

MORE OR LESS INTELLIGENT: *Nikkei IQ and Racial/Ethnic Hierarchies in British Columbia and Imperial Japan*

JANICE MATSUMURA*

IN RECENT YEARS, RESEARCH on the intersections between North American *nikkeijin* and Japanese histories has generated greater awareness of the pitfalls of a rigid dichotomy between ethnic studies and area studies.¹ Just as the Asia-Pacific War has determined the metanarrative of Japanese history from 1868 to 1945, the dominance of the internment in North American *nikkei* history has resulted in blind spots, wherein earlier events and developments are too narrowly viewed as just preludes to the camps and certain aspects of emigrant experience are overlooked, ignored, or avoided. The relationship between emigrants and Japan no doubt fell into the last category, and it is not difficult to understand why researchers of Canadian *nikkei* history, many of whom were former camp inmates or their descendants, refrained from exploring this topic for fear that it could resuscitate doubts about wartime loyalty.

The Canadian government's decision to incarcerate Japanese Canadians is still able to provoke some debate, and, in an 8 July 2015 article in *Legion* magazine, historian J.L. Granatstein asserts that the decision was "wrong" in hindsight but had been deemed "necessary" at the time by Canadian policy-makers, who were keenly aware that "Tokyo regarded all overseas Japanese, regardless of where they were born, as Japanese citizens subject to the Emperor's orders."² Granatstein is not alone in

* This study was supported by a research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I also wish to thank the following individuals for their perceptive advice, generous assistance, and abundant encouragement: the two anonymous reviewers, Andrea Geiger, Richard Mackie, Bob Tadashi Wakabayashi, and the late Paddy Tsurumi, a great friend and mentor who always tried to get me interested in *nikkei* history.

¹ For two outstanding examples of such research, see Eiichiro Azuma, "Pioneers of Overseas Japanese Development: Japanese American History and the Making of Expansionist Orthodoxy in Imperial Japan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 67, 4 (2008): 1187-226; Andrea Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion: Transpacific Encounters with Race, Caste, and Borders, 1885-1928* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

² "Face to Face: Should the Canadian Government Have Authorized the Forcible Evacuation Inland of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War?," *Legion Magazine*, 8 July 2015.

acknowledging that Japanese officials presumed influence over their emigrants.³ Moreover, there were individuals who expressed support for Japan's "Holy War" against Western imperialism among some *nikkeijin* imprisoned at the Angler Prisoner of War Camp No. 101 in Ontario, which had been used earlier for captured German military personnel.⁴ It is not known whether these *nikkei* prisoners at Angler maintained such views before their incarceration or after.

But there is still no evidence that Japanese officials were able to provoke concerted anti-Canadian activities among the vast majority of *nikkeijin*. Insisting that internment was not just wrong but also unnecessary, Granatstein's critics have been quick to point out that Canadian officials, even as they forcibly relocated an entire ethnic group and not just certain individuals, recognized that "there was not a single act of subversion, sabotage, or espionage to point to as justification."⁵ Investigations into the relationship between Japan and its North American emigrants cannot function as some sort of litmus test for disloyalty to Canada and, thus, the validity of internment; rather, they help to liberate *nikkei* experiences from a strictly Canadian history framework, or what Eiichiro Azuma calls a "mononational frame of thought,"⁶ revealing the transnational impact of events and developments that occurred or originated in Canada.

Inspired by research on the intersections between North American *nikkei* and Japanese histories, most notably by Azuma and Andrea Geiger,

Available at: <https://legionmagazine.com/en/2015/07/face-to-face-should-the-canadian-government-have-authorized-the-forcible-evacuation-inland-of-japanese-canadians-during-the-second-world-war/>.

³ In illustrating how emigration and colonization were often conflated in the eyes of Japanese advocates of empire, Eiichiro Azuma notes that "educated Japanese – both domestic and abroad ... had the tendency to view all foreign settlements of their countrymen and women as aspects of national expansion." See Azuma, "Pioneers," 1194.

⁴ The author owes this information to Dr. B.T. Wakabayashi of York University, who has discovered sources pertaining to members of a kendo club that was established in the Angler camp. The material includes an April 1945 collection of writings by club members entitled "Akeyuki Shōko." See Canadian Kendo Federation History Compilation Committee, ed., *Kendo in Canada to 1946: A Preliminary Study through Documents*, Part 2, *Original Japanese Sources* (n.p.: Canadian Kendo Federation, 2011). Wakabayashi observes that it was most probably the older *issei* (emigrants or first generation in Canada) and *kibei* or *kika nisei* (individuals who had been born in North America but educated in Japan), who expressed such support for the so-called imperial cause. Wakabayashi cautions that differences in opinion due to socialization or personal experience between *issei*, *kibei* or *kika nisei*, and *nisei* who remained in Canada must be kept in mind and that the Angler kendo club members were not representative of these groups among Japanese Canadians. Personal email correspondence with author, 9 May 2016.

⁵ "Face to Face"; Reg Whitaker, review of *Mutual Hostages: Canadian and Japanese during the Second World War*. Patricia Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Iino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 2 (1991): 225.

⁶ Azuma, "Pioneers," 1189–90, 1222.

this article examines the Sandiford intelligence testing of Vancouver-based Japanese Canadian schoolchildren in 1925. Geiger has uncovered the interplay of race and *mibun*, Japanese historical status and caste, in the experiences of emigrants,⁷ and, in Japan as well as in Canada, the Sandiford testing resulted in the defence of existing hierarchies of race and ethnicity. In Canada, the argument emerged that *nikkeijin* constituted the more intelligent members of their ethnic group, necessitating the protection of the white majority from the unfair competition posed by this supposedly exceptional and select non-white minority. In Japan, not surprisingly, individuals were less willing to accept this argument that emigrants were more intelligent than those who remained in the country. In contesting the Sandiford testing's depiction of *nikkeijin* as the intellectual *crème de la crème* of the Japanese, one critic implied that it did not require the most talented Japanese to outperform all other peoples in Canada.

