

TAKANOSHIN DOMOTO

My father, Takanoshin Domoto, was among the very early Japanese to go^{to} America to live, to work, to make a dream come true. The closed door policy of the Tokugawa regime forbade Japanese from emigrating and it was not until 1885 that the government authorized emigration. The 1882 U.S. policy to exclude Chinese laborers became an impetus to recruit labor from Japan. The 1890 U.S. Census records 2,000 Japanese in the United States. Takanoshin was among the 2,000 Japanese.

The Domoto family was a complex of families living in Uchita-machi (town), Aza Higashi-01 (area), Tanaka-mura (county), Wakayama Prefecture (Formerly called Kishu). 和歌山県田中村字東大井打田町
The Kishu area was under the umbrella of Mt. Koya, the headquarters of Tendai-shu with about 150 temples up in the clouds.

Women were not permitted to go up Mt. Koya until recently.

The Kii River flows along the base of Mt. Koya through farm land and tangerine hills directly west to Wakayama city, the seat of the Kishu branch of the Tokugawa family. About 12 miles up Kii River from Wakayama city was Uchita-machi. The Kii River was the famous transportation route.

The Domoto complex consisted of the Honke-Domoto (Main stream Domoto) and to its side the Higashi-Domoto (East Domoto) which branched off to the Sakaya-Domoto (Wine dealer Domoto), Kita Domoto (North Domoto) and Inkyo-Domoto (Retired Domoto). Their ancestors were tondenhei, Buddhist priests turned soldiers and settled as farmers. When Matsue, my mother, made her first call on the Domoto family, she was surprised to see a spear, a javelin, a halberd over the entrance and a hinawaju (Western gun) as decoration in the tokonoma alcove, knowing that farmers were not permitted to have arms. The gate, the house, the furnishings were remnants of

after thinking the matter over. *said the priest.*

When the doors of Japan were opened to the West following a 300 years Tokugawa government closed door policy, the motto was, "Learn about the West", "Copy the West", "Become like the West". With tremendous zeal the country launched forward. On the ship America Maru which sailed 1871 carrying the Iwakura Mission to renegotiate the unequal treaty of 1854, there were at least 140 ryōgakusei (students going abroad to study) including five little girls age 8 to 15. Young men were sent abroad to gather information, learn about the culture and bring back their most recent technology, so Japan might catch up. Those who went to America mostly went to the East. As a result information that came back to Japan was about life in Eastern America. It was a land that had gained its independence from Europe, it was a religiously oriented country, it was a vast extending country full of opportunities, it was a land where dreams could materialize. There was a rapid influx of things and ideas from Europe and America especially 1870-1890 and was called the Rokumeikan Period

In Kita-Oi area there was an eager young man, Honda Waichiro, who secretly left home, went to Tokyo to learn about this new world. Fortunately he was able to study under Fukuzawa Yukichi, the founder of Keio University, and met with many of the new thinkers. After a few years he returned wanting to educate the young men in Kishu. He opened a juku (tutoring school) in Negoro 根来 and later moved the juku to the Honda home in Kita-Oi. It was called Kyoshugakuryo (共修学舎). The Hondas and Domotos were related, Honda Waichiro's sister being the wife of Domoto Kichinoshin, Takanoshin's eldest brother. Naturally Takanoshin heard much about the juku and was strongly attracted. Though it

was quite a trek, he often went there after school. To this juku often came an American missionary, J.D.Hail, whom Waichiro highly respected. There were two Hail brothers who came from Illinois as missionaries in early Meiji. J.D.Hail was assigned to Wakayama area. His contact with the juku served Hail's purpose well as young men gathered there. Hail came regularly and talked about a different world, America, and he talked about the Christian way of living in America. These eager country boys were absorbing America from a live American. From Hail's side he had fertile soil in which to plant Christianity. At his first baptismal there were seven young men who accepted Christianity and among them was Takanoshin. All seven were contacts made through the juku. Their names are -

本	本	三	三	三	三	堂
多	多	谷	谷	谷	谷	本
和	万	仙	仁	華	謙	榮
一	元	一	元	一	助	元
郎	助	郎	助	一	助	進

Attracted by the image of America, the first student at Kyoshugakuryo to go to America was Mitani Kokichiro in Meiji 16 1883 followed by Takanoshin and his younger brother Kanetaro in 1884, Meiji 17.

of a comfortable past. It was evident that the Domotos had been prosperous country folks with large land holdings.

