

Asian Migrants, Exclusionary Laws, and Transborder Migration in North America, 1880-1940

In late March 1908, Japanese migrant Tatsumi Mitsutaro arrived at Blaine, Washington, across the international border from Douglas, British Columbia. Tatsumi told a Canadian immigration inspector at the border that he had entered the United States from Mexico at Eagle Pass, Texas, and that he was travelling north to Vancouver where he intended to catch a steamship back to Japan. His admission to Canada was denied. The grounds for refusal? It was a Canadian Order-in-Council that prohibited immigrants from coming into Canada unless arriving by a continuous journey from the country of their birth or citizenship on tickets purchased before leaving that country. Because Tatsumi did not travel directly from Japan, but arrived in Mexico and then travelled through the United States, he was declared inadmissible and was to be returned to Mexico (1).

Without money to afford a railroad ticket back to Mexico, Tatsumi's return trip was further complicated. He had been allowed to land and then to transit through the United States at Eagle Pass some two weeks earlier. His entry into the United States was in accordance with an allowance made for Japanese and Korean laborers who were otherwise excluded from the United States by the terms of the Executive Order of the President Theodore Roosevelt on March 14, 1907. This "transit privilege" required Tatsumi to produce a prepaid through ticket across the United States as a proof of his intention to continue on to another country. Also, he had to pay a \$500 cash bond, which would be returned to him upon his passage out of the United States within twenty days. Having been debarred by Canadian Immigration, however, Tatsumi had not left the United States in mid-April, well past the moratorium of the bond. Faced with the imminent risk of losing the \$500, he was literally stuck in the United States until U.S. Immigration finally agreed to grant him permission to leave for Japan from the port of Seattle (2).

Tatsumi's experience of being caught between two borders might not have been typical for his countrymen who journeyed across the Pacific. Many who followed the same itinerary as Tatsumi would have abandoned their "transit" through the United States long before reaching their purported destination in Canada. Flouting the rules in

this way likely posed little problem as long as migrants disappeared from official scrutiny at some point along their way. Nevertheless, Tatsumi's case highlighted a basic theme in Asian migration to North America. Though many went directly to their destinations and stayed there, that was far from the only or common experience of all migrants. Rather, having arrived in the U.S., Canada, or Mexico, a large number of Asians, along with their Canadian, Mexican, European, and Middle Eastern counterparts, chose to move on to the other side of the international boundaries (3).

While most Asian transborder migration took place on the Pacific coast, its impact was felt far beyond that region. The movement of Asians across Mexican, Canadian, and U.S. borders shook a sense of security and confidence among U.S. and Canadian immigration officials.

For them, the seemingly uncontrollable influx of undesirable and unassimilable foreigners (and in the case of Mexico, the antirevolutionaries fleeing the country) took on national and international dimensions. One Canadian official's statement illustrates the depth of concern. Referring to cross-border migration of Chinese, Japanese, and East Indians as the "momentous question," he expressed in 1914 the urgent need for building a common front with the United States against "the Oriental question," which was a "menace both to the United States and Canada" (4). Indeed, even before such a call was launched, the U.S. and Canadian governments had been expanding systems of selection and exclusion at the hitherto largely neglected gates of entry along the border they shared. In many ways then, Asian transborder migration shaped and reshaped North American borders

far more forcefully than did their European counterparts.

This article sheds light on some of the ways in which merchants, laborers, farmers, and lumber camp workers, as well as a far smaller number of wives and prostitutes from China, Japan, and South Asia, negotiated their mobility as they moved across North America's land border (and sometimes back again) from the 1880s to 1930s, after their voyages across the Pacific. This was a crucial time when the permeable borders were gradually transformed. The United States and Canada set up racially discriminatory regulations, and Mexico closed



Sikh workers from the Punjab region of India construct a section of the Oregon Pacific & Eastern Railroad, which serviced the lumber industry, c. 1909. (Courtesy of the Southern Oregon Historical Society, #1603)

its border during and its revolution that began in 1910. The story of Asian transborder migration reveals a complex network of Asian migrants, North American regulatory agents, and multinational middlemen—ranging from steamship companies to labor contractors to small-time smugglers. It illustrates how migration patterns were deeply influenced by class, race, and gender. And it makes it clear that Asian migrants, while often exploited, also exercised a degree of control over their own lives at the local, national, and international levels.

