

VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE CHINESE DIASPORA IN THE TRANSPACIFIC WORLD, 1788-1918

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IN THE CITY OF VICTORIA, Vancouver Island hosts the oldest, and at one time the largest, Canadian Chinatown. Other towns and cities on the Island – those within Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Coast and Straits Salish territories – also saw substantial numbers of newcomers from China arrive and settle, making important contributions economically and otherwise, despite impediments thrown up by systemic racism. However, the role of the Island's Indigenous territories as a portal for transpacific Chinese migrants and as an anchor for their transnational networks has rarely received scholarly or public attention. In this article, I provide a bird's-eye view of Vancouver Island as a site of historic significance for the transpacific Chinese diaspora, especially for its transnational dispersion and cohesion between 1788 and 1918.¹ The term “transpacific” reflects not only the diaspora's geographic scope, and the “dynamic flow of ideas and peoples engaged in border-crossing on both sides of the Pacific,”² but also the development of transoceanic Chinese migrant networks.

This study of Chinese networks on Vancouver Island goes beyond previous studies that focus on *guanxi* (personal relations)³ or on trans-

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¹ For a conceptual analysis of the Chinese diaspora, including its transnational dispersion and cohesion, see Zhongping Chen, “Building the Chinese Diaspora across Canada: Chinese Diasporic Discourse and the Case of Peterborough, Ontario,” *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 13, no. 2–3 (2004): 185–210, 186–88, 195–96, esp. 205–6.

² This usage is from John Price, *Orienteering Canada: Race, Empire, and the Transpacific* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011), 1.

³ For an example of these studies, see Thomas Gold, Doug Guthrie, and David Wank, eds., *Social Connections in China: Institutions, Culture and the Changing Nature of Guanxi* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

national institutions alone.⁴ It instead stresses relational institution-ization (the normalizing, regulating, and organizing process) and expansion at and beyond the interpersonal level as well as relational diversification, which increasingly brings different people, organizations, and other elements into interaction, producing complex dynamics of social change.⁵ In referring to diasporic networks of transpacific Chinese migrants on Vancouver Island, I am pointing to their “interactive links to their homeland, hostlands, and co-ethnic groups.”⁶

To historicize the role of Vancouver Island in the evolution of the Chinese diaspora, it is important to keep in mind earlier periods of migration across the Pacific. According to reliable records about transpacific crossings, the Spanish galleon trade from 1565 brought a large number of Asian migrants, including Chinese, from the Philippines to New Spain (today known as Mexico) for two and a half centuries. At that time, those whose origins were in China, be they residents in either the Philippines or in Spanish Mexico, came predominantly from Fujian province on the southeast coast of the Chinese Empire. However, it seems they failed to establish a sustainable diaspora in Mexico when the galleon trade ended in the early 1800s. The most recent research on these early transpacific Chinese migrants, especially those from Fujian province, has not identified a direct connection between them and the Cantonese-dominated migrants from Guangdong province, who came to the Americas, including Mexico, in the mid-nineteenth century

⁴ On pages 20 and 69–70 of Adam McKeown, *Chinese Migrant Networks and Culture Change: Peru, Chicago, Hawaii, 1900–1936* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), its discussion about “networks” mainly focuses on “institutions: the businesses, families, native place associations, and sworn brotherhoods” but touches lightly on “personal connections” later on.

⁵ This analytical approach comes from my theoretical analysis in Zhongping Chen, *Modern China's Network Revolution: Chambers of Commerce and Sociopolitical Change in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), xii–xv, 6–7. The concept “relational institutionalization” refers to the development of both formal and informal organizations, rules, and procedures that regulate and organize human activities and relations, and especially to the increasing formalization of social relations. It is derived from Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo, “Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics,” in *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*, ed. Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

⁶ Chen, “Building the Chinese Diaspora across Canada,” 205.

onwards.⁷ There was, however, a short-lived period of mass migration from Fujian to Hawai'i and South America in the 1840s and 1850s.⁸

The rise of the Cantonese-dominated transpacific Chinese diaspora in the late 1840s resulted initially from the gold rush in California and the establishment of their communities across the American west, especially large Chinatowns in San Francisco and other cities. Even before then, however, Vancouver Island saw the initiation of the Cantonese-dominated transpacific Chinese diaspora with the arrival of Chinese migrants at Yuquot in 1788–89. On the southern tip of the Island, Victoria emerged as the major entry port for migrants when the gold rush broke out in British Columbia in 1858. Later it served as a key transfer station for large numbers of labourers from both southern and northern China to the European battlefields around 1918. Its paramount role becomes even clearer when we consider how the Island became the base for numerous Chinese communities that supported the establishment of significant transpacific networks. Furthermore, exclusion acts, beginning in 1882, effectively prohibited Chinese migration to the United States. Yet Chinese migrants still managed to enter Canada through Victoria and to expand their transpacific networks on and from the Island even after the Canadian government imposed a head tax in 1885.⁹

⁷ Edward R. Slack, Jr., "The *Chinos* in New Spain: A Corrective Lens of a Distorted Image," *Journal of World History* 20, no. 1 (2009): esp. 36–39, 67. For immigration from China, especially Fujian province, to the Philippines under the impact of galleon trade, and for the dominance of Fujian natives among these Chinese immigrants up to 1800, see Zhuang Guotu et al., *Feilubing Huaren tongshi* [A comprehensive history of the Chinese in the Philippines] (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2012), 112–13, 120–22, 134–36, 144–48; Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 38. For Cantonese migration to the Philippines after 1800 and their dominance in Chinese immigration to the Americas from the mid-nineteenth century, see Lynn Pan, *The Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 36, 187.

⁸ Yen Ching-hwang, *Coolies and Mandarins: China's Protection of Overseas Chinese during the Late Ch'ing Period (1851–1911)* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1985), 48–76. The scholarly claim about the total "absence" of people from Fujian province in transpacific Chinese migration of the mid-nineteenth century in previous research on the rise of Cantonese networks across the Pacific is an overstatement. See Henry Yu, "Mountains of Gold: Canada, North America, and the Cantonese Pacific," in *Routledge Handbook of the Chinese Diaspora*, ed. Tan Chee-beng (London: Routledge, 2013), 109.

⁹ Charles A. Price, *The Great White Walls Are Built: Restrictive Immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836–1888* (Canberra: The Australian Institute of International Affairs in association with Australian National University Press, 1974), 60–61, 96–97, 130–39.

VANCOUVER ISLAND AND
TRANSPACIFIC CHINESE MIGRATION

As the major port city of Vancouver Island, Victoria has received scholarly recognition as the “gateway” for Chinese migration to Canada once the gold rushes began in the Fraser Valley in the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁰ But smaller cities and towns on the Island, such as Nanaimo and Cumberland, in Snuneymuxw and K’ómoks territories, respectively, also attracted Chinese immigrants to their mining industry and other economic sectors.¹¹ And even earlier, as the Manila-Mexico galleon trade gradually declined in the late eighteenth century and thereafter,¹² a maritime fur trade developed between the Pacific Northwest (including Vancouver Island) and Canton (Guangzhou), the only trade port open to Western merchants in Qing China.¹³ This triggered the first wave of Cantonese migration across the Pacific in 1788–89.