Such criticism effectively exploited the Sandiford testing as anti-Western propaganda. But, at the same time, it also affirmed one of many hierarchies that persisted among ethnic Japanese – namely, a subordination of those outside of the home islands – that officials feared was impeding emigration to Asia. In order to convince people to become settlers in the new informal colony of Manchuria, propagandists had been vigorously attempting to promote emigration as a mission undertaken by purportedly “superior” members of society. As an examination of these responses to the Sandiford testing reveals, despite propaganda campaigns, Japanese policy-makers experienced no greater ease with their own citizens than they did with white Canadians when it came to displacing negative attitudes towards emigrants and their progeny.

NIKKEIJIN IN NORTH AMERICAN RACIAL HIERARCHIES

Conducted by University of Toronto professor of educational psychology Peter Sandiford, the testing was part of a 1925 survey of the BC public school system. During the 1920s and 1930s, responding to public concerns about demographic change in North American societies, academics became increasingly interested in race-based intelligence testing, and the Sandiford testing was one of five projects involving children of Japanese ancestry residing on the west coast.⁸ The following brief description of

⁷ Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion*, 10.

⁸ For detailed information on some of these other tests, see David K. Yoo, “Testing Assumptions: IQ, Japanese Americans, and the Model Minority Myth in the 1920s and 1930s,” in *Remapping Asian American History*, ed. Sucheng Chan (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2003), 69–85;

some of these American studies will reveal how the Sandiford testing departed from and conformed to other research findings.

Beginning in 1920, Marvin Darsie, a graduate student of the prominent psychologist/eugenicist Lewis Terman, tested nearly seven hundred children of Japanese ancestry, asserting that “every effort was made to secure a group which would be thoroughly representative of the race in California.”⁹ Based on a regimen of examinations and evaluations by teachers, Darsie concluded that his test subjects were markedly superior to children of Southern European descent but still somewhat inferior to those of Northern European ancestry.¹⁰ Darsie’s conclusions were similar to those found in a later test conducted by another of Terman’s graduate students, Hisakichi Misaki. In 1927, Misaki tested eighty-two *nikkei* children residing in the San Francisco Bay area and reported that, even taking into consideration a language handicap, these children lagged behind their white counterparts. In a recent historical study of the intelligence testing of Asian Americans, David Palter reveals that, although a Hawaiian of Japanese ancestry, Misaki was very much a Japanese nationalist in his response to the test results. Asserting that the “intelligence of a people is expressed in its civilization,” Misaki described Japan as one of the world’s most ancient civilizations, having been an empire for over two thousand years. The intelligence of such people, Misaki insisted, was by no means reflected in the performance of his test subjects: “The immigrants attracted to this country from the Orient are drawn from inferior groups in their own countries. It seems clear that the Japanese in America are not, then, representative of the Japanese nation.”¹¹

Although Sandiford’s study marked the first comprehensive usage in Canada of what has been called scientific intelligence testing, Sandiford followed the example of Darsie and Misaki in adopting measures to get around what was presumed to be their subjects’ weaker grasp of the English language.¹² His study sample consisted of 150 Japanese Canadian

David Palter, “Testing for Race: Stanford University, Asian Americans, and Psychometric Testing in California, 1920–1935” (PhD diss., University of California Santa Cruz, 2014).

⁹ Marvin L. Darsie, *The Mental Capacity of American-Born Japanese Children* (Baltimore: The Williams and Wilkins Company, 1926), II, 9.

¹⁰ Yoo, “Testing Assumptions,” 75–76.

¹¹ Palter, “Testing for Race,” 14, 291; Hisakichi Misaki, “The Effect of Language Handicap on Intelligence Tests of Japanese Children” (MA thesis, Leland Stanford Junior University, 1927), I, 29.

¹² Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 91; Harold Keith Hutchinson, “Dimensions of Ethnic Education: The Japanese in British Columbia, 1880–1940” (MA thesis, University of British Columbia, 1972), 95n1.

children, which was later enlarged to 276, who were asked to complete the Pintner-Patterson Scale of Performance Tests in order to eliminate any language handicap.¹³ These tests involved picture puzzles and boards into which blocks of various shapes had been cut, and the intelligence of children was determined by their speed and accuracy in completing each test.¹⁴

Historians have noted how the Sandiford testing unexpectedly contradicted racist or nativist expectations of white superiority in Canada.¹⁵ Like Lewis Terman, Sandiford was a proponent of immigration restrictions who, according to Jennifer Anne Stephens, was increasingly able to publicize his views:

Throughout the interwar period, Sandiford's reputation grew ... He drew considerable attention from the press as a leading educational psychologist and, by all accounts, as a dynamic public speaker. When the debates over Canadian immigration policy again heated up in the late 1920s, Sandiford waded in. His main theme, that intelligence and race were directly linked, found resonance in the conventional wisdom of the day ... Sandiford could bring firm, scientific proof to the claim that intelligence levels conformed to a racial hierarchy, a reflection of the racial biological order. Social problems such as prostitution and venereal disease, unemployment and alcoholism – all these preventable problems were traceable to the “inferior stock” of “inferior races.”¹⁶

Confident of how whites would perform, Sandiford did not use actual test subjects for a comparison with Japanese Canadians. Relying on a “theoretical white group,” to which he arbitrarily assigned a median IQ score of 100, he was dismayed when he calculated a score of 113 for the Japanese Canadian children.¹⁷ In a 1938 book on Japanese Canadians, Charles H. Young and Helen R.Y. Reid drew attention to the use of a “theoretical white group” to illustrate the sloppiness of the study.¹⁸ Provincial school inspectors and teachers were no less critical of the findings. In a 1927 report, one Vancouver inspector of schools,

¹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁴ J.H. Putnam and G.M. Weir, *Survey of the School System* (Victoria: Charles F. Banfield, King's Printer, 1925), 438, 442.

