



George Shima: "The Potato King of California"

Don and Nadine Hata

George Shima, circa 1920. (From Toshio and Masao Yoshimura.)

ONE of the most successful entrepreneurs in the history of California agriculture died of a stroke in April 1926. Among the pallbearers at his funeral were David Starr Jordan, Chancellor Emeritus of Stanford University, and James Rolph, Jr., Mayor of San Francisco. Numerous other dignitaries attended to honor the man known as the "Potato King." He left an estate estimated at between \$15 and \$17 million and a record of public service and leadership which stands as a classic example of the "Horatio Alger" path to the American dream. But the name of George Shima, whose Empire Delta Farms once spanned 6,000 acres, is missing from histories of California and the West. While much has been written about Japanese Americans during and after their World War II incarceration, Shima and other Issei, first generation immigrants from Japan, seldom appear as individuals in the cultural mosaic of our pioneer past.¹

George Shima was born in 1864, ten years after the signing of the treaty between the United States and Japan which ended two centuries of official isolation (*sakoku*). No birth records refer to "George Shima" because he was born Kinji Ushijima and changed his name after he immigrated to the United States.²

Shima's birthplace, the town of Kurume, lies near the strategic port city of Fukuoka on the southernmost Japanese home island of Kyushu. Shima's family was moderately successful as landowners and farmers, and his experience with the labor-intensive and high-yield methods which had evolved in land-scarce Japan would serve him well in America.³ But America was still far removed from young Shima's thoughts. The Japan of his childhood experienced turbulent changes which saw the restoration of Imperial rule and the formation of a new government. In 1868 the young Emperor Meiji issued a terse five-article Charter Oath which set the nation's future priorities.

Those who chartered Japan's entry into the modern world believed that their country's survival and the elimination of extraterritoriality clauses in foreign treaties demanded national unity, a modern industrial economy, and a positive image as a modern society.⁴ The Meiji Charter Oath therefore promised "deliberative assemblies," elimination of social class distinctions, and the rejection of "evil customs of the past." It also included a final expectation that "knowledge shall be sought throughout the world." The latter was intended to create a modern nation state

on the Western model, and it served as an exhortation for young Japanese to seek an education applicable to the modern world, and to expect upward social mobility.⁵ In practice, the available opportunities were far exceeded by those who qualified, and within a year after the promulgation of the Charter Oath, hundreds of Japanese began to emigrate as contract laborers on Hawaiian sugar plantations.

Young Shima did not follow the Hawaiian route that many Issei took, for reports of their experiences indicated that plantation life was harsh and opportunities were limited. The new Meiji government took an intense interest in the treatment of its citizens in Hawaii, in large measure due to the concern that failure to do so would result in a lack of proper respect in the eyes of the Western nations.⁶ Officials in Tokyo and consular outposts would continue to carefully monitor the treatment of their citizens as they moved beyond Hawaii to the West Coast.

While nearly 30,000 Japanese laborers emigrated as *dekasegi* or "birds of passage" to Hawaii by the eve of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Shima had spent his time learning Japanese and then studying Chinese classics as he moved from Fukuoka to Tokyo. The passage of compulsory education legislation in 1872 had a direct impact on Shima, who only had learned to read and write Japanese a year before. In 1875 he attended elementary school for the first time. By the time he left for Tokyo in 1885, Shima also had learned Chinese, but no English, as it was not taught at either the public or private schools he attended. His goal was to become as great a scholar in Chinese classics as his Fukuoka mentor, Wataru Esaki. Unfortunately for Shima, his lack of preparation in English resulted in his failing the entrance examination to Hitotsubashi University. Impulsively, Kinji Ushijima decided to go to America to study English.⁷

Shima arrived in San Francisco in 1889 at the age of 26, with less than \$1,000, and like others before him, found employment as a domestic servant. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Law had created a scarcity of domestic servants and the archetypical "Japanese schoolboy" who worked for one or two dollars a week plus free room and board was in great demand.⁸ Shima's daughter recalled her father describing his first job:

I had been on break from college and was helping my mother clean the house. My father, observing the way in which I was sweeping, took the broom from me, exclaiming, "let me show you the proper way to sweep. After all, it was my first job in this country."⁹

His stint as a schoolboy taught him other things that would pay dividends — fluency in English and a knowledge of how to interact with Americans.