In March 1778, British captain James Cook’s third exploratory voyage to the Pacific reached Nootka Sound on the west coast of present-day Vancouver Island, and his crew discovered a rich supply of sea otter furs in Nuu-chah-nulth territories and farther north. Although Cook soon died in a clash with Kānaka Maoli people in the Hawai’ian Islands (colonial: Sandwich Islands), his crew ventured to Canton, where the furs fetched an unexpectedly high price in the Chinese market. News quickly spread, inspiring merchants from Europe and the newly independent United States to travel to the Nootka Sound region in search of sea otter furs, thus initiating a “soft gold rush” in the Pacific Northwest and its fur trade with Canton. An energetic and ambitious British captain, John Meares, also jumped into the soft gold rush, seeking fortune and fame through a maritime venture for the British Empire.¹⁴ However, the misfortune that occurred during his initial voyage to the Pacific Northwest, especially the loss of most of his European sailors to a maritime accident and Alaska’s cold weather, unexpectedly led to the arrival of the first of two large groups of nearly 120 Cantonese labourers in total in Yuquot in

¹⁰ Zhongping Chen, John Price, Kileasa Wong, Jenny Clayton et al., “Victoria’s Chinatown: A Gateway to the Past and Present of Chinese Canadians,” <http://chinatown.library.uvic.ca>.

¹¹ David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1988), 37–39, 45–48, 71–77.

¹² Zhuang et al., *Feilubing Huaren tongshi*, 112–13, 206.

¹³ For the beginning of the transpacific fur trade, see Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 134–38, 164.

¹⁴ J. Richard Nokes, *Almost a Hero: The Voyages of John Meares, R.N., to China, Hawaii and the Northwest Coast* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1998), 1–9; Thomas Vaughan and Bill Holm, *Soft Gold: The Fur Trade and Cultural Exchange on the Northwest Coast of America* (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1982), 3.

Nootka Sound in 1788–89. Many of them ventured further to Hawai‘i, and about thirty-five of these Cantonese crew members were captured and escorted to Mexico by Spanish warships. Six of them escaped Spanish custody and stayed in Mexico, and twenty-nine were later released back to China, as described in John Price’s article in this special issue.¹⁵

Available sources show that at least one of the members of Meares’s Chinese crew jumped ship in Hawai‘i and became the first of the permanent immigrants from China to arrive in this mid-Pacific archipelago. Thus, 1789 has been celebrated by the Chinese in Hawai‘i as the beginning of their history on these Islands.¹⁶ Moreover, another group of forty-five Chinese also joined ten American seamen on Captain Simon Metcalfe’s vessel, the *Eleanor*, on a transpacific trading voyage from Macao to Nootka Sound in 1789. They were again driven away from the Pacific Northwest by the Spaniards, had to retreat to the Hawaiian Islands, and finally returned to China. During Captain George Vancouver’s voyage to Hawai‘i in 1794, both he and one of his crew, Edward Bell, recorded Chinese and non-Indigenous people on the Islands.¹⁷ Thus, the earliest Chinese on the Hawai‘ian Islands could have included members of both Captain Meares’s and Captain Metcalfe’s Cantonese crew, who had first migrated to Yuquot in 1788–89 in what is now present-day Vancouver Island. Thus, based on available records, the first large wave of direct migration from Guangdong to Yuquot of nearly 165 Cantonese crew members on Meares’s and Metcalfe’s vessels in 1788–89 was a prelude to the rise of the transpacific Chinese diaspora in the mid-nineteenth century, although, from the 1780s onward, their ethnic community managed to continue its growth only on the Hawaiian Islands.¹⁸

Anticipating the loss of its posts in Oregon as a result of the imminent Treaty of Oregon, the Hudson’s Bay Company established the fort of Victoria at the southeastern tip of Vancouver Island as a fur trade station

¹⁵ In order to avoid overlap with Price’s article, I omit from this article the detailed analysis of the Meares-led Chinese migration to the Pacific Northwest in 1788–89; however, it will appear in the introductory chapter of my forthcoming book, *The Rise, Reform, and Revolution of the Transpacific Chinese Diaspora*.

¹⁶ Franklin Ng, “Preface,” *Chinese America, History and Perspectives: The Journal of the Chinese Historical Society of America*, special issue, *The Hawai‘i Chinese* (San Francisco: Chinese Historical Society of America, 2010), v.

¹⁷ George Vancouver, *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World* (London: 1801), 3:227, 5:112; Edward Bell, “The Log of the *Chatham*,” *Honolulu Mercury* 2, no. 1 (1929): 86.

¹⁸ For the continual development of the Chinese community in Hawai‘i after 1789, see John H. Connell, “The History of Chinese in Hawaii,” *Mid-Pacific Magazine* 46 (1933): 419–24; Eleanor C. Nordyke and Richard K.C. Lee, “The Chinese in Hawaii: A Historical and Demographic Perspective,” *Hawaiian Journal of History* 23 (1989): 197–98.

in 1843.¹⁹ Its rise was the base for the spread of settler colonialism on the Island, or the British settlers' "conquest" of the Island and "the dominance by [such] an exogenous agency over an indigenous one."²⁰ Thus, Victoria quickly became the capital of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849 and of British Columbia in 1866. When the gold rush broke out in British Columbia in 1858, a new wave of Chinese migrants quickly arrived in Victoria, first from San Francisco and then directly from Hong Kong. It is important to note that most of them did not stay in Victoria as settlers but used the city only as a gateway to the gold-mining fields along the Fraser River. Even though a Chinatown quickly appeared in Victoria, it mainly functioned as a base for its merchant leaders to organize the transnational and transpacific migration of their provincial fellows from Guangdong province.²¹

In particular, around 1858, Loo Chock Fan (Lu Zhuofan) and his younger brother Loo Chu Fan (or Loo Chew Fan, Lu Chaofan) established Kwong Lee & Co. (Guangli & Co.) in Victoria.²² The Loo brothers also used their Hop Kee & Co. in San Francisco to organize large-scale Chinese migration from California to the goldfields of British Columbia. On 24 June 1858, Hop Kee & Co. signed an agreement with Allan Lowe & Co. to charter a ship to transport three hundred Chinese miners from San Francisco to Victoria. On 25 April 1860, a total of 265 Chinese migrants, including one woman, arrived in Victoria from Hong Kong, and they immediately came under the care of Kwong Lee & Co. In the next month, the company further announced that the clipper *Daniel Elliott* had left Hong Kong with 370 migrants for Victoria. Three other ships with more than six hundred Chinese immigrants would soon leave Hong Kong for Victoria.²³

Thus, one local newspaper in Victoria found that the Chinese immigration had taken "a more tangible form by the initiative taken by

¹⁹ Harry Gregson, *A History of Victoria, 1842–1970* (Victoria: Victoria Observer Publishing Co., 1970), 1–6.

²⁰ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

²¹ Edgar Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada: A History of the Chinese Communities in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 13–16.

