

Reading “The Story of Manzo in Canada: The First Immigrant to Canada” by Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami

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May 2026

1. Introduction

Published on 1 December 1977 by Osuzuyama Shobo in Tokyo, the book, *The Story of Manzo in Canada: The First Immigrant to Canada*, co-authored by Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami, played a symbolic and decisive role in establishing the ‘1877 Landing of Manzo Nagano in Canada Theory’ within the Japanese Canadian community and in ensuring the success of the Centenary of Japanese Canadian Immigration. In this paper, I shall first elucidate why this book—published in Japanese with no English translation and aimed primarily at first-generation Japanese Canadians—was able to fulfil such a role.

I discovered this book at the Edmonton Japanese Canadian Association Library. However, there are currently no libraries that offer a digital version of this book for viewing. As it is also difficult to obtain a copy on the second-hand book market, I will provide an overview of the book and examine the account of Manzo Nagano’s life presented in each chapter.

2. The Japanese Canadian Community in the 1970s

2.1 The ‘Silent Era’ in Post-War Japanese Canadian History

The 1970s marked a crucial turning point in the history of Japanese Canadians. The ‘Centennial Celebration of Japanese Canadian Immigration’, held in 1977, was not merely a commemoration of past events; it took on the character of a grand cultural movement through which the Japanese Canadian community—which had been severely damaged and fragmented by wartime internment—reunited and reclaimed its identity. The success of this Centennial, which was planned and grew into a social movement, was the result of a complex interplay between the political and cultural changes sweeping through Canadian society in the 1970s, generational shifts within the Japanese Canadian community, and a strong yearning for the restoration of rights. So why did the Japanese Canadian community at that time feel the need for a ‘starting point in history’ to rebuild itself?

When discussing the history of Japanese Canadians, one cannot avoid the harrowing experiences of the Second World War. From 1942 onwards, under Canadian government policy, Japanese Canadians were treated as ‘enemy aliens’ and forcibly relocated from the coastal areas of British Columbia to internment camps in the interior. During this process, their property and businesses were confiscated, and, as they were prohibited from returning to their original places of residence until 1 April 1949, many were forced to resettle in unfamiliar areas, such as eastern Canada. This forced displacement did not stop at the physical destruction of the community; it also fundamentally stripped the Japanese Canadian community of its spiritual foundations, including opportunities to find Japanese Canadian partners, the history and culture that should have been passed down across generations, and, in particular, the opportunity to learn Japanese as a heritage language and preserve family memories.

In the post-war years, to protect themselves from severe discrimination and prejudice within Canadian society, the Japanese Canadian community avoided speaking of their past hardships and spent a long period in an 'era of silence', prioritizing 'assimilation' into the surrounding white society. As a result, records of the activities of early immigrants and the historical memory of the community that existed before the war were lost, creating a significant 'historical void' within the Japanese Canadian community.

2.2 The 1970s: An Era of Identity Searching for Japanese Canadians

However, by the 1970s, thirty years after the war, a major generational shift and a change in consciousness began to take place within the community. The Nisei (second) generation, who had experienced internment during their childhood or youth, were now in their thirties to fifties—the prime of their working lives. Having achieved success in education and business, they had established a certain social standing in Canadian society. With their lives stabilized, they regained their confidence and prepared to break the silence they had been forced to endure for so long, ready to speak out about their roots and the unjust treatment they had suffered. Furthermore, the third generation—born after the war and educated at Canadian universities—was also coming to the fore. Although raised within the white mainstream society, they harboured a strong interest in their own cultural identity and began to question the unjust history experienced by their parents' generation. This shift from the 'silent generation' to the 'voicing generation', driven by the emergence of the second and third generations, became the driving force behind efforts to retell history from within the community.

2.3 A Paradigm Shift in Canadian Society

A major driving force behind this shift in attitudes within the Japanese Canadian community was the political paradigm shift taking place across Canadian society. In 1971, the Canadian government became the first in the world to adopt 'multiculturalism' as official state policy. Rather than forcing minorities to assimilate, this policy actively encouraged them to preserve their own cultures and histories and to share their stories. The government supported the activities of diverse communities by providing grants to minority cultural organizations, assisting in establishing community centres, and promoting research into ethnic history. For Japanese Canadians, too, the introduction of multiculturalism brought about a dramatic change in the environment, with the public now officially recognizing that they could proudly share their long-hidden history on the public stage. This served as a powerful 'tailwind' for re-evaluating their history and reconstructing their own identity.

The 1970s were also a period when movements seeking social justice by minority groups—such as the civil rights movement, the movement for the restoration of Indigenous rights, and the Asian American movement—gained momentum across North America. Amidst this global trend of heightened awareness of human rights, Japanese Canadians, too, deepened their understanding that it was right to assert their rights and seek redress for past historical injustices. Against this backdrop, centred on organizations such as the National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC), the 'redress movement'—seeking an apology and compensation from the Canadian government for wartime internment and property confiscation—began to take shape quietly but surely.

To advance the Redress Movement, it was necessary not merely to complain about the harm suffered, but to present, in a compelling manner, to Canadian society the extent of their contributions and the unjust history they had endured. To this end, it became an urgent priority to unearth the history of the lost community and construct a ‘correct historical narrative’ based on objective facts.

As the community recovered from the divisions of the post-war period and reconstruction progressed through initiatives such as the establishment of cultural centres and the organization of cultural festivals, the Japanese Canadian community faced a major obstacle. This was the loss of a shared narrative—one that lay at the very heart of their identity—regarding ‘when and from where they had come to Canada, and the path they had taken’, due to years of silence and the dispersal of records. To advance the Redress Movement and pass on a sense of pride in their roots to the younger generation, it was essential to have a clear ‘historical starting point’—one that everyone could share and take pride in—rather than a collection of vague memories. In other words, to achieve the regeneration and reunification of the Japanese Canadian community, what was needed above all was a narrative serving as a symbolic ‘point of departure’ to bind the scattered people together.

3. The Background to the Publication of ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada

3.1 The Rediscovery of ‘Manzo Nagano’ by Toyoaki Takata

The answer to this intense historical yearning came with the rediscovery of ‘Manzo Nagano’ by the historian and editor Toyoaki Takata. In the early 1970s, Takata chanced upon a passage in the book *Japanese Canadians*¹, written by Charles Young and Helen Reid in 1938, which claimed that Manzo Nagano had travelled to Canada as a sailor in 1877 and settled in Westminster. Although Manzo Nagano’s name and achievements had been known to some within the pre-war Japanese community, he had been all but forgotten by Japanese Canadians following the post-war internment. Takata saw great significance in the year ‘1877’. He realized that, taking 1877 as the starting point, the 1970s marked the historic milestone. He intuitively felt that this clear narrative of the ‘first Japanese immigrants’ would serve as the perfect symbol to reunite a divided community. Takata’s rediscovery sparked the idea of celebrating 1977 as the ‘Centennial of Japanese Canadian Immigration’ on a national scale, which developed into a major movement involving the entire community.

3.2 Publication of ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada

To coincide with this centenary, Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami published a commemorative book entitled *The Story of Manzo in Canada*. This book pieced together limited primary sources, articles from old Japanese-language newspapers, and interviews with those involved to reconstruct Manzo Nagano’s eventful life as a single narrative. *The Story of Manzo in Canada* went beyond a mere personal biography; it presented the Japanese Canadian community with a clear ‘point of origin’ for their history, affirming that ‘our history began here’. The author crafted a narrative in which Manzo Nagano, a young man from the remote village of Kuchinotsu in Nagasaki Prefecture, set out to make his mark on the world. After much hardship, he achieved business success in Victoria, but in 2022,

the building housing both his home and shop was destroyed by fire. He subsequently fell ill and eventually returned to his hometown of Kuchinotsu, where he spent the remainder of his life. This story became a symbolic narrative that helped Japanese Canadians—who had been on the verge of losing their sense of self-worth amidst the discrimination and pressure to assimilate following their internment—regain a strong sense of pride, reminding them that ‘we have a long history spanning 100 years and have contributed deeply to the development of Canadian society’.

The rediscovery of the history of the Japanese Canadian community in the 1970s and the fervour surrounding the Centennial celebrations were not merely about nostalgia. Against a complex social backdrop—including generational change, the introduction of the Canadian government’s multiculturalism policy, a growing awareness of minority rights, and the launch of the redress movement following the internment—it was an essential process for the Japanese Canadian community to take a new step towards the future. To overcome the deep wounds of the community’s destruction and the loss of identity caused by the internment, and to assert their rights and dignity within Canadian society, a shared ‘point of origin for a history of which they could be proud’ was essential. Although recent historical research has pointed to uncertainties regarding the documentary evidence for the story of Manzo Nagano’s arrival in 1877, within the specific historical context of the 1970s, it played an extremely important cultural and political role as a ‘symbol,’ enabling the Japanese Canadian community to reaffirm its roots and restore its continuity and cohesion as a community. It can be said that this very process of historical reconstruction was the driving force behind the subsequent redress movement’s success and laid the foundation for the diverse and vigorous activities of the present-day Japanese Canadian community.

‘The Story of Manzo in Canada’ was published only in Japanese; there was no English version. However, all the actual activities of the Centennial celebrations were conducted in English, and the ‘English version of the Manzo story’, based on ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada’, was spread among Japanese Canadians who could not read Japanese through English speeches, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and exhibition panels. These Japanese Canadians of the English-speaking generation experienced the Centennial celebrations within the narrative framework created by ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada’.

4. Criticism of the Theory that Manzo Landed in 1877

Recent historical criticism of the ‘1877 landing theory’ (primarily based on research by Mr... and Mr..s. Switzer ²) has been thoroughly examined from the perspectives of contradictions and exaggerations in Manzo Nagano’s own testimony, as well as inconsistencies with objective public records. Specifically, the following points have been raised:

4.1 Contradictions in the Timing of Manzo’s Testimony and the ‘Expansion of the Narrative.’

- 1909 Record (Interview by Sumio Ishidate): In Ishidate’s book ³, Manzo states that he “landed at Victoria Harbour in March 1877 (Meiji 10)”, but Ishidate himself clearly noted that “no definitive evidence exists; we can only speculate”. Furthermore, at this stage, Nagano himself did not claim to be the ‘first immigrant’, but merely described himself as ‘one of the earliest settlers’.