The Canadian-U.S. Border

Thousands of Chinese laborers who had worked at railroad construction sites and mining camps located throughout Washington, Oregon, and California left the United States once construction was over, or even in the middle of it, in order to work for the Canadian Pacific Railroad (CPR) in the 1880s. Between 1881 and 1885, the year of the completion of the railroad, Yip Sang, a Chinese labor contractor in Vancouver and later one of the city's most affluent merchants, supervised close to seven thousand Chinese workers for the CPR. The Guandong native thus provided a pillar of the Chinese labor pool on which the corporation relied almost exclusively. East Indians, the largest number of whom were lumber workers in the Pacific Northwest, also relocated back and forth across the border from sawmills in Bellingham, Washington, to those in British Columbia, selling their labor to the employers who offered the highest wages. Most of them were Punjabi Sikhs, although they were erroneously referred to as "Hindoos" by U.S. and Canadian officials (5).

According to a report by W. L. Mackenzie King, Canadian Deputy Minister of Labor, of over eight thousand Japanese who arrived in Victoria or Vancouver in 1907, a little less than one half (3,619 individuals) held passports to the United States—issued by the Japanese government in accordance with the agreement with the U.S. They crossed the border southbound immediately upon their arrival (6). Only one-fifth (or 1,641 individuals) travelled directly from Japan, whereas more than one-third (or 2,779 individuals) came from Hawai'i. The Canadian government explained the unexpectedly high proportion of Hawai'ian Japanese as a direct result of the U.S. ban on Japanese who travelled with passports to Hawai'i, but who, having landed or worked there, moved on to the continental United States. By passing through British Columbia, these Japanese laborers circumvented the restrictions placed on their mobility by the U.S. Immigration authorities (1907) and President Roosevelt's Executive Order (1908) until this route would be officially closed by the Canada's Continuous Journey Clause that same year (though, in practice, migrants continued to find their way through).

Central to the mobility of Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian migrants and settlers were ethnic merchants and labor contractors, often the same individuals, as well as emigration companies. Just as they traded goods across international boundaries, these merchants of human labor shipped people from Asia and Hawai'i in response to specific labor needs: to logging camps in British Columbia and Washington, coal mines in Idaho, salmon canneries in British Columbia and Alaska, and farm fields along the Pacific coast and inland. Labor contractors like Yamaoka Ototaka, the head of the Oriental Trading Company (*Tōyō Bōeki Gaisha*) based in Seattle, took advantage of the fact that the Hawai'ian Japanese resided beyond the jurisdiction of the Japanese Government and thus were outside the restrictions that limited the travel abroad of its citizens (7). The annexation of Hawai'i by the United States in 1898 also facilitated travel by Japanese plantation workers in the Pacific islands to the mainland. Labor contractors' capacity to exploit the labor and mobility of their countrymen gave Yip Sang and many other ethnic merchant-contractors power

The "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907-08

This accord between the United States and Japan was a set of informal understandings restricting Japanese immigration to the U.S. based on diplomatic notes exchanged between U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root and Japan's Foreign Minister Tadasu Hayashi in 1907 and 1908.

Several key factors provide the historical context for the Agreement. Victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 emboldened Japan to assert the rights of Japanese in the U.S., raised alarm among anti-immigrant groups on the west coast, and led President Theodore



Elihu Root (Courtesy of Library of Congress)

Roosevelt, an admirer of Japanese military might, to make conciliatory gestures toward Japan. Meanwhile, an aggressive anti-Japanese movement had emerged, centered in California, with the Asiatic Exclusion League clamoring for a state law banning all immigration from Japan. Already, federal law was interpreted to deny Japanese "aliens" or *Issei* from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. In early 1907, a revised Immigration Act enabled the president to ban the entry of immigrant workers who passed through U.S. "insular possessions," such as Hawaii,

and then attempted to enter the United States.

(Roosevelt's Executive Order 589, to this effect, followed, with specific reference to Japanese and Koreans.)

Closer to home, in the wake of the deadly 1906 San Francisco earthquake, as a majority of buildings including schools were destroyed, anti-immigrant forces on the city's school board took their chance to further segregate Asian students. Japanese students, who numbered less than one hundred, were reassigned to a school reserved for "Oriental" students, which included mainly Chinese children. Parents and Japanese diplomats protested. President Roosevelt was caught between militant anti-Japanese Californians and Japanese government officials.

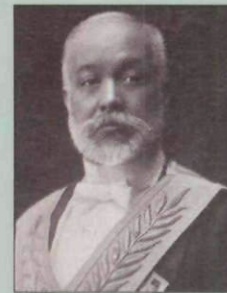
The resulting "compromise" Agreement committed Japan to ban emigration of Japanese laborers to the U.S. In return, the San Francisco School Board, under pressure from Roosevelt, rescinded the segregation order. But tensions did not abate.

