entered later next to her husband’s name in his genealogy.33

In Chinese culture, family and home were synonymous. They even shared the same character in the Chinese language. Women of all classes were regarded as inferior to men and were expected to remain at home, attentive to family and domestic responsibilities. The “bound feet” of Chinese women of “gentle birth,” while indicating social rank and considered “beautiful,” also symbolized their subordinate status as women and served to prevent them from wandering. In 1855 a Chinese merchant of San Francisco explained why many men did not bring their wives with them to America: the women of the “better families” generally had “compressed feet” and were “unused to winds and waves.” But keeping women home was not a function of class. While peasant women did not have bound feet, they were also confined to a narrow world circumscribed by the “necessity” of gender. Tied to family and home, they stayed within the walls of their village.34

Chinese women were also left behind because it would have been too costly to accompany their husbands and the men thought they would be gone only temporarily. Moreover, according to an explanation sometimes known as the “hostage theory,” women were kept home in order to ensure their absent husbands would not become prodigal sons in America. Chinese peasant culture was familialist; individual identity was based on family and lineage, and economic welfare and family were integrated. The Chinese system of patrilineal descent provided for the equal division of a family’s household property and land among all adult sons and for them to share responsibility for the support of their elderly parents. By keeping the wives and children of their sons at home, parents hoped they would be able to buttress family ties and filial obligations. Their wandering sons would not forget their families in China and would send remittances home. “The mother wanted her son to come back,” explained Len Mau Yun, married to Len Too Shing (one of Len Wai’s sons). “If wife go to America, then son no go back home and no send money.”35

Significantly, sons migrating to Hawaii were more likely to take their wives with them than their counterparts leaving for California.
In 1900, of the 25,767 Chinese in Hawaii, 3,471 or 13.5 percent were female, but of the 89,863 Chinese on the U.S. mainland, only 4,522, or 5 percent, were female. Why this difference in sex ratios between Hawaii and the continent?

One possible way to explain this pattern is to note the ethnic differences between the two groups of migrants. The Chinese in California were mostly Punti, whereas many of their counterparts in Hawaii were Hakka. The latter did not practice footbinding, and hence Hakka women had greater ability than many Punti women to travel and also to work abroad.

But conditions and circumstances in the receiving countries also determined the difference in sex ratios. In Hawaii, there were efforts to promote the migration of Chinese women. As early as 1864, the editor of the Pacific Commercial Advertiser anxiously noted the presence of the predominantly male Chinese population on the plantations and recommended the importation of Chinese women: “To throw in these islands, hundreds or thousands of laborers without their wives, to encourage their importation without that controlling and softening influence which women, by God’s will, exercise over man, would be to encourage vice and urge on the fearful evils originated by dissolute habits.” In 1877, as planters expanded sugar cultivation and recruited increasing numbers of Chinese laborers, the newspaper editor again expressed his concern about the influx of so many Chinese men in the prime of life and “full of the animal instincts natural” to youth. “No Chinamen,” he insisted in an editorial, “should be allowed henceforth to come here ... unless they are accompanied by their women.” Meanwhile, missionaries also voiced alarm about this population of Chinese male laborers “without women and children” living like “animals” on the plantations. In his appeal to the planters to bring Chinese women to Hawaii, missionary Frank Damon declared: “No surer safeguard can be erected against the thousand possible ills which may arise from the indiscriminate herding together of thousands of men! Let the sweet and gentle influence of the mother, the wife, the sister, and the daughter be brought to bear upon the large and yearly increasing company of Chinese in our midst, and we shall soon see a change wrought, such as police regulations cannot produce.”

Planters themselves saw that Chinese women could be used to control the Chinese laborers. In a letter to Damon, planter H. M. Whitney wrote in 1881: “With Chinese families established on every plantation ... there would be much less fear of riotous distur-
The influence of families especially where settlers locate in a foreign country — has always been a peaceful influence.” Planters actively encouraged the immigration of Chinese women. In 1865, for example, the Hawaiian Board of Immigration commissioned Dr. William Hillebrand to recruit about five hundred Chinese laborers in Hong Kong, specifying a quota for women: 20 to 25 percent of them were to be married women. Under Hillebrand’s program, Chinese men could afford to take their wives with them to Hawaii, for their spouses’ passages would be paid for by the planters. Like the men, the women would sign labor contracts to work on the plantations. “It is understood,” stated Hillebrand, “that the women be employed at light labor only, and not be separated from their husbands.” But they were to be paid less than their male counterparts — three dollars rather than four dollars a month. Hillebrand’s two shiploads of 528 Chinese laborers included ninety-six women and ten children.37

A similar combination of the missionary concern and employer self-interest that encouraged the immigration of Chinese women to Hawaii did not exist in California. In fact, the opposite occurred. Employers in California viewed Chinese laborers as temporary and migratory. They wanted a labor force of single men, a mobile work force ready to move to the next construction site or the next harvest. They did not want to have responsibility for families and did not care about the social needs of their workers. Their relationships with workers were contractual, businesslike: they were purchasing labor, nothing more, nothing less. Chinese male migrants could see that the work situation in the islands would be more settled. They would have employment for five years on a particular plantation where they would live in stable communities. But in California, as miners or railroad workers or migrant farm laborers, Chinese men would be entering a frontier society where conditions would be difficult for their wives and children.

The greater proportion of Chinese women in Hawaii than in the mainland United States was also influenced by the different ways the Chinese were viewed and received by whites in the two countries. In 1879, an editorial in the Hawaiian missionary paper The Friend described the difference between white attitudes toward the Chinese in California and Hawaii: “The California watchword may be ‘The Chinese must go,’ but that of Hawaii is ‘The Chinese must come,’ to work our cane and rice fields. Now let us treat them fairly, and do all in our power to introduce Chinese families and diffuse among
them Christianity.” Underlying this difference was, on the one hand, the large white working class in California that perceived Chinese laborers as competitors, and, on the other hand, the relatively small number of white workers in Hawaii. Chinese encountered greater racial discrimination and hostility, even violence, in California than in Hawaii. Moreover, whites in Hawaii did not see the islands as a place for extensive white settlement. Totaling only 6 percent of the population in 1878, they did not have a predominantly white society to preserve or defend. But whites in California, as early as 1850, or only two years after annexation, constituted 99 percent of the state’s population. Thirty years later, on the eve of the enactment of the Chinese Exclusion Act, whites represented 87 percent of Californians. They felt the need to protect their white society and saw the entry of Chinese women and families as a threat to racial homogeneity and their view of America as a “white man’s country.”

Significantly, Hawaii and the United States developed very different policies regarding the entry of Chinese women. Concerned about the increasing presence of a disorderly and overwhelmingly male Chinese population in the 1880s, the Hawaiian government limited Chinese immigration to 2,400 a year. But it exempted Chinese women and children from the quota in order to encourage them to come. The policies of the U.S. government, on the other hand, were designed to keep out Chinese women. The Page Law, passed in 1875 to prohibit the entry of prostitutes, was enforced so strictly and broadly it served not only to exclude Chinese prostitutes but also to discourage Chinese wives from coming here. Chinese women seeking to emigrate to the United States had to undergo rigorous interrogation and cross-examination by U.S. officials stationed in China. The Page Law intimidated all women considering emigration: the number of Chinese women entering the United States between 1876 and 1882 declined from the previous seven-year period by 68 percent. In 1882, during the interval of a few months between the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and its enforcement, 39,579 Chinese slipped into America. But this massive migration included only 136 women, testifying to the effectiveness of the Page Law.

While the 1882 law prohibited the entry of “Chinese laborers,” it was unclear whether it also restricted the entry of Chinese women. This question was tested two years later in the Circuit Court of California in In Re Ah Moy, on Habeas Corpus. In this case, Too Cheong, a Chinese laborer and resident of the United States, had returned to China in 1883 and had married Ah Moy. When he came
back to the United States a year later, Too Cheong brought his wife with him. The court denied Ah Moy admission, declaring that the wife of a Chinese laborer, being herself a “Chinese laborer,” could not lawfully enter the United States. Moreover, the court argued, a Chinese wife who was not a “Chinese laborer” in fact prior to her marriage took the “status” of her husband upon marriage and hence became a member of a “class” whose entry was prohibited. In 1888 Congress prohibited a Chinese “laborer” already here to leave and then return to the United States, and also made it unlawful for “any Chinese person” (except for merchants) to enter the country.40

The differences in state policies between Hawaii and the United States not only determined how many Chinese women went to each country but whether they migrated as wives or prostitutes. Generally, Chinese prostitutes were absent in Hawaii. Chinese men were allowed to have their wives accompany them to the islands or to join them there. Chinese immigration to Hawaii was carefully regulated by the government and the planters: usually Chinese migrants entered as contract laborers for the plantations, and this process screened out prostitutes. Furthermore, Chinese men could have relationships with Hawaiian women, and many of them married native women and raised families in the islands. Unlike their sisters in Hawaii, most of the Chinese women entering California before 1875 were prostitutes. In 1870, of the 3,536 Chinese women in California, 2,157, or 61 percent, had their occupations listed as “prostitute” in the population census manuscripts. Chinese could enter America voluntarily as immigrants; consequently the United States could not control the entry of prostitutes as effectively as the Kingdom of Hawaii. Furthermore the Chinese community in California was largely composed of migratory men dependent on prostitutes to satisfy their sexual needs.41

One of these prostitutes, Lilac Chen was only six years old when she was brought to San Francisco. Years later, at the age of eighty-four, she remembered the day her father said he was taking her to her grandmother’s house: “And that worthless father, my own father, imagine... sold me on the ferry boat. Locked me in the cabin while he was negotiating my sale.” Chen kicked and screamed; when she was finally let out, she could not find her father. “He had left me, you see, with a strange woman.” Another prostitute, Wong Ah So, described her tragic experience: “I was nineteen when this man came to my mother and said that in America there was a great deal of gold... He was a laundryman, but said he earned plenty of money. He was very nice to me, and my mother liked him, so my mother
was glad to have me go with him as his wife. I thought that I was his wife, and was very grateful that he was taking me to such a grand, free country, where everyone was rich and happy." But two weeks after Wong Ah So had arrived in San Francisco, she was shocked to learn that her companion had taken her to America as a "slave" and that she would be forced to work as a prostitute.\textsuperscript{42}

The transit of Chinese prostitutes reflected the nature of the Chinese migration to America: it was mainly the movement of men. Their plan was to be away temporarily. Waving good-bye, many sojourners heard their wives sing:

\begin{quote}
Right after we were wed, Husband, you set out on a journey.  
How was I to tell you how I felt?  
Wandering around a foreign country, when will you ever come home?  