- Records from 1920 (interview with Jinshiro Nakayama): In Nakayama’s interview, 11 years later ⁴, Manzo had changed his account of the landing site to New Westminster. Furthermore, a dynamic ‘adventure story’ had been substantially added, detailing how he subsequently fished for salmon on the Fraser River, worked as a dock labourer in Vancouver, and travelled between Shanghai, Hong Kong and Nagasaki. Switzer points out the possibility that Manzo, in 1920, may have exaggerated his story to avoid disappointing the interviewer, due to illness and the hardships of life.

4.2 Lack of corroboration and contradictions in Canadian public records

- No landing records exist: No contemporary official documents (such as passenger manifests) directly proving that Nagano arrived in 1877 survive today.
- Contradictions with official oaths and declarations: In his application for naturalization in 1897, Manzo himself clearly stated under oath that he ‘came to Canada in 1892’. Furthermore, in the 1901 Canadian federal census, he declared to the enumerator that he had immigrated in ‘1886’, meaning his official statements are inconsistent.
- Reliable records of residence date from 1892 onwards: The first official record providing definitive proof of Manzo’s presence in Canada is the 1892 Victoria City directory.

4.3 Discrepancies with Japanese records and family events

- Although Manzo claimed to have been wandering around Canada and overseas from 1877 to 1891, marriage certificates and other documents show that he fathered his eldest son (George) in Japan in 1887.
- Furthermore, there are official documents showing that he transferred his permanent residence to Yokohama in 1887, and a search of his hometown of Kuchinotsu in Nagasaki Prefecture revealed no records to support any overseas travel prior to 1892.

4.4 Conclusions of the Historical Critique

Based on these findings, recent historical research has concluded that ‘there is absolutely no evidence to support Nagano’s movements prior to 1892, and they cannot be trusted ⁵’. Whilst it is a fact that he was a pioneer of the Japanese community who played an important role as a businessman in Victoria from 1892 onwards, the established view that he was ‘the first Japanese immigrant to land in Canada in 1877’ is regarded as a ‘narrative’ formed on the basis of later testimonies that lack objective evidence.

5. Manzo’s Place in Contemporary Japanese Canadian Society

The perception of the ‘Story of Manzo in Canada’ and Manzo Nagano within the current Japanese Canadian community has settled down since the era of the 1977 ‘Centennial Celebration of Japanese Canadian Immigration’, when he was enthusiastically mythologized and symbolized, and has now shifted towards a more objective and balanced assessment.

Specifically, it is viewed from the following three perspectives.

5.1 Establishment as a ‘Symbol of the Starting Point of History.’

Even today, when discussing the history of Japanese Canadians, Manzo frequently appears in museum exhibitions and school educational materials as the ‘first Japanese immigrant’ or the ‘first chapter of Japanese Canadian history’. Furthermore, ‘Mount Manzo Nagano’, named by the Canadian government in 1977, continues to be passed down as a symbol of the Japanese Canadian community’s historical pride. His role as an indispensable ‘point of reference’ in the narrative of Japanese Canadian history remains firmly established to this day.

5.2 The Fading of Deification and Academic Re-evaluation

The mythical portrayal of him as the ‘father of the Japanese Canadian community’, as seen during the centenary celebrations, has faded. Recent historical research has taken a dispassionate look at the contradictions found in the historical records relating to his life (particularly his movements prior to 1892). Furthermore, given Manzo’s great success in commerce and the fact that he had already returned to Japan by the time the pre-war Japanese Canadian community was forming, he is academically regarded as a figure with a dual nature: ‘whilst an important figure among the early immigrants, he is not representative of the typical Japanese immigrant of that era who worked in fishing or forestry, but rather an exceptional case’.

5.3 General Perception and Emotional Distance within the Community

Whilst his name is widely known amongst the general Japanese Canadian population as ‘the first person to come to Canada’, he is not a familiar hero frequently discussed in everyday conversation. For members of the current Japanese Canadian community, the history of the harsh internment experiences during the war and the subsequent post-war reconstruction and redress movement are recognized as events that are closer to home and with which they have a deeper emotional connection.

Overall, it can be said that the story of Manzo has moved beyond being a ‘narrative’ blindly celebrated and is now perceived as an important symbol of ‘the starting point from which the history of Japanese Canadians began’.

6. The Content and Verification of ‘The Manzo Story in Canada’

6.1 The Background to the Publication of ‘The Manzo Story in Canada’

Inspired by Toyoaki Takata’s discovery of Manzo Nagano, Kenzo Mori decided, together with Takami, to depict Nagano’s life. In Chapter 1, Mori states the following:

This is the story of Manzo Nagano, the Ultraman who was born in the Ansei era and died in the Taisho era.

Nagano’s life was full of ups and downs. As he spent most of his life in Canada during its formative years, it was extremely difficult to trace his records. Precisely because of this difficulty, the image of Manzo Nagano passed down through oral tradition among Japanese Canadians and in his hometown of Kuchinotsu Town, Nagasaki Prefecture, was akin to a colossus (albeit a foolish one).

Consequently, there was a considerable risk from the outset that the results of our investigation would fall into the category of ‘the blind man feeling the elephant’.

We chose to take on that risk. Neither of us is particularly adventurous, nor do we often find ourselves hesitating. However, anticipating that the subject would likely never resurface as a topic of discussion once 1977—the year of the Centenary of Japanese Immigration to Canada (see separate section)—had passed, we summoned the ‘reckless courage’ to put pen to paper at this juncture.

We understand this book is neither the best nor even the second-best. Nevertheless, we would be delighted if, by reading this book, you were able to gain even a little insight into the origins of Japanese immigration to Canada. We would also be pleased if it proved useful to researchers of early Japanese immigration to Canada ⁵.

‘Now, in March of that year, quite suddenly, we decided on a plan to record the footsteps of the late Manzo Nagano and set about implementing it in great haste. This was because, despite being the first immigrant, there is very little known—among both Canadians and Japanese—regarding the circumstances of his birthplace (why did he decide to emigrate?), his journey (how did he stow away?), achievements (why did he succeed?), and the happiness of his life (his middle years were good, but his later years were extremely unfortunate)—were virtually unknown to both Canadians and Japanese.

From then on, one of us from the Canadian side and one from Japan began to investigate every aspect of Manzo’s life at a rapid pace. The centenary celebrations had already commenced in various locations, including Toronto, Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal.

As Mori notes, the project to write the story of Manzo Nagano’s life began in March 1977 and was completed in an extremely short timeframe, with the book being published on 1 December of the same year.

Kenzo Mori (1914–2007) was a second-generation journalist who continued to document the history of the Japanese Canadian community throughout the pre-war and post-war periods. Born in the Vancouver area, he returned to Japan with his family during his childhood but travelled alone to Canada again at the age of 16. After graduating from high school, he obtained a degree in literature from the University of British Columbia. Before the war, he worked as a reporter for a Japanese-language newspaper, and during the Second World War, he endured the harsh experience of being interned in a camp north of Vancouver. This experience became the catalyst for his later deepening interest in historical documentation and the restoration of rights for Japanese Canadians. After the war, he returned to work as a Japanese-language editorial assistant at *The New Canadian*, later serving as editor-in-chief, and supported the voice of the Japanese Canadian community for many years. He was also involved in the founding of the Ontario and Canadian Ethnic Press Association, contributing to the formation of a multicultural society.

Hiroto Takami was born in Miyazaki Prefecture in 1936. He stayed in Canada from 1965 to 1966, during which time he developed an interest in Japanese immigration to Canada. He visited Canada again in 1968, travelling to every province except the Yukon Territory to meet Japanese Canadians,

and subsequently published *Japanese in Canada*. He returned to Canada in 1976 to conduct research on Japanese immigrants, with a particular focus on Manzo Nagano.

Given the extremely limited availability of primary sources, Mori drew on his experience as a former newspaper reporter to meticulously examine pre-war Japanese-language newspapers (such as the *Tairiku Nippo*), verify photographs and materials provided by the Nagano family, and conduct oral history interviews with elderly residents in Victoria and Vancouver. And cross-referencing public records, such as business registrations at the archives, to bring Manzo's life story to life through a multi-faceted approach.

During the centenary celebrations in 1977, Mori interviewed Manzo's eldest son, George Tatsuo (then aged 88), who was staying in Toronto to attend the events, and his grandson, Paulo Nagano, a Doctor of Philosophy⁶. However, as the ever-busy Manzo rarely spoke at home, even his descendants were unaware that he had been the first Japanese immigrant, and knew almost nothing about Japanese customs or their father's past. These interviews did not contribute to painting a complete picture of Manzo.

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This book introduces not only the story of Manzo Nagano but also that of Japanese Canadians who have been or are currently active pioneers in various fields. From this, one can discern an intention to view Japanese Canadians and their history positively.

6.3 Kenzo Mori's interview with George Nagano

Chapter 1 (Prologue) of *The Story of Manzo in Canada* contains a transcript of the conversation between Kenzo Mori and George Nagano during an interview held at a hotel in Toronto on 20 May 1977. The interview notes compiled by Kenzo Mori for this book have not been made public. This interview is a valuable record of a conversation with someone closely associated with Manzo Nagano—specifically, his eldest son, George. An excerpt from the interview section of the book is provided below.

Interview with George Nagano

In Toronto's downtown area, there is a hotel called the Hampton Court. From the windows, one can gaze out upon Lake Ontario, one of the Great Lakes. On 20 May 1977, five Japanese Americans were having breakfast in the hotel's restaurant. Soon, centred around an elderly gentleman of ninety, the five were eating in perfect harmony, moving their spoons and forks with great camaraderie.