¹⁵ For example, see Angus McLaren, “Stemming the Flood of Defective Aliens,” in *History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings*, ed. Barrington Walker (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008), 197–98.

¹⁶ Jennifer Anne Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada's Welfare State, 1939–1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 68.

¹⁷ Charles H. Young and Helen R.Y. Reid, *Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938), 135.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 135–36.

H.H. MacKenzie, insisted that subsequent intelligence testing had proven that “native-born, white children [were] inferior to none, of whatever race, creed, or colour.”¹⁹

A less indignant rebuttal came from J.E. Brown, the principal of Vancouver’s Strathcona School, which had enrolled over five hundred Japanese Canadians among its pupils. Brown questioned Sandiford’s choice of the Pinter-Paterson performance tests, which he described as measuring manual dexterity rather than the mental aptitude of students. In response to Sandiford’s testing, Brown had administered a series of tests in 1927 to eighty Japanese Canadian and 120 white children. The results, he reported, showed that the former were neither superior nor inferior to others in ability.²⁰ Brown also described Japanese Canadian pupils as exceptionally well behaved and their parents as solicitous and competitive about their children’s academic performance. According to Brown, it was Japanese Canadian parents and community leaders who most often asked him how ethnic groups compared in terms of ability.²¹

Given their interest in such matters, Sandiford’s testing would have aroused considerable interest among Japanese Canadians. But an examination of one community newspaper, the *New Canadian*, reveals differences of opinion about the test results.²² An August 1940 article entitled “The Nisei at School” addresses the question of whether second-generation Japanese Canadians were intelligent, clever, or “dumb.” Its anonymous author claimed that, as a result of Sandiford’s study, Japanese Canadians were now believed to be more intelligent than average white Canadians. However, attributing academic success to “racial characteristics” such as respect for education, the author asserted that truly “intelligent” people tended to support studies that indicated little difference in the intelligence between Asians and non-Asians.²³

Ethnic cultural manners that emphasized the importance of modesty may have restrained many community writers from publicly subscribing to ideas of Japanese Canadian intellectual superiority, but it did not prevent them from helping to disseminate such views. Another *New*

¹⁹ Mary Ashworth, *The Forces Which Shaped Them: A History of the Education of Minority Group Children in British Columbia* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1979), 102.

²⁰ Hutchinson, “Dimensions of Ethnic Education,” 96; J.E. Brown, “Japanese School Children,” *BC Teacher* 7, 10 (1928): 8–10.

²¹ Brown, “Japanese School Children,” 11, 8.

²² Hutchinson, who refers to the *New Canadian* articles, proposes that “many Japanese parents came to believe otherwise and more or less accepted Sandiford’s original claims. The common belief in the Japanese community held Japanese students to be ‘as a whole ... more proficient in their studies than any other race.’” See Hutchinson, “Dimensions of Ethnic Education,” 98.

²³ “The Nisei at School,” *New Canadian*, 21 August 1940, 4.

Canadian article, which touched on the limited employment opportunities for the community's young people, reminded its readers that "popular opinion [is] that the Japanese-Canadian pupils as a whole are more proficient in their studies than any other race."²⁴ Moreover, the newspaper informed its readers of research, such as that conducted by an Ohio State University doctoral student, that corroborated Sandiford's argument that the above average intelligence of *nisei*, or second-generation children in the community, is due to the "selective immigration" of Japanese.²⁵

In declaring that Japanese Canadians might be the most intelligent among ethnic groups in the province, Sandiford had also tried to assuage nativist insecurities by describing Japanese emigrants as exceptional rather than as representative of their countrypeople:

The superiority is undoubtedly due to selection. In the main it is the Japanese and Chinese possessing the qualities of cleverness, resourcefulness and courage who emigrate to British Columbia; the dullards and less enterprising are left behind ... Secondly, the groups tested in the elementary schools are probably a selected group; the relatively more intelligent Chinese and Japanese children will be sent to school in higher proportion than obtains among the whites. But from the political and economic standpoints the presence of an industrious, clever and frugal alien group, capable (as far as mentality is concerned) of competing successfully with the native whites in most of the occupations they mutually engage in, constitutes a problem which calls for the highest quality of statesmanship if it is to be solved satisfactorily.²⁶

These supposedly talented emigrants, in other words, were tolerable, but only if they remained members of a minority. This was the position of member of Parliament and staunch anti-Asian immigration lobbyist W.G. McQuarrie, who explained to newspaper reporters in 1925 that, although he had nothing against Asians who were already here and even occasionally employed them, he opposed the admission of any more.²⁷ In a 1921 article published in the *Vancouver Province*, the former BC attorney general, M.A. MacDonald, expressed respect for the "Japanese

²⁴ Hide Hyodo, "Contacts after Graduation," *New Canadian*, 27 May 1939, 13.

²⁵ "Nisei IQ High States Scholar," *New Canadian*, 15 March 1939, 1.

²⁶ Peter Sandiford and Ruby Kerr, "Intelligence of Chinese and Japanese Children," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 17, 6 (1926): 366.