A few hundred students comprised the majority of

Japanese in the United States prior to 1882. The federal Chinese Exclusion Law encouraged Japanese laborers to move to the Pacific slope region as reports reached Japan and Hawaii about the vacuum in virtually every job category filled by Chinese. Workers were wanted as stoop farm labor and in fishing, lumbering, mining, and railroad construction. The growing Japanese population also required services such as boarding houses, dry goods stores, groceries, and restaurants, and most important, bilingual contacts to link potential employees to prospective employers. Thus the labor contractor was an indispensable figure in the immigrant community. That role provided opportunities for Shima and other Issei to use their English in jobs with better pay and status.

The willingness of Japanese laborers to accept lower wages enabled them to secure employment easily in rural areas. Urban manufacturing jobs in such areas as shoes, clothing, and cigars were closed to the Issei because of the availability of white laborers who had replaced Chinese workers in these industries after the 1882 law. With urban employment and upward mobility in the cities closed to them, many Japanese turned to rural agriculture where there was a growing demand for farm laborers.¹⁰

Shima left the San Francisco area in 1889 and headed east to the Stockton-Sacramento delta where

the stocky Japanese gained a reputation as a speedy worker, and on more than one occasion he was challenged by the Americans to a potato-picking contest. In this friendly rivalry Shima invariably came out on top, despite the fact that his white competitors often surreptitiously removed his sacks from his row to theirs in vain attempts to even the score. This early capacity for hard work, he himself said, gave him his first impetus to further effort. He thought: "If I can out-pick the Americans, I can also out-grow them."¹¹

He soon moved from farm worker to labor contractor. But the delta provided other potential for his evolution as an entrepreneur. Shima observed that whereas the delta was already a well-established agricultural region, large areas were under-utilized due to periodic flooding of the low-lying areas by the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Prime farming land commanded exorbitant prices of \$150 or more per acre. Waste lands such as swamps and flooded islands were offered for as little as \$3 to \$5 per acre, or at even lower prices if large properties were involved; leases were available for whatever the lessee was willing to pay.

Shima and other former student friends started a 15-acre farm near Woodbridge. By 1899 they had moved from moderate success with beans and began to experiment with potatoes. It took nearly ten years of



Sacks of potatoes with George Shima's Ūbel, circa WWI. (From Toshio and Masao Yoshimura.)

trial-and-error to learn how to master the potato in the environment of the delta region. Although the potato was a staple element in the American diet, few Issei were willing to risk time and capital in the crop. Moreover, its marketability and appeal to Japanese was limited, and profit would depend on direct competition with non-Issei farmers. But potatoes could be grown in the cheap "tule" marshes and swamps of the delta, and by 1899 Shima and his friends began to reclaim some 400 acres on Bradford Island.¹²

By 1900 Shima began to pull together sufficient capital, eventually including such non-Japanese sources as the Fleischacker financial interest in San Francisco, to embark on a massive construction of dikes around the flooded islands of the lower delta near Stockton.¹³ It was forbidding terrain; "the whole place was infested with malaria and shunned by American farmers."¹⁴ But Shima was tenacious in the face of numerous setbacks. His workers first constructed dikes around the low-lying islands, dug transverse ditches and installed pumps to pour the excess water back into the rivers, and employed dredges and heavy machinery to deepen natural channels to lower the water table. As land was diked and drained, it was then steam-plowed and lay fallow while reeds and bush were allowed to rot and further enrich the soil. The result was one of the largest land reclamation efforts on the West Coast. Even today, the farmers of the delta wage a constant struggle against the high tides and floodwaters. The aging and decaying system of dikes and levees has not been replaced due to high costs, and each year the waters eat away at Shima's legacy.

Between 1889 and 1913, he reclaimed more than 28,800 acres of mosquito-ridden wastelands made fertile by centuries of silt deposits that had formed the delta.¹⁵ But land reclamation was only the first step for Shima. The selection of crops was no less challenging.

His initial efforts at raising rice were only marginally successful.¹⁶ Problems with mites, rot, and mildew, and lack of insecticides, required refining plant strains appropriate to local conditions. Shima continued to experiment with potatoes, and he became convinced that properly reclaimed land could produce two profitable crops per year. Potatoes were more resistant to dampness and cold than wheat or barley, and with reasonable care, 40 to 50 bushels per acre could be harvested in each crop. He also saw the great potential for potatoes as a non-perishable vegetable for shipment to distant markets. By 1900 his leased holdings were estimated at 1,000 acres under his own name and an additional 2,000 acres in joint tenancy with the Ringe farm holdings. His cash crops in that year included fruits, berries, and vegetables, such as onions and potatoes.¹⁷ Potatoes eventually would dominate as he sought the advice of agricultural experts at Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley for seeds as well as planting and harvesting techniques. By 1909 he was known as the "Potato King" of California.