Takanoshin was born November 3rd probably in 1864, in the Kita Domoto family. His father, Kaichiro, was the 3rd son in the Higashi-Domoto family and established the Kita-Domoto. His mother was Toyono. Takanoshin was the 2nd son of 6 boys and 2 girls. His mother died comparatively young, so Onui, the eldest daughter brought up the children. I have written 'probably 1864' because when Takanoshin made his first visit home in 1895 (Meiji 28) Onui asked him how old he had become. When Takanoshin gave his age, she said, "I thought age was a thing that increased one every year but perhaps things are different in America that you should have become three years older than your elder sister".

From his early years Takanoshin was different from the others. To begin with, he did not have the physique required for the rough life of a farmer. Not much to be proud of as a farmer boy. Where as his younger brother, Kanetaro, was robust and known as the village strong boy. He over-shadowed Takanoshin who was quiet and tended to enjoy thinking. One early morning Onui became aware of the sound of water splashing at the well. There was Takanoshin naked, pouring buckets of cold water over himself. She did not interfere. This continued every morning. He was carrying out a vow for some thing, it became evident. Takanoshin fell in love with a thin red lacquered post at the temple and he made a vow of 100-day prayer. On the 100th day he took a saw and cut off this post. It was not difficult for the priest to find the culprit as Takanoshin was proudly carrying around his long coveted red stick. On being questioned by the priest he said "I kept my 100-day promise and Buddah allowed me to have this." "You have earned it. It is yours"

The farmers in Wakayama Prefecture had been troubled with blight. 1883, Meiji 16, turned out to be a traumatic year, a complete failure of crops. The lesser farmers, those cultivating one cho or less were exempt from paying tax but the Domotos with 8 cho farm land could not qualify for benevolent treatment. As other large land owners were caught in the same situation, land price dropped. For one tanbu as collateral only 25yen was available. In order to meet the Domoto share of allotted taxation the Domoto finances tilted heavily.

Takanoshin watched his family finances going down hill. He felt a strong responsibility. But what could he do. He decided to consult Honda Waichiro whom he respected so highly. It was Waichiro's suggestion that he talk the matter over with Hail. Some where in the conversation between Hail and Takanoshin, the idea of going to America took root. It is conceivable that lacking physical strength he wanted to ^{try} some thing different. For such a daring adventure the family asked him to take Kanetaro, the strong boy, along to assist him. The Domoto family could not have paid for two ship fares at that time. I surmise that Hail taking a special interest in young men of Kishu, some how through Christian contacts obtained two steerage passages. They boarded the S.S. Oceanic and arrived in San Francisco November ¹⁸ 1884, Meiji 17. Takanoshin was 20 and Kanetaro was 17. According to Mrs. Reischauer's book "Samurai and Silk" the S.S. Oceanic was one of four 2,000 ton paddle-wheel steamships owned by Pacific Mail and Steamship Company of America and took 3.5 weeks to cross the Pacific Ocean. The steerage passage was a single large hold with no port holes and with hammocks strung in three tiers. The floor was sprinkled with red peppers to counteract the stench. The steerage fare was 270 yen.

Having known only the Kishu country life of may be a ten mile radius, even before arriving in America he met surprise after surprise. He wrote home, "A line of row houses on wheels running on a track with smoke coming out of the front is a train".