²² David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinese Community Leadership: Case Study of Victoria in Canada* (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co., 2010), 53–54; Tzui-I Chung, "Kwong Lee & Co. and Early Transpacific Trade: From Canton, Hong Kong, to Victoria and Barkerville," *BC Studies* 185 (2015): 137–60. In this article, the old-style spellings of Chinese names and other terms are from historical documents, and they are followed by Pinyin spellings inside parentheses.

²³ "Agreement between Hop Kee & Co. and Allen Lowe & Co., ... 24 June 1858," in MS-1053, Wilson Knowlton Collection, British Columbia Archives, Victoria, BC; *Colonist*, 26 and 28 April 1860; *Colonist*, 31 May 1860.

native Chinese merchants themselves in consigning vessels laden with labourers and Chinese produce to our port.²⁴ As a result, Chinese migration to British Columbia quickly reached a peak, numbering nearly four thousand in the goldfields of the Fraser River in the summer of 1860, although that number quickly decreased to 2,875 in March 1861 as many returned to China or went south to California during the winter season.²⁵ Clearly, almost all of them passed through Victoria on their transpacific voyage to British Columbia or back to Guangdong province.

A significant number of these Chinese immigrants transited from Victoria to other settlements on Vancouver Island. In the late 1860s, Chinese labourers began to work for the Vancouver Coal Mining and Land Co. in Nanaimo, and for Dunsmuir, Diggle & Co.'s coal mines in Wellington, about seven kilometres north of Nanaimo, in the early 1870s. When coal mines were slack in mid-1878, nearly a hundred of these Chinese miners from Nanaimo formed two companies to mine gold around Port Alberni in central Vancouver Island. Many of the Chinese coal miners in Nanaimo were from the Ma lineage, and a Ma Look managed their gold-mining activities. Dunsmuir, Diggle & Co. later expanded its coal-mining industry to South Wellington, about nine kilometres south of Nanaimo, and hired more Chinese miners. By 1880, 327 Chinese still worked in the coal mines of both Nanaimo and Wellington.²⁶ In Canada as a whole, Chinese immigrants still totalled only 4,416 by mid-1881, and 4,383 (99.3 percent) of them were in the province of British Columbia.²⁷

The number of Chinese communities on Vancouver Island, in British Columbia, and across Canada increased as another wave of labour immigration accompanied the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in the province from 1880 to 1885. This happened because three major Chinese labour contractors for the CPR, Lee Tin Poy (Li Tianpei), Lee Yick Tack (Li Yide), and Lee Yau Kain (Li Youqin), all based their companies in Victoria between 1880 and 1885. The primary white contractor for CPR construction in British Columbia, Andrew

²⁴ *Colonist*, 10 May 1860.

²⁵ *Colonist*, 28 March 1861. The newspaper indicates that the figure of 2,875 Chinese in British Columbia was from "a recent census taken by an intelligent Chinaman." But this figure has been misunderstood as the number of new arrivals from China in early 1861, and thus there has been an overestimation of "six or seven thousand Chinese in what is now British Columbia in the early 1860's [sic]." See Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada*, 13–14.

²⁶ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 37–39, 46, 71; *Colonist*, 21 May and 20 June 1878; *Seventh Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year Ending 31st December 1880* (Victoria: Government Printing Office, 1881), 437.

²⁷ *Census of Canada, 1880–81* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1882), vol. 4:10.

Onderdonk, also used a Victoria-based shipping agency to transport the recruited Chinese labourers from Hong Kong to British Columbia.²⁸

Quite a few scholars have cited the figure of approximately seventeen thousand as the number of Chinese labourers who worked on the CPR from 1880 to 1885.²⁹ This figure derives from the work of Edgar Wickberg and his collaborators, who suggested that a total of 17,007 Chinese arrived in Canada from January 1881 to October 1884.³⁰ In fact, this was only the number of Chinese arrivals in Victoria's Custom House from January 1881 to October 1884,³¹ and it does not include those who arrived via New Westminster and other entry ports to Canada. During the CPR's main construction period in British Columbia from May 1880 to September 1885, at least 19,524 Chinese entered the province, with 19,163 (98.2 percent) passing through Victoria. More than ten thousand of these immigrants, but not necessarily seventeen thousand, worked on the railway line.³² The arrival of nearly twenty thousand Chinese through Victoria during this railway-building era was crucial – both for the completion of the railway and for the establishment of a permanent Chinese presence across Canada. Even though a large number of these railway workers returned to China after the CPR was completed in September 1885, two-thirds of them took “return certificates,” which allowed for their future re-entry into Canada.³³

Many Chinese immigrants, including those dismissed from the CPR after its completion in late 1885, pursued their fortune on Vancouver Island, and out of this process they established their communities in Sidney, Duncan, Cumberland, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, and many other cities and townships up and down the Island.³⁴ In particular, the local

²⁸ For detailed textual research on CPR's Chinese labour contractors and their use of transpacific networks for recruitment, transfer, and management of the railway labourers from China, see Zhongping Chen, “Chinese Labor Contractors and Laborers of the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1880–1885,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 110, no. 1 (2018–19): 18–32, esp. 20–23.

²⁹ Li Quan'en (David Lai), Ding Guo, and Jia Baoheng, *Jianada Huaqiao yiminsi* [History of Chinese migration to Canada] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2013), 33; Julia Ningyu Li, *Canadian Steel, Chinese Grit: A Tribute to the Chinese Who Worked on Canada's Railroads More Than a Century Ago*, trans. John Howard-Gibbon and Jan Walls (Toronto: Paxlink Communications Inc., 2000), 172–73, 186–87; Library and Archives Canada, “Building the Canadian Pacific Railway,” <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/021013-2031.3-e.html>.

³⁰ Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada*, 22.

³¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration* (Ottawa: Printed by order of the Commission 1885), 396, 398.

³² Chen, “Chinese Labor Contractors and Laborers,” 24–25, 29–31.

³³ Patricia Roy, “A Choice between Evils: The Chinese and the Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in British Columbia,” in *The CPR West*, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1984), 33.

³⁴ For information related to these communities, see Zhongping Chen and John Price, “The Chinese Canadian Artifact Project: Everyday Life in BC's Chinatowns and Beyond,” 1–34,

coal-mining industry around Nanaimo, together with the related railway construction, provided them with crucial job opportunities. In 1883, Robert Dunsmuir and Sons Co. established itself as a major coal-mining empire on Vancouver Island, and it obtained coal rights in the Comox Valley the same year, although its coalfields around Union, the future Cumberland, would not be fully developed until 1888. In August 1883, Robert Dunsmuir also contracted with the Canadian government to build the 126-kilometre-long Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway (E&N) in return for \$750,000 and a land grant of nearly 2 million acres (together with its coal and timber rights).³⁵ The land grant included the southeast quarter of Vancouver Island from Victoria to Campbell River, an act of dispossession that the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group has labelled "The Great Land Grab."³⁶ Thereafter, the company expanded its coal-mining industry to Wellington-Extension, later shortened to Extension, in 1897, and linked it with a railway to its coal-shipping wharf and miners' settlement in Oyster Harbour, which was renamed "Ladysmith" in 1900.³⁷ In both its coal-mining operations and railway construction, the Dunsmuirs relied heavily on Chinese labourers.

