

FIVE JAPANESE IN SEBASTOPOL

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To my surprise, I saw not only a number of Japanese, but

also a Buddhist temple ("Kannonji Temple," 1000 Mountain Highway, So.), which indicated a sizable Japanese community around it. After participating in a service in the temple,

I became acquainted with its members. One of my students

by

Takamasa Sakai

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idea of interviewing the old members about their life history

for the first time. Yet, I postponed the plan until this

semester. The class "American Folklore," which I am taking

this semester, finally pushed me to action.

The following are the outcome of the interview with

five Japanese Americans who went through the hardships of

adaptation to the American land and culture. This article

is a history of the hardships from their viewpoints, not a

history supported by exact historicity. In other words, it

is a folk history. These Japanese Americans are:

American Folklore

Mr. Kiyoshi [Name] in 1898,

Dr. Hector Lee

December 17, 1975

Mr. Hiroshi [Name] born in 1898,

8983 Dodge Highway, Sebastopol

FIVE JAPANESE IN SEBASTOPOL

It was more than a year ago when I first came to the town of Sebastopol, looking for an apartment. In this small town (population 5,000), I never expected to see Japanese. To my surprise, I saw not only a number of Japanese, but also a Buddhist temple ("Emmanji Temple," 1200 Gravenstein Highway, So.), which indicated a sizable Japanese community around it. After participating in a service in the temple, I became acquainted with its members. One of my findings during those days was that the old members of the church were becoming fewer because of their ages. This gave me an idea of interviewing the old members about their life history for the first time. Yet, I postponed the plan until this semester. The class "American Folklore," which I am taking this semester, finally pushed me to action.

The followings are the outcome of the interview with five Japanese Americans who went through the hardships of adaptation to the American land and culture. This article is a history of the hardships from their viewpoints, not a history supported by exact historicity. In other words, it is a folk history. These Japanese-Americans are:

Mr. Kiyoshi Akutagawa: born in 1898,
8240 Kennedy Road, Sebastopol

Mr. Hiroshi Taniguchi: born in 1898,
8985 Bodega Highway, Sebastopol

Mr. Kichizo Morita: born in 1902
2369 Sanders Road, Sebastopol

Mr. Y. Ito: born in 1905
939 Hurbut Drive, Sebastopol

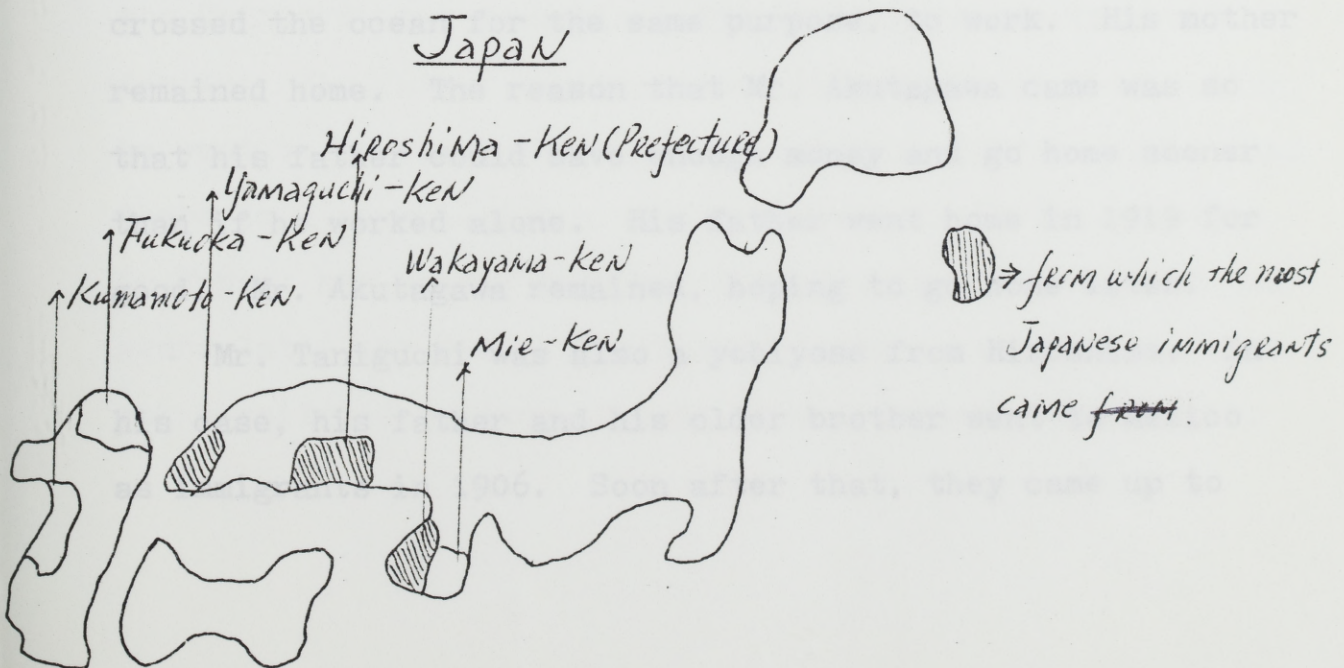
Mr. George Okamoto: born in 1919
7530 Occidental Road, Sebastopol