By that time, many other Issei had accumulated sufficient savings to invest in their own farms, and with this growing transformation from rural proletarians to farm owners, they were perceived as an unprecedented threat to the Anglo capitalists' control

of California agriculture. Moreover, economic conditions were linked to other nativist and xenophobic arguments against the Issei, and the convergence of calls for action created a series of highly publicized crises which began with the segregation of Issei in the public schools of San Francisco.

After the 1906 earthquake, the San Francisco School Board ruled that Japanese students would be required to attend a segregated facility for Asians. The Japanese government intervened with a strongly worded protest demanding equal treatment for its emigrants, and a diplomatic crisis ensued.¹⁸ The policy was rescinded through the personal intervention of President Theodore Roosevelt, whose interest was not rooted in altruism.¹⁹ Roosevelt perceived the San Francisco school incident as only one dimension of an expanding anti-Japanese movement on the West Coast, and he involved himself in negotiations which led to the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1908.²⁰ Japan voluntarily agreed to restrict emigration of laborers and honored its promise by establishing strict screening procedures for emigrants.

The total number of Japanese arriving in the continental United States declined by about 30 percent during the period 1908-1913, but the entry of numerous women led to nativist accusations of Japan's non-feasance, and demands for more stringent immigration restrictions.²¹ The issue of *shashin-kekkon* or "picture brides" would add more fuel to the anti-Japanese movement, and propel George Shima into an Issei leadership role. In 1907 the Native Sons of the Golden West joined the cause of the Asiatic Exclusion League by attacking the practice of "picture brides" which allegedly subverted Yankee courtship rituals and reinforced the alleged "unacculturability" of the Issei.²² The earlier nativist charges against the Chinese in America had accused them of being unacculturable because they were largely male laborers without wives or children. Many Issei were determined to plant permanent roots in America; thus they circumvented the Gentlemen's Agreement by exchanging photographs with women who were willing to emigrate, marrying them by correspondence.²³ Such methods were not uncommon among other lonely bachelors in pioneer areas, but nativists warned that the Issei intended to "breed like rabbits" and inundate the West Coast with children who would be American citizens by birthright.²⁴

The Issei were by no means passive or disorganized in the face of mounting discrimination. Issei from the same *ken* or prefecture formed *kenjinkai* (prefectural associations) and other organizations similar to associations among first generation European immigrants. Thus welfare and employment groups, trade guilds, women's auxiliaries, ethnic churches and newspapers, language schools, and voluntary credit systems (*tan-omoshi*) which provided loans and investment capital

to members were established. Group cohesion as well as external hostility were key factors to survival and success outside the mainstream.²⁵

Leadership of the Japanese community organizations was initially dominated by representatives of the overseas Japanese business community, such as American branches of Japan-based banks and corporations involved in trans-Pacific commerce. As Issei immigrants moved from the ranks of laborers to urban and rural entrepreneurs, however, they began to form a new hierarchy of leadership in the Japanese American population. In 1909 George Shima became the first president of the Japanese Association of America, a coalition of more than 50 Issei community groups and *kenjinkai* which was attacked by nativists as evidence that Issei were agents of Imperial Japan.²⁶

The role of the Japanese Association and its local branches in Japanese communities throughout the Pacific slope region was much less sinister or subversive than nativist "warnings" portrayed them. It is true that the associations had a semi-official relationship with the Japanese government, based on the fact that Issei were "aliens ineligible to citizenship," a category of permanent non-citizen resulting from the limitation of naturalization to "white persons and persons of African descent." The Japanese government used the various Japanese associations to handle the bureaucratic paperwork required by the Gentlemen's Agreement and Japanese law for permission to leave and return to the United States.²⁷ The local associations also promoted conduct among Issei which would provide a positive image of all Japanese. The Japanese associations complied with their bureaucratic assignments, but they also evolved as advocates of the skills and rights that the Issei and their American-born children, the Nisei, would need to survive in the face of increasing hostility. Thus the associations promoted "Americanization" by supporting the learning of English and educational achievement, and campaigned for Issei citizenship and civil rights. While the leaders of the associations were linked to the Japanese consulates, and outwardly resembled "typical 'Establishment' types,"²⁸ Issei like George Shima were committed to establishing roots in America.