I beg of you, after you depart, to come back soon,  
Our separation will be only a flash of time;  
I only wish that you would have good fortune,  
In three years you would be home again.  
Also, I beg of you that your heart won't change,  
That you keep your heart and mind on taking care of your family;  
Each month or half a month send a letter home,  
In two or three years my wish is to welcome you home.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

"See you again, see you again," the men shouted. Turning away from their wives, they traveled on foot or in small boats to port cities like Canton and Hong Kong, where they boarded ships bound for Honolulu and San Francisco.

**A Meiji Voice Crossing the Pacific**

They came later than the Chinese immigrants, arriving in Hawaii in significant numbers beginning in the 1880s and then in the continental United States a decade later. But like the Chinese, the immigrants from Japan — the Issei, or "first generation" — carried a vision of hope.

\begin{quote}
Huge dreams of fortune  
Go with me to foreign lands,  
Across the ocean.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}
For over two centuries, the Japanese people had been forbidden by law from traveling to foreign lands. In 1639, Japan initiated an era of isolation from the West that remained effectively uninterrupted until Commodore Matthew C. Perry’s intrusion in 1853. While Japan continued the ban on emigration, it experienced new difficulty enforcing the law. In 1868, the Hawaiian consul general in Japan secretly recruited and transported to Hawaii 148 Japanese contract laborers, and a year later, German merchant John Henry Schnell took some forty Japanese with him to found a silk farm in California. In 1884, the Japanese government permitted Hawaiian planters to recruit contract laborers.

The new policy ignited an emigration explosion. Internal pressures for overseas migration had been building for over a decade and were becoming intense in the 1880s. After the 1868 Meiji Restoration, Japan began fervently pursuing a program of modernization and westernization in order to protect itself against European and American imperialist powers. To finance the industrialization as well as militarization of Japan, the Meiji government required farmers to pay an annual fixed tax on land. During the 1880s, the government instituted deflationary policies that depressed the price of rice and caught farmers in a financial squeeze. Over 300,000 lost their lands because of their inability to pay the land taxes. “The depression of trade in Japan has increased month by month and year by year, showing no signs of abatement,” the Japan Weekly Mail reported in 1884. “It seems to have come to a climax during the autumn of the present year, for the distress among the agricultural class has reached a point never before attained. Most of the farmers have been unable to pay their taxes, and hundreds of families in one village alone have been compelled to sell their property in order to liquidate their debts.”

Farmers all over Japan faced economic hardships. Many farmers in the northern prefectures moved north to the island of Hokkaido in search of opportunity. In the southwestern prefectures such as Kumamoto, Hiroshima, and Yamaguchi, farmers were in an especially dire situation. Hiroshima prefecture, for example, had the smallest amount of land per household. In 1885, a journalist described the worsening economic conditions in Yamaguchi prefecture: “What strikes me most is the hardships paupers are having in surviving. . . . Their regular fare consists of rice husk or buckwheat chaff ground into powder and the dregs of bean curd mixed with leaves and grass.”
Farmers in the southwestern prefectures were specifically targeted by the Hawaiian recruitment program. During the 1870s, Hawaiian consul R. W. Irwin had served as adviser to a large Japanese trading company headed by Masuda Takashi. Originally from Yamaguchi prefecture, Masuda was concerned about the people suffering there and advised Irwin to recruit laborers in the southwestern prefectures. Once emigration from this area was under way, it was fueled by stories, spread by word of mouth, about opportunities in Hawaii.47

The future in Japan seemed bleak for these financially distressed farmers, and thousands of them were seized by an emigration netsu—a "fever" to migrate to the Hawaiian Islands and the United States. They saw themselves as dekaseginin—laborers working temporarily in a foreign country. Their goal was to work hard in order to "return home in glory" after three years and use their savings to buy land or regain land lost to debtors.48

Many dekaseginin carried a responsibility to discharge family debts. One of them was the grandfather of Hawai‘i’s Senator Daniel Inouye. A fire had broken out in the Inouye family home and spread to nearby houses; in order to pay for the damages, the family sent their eldest son, Asakichi, to Hawaii. Accompanied by his wife, Moyo, and four-year-old son, Hyotaro, he planned to return to Japan after the family debt had been paid. Some dekaseginin hoped to advance socially into a higher class by becoming a yoshi—a son-in-law adopted into the wife’s family. "I planned to work three years in the United States to save 500 yen and then go back to Japan," a migrant explained, "because if I had 500 yen in Japan I could marry into a farmer’s household, using it for my marriage portion." The migrants carried in their hearts the dream of striking it rich and coming back to Japan as kin’i kikyo—wealthy persons.49

Hawaii offered a chance to succeed. During the contract-labor period from 1885 to 1894, Japanese migrants signed agreements to have their passages paid for by planters and to work for three years for nine dollars a month plus food, lodging, and medical care. They clearly saw the wage advantage they would have in Hawaii: the higher wages in Hawaii and the favorable dollar-yen exchange rate could enable a plantation laborer in the islands to earn six times more than a day laborer in Japan. They were told they would be able to save four hundred yen—an amount a silk worker would be able to acquire only by working every day and saving all wages for ten years. Three years of separation from family and friends seemed a small sacrifice for such a huge sum.
When the Japanese government announced it would be filling six hundred emigrant slots for the first shipment of laborers to Hawaii in 1885, it received 28,000 applications. By 1894, some 30,000 Japanese had gone to the islands as kan’yaku imin, or government-sponsored contract laborers. After 1894, migrants went to the islands as private contract laborers through emigration companies, or as free laborers, drawing from their own resources or borrowing money to pay for their transportation.

Family fortunes
Fall into the wicker trunk
I carry abroad.

“My father had put a mortgage on his property to get me the 200 yen I used when I sailed to Hawaii,” said a migrant. “For the cost to come to Hawaii our land was placed under a mortgage,” another one explained. “And we borrowed some money, about $100, from the moneylender. After we came to Hawaii we sent money back. If we didn’t pay it back, our land would have been taken away.”

Beginning in the 1890s, Japanese migrants were also attracted to the U.S. mainland. American wages seemed fantastic: they were about a dollar a day — an amount equal to more than two yen. Inota Tawa calculated that as a laborer in America he could save in one year almost a thousand yen — an amount equal to the income of a governor in Japan. He begged his parents: “By all means let me go to America.” In 1902, a carpenter in Japan could make only two thirds of a yen in wages for a day’s work, while a railroad laborer in America was paid a dollar a day. To prospective Japanese migrants, “money grew on trees” in America.

Between 1885 and 1924, 200,000 Japanese went to Hawaii and 180,000 to the U.S. mainland. They were predominantly young men: my grandfather Kasuke Okawa was only nineteen years old when he left home in 1886. Between 40 and 60 percent were in their twenties, and about 25 percent were in their thirties. Due to Japan’s system of compulsory education, the migrants were comparatively well educated, with an average of eight years of schooling. In fact, Japanese migrants had a higher literacy rate than their European counterparts: according to the U.S. Census for 1910, only 9.2 percent of Japanese immigrants ten years of age and older were illiterate, compared to 12.7 percent of foreign-born whites in the same age group. Most Japanese migrants came from the farming class and
were not desperately poor. The average Japanese-male immigrant arrived here with more money than his European counterpart.\textsuperscript{52}

The Japanese migrants were a select group, more so than the Chinese. Unlike China, Japan was ruled by a strong central government. The Meiji Restoration had unified the country, and the new state was able to regulate emigration. Driven by a rising nationalism, the government viewed overseas Japanese as representatives of their homeland and required prospective emigrants to apply for permission to leave for Hawaii and the United States. Review boards screened them to ensure that they were healthy and literate and would creditably "maintain Japan's national honor." The Japanese government had received reports on the conditions of the Chinese in America and was determined to monitor carefully the quality of its emigrants. In 1884 Japanese Consul Takahashi Shinkichi had informed his Foreign Ministry: "It is indeed the ignominious conduct and behavior of indigent Chinese of inferior character... that brought upon the Chinese as a whole the contempt of the Westerners and resulted in the enactment of legislation to exclude them from the country." The Japanese government should deny indigent Japanese passage to the United States, he advised, or else the Japanese would soon follow "in the wake of the Chinese." Seven years later, as Japanese migrants began entering the United States, Japanese Consul Chinda Sutemi similarly warned that if the government permitted the emigration of "lower class Japanese," it would "unavoidably provide a pretext to the American working class and pseudo-politicians for their drive to exclude the Japanese from this country." The Chinese "failure" in America, Chinda stressed, must be a "lesson" for Japan.\textsuperscript{53}

Seeking to avoid the problems of prostitution, gambling, and drunkenness generated by an itinerant bachelor society and to bring greater stability to the immigrant communities here, the Japanese government promoted the emigration of women. Japanese women went to America in much larger numbers than Chinese women. As early as 1905, females constituted over 22 percent of the Japanese population in Hawaii and about 7 percent on the mainland. Three years later, in the Gentlemen's Agreement, Japan restricted the emigration of Japanese "laborers," but strategically retained a loophole: parents, wives, and children of laborers already in America would be allowed to emigrate. This policy allowed my uncle Nobuyoshi Takaki, who came to Hawaii in 1904, to send for his father, Santaro, in 1912, and Santaro, in turn, to have his two remaining sons, Teizo and Toshio, join them in 1918. Moreover, thousands of women also
entered Hawaii and the mainland through the same opening—66,926 of them between 1908 and 1924. Between 1911 and 1920, women represented 39 percent of all Japanese immigrants. In fact, so many Japanese women emigrated that females represented 46 percent of the Japanese in Hawaii and 34.5 percent on the mainland in 1920, a year before the “Ladies’ Agreement,” in which Japan terminated the emigration of picture brides. But by then, some 20,000 picture brides, including my aunts Yukino Takaki and Mitsue Takaki, had already arrived here.  