²⁷ Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 131; "On Oriental Exclusion: McQuarrie Reviews Subject Admits He Occasionally Employs Orientals – Not Playing Politics," *Vancouver Daily Province*, 23 October 1925.

in Canada”; however, referring to their purported fecundity and impossible economic standards, he insisted that even more restrictions on immigration were required.²⁸

According to Patricia Roy, although Canadian nativists considered Asians “unassimilable,” “unassimilability” rested on assumed differences in standards of living, customs, and habits but not necessarily on a belief in racial inferiority.²⁹ Anti-Asian lobbyists in North America often expressed a higher opinion of the capabilities of emigrants than did many Japanese officials and elites. In 1923, Britain’s *Sunday Times* published an article by David Loughnan entitled “‘Peaceful Penetration’: How Japan Is Conquering British Columbia,” which warns of the province’s transformation into a “suburb of Asia” by emigrants capable and confident of outperforming “Canadian citizens”:

The Japanese who come to Canada cannot and will not be assimilated; they cannot become naturalised, for Japan will not expatriate them; they retain lower standards of living, and, thereby create economic competition which drives Canadian citizens to the wall; they come with the declared intent of creating for the Yamato race in Canada a permanent and independent position; they obey only the voice of the Mikado; they believe themselves to be a superior race, and therefore have no incentive to merge their identity in an inferior race.³⁰

Loughnan is by no means original. His article refers to the Japanese Exclusion League of California and parrots the arguments that League founders, such as V.S. McClatchy, presented to a US Senate committee in 1921. McClatchy asserted that the Japanese were “undesirable as immigrants and as citizens, not because they [were] an inferior race but because they [were] superior in certain characteristics.” While he did not go into specifics as to which characteristics worked to their advantage, McClatchy noted that one of the achievements of Japan was a public school system that ensured that even the poorest members of society were literate and eager to improve themselves.³¹

Individuals in Japan were well acquainted with “Yellow Peril” stereotypes of the insidiously intelligent (in the manner of *Fu Manchu*) Asian, and, during the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), the government

²⁸ Patricia E. Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man’s Province, 1914–41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 59.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁰ David Loughnan, “‘Peaceful Penetration’: How Japan Is Conquering British Columbia,” *Sunday Times*, 1 April 1923.

³¹ V.S. McClatchy, *Japanese Immigration and Colonization: Skeleton Brief* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 56, 75.

sent special envoys to Europe and North America to counter these images.³² But mollifying the fears of Westerners was limited to issues of outright territorial conquest. When it came to emigration, no doubt because of their class prejudice, their low opinion of their countrypeople who became emigrant labourers, Japanese officials and elite intellectuals showed less awareness or concern about North American nativist fears of being swamped by an ever-increasing number of “superior” newcomers.

NIKKEIJIN IN A HIERARCHY OF ETHNIC JAPANESE

Sandiford’s conclusions contradicted a well-entrenched ranking of ethnic Japanese that was rooted in classism and reinforced, whether intentionally or not, by state propaganda. Since the Meiji period (1867–1912), the authorities had exploited ancient myths of the sacred origins of Japan and its imperial family to cultivate nationalism, and one by-product of this propaganda was the subordination of those outside of the home islands. Emigrants ranked higher than colonized peoples due to their ethnicity but suffered diminished standing and became somehow “lesser Japanese,” or decidedly less “civilized,” due to their physical distance from the source of the nation’s greatness – the home islands and, more specifically, the person of the emperor.³³ In a 1909 article published in an American political science journal, Yoshida Yosaburo observes that very few emigrants hailed from the densely populated *Kinai* region of the country, where emperors maintained their courts for centuries. Yoshida asserts that most emigrants did not intend to stay permanently in North America and, although certainly not the dregs of society, originated from Japan’s southwestern regions, which were historically known for pirates, warriors, and other more adventurous but decidedly less cultured folk.³⁴

A transnational stereotype of emigrants is that of impoverished “losers” in the struggle for survival. During the eighteenth century, English publications almost routinely portrayed the American colonies as “receptacles for the waste population of Britain who would never overcome the stain

³² Rotem Kowner, “Becoming an Honorary Civilized Nation: Remaking Japan’s Military Image during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905,” *Historian* 64, 1 (2001): 19–38.

³³ By 1946, the famous political theorist Maruyama Masao drew attention to this understanding of status when discussing how wartime political leaders derived their legitimacy and sense of superiority from their spatial closeness to the emperor. See Masao Maruyama, “Theory and Psychology of Ultrnationalism,” in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1–28.

³⁴ Yosaburo Yoshida, “Sources and Causes of Japanese Emigration,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34 (1909): 158–59, 165–67.

of their social origins.”³⁵ Japanese emigrants also had to contend with “the stain of their social origins.” In drawing attention to the presence of *buraku jūmin*, members of a hereditary outcast group, among Japanese emigrants, Andrea Geiger contributes to a greater awareness of diversity within *nikkei* communities.³⁶ There is no denying the hardships suffered by *buraku jūmin* as a result of the prejudice of the Japanese general population, with more extreme bigots refusing to recognize them as human beings. However, Geiger also demonstrates that many people in Japan viewed all emigrants as disreputable and,³⁷ further, that officials, whose pretensions of elite status and arrogance were well enough known to be summarized by an adage – *kanson minpi* (bureaucrats exalted, common people despised)³⁸ – did not limit “selective immigration” to *buraku jūmin*. They denied passports to or tried to carefully monitor the activities of individuals who, they deemed, were too low class and thus likely to be despised as “uncivilized” by Westerners.³⁹ Both in Japan and abroad, government representatives tried to convince North Americans that the emigrant labourers in their midst were not representative of the Japanese. Such efforts appeared to have at least some effect in 1893, when Vancouver’s *Daily News-Advertiser* published an article informing its readers: “lower class Japanese are by no means ... desirable settlers ... [t]hey stand in a wholly different position from that occupied by the intelligent Japanese of the middle and higher classes.”⁴⁰

As Japan’s empire expanded and impoverished Koreans and other colonized peoples searching for work made their presence felt in Japanese cities, officials and intellectuals may have found some common ground with anti-immigration lobbyists in North America in demanding

³⁵ Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating Empire and Confronting Colonialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 79.