Anti-Japanese riots broke out in San Francisco in May 1907, and again in October. Moreover, under the Agreement, Japan retained the right to issue visas to non-laborers—merchants, students, and landowners—as well as to laborers formerly residing in the U.S., and members of their immediate families.

Under this last provision, thousands of Japanese women legally immigrated to the U.S.—popularly known as "picture brides"—as the result of arranged marriages in Japan and Korea. Exclusion advocates then raised alarms about high Japanese birth rates, fueling resentment against the "loopholes" in the Agreement.

In 1913, the California legislature passed the Alien Land Law, which denied *Issei* the right to own land in the state, and limited land leases to three years. In 1915, the Heart newspapers ran lurid news stories warning of the "Yellow Peril." And while Japan and U.S. presidents from Roosevelt to Coolidge upheld the "Gentlemen's Agreement," it was nullified by the Immigration Act of 1924, which banned all further Japanese immigration. In response, protests took place throughout Japan. The era of "gentlemanly" relations between the two nations had ended.

—Carl R. Weinberg



Tadasu Hayashi (Courtesy of New York Public Library, <<http://www.nypl.org>>)



Sikh passengers aboard the Komagata Maru, 1914. Gurdit Singh, businessman who chartered ship to bring 376 Indian migrants, mainly Sikh workers, to Vancouver, British Columbia, is at left in light-colored suit. Invoking "direct passage" immigration rules, the Canadian government kept passengers on board ship in Vancouver harbor for two months, and then sent the steamer back to India. (Courtesy of Vancouver Public Library, Special Collections, VPL 6231)

and prestige in ways similar to Greek, Italian, and Mexican labor contractors or *padroni* who profited from the labor and mobility of their fellow countrymen (8).

Building Legal Barriers

Beginning in the 1880s, evolving legal restrictions in the United States and Canada converged to narrow and, ultimately, close the hitherto loosely controlled U.S.-Canadian border to Asian migrants. Historians attribute the emerging link between U.S. and Canadian policies to a combination of factors. They included a form of border diplomacy rooted in the U.S. imperialist assertion of national sovereignty over its borders, as well as the continuing resistance of Chinese, Japanese, and East Indian immigrants, for whom cross-border mobility was an essential part of their way of life (9).

The passage of the U.S. Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882 began the demise of the labor-contracting empire orchestrated by entrepreneurs like Chin Gee Hee in Seattle. Canada did not exclude Chinese, but its Immigration Act of 1885 imposed a fee on every arriving Chinese, later called a "head tax," of \$50. The amount was raised to \$100 in 1900 and \$500 in 1903, an equivalent of two year's wages for a Chinese laborer (10). The reaffirmation of U.S. labor contract laws in 1903 crystallized the *de facto* exclusion of Japanese laborers. Following the "Gentlemen's Agreement" between the United States and Japan in 1907-1908, Canada and Japan signed the Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement in 1908, a Canadian version of the Gentlemen's Agreement. That same year President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed Executive Order 589, which barred foreign contract laborers (especially Japanese) from entering the United States from Canada, Mexico, or the

insular possessions of the U.S., such as Hawai'i. Canada echoed this executive order by adopting a similar regulation, a Continuous Journey Order-in-Council in 1908, which required all immigrants to travel directly from their country of birth to their Canadian destinations (11).

The additional obstacles for Asians included the ban on contract labor and the Likely to Become a Public Charge Clause, which forced Asian migrants to navigate through a narrow legal space (12). They were bound by the need to demonstrate their ability to earn a living in the United States while they had to avoid suggesting that they entered the country with a labor contract in hand. This provision especially affected women because female migrants, especially those of color travelling unaccompanied, were often suspected of prostitution.

The Continuous Journey clause, initially targeted at Japanese, also served to block immigration from East India because there were no direct steamship lines between the sub-continent and Canada. The voyage of the steamship *Komagata Maru* in April 1914 is a case in point. In a somber reminder of its power to enforce the direct passage regulation, the Canadian government refused the landing of 376 East Indians, mostly Sikh laborers, in Vancouver. Chartered by Gurdit Singh, a wealthy Sikh businessman from Hong Kong, the steamer—with British subjects as passengers—departed Hong Kong for Vancouver, where racial tensions over Asian immigration had led to violent riots as late as 1907. The vessel collected additional passengers at Shanghai, Moji, and Yokohama. A British Columbia newspaper called the ship's arrival a "Hindu Invasion" although, in fact, Hindus were only a handful among the passengers. On July 23, 1914, after two months of detention on board the ship and denied supply of food and water, the steamer was forced to leave for Calcutta (13). (See illustration above.)