“Amidst these developments, in May, I found myself in a situation where I absolutely could not afford to miss the news that George Nagano—the ‘phantom’ son of Manzo Nagano, who was said to be living in America and had seemingly been unearthed for the centenary celebrations—had come to Toronto, Canada, accompanied by third- and fourth-generation descendants.

Considering Mr. George Nagano’s age, I felt that if I missed this opportunity, I might never know when he would follow his father, Manzo, into the afterlife. Apologising silently in my heart for the intrusion, I nevertheless requested an interview, hoping that, as his son, he would be able to shed light on his father’s true character and surely possess considerable detail regarding him. Permission was finally granted on 15 May.

Thus, I conducted an interview with George Nagano, who was staying at a hotel, and attempted to compile a record of the testimony of this elusive ‘first immigrant’.”

“I (M) arrived at the hotel at the agreed time of 8.15 am. I walked towards the restaurant and entered. I stopped abruptly, recognising five Japanese-Americans with my own eyes. Once I had confirmed that Mr. George Nagano was among them, my heart was already swelling with emotion. I approached their table and, putting everything else aside, greeted Mr. George Nagano first.

‘Lovely morning, Mr. Nagano,’ I said, offering my hand. As if he had been waiting for it, he gripped my palm firmly and said, ‘Hello, morning! I’ve been waiting for you.’ Mr. George Nagano welcomed me warmly.

Jack, his second son, kindly guided me to a seat right next to Mr. George Nagano. Seated next to him was Mr. Tylas, Mr. George’s eldest son. Beside him sat Jack’s wife, Louise. And sitting more or less in the centre was his eldest daughter, Junko, who had emigrated after the war. With these five people before me, I began the interview. Although Mr. George Nagano was a second-generation Japanese Canadian, he answered my questions interspersed with Japanese.”

“——Did you know beforehand that your father was the first person to emigrate to Canada?

[George Nagano] Not at all. I had no idea whatsoever. It never even crossed my mind that Dad was the first person to do so. Mr. Takata (Note: Toyo Takata) came to Los Angeles, where I live in the US, last year, I think, and told me that. I was very surprised at the time. Even so, I didn’t believe it was true.

—Now, this is a slightly impertinent question, but your mother passed away when you were just three years old. After that, your father married his second wife. However, the woman who saw you through to adulthood, and who lived with you when you got married and moved to America, was your father’s third wife—a woman named Tayoko. What are your thoughts on her?

[George Nagano] Sadly, my mum’s health never recovered after she gave birth to me, and she died three years later. But my third mother was very kind to me, too. Dad was always

working flat out and couldn't care less about how I felt—he was completely indifferent and stubborn to the core—but Mum would listen to my opinions.

At this point, my concern that Mr. George might ask for my thoughts on my second mother proved to be spot on. My second mother was the biological mother of my second brother, Frank Terumaro (deceased), but she never made it to Canada, and her name is uncertain. This was because she was regarded as a mysterious figure. As the rumours surrounding this half-sibling of Old George went beyond mere gossip, there were circumstances that made it impossible not to be concerned. In short, the mother of the second son was not recorded in the family register of Kuchinotsu Town, Nagasaki Prefecture, as a legal wife. The secret that the second son had been born somewhere in Japan before being taken to Canada and registered as Canadian-born had struck a painful chord in my ears.

—So, you lived in America after you got married. I hear your father had a difficult time in his later years. Undeterred by his misfortune, his third wife returned to Nagasaki Prefecture to be with him until the very end, before returning to her own hometown. Where was the third mother from? And where was the second mother from?

[George Nagano] Unfortunately, I don't know the exact hometowns of either my second or third mother. Papa was always so busy; he never told us children anything. And by the time there was a need to talk, Papa was already in isolation at St Joseph's Hospital with an infectious disease and was in no condition for long conversations.

—Have you ever been to your father's hometown, Nagasaki?

[George Nagano] No, I haven't.

—So, you don't know what sort of place your father's birthplace is, or what sort of customs people there follow?

[George Nagano] I haven't been there, so I don't know. The war was a disaster too. I know a little from what my daughter has told me, from what others have said, and from reading books—but even so, it's all just imagination. To say I know it from what I've heard or read would be a lie."

—Your father came to Canada a hundred years ago. You already have great-grandchildren. Children who are the fifth generation from your father are growing up. You'll be meeting the fifth generation soon, won't you? Your father was born in March of the second year of the Ansei era, 122 years ago. Can you imagine what kind of country it was?

[George Nagano] No. No. I can't imagine it at all. (He answered honestly, waving his aged hands from side to side.)

—Finally, what are your thoughts on being invited to Canada for the Centenary of Japanese Immigration?

[George Nagano] I'm delighted to have been so warmly welcomed. It is a supreme honour, in particular, that my father's legacy has been recognized even by the Prime Minister of

Canada. When I was little, my mother died, so I was often doted on. As I grew up, things became stricter. Now that I'm an old man myself, he has given me a sense of pride. I am truly grateful to the Centenary Committee members. (During this interview, his eldest son, Mr. Tyrus, and eldest daughter, Junko, assisted him.) Furthermore, Junko revealed that the third wife, Tayoko, hails from Tottori Prefecture. Additionally, hot news was broadcast on television that, in two months' time, the Federal Map Commission would name a 2,000-metre-high mountain near Vancouver 'Mount Nagano Manzo' (Nagano Mountain.)

During the interview, Mr. Nagano answered my questions, occasionally moistening his throat with orange juice. He admitted frankly that he knew almost nothing about his father's homeland. He had been attending centenary celebrations in various cities for about a week and had been warmly welcomed, which delighted him greatly; yet, when asked about events from 122 years ago, his response was a reluctant 'no'. To be honest, I, the questioner, did not really understand Japan as it was 122 years ago either. Having been educated in Japan fifty years prior, I was able to make a reasonable guess. To explain this clearly, I said, 'It was a time when the Japanese still wore the "chonmage" hairstyle. There was a sort of caste system comprising samurai, farmers, artisans and merchants, and it was an era when the samurai still held sway.' At this, George Nagano seemed puzzled, asking, 'Chonmage? Like that wig-like hair? I see. Is that such a long time ago?' he asked, looking puzzled, but then added, "Ah, yes. I've seen that in the movies," and finally seemed to grasp the concept.

Through this interview, I was able to capture a glimpse of the true character of Manzo Nagano, the elusive first settler I had been hoping to find. I believe the readers of this book will also glean something from the interview. However, I did not obtain a single crucial piece of decisive evidence. Consequently, following an urgent consultation via an international call between Toronto and Miyazaki, we decided—though it is an extremely conventional approach—to 'do our very best, using the documents as a foundation', and to begin telling the 'story' of Manzo's life, from his birth to his death."



萬歳の子孫 (左から孫ジャックさん・パウル博士夫人フローレンスさん・孫タイラスさん・長男辰夫さん・孫パウル博士・孫森作順子さん・ジャック夫人ルイーズさん・ジャック夫妻の息子トムさん)

Comments on the Interview

In this interview, George Nagano states that he did not know Manzo was the first Japanese immigrant to Canada. Switzer cites this as further evidence that Manzo did not land in Canada in 1877.

George says that Manzo was too busy with work to pay any attention to his feelings. Furthermore, Kenzo Mori concludes regarding this interview: ‘Through this interview, I was able to capture a glimpse of the true character of Manzo Nagano, the elusive first settler I had been hoping to find. I believe readers of this book will also glean something from the interview. However, I did not obtain a single piece of decisive, crucial information.’ However, given this valuable opportunity for an interview, why did Kenzo Mori not ask George more about Manzo? For instance, George married Saki Kiuchi in Victoria in 1910, when he was 30, and continued to assist Manzo with his work for some time after their marriage, so one would assume he was familiar with Manzo’s work. Yet, why did Kenzo Mori not ask George about Manzo during this period? Was Kenzo Mori of the opinion that, as George was 88 years old at the time of this interview, his memory had faded and he could not expect a satisfactory answer to such questions?

6.5 Comparison of the content of the 1920 interview with Manzo Nagano conducted by Jinshiro Nakayama, as recorded in Nakayama’s *Kanada Dohyo Hatten Daikan*, and the content of *The Story of Manzo in Canada*.

Although Jinshiro Nakayama’s *Kanada Dohyo Hatten Daikan* is not currently accessible online, in Switzer’s *Discover Nikkei* post of 14 April 2024, “Manzo Nagano (Part 1) — Did He Come in 1877?”, contains a Japanese translation of a summary of Nakayama’s interview with Manzo Nagano (1920) provided by Rigenda Smida. The points raised by Manzo Nagano in this interview are summarised as follows:

- In 1874, at the age of 19, he became a sailor.
- In 1877, he travelled to Canada and landed in New Westminster. He remained there even after the ship had departed.
- He chartered a boat and fished for salmon on the Fraser River with an Italian partner. This made him a pioneer for the Japanese fishermen who followed.
- In 1880, he moved to Gastown (later Vancouver) and worked as a dock worker. Unable to settle down, he subsequently sailed to places such as Shanghai, Nagasaki and Hong Kong.
- He returned to New Westminster in 1884. At that time, there were already seven or eight Japanese fishermen there.
- He subsequently crossed over to the United States and returned to fishing, but in 1886, after being caught in a storm, he travelled up the Fraser River. On this occasion, he found five Japanese fishermen. He returned to Seattle and started a business.
- He returned to Japan in 1891.
- In 1892, he returned to Canada and opened a shop in Victoria.
- In 1894, he established a salted salmon industry in British Columbia.

6.6 Comparison of *The Story of Manzo in Canada* and 'Interview with Manzo Nagano by Nakayama (1920).'

I have compared these two documents and summarised the similarities and differences in Manzo Nagano's early career (from his departure as a sailor until the early 1890s) in the table below.

His career from his arrival in Canada in 1877 to his work in Gastown (Vancouver) in 1880 is described in both accounts in perfect agreement, but his activities from the 1880s onwards are described in completely different ways.