³⁶ In the introduction to her book, Geiger recalls the concerns expressed by some *nikkeijin* in Canada and the United States: “they expressed concern that if the question were raised, people in Japan would think that all Japanese immigrants were *buraku jūmin*. Implied in their concern is fear that this would cause Japanese to view all Japanese abroad in a more negative light.” See Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion*, 8.

³⁷ Geiger notes that emigrants were not only disparaged as financial failures but also suspected of trying to avoid conscription and thus accused of being unpatriotic. See Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion*, 46-47.

³⁸ Gerald L. Curtis, *The Logic of Japanese Politics: Leaders, Institutions, and the Limits of Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 55.

³⁹ Andrea Geiger, “Negotiating the Boundaries of Race and Class: Meiji Diplomatic Responses to North American Categories of Exclusion,” *BC Studies* 156 (Winter 2007/08): 39; Jonathan Dresner, “Instructions to Emigrant Laborers, 1885-94: ‘Return in Triumph’ or ‘Wander on the Verge of Starvation,’” in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents, and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi, 52-68 (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁰ Geiger, *Subverting Exclusion*, 40.

measures to keep out individuals whom they considered unsavoury sojourners.⁴¹ Moreover, by the 1920s, eugenics, as a social movement that advocated selective breeding and sterilization, enjoyed a worldwide following, and, at the 1924 Social Service Congress of Canada, one speaker expressed a view of emigrants that was also accepted by more than a few individuals in Japan: “What are the eugenic effects of bringing in thousands of boys and girls, a considerable proportion of whom have sprung from stock which, whatever else may be said of it, was not able to hold its own in the stern competition in the motherland?”⁴² One of Japan’s most famous eugenicists, Tokyo Imperial University professor of medicine Nagai Hisomu, applied the word “weeds” to so-called “inferior races” and individuals suffering from genetic disorders, and, in a 1915 article, he criticized American immigration policy, declaring: “the United States may pride itself on being the richest and most civilized country in the world ... [but] in the name of the most beautiful tenets such as mercy, altruism, and humanity, [it] transplants weeds onto its own territory.”⁴³

Opposed, as an issue of national pride, to restrictions on the immigration of their fellow citizens, Japanese elites nevertheless acknowledged the concerns of their North American counterparts who feared that Canada and the United States were becoming eugenic dumping grounds for other countries. Responding to the US government’s adoption of the Immigration Act, 1924, which effectively excluded immigrants from Asia,⁴⁴ the geneticist Tanaka Yoshimaro asserted that North Americans were correct to be concerned because Japanese emigrants, being from the lower classes, tended to be “of a poor type.”⁴⁵ In Japan as elsewhere, he argued, there were “inferior” and “superior” individuals, which posed problems for emigration: while the export of inferior types aroused

⁴¹ For information on the emigration of colonized peoples to the Japanese home islands, see Michael Weiner, *The Origins of the Korean Community in Japan, 1910-1923* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1989).

⁴² McLaren, “Stemming the Flood,” 189.

⁴³ Christopher W.A. Szpilman, “Fascist and Quasi-Fascist Ideas in Interwar Japan, 1918-1941,” in *Japan in the Fascist Era*, ed. E. Bruce Reynolds (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 79-80, 102n42. For other studies of eugenics and its advocates in Japan, see Sumiko Otsubo and James R. Bartholomew, “Eugenics in Japan: Some Ironies of Modernity, 1883-1945,” *Science in Context* 11, 3-4 (1998): 545-65; Sumiko Otsubo, “Between Two Worlds: Yamanouchi Shigeo and Eugenics in Early Twentieth-Century Japan,” *Annals of Science* 62, 2 (2005): 205-31; Jennifer Robertson, “Blood Talks: Eugenic Modernity and the Creation of New Japanese,” *History and Anthropology* 13, 3 (2010): 191-216.

⁴⁴ Milestones: 1921-1936, The Immigration Act of 1924 (The Johnson-Reed Act). Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, United States Department of State. Available at <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act>.

⁴⁵ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, “Debating Racial Science in Wartime Japan,” *Osiris*, vol. 13, 1998, 361.

resentment in the receiving nation and imperilled diplomatic relations, the emigration of superior types threatened to lower the quality of the remaining population. In a 1925 article published in the country's leading journal on eugenics, Tanaka offered the following two-pronged solution. If North American governments were intent on safeguarding the superior qualities of their populations, they needed to abandon the Immigration Act's national origins quota system and instead assess prospective emigrants strictly on their merits as individuals. If Japanese governments sought to reduce the occurrence of anti-Japanese sentiments in foreign countries by only permitting superior Japanese to emigrate, they had to invest in eugenic research to safeguard the supply or reproduction of these superior individuals.⁴⁶

Japanese elites such as Tanaka Yoshimaro had been incorrect in assuming that countries would open their doors to their emigrants if it could be "scientifically" proven that they were of better quality. However, following the takeover of Manchuria, Japanese authorities were no longer so concerned about changing how their people were viewed in foreign lands and more intent on promoting among their own citizens a belief in Japanese racial/ethnic superiority.

NIKKEIJIN AND THE CHALLENGES OF PROPAGANDA

Historians have noted how anti-Asian immigration movements in North America persuaded an increasing number of Japanese political leaders and intellectuals to direct emigration and economic investment in Manchuria, which supported a very ethnically diverse population when it eventually became a puppet state and, thereby, an informal colony in 1932.⁴⁷ As Oguma Eiji reveals, the postwar pervasiveness of a myth of Japanese homogeneity, of being a nation peopled by only one racial, ethnic, and cultural group, has contributed to a forgetting of Japan's

⁴⁶ Tanaka Yoshimaro, "Yūseigaku kara mita hainichi mondai: Risō no kokka wa seikatsu no jūjitsu," *Yūseigaku* 6 (1925): 40, 44-46. For sources published in the Japanese language, the authors' last names are listed before their first names.