Families of Japanese workers, Manley-Moore Lumber Company, Manley-Moore, Washington, c. 1927. Though immigration from Japan was legally prohibited after 1924, thousands of male Japanese workers were joined by their wives under the provisions of the "Gentlemen's Agreement," before that date. At the same time, illegal immigration to the United States, through Mexico and Canada, continued. (Courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, C. Kinsey 1976)

The U.S. Acts of Immigration in 1924 completed the general shift towards barring the entry of Asian migrants and restricting immigration from southern and eastern Europe. It accomplished the latter goal by pegging admission quotas to the 1890 census, which strongly favored immigrants from northern and western Europe. A parallel shift in Canadian policy had taken place in 1923 when the Order-in-Council (P.C. 182) excluded "any immigrants of any Asiatic race," except agriculturalists, farm laborers, female domestic servants, and the wife and children of a person legally in Canada. These seemingly large loopholes were negated by the Chinese Immigration Act, passed in the same year, which terminated Chinese immigration. Neither did they matter much to Japanese, since in 1925 the Japanese government agreed to cut down the quota assigned by the 1908 Hayashi-Lemieux Agreement from 400 to 150. In 1930, the Canadian government issued an Order-in-Council (P.C. 2115) that reinstated prohibition of any immigrant of any Asiatic race, except the wives and minor children of Canadian citizens, while exceptions for farmers, farm labourers, and domestics were deleted (14).

Transpacific steamship company owners were among the historical actors, little studied by migration scholars, who challenged most vehemently the exclusionary laws and regulations. The Canadian Agreement of 1894, signed between the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Canadian transportation companies, stipulated that U.S. inspectors were to be assigned to Canadian seaports and inland points. Dodwell &

Co., a trading and shipping company headquartered in Hong Kong with its branches in Seattle and Tacoma among a dozen localities worldwide, perceived the Canadian Agreement as detrimental to their business of carrying passengers directly to the United States. This was because, a company representative argued, the agreement favored the Canadian Pacific Railway's steamer connection (15).

The sense of unfairness and the allegedly shrinking market share of the U.S. liners led these companies routinely to file dummy manifests upon their ships' entry into Canadian ports. Such a manifest would list Canada as the final destination of the Japanese passengers disembarking in Vancouver or Victoria, although many were, in fact, bound for the United States. Once they cleared Canadian immigration, these passengers would board the ship again for the last leg of the voyage to the U.S. An instrument that enabled the practice of transshipment was an "order" issued by the U.S. shipping companies which promised the passengers disembarking at a Canadian port free transport to their destination in Seattle, Tacoma, or San Francisco. Successful transshipment depended partly on the false testimony of the passengers before the U.S. Board of Special Inquiry at Canadian ports. They would declare that they held transportation only to Canada. But these migrant passengers were following the directions given to them, rather than acting on their own to deceive U.S. authorities. In these cases, it seems that the steamship companies were at the forefront of circumventing U.S. immigration laws.

Illegal Entry into the United States

If U.S. and Canadian exclusionary laws and regulations curbed the legal mobility of Asian laborers across North America, the tightening of the system also spurred migrants to avoid legal entry procedures altogether. Evasion took many forms. Japanese and East Indians in Washington State sold their passports to recent arrivals from their countries in British Columbia who desired to cross the border southward. Some would also play tricks to deceive immigration officers. Others would simply choose to cross the border between Blaine and the Cascade Mountains where thick forests along the international border made detection nearly impossible (16). Such practices were well-known to U.S. officials, journalists, and wider general public, a common knowledge that shored up white America's construction of a racialized stereotype of "sneaky Orientals" and the demarcation of Chinese and other Asians as "illegals." Mexicans and southern and eastern Europeans later came to enlarge that racialized category, as they were subject to part of the same apparatus of exclusion under the quota laws of 1921 and 1924, as well as tighter enforcement at the border.

The persistence, endurance, and ingenuity with which recently arrived laborers from South Asia, settled farmers from Japan, and seasoned entrepreneurs from China conducted many forms of illegal border-crossings is impressive. Clearly, as historians Roger Daniels and Yuji Ichioka have argued, no matter how oppressed and excluded Asian migrants might have been, they were far from powerless victims of the increasingly tight grip of North American states (17). Out of limited alternatives, they made their choices, defined their actions, and complied with or subverted the legal constraints placed upon their movement.