Manzo Nagano's Early Career: A Comparison of Similarities and Differences

Time and Theme of Events	Description in 'Summary of the Story of Manzo Nagano in Canada'	Description in *Interview by Nakayama*	Similarities / Differences
Start of his career as a sailor	He was hired as a stoker's assistant on a British ship and set sail.	In 1874, at the age of 19, he became a seaman.	Similarities
Arrival in Canada	In 1877, he successfully entered Canada illegally.	In 1877, he travelled to Canada and landed in New Westminster.	Similar
Early work in Canada	He teamed up with an Italian to go salmon fishing and was successful.	He fished for salmon on the Fraser River with his Italian partner.	Similar
Activities in 1880	In 1880, he moved to Gastown (later Vancouver) and took a job as a dock worker.	In 1880, he moved to Gastown and worked as a dock labourer.	Similar
Movements from 1880 onwards	He continued to work as a docker in poor conditions, whilst striving to save money for a future business venture.	He remained restless and set sail for Shanghai, Nagasaki, Hong Kong and other destinations.	Differences
Activities in 1884	Seizing an opportunity to return home, he travelled via Hawaii to Japan (Kuchinotsu).	Returns to New Westminster.	Differences
First Return to Japan	He returned to Japan in 1884.	He returned to Japan in 1891.	Differences

Activities in the late 1880s	He travelled to Canada once again on a secret mission to transport 500 Chinese labourers there and contributed to the construction of the railway.	He travelled to the United States and worked in the fishing industry. After encountering a storm in 1886, he returned to Seattle and started a business.	Discrepancies
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Thus, whilst the two documents agree on his early activities in Canada from his arrival in 1877 until 1880, there are significant discrepancies regarding his activities after 1880 (whether he sailed to Asia or worked in Canada) and the timing of his temporary return to Japan (1884 or 1891), and the nature of his activities in North America in the late 1880s (whether he was involved in railway construction in Canada or fishing and trade in the United States) are significantly at odds.

It can be surmised that, in writing *The Story of Manzo in Canada*, Kenzo Mori constructed a narrative centred on Manzo by using as its framework the tales of his youthful adventures that Manzo Nagano recounted to Jinshiro Nakayama when he was 65 years old, and by incorporating the circumstances in Japan and Canada during this period, and stories he had heard about Manzo Nagano and Japanese pioneers, to construct a narrative centred on Manzo.

7. Summary and Analysis of Each Chapter of *The Story of Manzo in Canada*

7.1 Chapter 1 (Prologue)

Summary

Manzo Nagano was born in Nagasaki during the Ansei era and lived in poverty, working as a coal porter until the age of eighteen; however, after meeting foreign merchants, he resolved to stow away and went on to play an active role in Canada as the first Japanese settler. Manzo's actions—succeeding as a trader in early Canada and pioneering new trade routes linking Japan with the world—are regarded as a form of 'horizontal' modernization driven by the power of the common people, distinct from the 'vertical' modernization driven by bureaucrats. However, in his later years, he suffered from fire and illness; driven by homesickness, he returned to Japan and died in Kuchinotsu. During interviews conducted for the centenary commemorations, it emerged that his son, George, knew almost nothing of his father's past, and the complex family circumstances remained unclear. The authors have resolved to reconstruct Manzo's life as a narrative based on the limited testimonies and materials available.

7.2 Chapter 2: 'The Birth of Manzo'

Summary

Manzo Nagano was born in March 1855 in a poor farming village in Kuchinotsu, Nagasaki Prefecture. His mother, Tane, was struck by sudden labour pains whilst working in the fields; she returned home and gave birth to Manzo on the wooden floor of their house. With the help of neighbouring women, the baby was born crying vigorously, before the midwife arrived; his cry was described as having 'the temperament of a dragon'. His younger brother, Eiji, was frightened by the

sight of his mother's suffering but felt relieved at his brother's birth, and the family welcomed the new life. At that time, Kuchinotsu had little arable land and life was harsh; working on the 'ishi-bune' (coal barges) was the sole source of income. The men carried coal wearing nothing but a loincloth, whilst the women often went overseas as 'karayuki-san' (migrant workers), and poverty dictated the family's fate. Furthermore, Kuchinotsu had been a battleground during the Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion, and many of its residents were descendants of settlers. Prior to the Meiji era, commoners were not permitted to have surnames, and it is thought that Manzo was called 'Man' or 'Manzo' during his childhood. It can be said that this harsh natural environment, historical background, and a culture of labour amidst poverty shaped Manzo's character, leading him later to venture overseas and demonstrate his spirit of adventure and drive.

Verification

Nagano Manzo was born in 1855 in Nishi-Odomari, Kuchinotsu Village, Takaki District, Hizen Province. The year 1855 (Ansei 2) came immediately after the conclusion of the Japan-US Treaty of Amity the previous year, marking the de facto end of the long-standing policy of national isolation; it was a period when the whole of Japan was forced to rapidly become aware of the existence of 'foreign lands'. Geographically, Kuchinotsu was situated at the gateway to Nagasaki Port and had long been a strategic hub for maritime traffic. Nishi-Ōdomae, where Manzo was born, lies west of Kuchinotsu Port, offering a clear view of the Amakusa Islands across the water. At that time, life in Kuchinotsu Village centred mainly on traditional fishing and a semi-agricultural, semi-fishing lifestyle, with a small amount of cultivated land. However, as Manzo grew up, this quiet village structure was to undergo dramatic changes due to the massive economic factor of coal exports from the Miike Coal Mine.

In 1867 (the third year of the Keiō era), when Manzo was 12, an event occurred that would determine the fate of Kuchinotsu. The Miike Coal Mine began using Kuchinotsu as a transshipment port for overseas exports. From that year onwards, Kuchinotsu underwent a transformation from a quiet fishing village into a dynamic modern trading port, filled with billowing black smoke and swirling coal dust. At that time, Miike Port (now Omuta City) faced the shallow waters of the Ariake Sea, making it impossible for large foreign vessels to dock directly. Consequently, the coal had to be transferred onto small barges known as 'hashike' and transported to Kuchinotsu. Becoming a coal transshipment point led to explosive economic growth in Kuchinotsu. According to statistics from the time, Kuchinotsu's export value even temporarily surpassed that of Nagasaki Port. It is reasonable to assume that Manzo worked on a coal transport ship in Kuchinotsu during his youth.

The boom in coal exports attracted a diverse range of people to Kuchinotsu. In the 1890s, group migration from Yoron Island began, and workers driven by poverty from the neighbouring Amakusa and Shimabara regions also flocked to the port.

Although the port was always bustling with activity, behind the scenes lay severe inequality and poverty. In particular, the presence of the daughters of poor farming and fishing families from Shimabara and Amakusa—who would later come to be known as 'karayuki-san'—represented the greatest contradiction facing society at that time.

7.3 Chapter 3: 'The Departure of Young Manzo'

Summary

Manzo Nagano, who grew up in Kuchinotsu, Nagasaki Prefecture, was a boy who possessed extraordinary boldness and drive from an early age. His family was poor, and as the fourth son, he was not in line to inherit the family estate; consequently, he felt the need to carve out his own future from an early age. In the village, it was common for second and third sons to go abroad to work, and Manzo's longing to 'go abroad' grew stronger; at around the age of fifteen, encouraged by his neighbour Kōkichi, he resolved to go overseas. In this moment, when he agreed whilst putting on a brave face despite his fears, we can see the first signs of the adventurer he would later become.

When Manzo was thirteen, whilst working on a coal-loading ship, he took offence at being treated like a child by the foreign captain and caused a commotion by suddenly jumping into the sea. Whilst the sailors searched frantically for him, he was already swimming leisurely several hundred metres away; his courage and swimming ability astonished the captain. This incident became the talk of the village, and Manzo's name spread rapidly. Although he refrained from going to sea for a while after that, a strong determination had taken root in his heart: 'One day, I will be the one hiring foreigners.'

Over the next five years, Manzo worked hard as an apprentice in the fishing industry and at shipyards, demonstrating his quick wits and dexterity by rapidly mastering the techniques for repairing foreign vessels. By the time he was nineteen, he had become renowned in the village as a hard worker with a bronze complexion and bulging muscles, and he was ready to work overseas.

Eventually, Manzo's diligence in Kuchinotsu was recognized, and he was hired as a stoker's assistant on the British ship, the Argus. His mother, Tane, could not hide her concern due to her son's boldness, but his father, Kihei, encouraged him, saying, 'It is time for you to become a man in your own right.' Manzo himself was inspired by the story of Yamada Nagamasa, who had succeeded in Siam, and resolved, 'I too shall become a man who conducts great business.'

And so Manzo set off on a long voyage via Shanghai and Hong Kong, bound for Southeast Asia and India. The work of stoking the boilers was gruelling; he did not understand English and was teased daily by the white sailors, but he overcame these challenges through his innate competitive spirit and diligence. This overseas experience would later form the foundation of his success in Canada.

Analysis

At that time, British ships carrying coal were equipped with cutting-edge steam engines. During this transition from sailing ships to steamships, the skills required of seamen were becoming increasingly specialized. Had Manzo boarded a British ship, he would have learnt English, mastered the art of living within a world of modern discipline, and truly realized that the world was connected by sea routes. Kuchinotsu would later be known as 'the town with the largest number of seafarers in Japan', and this tradition likely dates back to Manzo's time. It is said that by the 1960s, 60 percent of the population was involved in the seafaring industry, but its roots lie in the shipping industry of the late Edo period.

7.4 Chapter 4 To North America

Manzo Nagano's journey to Canada in North America begins with the scene of loading a large quantity of coal at Kuchinotsu Port. There were almost no refuelling ports in the Pacific, and in early Meiji-period Japan, there were only a few major bunkering ports, including Kuchinotsu. Due to its importance, Kuchinotsu flourished as a port of call for foreign ships, and Manzo grew up in that environment. The *Argus* took on provisions and supplies in Yokohama, and whilst Manzo marvelled at the atmosphere of the city—which he was seeing for the first time—his hopes swelled at the captain's descriptions of 'America, the modern nation'. The crew, too, harboured a longing for America, and the ship was filled with both tension and excitement for the long voyage ahead.