I sorted out the materials in this article under seven chapters, based on the common events and experiences of their lives. In some chapters, I did not reveal their names on the matters that are too private and detrimental, due to their request.

IMMIGRATION

Why to the U.S.?

The term immigration here is not right in the strict sense because Japanese were not allowed to immigrate to the mainland (only in Hawaii). They came to the mainland to work under a treaty between the American and Japanese governments.



These Japanese men who came under this treaty were the fathers of my interviewees. They were not given the American citizenship, nor did they intend to stay here for good. But as they stayed longer, they became used to the new environment and more of them declined to go back to Japan.

Mr. Akutagawa was a yobiyose (meaning "asked to join"), that is, he was born in Japan and later joined his father in the United States. Therefore, he had no citizenship in this country. His house was a farm in Kumamoto. According to him, his father came to this country to earn enough money so that he could pay a debt he owed on the house. His father first went to Hawaii in 1903, where the Japanese settlement was quite heavy. Soon, he moved into the mainland. He worked in Ukiah, California, drying pears and doing other farm labors. He stayed there for twelve years and went back home in 1915, when Mr. Akutagawa was sixteen years old. Two years later, in 1917, his father and he crossed the ocean for the same purpose, to work. His mother remained home. The reason that Mr. Akutagawa came was so that his father could save enough money and go home sooner than if he worked alone. His father went home in 1919 for good. Mr. Akutagawa remained, hoping to go home later.

Mr. Taniguchi was also a yobiyose from Hiroshima. In his case, his father and his older brother went to Mexico as immigrants in 1906. Soon after that, they came up to

this country. Mr. Taniguchi joined them in 1915, when he was seventeen. It was in Sebastopol, and he intended to stay in this country for good.

Mr. Morita was a kibeï (meaning "returner"), that is, he was born in the United States, sent back to Japan, and came back to this country where he had his citizenship. He was from Fukuoka. His status gave him an advantageous stand for living over yobiyose, which I will state in later chapters. His father owned a restaurant in a small town called Madela, near Fresno where he was born. His mother took him back to Japan when he was six months old. Later his father moved to Stockton and to Fresno as a farm laborer.

Mr. Morita and his mother joined his father in Fresno in 1917. He does not recall when his parents first came to this country.

Mr. Ito's father was a sailor in Japan, engaged in shipping sand from river beds to nearby cities. He was from Mie, and he said there was only one person to come to the United States from his little village other than his family. His father first arrived in Seattle in 1905. Then, he went to Portland where his friend was waiting. He worked there in a sawmill for a couple of years. In the meantime in Japan, his mother gave birth to Mr. Ito in 1905, and two years later she died. His father found a new job as a cook for a railroad company, but he quit it shortly and came to

Sebastopol in 1907. He worked with berries and hops in the spring, and apples from the summer to the winter. There were many like him in the area. He went home in 1916. He remarried in Japan and ~~swang~~^{came} back to the U.S. with his eldest son. Mr. Ito and his step-mother joined his father and brother four years later in 1920, in Forestville (seven miles northwest of Sebastopol). He was fifteen years old.