By 1909, as the anti-Japanese movement coalesced toward a climax in the 1913 Alien Land Law in California, George Shima was sufficiently well-off to purchase a home at 2601 College Avenue in one of the best residential sections of Berkeley. But money could not purchase respect, even in a cosmopolitan university community, and Shima soon found himself under siege. Reporters from newspapers in Berkeley, neighboring Oakland, and even across the bay in San Francisco heard the insinuations and vicious gossip, and they lined up to cut down the Issei who had succeeded according to the Horatio Alger model. The protest



George Shima, circa 1920. (From Toshio and Masao Yoshimura.)

movement demanded he move to an "Oriental" neighborhood. Fame turned quickly to notoriety as the newspapers printed headlines about the "Yellow Peril in College Town," "Jap Invades Fashionable Quarters," and "Jap Puts On Airs."²⁹

Shima had not altered the ambiance of his neighborhood. Illustrations of his residence show that the exterior facade and surrounding grounds were in keeping with the architecture and landscaping of the community. The adjoining lot which he purchased was planted with rare shrubs and plants imported from Europe as well as Asia. Shima's response to the racist uproar was elegantly effective. In answer to charges that he and his family would ruin the racial homogeneity of the neighborhood, the Potato King erected a high fence with the explanation that it "would keep the other children from playing with his." Then he donated \$500 to the University of California's Young Men's Christian Association. Money made the difference, even if it came from a "Jap," and Shima was accepted as a public-spirited member of the community. But as one authority on the history of the Issei has noted, "if even a millionaire has problems finding

a home, what must it have been like for his less prosperous compatriots?"³⁰

Indeed, Shima's experience in Berkeley reflected the hypocritical thrust of the anti-Japanese movement which attacked the Issei for marrying and raising families, seeking to learn English, and desiring upward mobility. Pressure began to increase for legislation to avoid the Japanese "takeover."

The gathering momentum of nativists in the anti-Japanese coalition in the years 1908-1913 cannot be explained by the size of the Issei population, for their total numbers were never large enough to significantly affect wage rates or dominate land holdings.³¹ The Gentlemen's Agreement had succeeded in reducing the numbers of Japanese emigrating as laborers, and the Issei never exceeded two percent of the total population of California, and less than one-tenth of one percent of the entire United States.

The reasons for the growing outcry which led to the 1913 Alien Land Law in California also include the pervasive influence of nativism and xenophobia. Shima and other Issei, although few in numbers, were perceived as being too successful, and therefore became "indispensable enemies" for their alleged threat to Anglo socio-economic supremacy in California and the West Coast.³² The emergence of Meiji Japan as a modern nation with imperial aspirations also fueled xenophobic fears that the Issei were an advance guard of a new "Yellow Peril," a threat to national security. As the battle lines were drawn, George Shima became a prime target of the anti-Japanese coalition and a spokesman for the rights of Issei.

As the numbers of Japanese farm laborers grew, so did the numbers of those who were able to purchase or lease land from group-sponsored savings through *tan-omoshi*, careful purchases, and hard work. The perceived threat from Japanese leaseholds and ownership of farm land was recounted by Chester A. Rowell, a close confidant of Governor Hiram Johnson, soon after the alien land law of 1913 was passed.

It was in the Sacramento delta that Shima, described by Rowell as "the richest Japanese in California," controlled several thousand island and delta acres, operated "his own fleet of river boats to handle his crops," and employed "a small army of Japanese, Chinese, and Hindus." He not only sold his own crop of potatoes but was "engaged in speculative operations on the potato market." Furthermore, Rowell said, Shima was active in the Stockton Chamber of Commerce and had invested in various properties there. Rowell claimed that the impact of Shima's farm and others would have been "insignificant" if it had not been for the "race issue." The real problem, he insisted, was posed by Japanese farm workers who provided the labor for Anglo farmers raising berries, sugar beets, grapes, nursery products, vegetables, and citrus and deciduous fruits. These laborers, said

Rowell, "practically dominate the labor of the characteristic agricultural and horticultural production of California," and they could do so because they were willing to serve as migrant laborers filling the vacuum caused by the decline in Chinese labor. Equally important was their peculiar ability to perform tasks requiring squatting.³³

Along with the shift of Japanese to rural areas came a sharp increase in anti-Japanese sentiment in areas like the Central Valley. Pressure to pass such legislation continued to mount after Republican Hiram Johnson was elected in 1910. Governor Johnson, who had publicly avoided taking sides on the issue during the campaign, found himself dealing with legislators who in 1911 introduced 27 anti-Japanese bills, including one that specifically prohibited "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from owning land.³⁴

Shima wrote to the governor several times in 1911. After expressing his pleasure at Johnson's victory, Shima informed him that the "Japanese Question" was resolving itself. Not only was immigration decreasing by some 7,000 to 8,000, but even the "yellow journals" were no longer discussing the question. Shima said:

The lands owned by the Japanese are only 11,000 acres. What a small acreage [sic] they have in this State. Speaking of the vast area of California, it might be well to say that no Japanese have land in California. It might be reasonable, perhaps, if Japanese were increasing to raise such a question. But, as I have said above, they are decreasing and their questions are solving themselves.