As early as 1883, Dunsmuir hired 350 Chinese coal miners, and their number rose to 685 in his coal mines around Wellington and Extension the next year.³⁸ Although the subcontractors for the first forty kilometres of the E&N Railway from Nanaimo towards Esquimalt initially promised not to hire a single Chinese worker, they soon found it impossible to secure sufficient white workers and, at the end of 1884, had to entrust Tai Chong & Co. (Taichang & Co.) in Victoria for a supply of Chinese labourers. Thus, the ground of the railway was broken in Nanaimo by 120 Chinese labourers on 12 January 1885, and there was still an urgent need for six hundred more Chinese workers. Two days later, 175 Chinese men from the CPR line arrived in Victoria for railway work, and Tai Chong & Co. brought about one hundred more Chinese workers from the CPR to work on E&N Railway construction on 16 January 1885.³⁹ The number of railway workers on this section rose to about nine hundred in July 1885,

in John Price et al., "The Chinese Canadian Artifacts Project," <https://ccap.uvic.ca>.

³⁵ Terry Reksten, *The Dunsmuir Saga* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1991), 54–62; John R. Hinde, *When Coal Was King: Lady Smith and the Coal-Mining Industry on Vancouver Island* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), 15, 27–30.

³⁶ Robert Morales, "The Great Land Grab in Hul'qumi'num Territory, Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group," <http://www.hulquminum.bc.ca/pubs/HTGRailwayBookSpreads.pdf?lbisphpreq=1>.

³⁷ Hinde, *When Coal Was King*, 15, 27–30.

³⁸ *Colonist*, 2 March 1883; *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration*, 363.

³⁹ *Colonist*, 21 September and 31 December 1884; 5 and 17 January 1885.

but nearly seven hundred of them were supplied by Tai Chong & Co.⁴⁰ For the thirty-two kilometres of railway from Esquimalt northward, the contractor employed 1,050 workers by mid-1885, including “gangs of Chinese” who did the hard work (like cutting rock).⁴¹ In this section of track, one subcontractor faced the hardest eight-kilometre line of the E&N Railway north to Goldstream because construction work involved extensive rock cuttings and very deep fills as well as opening a sixty-one-metre tunnel. By May 1885, he had hired 250 Chinese labourers in addition to about one hundred white workers.⁴² As CPR construction was close to its end in late 1885, more Chinese labourers were dismissed, and they joined the construction of the Island railway, ensuring that Dunsmuir could complete the contract by August 1886.⁴³

The surplus of cheap Chinese labourers, especially experienced workers from the CPR, also helped Dunsmuir build other local railways, such as the spur from the main E&N Railway line to Oyster Harbour (the future Ladysmith) in 1885.⁴⁴ When the Dunsmuir family began to develop the coal industry around Union (the future Cumberland) in 1888, it dispatched one crew to open the mines and another crew of forty-two Chinese to survey and build a railway from the mines to Union Bay, the coal-shipping wharf. These railways linked Dunsmuir’s coal mines and their coal-shipping harbours and further connected them with the freight and passenger services of the E&N Railway.⁴⁵

Dunsmuir’s mines in Wellington and Extension were obliged to comply with the BC government’s Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1877, amended in 1890, to ban Chinese from working underground. However, 105 Chinese still worked above ground in the Extension coal mines up to 1901. The Dunsmuirs launched and eventually won legal challenges to the provincial legislation and continued to employ Chinese miners underground in the mines around Cumberland in 1888 and thereafter. Thus, the number of Cumberland’s Chinese miners increased from 150 to 200 between 1888 and 1890.⁴⁶ As a result, Vancouver Island saw a suc-

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1 and 11 July 1885.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9 June 1885.

⁴² Ibid., 19 May 1885.

⁴³ Ibid., 15 and 28 July 1885; Hinde, *When Coal Was King*, 15. For the Chinese in the construction of the E&N Railway, see also Donald F. MacLachlan, *The Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway: The Dunsmuir Years, 1884–1905* (Victoria: BC Railway Historical Association with assistance from the BC Heritage Trust, 1986), 17–37.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17 July 1885; Hinde, *When Coal Was King*, 28.

⁴⁵ D.E. Isenor, E.G. Stephens, and D.E. Watson, *One Hundred Spirited Years: A History of Cumberland, 1888–1988* (Campbell River, BC: Ptarmigan Press, 1988), 92.

⁴⁶ Hinde, *When Coal Was King*, 82–85; Jennifer Nell Barr, *Cumberland and Heritage: A Selected History of People, Buildings, Institutions and Sites, 1888–1950* (Cumberland, BC: Corporation

cession of Chinatowns established in or near the coal-mining centres of Nanaimo, Wellington, South Wellington, Extension, Bevan, Ladysmith, Cumberland, and Union Bay, in addition to the first Chinatown in Victoria. In 1901, Victoria's Chinatown had 2,978 residents and remained the largest in Canada. In the same year, two other Island Chinatowns, in Nanaimo and Cumberland, had six hundred and 521 residents, respectively, and they were also among the largest Chinese settlements in Canada.⁴⁷

After 1901, once it rose as the western terminus of the CPR, Vancouver began to host the largest Chinatown in British Columbia and Victoria lost its importance as the major gateway for Chinese immigration to Canada. However, the quarantine at William Head on the southeast corner of Vancouver Island and other long-standing immigration facilities there, together with the relative isolation of the Island itself, made it a transpacific base for the Canadian government's secret mission to transfer large numbers of Chinese labourers to the Western Front during the First World War. During that war, both British and French governments recruited Chinese labourers as non-combat forces on the European battlefields. Fearful of enemy attacks and potential anti-Chinese abuse, from early March of 1917 to late March of the next year, the Canadian government secretly landed about eighty-four thousand Chinese labourers at William Head and then transported them in closed rail cars across Canada to embark for Europe.⁴⁸

In 1919, most of the approximately eighty-four thousand labourers later returned from Europe to China through Canada, again passing through William Head on Vancouver Island, but an unknown number of them were among the approximately three thousand Chinese who settled in France after the war. Because most of them were from northern China rather than Guangdong province, this wartime operation through Vancouver Island helped the Chinese diaspora to diversify beyond the Cantonese-dominated transpacific migration. The diaspora thus expanded further into Western Europe, where immigrants from China had only a limited presence before the First World War.⁴⁹

of the Village of Cumberland, 1997), 26–27; Watson, *One Hundred Spirited Years*, 74.

⁴⁷ Lai, *Chinatowns*, 71–73, 83; Watson, *One Hundred Spirited Years*, 51.

⁴⁸ Elizabeth A. Tancock, "Secret Trains across Canada, 1917–1918," *Beaver* 71, no. 5 (1991): 39–43; Peter Johnson, *Quarantined: Life and Death at William Head Station, 1872–1959* (Victoria: Heritage House, 2013), 147–56.