The picture-bride system, or shashin kekkon (“photo-marriage”) was based on the established custom of arranged marriage, omiai-kekkon. Marriage in Japanese society was not an individual matter but rather a family concern, and parents utilized go-betweens, bais-hakunin, to help them select partners for their sons and daughters. In situations involving families located a far distance from each other, the prospective bride and groom would often exchange photographs before the initial customary meeting, omiai. This traditional practice lent itself readily to the needs of Japanese migrants in America. “When I told my parents about my desire to go to a foreign land, the story spread throughout the town,” picture bride Ai Miyasaka later recalled. “From here and there requests for marriage came pouring in just like rain!” Riyo Orito, who came here in 1913, also had a “picture marriage.” Her marriage to a Japanese man in America had been arranged through a relative. “All agreed to our marriage,” she said, “but I didn’t get married immediately. I was engaged at the age of sixteen and didn’t meet Orito until I was almost eighteen. I had seen him only in a picture at first.”

Japanese government policy for the emigration of women and the picture-bride practice operated within the context of internal economic developments that were transforming conditions for women. While women in China were restricted to the farm and the home, women in Japan in the nineteenth century were becoming wage-earning workers away from home in services such as inns and groshops as well as in industries like tea processing and papermaking. Thousands of young women were engaged in the migration of labor, dekasegi rodo, within Japan and employed in industries away from home. During the 1880s, daughters of farming families constituted 80 percent of the labor force in the textile industry. Women were also hired regularly as construction laborers and employed in the coal mines, carrying heavy loads of coal out of the tunnels on their backs. By 1900, women composed 60 percent of Japan’s in-
dustrial laborers. Women in rural areas were leaving home for work almost as commonly as men, and this pattern became increasingly widespread as the Meiji government accelerated modern capitalistic development in order to pursue *fukoku-kyohei* — a strong and prosperous nation ready to protect itself against expansionist Western powers. The movement of Japanese women to Hawaii and the United States was an extension of a proletarianization process already well under way in Japan.\(^5^6\)

Japanese women were also more receptive to the idea of traveling overseas than Chinese women. The Meiji government required the education of female children, stipulating in the *Chakushu junjo (Procedures for Commencement)* of 1872 that “girls should be educated… alongside boys.” The Emperor Meiji himself promoted female education. “My country is now undergoing a complete change from old to new ideas, which I completely desire,” stated the emperor. Japanese youth, “boys as well as girls,” should learn about foreign countries and become “enlightened as to ideas of the world.” Japanese women, unlike their Chinese counterparts, were more likely to be literate. “I attended six years of elementary school: two years of Koto sho gakko [middle advanced elementary school], and four years of girls’ middle school,” said Michiko Tanaka. “We studied English and Japanese, mathematics, literature, writing, and religion.” Under the reorganization of the school system in 1876, English was adopted as a major subject in middle school. Japanese women were also curious about the outside world. They had been told by their Emperor Meiji how women “should be allowed to go abroad” and how Japan would “benefit by the knowledge thus acquired.” They also heard stories describing America as “heavenly,” and many of them were more eager to see the new land than to meet their new husbands there. “I wanted to see foreign countries and besides I had consented to marriage with Papa because I had the dream of seeing America,” Michiko Tanaka revealed to her daughter years later. “I wanted to see America and Papa was a way to get there.” “I was bubbling over with great expectations,” said another picture bride. “My young heart, 19 years and 8 months old, burned, not so much with the prospects of reuniting with my new husband, but with the thought of the New World.” Informed they would be married and sent to husbands in America, many women secretly had their own extravagant reasons for going.\(^5^7\)

The emigration of women was also influenced by views on gender and the system of land inheritance in Japanese society. A folk
saying popular among Japanese farmers expressed their feelings about the respective places of their children: “One to sell, one to follow, and one in reserve.” The “one to sell” was the daughter. She was expected to marry and enter her husband’s family. “Once you become someone’s wife you belong to his family,” explained Tsuru Yamauchi. She found out she would be going to Hawaii somewhat abruptly: “I learned about the marriage proposal when we had to exchange pictures.” Emigration for her was not a choice but rather an obligation as a wife. Whether a Japanese woman went to America depended on which son she married — the son “to follow” or the son “in reserve.”

Unlike the Chinese, Japanese farmers had an inheritance system based on the rule of impartible inheritance and primogeniture: only one of the sons in the family, usually the eldest, inherited the family’s holding, or _ie_, thus keeping intact family ownership of the land and the means of the family’s survival. In the mountainous island nation of Japan, arable land was limited, and most of the farm holdings were small, less than a single hectare, or about two and a half acres. Division of a tiny family holding would have led to disaster for the family. As the possessor of the family farm, the eldest son, the one “to follow,” had responsibility for the care of the aged parents. The younger or noninheriting son or sons, “in reserve,” had to find employment in towns. For them, the process and pattern of relocation within Japan were already in place, and could be easily applied to movement abroad. At the morning ceremonies of the elementary and middle schools, principals instructed their students: “First sons, stay in Japan and be men of Japan. Second sons, go abroad with great ambition as men of the world!” As they became _deka-seginin_, younger sons were not as tightly bound to their parents as their Chinese counterparts, and they were allowed to take their wives and children with them to distant lands.

Actually, immigrant men also included first sons. My uncle Nobuyoshi Takaki was the oldest son; many first sons came when they were young, before they had responsibility for elderly and dependent parents, and others came to earn money to supplement the family incomes and to help defray family debts. In the village of Jigozen in Hiroshima prefecture, 30 percent of the emigrants between 1885 and 1899 were heads of families, 23 percent wives, 22 percent eldest sons, and 24 percent second and younger sons. The heads of families included both first and younger sons. While first-son heads of families sometimes took their wives with them, thinking their double incomes
could enable them to pay off family debts more quickly and shorten their sojourn, younger-son heads of families were even more inclined to have wives accompany them, for they could stay away longer, perhaps even permanently.60

But whether Japanese women migrated depended also on the government policies and economic conditions of the receiving countries. Where the U.S. government had strictly prohibited the entry of Chinese women, it allowed Japanese women to come under the terms of the Gentlemen’s Agreement. Furthermore, Japanese women entered California and other western states when society here was more stable and more developed than the earlier period of Chinese immigration. They were pulled by particular economic developments. As thousands of Japanese-immigrant men became shopkeepers and small farmers, they sent for their wives, thinking their spouses could assist as unpaid family labor. Wives were particularly useful on farms, where production was labor intensive. “Nearly all of these tenant farmers are married and have their families with them,” H. A. Millis noted in his report on the Japanese in 1915. “The wives do much work in the fields.”61

While the U.S. government permitted the entry of Japanese women, the Hawaiian government actively promoted their immigration. When it first opened negotiations for emigration with Japan in 1879, the Hawaiian government stipulated in its initial draft of the agreement that 40 percent of the immigrants were to be women. They were to come as contract laborers. Half of their expense for passage would be paid by the Hawaiian Bureau of Immigration, and they would receive six dollars per month in wages, compared to ten dollars for men. During the government-sponsored contract-labor period from 1885 to 1894, the Hawaii Bureau of Immigration systematically recruited Japanese women, who constituted 20 percent of the kan’yaku imin. Between 1894 and 1908, thousands of women sailed to Hawaii as private-contract laborers. One of them was my grandmother Katsu Okawa, who emigrated as a single woman in 1896. Unlike farmers on the U.S. mainland, who wanted a migratory male work force, planters in the islands saw Japanese women as workers, using them as cooks, seamstresses, and field laborers. Planters also viewed the family as a mechanism of labor control. In 1886, a year after the beginning of the Japanese movement to the islands, the Hawaii Inspector-General of Immigration, A. S. Cleghorn, reported that Japanese men did much better work and were more satisfied on plantations where they had their wives. “Several of the
planters,” he noted, “are desirous that each man [from Japan] should have his wife.”