In the same letter, Shima referred also to the Panama-Pacific International Exposition which would be held in San Francisco in 1915. San Francisco, he predicted, would never become as great as New York without trade with Japan. He warned that the Japanese government and people were watching events in California with great concern. "The question," he said, can "be easily settled if we regard each other as brother and sister. . . . We wish, but good will and peace between us."³⁵ But Johnson, as well as members of both parties, joined the mounting public outcry against Issei farmers and laborers. In May 1913, the Alien Land Act was passed and signed by Johnson, who claimed credit for its success.³⁶

Public sentiment behind the enactment of the Alien Land Law reflected the widely-held conviction that Issei entrepreneurs like Shima had been too successful in proving that they were more than "the white man's match." Nine days before Johnson signed the law, it was reported that:

Three times in succession Shima, the Japanese grower, virtually cornered the potato market of



George Shima's residence in Berkeley, CA, circa 1909. (From Toshio and Masao Yoshimura.)

the Pacific coast through superior knowledge, better foresight, and greater daring. . . . No line of business was "safe" from the yellow invasion.³⁷

Many others shared this 1913 description of Shima, whose activities in the San Joaquin delta were called an example "of the range of the spectacular features of the so-called Japanese menace." He was "the one Jap in California who has made a heroic success of farming and whose wealth is stated in figures running from half a million to two million dollars."³⁸

A racist factor in the demand for exclusion was that Issei never would be able to disappear into the great American melting pot. Skin color and shape of eyes could never be hidden. And to make matters worse,

Instinctively the mass of the white resents the proud, erect bearing, the immaculate clothes, the exquisite manners of the successful, well-bred Japanese, who in the estimate of the mob, always remains a "Jap" immigrant.³⁹

The 1913 law placed a three-year limit on the lease of agricultural land and prohibited land purchases by "aliens ineligible to citizenship." But the Issei against whom the law was specifically directed found it relatively easy to circumvent: land was leased and purchased in the name of their Nisei children who were U.S. citizens by birthright.⁴⁰

The years between 1913 and the end of World War I saw a temporary hiatus of the anti-Japanese movement. In March 1919, however, U.S. Senator James D. Phelan resurrected the issue as he opened his campaign for re-election in California. By the end of the year, the anti-Japanese forces in the state had joined together behind the Native Sons' proposal to secure a "law that will make it impossible for Japanese to get possession

soil." This concerted move to strengthen the Alien Land Law was supported not only by native organizations, but by the American Legion, labor unions, and California's farmers. It was the fear of competition from Japanese farmers, not from cheap labor in the cities, that posed the real threat, for by the end of the war, most Issei farmers and agricultural workers were either on their own land or working for each other. And they now claimed ten percent of the market price of all California crop.⁴¹

In 1920, the anti-Issei coalition gathered enough signatures to place the proposed new alien land law on the ballot. It would prohibit "aliens ineligible to citizenship" from buying or leasing property in the names of their children or through a corporation.⁴² Shima authored a pamphlet entitled "An Appeal to Justice." He supported the "Gentlemen's Agreement" and opposed the practice of "picture brides." Furthermore, he stressed the Japanese Association of America's attempts to "foster Americanism among the Japanese in California" and that the state's Issei had "never shirked their duty" when it came to patriotic or charitable actions and contributions. How can Americans, he asked, ignore their own traditions of fair play to deny "peaceable, industrious and law-abiding" Japanese neighbors equal protection of the law?⁴³ Sup-

porters came forth, but not enough to make a difference.⁴⁴

The 1920 initiative was successful, and the newly formed Japanese Exclusion League of California pushed for passage of the 1924 National Origins Act. They helped mastermind the portion of that federal immigration law that excluded "aliens ineligible to citizenship." Japanese immigration virtually ceased until the law was relaxed in 1952.⁴⁵

A little more than a decade after Shima died in 1926, his widow and children moved to New York, well before Executive Order 9066 caused the forced evacuation and incarceration of all Japanese Americans during World War II. In 1975, a half a century after his death, 400 persons attended the dedication of the Shima Center at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton, named in honor of the Issei pioneer whose expertise and tenacity helped develop the agricultural potential of the region.⁴⁶ In 1982, a local newspaper article noted that George Shima had left a watch presented to him by a fellow delta rancher and former partner, Lee Philips. The inscription read: "To the man who does, from the man who tries."⁴⁷ It was a fitting epitaph for an Issei argonaut who linked the Far East to the Far West.⁴⁸



Dr. Donald T. Hata, Jr., is Professor of History at California State University, Dominguez Hills. He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California. His book *Japanese Americans and World War II*, co-authored with Nadine Hata, is in its fifth printing.