⁴⁹ Frank N. Pieke, "Introduction," in *The Chinese in Europe*, ed. Gregor Benton and Frank N. Pieke (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 3–4; Guoqi Xu, *Strangers on the Western Front: Chinese Workers in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 151; Chen

From 1788 to 1918, Vancouver Island repeatedly played a historic role as a transpacific portal for key stages of Chinese migration to North America and farther to Europe. However, transpacific Chinese migrants were able to build this global diaspora not only through their successful dispersion across national borders (and through overcoming racist barriers) but also through the expansion of their varied local, nationwide, and even worldwide networks. One central node in their worldwide, and especially their transpacific, networks is Vancouver Island, including Victoria.

VANCOUVER ISLAND AND TRANSPACIFIC CHINESE NETWORKS

Even though the first two groups of about 120 Cantonese migrants crossed the Pacific on Captain Meares's vessels in 1788–89 only as his crew and hired hands for fur trade purposes, according to his account they also included those who “intended to become settlers on the American coast.”⁵⁰ But this account probably reflected Meares's own colonial ambition to have “trading posts ... established on the American coast, [with] a colony of these men” under his control.⁵¹ In general, “migrants can be individually co-opted within settler colonial political regimes ... They do not, however, enjoy inherent rights and are characterised by a defining lack of sovereign entitlement.”⁵² Indeed, tens of thousands of Chinese migrants entered Canada or went to Europe through Victoria from 1858 to 1918 and provided labour, commercial, and even para-military services for Canada or the British Empire and its allies, but they always faced racial discrimination and exclusion, while their homeland suffered foreign intrusion. Thus, many Chinese migrants used Vancouver Island to build various networks through which to pursue a decent livelihood, to develop business activities, to coordinate anti-racism fights, and to achieve national salvation for their homeland.

These diasporic networks included intertwined interpersonal ties and institutional links that spread from Victoria's Chinatown across Vancouver Island to the transpacific world and beyond. There was also a historical trend towards increasing institutionalization inside their transpacific family, corporate, and (especially) sociopolitical associations. Such networks not only linked up these dispersed Chinese migrants

Sanjing, *Huagong yu Ou zhan* [Chinese labourers and the Great War] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo, 1986), 1–6, 31–38, 149, 154.

⁵⁰ John Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789 from China to the North West Coast of America* (London: Logographic Press, 1790 [repr., New York: Da Capo Press, 1967]), app. 3: No. 1, “Copy of the Memorial,” 3.

⁵¹ Meares, *Voyages Made in the Years 1788 and 1789*, 2–3.

⁵² Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 3.

and communities and connected them with their homeland but also facilitated, for good or bad, their relations with non-Chinese individuals or groups. On Vancouver Island, the mostly male migrants from China were in daily contact with non-Chinese individuals, and some of them formed families with Indigenous women, although such interracial marriages were more common in the interior of British Columbia.⁵³ In their encounters with white people on and beyond the Island, Chinese migrants found not only anti-Chinese discrimination but also close friendships and mutual trust. In some cases, Chinese community leaders even worked with their white associates to fight anti-Chinese racism, as is shown below. Certainly, it was mainly the institutional relations of these migrants, at and above the interpersonal level, that led to their diasporic cohesion from the local to the transpacific level.

Starting from the gold rushes of British Columbia in the mid-nineteenth century, rich Cantonese merchants in Victoria developed their business networks both locally and across the Pacific. As one of the largest business establishments in Victoria's Chinatown from its beginning, Kwong Lee & Co. operated in close connection with Kwong U Shing Co. in Canton, Kwong Man Fung Co. in Hong Kong, and Hop Kee Co. in San Francisco in the 1860s and thereafter.⁵⁴ This Victoria-based company also used a chain of branches to distribute provisions for Chinese gold miners across the Fraser Valley, and its business networks eventually followed the gold rush into the Cariboo region farther north. Around 1868, its branches spread to at least six gold-mining settlements: Yale and Lillooet in the lower Fraser Valley as well as Williams Creek, Quesnel Mouth (today's Quesnel), Quesnelle Forks, and Barkerville in the Cariboo region, although some of its branches were short-lived business establishments.⁵⁵

⁵³ Jean Barman, "Beyond Chinatown: Chinese Men and Indigenous Women in Early British Columbia," *BC Studies* 177 (Spring 2013): esp. 42, 48, 50; Christian Lieb and Jenny Clayton, "Jackie Ngai Interview, 21 September 2012," p. 2, in Reeta C. Tremblay et al., "Negotiating Citizenship: The Chinese and South Asian Communities in Greater Victoria," <http://negotiatingcitizenship.uvic.ca/items/show/34>. In this interview, Jackie Ngai mentioned her great-grandfather's third wife, "a Native woman." For additional family history about her great-grandfather, Ngai Sai (Wei Si), after his arrival in Victoria in 1864, see Charles P. Sedgwick, "Interview of Ngai Ou Sow," in no. 1995-018, Charles P. Sedgwick File, University of Victoria Archives.

⁵⁴ Lai, *Chinese Community Leadership*, 55.

⁵⁵ *First Victoria Directory, Second Issue, and British Columbia Guide* (Victoria: E. Mallandaine, 1868), 77; *Cariboo Sentinel*, 6 May 1867. One personal memoir indicates that, for a while, Kwong Lee & Co. also had branches in Clinton, Lytton, and Stanley. See William M. Hong, ... *And ... That's How It Happened: Recollections of Stanley-Barkerville, 1900-1975* (Wells, BC: self-pub., 1978), 194.

In addition to these Chinese merchant companies, the Hong Fraternal Society (Hongmen), a secret organization for mutual assistance and self-protection of the poor in southern China, also spread to Canada via Victoria and developed extensive networks among Canadian Chinatowns from the late nineteenth century. The origins of the Hong Fraternal Society in China and North America are still controversial,⁵⁶ but its lodges or local branches had appeared in San Francisco and Sacramento as early as 1854,⁵⁷ as well as in Victoria and in the gold-mining town of Quesnel Mouth in the northern Cariboo region by the 1870s.⁵⁸ These early lodges of the Hong Fraternal Society in both the United States and Canada seem to have used the same title as did their predecessors in Guangdong province – Hongshun tang (Society of the Hong Obedience).⁵⁹ However, in San Francisco, an American-born branch, Chee Kong Tong (CKT, Zhigongtang, Active Justice Society), also appeared in or before 1879,⁶⁰ and, according to English-language media, under the name “Chinese Freemasons” it soon spread to many North American Chinatowns.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Dian H. Murray and Qin Baoqi, *The Origins of the Tiandihui: The Chinese Triads in Legend and History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 89–150; Sue Fawn Chung, “The Zhigongtang in the United States, 1860–1949,” in *Empire, Nation, and Beyond: Chinese History in Late Imperial and Modern Times, a Festschrift in Honor of Frederic Wakeman*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick, Wen-hsin Yeh, and Madeleine Zelin (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2006), 234.

⁵⁷ *Daily Alta California*, 5 January 1854; *Daily California Chronicle*, 30 January 1854.

⁵⁸ *Colonist*, 2 May 1871, 21 January 1877, and 5 January 1879; Stanford M. Lyman, W.E. Willmott, and Berching Ho, “Rules of a Chinese Secret Society in British Columbia,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27, no. 3 (1964): plates 3 and 5, 536.