After 1900, when Hawaii became a territory of the United States, planters became even more anxious to bring more Japanese women. Federal law prohibited the contract-labor system, and planters found they had to entice laborers to stay on the plantations. Realizing that men with wives were not as likely to leave the plantation as single men, planters asked their business agents in Honolulu to send “men with families.” The manager of the Hutchinson Sugar Plantation, for example, wrote to William G. Irwin and Company in 1905: “Will you be kind enough to send us as soon as you are able to do so, forty Japanese married couples. We want them for the Hilea section of the Plantation where we have always had more or less trouble in keeping Japanese laborers, and believe that by having married couples only, the laborers would remain.” In 1900 Shokichi and Matsu Fukuda left their six-month-old daughter, Fusayo, with her grandparents and migrated together as a married couple to work on the Puunene Plantation on Maui.

Hundreds, possibly thousands of women were brought as prostitutes, most of them to the U.S. mainland. They were sold to amegoro (Japanese pimps) or were abducted or lured under false pretenses. One of them, the daughter of a farming family in Amakusa, later recounted her experience. In 1890, a “smooth-talking” salesman visiting Amakusa told her stories about foreign lands. He told her that “gold nuggets were waiting to be picked up on the riverbanks of America” and persuaded her to accompany him to nearby Nagasaki, where he showed her a foreign ship bound for America. After boarding the huge ship, she walked the decks enjoying the new experience. Then she was introduced to a seaman, who said: “Why don’t you go to America on the ship?” “I’d like to go and see America,” she replied, “but since I don’t know anyone there, I can’t.” Just as she was “half thinking about wanting to go and half worrying,” she suddenly heard a clanging bell as the ship hoisted anchor and sailed out of port. The salesman was nowhere to be seen. She was taken to a room by the sailor and warned: “I’ll bring you meals; so don’t leave the room. If by chance you’re discovered, you’ll be thrown into the sea.” When the ship reached San Francisco, the seaman dressed her in Western clothes and took her off the ship. “Pulled by his hand in the pitch darkness of the night,” she “trailed behind him” to “an unknown house” where she was forced to become a prostitute.

Most Japanese migrants left voluntarily, looking forward to
their adventure. Still, as they prepared to leave their farms and villages, they felt the anxiety of separation. One of them remembered how her husband's eldest brother had come to say farewell. "Don't stay in the [United] States too long. Come back in five years and farm with us." But her father then remarked: "Are you kidding? They can't learn anything in five years. They'll even have a baby over there.... Be patient for twenty years." Her father's words shocked her so much she could not control her tears: suddenly she realized how long the separation could be.

With tears in my eyes
I turn back to my homeland,
Taking one last look.65

"My parents came to see me off at Kobe station," a woman recalled many years later. "They did not join the crowd, but quietly stood in front of the wall. They didn't say 'good luck,' or 'take care,' or anything. They did not say one word of encouragement to me. They couldn't say anything because they knew, as I did, that I would never return." Perhaps, many migrants wondered, they would not see Japan again, destined "to become the soil of the foreign land." Realizing her stay in America would be a permanent one, another migrant inscribed the moment and her feelings in poetry:

Parting tearfully,
Holding a one-way ticket
I sailed for America.66

There were settlers among the migrants. "My father came here as a non-sojourner," said Frank S. Miyamoto of Seattle. "He had the idea that he would stay." His father had gone to Korea first and then emigrated to the United States to become a merchant. He had little reason to return to Japan, for he was the only son and both of his parents had died. Similarly, Frank Tomori of Portland saw America as his new home: "I happened to see a Western movie, called 'Rodeo,' at the Golden Horse Theater in Okayama City, and was completely obsessed with 'American fever' as a result of watching cowboys dealing with tens of thousands of horses in the vast Western plains. Enormous continent! Rich land! One could see a thousand miles at a glance! Respect for freedom and equality! That must be my permanent home, I decided." After the 1908 Gentlemen's Agreement there occurred a shift in the purpose of Japanese immigration from the dekasegi (sojourning) to the teijyu (settling) stage. "Stay in
America and make it your country” became the new slogan, as Japanese immigrants increasingly saw their stay as long-term, perhaps even permanent, and summoned their families to join them, yobiyose.67

As they left their homes, the migrants drew inspiration and strength from their legends. One of the stories was about Momotaro — the peach boy. An old, childless couple lived on a farm, and one day the woman went down to the stream to wash clothes. Suddenly she saw a large peach floating in the water. She brought it home and her husband cut the fruit open, and they were surprised to find a baby boy in the peach. Momotaro grew up to be a strong and brave warrior — an expert swordsman, a samurai for the people, and he went off to fight the demons who were threatening the village. After destroying the monsters, Momotaro returned home and took care of his parents for the rest of their lives. Most of the migrants promised they would return to Japan as they gathered within themselves a courage they did not fully realize they possessed.

Mine a Meiji voice,
Crossing the Pacific sea,
It has grown husky.68

Leaving the Land of “Morning Calm”

Meanwhile, some 8,000 Koreans sailed to the United States between 1903 and 1920. Leaving the kingdom of Choson (“Morning Calm”), most of them migrated to the territory of Hawaii. Like the Chinese and Japanese, the Korean migrants were young: over 90 percent of the adults were between the ages of sixteen and forty-four. But unlike the first two groups of Asian immigrants, Koreans came from diverse walks of life. They were farmers, common laborers in the cities, government clerks, students, policemen, miners, domestic servants, and even Buddhist monks. Most of them were from urban areas rather than the country. In their level of education, they were more like the Japanese than the Chinese. About 70 percent of them were literate.

Converted to Christianity, many Koreans had been encouraged to emigrate by American missionaries. “I was born in Korea,” said a migrant, “and was a Christian before I came to the United States.” Significantly, 40 percent of all Korean immigrants were Christians. At large tent meetings in the seaport of Incheon, the Reverend George Heber Jones of the Methodist Episcopal Church preached to pro-
spective emigrants, inspiring them with "laudable ambitions." The American missionaries, said Yi Tae-song of the Korean Christian Movement of Hawaii, appeared in Korea and began telling "the wonderful story of the Cross" and what it could do for those who would accept it and carry it through life. The new converts were told Hawaii represented a "haven of peace and plenty." 69

The Korean migration was also driven by political reasons: Hawaii represented a haven from Japanese imperialism. "There was little or no opportunity for my grandfather to find a job in Korea in those days," a Korean in Hawaii explained. "The Japanese imperial government was controlling Korea at the time and the outlook toward the future was very poor." The Japanese were "cruel oppressors." "When my grandfather learned that the Japanese government was letting people out of the country to work in the islands, he was happy to volunteer." Hawaii was also a place where Koreans could struggle for national independence. "When I saw my country fall into the hands of the Japanese aggressors," said a migrant, "I was filled with sorrow, but, unable to do much to help, I applied for the status of an immigrant and came to Hawaii hoping to learn something in order to help my country." 70

Some Korean migrants left as political refugees, escaping from Japanese-government persecution. A high-school teacher in Korea during the early years of the Japanese occupation, Whang Sa-sun had joined the secret patriotic society, Sinmin-hoe (New People's Society). "At the time the Japanese military government persecuted the people, especially the young people and took them to jail," said Whang. In order to avoid arrest by the Japanese police for membership in the Sinmin-hoe, Whang left Korea. "My wife and I sneaked out. . . . We crossed the Yalu River and from there rode the railroad to Shanghai. At that time I wore Chinese clothes. The Japanese didn't know I was Korean; they thought I was Chinese." In Shanghai, Whang and his wife boarded a ship bound for America. "When I left Korea, I felt like a free man. Korea was like a jail, and I was a prisoner. I wanted to come to America. America was a free country." Myung-ja Sur also felt politically compelled to leave Korea. "Because the Japanese oppression was so severe for all Koreans, especially Korean patriots, I had to flee to Shanghai," she told her grandson years later. A schoolteacher, she had participated in the March First Movement of 1919, distributing copies of the Declaration of Independence and Korean flags. "The Japanese went crazy. They beat up people and killed thousands of Koreans while many were arrested
and later killed.” In Shanghai, Sur was arrested by the Japanese secret police and imprisoned for a month. “When I returned to Korea the Japanese followed me everywhere so I decided to leave for America where I planned to continue my education. Before I left I sent my picture to this Korean man in the United States and he sent me his picture and then we were married.” 

But, like the Chinese and Japanese, Korean migrants were also pushed from Choson by poverty. Famine and drought had inflicted economic suffering. One American missionary described the terrible conditions: “We have never known such unrest among the Koreans due to the excitement of so many going to the Hawaiian Islands to work on sugar plantations, and the dreadful hardtimes. . . . We can’t blame them for wanting to go to America.” In a letter to Governor Sanford Dole of Hawaii in 1902, Horace N. Allen of the U.S. legation in Seoul reported: “The severe famine of the past winter made the matter [of emigrating to Hawaii] seem all the more attractive to the people.” The following year, on January 27, sugar-industry official C. M. Cooke reported the arrival of the first group of Korean immigrants: “We have just received about fifty laborers and their families from Korea. As the people there are in a starving condition we hope that we shall be able to get a number of them as they seem to be just what our plantations need.”

“Times were hard,” a Korean immigrant recalled. “The country had been passing through a period of famine years. . . . My occupation as tax collector barely kept me from starvation’s door as I travelled from village to village.” His initial plan was to migrate alone and return to Korea after three years, but he finally decided to take his family with him to America. “We left Korea because we were too poor,” another Korean recounted. Unable to restrain tears evoked by memories of the suffering, she added: “We had nothing to eat. There was absolutely no way we could survive.” Echoing a similar story, a Korean migrant said: “There were no opportunities for work of any kind and conditions were bad. It was then that we heard of a man who was talking a lot about the opportunities in Hawaii. He said it was a land of opportunity where everybody was rich.”