⁴⁷ Okamoto Shumpei refers to the so-called "Komura (anti-emigration) doctrine," the argument put forth by Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō in 1909, which holds that Japan had to redirect the flow of its people to areas of Asia that had recently come under its control, such as southern Manchuria, rather than exacerbate anti-immigration sentiments in the United States and Canada. See Okamoto Shumpei, "Meiji Imperialism: Pacific Emigration or Continental Expansion?," in *Japan Examined: Perspectives on Modern Japanese History*, ed. Harry Wray and Hilary Conroy (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 142; Masako Gavin, "Anti-Japanese Sentiment and the Responses of Two Meiji Intellectuals," *East Asia* 21, 3 (2004): 23-36.

history as a multi-ethnic empire.⁴⁸ With the annexation of Taiwan in 1895 and Korea in 1910, around 30 percent of imperial subjects, or “Japanese,” were not ethnic Japanese.⁴⁹ In early 1930s Manchuria, the ethnic Japanese constituted less than 1 percent of the region’s estimated total population of 30 million.⁵⁰

Reluctant at this time to further undermine international relations by annexing the region but intent on justifying their nation’s control, the authorities turned to emigration. In 1936, the government approved of plans to increase the Japanese presence in Manchuria by sending over 5 million persons (close to one-fifth of all the farm households) from the home islands within twenty years.⁵¹ This massive migration project was an undeniable failure, having attracted only 320,000 participants between 1937 and 1945. It is not difficult to imagine why, despite the authorities’ monetary incentives and promises of land, individuals were reluctant to migrate to Manchuria. The region was considered physically dangerous and inhospitable, a place where one had to contend with armed resistance to Japanese rule as well as long, dark, and bitterly cold winters. Yet, according to officials, people also feared public disdain, convinced that their fellow Japanese would view them as no different from *imin*, the lower-class labourers who had earlier travelled to North America. In 1939, the colonial minister informed Imperial Diet members about the recruitment problem and how, in response to repeated demands from residents in Manchuria, his office would use the term *takushi* (colonial fighter) and not *imin* to describe Japanese in the region.⁵²

The persistence of such negative attitudes towards the *imin* exposed the weaknesses in the authorities’ pro-emigration propaganda. It was with the takeover of Manchuria that *nikkei* experiences attracted the attention of officials and intellectuals such as Iriye Toraji. In his 1936 history of Japanese expansionism, which was promoted by the Foreign Ministry and was reprinted twice by 1942, Iriye portrays Japanese emigrants to North America as patriotic forerunners of the brave new settlers in Manchuria. Focusing on the former’s victimization by discriminatory

⁴⁸ Eiji Oguma, *A Genealogy of ‘Japanese’ Self-Images* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2002).

⁴⁹ David Askew, “Review Essay: Oguma Eiji and the Construction of Modern Japanese Identity,” *Social Science Japan Journal* 4, 1 (2001): 112.

⁵⁰ Mariko Asano Tamanai, “Introduction,” in *Crossed Histories: Manchuria in the Age of Empire*, ed. Mariko Asano Tamanai (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 8.

⁵¹ Hyun Ok Park, *Two Dreams in One Bed: Empire, Social Life, and the Origins of the North Korean Revolution* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 141; Takemaro Mori, “Colonies and Countryside in Wartime Japan: Emigration to Manchuria,” *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2004). Available at <http://japanfocus.org/~Mori-Takemaro/1810/article.html>.

⁵² Mori, “Colonies and Countryside”; Azuma, “Pioneers,” 1197n6.

legislation, Iriye concludes that these earlier emigrants were nevertheless “victors of racial competition, because, after all, white Americans could not compete with them fair and square.”⁵³ Yet, for all these efforts to boost public esteem for earlier emigrants, class prejudice that equated poverty with inferiority still intruded into propaganda, which often tried to distinguish migration to Manchuria from the travel of lower-class labourers to North America. According to Louise Young:

Empire-building in Manchuria now involved demographic expansion, which was justified in the language of racial mission. For promoters of the “racial mission” thesis, it was imperative that settlers be “selected carefully” from among the “superior elements of society” so that Japan would win the “racial struggle” with China: Manchuria must not become a dumping ground for “inferior elements” – the poor or unemployed, who represented the “losers in the struggle for existence.”⁵⁴

As emigration had become a “racial mission” and, therefore, an issue of national pride, the authorities were prepared to sponsor research that could confirm the Japanese people’s adaptability to new environments and their qualifications to be *shidō minzoku* (the leading race that would “guide” other Asians).⁵⁵ The results of studies of emigrants to Manchuria were nevertheless not always or totally positive.

In 1936, Ishikawa Shimeji, a child psychologist working for Japan’s South Manchurian Railway Company,⁵⁶ published an article on the intelligence testing of Japanese boys and girls attending elementary and middle (junior high) schools in the Manchurian city of Mukden. Ishikawa claimed that children born in Manchuria, followed by those belonging to families that had been residing in the region prior to Japan’s takeover in 1932, had notably higher test scores than did those whose families had recently emigrated to the puppet state. These differences in performance prompted Ishikawa to conclude that, while the number of emigrants had increased since the takeover, the quality of these individuals had declined. Demonstrating his commitment to a hierarchy of Japanese based on geographic region, Ishikawa drew attention to the

⁵³ Azuma, “Pioneers,” 1197–99.

⁵⁴ Louise Young, “Rethinking Race for Manchukuo: Self and Other in the Colonial Context,” in *The Construction of Racial Identities in China and Japan*, ed. Frank Dikotter (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997), 168–69.

⁵⁵ Tamanoi, “Introduction,” 13–14; Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), particularly the chapter entitled “The Migration Machine,” 352–98.