⁵⁹ Liu Boji, *Meiguo Huaqiao shi* [A history of the Chinese in the United States of America] (Taipei: Xingzhengyuan qiaowu weiyuanhui, 1976), 418–19; Yingying Chen, “In the Colony of Tang: Historical Archaeology of Chinese Communities in the North Cariboo District, British Columbia, 1860s–1940s” (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2002), 427–28.

⁶⁰ *The San Francisco Directory for the Year Commencing April 1879* (San Francisco: Francis, Valentine & Co., 1879), 932. Based on the 1882 rules of the CKT in Quesnel Forks, it has been assumed that a CKT lodge had been formed at Quesnel Mouth in 1876. See Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada*, 30. But the Chinese text of the rules does not specify the title of the Hong Fraternal Society’s lodge at Quesnel Mouth in 1876, which was more likely titled Hongshun tang at that time. The CKT, or the Chinese Freemasons in Canada, dates its origin in the country to a legend about the founding of a Hongshun tang in Barkerville, a major gold-mining town in the Cariboo region, in 1863. It also provides a list of CKT lodges in Victoria and nine other towns and cities of British Columbia, including three gold-mining towns in the Cariboo region, from 1876 to 1881. See Jian Jianping, *Zhongguo Hongmen zai Jianada* [The Chinese Freemasons in Canada] (Vancouver: Zhongguo Hongmen Minzhidang zhu Jianada zongzhibu, 1989), 13. But the claim lacks the support of written documents, and it contradicts the 1882 rules of the CKT in Quesnel Forks, which regarded a Hong Fraternal lodge, obviously a Hongshun tang, in Quesnel Mouth as the first and only one of its kind in the nearby area from 1876 up to 1881. See Lyman, Willmott, and Ho, “Rules of a Chinese Secret Society in British Columbia,” plate 3, 536.

⁶¹ Bennet Bronson and Chuimei Ho, *Coming Home in Gold Brocade: Chinese in Early Northwest America* (Seattle: Chinese in Northwest America Research Committee, 2015), 125–26.

The earliest workers employed by the CPR came from California in 1880, and they evidently brought the CKT's networks to Victoria and other cities and towns in British Columbia. By the early 1880s, the new CKT had founded lodges in Lytton, Boston Bar, Yale, and New Westminster along the CPR line. Up to 1885, these lodges appear to have been the major organizational forces in some, if not all, of Chinese railway labourers' collective actions against the mistreatment by white foremen, the BC government, and even Chinese labour contractors.⁶²

The new CKT's lodges also spread northward into the Cariboo region and incorporated the previously formed Hongshun tang's lodges in gold-mining cities or towns such as Quesnel Mouth.⁶³ According to a CKT publication in Canada, its lodges soon appeared in coal-mining towns and cities like Nanaimo and Cumberland on Vancouver Island, and further mushroomed in dozens of other cities across British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia from the 1880s. Victoria's CKT established itself as the headquarters of all these lodges by the beginning of the twentieth century, and its leadership was later recognized through a national conference in 1919.⁶⁴

⁶² Zhongping Chen, "The Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Transpacific Chinese Diaspora, 1880–1885," in *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fishkin with Hilton Obenzinger and Roland Hsu (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019), 294–313, esp. 297, 303–7. The previously cited self-publication of the CKT in Canada also claims that Victoria's CKT was founded by a few Chinese immigrants, including Lin Lihuang, from Seattle in 1876. See Jian, *Zhongguo Hongmen zai Jianada*, 13. This claim still lacks documentary evidence. Even the most recent and comprehensive work on the history of the Hong Fraternal Society in Canada includes accounts of the CKT's first lodge in Barkerville around 1869, two successive lodges in Victoria and Quesnel Mouth from 1876, and three other lodges in Williams Creek, Stanley, and Keithley in the Cariboo region from 1877 to 1881. But it contradicts itself by stating that all of the Hong Fraternal Society's lodges in the Cariboo region, except those in Quesnel Mouth and Quesnel Forks, used only the China-originated title, Hongshun tang, rather than CKT, before 1882. See Li Yuan'en (David Lai), *Hongmen ji Jianada Hongmen shilun* [The Hong Fraternal Society and its history in Canada] (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2015), 78, 83, 87–88, 93–95, 99.

⁶³ "Hongshun tang gexiongdi qianshubu: Xinyinian xinyue mengchun li shoudanbu" [A register of Hongshun tang membership dues: The section of receipts created in the first month, spring of 1881], archival no. 1980.291.7, in "Chee Kung Tong Materials and Other Chinese Language Documents," Barkerville Historic Town and Park Archives, accrual: RG-513. Although this document was created by the Hongshun tang in Quesnel Mouth in 1881, it was stamped by the seals of both the Hongshun tang itself and the local CKT lodge. The title and stamp of "Hongshun tang" disappeared from similar documents thereafter and were replaced by those of the CKT's lodge in Quesnel Mouth. Thus, this documentary evidence clearly shows the transition from Hongshun tang to CKT in Quesnel Mouth and nearby gold-mining towns around 1881.

⁶⁴ Jian, *Zhongguo Hongmen zai Jianada*, 13–14, 25. This CKT's self-publication includes a list of dozens of CKT's lodges throughout Canada from 1882 to 1885, but it also contradicts itself by stating that these lodges spread from British Columbia to other Canadian provinces between

The CPR's three major labour contractors in the early 1880s, Lee Yau Kain, Lee Tin Poy, and Lee Yick Tack, used their transpacific business networks and their personal and business relations with Onderdonk, the major white contractor, to foil racist acts against immigration from China, effectively bringing in more than ten thousand Chinese railway labourers between 1880 and 1885. The three Lee labour contractors and other merchant leaders of Victoria's Chinatown also established an umbrella community organization, the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA, *Zhonghua huiguan*), in Victoria to serve their compatriots throughout Canada, especially British Columbia. They did this in response to internal crises (such as tong wars) in various Chinese communities and also as a means of challenging racist legislations enacted by the BC government in early 1884. One of the provincial bills imposed an annual ten-dollar tax on each of the Chinese residents in the province. The Victoria-based CCBA first gained support and recognition from Qing China's general consulate in San Francisco and then issued a circular to all the Chinese in British Columbia in April 1884, promising to lead the legal battle against the BC government's anti-Chinese bills. In late August 1885, the CCBA-led legal battle eventually succeeded after a court in Victoria declared the provincial bill for a Chinese tax to be *ultra vires*.⁶⁵

Thereafter, the Victoria-based CCBA often represented all Chinese in Canada with regard to their internal and external affairs: it was especially concerned with keeping order across Canadian Chinatowns, providing charitable care for the poor and the sick, and fighting racial discrimination. Its institutional model was followed by similar umbrella organizations in Vancouver and other Canadian cities, who also copied its use of bilingual titles (*Zhonghua huiguan* in Chinese, Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association in English).⁶⁶ While the interrelations between the CCBA in Victoria and community organizations in other Canadian Chinatowns still need to be examined, it is clear that the CCBA's use of the bilingual titles offered a new nationalistic identity for their predominantly Cantonese members, stressing broad links with China rather than local links with their homes in Guangdong province.⁶⁷

1886 and 1912. Victoria's CKT began to use the title "headquarters," or *zongtang*, at least from late 1914. See *Da-Han ribao* [Chinese times], 18 September 1914.