From newspaper advertisements and posters, Koreans learned that plantation laborers in Hawaii received free housing, medical care, and sixteen dollars a month for a sixty-hour work week — a sum equal to about sixty-four won (Korean dollars), a small fortune to Koreans. Koreans were told by the labor recruiters that Hawaii
was a “paradise” where “clothing grew on trees, free to be picked,” and where “gold dollars were blossoming on every bush.” They were given descriptions of America as a “land of gold” and a “land of dreams.” Lured by fantasy and hope, Koreans borrowed money from a bank in Korea financed by the Hawaiian sugar planters. They agreed that the hundred-dollar loan for the transportation expense would be deducted by the plantation manager from their monthly pay over a three-year period.\textsuperscript{74}

The Korean migration included many women: of the 6,685 adults who entered between 1903 and 1906, nearly 10 percent were women. Guaranteed employment and housing on the plantations, Korean men saw the islands as a place where family life was possible. But many took their wives and children with them because they were afraid that they would not be able to return to a Korea under Japanese domination. An additional 1,066 Korean women came as picture brides during the next seventeen years. Whereas the families of Japanese immigrants had arranged their children’s picture-bride marriages, Korean migrants relied on Japanese agents to make the necessary arrangements for them. In their offices in the port cities, impersonal agents displayed photographs of grooms and gathered applications from interested young Korean women. At the time of their marriages, the men were generally twenty years older than their wives. Korean picture brides entered the United States with Japanese passports issued to them as colonial subjects of Japan under the terms of the Gentlemen’s Agreement. By 1920, Korean women constituted 21 percent of the total Korean-adult immigrant population in the United States.\textsuperscript{75}

For many Korean picture brides, Hawaii promised a better life. “My parents were very poor,” said a Korean woman. “One year, a heavy rain came, a flood; the crops all washed down. Oh, it was a very hard time. . . . Under the Japanese, no freedom. Not even free talking.” She had heard stories about the islands. “Hawaii’s a free place, everybody living well. Hawaii had freedom, so if you like talk, you can talk; you like work, you can work. I wanted to come, so, I sent my picture. Ah, marriage! Then I could get to America! That land of freedom with streets paved of gold! Since I became ten, I’ve been forbidden to step outside our gates, just like the rest of the girls of my days. So becoming a picture bride would be my answer and release.”\textsuperscript{76}

Anxious to seek greater opportunities and freedom in America, many more Korean men and women would have left Choson had
Korean emigration not been so short-lived. In 1905, only two years after the arrival of the first Korean plantation laborers in Hawaii, Japan began to formalize its control over Korea by declaring it a “protectorate.” The Japanese government then prohibited Korean emigration to Hawaii in order to curb Korean labor competition with Japanese workers in Hawaii and to cut off the source of Korean-independence activities in the United States. Consequently, Korean migrants came in much smaller numbers than the Chinese and Japanese.

Yet, like the other Asian migrants, the Koreans carried an expectation. As they crossed the Pacific Ocean to Hawaii, they said to themselves: *kaeguk chinch wi* — “the country is open, go forward.”

**Manongs in Movement**

Unlike the Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, Filipino migrants came from a territory of the United States. They went by the tens of thousands after the U.S. annexation of the Philippines — first to Hawaii in the early 1900s and then to the mainland in the 1920s. Ninety percent of the migrants were Catholic, reflecting the presence of the Catholic Church in the Philippines during centuries of Spanish colonial rule. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, Filipinos had been in contact with European culture for a long time through the church. “The Filipinos were brought up under Christianity for 400 years,” explained immigrant Phillip V. Vera Cruz. “They have a different upbringing and were more attached to the western people.”

They were also American in their outlook. Many had been educated in schools established by Americans. “From the time of kindergarten on our islands,” said Salvadore del Fierro, “we stood in our short pants and saluted the Stars and Stripes which waved over our schoolyards.” In their classrooms they looked at pictures of Washington and Lincoln, studied the Declaration of Independence, and read about the “home of the free and the brave” in their English-language textbooks. “We said the ‘Pledge of Allegiance’ to the American flag each morning,” recalled Angeles Amoroso, who emigrated to the United States in 1923. “We also sang ‘The Star Spangled Banner.’ All of the classes were taught in English.” Hundreds, thousands of American teachers had gone there to Americanize the Filipinos. “I studied under American teachers [in the Philippines], learning American history and English, being inspired by those teachers and American ideals,” a Filipino told an interviewer in California.
in 1930. “It’s no wonder that I have always wanted to come here.”

By 1930, some 110,000 Filipinos had gone to Hawaii and another 40,000 to the mainland. Some of them — several hundred, possibly a few thousand — were *pensionados*, or government-sponsored students. The vast majority of the migrants were laborers from poor and uneducated farming families. The Filipino migration was overwhelmingly composed of young men: of the 31,092 Filipinos who entered California between 1920 and 1929, 84 percent were under thirty years of age. Genevieve Laigo of Seattle never forgot how the Filipino men greatly outnumbered the Filipino women on the ship carrying them to America in 1929: “There were three hundred men and only two women!” In 1930, only 10,486 or 16.6 percent of the 63,052 Filipinos in Hawaii were female. The imbalance between Filipino men and women was even greater on the mainland, where only 2,941 or 6.5 percent of the 45,208 Filipinos were female.

The greater percentage of Filipino women in Hawaii as compared to the mainland was influenced by the different labor conditions waiting for them in each region. A Filipino laborer would more likely consider taking his wife with him to Hawaii than to the mainland. In the islands, he would be employed on a plantation where he would live in a permanent and stable plantation community. On the mainland, he would be a migratory farm laborer, moving from field to field and from one temporary camp to another, even from one state to another. Furthermore, planters in Hawaii saw how it was in their interest to promote the emigration of Filipino women. The Hawaiian Sugar Planters’ Association, which governed the sugar industry in the islands, determined that men with families were steadier workers than single men. In a study conducted in 1916, the association produced evidence demonstrating the positive “influence of family responsibility”: Japanese men, many of them married, worked an average of 21.9 days a month (84 percent of full-time), while Filipino men, mostly single, worked only eighteen days a month (69 percent). To encourage Filipino men to have families on the plantation and thus become more reliable workers, the association approved a plan for the importation of Filipino women. In a letter to H. Hackfield and Company in 1916, a director of the association announced a new program to encourage the Filipinos on the plantations to secure wives from the Philippines. “If these men will furnish us with letters to their wives or prospective wives, photographs of themselves and letters from the managers and from some Filipino women in the camps recommending the men as being desirable hus-
bands,” the director stated, “we will endeavor to induce the wives or prospective wives to come to Hawaii, and will see that they reach the men who send for them.”

But the gender composition of the Filipino migration was not determined wholly or even mainly by employers and their needs. Filipino culture with its Spanish and Catholic traditions placed restrictions on the possibilities of travel for women, requiring them to be accompanied by their husbands or fathers. Moreover, Filipino migrants generally viewed themselves as sojourners; they did not see America as a place to bring families and to settle. Unlike the Chinese and Japanese, most of the migrating Filipino men were unmarried. Only 18 percent of the Filipino men on the U.S. mainland were married, and most of these had left their wives in the Philippines, thinking their stay in America would be only temporary.

Whether single or married, thousands of Filipino men felt forced to leave home. Had they remained in the Philippines, many migrants said, they would have found themselves “sinking down into the toilet.” Life was getting harder, and people were forced to “reach farther and farther away to make ends meet.” Times had not always been so terrible. In a poem about his early childhood in the Philippines, an immigrant in California depicted a moment of felicity and plenty:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{My father was a working man} \\
&\text{In the land of the big rains,} \\
&\text{The water glistened on his arms} \\
&\text{Like the cool dew in the morning} \\
&\text{When the rice was growing tall. . . .}
\end{align*}
\]

“In the forest behind us,” a plantation laborer in Hawaii recalled as he talked about his childhood in the Philippines, “we got so much to live on. I would go hunting there with a string trap once a month and you would have to call me clumsy if I brought down less than four wild chickens. We used to trap wild pigs there too and deer.” But then “the rich people” from town came to hunt with guns. “Those lazy bastards would even come at night when the animals and birds were asleep and blind them with their flashlights. And boom! No miss. Boom! They fell like shaken mangoes to the ground.”

Increasingly the peasants discovered that the rich rice lands they cultivated were becoming owned by men who never saw their property, by “names on pieces of paper.” Each year they had to give a larger share of their crops to distant landlords and were driven into
debt. A Filipino immigrant remembered his father saying to his brother Luciano:

“The moneylender has taken my land, son.”
“How much more do you owe him, Father?” asked Luciano.
“It is one hundred pesos,” said my father. “I promised to pay in three weeks, but he won’t listen to me. I’d thought that by that time the rice would be harvested and I could sell some of it; then I would be able to pay him. He sent two policemen to Mangusmana to see that I do not touch the rice. It is my own rice and land. Is it possible, son? Can a stranger take away what we have molded with our hands?”
“Yes, Father,” said Luciano. “It is possible under the present government.”

Many years after he had left the Philippines, another Filipino immigrant sadly described this process of dispossession: “There was a time when my ancestors owned almost the whole town of Bulac and the surrounding villages. But when the Americans came conditions changed. Little by little my father’s lands were sold. My share was mortgaged finally to keep the family from starvation and I soon found myself tilling the soil as did the poor Filipino peasants.”