Unlike the Southeast Asian route, the voyage across the Pacific was monotonous and gruelling, with nothing but sea and sky in sight for weeks on end. The food in the icehouse began to rot, and the white sailors' discontent grew. There was even an incident in which Manzo was teased by white sailors after being told that tofu was 'Japanese cheese', which eventually led to a huge brawl; however, such clashes were part of everyday life in the seafaring world. Eventually, in May 1877, the ship arrived in New Westminster via Victoria, and Manzo could hardly contain his excitement.

However, the greatest obstacle awaited him here. Manzo had secretly agreed with the captain to disembark, but when the time came to confirm the arrangement, the captain demanded a bribe. Manzo handed over the money he had on him while suppressing his anger, but the captain continued to make further demands. Finally, Manzo flew into a rage; prepared to fight a duel, he stripped down to his loincloth and took up a metal weapon. Faced with this formidable display, the captain relented and allowed Manzo to disembark. This incident instilled in Manzo a deep distrust of white people and became a major turning point that would influence the rest of his life.

Thus, Manzo succeeded in entering the country illegally by blending in with Chinese labourers, setting foot on an unknown continent at the age of twenty-three. At that time, Japan was still an immature modern nation; the passport system was not yet established, and emigration was, in principle, not permitted. It was an era when leaving one's feudal domain was only just beginning to be permitted, and Manzo's actions were, legally speaking, tantamount to 'deserting the country'. For him, however, it was the only way to escape poverty and carve out a future for himself.

Manzo's departure took place against the backdrop of a turbulent period in Japan. Around the time of his birth, a series of events unfolded: Commodore Perry's arrival, the Ansei Purge, the Sakuradamon Incident, the Satsuma-British War, the Chōshū Campaign, followed by the Restoration of Imperial Rule and the Boshin War, placing Japan at a turning point in its transition to a modern nation. Although the Meiji government was moving towards the enactment of a constitution and modernization, the lives of ordinary people remained harsh, and little information from abroad reached them. Unaware of these domestic circumstances, Manzo plunged into the unknown world armed only with his ambition and spirit of adventure, relying solely on the rumour that 'wages are high abroad'.

In this way, Chapter 4 vividly portrays the boldness and decisiveness of the young Manzo, interweaving his voyage to Canada, his first clashes with white society, the tense scenes of stowaway life, and the historical backdrop of Japan.

Analysis

In the 1870s, the area around Vancouver in British Columbia was still in its formative stages as a city; it was not yet the metropolis it is today, but merely a small settlement centred on Gastown. At this time, plans for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) were progressing, and the area was expected to develop as a port city; however, there were still very few Asian immigrants settling there. Japanese immigrants did not begin to appear in significant numbers until the 1880s, making the 1870s a period that could be described as the ‘eve of Japanese immigration’.

Meanwhile, salmon fishing on the Fraser River had already developed into a major industry by the mid-19th century, and by the 1870s, the canned salmon industry was expanding rapidly. Canning factories (canneries) were built one after another at the mouth of the Fraser River, and operations were primarily carried out by white, Indigenous and Chinese workers. Japanese fishermen did not enter this industry until the late 1880s; in the 1870s, there were still no Japanese fishermen to be seen. Similarly, regarding the exploitation of the fishing grounds at the mouth of the Fraser River—where Japanese fishermen would later play a major role—the 1870s were still a preliminary stage before Japanese involvement began, and the industrial structure was centred on white capital and Chinese labourers. Having witnessed the state of salmon fishing on the Fraser River, Manzo likely recounted his experiences to Nakamura.

7.5 Chapter 5: New Westminster

Summary

Through his experiences in Hong Kong, Annam, Singapore, India, Hawaii and the US mainland, Manzo Nagano had developed a degree of understanding of English, albeit imperfect. Consequently, landing in New Westminster, Canada—an English-speaking country—was a stroke of luck for him. After landing, he spent the night roughing it in the woods, but by the following morning, he had already found an inn and, using broken English and gestures, succeeded in securing work to pay for his lodging. His earnest gaze and sincerity made a strong impression on others, giving him a persuasiveness that more than made up for his limited language skills.

Before long, Manzo began socializing with both white settlers and Indigenous people, and despite his limited English, he earned the trust of those around him through his natural leadership and eloquence. His first job was in the salmon fishing industry, where he partnered with an Italian woman named Gaetana Porco. At that time in British Columbia, salmon fishing was a major industry on a par with forestry, and the rivers were teeming with salmon. The fishing method—working in pairs in small boats to cast nets and catch salmon—was relatively simple, but setting the nets and manoeuvring the boat required advanced skills. Manzo had developed a keen instinct for rowing and casting nets from his experience in Kuchinotsu, and within about three weeks, he was displaying a level of skill that astonished the local fishermen.

Porco was skilled at steering the boat, but he was not adept at setting the nets—the very heart of salmon fishing—and came to hold Manzo’s skill in the highest regard. Manzo possessed a keen instinct for spotting schools of salmon and successfully located one spring salmon fishing ground after another. The pair’s income grew steadily, and Manzo’s reputation was highly regarded by the

innkeeper. However, Manzo's nature was one that constantly sought progress, and he was not content to settle into the same line of work.

One day, Porco told him of a rumour that 'a large-scale project was starting in Gastown, offering high-paying work'. Manzo, who was dissatisfied that salmon fishing only provided an income from early summer to late autumn and that the innkeeper had failed to keep his promises, was strongly drawn to this prospect. Though Gastown was still a remote village at the time, rumours of railway construction and major harbour works were spreading, and a sense of vitality was beginning to emerge.

To verify the rumours, Manzo entered a tavern in Gastown and learned from a waitress that 'construction of a railway station and major harbour works were about to begin'. However, when he went to pay his bill, he found he had no Canadian currency to hand. When he offered the trade silver coins he had brought from Japan, the landlord berated him, saying, 'This money is no good here,' and he suffered the humiliation of being treated like a savage. Manzo tried desperately to explain, but his words fell on deaf ears; the incident made him keenly aware of his isolation and the discrimination he faced in a foreign land.

Nevertheless, Manzo did not let this get him down; rather, it fuelled his enthusiasm for new work, and he resolved to seize the opportunities available in Gastown. Thus, not content with his success in the salmon fishing trade, he set out in search of even greater business opportunities.

7.6 Chapter Six: From Canada to the Orient

Summary

In early spring 1880, Manzo Nagano left New Westminster, where he had lived for two years, and moved to Gastown, the precursor to the present-day city of Vancouver. Although his time in New Westminster had been brief, he had formed deep bonds with Porco, the Italian man with whom he had worked in the salmon fishery, and with the Native people who had treated him kindly, and these connections left a lasting impression on Manzo. He had spent most of those two years with Porco in particular; the man had a gentle nature and never complained, even though the income split was six to four in Manzo's favour. As they parted, Manzo felt a deep sense of sympathy and gratitude towards him. However, Manzo harboured ambitions for greater success and resolved to cut his ties and move on to the next place.

Upon arriving in Gastown, Manzo turned to George Canaton, a British man he had met previously in a bar and took a room in a third-rate hotel. However, the place was a den of bedbugs, with shabby wooden beds and dirty blankets. Manzo suffered the ordeal of being bitten all over his body from the very first day, and by the third day, he had even been bitten in his private parts. Although Canaton tried to console him with a joke, Manzo could bear it no longer and lodged a complaint with the hotel manager; the infestation was finally brought under control through disinfection with carbolic acid and the spreading of lime. Despite these unsanitary conditions, Manzo found work as early as the fifth day and began working as a dock labourer in Port Moody.

The work in Port Moody involved heavy labour, carrying timber to load onto foreign sailing ships. Working alongside large white men, Manzo, though small in stature, displayed such strength—

thanks to his well-trained muscles and tenacious spirit—that he came to be known as the ‘Iron Man’. Working hours lasted ten to twelve hours, but the wages were high for the time, and he earned between one and one and a half dollars a day. Considering that wages in Kuchinotsu, Japan, were only ten to twenty sen, his income in Canada was exceptional. To save money for a business venture, Manzo avoided alcohol and entertainment as much as possible and devoted himself to saving.

Meanwhile, in Canada at the same time, many railway construction workers were Chinese, suffering from dangerous work and poor living conditions. By avoiding such work and choosing the better-paid dock work, Manzo was able to move closer to his future dream. His goal was to save five hundred to one thousand dollars, return home, succeed in business, and astonish his hometown.

Eventually, Manzo found himself needing to find a ship to return home. To get close to the harbour supervisor, Mr. Barsh, he frequented the bar where the man went and even had a gentleman’s suit made to create an opportunity for contact. When he learned from the supervisor that there were plans to recruit several hundred Chinese labourers for the construction of Port Moody Station, Manzo pretended to be well-versed in the affairs of Shanghai and Hong Kong, playing along with the conversation and successfully piquing the supervisor’s interest. However, behind the scenes, a former sailor-turned-broker appeared and demanded a deposit. Manzo saw through this, firmly refused, negotiated directly with the captain himself, and finally obtained permission to board the ship.

In 1884, Manzo set sail from Port Moody, travelling via Hawaii to the East. As he embarked on his journey home, his heart was filled with thoughts of his hometown, Kuchinotsu, and grand dreams of the business venture ahead. In an era when Canada was still a frontier, and Vancouver was little more than a tent city, Manzo had survived those harsh conditions and was now moving forward to his next challenge.

Verification

Records indicate that in 1858, gold was discovered in the upper reaches of the Fraser River (between Hope and Lillooet), prompting an influx of some 30,000 gold miners. Many were veterans of the California Gold Rush; unemployed miners travelled north in search of a new frontier. The gold in the Fraser River was found in relatively shallow waters, and by the mid-1860s, the deposits had been exhausted, and the rush had come to an end.