Dr. Nadine I. Hata is Dean of Behavioral and Social Sciences at El Camino College, Torrance, CA. She holds a Ph.D. in History from the University of California and has published in the field of the Japanese American experience.



NOTES

1. Roger Daniels, "American Historians and East Asian Immigrants," in Norris Hundley (ed.), *The Asian American, The Historical Experience* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1976), 2.
2. His original given name was Seikichi, which was changed after he entered a private middle school in 1881. Apparently another student had the same family and given names, and Shima resented being confused with the other boy who was not very bright. The name given to Shima by his teacher meant "to restrain yourself," a warning that Shima's mentor hoped would serve him well in the future. In America, he was probably called "George" by his Anglo friends who could not pronounce "Kinji." Ushi-

jima was also shortened for this purpose as well. Toshio Yohimura, *George Shima. Potato King and Lover of Chinese Classics* (Japan, 1981), 1-7. The Americanization of his name is an interesting example of accommodation in an era when nativists were accusing Japanese and other Asian immigrants of being "unacculturable." Brief biographical sketches of Kinji Ushijima and other pioneer Issei in America from Fukuoka Prefecture are found in two Japanese-language compilations by Tsunenogoro Hirota: *Zai-Bei Fukuoka Kenjin to Jigyo* [*Japanese from Fukuoka Prefecture and Their Enterprise in America*] (Los Angeles: Zaibei Fukuoka Kenjin to Jigyo Hensan Jimusho, 1936); and *Zai-Bei Fu-*

- kuoka Kenjinshi [*History of the Japanese from Fukuoka Prefecture in America*] (Los Angeles: Zaibei Fukuoka Kenjinshi Hensan Jimusho, 1931).
3. Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan* (Stanford University Press, 1959), 212-213.
4. The new leadership behind the emperor was committed to whatever was necessary for Japan to avoid the fate of China, in which a reactionary government was faced with internal turmoil, incapable of resisting Western incursions on its borders, and impotent in protecting its citizens abroad. Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific, An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967),