⁵⁶ Koyano Kuniko, “‘Manshū’ ni okeru shinrigaku – zenhanki ni okeru jinbutsu o chūshin toshite,” *Ibaraki kirisutokyō daigaku kiyō* 35, 161 (2002): 168–71.

growing presence in Manchuria of individuals from southern Japan, or around Kyushu and Shikoku, who, in his opinion, were often intellectually inferior to Japanese in the highly urbanized areas around Tokyo and Kyoto. At the same time, Ishikawa raised the possibility that something in the social and natural environment of Manchuria had the effect of initially accelerating the psychological development of Japanese children, noting further that Manchuria-born children, having been exposed the longest to this environment, exhibited a greater intellectual maturity than did their peers in Japan. However, he believed that the Manchurian environment had an accelerating effect only up to a certain point and that, thereafter, it seemed to obstruct further development, which, Ishikawa proposed, was demonstrated by the sharp drop in test scores among Manchuria-born schoolchildren as they reached the higher grades in middle school. The optimal number of years that a Japanese child should live in Manchuria and benefit from the environment was, according to Ishikawa, eight.⁵⁷ In recommending a time limit to a Japanese child's stay in the region, Ishikawa could provide only a qualified endorsement for Manchurian colonization.

Ishikawa also provided a less positive assessment of Japanese emigrants than did Sandiford, who judged such individuals to be superior to non-emigrants – “the dullards and less enterprising ... left behind.” Comparing the scores of Mukden-based male and female middle school students with those of their counterparts living in Nagoya, a Japanese city of comparable size, Ishikawa found that the former, while performing better than those in less prestigious “second-ranked” public and private middle schools in Japan, had lower scores than those attending the country's “first-ranked” public middle schools.⁵⁸ Countering Sandiford's claim of emigrant superiority, Ishikawa's findings instead supported the position adopted by his metropolitan colleague, Tanaka Kan'ichi, who appeared to be not only more enthusiastic in promoting empire building but also more insistent on a hierarchy of Japanese that situated the most intelligent in the so-called home islands.

In a 1926 publication, Japan's foremost researcher in intelligence testing, Tanaka Kan'ichi, called upon the Japanese people to demonstrate their ability to compete with other nations by becoming successful colonists.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ishikawa Shimeji, “Zaiman Nihon jidō no chinōteki tokushoku,” dai ippō, *Mantetsu kyōiku kenkyūjō kenkyū yōhō*, dai jūichi shū, April 1937, 139, 189, 197, 216–17, 220, 167, 231.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176, 179.

⁵⁹ Tanaka standardized a version of the Binet Intelligence Scales and, in 1921, constructed and administered an intelligence test for entrance examinations into the country's middle schools. See Tadasu Oyama, Tatsuya Sato, and Yuko Suzuki, “Shaping of Scientific Psychology in

In 1933, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science conferred a sizeable grant upon Tanaka for a study comparing the so-called mental characteristics of East Asians in their home countries with those of East Asians abroad.⁶⁰ The result was a fifteen-hundred-page report that he described as being strictly for specialists. The report became the basis for a 1941 book, *Nihon no jinteki shigen* (Japan's Human Resources), which he produced in the hopes of making the topic of the Japanese people's intelligence more accessible, and of interest, to the general public.⁶¹

In *Nihon no jinteki shigen*, Tanaka also presents findings to support wartime propaganda about the Japanese people's mission to bring peace to Asia through its expanded empire. In the summer of 1940, following the invasion of French Indochina, the Japanese government announced plans for the establishment of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" that would include Japan and its colonies, Manchuria, China, and Southeast Asia. Tanaka asserts that the Japanese people's leadership role in the Co-Prosperity Sphere was justified by their superior intelligence, as confirmed by comparative studies of different races and ethnic groups. In describing his own testing of over eight thousand children of different ethnicities living in major cities in Japan, China, Korea, Manchuria, and Taiwan, Tanaka presented results for every city that placed the ethnic Japanese above all other groups in terms of intelligence.⁶²

With regard to the intelligence of ethnic Japanese living in foreign countries or, specifically, North America, Tanaka cited the studies conducted by Sandiford, Darsie, and Misaki. He countered Darsie's results, which held that these students had lower scores than did their peers of Northern European ancestry. He attributed the weaker performance of Japanese Americans to an English language handicap, using Misaki's findings, which showed these children performing better when tested in Japanese. He also referred to his own testing of elementary and junior high school children in three US cities with sizeable Japanese emigrant populations: Honolulu, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. He declared that, when he conducted his testing in the mid-1930s, children

Japan," *International Journal of Psychology* 36, 6 (2001): 400; Tanaka Kan'ichi, *Nihon minzoku no shōrai* (Tokyo: Baifūkan, 1926), 2.

⁶⁰ Koyano Kuniko, "Manshū' ni okeru shinrigaku – Kenkoku daigaku to sono shūhen," *Ibaraki kirisutokyō daigaku kiyō* 36, 163 (2002): 176.

⁶¹ Tanaka Kan'ichi, *Nihon no jinteki shigen*. *Nihonjinron* 21 (Tokyo: Ōzorasha, 1994 [1941]), 1.