The first night in America was full of awe. After the crowded smelly quarters in the hold of the Oceanic, they had a room to themselves. There was a soft tatami size (3' X 6') raised section which he interpreted as a Christian alter. Being a country where people practiced the Christian principles, he decided they could afford to give that much space for the alter. So grateful to have arrived in America, He rolled himself in his blanket and slept on the floor as close to the alter as he could get. He was to learn that his alter was a place to sleep called a bed.

He immediately looked up two predecessors from his village area, both of whom were at the Fukuin-Kai (Gospel Society) at Golden Gate and Tyler Street. They were Mitani Kokichiro who had studied at the juku, Kyoshugakuryo, and left for America the year before and Date who had left the village in 1872, Meiji 5, and gone to Hokkaido and there met an American agricultural engineer whom he accompanied to America. In America he studied at a theological seminary and became an ordained minister. The Fukuin-Kai started as a Bible class for Japanese men in the late 1870s and served as a gathering place for the early Japanese as most had Christian contacts. Through the Fukuin-Kai Takanoshin and Kanetaro on the third day after arrival in San Francisco were hired as house boys in separate homes. Kanetaro being the robust farmer boy was not suited for house work. Hearing that in Seattle area there were jobs handling lumber, he joined that group immediately and left for Seattle.

For two years Takanoshin moved from job to job learning the American way. At one house the mistress demonstrated peeling a potatoe and she went out. He did not understand how many potatoes he was to peel. Conscientiously he continued peeling. By the time she returned in the late afternoon, he had peeled the whole sack of potatoes that stood in the kitchen. At another home the mistress pointed to the windmill. He looked up and saw it was not moving. Thinking that she wanted him to keep that windmill moving, he ran out and up the windmill and started pulling. Soon there was a swarm of people below yelling at him. From their gestures he guessed that he was to come down. A more serious mistake was when he noticed that the mistress of the house was taking a bath. As a dutiful servant he went in to scrub her back. The husband chased him with a gun and shot at him. Luckily it missed. He had to send an interpreter to explain that in Japan it is the duty of a servant to scrub the back of bathers, male or female. At one point he was hired at the Sutro Estate as a day laborer to weed the lawn. He was assigned to lawn which sloped to the Pacific Ocean with the American flag in plants. Daily he could see the ships going in and out of the Golden Gate. Overcome with homesickness he uprooted the plants and replanted a Japanese hinomaru flag. Of course that was the end of that job. But noticing that one of the head gardeners was an understanding Japanese, he made arrangements for Kanetaro to be hired since he has a farming background. So when Kanetaro returned from Seattle, he worked for the gardener at Sutro Estate and there got his training for the future nursery of his own. Ships going in and out of the Golden Gate became an unconscious goal that kept leading Takanoshin to bigger things.

Young Japanese men were gradually increasing in San Francisco. There was a need for a place where they could meet fellow countrymen, speak in their own language, exchange experiences and comfort each other. On the urging of Dr. Earnest Sturges who took a personal interest in the welfare of the young Japanese, in 1886 Date Takanoshin Domoto and Yabe Shinsaku started the Nihon Kirisutokyo Seinen Kai (The Japanese Young Men's Christian Association) on Mission Street. The early arrivals were mostly men who had come through Christian influences or arrangements. Their contacts were Christian. In the beginning the Fukuin-Kai (Gospel Society) served an important role. As the numbers increased the character of these gatherings began to change, and part of the group in 1892 moved to Haight Street and thereafter became known as the Haight Street Seinen Kai (Haight Street Young Men's Association). No doubt there were other groups. Each served as an important gathering place for lonely young men away from their home country, eager to learn a new way of life. In 1885 Kikumatsu Togasaki, the well known Christian business man and Kyutaro Abiko, the publisher who used his newspaper, Japan American News, to put into practice in America his Christian ideals, arrived and in 1888 Kinji Ushijima (George Shima) who became the millionaire potatoe king arrived.

日本.
キリスト教
青年会
明治19

{ 伊達多伸
董本 菅之進
矢部 新作