The attempts of Asian migrants to outmaneuver North American government authorities on the Canadian and Mexican borders were facilitated by various third parties. Asian cross-border migrants relied on smugglers and "guides" who helped to orchestrate surreptitious entries of their human merchandise to the United States from Canada. The ability of Asians to land in Canada legally made entering the U.S. that much easier. Chinese migrants arriving in Canada were taxed, but not excluded; admission of Japanese laborers was regulated, but not banned; and East Indians, as subjects of the British Empire, were unwelcome, but at least officially allowed free passage provided that they arrived on a continuous journey from their country.

Smuggling along the border was a lucrative business, which generated \$100 to \$1000 commission fees per Chinese migrant. Ethnic labor contractors were key figures in the trade. Japanese labor agent Sen-goku T. stated that he took charge of "300 Japanese across the border at Blaine" and "placed them at work in the state of Idaho in the building of the Great Northern Railway." Native Americans also played significant roles. With their detailed knowledge of local geography, they navigated Chinese and Japanese from British Columbia to Washington for as little as \$3 per migrant (18). Together with other agents of migration, including boardinghouse operators and shopkeepers in Vancouver, Victoria, Seattle, and San Francisco, as well as Honolulu, these guides and smugglers, ethnic, U.S., or Canadian, formed a network of illicit business that challenged nations' efforts to enforce the international border.

To be sure, the geographical mobility of Asian migrants also strengthened negative perceptions on the part of U.S. and Canadian authorities, journalists, and ordinary citizens. At the turn of the twentieth century, newspapers often depicted a stereotypical image of "John Chinamen," who cunningly evaded the exclusion laws. Wearing loose-fitting pants, "coolie" hats, and distinctive shoes with ubiqui-

tously long braids of hair, these Chinese men represented "a cultural anomaly," according to historian Erika Lee, that was "both sexually and racially ambiguous and threatening" (19).

Chinese were, in fact, a small minority of those entering the U.S. illegally in this period. Many more from Greater Syria, Greece, Hungary, and Russia, as well as so-called "maidens" from other European countries crossed the Canadian border into the United States in violation of immigration restrictions. Considering the very nature of such entries, the exact number of unauthorized transborder migrants is unknown. Nevertheless, an estimated 17,000 Chinese entered the United States from Canada or Mexico during the four decades following 1882, compared to 50,000 Europeans crossing the border into the United States illegally via Canada in 1890 alone. Unlike the alleged "yellow peril," however, those European and Middle Eastern migrants were perceived to pose relatively little threat to U.S. society. Clearly, illegality was constructed in racial terms as early as the 1890s (20).

Racial construction of illegality took a significant turn during the 1920s and early 1930s. As historian Mae Ngai has discussed, with the advent of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, its numerical quota system propelled strengthening of legal and administrative apparatus for border patrol and deportation policies. Such a process meant that the legal machinery designed to expel unwanted aliens, hitherto synonymous with "the obnoxious Chinese," came to be used against other groups of people including anarchists, Mexicans, and Europeans who had lawfully entered the country (21).

The Mexican-U.S. Border

In stark contrast to the exclusionary regimes and racist ideologies in the United States and Canada, Mexican President Porfirio Díaz launched a very different policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the aim of populating and developing the north of the country, Díaz's policies deliberately invited foreign investors, farmers, and laborers into Mexico. Chinese were among the first Asians to migrate to Mexico in significant numbers after being denied entry into the United States in 1882. Mexican civil law granted Chinese and Japanese rights equal to those of Mexican citizens. Such rights did not spare Chinese residents of Mexico from being routinely scrutinized at the border, whereas native Mexicans benefited from free passage in the 1890s. But the claim of citizenship and the privileges accorded to Chinese and Japanese border residents enabled them legally to enter the United States, until President Roosevelt proclaimed a ban on foreign contract laborers (22). Thus, for Chinese and many other Asian and European migrants who came to replace the Chinese, landing at the Mexican ports opened a passage not only to the Mexican interior, but also to the U.S. border regions (23).

For Japanese migrants, their decision to go to Mexico stemmed also from the emigration policies of the Japanese government. In 1900, the Meiji rulers temporarily stopped the issuance of passports for those bound for Canada and the United States, while it did not restrict the number of passports for other destinations in North America. The eighteen-month ban was partially revoked in 1902, but the Meiji government continued to exclude the laborer class from emigration to the United States (24). At the same time, it allowed, and at times even encouraged, labor migration to Latin American destinations such as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil, particularly after 1908. Together with the enforcement of stricter immigration regulations in the United States and Canada, the Japanese government's policies had the effect of shifting the migration movement from Japan south of the Rio Grande, thus modifying the geographical contours of Japanese migration on a continental scale (25).