As the farmers experienced increasing hardships, they also sometimes encountered personal abuse from the Filipino elite. A young boy never forgot one such incident. One day he had gone with his mother into town to sell mongo beans. There they noticed an elegantly dressed young woman walking down the street. Irritated by their stares, the woman raised her silk umbrella. “What are you looking at, poor woman?” snapped the wealthy woman contemptuously as she struck the basket of beans, scattering them on the pavement. Crawling on her knees, his mother scooped the beans into the basket. “It is all right. It is all right,” she tried to reassure her son. Confused and stunned, the boy knew it was not all right as he knelt on the wet cement and picked out the dirt and pebbles from the beans.

But there was a way out of poverty, Filipinos believed. They could go to America — Hawaii and California. “Kasla glorya ti Hawaii,” they said, “Hawaii is like a land of glory.” They could find work on the sugar plantations and “pick up” money. Then they could return home triumphantly as successful migrants, as balikbayanos and Hawaiianos. Like peacocks, they could strut down the dusty streets of their villages, proudly showing off their “Amerikana” suits, silk shirts, sport shoes, and Stetson hats. They fancied themselves looking
so rich with their “money to blow.” “Everyone,” reported a Filipino immigrant, “became fascinated by the tales told of Hawaii,” seized by what was commonly known as the “Hawaiian fever.”

Called “drummers,” labor agents sent to the Philippines by the Hawaiian sugar planters helped to spread the fever. They traveled from town to town, showing movies that depicted the “glorious adventure and the beautiful opportunities” awaiting Filipino workers in Hawaii. “One scene [in one of the movies] shows the handing out of checks,” said a provincial school officer. “The movie is free and is usually shown in the town plaza, so that everyone has a chance to see it.” The labor agents “dazzled the Filipino eyes” with the sum of two dollars a day, an attractive wage compared with the fifteen cents a man could earn daily by hard labor in the Philippines. “The migrating Filipino,” reported the Manila Times, “sees no opportunity for him in the Philippines. Advertise in a Manila paper and offer a job at 25 pesos a month, not a living wage in Manila, and you will get a thousand applicants. Make the same offer in any provincial town, and the response will be twice as great, comparatively. Is it any wonder, then, that the lure of pay four to ten times as great, in Hawaii or the United States, draws the Filipino like a magnet?” Lured here in the 1920s, Ted Tomol told an interviewer half a century later, when he was eighty-three years old: “Back home, we thought California was the Eldorado.”

Trying to climb out of peonage, Filipinos signed labor contracts, agreeing to labor for three years in exchange for transportation to Hawaii and wages of eighteen dollars a month plus housing, water, fuel, and medical care. Decades later, a Filipino vividly remembered the day he signed his labor contract:

The agent was just coming down the steps when I halted my horse in front of the recruiter’s office. He was a fellow Filipino, but a Hawaiian.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I would like to present myself for Hawaii, Apo,” I answered as I came down from my horse.

“Wait, I’ll go see if I can place you on the next load,” he said, and turned back up into the door.

When he came out, he had a paper in his hand. “Come up, so we can fill in the forms,” he waved; so I went in.

“You write?” he asked.

“No,” I said; so he filled in for me.

“Come back Monday for the doctor to check you up,” he
said, patting me on the back. “When you come back, bring beinte cinco, twenty-five, and I’ll make sure of your papers for a place,” he said, shaking my hand.

It was like that. “Tip” is what we call it here. But that is our custom to pasoksok, slipsome, for a favor.87

The migrants promised to be gone for only three years, for they believed it would be easy to earn and save money in America. Returning with rolls of cash bulging in their pockets, they would pay off the mortgages on their lands and recover their family homes. “My sole ambition was to save enough money to pay back the mortgage on my land,” explained a Filipino. “In the Philippines a man is considered independent and is looked upon with respect by his neighbors if he possesses land.” As he said farewell to his brother in the Philippines, a Filipino laborer promised: “I will come back and buy that house. I will buy it and build a high cement wall around it. I will come back with lots of money and put on a new roof. ... Wait and see!”88

But not all of the departing Filipinos were sojourners. Rufina Clemente Jenkins had met an American soldier in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and married him in 1900, when she was only fourteen years old. Two years later she sailed to America with her daughter, Francesca, to join her husband and make her home here. Pete Silfan of Seattle said that he had come to the United States “to look for a better living. Down there [the Philippines] we didn’t have any future.” Aware of the limited opportunities for education and employment in the islands, especially for women, Angeles Amoroso decided to search for a new future in the United States: “My father had the impression I would be away only for seven years, but I knew in my heart that I would be making America my permanent home.”89

From the Plains of the Punjab

In 1907, a year after the first group of Filipinos had landed in Hawaii, workers from India began arriving on the West Coast. The period of Asian-Indian immigration was extremely short. Immigration officials began placing restrictions in 1909 and Congress prohibited immigration from India eight years later. Altogether only sixty-four hundred came to America. The Asian-Indian migrants were even more disproportionately male than the other groups of Asian immigrants: less than one percent were women. Generally they were
young men, between sixteen and thirty-five years of age; many, perhaps most, were married. In 1907, Fred Lockley interviewed many of the Asian-Indian migrants and reported that "practically all" of the newcomers were married and had families in India. The migrants possessed little or no education: 47 percent were illiterate. Most had been unskilled laborers and agricultural workers in India, coming here in small groups, networks of pindi (village men) and got (cousins).90

They had left the fertile plains of the Punjab, the "land of five rivers," a rectangular-shaped province. Originally from the districts of Ludhiana, Jullunder, and Hoshiarpur, most of the migrants were Sikhs. Based on a doctrine of equality that challenged the Hindu caste system, Sikhism was a reform religion representing a syncretism of Islam and Hinduism. To demonstrate their religious commitment, the men never shaved their beards or cut their hair. They wore turbans, for the rules required them to cover their heads in the temple. Of all the immigrants in America, observed immigrant Saint N. Singh in 1909, none surpassed the Sikhs in "picturesqueness." They could be seen "clad in countless curious styles." Yards upon yards of cotton, calico, or silk were swathed about their heads, forming turbans, cone-shaped or round like a mushroom button, with waves or points directly in the middle of their foreheads or to the right or left, "as variable as the styles of American women's pompadours."91

The emigration of Asian Indians to this country was conditioned by British colonialism in India. Seeking to develop capitalist agriculture in India, the British government instituted changes in the land-tenure system and the production of agriculture that placed small landholders in an extremely vulnerable situation. In order to pay their debts, many of them had to mortgage their lands. Moneylenders unscrupulously required peasant farmers to sign mortgage contracts that charged 18 to 36 percent interest and contained clauses specifying the sale of the land in the event of late payments. Furthermore, a famine from 1899 to 1902 decimated the cattle owned by the peasants and forced them deeper into debt. Within this context, Indians by the hundreds and thousands left their homeland to work in the British West Indies, Uganda, Maritius, and British Guiana. Several thousand went to Canada and the United States. "Do you wonder when you look at India, with its low wages and high taxes, its famines and plagues, its absence of all incentive toward advancement, that the dam which for so long has held the people in check is weakening?"
observed a writer in the *Pacific Monthly Magazine* in 1907. “Do you wonder that the East Indians are turning their faces westward toward the land of progress and opportunity?”

Canada was the destination for many Asian Indians, but they found themselves unwelcome there. “British Columbians are proud of India . . . proud of East Indians as boys of the flag,” declared the *Vancouver World* in 1906. “But an East Indian in Canada is out of place.” White workers also voiced their opposition to the entry of Asian Indians: “British Columbia is a white man’s country. The coming hordes of Asiatic laborers will keep wages down and crowd the white man to the wall, since a white man cannot nor will not come down to the Asiatic laborer’s low standard of living.” A letter written in 1914 on behalf of six hundred Sikhs in Hong Kong, addressed to their friends in America, expressed their fear of a Canadian immigration restriction law: “For God’s sake, help us get to the United States or Canada. The new Canadian law will go into effect on 5 March 1914 after which time few Hindus will be admitted into Canada. It has been much more difficult for the past six months to get into Manila than heretofore. We are shut out of Australia and New Zealand. For God’s sake, come to our assistance so that we will be able to get into the United States or Canada.”

When asked why he had left the Punjab, Deal Singh Madhas told an interviewer: “To make money and then return to the Punjab and farm for myself instead of on the ancestral property.” As Sikh soldiers in the British army, many migrants had gone initially to China to help suppress the 1900 Boxer Rebellion; others had been recruited as policemen to be stationed in Hong Kong. “I was born in the Punjabi district of India and served on the police force in Hong Kong, China, for some years,” Sucha Singh told an interviewer in 1924. “While I was in China several Hindus returned and reported on the ease with which they could make money in America and so I decided to go.” Many migrants had first served in the Indian Army. After three years of military service, eighteen-year-old Puna Singh migrated in 1906, having heard as a soldier exciting stories about America. Generally the migrants were the second or youngest sons, sent by their fathers to earn money to pay off debts and the mortgage. They went abroad under the sponsorship of their families. Their decision to emigrate was not a solitary one, reflecting personal desires or hopes, but a collective conclusion based on kinship obligations and the need to supplement the family income. To pay for their transportation to Vancouver and San Francisco, many Punjabis mortgaged
one or two acres of their land in India. Even if they had to become debtors to get to America, they thought the promise of getting ahead in the new land was worth the sacrifice. Paid ten to fifteen cents a day in India, they were told they could earn two dollars for a day’s work in America. A Sikh migrant later recalled how California seemed “enchanted.”

The plan for virtually all migrants was to return to their villages. Moola Singh, for example, was only fifteen years old when he came here in 1911. He had recently been married by his father to a young woman, and they had spent only three months together when he left her with his relatives. “You’re leaving me here?” she asked him. “Yes,” he replied, “my mother is here.” “What do I need a mother for? You started love; I need you.” Moola promised: “I’ll come back in six years.” And his young bride countered: “I’ll give you three years.”