⁶² The cities were Tokyo, Kyoto, Nagoya and Sendai (Japan); Beijing, Tianjin, Jinan, Qingdao, Nanjing, Hangzhou, Shashi, Zhenjiang, Suzhou (China); Seoul, Pyongyang, Taegu, Pusan (Korea); Taipei, Taichung, Tainan (Taiwan); and Mukden, Dairen, Port Arthur (Manchuria).

of Japanese ancestry in every grade achieved higher scores than did all white children.⁶³

As his study clearly had the most propaganda potential, appearing to readily support Japanese scientific racism,⁶⁴ Sandiford was the focus of Tanaka's attention. More than Darsie and Misaki, Sandiford was a known authority on intelligence testing and was making assertions similar to those of Tanaka regarding the superiority of ethnic Japanese. Tanaka nevertheless expressed reservations about Sandiford's study. For his study of children in the aforementioned three American cities, Tanaka had examined 562 boys and 513 girls of Japanese ancestry, and he contended that Sandiford's test group of 276 Japanese Canadian children was too small. It did not permit, Tanaka insisted, for generalizations about their superior intelligence compared to other Canadians, much less to the Japanese in Japan.⁶⁵

Tanaka instead suggested that Sandiford's research was significant for raising the question of whether or not Japanese who emigrated were more intelligent than were those who remained in Japan. Years earlier, Tanaka Yoshimaro had warned against nations focusing only on preventing "inferior" members from emigrating and neglecting to ensure that "superior" members remained in the country. Given the propaganda calling on "superior elements of society" to make their way to Manchuria, it is not too far-fetched to think that concerns about a "brain drain" from the metropole began to circulate among researchers, especially those interested in mapping the empire in terms of intelligence. By overturning Sandiford's conjecture that emigration removed from countries those citizens enjoying "the qualities of cleverness, resourcefulness and courage," Tanaka Kan'ichi could prove that the home islands were experiencing no such loss of talent. Tanaka's readers, most of whom were presumably living in Japanese cities, could rest assured that the wartime expansion of the empire into the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere had not (and would not) disrupt a hierarchy in which the best and brightest Japanese remained in the metropole.

Portraying Sandiford's Japanese Canadian test subjects as, at most, above average but certainly not exceptional, Tanaka made them more

⁶³ Tanaka, *Nihon no jinteki shigen*, 3-4, 101-3, 113-8, 130; Tanaka Kan'ichi, *Minzoku no shinrigaku* (Tokyo: Kawade shobō, 1943), 50-52.

⁶⁴ Tessa Morris-Suzuki clearly explains the difference between scientific racism and racial science: "Racial science is based on a belief in the reality and importance of dividing lines between distinct 'races' ... Scientific racism, on the other hand, includes a belief that races can be ranked within a 'hierarchy of superior and inferior.'" See Morris-Suzuki, "Debating Racial Science," 356.

⁶⁵ Tanaka, *Nihon no jinteki shigen*, 122-23, 142, 100-104.

useful in demonstrating the superiority of ethnic Japanese over white Europeans. In his conclusion to *Nihon no jinteki shigen*, Tanaka contends that ideas of Japanese inferiority, which were promoted by Westerners, have been so pervasive that many Japanese may have internalized them.⁶⁶ Rather than simply introduce his readers to a study by a Canadian researcher that found that children of Japanese ancestry scored higher than others in intelligence testing, Tanaka better served propaganda by asserting that Sandiford's test subjects, who were outperforming all their white classmates, were not even the most gifted, or "superior," Japanese.

The challenge for Tanaka was that he could not rely on overall scores to establish the intellectual superiority of children in Japan over those of Japanese ancestry in foreign countries. Using his own research on children in Japanese and American cities as well as his own testing system, he found that the average score for American *nikkeijin* (49.79) was slightly higher than that of children in at least three major Japanese cities (49.48) and only lower than the average for children in the capital city of Tokyo (51.81). Still, he found a far broader range of scores among the Japanese in Japan: while there were more children at the bottom of the intelligence scale, there were also far more at the very top. With this, Tanaka proposed that Sandiford might be correct in his contention that few intellectually inferior individuals travel abroad because they lack the ability to do so. But this did not mean that Japan's population was experiencing a decline in intelligence due to emigration for the simple reason that the most intellectually superior presumably had little reason or desire to go abroad.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION: EMIGRATION AND EMPIRE BUILDING

In examining the Sandiford testing, this article addresses the appropriation of *nikkei* experiences in Japanese propaganda. It considers how the persistent association of emigrants with "inferiority" on the part of both the producers and targets of propaganda could impede campaigns for imperial expansion. Government policies, state ideology, and popular attitudes were not always in harmony with each other. The authorities had coercive means to ensure that men became soldiers in wars that resulted in the creation of colonies, but they could not compel individuals to become emigrant/colonizers: they could only try to persuade them.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 345.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 130-33, 134-45, 140-41.

In glorifying settlers in newly acquired Manchuria, the authorities of the 1930s were asking the public to forget a longer history during which they disparaged emigration as the last resort of economic failures. Such prejudice proved to be deep-rooted and, in the opinion of officials, helped to stymie the state-sponsored migration plan. Believing that individuals were averse to being identified with the lower-class labourers who had earlier travelled to North America and who were known as *imin*, policy-makers sought to change attitudes towards emigration. On the one hand, they depicted settlers to Manchuria as “superior elements of society” and tried to distinguish them from the earlier *imin*; on the other hand, they also paid tribute to emigrants to North America in narratives of Japanese territorial expansion, which were no longer attributing white racism to contempt but, rather, to a “fear of Japanese superiority.”

The Japanese authorities enjoyed the services of individuals who could be called “master propagandists,” and the Sandiford testing seemed to be tailor-made for these persons.⁶⁸ However, while the test scores of children in Vancouver appeared to substantiate Japanese superiority over other races and ethnic groups, Sandiford’s explanation for the high performance of the Canadian *nikkeijin* ran counter to a hierarchy within the Japanese empire that not only privileged ethnic Japanese over colonized peoples but also ranked Japanese in Japan over those abroad. It was a hierarchy that was understandably near and dear to the hearts of Japanese metropolitan elites, including those, such as Tanaka Kan’ichi, who assisted in propaganda campaigns.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ For more information on Japanese propaganda, see Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2006).

⁶⁹ Tanaka Kan’ichi was clearly elite, the product of some of the most prestigious schools in the nation. See Miki Takasuna, “Chapter 16 Japan,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: Global Perspectives*, ed. Donald B. Baker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 357.