Legal Passage across the Mexican Border

Unlike their counterparts at the northern border, Asian migrants along the Mexican-U.S. boundary negotiated their passage across the international line by claiming their status of *fronterizos*, or border residents, in the years before the Mexican Revolution. The legality of their passage across the border has long been overlooked. The illegal migration of Asians, in contrast, commanded far greater attention from the contemporary media, national governments, as well as historians who have written on the subject. Chinese merchants in Mexico petitioned for their entry into the United States from Mexico at the turn of the century with support from their legal and business contacts among Mexican and U.S. officials, banks, and trading partners. Laborers encountered greater difficulty when crossing the border, but they too were able to maneuver at deportation hearings. The Chinese expatriates' strategic claim of membership in Mexican civil society and the allowance of this claim by the legal regime of pre-Revolutionary Mexico did not testify a lack of xenophobia south of the Rio Grande. Chinese continued to experience discrimination. Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, Mexico followed a path distinct from the United States and Canada, where racialized discourses marginalized co-ethnics and institutionalized their exclusion (26).

In the years following the 1924 U.S. ban on Japanese immigration, the number of Japanese workers swelled in the bordering province of Ensenada in the Mexican state of Baja California. Many were contracted by California-based Japanese firms and they too travelled legally and routinely across the border in both directions. There were also large-scale proprietor *Issei*, who typically lived on the U.S. side and who hired local Japanese from Mexicali, also in Baja, for daily operation of their farms.

Historian Eiichiro Azuma argues that a combination of factors propelled these Japanese settlers and migrants to move to Mexico. The institutionalization of white racism north of the border was certainly one. *Issei* journalists who propagated Japanese expansionist thought among California Japanese also played a role. They encouraged those with financial means to go to Mexico for more viable and autonomous agricultural ventures. Equally, if not more importantly, the interdependent nature of the ethnic economies on both sides of the border, as well as the structure of local Japanese associations (*Nihonjin kai*), which functioned as surrogate Japanese consulates for Baja California and Southern California, promoted emotional ties and a sense of shared community among the residents in the border region (27). Altogether, these forces enabled Japanese in the two Californias to move across the border in both directions.

Smuggling across the Southern Border

Asian migrants also moved across the Mexican border into the U.S. without proper documentation. To Clifford Alan Perkins, who held the post of Chinese Inspector for U.S. Immigration in Tucson, El Paso, San Antonio, and Tijuana, the story of Chinese illegals boarding a train to reach inland cities undetected was a familiar one. Migrants would hide in freight cars, under the tenders of the locomotives, in the space above the entryway in the old passenger cars, in staterooms rented for them by accomplices, and even in the four-foot-wide ice vents across each end of the insulated refrigerated cars, iced or not (28). The stakes were high. The Chinese Six Companies, headquartered in San Francisco, directed the Chinese smuggling traffic from Havana, Cuba. Members of the Six Companies invested in import-export ventures, which extended to lucrative businesses like the opium trade, white slavery, and human contraband (29). These transnational merchants used their networks of smuggling activities for human, narcotics, or alcohol across the Caribbean, along the Mexican-U.S. border, and across the Pacific Coast up to San Francisco and beyond. U.S. immigration reports stated that Chinese smugglers

provided recent Chinese arrivals in Mexico with U.S. money, Chinese-English dictionaries, Chinese American newspapers, and U.S. railroad maps (30). Japanese used some of the same strategies. One migrant apprehended by the U.S. immigration officer possessed hand-drawn maps with indications in Japanese, depicting both a close-up and a bird's-eye view of railroad networks running through Mexico leading to El Paso, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. (See illustration on facing page.)