Mr. Okamoto is a kibeii, and the youngest of all my interviewees. His parents first came to Hawaii from Hiroshima. Their family in Japan had a store, selling just about everything in their small village. The store came under heavy debts, and this pushed his parents out of Japan. They were looking for a new life in this country as well as money to restore their house in Japan. They stayed in Santa Cruz during the apple season (drying apples and pruning^{them}), and in Sebastopol during the hops season. He was one year old when he and his two sisters were sent back home to be under his grandparents' care. The reason, as in most cases among the Japanese in this country, was because his parents were too busy working. In 1926, his father obtained the present house and orchard and dryer (where they dried apples). He could not buy the land because of the California land law at that time, so he leased it for ninety-nine years in his son's name. By this time, they had decided to live here permanently because of their growing family (two younger brothers were

referring to.

born). His two sisters came back to his parents in 1930, and three years later, he was brought back here by Dr. Fujigami, a dentist, who happened to be back to Japan for a visit.

Strictly speaking, both yobiyose and kibeï are second generation though their mother tongue is predominantly Japanese. The first generation Japanese in this country are their parents who pioneered the immigration back in the late 19th century or in the early 20th century. Interestingly enough, all my informants entered this country at the age of fifteen or more. So not only language but also cultural backgrounds were very much fixed in their minds; and subsequently this became an obstacle in the process of acculturation.

A difference between yobiyose and kibeï is their ages, though not always so. Yobiyose tends to be older than kibeï because of the Immigration Law that stopped yobiyose from further entry in 1924 on. This difference is another example of citizenship being advantageous over non-citizenship, because kibeï had no immigration restrictions.

Marriage

There were two types of marriages among the Japanese: one is with girls in Japan, another with girls in this country. The ratio of the two, according to one informant, was probably five to five. But it depends on what he was referring to.

One of my informants married in 1924, not in this country, but in Japan. This year was set by the new Immigration Law as the last year for the picture marriage. Also the yobiyose entry was banned. So, he went back to Japan and got married within three months. It was the only way he could marry and come back with his bride to the U.S. The marriage was already arranged by his parents, and he knew his future bride through pictures. But this did not work out, somehow, so his parents found another person for him in a hurry. Another informant married exactly the same way.

None of my informants married through pictures; ~~in short,~~ ^{However,} ~~most~~ ^{s were} a bride was sent to this country to marry the man they never met except in the pictures. This method was widely practised before 1924. For example, Mr. Taniguchi remembers that there were probably a hundred girls aboard his ship in 1915.

Mr. Ito said that there were two hundred in his ship in 1920.

Three of the informants married those in the U.S. But they did not find the girls by themselves. Their marriages were arranged by their parents within the Japanese communities. Another interesting fact was that until 1932 when a Japanese girl with American citizenship married a non-citizen Japanese (or any foreigner), she had to give up her citizenship. This bill probably restricted such a marriage to take place, because it meant more permanent aliens.

Up Till Sebastopol

Some were already in Sebastopol a few days after their ships went in the San Francisco port. Mr. Ito told me that he started working the next day after he arrived in Forestville in an orchard and dryer, helping his father. So was Mr. Okamoto's case. The other three drifted other places for awhile until they got here. Mr. Akutagawa was with his father drying pears in Ukiah and growing hops in Santa Rosa. After his father left for Japan, he did not go to Ukiah instead he found a dryer job in Sebastopol. Mr. Taniguchi had the most drifting life of all. He was in Sebastopol in 1915 working on a ten acre strawberry patch in Graton. His father, his brother, his uncle and he leased the land. Then around 1918, his father and brother went into the dryer job and also hops during the spring. His father went back home in the next year and Mr. Taniguchi moved to Stockton. He grew onions and potatoes there on a share-base with his friend. They were saving enough money so that they could go to South America. First he went to Japan in 1921, but he was disapproved of the plan by his parents. He came back to Sebastopol ~~Sonoma~~, and his friend went to Brazil. Mr. Morita tread the most unconventional path before it reached Sebastopol. When he arrived in Fresno in 1917, his first work was on ^{rasp}~~As~~berry Farm there with his father. In 1924, he changed his life 180 degrees and went to a photography school in Illinois for nine months. He came back to Fresno, and opened a studio