The timber industry on the coast of British Columbia (B.C.) in the 1880s was a ‘nascent industry’ that experienced rapid growth following the gold rush; sawmills and logging camps expanded rapidly, drawing on the vast coniferous resources of the coast. Along the coast, steam-powered sawmills were built at river mouths and along the bay, and the number of mills also increased around Ballard Bay (later Vancouver). The coastal timber industry of the 1880s was supported by a diverse workforce comprising white, Indigenous and Chinese labourers, but the working conditions were harsh, characterized by frequent accidents, long working hours and life in isolated camps. Manzo must have witnessed these conditions and incorporated them into his own experiences.

7.7 Chapter 7: The First Japanese in Seven Years

Summary

When Manzo Nagano was loading coal at the port of Honolulu, Hawaii, he caught sight of a man who appeared to be Japanese for the first time in seven years, and his heart leapt with excitement. The moment he spotted the sturdy man from Satsuma, clad in a red fundoshi, the loneliness he had felt whilst abroad and his longing for the Japanese language surged up within him all at once. For Manzo, who had lived amongst foreigners for seven years, struggling with English and repeatedly facing misunderstandings and conflicts, the presence of someone with whom he could converse freely in Japanese was a joy so great it brought tears to his eyes. He ran to the jetty, shouted, 'Are you Japanese?', and spoke with the Satsuma man in the very dialect of his homeland. The man told him he had lost his wife and children and was working with the help of his Chinese companions; Manzo was deeply moved by his plight. Though their conversation was brief, Manzo savoured the warmth of the Japanese language and the depth of human compassion anew. As they parted, they waved to one another, etching this fleeting encounter on a small Pacific island into their hearts.

Upon his return home, it was his parents who welcomed Manzo with the greatest joy. His mother, Tane, shed tears at the sight of her son, who had grown into a stronger young man, and cooked red rice to offer before the family altar. Manzo recounted his life in Canada in a lively and amusing manner, and his family listened with a mixture of surprise and envy. Word spread throughout the village, and the village headman and the young men came to visit, listening intently to Manzo's stories. Manzo grew proud of himself and confided to the village head alone that he had 'brought five hundred Chinese workers for the trans-Canada railway', astonishing him. However, the village's narrow-minded values soon pushed Manzo into an adoption arrangement, and he reluctantly agreed to save face for his father. It was a purely formal adoption, and he would soon be removed from the family register, but Manzo realized he was still relying on his mother's affection and accepted it with a wry smile.

Manzo's return to Japan lasted a mere two weeks, after which he returned to the ship. There were already over five hundred Chinese labourers on board, a fact that could not be made public, given the Japanese government's policies towards China and Korea. At the time, secret orders had been issued in Japan regarding contact with China and Korea, and Manzo had no choice but to keep his mouth shut. The Deffrey sailed via Yokohama to Canada, arriving at Victoria in early August. The Chinese labourers Manzo had gathered were, for the most part, in good health, suffered only mild seasickness, and were in a condition that satisfied their employers. In the past, many emaciated Chinese had been transported, and there had been numerous cases of them dying because they could not endure the gruelling railway construction in the Rocky Mountains; consequently, this success became a source of pride for Manzo.

Manzo harboured no prejudice against the Chinese; on the contrary, having spent time in close contact with them in Hong Kong and Shanghai from a young age, he felt an affinity towards them. Even as the Meiji government pursued 'Seikanron' (the theory of conquering Korea) and imperialist policies, Manzo took no interest in politics, concentrating solely on fulfilling his duties. The Chinese labourers were delighted to be earning three times the wages they would have received in Shanghai or Hong Kong, and they worked energetically on the railway construction at Port Moody. The

completion of the CPR was a top priority for the Canadian government, and Manzo's work made a significant, albeit behind-the-scenes, contribution to Canada's founding.

However, his achievements were credited to the white captain and crew, and Manzo's name was never recorded. Nevertheless, Manzo did not let this bother him; with nothing but a sense of satisfaction at having fulfilled his duty, he set out once more to begin a new life.

Background

In the 1880s, British Columbia was a region where ties with Asian countries, particularly China and Japan, were rapidly strengthening. This was driven by the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and the demand for labour in the fishing and timber industries; approximately 15,000 Chinese labourers travelled to BC during the 1880s to support the construction of the railway's western section. Although their labour was indispensable, opposition grew among white workers and politicians on grounds such as 'wage competition' and 'differences in lifestyle'. Institutional discrimination intensified, culminating in the introduction in 1885 of a \$50 head tax applicable only to Chinese people.

These exclusionary movements were linked to the policy of disenfranchising Asian residents, which the BC Legislative Assembly had been pursuing since the 1870s, and by the 1880s, the slogan 'A White Man's Province' had gained political traction. The anxieties of white society were linked to a narrative that viewed the increase in Asian immigrants as a 'threat to civilization', and this was further reinforced through statements in newspapers and by politicians.

Meanwhile, the Asian community was also deepening its ties with British Columbia. The Chinese government took steps to protect immigrants through its consulate in San Francisco, and in 1884, the Chinese Community Association of British Columbia (CCBA) was established in Victoria to protest against discrimination and provide welfare support. This was one of the earliest Chinese organizations in North America and symbolized the social ties between British Columbia and China.

Relations with Japan also began to take root, and by the late 1880s, the number of Japanese people working in the fishing and sawmill industries had increased. Although their numbers were still small, the foundations of the Japanese communities that would later emerge in Steveston and on Powell Street were laid during this period.

7.8 Chapter 8: Success as a Canadian Tycoon

Summary

In 1893, Manzo Nagano embarked on a salted salmon manufacturing business in Vancouver, which became the major undertaking that defined his life. He was well aware of the abundance of salmon in the Fraser River and surrounding waterways and, drawing on information from Indigenous peoples, he conceived a plan for large-scale processing and export of salmon. At the time, the number of Japanese immigrants was increasing, and whilst there were individual attempts to send salmon to Japan, Manzo was the only one to successfully put the concept of 'mass acquisition, mass production and low-cost export' into practice. Despite a lack of funds, true to his character of acting immediately upon a decision, he proposed a joint venture to Shinkichi Tamura in Vancouver.

Tamura was a cautious man and was reluctant to accept Manzo's outlandish plan, but Manzo persuasively argued, 'The salmon caught in the rivers around Vancouver can be bought for next to nothing compared to Japan,' and Tamura finally decided to invest. Manzo mortgaged his own shop to demonstrate his creditworthiness and cemented his resolve to pursue the venture.

Manzo set his sights on humpback salmon, which were considered of little value locally. Tamura expressed concern, saying, 'Even the poor fishermen and the Indians here throw them away,' but Manzo argued that if they timed the catch for when the fish were at their fattest, the quality would not be poor, and he was convinced that if processed by salting, they would make a perfectly viable product. He commissioned fishermen and Indians in New Westminster to catch large quantities of humpback salmon and succeeded in purchasing them at a price one-twentieth that of ordinary salmon. In a processing plant converted from an old house, he employed Japanese, Chinese, and white workers to remove the heads, gut the fish, and salt them before packing them into miso and soy sauce barrels for shipment to Japan. However, the first shipment failed, and a telegram arrived stating, 'The reputation is poor because the heads are missing.' This was because he had overlooked the Japanese custom that salmon for New Year's must have their heads attached.

Manzo did not give in to this failure; fortunately, he had saved his funds, and the following year he once again packed and exported salted salmon with the heads attached, ensuring they looked presentable. This was a resounding success, and a report arrived stating, 'The reputation is excellent. Sales are soaring due to the low price.' He made a huge profit, generating \$12,000 in sales over three months, with \$8,400 remaining even after deducting expenses. The fact that poor catches were continuing in Japan also worked in his favour, and the inexpensive Canadian salmon was welcomed in the market. Tamura expressed his respect for Manzo's intuition and perseverance, and surprised Manzo by proposing a profit-sharing arrangement of 'seven parts to three'. Thus, Manzo became known as the 'Canadian Tycoon, the 'Salmon Tycoon,' and the 'Salted Salmon King, and continued to export salted salmon, reaping enormous profits.

Building on his success, Manzo constructed a luxurious three-storey brick building on Main Street in Victoria and opened shops selling Japanese art and general merchandise in Victoria, Vancouver and Seattle. Folk crafts sold well thanks to the Orientalist trend in the West and the development of the Yokohama-Victoria shipping route, and his business flourished. He was also active in various fields, such as arranging labour for whaling companies. As a central figure in Victoria's Japanese community, he served as president of the Japanese Club and the Kyōwa-kai (Harmony Association), and led more than a hundred welcome ceremonies when Japanese Navy training ships called at the port, receiving numerous letters of appreciation.

However, from the First World War onwards, pressure on the Japanese community intensified, and issues such as fishing licence disputes and the lack of citizenship became increasingly serious. Sales at Manzo's shop also declined, and on the advice of Tamura and others, he consolidated his shops and scaled back his operations. This was also due to his purchasing methods becoming outdated following the distribution revolution brought about by the advent of large cargo ships. Nevertheless, Manzo's forty years of business and social contribution in Canada were significant, and his business acumen and drive were truly exceptional.

Analysis

In the 1890s, Victoria flourished as a major port on Canada's Pacific coast and served as a hub for maritime traffic linking Asia and North America. The number of immigrants from Japan gradually increased, and by the 1890s, Victoria had established itself as the primary port of entry for Japanese immigrants. Many of the immigrants worked in the fishing, forestry, mining and railway construction industries, and Japanese boarding houses, general stores and labour agencies gradually began to appear in the city.

However, as the number of immigrants grew, so did the anxiety and hostility within the white community. In particular, in 1895, a law was enacted depriving Japanese residents (regardless of citizenship) of the right to vote, thereby institutionalizing their political exclusion. This was part of a broader movement to curb Asian immigration, and during the same period, a series of discriminatory policies were introduced, including restrictions on employment in certain professions and public office.