- 1-32.
5. Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century* (New York: Ronald Press, 1955), 72, 171, 175, 178; William L. Neumann, *America Encounters Japan, From Perry to MacArthur* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); and Edwin O. Reischauer, *The United States and Japan* (New York: Viking, 1957), 188.
 6. Contract laborers to Hawaii were permitted to emigrate on the condition that they receive free transportation for themselves and their children, free housing and medical care, and a maximum ten-hour working day. Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Frontier in Hawaii, 1868-1898* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953).
 7. Within a year after his arrival in Tokyo, Shima abandoned his plan to become a Chinese scholar and began to study English. One factor was the "sternness of the times." There also appears to be some disagreement as to why Shima left Japan. Some contend that he was lured to California by a newspaper article that extolled its advantages as an ideal place for Japanese immigrants. Yoshimura, 4-7, 16, 32-33. Many others had preceded him. As early as 1872, during the visit of the Iwakura Mission to the United States, a meeting was held between members of the delegation and Japanese students who were known to be in San Francisco. Donald Teruo Hata, Jr., "Undesirables: Early Immigrants and the Anti-Japanese Movement in San Francisco, 1892-1893 - Prelude to Exclusion" (New York: Arno, 1978), 43-67. Five years later a small group of students formed the Gospel Society (Fukuinkai). There were other student groups, including some early socialists. Yuji Ichioka, "A Buried Past: Early Issei Socialists and the Japanese Community," *Amerasia Journal*, I, 2 (July, 1971), 1-25.
 8. The "Japanese schoolboy" was firmly stereotyped by 1920, when Wallace Irwin, a San Francisco journalist, created a fictitious 35-year old named Hashimura Togo. Cartoons and caricatures of Togo showed him with large buck teeth, always smiling obsequiously, ardently ingratiating, and speaking pidgin English. He worked in the home of an American family in order to attend school, and secretly planned for the day when he would use his knowledge against the Yankees who had befriended him. As the Togo serials appeared across the nation, Americans became familiar with the outwardly polite but always sneaky and cunning "Jap." Wallace Irwin, "Hashimura Togo, Westerner," *The Sun-set*, XLV, 6 (December 1920), 22-23, 54, 56; Roger Daniels, *The Politics of Prejudice, The Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 11-12.
 9. Interview with Shima's daughter, Mrs. Florence Taye Hori (Berkeley, CA, November 1971), in Jay Albert, "George Shima - 'The Potato King'" (unpublished paper, California State College, Dominguez Hills, 1971), 6.
 10. Masakazu Iwata, "The Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture," *Agricultural History*, XXXVI (1962), 25-37. Iwata's expanded manuscript is slated to be published by the University of California Press in the near future; the tentative title is "Planted in Good Soil: Issei Contributions to U.S. Agriculture."
 11. Jean Pajus, *The Real Japanese California* (Berkeley: James J. Gillick, 1937), 84.
 12. The demand for staples caused by the Spanish-American War also helped Shima's efforts. Yoshimura, 58; Kaizo Naka, "Social and Economic Conditions Among Japanese Farmers in California" (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1913), 37-47.
 13. Shima's funds also came from the Yokohama Specie Bank, the forerunner of California First Bank. It has also been reported that during the post-World War I depression, the bank refused to support him and insisted that he pay off his debts. Yoshimura, 42.
 14. Pajus, 85.
 15. Naka, 42.
 16. Problems with rice growing in the Central Valley were resolved by K. Ikuta, the "Rice Wizard," during the period 1910-1920. Emil T. H. Bunje, "The Story of Japanese Farming in California" (Berkeley: U.S. Works Progress Administration Project, 1957), 20-22; Robert A. Wilson and Bill Hosokawa, *East to America, A History of the Japanese in the United States* (New York: Morrow, 1980), 66; Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei, The Quiet Americans* (New York: Morrow, 1969), 61-62; and California State Board of Control, *California and the Oriental* (Sacramento, 1920), 204-206.
 17. Interview with Shima's son, Rindge Shima (Los Angeles, October, 1971), in Jay Albert, 7. Shima's marketing techniques also included shipping his potatoes in red bags marked "Shima Fancy" which became a well-known trademark. Yoshimura, 24, 28.
 18. A. Whitney Griswold, *Far Eastern Policy of the United States* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), 347; and Frank T. Chuman, *The Bamboo People, The Law and Japanese Americans* (Del Mar, CA: Publisher's Inc., 1976), 18-37.
 19. Japan had been an unexpected victor in the recent Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and alarmists wailed about the Imperial Navy's threat to America's colonies in the Pacific. Thomas A. Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese Crisis* (Stanford University Press, 1934).
 20. *Congressional Record*, 59th Cong., 1st sess., 3749-3753.
 21. By this time, Shima had acquired a wife and family. In 1900 he returned briefly to Japan and married Shimeko Shimomura. Shimomura insisted that Shima convert to Christianity. Their eldest daughter, Taye, was born in 1902; sons Togo in 1904, Takuji in 1906, and Rindge in 1908. Yoshimura, 10, 29, 59-60.
 22. The experiences of women who became picture brides were indeed often very difficult; see Akemi Kikumura, *Through Harsh Winters, The Life of a Japanese Immigrant Woman* (Novato, CA: Chandler and Sharp, 1981).
 23. See Kesa Noda, *Yamato Colony: 1906-1960* (Livingston, CA: Livingston-Merced Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, 1981), 53-64.
 24. The anti-Japanese movement worried the Nisei, second generation Japanese-American, would pose a more dangerous threat to Anglo control than their Issei parents who remained "aliens ineligible for citizenship."
 25. Ivan H. Light, *Ethnic Enterprise in America: Business and Welfare among Chinese, Japanese, and Blacks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 57; and Joel Modell, *The Economics and Politics of Racial Accommodation, The Japanese of Los Angeles, 1900-1942* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 91-93. *Kenjinko* assisted the 10,000 Japanese left homeless in the wake of the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco. James Stuart Olson, *The Ethnic Dimension In American History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 337.
 26. Roger Daniels, "The Japanese," in John Higham (ed.), *Ethnic Leadership in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 36-63.
 27. The Japanese consular service delegated to the associations the responsibility to record marriages, births, and other vital statistics because Japan, like England and France, had adopted the code of *jus sanguinis* (dual citizenship).
 28. Daniels, *Ethnic Leadership*, 43.
 29. Kiyoshi K. Kawakami, *Asia at the Door, A Study of the Japanese Question in Continental United States, Hawaii and Canada* (New York: Revell, 1914), 148-149.
 30. Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice*, 10; K. K. Kawakami, *The Real Japanese Question* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 44-47.
 31. So many of the Japanese who arrived in 1908-1924 returned home that the net increase in the Issei population was less than 1,000 per year.
 32. "Labor continued to oppose the Japanese with almost the fervor it had shown against the Chinese. This seeming anomaly is readily explainable. West Coast laboring men had inherited a prejudice against immigrants from Asia that continued long after the original economic grievances against them had disappeared." Roger Daniels, "The Issei in California, 1890-1940," in Hilary Conroy and T. Scott Miyakawa (eds.), *East Across the Pacific, Historical and Sociological Studies of Japanese Immigration and Assimilation* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1972), 85.
 33. Chester H. Rowell, "The Japanese in California. Why Californians Regard Their Presence as 'the Beginning of the Biggest Problem that Ever Faced the American People,'" *World's Work*, XXVI, 2 (June 1913), 195-201. Rowell noted that of the estimated 55,000 Japanese in California in 1910, some 20,000 were "farm hands" and 4,500 were "farmers." In 1909, 319 leases were recorded in the state for a total of 20,294 acres; three years later, an additional 282 leases and 17,596 acres had been recorded. He estimated that by 1912, Japanese also owned a total of 312 farms amounting to 12,726 acres for a total assessed valuation of \$609,605. The largest amount of land owned by Japanese was in Fresno County (4,776 acres); the largest leaseholds were in San Joaquin, Sacramento, and Contra Costa Counties.
 34. Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice*, 45-51. Cal-