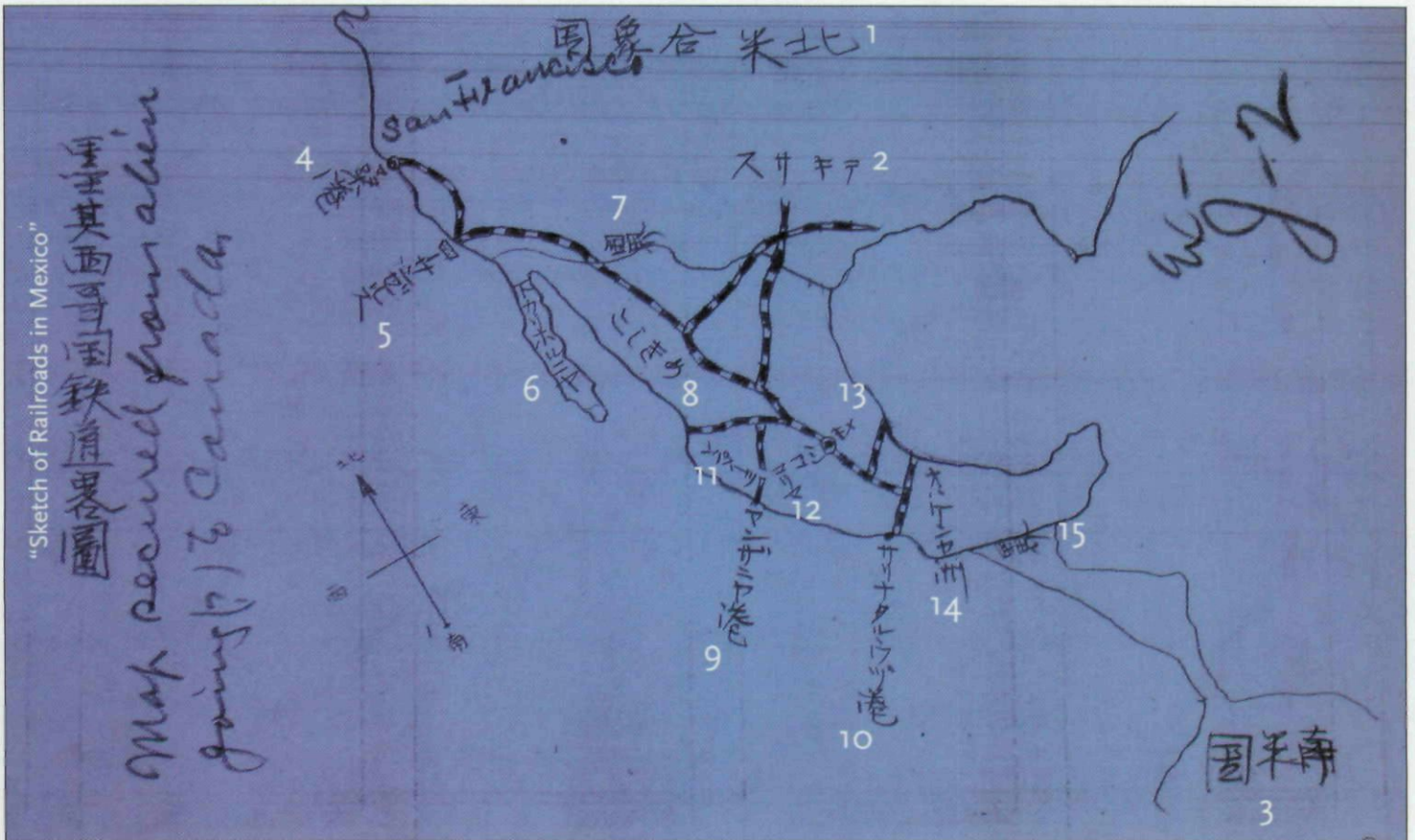
Conclusion

In the early twentieth century, with increasingly stringent inspections along land borders as well as seaports, the United States, Canada, and later Mexico curbed, to an important extent, the geographical mobility of Asian migrants deemed unassimilable and potentially dangerous to each society. Yet the impact of these regulations remained partial. Chinese, Japanese, and South Asian migrant laborers, commuting farmers, ethnic merchants, labor contractors, smugglers, steamship companies, and boardinghouse operators created a myriad of ways to circumvent the enforcement efforts of the North American states as well as their home governments. They did so by exploiting the gaps and differences that existed in the implementation of state control across North America's boundaries. In so doing, they raised significant questions about the power and limitations of government-imposed immigration restriction.

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, border security, especially between Canada and the United States, surged as a prime concern in both countries. Racial profiling and xenophobic hate crimes were on the rise, particularly in the United States. Many young and middle-aged men of Arab or Muslim origin came under suspicion as al-Qaeda terrorists, and were incarcerated in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in Canada. An unknown number remain in detention today, eight years after the 9/11 attacks. Others were quickly deported, or "repatriated," regardless of their nationality, and despite a very real risk of torture in their supposed country of origin.