Pacific Passages

Pushed from their homelands and pulled to America, the migrants left family, friends, and loved ones in China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, and India. The groups were enormously diverse. They ranged in number — from approximately 430,000 Chinese, 380,000 Japanese, and 150,000 Filipinos to only about 8,000 Koreans and a similar number of Asian Indians. They brought a rich variety of religions including Taoism, Buddhism, Shintoism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity. They differed in gender composition: overwhelmingly the Chinese, Filipino, and Asian-Indian migrants were men, but among the Koreans and Japanese were significant numbers of women. Even within each group the ratio of men to women varied according to destination: proportionately more Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino women emigrated to Hawaii than to the U.S. mainland. While the men generally chose to go, many women had no choice; their husbands had decided for them or they were brought as prostitutes. “Necessity” drove their migration to America.

Most of the migrants in each group came as sojourners. Still some, even many, came thinking they would or might stay. Intention of permanent settlement increased for the Chinese after the 1882 exclusion act and for the Japanese after the 1908 Gentlemen’s Agreement. Entering through loopholes in the exclusionist policies, Chinese and Japanese came to join family members and make their homes in America. The migrants also brought with them differing amounts of education. While the Japanese and Koreans were largely literate, most
of the other groups had very limited or no schooling. Educated in American schools in the islands and able to speak some English, Filipinos were somewhat familiar with U.S. culture. While the Koreans came from urban areas, the migrants of the other groups originated generally from agricultural communities. Leaving a country with a weak central government, the Chinese lacked a strong sense of nationalism, while the Japanese embraced the patriotism of Meiji Japan. Witnessing Japanese penetration of their country, Korean migrants nurtured a defensive nationalism.

Still, what was equally, perhaps even more striking about most of the migrants was how they were stirred by a common discontent and how they came searching for a new start. "Poverty hurt," but hunger and want were not what essentially defined the migrants, for "necessity" also powered men and women who stayed home. The migrants were unique in a felicitous way: they were the dreamers. They could imagine what they could do in an unformed America, and their dreams inspired them to take risks. They wondered what they could become, unfurled before the winds of change and challenge. Possibilities exploded in their heads. They went to bed in the evenings, ideas and calculations roaring in their brains, and woke up in the mornings shivering with euphoric excitement and feeling a restless empowerment. They decided to be "extravagant." Scenarios of a brighter future, racing in their minds, swept them away relentlessly toward a rupturing experience, a radical break from the "cake of custom" and their old homelands. Ah, but the world is big, others warned them: Do you know the meaning of immensity? And they answered: We will tell you someday when we get back. The migrants felt their hearts tugging them toward an alluring America as they separated themselves from the graves of their ancestors and from a world where there were common points of cultural reference and where people looked like them and spoke their language. They reached for "what persisted."96

Many of the migrants had never before even stepped beyond the boundaries of their farms or villages. Entering the port cities, they were confused and frightened by the noises and the crowds. At the docks, they said final good-byes. "When I departed Naha Harbor [in Okinawa]," a migrant remembered, "my mother sang loudly and danced with other women relatives until my ship went out of sight. Her song went like this: 'My beloved child, on this auspicious ship, may your journey be as safe and straight as if linked by a silk thread.'" Another mother told her departing daughter: "I am going
to miss you very much when you leave, but I'll always be with you. We won't be separated even for a moment.” The daughter did not understand what her mother meant until that night when dressing for bed she found a piece of the Buddhist altar ornament in the breast of her kimono. A young Filipina accompanied her uncle who wanted her to be educated in the United States; waving good-bye to her mother, she said she would be back in seven years. “But I knew,” she told her granddaughter many years later, “I was never coming back.”

Then there was a surge toward the moored ships, and the travelers began struggling through a sea of people. “Everyone was afraid that he would be left behind,” said a Chinese migrant, “so as soon as the way was opened everyone just rushed to get on board and when he was finally aboard he was all out of breath.” The ship pulled away from the dock, stretching and snapping off the streamers one after another.

Ribbons of farewell
I hold between my fingers
Feeling blood flow through.

As she felt her ship sail away from Yokohama, a woman watched the city disappear behind the waves. “The ship gained speed heartlessly out into the open sea,” she said. “I could see nothing but water, when suddenly, and so unexpectedly, I sighted Mount Fuji poking its head above the horizon. I thought that Mount Fuji was stretching itself up to say, ‘Goodbye,’ to me. ‘Ah! Fuji-san,’ was all I could utter.” From the ships, Filipinos looked at pretty young women waving good-bye from the docks and giving them “remember me man-ong” smiles.

You were still waving, beloved
When I left you
To journey to another land
A white kerchief
You held
Drenched with tears
You couldn’t help crying
I promised it'll be short
while perhaps
And I will be back home....
Gazing at the distant shores of Manila and holding his rattan suitcase, a manong felt a deep emptiness within: “I knew that I was going away from everything I had loved and known. I waved my hat and went into the vestibule that led to the filthy hold below.”

In the steerage, the voyagers were packed together. “It was crowded below deck,” a Filipina later recalled. “I think there were more than 300 of us; my husband was in a different section while the women and children were in another section. During the long voyage I would often sit on deck, holding my youngest child. . . . My husband and my other child, who was four, would often go and watch through the fence the first-class passengers playing in the swimming pool.” The smell of freight, oil, and machines filled the air of the stifling steerage. The passengers would try to climb out onto the deck where they could breathe fresh air and sun themselves. But “the first-class passengers were annoyed,” a Filipino said, “and an official of the boat came down and drove us back into the dark haven below.”

On another occasion, a young white woman, wearing a brief bathing suit, was walking on the deck with a companion. Noticing the Filipinos sunning themselves, she remarked scornfully: “Look at those half-naked savages from the Philippines, Roger! Haven’t they any idea of decency?”

The passengers found the food terrible and monotonous. “The food was different from that which I had been used to, and I did not like it at all,” a Chinese passenger complained. “When I got to San Francisco I was half starved because I was afraid to eat the provisions of the barbarians.” A Japanese traveler remembered that “the cooks and the ship’s boys were Chinese, and every day we had curry rice only.” Time and again Japanese passengers grumbled about the food: “The soup served every morning contained only two or three small pieces of dried tofu (bean curd) and was watery and tasteless.” “Breakfast and lunch consisted of bean paste soup and pickled radish. For supper we were served fat-back. Though rice was served, it was so hard it wouldn’t go down the throat. There was no soy sauce, and everything was literally awful.” Traveling in the steerage class of the steamship President Pierce, a Filipino passenger could not “stomach” the food — “wilted pechay (Chinese cabbage) and rotten vegetables; putrefied fish, salted pork, and stale hamburger for meats; and foul-smelling brew of tea and coffee made from sea water for drinks.” “Food was served in great buckets,” another Filipino traveler reported, and Filipinos were disappointed to find them filled with bread rather than rice. They missed their daily rice — “food which
every hardworking Filipino cannot do without, especially in the morning.” Sometimes it did not matter what the passengers ate, for the seas were so rough that they could not keep their food down.  

On the ship, their world seemed to be in constant motion, swaying and rocking.

*I ate wind and tasted waves for more than twenty days,*
a Chinese traveler wrote in a poem he had carved on the walls of the Angel Island immigration station in San Francisco Bay. “Day after day the weather was bad and the sea stormy,” a Japanese passenger said. “The hatch was tightly closed and there was no circulation of air, so we were all tortured by the bad odor. As the boat was small, whenever a high wave hit us the top deck was submerged and the sound of the screw grinding in empty space chilled us.”

*One third-class porthole*  
Against which from time to time  
Waves crested and broke.

The passengers felt disoriented, unbalanced, nauseous. “After boarding, when we got close to the Mokpo River, the turbulence was heavy,” a Korean immigrant recalled. “We felt the ship rocking and the people in the ship moved like a football and threw up.” Confined below deck during stormy weather, Filipino voyagers on the S.S. *President Cleveland* sailing to San Francisco in 1926 were almost overwhelmed by the stench of vomited food, finding the steerage smelling like a “store of dried fish.”

The passengers felt grimy, but they had no place to wash hands and faces, no place to bathe. On one ship, the crew put a long row of bowls on deck, filled half full of water for the passengers to rinse out their mouths and wash their faces. Always the travelers faced the danger of epidemics sweeping through the steerages. On one occasion, 597 Chinese were forced to remain on their disease-infected ship for two months after it had reached Honolulu. A Filipino migrant never forgot the horror of a meningitis epidemic on board his ship: “The Chinese waiters stopped coming into our dining room, because so many of us had been attacked by the disease. They pushed the tin plates under the door of the kitchen and ran back to their rooms, afraid of being contaminated. Those hungry enough crawled miserably on their bellies and reached for their plates.” Every now and then, he added, a young doctor and his assistant descended below
deck to “check the number of deaths and to examine those about to die.”

In the steerage, the passengers slept on bunk beds in rows resembling the inside of an army barracks. “We were packed into the ship in one big room. There was no privacy, no comforts, no nothing. We were like silkworms on a tray, eating and sleeping.” Sleep did not come easily, due to the congestion, excitement, and anxiety. “I could not sleep a few nights,” explained Yang Choo-en, who left Korea in 1902, “because so many things were in my mind and I worried so much since I did not know what would happen in the new, strange land in Hawaii. I did not know how to speak English and I did not know anything about sugar plantation work either.” The crossing was tedious. Japanese travelers tried to occupy themselves by presenting traditional dramas and holding talent shows for noh singing, shigin (the chanting of Chinese poems), and biwa (Japanese guitar) solos. Passengers had time for reflection. As he lay on his bunk in the dark hole of the steerage, a Filipino traveler felt seasick and lonely. “I was restless at night,” he said, “and many disturbing thoughts came to my mind.” Perhaps he had made a mistake, but it was too late. He could not turn back now.