- ifornia Democrats were unable to elect a governor between 1894-1938.
35. Letter from George Shima to Governor Hiram Johnson, 11 February 1911; Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.
 36. On 1 May 1913, Shima again wrote to the governor, this time specifically on behalf of the Japanese Association of America, asking that "justice and humanity which we conceive to be the fundamental principal of the American nation . . . not [be] forgotten at this time." *Ibid.*
 37. Walter V. Woehlke, "White and Yellow in California," *The Outlook* CIV (10 May 1913), 64.
 38. "Personal Glimpses. California's Hustling Japanese," *Literary Digest*, XLVII (July-December 1913), 68.
 39. Woehlke, *The Outlook*, 64.
 40. Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice*, 63; George E. Frakes and Curtis B. Solberg (eds.), *Minorities in California History* (New York: Random House, 1971), 78-79.
 41. See Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice*, 81-88.
 42. *Ibid.*, 88-90.
 43. George Shima, "An Appeal to Justice," Hiram Johnson Papers, Bancroft Library,

- University of California, Berkeley. Shima also wrote other statements opposing the initiative. See, "A Farmer's View of the Question," in Paul Jacobs and Saul Landau (eds.), *To Serve The Devil. Volume 2: Colonials and Sojourners* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 231-233.
44. One such group was the American Committee of Justice, whose members included clergy, entrepreneurs, leaders of service clubs, and educators such as Dr. David Starr Jordan and Dr. James A. Blaisdell, President of Pomona College. They argued that the Japanese cultivated only 1.6 percent of the total farm land in California, and "no man with a healthy mind can believe that this is a grave menace to the state." However, the committee members also stated that if the initiative was defeated, California would be in a stronger position to ask the Federal Government for protection from "Oriental immigration." The American Committee of Justice, "Fair Play. Defeat It."
 45. Daniels, *Politics of Prejudice*, 91-105.
 46. *Stockton Record*, 4 May 1975.
 47. *Ibid.*, 24 April 1982.
 48. There is speculation that Shima actually

was planning a permanent return to the land of his forefathers, and not the brief visit that he had announced. He already had built an American-style home in his hometown of Kurume. Furthermore, he had investigated the possibilities of establishing farms in Korea (1900-1901) and Mexico (1910-1915). Although Korea may not have been suitable in 1900, it was eminently more promising by 1926 since Japan had annexed the peninsula in 1910. It is also possible that Shima anticipated financial support from his friend and fellow lover of classical Chinese poetry, Eiichi Shibusawa, an extraordinary Meiji entrepreneur who helped establish and run more than 100 major industrial and financial institutions. See Yoshimura for details on how Shima and Shibusawa met, 11-15. Finally, this hypothesis seems plausible because Shima, who had been in the forefront of the fight against California exclusionists, was no doubt concerned that the Issei and their descendants would not fare well under the increasingly discriminatory climate in California and across the nation.