Nevertheless, the Japanese community in Victoria capitalized on the city's port advantages to expand its commercial activities. Ships from Japan called at the port, and imported goods such as general merchandise, handicrafts and foodstuffs were distributed, with Japanese shops becoming a staple for both local residents and other Asian immigrants. In this environment, early immigrants such as Manzo Nagano established general stores, inns and import-export businesses, playing a central role in the community. Although Victoria was still small in population and not a major city like Vancouver, it played a vital role for Japanese immigrants as their 'first base' and a 'city of business opportunity'.

In their article for Discover Nikkei, Mr. and Mrs. Switzer state that Manzo Nagano's arrival in Victoria in 1892 can be verified by the fact that the name 'J.M. Nagano' appears in the 1893 Victoria telephone directory (the 'J' being the initial of Manzo's English name, Jack). They also verify that Manzo ran a shop called the Oriental Bazaar in Victoria by confirming it is listed in the British Columbia trade directory. Given the situation in Victoria in the 1890s, it makes perfect sense that Manzo would have opened a shop there.

In the 1890s, British Columbia was known as one of the world's leading salmon fishing grounds, with vast quantities of salmon migrating upstream every year, particularly in the Fraser River and its tributaries. Against the backdrop of these abundant resources, British Columbia's canned salmon industry developed rapidly, reaching a scale by the 1890s where more than 30 to 40 canneries were clustered along the coast. At the factories, sockeye salmon was primarily processed into tinned goods as a luxury item and exported to markets in North America and Europe, whereas lower-priced varieties such as humpback (pink salmon) and chum salmon were considered of little value and were often discarded without being processed.

During this period, the fishing workforce consisted mainly of Japanese, Chinese and Indigenous peoples, with Japanese fishermen becoming indispensable due to their high level of skill in gillnet fishing. Although they landed vast quantities of salmon, the varieties not handled by the canneries had little market value and were scarcely utilized locally. The existence of such a large volume of 'unutilized resources' created opportunities for salt-curing and the export trade.

Meanwhile, amid the rapid growth of British Columbia's salmon industry, competition intensified, and the sector grappled with price volatility and overproduction. As factories focused on high-margin canned products and virtually no processing was carried out for salted salmon, there was no connection with the salted salmon market aimed at meeting demand for the Japanese New Year. Manzo Nagano recognized this opportunity and established a unique business model: purchasing large quantities of locally sourced, low-value humpback salmon at low prices, processing them into salted salmon for the Japanese market, and exporting them.

In the 1890s, British Columbia was rich in salmon resources, yet its processing and export infrastructure was underdeveloped; in particular, the market for salted salmon destined for Japan remained untapped. Manzo Nagano's success lay in his ability to accurately identify this gap in the industrial structure and transform locally undervalued salmon into a product for the high-demand Japanese market. It was precisely because the salmon industry in British Columbia operated on a model of mass production and mass disposal that Nagano's salted salmon exports were able to generate such substantial profits.

Regarding Shinkichi Tamura, whom Manzo chose as his partner in exporting salted salmon to Japan, Kenzo Mori states the following in **The Story of Manzo in Canada**:

'Just as Manzo had anticipated, Shinkichi Tamura subsequently overcame every difficulty, establishing the Japan-Canada Joint Savings Company in 1907, becoming the leading Japanese Canadian businessman, and even returning to Japan to become a member of the House of Peers.' Shinkichi Tamura, a member of the House of Peers, was a real person who had deep ties to both Vancouver and Victoria.

About Shinkichi Tamura (1864–1936), Member of the House of Peers

Shinkichi Tamura was a businessman and politician active from the Meiji era through to the early Shōwa era, who was elected to the House of Peers in 1925 as a major taxpayer from Hyōgo Prefecture. He was born in 1864 at the Kumamoto Domain residence in Nakanoshima, Osaka, and later moved to Kobe after his father died at a young age. Aspiring to become a trader from a young age, he served as an apprentice at a tea merchant in Kobe before travelling to the United States, where he studied science and the humanities at the Chautauqua Literary Society, acquiring proficiency in English and an international outlook. Around 1888, he travelled to Victoria, Canada, and after working for the Gebur Trading Company, he established the 'Kami-Tamura Trading Company' in Vancouver in 1891 with former consul Sadao Jin and began selling Japanese goods.

Subsequently, Tamura founded 'Tamura Shokai' with its head office in Kobe, growing it into a large-scale direct-import trading firm with branches in Tokyo, Osaka, Yokohama, North America, and Canada. Furthermore, he made significant contributions to the development of Japan-Canada trade, including the establishment of the Japan-Canada Joint Savings Bank and the Japan-Canada Trust, where he served as president. Domestically, he held key positions in a wide range of economic organizations, including President of Nippon Seimai Seifun, President of Tokyo Internal Combustion Engine Works, Director of Pacific Fire Insurance, and Chairman of the Kobe Chamber of Commerce, and was known as a central figure in Kobe's business community.

As a politician, he was elected to the House of Representatives from Kobe City, Hyogo Prefecture, in the 12th general election of 1915 and served one term. Subsequently, in 1925, he was elected by his peers to the House of Peers as a major taxpayer from Hyogo Prefecture; he served two terms as a member of the Doseikai faction until his death in 1936. It is said that, thanks to his broad perspective, underpinned by international experience and practical knowledge of trade, he made a significant contribution to debates on economic policy and international relations. (Wikipedia 'Shinkichi Tamura', Weblio Encyclopedia 'Shinkichi Tamura')

However, there is no record of Manzo Nagano having sought assistance from this Shinji Tamura. Kenzo Mori, taking into account Tamura's achievements and the period in which he was active, likely constructed the narrative of this chapter on the assumption that, had Manzo Nagano been planning to export salted salmon to Japan, it was highly probable that he would have chosen to seek Tamura's cooperation.

7.9 Chapter 9: Struck by Fire and Illness

Summary

In the spring of 1921, Nagano Manzo was officially diagnosed with tuberculosis and began convalescing at St Joseph's Hospital in Victoria. Morimatsu Emi, who was eight years old at the time, was deeply cherished by Mr. Tayoko due to her frequent visits to the Manzo couple's shop, and she began accompanying Mr. Tayoko on her nightly visits to the hospital. As Mr.s Tayoko had been unable to have children of her own, she embraced Matsue as if she were her own daughter and would sometimes let her stay on the second floor of the shop. Matsue speaks fondly of the couple's room and the gifts she was given so generously. Manzo's convalescence was kept largely secret from those around him due to fears of the infectious disease; this led to the misunderstanding that visitors were not received, but in reality, it was a measure to prevent infection. After a seven-month battle with the illness, Manzo recovered, and Mr. Tayoko wept with joy upon seeing him discharged from the hospital.

However, the following year, a fire occurred that would decisively shake Manzo's life. In the dead of night, the three-storey building that served as both his home and shop was engulfed in flames; everything was lost—the shop on the ground floor, the stock in the basement, the living quarters on the first floor, and even the securities and contract documents stored on the second floor. The building, which could be seen as the very symbol of 'Canada Daijin' and the culmination of his many years of effort, collapsed, and Manzo's spirit rapidly declined. The fact that he had not taken out fire insurance was a further severe blow, and Manzo, now virtually penniless, found himself taking refuge at the home of Bunpei Kuwabara, whom he had once looked after. It is said that the burnt-out 'J.M. NAGANO AND CO.' sign was placed in the back garden, symbolizing Manzo's lingering attachment and pride.

Subsequently, Manzo's condition deteriorated once more, and he coughed up blood whilst readmitted to St Joseph's Hospital. The hospital granted special permission for his wife, Tayoko, to stay by his side, but in her fervent hope for her husband's recovery, she began to recite Omoto prayers with great devotion in his hospital room. Her fanatical prayers, so intense that she did not even notice when a nurse entered the room, aroused strong interest among the hospital staff;

however, drawing on their experience during the Spanish flu pandemic, they tacitly allowed it, adhering to a policy of not interfering with the prayers of the dying. Manzo's condition unexpectedly stabilized, and Mr. Tayoko firmly believed this was due to the protection of the Ōmoto religion.

However, a strong desire to leave Victoria and return to his homeland began to take root in Manzo's heart. Mrs. Tayoko agreed with this and, too, wished to offer a prayer of thanks to the Gohonzon in Kyoto upon their return. As their sons had already left home and their bond with their stepmother, Tayoko, was tenuous, Manzo decided that he and his wife would set off quietly on their own. On the day of their departure, Lady Tayoko hugged Matsue and bid her farewell, whilst Matsue, crying, asked, 'Auntie, where are you going?' And so, in the spring of 1922, enveloped in a deep longing for his homeland, Manzo left Canada for his hometown of Kuchinotsu.

Verification

At the time of writing this book, Kenzo Mori interviewed Matsue Mori (aged 70), who was living in Toronto, about Manzo and his wife. The Mori family lived near Manzo's shop in Victoria, and Matsue was much loved by Manzo's wife, Tayoko; she would accompany her to visit Manzo in the hospital. Having lost his home and shop in a fire, Manzo found himself in the care of Bunpei Kuwahara, whom he had once looked after; Kenzo Mori interviewed Bunpei's son, Masao, about the circumstances of this period. According to Masao, Manzo and his wife were living in two rented rooms from the Kuwahara family, but appeared deeply despondent. Kenzo Mori also interviewed Annaka, another Japanese-American who knew Manzo. According to Annaka, Manzo's home and shop had been a fine three-storey building.

7.10 Chapter 10: Death at Kuchinotsu, Nagasaki

Summary

After many years living abroad and suffering from ill health, Manzo Nagano finally returned to his hometown of Kuchinotsu in Nagasaki Prefecture in 1923. By the time he arrived in Yokohama, his physical strength had greatly declined. Whilst resting at an inn, he sent an express letter to his hometown, only to receive news that the coal carriers of Mitsui & Co., which had underpinned Kuchinotsu's prosperity, had relocated to Miike, leaving the port facing the threat of decline. For Manzo, who had been familiar with the Danpei-class ships since his boyhood, this news symbolized a major shift in the times and struck a deep chord within him. The reply came from Sue, the wife of Dairoku—the second son of his eldest brother Kamekichi—who sent a warm message of welcome, saying, 'Please take the utmost care of your health, Manzo-sama, and feel free to come and live with us in peace.'