shop there. He moved to Salinas in 1927 with his cameras. A few years later, he gave up the shop and turned toward Sebastopol. He brought the present land of twenty-four acres. He opened the land and planted raspberries first, then apples.

They all had a brief English education after the entry to the country. I decided to put it in this chapter though some had the education in Sebastopol. Mr. Taniguchi had an interesting experience during the first three winters. He went to San Francisco and stayed in the home of an American family as a house boy. He went to an English class set up by the Japanese Immigrant Organization during the day. The class was on Pine Street and there were fifty to sixty students. He said he did not like to be a house boy and he did not learn English much. Mr. Akutagawa went to Fremont Grammar School in Santa Rosa for three winters. He was a house boy, too. Mr. Ito was in a grammar school in Forestville. Mr. Okamoto went to Parkside School in Sebastopol. Mr. Morita was in a grammar school in Fresno. The school was only during the winter, because they had to work during the other seasons.

THE TOWN OF SEBASTOPOL

Mr. Taniguchi knows the town in 1915. There was a street car connecting Santa Rosa, Petaluma and Forestville to Sebastopol. It was an electric passenger car. According to Mr. Akutagawa's recollection, it probably lasted until

1924 or 1925. Mr. Ito told me that it took thirty minutes from Forestville to Sebastopol. He remembers that he took the street car to shop in Sebastopol. He got off at where is now Carlson Clothing store (post office before), and ran to Purity grocery store (now Imperial Savings). The flower shop in front of the post office (now) used to be the terminal station. Behind it, was a lot where they loaded and unloaded freight.

Main Street was all paved up to where the Methodist Church is. Healdsberg Street was bare dirt. Automobiles came into the town around 1920, and the Taniguchi family and the Ito family replaced their buggies with Ford trucks. The emergence of cars was probably a main cause for the disappearance of the street car.

The old locations of the town's offices and shops are: City Hall has been sitting where it is presently. The post office was where Carlson is. The Chamber of Commerce had a new office in 1926 on the corner of Bodega Highway and Petaluma Avenue. The corner used to be ^{an office} ~~"Ninon Hall"~~ owned by the Japanese community. The Chamber of Commerce recently moved out and replaced by Sebastopol Realty. All the informants remember the banks well because of their transactions with them. New Sierra National Bank used to be Bank of America, and was First National Bank previous to that. Bank of Sonoma County has been probably the oldest and largest in the town. It hasn't changed its location.

Imperial Savings came in after the Purity store moved out.

As for hospitals, there was one across the Methodist Church on Main Street, where Mr. Taniguchi received an appendicitis operation. It does not exist anymore. Hillside Clinic in front of Safeway was there in 1939, when the Ito family's second son was born there. Their first son was delivered in 1934 by Dr. Imory at their home. The doctor had a clinic by Parkside Grammar School. The child delivery at home was legal at that time, and in fact, most of my informants called a doctor and a nurse to their house. It sometimes occurred that husbands performed the task, but only in an emergency. The practice of midwifery was common among the Japanese in big cities, but not here.

All the interviewees agreed ~~to say~~ that the town hasn't changed much except that shops and offices were remodeled or relocated or replaced at least once. Mr. Hills of Pease Drugstore at the corner of Main and Bodega informed me that his store was there for forty-some years and the oldest in the town. Mr. Taniguchi said the town is smaller now because the area between Analy Drugs and the Methodist Church was filled with stores along the side of the street. Mr. Morita explained that the reason for the relatively few changes was that people went to Santa Rosa to shop, especially after cars came in.

owned a grocery store by the Chamber of Commerce behind a flower store (Gwen's Flowers). He remembers it