Theirs was a long, weary, and trying trans-Pacific traverse.

*Island soul of me
Cast off to cross the ocean.
Ab, the world is big!*

The surging, swirling ocean around them seemed to emblematize their feelings—the cresting and crashing of their emotions and thoughts. They were in movement, with nothing solid and stable beneath them. They were awash with questions about their future: what would life be like in the new and foreign land, so far away? What would they become there? Would they ever see their homelands and families again? Would it be worth risking everything they had?

*Loud waves rise and fall
On the North Pacific sea
Voyaging abroad
I stand on froth-washed decks
And am wet with salty spray.*
Then, finally, after four to eight weeks of confinement, the tired and homesick passengers saw, in the distant horizon, the land of their destiny. “Gazing in silent wonder at the new land,” the Chinese passengers on board the Great Republic arriving in San Francisco in 1869 were “packed” on the main deck, reported an observer. Then down the gangway they came, “a living stream of the blue-coated men of Asia,” bending long bamboo poles across their shoulders to carry their bedding, matting, and clothing. They were dressed in new cotton blouses and loose baggy breeches, slippers or shoes with heavy wooden soles, and broad-brimmed hats of split bamboo. “For two mortal hours,” the witness wrote, “the blue stream pours down from the steamer upon the wharf; a regiment has landed already, and still they come.” Eight years later, another witness described the arrival of Chinese migrants in San Francisco: a thousand men were on the deck of the ship, “huddled together,” all getting ready to go ashore, “washing and combing, talking and laughing, looking and wondering, scolding and quarreling, pushing and crowding; concealing opium in one part of their clothing, and silk handkerchiefs in another.”

The moment of arrival was engraved in the memories of the passengers. When Ahn Ch’ang-ho of Korea first saw the volcanic mountains of Hawaii rising from the sea before him, he was so deeply moved and overjoyed he later gave himself the pen name, To San (Island Mountain). Describing the day of his landing in Hawaii, Bonipasyo said: “At 8 A.M. we pulled into the immigration station of Honolulu. There was a band playing. We disembarked alphabetically and as we came down the gangplank, they [the immigration officials] asked us where we were going and we shouted the plantation of our destiny. ‘Waialua Sugar Company!’ ‘Puunene Maui!’ people shouted. I shouted, ‘Naalehu, Hawaii.’ ” Then Bonipasyo and his fellow Filipino laborers heard their names called. They were ordered to step forward individually, and a plantation official then placed a bango, a numbered metal tag on a chain, around the neck of each man. “On a clear, crisp, September morning in 1868,” after a sixty-day voyage from Guangdong, Huie Kin sighted land. “To be actually at the ‘Golden Gate’ of the land of our dreams! The feeling that welled up in us was indescribable,” he recalled. After Huie and the other passengers had landed, “out of the general babble, some one called out in our local dialect, and, like sheep recognizing the voice only, we blindly followed, and soon were piling into one of the
waiting wagons. Everything was so strange and so exciting. . . . The wagon made its way heavily over the cobblestones, turned some corners, ascended a steep climb, and stopped at a clubhouse, where we spent the night.”

Married to men they had not yet met, brides felt a special sense of anticipation and anxiety. “A month after the marriage,” a Chinese woman said, “I sailed for America with my husband’s relative, a distant clan cousin.” Her family had arranged her marriage by proxy to a man she had never seen. “On the day that the boat docked at Port Townsend, the cousin who brought me to America came to escort me on the deck. Standing beside me at the rail, he pointed to a figure walking up and down the wharf. He said, ‘See that man smoking a big cigar? He is your husband!’” A Japanese woman remembered how most of the passengers on her ship were picture brides: “When the boat anchored, one girl took out a picture from her kimono sleeve and said to me, ‘Mrs. Inouye, will you let me know if you see this face?’” After arriving in San Francisco in 1919, Fusayo Fukuda was placed in a large waiting room with other picture brides; all the husbands except hers came and a panic swept through her as she looked around the empty room. She was wishing she had not come and she could reboard the ship for Japan when finally her husband, Yokichi Kaya, arrived.

Most of the picture brides were much younger than their husbands. “When I first saw my fiancé, I could not believe my eyes,” said Anna Choi, who was fifteen years old when she became a picture bride. “His hair was grey and I could not see any resemblance to the picture I had. He was forty-six years old.” Surprised and shocked to find older men waiting for them on the dock in Honolulu, many Korean picture brides cried: “Aigo omani” — “Oh dear me, what shall I do?” One of these disconcerted picture brides was Woo Hong Pong Yun. Arriving in the islands at the age of twenty-three, she saw a thirty-six-year-old man greeting her as her new husband. “When I see him,” she said years later, “he skinny and black. I no like. No look like picture. But no can go home.” Another Korean picture bride, finding that her prospective husband did not look like his picture, was “so disappointed.” “I cry for eight days,” she said, “and don’t come out of my room. But I knew that if I don’t get married, I have to go back to Korea on the next ship. So on the ninth day I came out and married him. But I don’t talk to him for three months.” Still wearing kimonos and sandals as they disembarked from the ships, Japanese picture brides often found themselves immediately
taken by their husbands to a clothing store and outfitted with Western dress. One young woman remembered how she put on a high-necked blouse, a long skirt, high-laced shoes, "and, of course, for the first time in my life, a brassiere and hip pads." But she had trouble with the underwear. "Japanese women used only a 'koshimaki' [a sarong-like underskirt]," she explained. "Wearing Western-style underwear for the first time, I would forget to take it down when I went to the toilet. And I frequently committed the blunder."  

The migrants wondered how they would be received by Americans. Would we find ourselves, Chinese newcomers asked apprehensively, "eating bitterness" in Gam Saan? In China, they had been warned about the "red-haired, green-eyed" whites with "hairy faces." Now, in San Francisco, as they were driven through the streets in wagons, Chinese were often pelted with bricks thrown by white hoodlums. Then, crossing Kearny Street and entering Chinatown, the tired and now bruised travelers were relieved to get away from the fan qui ("foreign devils") and glad to find "Chinese faces delighting the vision, and Chinese voices greeting the ear." After they had landed in San Francisco in 1900, John Jeong and several others were put in a carriage to be taken to Chinatown. "It was an open carriage with standing room only," recalled Jeong years later. "Halfway there some white boys came up and started throwing rocks at us. The driver was a white man, too, but he stopped the carriage and chased them away." After a group of Japanese had arrived in San Francisco in 1905, they saw a gang of twenty white youngsters on the dock. "The Japs have come!" they shouted and threw horse dung. "I was baptized with horse dung," a newcomer commented later. "This was my very first impression of America." When they landed in San Francisco in 1906, several Koreans saw a group of white men standing around the gangplank. "One guy stuck his foot out," one of the migrants said, "and kicked up my mother's skirt. He spit on my face, and I asked my father, 'Why did we come to such a place? I want to go home to Korea.'" A year later, a traveler from India reached Seattle, where he and his fellow Sikhs received "strange looks" as people peered at their turbans and beards and listened curiously to their Hindustani language.

A wind came up behind the "strangers." Shortly after she had arrived in the San Joaquin Valley, a young Japanese bride stood alone in the darkness outside of her house: "If I looked really hard I could see, faintly glowing in the distance, one tiny light. And over there, I could see another. And over there another. And I knew that that was
where people lived. More than feeling ‘sabishii’ [lonely], I felt ‘samui’ [cold]. It was so lonely it was beyond loneliness. It was cold.” The migrants began to sense they had traversed new boundaries, some of them not defined by geography, and they anxiously gathered memory around themselves.

Alone I watch
The world moving in space, looking back into
Childhood for the words that meant so much,
The voices that had gone with the years.
This is the hour of memory.\textsuperscript{110}

They tried to remember the familiar places they had left behind — their homes, the neighbor’s fruit tree sagging pregnantly with clusters of red \textit{li-chi} fruit, the nearby stream where they caught shrimp with nets, the favorite footpath where delicious \textit{kilins}, or mountain bamboo shoots, grew everywhere, and the secret places where they picked \textit{matsutake} mushrooms. The farther they went from their village the more “vivid” it seemed to become in their minds. “There are mountains on one side, and there is the wide river on the other side,” said a migrant remembering his village. “A tongue of land extends into the river and on this land are hills that are covered with guava trees. Now is the time for the guavas to bloom. I used to go there when I was a child and the smell of the blossoms followed me down into the valley.”

\textit{Chasing them in dreams,
Mountains and rivers of home.}

“Why had I left home?” a newcomer asked. “What would I do in America? I looked into the faces of my companions for a comforting answer, but they were as young and bewildered as I, and my only consolation was their proximity and the familiarity of their dialects.” They could feel the liminality of the land awaiting them. Would everything be “familiar and kind”? the newcomers wondered. Or were they merely seeing illusions, harboring hopes that would “vanish,” too?

\textit{Illusion and I
Travelled over the ocean
Hunting money-trees.}
Looking and looking . . .
Even in America
What? No money-trees?

And so they entered a new and alien world where they would become a racial minority, seen as different and inferior, and where they would become “strangers.”\textsuperscript{111}