⁶⁵ Chen, "Chinese Labor Contractors and Laborers," 22–25, 27–28; Chen, "Construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway," 309–10; Lai, *Chinese Community Leadership*, 25–30; *Colonist*, 23 and 26 August 1885.

⁶⁶ Lai, *Chinese Community Leadership*, 4–7, 64–89.

⁶⁷ Timothy J. Stanley "Chinaman, Wherever We Go: Chinese Nationalism and Guangdong Merchants in British Columbia, 1871–1911," *Canadian Historical Review* 77, no. 4 (1996):

At the turn of the twentieth century, Victoria, together with other cities on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia, even produced the first truly global Chinese political organization and provided the impetus for its expansion. After the political reform of late Qing China failed in 1898 and its imperial patron, Emperor Guangxu, was put under house arrest by Empress Dowager Cixi and her faction, the major reformist leader Kang Youwei became an exile. He arrived in Victoria in April 1899. His public speeches in Victoria, Vancouver, and New Westminster attracted hundreds or thousands of local Chinese and motivated them to unite for the reform of both late Qing China and the Chinese diaspora. As a result, he and merchant leaders of the Chinatowns of Victoria, Vancouver, and New Westminster jointly founded the Chinese Empire Reform Association (CERA, or Baohuang hui, “the Society to Protect the Emperor”) in Victoria on 20 July 1899. Its chapters in Vancouver and New Westminster appeared almost at the same time, and other chapters were soon founded in other cities in Canada, the United States, and throughout the Pacific Rim.⁶⁸

In May 1903, Kang Youwei’s second daughter Kang Tongbi also arrived in Victoria and initiated the Chinese Empire Ladies Reform Association (CELRA, or Baohuang nühui, Women’s Society to Protect the Emperor). This was the first Chinese women’s political organization in modern times. Its chapters, together with its slogan for gender equality in education and politics, soon spread to Vancouver and New Westminster as well as to American cities ranging from Seattle, Portland, Astoria, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Boston to Honolulu.⁶⁹ CERA’s chapters, including those of CELRA, numbered twelve across Canada by the end of 1903. But five of the twelve chapters, including the first chapters of both CERA and CELRA, were located in Victoria, Nanaimo, Extension, and Union (Cumberland) on Vancouver Island. CERA’s chapters further spread to more than 150 cities in the Americas, Asia, Australia, and Africa by 1905, including more than forty Canadian cities. Among these forty Canadian cities, at least two more

489–91.

⁶⁸ Zhongping Chen, “Kang Youwei’s Activities in Canada and the Reformist Movement among the Global Chinese Diaspora, 1899–1909,” *Twentieth-Century China* 39, no. 1 (2014): 3–16; Chen Zhongping, “Baohuanghui zai Jianada de chuanguo, fazhan ji kuaguo huodong, 1899–1905” [The formation of the Chinese Empire Reform Association in Canada, its organizational expansion and transnational activities, 1899–1905], *Jindaishi yanjiu* 2 (2015): 141–48.

⁶⁹ Zhongping Chen, “Kang Tongbi’s Pioneering Feminism and the First Transnational Organization of Chinese Feminist Politics, 1903–1905,” *Twentieth-Century China* 44, no. 1 (2019): 3–32.

cities on Vancouver Island, Sidney and Chemainus, together with the four aforementioned Island cities, hosted CERA's chapters.⁷⁰

Under Kang Youwei's leadership, CERA greatly expanded its global networks by leading the worldwide Chinese boycott against American exclusion policies towards labour immigration from China around 1905. In fact, in 1902, through correspondence with CERA's president in Victoria, Li Fuji, Kang planned to alleviate anti-Chinese racism in both Canada and the United States through community reforms, such as implementing sanitary improvements and convincing Chinese immigrants to abandon the notorious tong wars. Victoria's CERA first followed Kang's call to establish a public bath and to urge its members to exercise sanitary care in December 1904, and its counterpart in Vancouver followed suit in January 1905. After Kang used CERA's global networks to help launch the anti-American boycott in May 1905, he gathered CERA's North American leaders for a meeting in New York in July 1905. Here, he urged them to reduce white prejudice through introducing sanitary practices and other reforms among Chinatowns and individual Chinese, as CERA had done in Victoria.⁷¹

CERA did not really alleviate anti-Chinese racism through such self-reforms, and it eventually declined when Emperor Guangxu died in 1908 and its major leaders in Vancouver clashed with Kang. Nonetheless, CERA was not "completely routed" as previous research has claimed.⁷² In 1913 it still had thirty-six chapters in Canada, including those in Cumberland, Duncan, Extension, Ladysmith, Nanaimo, Union Bay, and (especially) Victoria.⁷³

Around this time, being a competitor of Kang Youwei and his reformist movement, Sun Yat-sen led a republican revolution against the Qing dynasty among overseas Chinese. After he founded the Revolutionary Alliance (Tongmeng hui) in Tokyo in 1905, it developed dozens of chapters in Asia, Australia, the Americas, and Europe.⁷⁴ But its first

⁷⁰ Chen, "Baohuanghui zai Jianada de chuangli, fazhan ji kuaguo huodong," 141, 145; Liang Yingliu, "Changjian chuanshi Baohuang huisuo beiji" [Inscribed record about the initiation and erection of the Chinese Empire Reform Association's office], stone inscription inside 1715 Government Street, Victoria, BC.

⁷¹ Chen, "Kang Youwei's Activities in Canada," 17–19; Chen, "Baohuanghui zai Jianada de chuangli, fazhan ji kuaguo huodong," 147–48.

⁷² L. Eve Armentrout Ma, *Revolutionaries, Monarchists, and Chinatowns: Chinese Politics in the Americas and the 1911 Revolution* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990), 125.

⁷³ Chen, "Kang Youwei's Activities in Canada," 19–22; Huang Jin, *Wanguo jixin bianlian, 1913* [A convenient guide for international mail, 1913], in Yuk Ow Collection, carton 26, Ethnic Studies Library, University of California at Berkeley.