In June, Manzo took up residence at the 'Amiya' run by Sue and introduced Tayoko to his relatives. The air of his hometown clearly improved his health; his appetite returned, and he even laughed heartily for the first time in a long while. However, the decline of Kuchinotsu Port was a reality, and in the face of Mitsui & Co.'s rationalization policies, the village's petitions had little effect. Manzo stood on the shore, gazing out at the sea that had nurtured him since childhood, and spent his time quietly, recalling the faces of his parents.

As six months passed, Manzo's condition worsened once more, with his fever rising and his strength waning. At that time, tuberculosis was a feared infectious disease, so even his relatives began to keep their distance. Furthermore, as the 'Amiya' needed to resume business, Manzo and his wife moved to the Ota family home in Higashinakamachi. Tayoko heard that there was a promising young doctor in Nagasaki and persuaded Manzo to seek a consultation. After a thorough examination, Dr. Umemura told him, 'If you rest and recuperate, you will live a long life yet,' and Manzo was greatly encouraged. He spoke cheerfully of his boyhood memories and his experiences in Canada, and even expressed his hope of travelling to Canada once more to see his children.

However, that hope was short-lived. Whilst sightseeing in Nagasaki, Manzo coughed violently, coughing up blood-tinged phlegm, and Tayoko realized the gravity of the situation. Even after returning to Kuchinotsu, his condition did not improve; though he continued to believe the doctor's words, Manzo gradually lost his strength. And so, on 13 May 1924, whilst still dreaming of a reunion with his children, he passed away peacefully. He was seventy years old. Tayoko held a Buddhist funeral service and erected a gravestone, after which she set off for the Omoto-kyo headquarters in Kyoto, the centre of her faith.

Thus, Manzo Nagano, who had led a turbulent life as the first Japanese emigrant to Canada, quietly passed away in his homeland. In his later years, forced to avoid people due to his tuberculosis, some mocked him as 'Stingy Manzo'; yet considering the magnitude of the challenges and struggles his life had demonstrated, such backbiting was, in the grand scheme of things, a trivial matter. At the end of his life, there was the unadorned figure of 'Manzo the man', and his life quietly drew to a close.

7.11 Chapter 11: Manzo's Descendants

Summary

The final chapter on Nagano Manzo details his lineage, family, and the paths taken by his descendants. Manzo was the fourth son of six siblings, born on 27 March 1855 in Kuchinotsu Village, Minamitakaki District, Nagasaki Prefecture... His family home bore the trade name 'Amiya', but, as there are many instances where trade names do not correspond to occupations, there is no definitive proof that his father was a fishing master. In 1887, Manzo married Tsuya and had his eldest son, George, in Victoria; however, Tsuya died young, and her gravestone has since weathered away, leaving its location unknown. Manzo subsequently remarried a woman named Tayoko from Kyoto; however, the biological mother of his second son, Frank Terumaro—born around the same time—is not recorded in the family register, leading to speculation amongst the Japanese community that she was a mistress. It is surmised that Manzo, buoyed by the success of his Western-style restaurant and art and craft shop in Yokohama, visited Japan frequently and, during these visits, formed a relationship with the woman who would become Frank's mother.

His eldest son, George Tatsuo, was passionate about baseball and played for a Japanese team in Victoria. He later emigrated to the United States, where he had three sons and one daughter. His grandchildren are now spread across Canada, the United States and Japan, making for a truly international family. The second son, Frank Terumaro, was also a baseball enthusiast and worked as the right-hand man to Naoyuki Ozeki, a Japanese Canadian boss, at a pulp company in Ocean

Falls. He had one son and five daughters; his daughters married white men, whilst his son, Ted Tsuruo, married a woman of French descent. At the Centenary of Japanese Immigration to Canada, Ted was presented with a commemorative plaque by the government as Manzo's grandson.

Manzo's lineage has been passed down to the fourth and fifth generations; notably, one of Terumaro's grandchildren was named 'Manzo', carrying on his great-grandfather's name despite having a white father. Furthermore, as the fifth generation, Junko's grandchildren, the eldest daughter of George, are active throughout Japan, and the article introduces descendants living in Wakayama, Ehime, and Yokohama. In this way, Manzo's life is deeply intertwined with the history of the Japanese Canadian community and his family's history, and his descendants continue to thrive in diverse cultural spheres to this day.

Verification



Photograph of the Manzo Nagano family from the Victoria City Archives (2010). In the back row, on the left is the eldest son, Tatsuo George, and on the right is the second son, Teruo Frank; in the front row, on the left is George's wife, Seki, in the centre is Manzo, and on the right is Manzo's wife, Tayoko.

For Kenzo Mori, it was important to include ‘Manzo’s Descendants’ as the final chapter of ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada’. This was to demonstrate that the story of Japanese Canadians, which began with Manzo, did not end with his generation, but rather marked the beginning of a narrative that continues from the 1870s to the present day, much like the stories of Japanese Canadians of that era.

According to Switzer’s research on Manzo (Discover Nikkei, 15 April 2024), the chronology of the Nagano family is as follows.

In 1887, Manzo’s first wife, Sayo, gave birth to their eldest son, George Tatsuo. Sayo died in Japan, but no death record has been found. In the same year, Manzo transferred his registered domicile from Kuchinotsu to Yokohama.

In 1892, Manzo travelled from Japan to Victoria accompanied by his second wife, Tsuya, and his eldest son, George Tatsuo. In his 1897 naturalization documents, Manzo stated that he had arrived in Canada in 1892 and had sworn to this fact. In 1893, Tsuya gave birth to a daughter, Haru, but both mother and child died within seven months. They are buried at Ross Bay Cemetery in Victoria.

In 1898, Manzo returned to Japan temporarily to marry his third wife, Tayoko (according to Manzo’s testimony to Jinshiro Nakayama). Tayoko gave birth to Frank Terumaro in Victoria on 3 October 1898. No further children were born after Frank’s birth. George and Frank came of age in Victoria and subsequently lived independently from Manzo.

The major discrepancy between ‘The Story of Manzo in Canada’ and Switzer’s investigation into Manzo concerns the birth of Manzo’s second son, Frank. Kenzo Mori states that Frank was not Tayoko’s child but another woman. He reports having heard from Japanese Canadians that Frank was born and raised in Japan before being brought to Victoria. Following his interview with George, Kenzo Mori stated that, as the 1910 family photograph shows 23-year-old George and 12-year-old Frank, Frank must have arrived in Victoria by 1910.

‘My concern that Old George might ask me for my thoughts on his second mother proved to be well-founded. This second mother was the biological mother of his second son, Frank Terumaro (deceased), but she never made the journey to Canada, and her name remains uncertain. This was because she was regarded as a mysterious figure. As the rumours surrounding Old George and this half-sibling went beyond mere public gossip, there were circumstances that made it impossible not to be concerned. In short, the mother of the second son was not recorded in the family register of Kuchinotsu Town, Nagasaki Prefecture, as a legal wife. The secret that the second son had been born somewhere in Japan before being taken to Canada and registered as Canadian-born weighed heavily on my mind.’

I am unable to verify which of the two theories regarding Frank’s birth is correct.

8. Conclusion

Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami’s *The Story of Manzo Nagano in Canada* was a symbolic work that responded to the growing demand for an identity revival within the Japanese Canadian community in the late 1970s, helping propel the community into a new era. This book is based on the

groundbreaking discovery at the time that Manzo Nagano was the first Japanese person to settle in Canada in 1877. Faced with the extreme scarcity of primary sources regarding Manzo, Mori and Takami constructed a narrative centred on Manzo's own account of his adventures, which he told Mr. Nakayama in 1920. Drawing on trends in both the Japanese Canadian and wider Canadian societies from the 1870s to the 1920s, they crafted a story that portrayed Manzo as a symbolic figure of early Japanese immigration.

After settling in Victoria, Manzo was active in the commercial and service sectors, which were rare within the Japanese Canadian community at the time. The young second- and third-generation Japanese Canadians, who were beginning to take the lead in the Japanese Canadian community in the 1970s, were able to superimpose their own experiences of success onto Manzo's pioneering journey, and Manzo's image served as a symbol reflecting the community's self-image.

Recent historical research has cast doubt on the conventional understanding that Manzo Nagano settled in Canada in 1877. It is now considered highly likely that Manzo was not 'the first Japanese person to settle in Canada'. Nevertheless, Manzo Nagano is still widely recognized today as a symbolic figure representing early Japanese immigrants. Furthermore, the year 1877 was chosen by the Japanese Canadian community itself as the symbolic starting point for Japanese settlement in Canada during the 1977 Centennial Celebration of Japanese Canadians, and it is likely to continue to be remembered as such.

Footnotes

1. Charles Young and Helen Reid, *The Japanese Canadians* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1938)
2. Ann-Lee Switzer and Gordon Switzer, Manzo Nagano (Part 1) – Did He Come in 1877? *Discover Nikkei*, 14 April 2024; Ann-Lee Switzer and Gordon Switzer, Manzo Nagano (Part 2) – Did He Come in 1877? *Discover Nikkei*, 15 April 2024
3. Sumio Ishidate, *Kanada Doho Hattenshi* (The History of the Development of the Japanese Community in Canada), Vancouver: Tairiku Nippo-sha, 1909
4. Jinshiro Nakayama, *Kanada Doho Hatten Taikan* (A Comprehensive Survey of the Development of Our Compatriots in Canada), Vancouver: Tairiku Nippo-sha, 1922
5. Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami, *The Story of Manzo in Canada: The First Immigrant to Canada* (Tokyo: Osuzuyama Shobo, 1977), p. 1
6. Kenzo Mori and Hiroto Takami, *op. cit.*, p. 8