One ongoing case involves Mohamad Elzahabi, a Montreal resident and green card holder who headed south across the Canadian border in August 2001. He arrived in Boston September 7. Four days later, members of al-Qaeda killed three thousand people in New York and Washington, D.C. Elzahabi was detained and interrogated by the FBI. Today, without status in the U.S. or Canada, he faces the possibility of deportation (31). It is too early for us to say what the final outcome will be for the case of this former Afghan trainee. What is certain is that heightened cooperation and information exchange between the FBI and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, as well as other information and security agencies on both sides of the border, have made cross-border movement of suspected individuals and ordinary citizens increasingly problematic.

Evidently, the concept of racial menace, expressed today in terms of "security," is being transformed once again, shifting it from "Oriental" problems to an "Arab" and terrorist threat. This shift is creating a tragedy of its own, reformulating some of the old problems in an eerie manner. Four days after the September 11 attacks, a Sikh immigrant man was shot to death near Phoenix (32). Balbir Singh Sodhi, who had immigrated from his native Punjabi over twelve years earlier, was the owner of a newly opened gas station and convenience store in Mesa, Arizona. His murderer, Frank Silva Roque, mistook the turbaned Sodhi for a Muslim and fired three shots at him out of a desire for revenge. A century after his forebears, who had been mistakenly identified as Hindus, had come to make new lives in the Pacific Northwest and Canadian West, an erroneous identification fuelled by misplaced racial hatred caused the death of an innocent Arizona Sikh man. Clearly, fuller accounts of migration history, including the story of Asian transborder migration, are needed, as migrants' stories continue to form a fundamental part of our lives in North America today. □



Munaichi (Sōichi) Ozaki, "Sketch of Railroads in Mexico," hand-drawn map seized by U.S. immigration agent from Japanese migrant at U.S./Mexican border. "Map secured from alien going (?) to Canada," reads notation in English. The question mark is significant. Migrants who claimed they were exercising their "transit privilege" through the U.S., en route to Canada, often remained in the U.S. for good. Notations in Japanese read: 1. United States of North America, 2. Texas, 3. South American country, 4. San Francisco, 5. Los Angeles, 6. Baja California, 7. National Boundary, 8. Mexico, 9. Port of Manzanillo, 10. Port of Salina Cruz, 11. Uruapan, 12. Colima, 13. Mexico City, 14. State of Oaxaca, 15. National Boundary. Translation from Japanese by Yukari Takai. (Courtesy of National Archives)

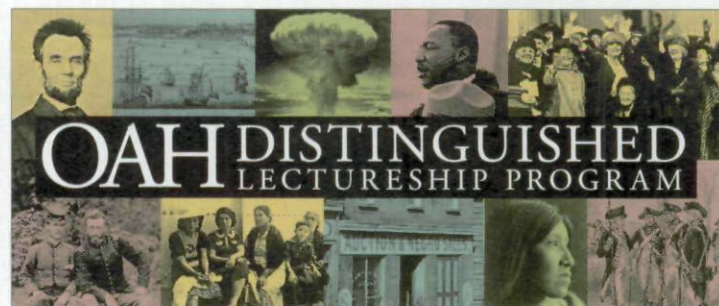
Endnotes

1. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), RG 85, File 51931, Folder 5. Among numerous communications, see Henry W. Bartlett, Department of Commerce and Labor, Immigration Service, Office of Inspector in Charge, Port of Blaine, Washington to Inspector in Charge, Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, March 12, 1908.
2. Yukari Takai, "Defining and Breaching the Nation-State: The Movements of Japanese and Canadians across the US-Canadian Border," *The Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Studies*, Aichi Prefectural University 39 [Aichi Kenritsu Daigaku Kiyō] (March 2006): 1-28. See also Takai, "Circumnavigating Controls: Transborder Migration of Asian-Origin Migrants during the Period of Exclusion" in *Migrants and Migration in Modern North America: Cross-Border Lives, Labor Markets, and Politics in Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, and the United States*, Dirk Hoerder and Nora Faires eds. (forthcoming); and Andrea Geiger, "Caught in the Gap: the Transit Privilege and North America's Ambiguous Borders," in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Building and Breaking Boundaries between Canada, the United States and Mexico*, Andrew Graybill and Benjamin H. Johnson eds., (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).
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11. Johnston, *Komagata Maru*, 4–5, n. 9, 28, 33, 58–59.
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19. Lee, *At America's Gates*, 162, 165–73.
20. Ramirez, *Crossing the 49th Parallel*, 41; Lee, *At America's Gates*, 151, 170. Angelika E. Sauer also also discusses this point in her essay, "The Construction of Borders: Building North American Nations, Building a North American Perimeter, 1890s–1910s," in *Migrants and Migration*.
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