⁷⁴ Zhang Yufa, *Qing-ji de geming tuanti* [Revolutionary organizations at the end of the Qing period] (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2011), 215–46.

agent in Canada, Feng Ziyou, arrived in Vancouver as late as 1910. Feng was the editor of the local CKT's newspaper, *Da-Han ribao* (*Chinese Times*), and he used the Hong Fraternal Society's anti-Qing slogan for political propaganda among CKT lodges and members. Indeed, when Sun Yat-sen came to Canada in early 1911 to raise funds for an anti-Qing uprising in Canton, he and Feng mainly relied on CKT's lodges for support.⁷⁵

Although, after his arrival in Vancouver on 6 February 1911, Sun's revolutionary propaganda was well received by leaders and members of CKT's lodge, his fundraising efforts did not succeed until he and Feng reached Victoria on 22 February and ensured the support of CKT's headquarters there. The CKT's headquarters not only mortgaged its premises on 27 February to raise \$12,000 (approximately \$30,000 HKD) for the Canton uprising but also dispatched one of its leaders, Xie Qiu, to accompany Sun across Canada and to help mobilize its lodges for fundraising purposes. Departing Victoria, Sun went to Nanaimo on 28 February and then to Cumberland on 1 March. He returned to Extension on 5 March and to Nanaimo on 12 March, and in both places he presided over the initiation ceremonies for new members for the two local CKT lodges. Evidently, his fame helped CKT's lodges to recruit new members and, in return, Sun received strong support from them.⁷⁶

Sun's fundraising success on Vancouver Island ensured that he would achieve similar successes after his return to Vancouver and during his subsequent visits to New Westminster, Kamloops, Kelowna, Revelstoke, and other cities in British Columbia, up to 29 March 1911. Together with Xie Qiu, a leader of Canadian CKT headquarters in Victoria, he continued his fundraising trip eastward thereafter. The two of them went through Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal, when Sun departed for New York on 19 April 1911. CKT's lodge in Toronto followed the precedent set by the Victoria headquarters and mortgaged its premises for the Canton uprising. As a result, Sun raised \$63,000 HKD from Chinese communities across Canada (especially CKT lodges), or 41.8 percent of all funds for the Canton uprising. But about half of the Canadian contribution was from CKT's headquarters in Victoria and its lodges in other Vancouver Island cities.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Chen Zhongping, "Weiduoliya, Wenghua yu haineiwai Huaren de gailiang he geming, 1899–1911" [Victoria, Vancouver, and Chinese reforms and revolutionary movements at home and abroad, 1899–1911], *Shehui kexue zhanxian* 11 (2017): 91.

⁷⁶ Chen, "Weiduoliya," 92–93; Jian, *Zhongguo Hongmen zai Jiaoda*, 26, 33. Jian's book (pp. 32–33) incorrectly incorporates one portion of a photocopied record of Sun's presiding over CKT's initiation ceremony in Extension (Xinbu) into a photocopied record of Vancouver's CKT.

⁷⁷ Chen Zhongping, "Weiduoliya," 94; Jian, *Zhongguo Hongmen zai Jiaoda*, 26.

With financial support from overseas Chinese, especially those in Canada, the Canton uprising broke out on 27 April 1911; however, it turned out to be the last and also the most disastrous failure of the ten anti-Qing military actions under Sun's leadership. Nonetheless, after the Republican Revolution broke out in central China on 10 October 1911 and then spread to southern China, Sun was invited back to China and soon became the provisional president of the newly formed Republic of China on 1 January 1912. Under his leadership, the Revolutionary Alliance then joined other political groups to form the Nationalist Party (Guomindang) in 1912. By early 1913, the Nationalist Party had more than fifty local chapters and liaison agencies (*jiaotong bu*) in China and abroad, but only six were located among overseas Chinese communities in Japan, Southeast Asia, and North America. One of its overseas liaison agencies was based in Victoria.⁷⁸

The Nationalist Party was outlawed by the military dictatorship in the early Republic of China in November 1913, but its organizations in North America, including the liaison agency in Victoria, survived under the title of the Chinese Nationalist League. In Canada, two years later, the officially registered Chinese Nationalist League developed more than forty chapters with over eight thousand members. All of them, along with their counterparts in the Americas, Hawai'i, England, Australia, and Africa, came under the leadership of the party's San Francisco general chapter (*Meizhou zongzhibu*).⁷⁹ Nonetheless, from 1912, the liaison agency of the Chinese Nationalist League in Victoria retained its special status, which was confirmed by a certificate issued by the San Francisco's general chapter on 29 June 1916.⁸⁰ Before the Chinese Nationalist League was implicated in a political assassination in Victoria's Chinatown in September 1918, after which the Canadian government put it under a six-month proscription, its chapters had increased to more than fifty in Canada.⁸¹ Quite a few of these chapters were located on Vancouver Island.

Thus, in addition to the Victoria-centred Kwong Lee Co. and its transpacific business webs, CKT lodges, CCBA memberships, and

⁷⁸ Zhang, *Qing-ji de geming tuanti*, 322–26; Zhang Yufa, *Minguo chunian de zhengdang* [Political parties in early Republican China] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2004), 58, 64–71.

⁷⁹ Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui disanzu, ed., *Zhongguo Guomindang zai haiwai, shangpian* [The Chinese Nationalist Party's organization overseas, Part 1] (Taipei: Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui disanzu, 1961), 140, 148.

⁸⁰ Director Ma Jieduan of Victoria's Liaison Agency to the American general chapter, 14 August 1916, in "Zhongguo Guo Min Dang Records, 1894–1957," Huan reel 40, no. 6186, Hoover Institute, Stanford University.

⁸¹ Wickberg et al., *From China to Canada*, 105–6, 110; Allan Rowe, "The Mysterious Oriental Mind: Ethnic Surveillance and the Chinese in Canada during the Great War," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 36, no. 1 (2004): 48–49, 61.

CERA chapters all spread from Victoria throughout Vancouver Island and Canada and even to the Pacific Rim. Victoria also helped underpin the global networks of the Chinese Nationalist League from the early 1910s. The transpacific networks of Kwong Lee Co. and the CERA declined or disappeared in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, but those of the CKT, the CCBA, and the Chinese Nationalist League are still extant. They helped link the transpacific Chinese diaspora not only at the local and global levels but also from the past to the present.

CONCLUSION

Vancouver Island is often perceived as the western terminus of British expansion in North America. However, long before the founding of the colony of Vancouver Island in 1849, the Island had already been a portal of the first large wave of transpacific Cantonese migration around 1788 and, by 1918, had helped expand the Chinese diaspora to global proportions. Other cities and locations in the Pacific Rim, such as Hong Kong and San Francisco, played similarly historic roles and have received recent scholarly recognition.⁸² By contrast, even though today's Chinatown in Victoria has become a symbol of Canadian multiculturalism and a major tourist attraction, it still appears in local historical literature as a "forbidden city,"⁸³ with a mysterious exhibit located in a murky and unnoticeable corner of the Royal BC Museum. In other tourist attractions inside and around Victoria, such as Craigdarroch Castle and the Hatley Castle, Chinese impacts on the local history of Vancouver Island, including on the Dunsmuir coal and rail empire, are either barely mentioned or totally neglected.

This article, and indeed this special issue, challenges conventional local history, which has been too long limited to "the study of individuals and groups interacting within a specific locality in the past."⁸⁴ Instead, it affirms that local history should be a "local-centered rather than locally-confined historical study so that its global links could be revealed."⁸⁵ This new historical approach is especially important for re-examining local Chinatowns on Vancouver Island within the transpacific and global contexts of the Chinese diaspora.

⁸² Elizabeth Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2013); Yong Chen, *Chinese San Francisco, 1850–1943: A Trans-Pacific Community* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

⁸³ David Chuenyan Lai, *The Forbidden City within Victoria: Myth, Symbol and Streetscape of Canada's Earliest Chinatown* (Victoria: Orca, 1991).

⁸⁴ Lyle Dick, "2013 Canadian Historical Association Presidential Address: On Local History and Local Historical Knowledge," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 24, 1 (2013): 5.

⁸⁵ Chen, "Weiduoliya," 96.