

CHAPTER IV

THE JAPANESE IN AGRICULTURE

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incomplete

The importance of agriculture to the Japanese as a means of livelihood has already been pointed out. In 1940 some 22,000, or 45 per cent of the Japanese workers in California, Washington, and Oregon were employed in agriculture.¹ They operated 6,118 farms and 258,074 acres of farm land on the coast. The geographical distribution of these farms approximated that of Japanese population. In California there were 5,135 farms embracing 226,094 acres, while corresponding figures for Washington and Oregon were 706 farms with 20,326 acres and 277 farms with 11,654 acres, respectively. In relative distribution California farms and acreage comprised 84 per cent and 88 per cent, respectively, of the total number and the acreage of Japanese-operated farms on the Pacific Coast.

More than fifty years ago the Japanese began their struggle to achieve their present status in agriculture. Like many other

1. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration. National Defense Migration; Fourth Interim Report (House Report 2124). 77th Congress, Second Session, Findings and Recommendations on Evacuation of Enemy Aliens and Others from Prohibited Military Zones, May, 1942. p. 104. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1942.

immigrant groups, they started at the bottom of the "agricultural ladder" as farm laborers. ~~As early as~~ ^I in the early eighteen nineties Japanese were observed working in the fruit orchards of the Sacramento and Santa Clara valleys, the vineyards of Fresno, the sugar beet fields of Salinas Valley, and the marshy delta region near Stockton. Soon after 1900 they ~~became~~ ^{found employment} also employed in the citrus orchards and vegetable farms of southern California. Once farm employment was secured by the pioneers in a district, other Japanese soon followed. ~~As the number of Japanese in the district increased rapidly, they found employment in a greater number on ranches and farms.~~

In these early years the Japanese were favorably regarded by agriculturalists in the Pacific Coast states, particularly in California, and became a reliable and convenient source of cheap labor. The completion of the transcontinental railroads had opened vast markets in the Middle West and the East for western agricultural products. Large profits from the marketing of specialty crops attracted more and more farmers to the production of these crops. Irrigated acreage had been increasing, and more land had been

converted to intensive farming from the production of general crops. Specialization, however, called for large capital and an abundant supply of cheap, and highly mobile labor. Mobility was necessitated by great seasonal fluctuations ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ regional labor demands. For decades Chinese labor had been much in demand and predominated in many agricultural sections of the West, but the Chinese exclusion law of 1882 ~~had~~ stopped the flow of new immigrants. ^{from agriculture} The gap created by the disappearance ~~of the Chinese from the labor~~ market, ~~due to death and old age, and by the rapid expansion of~~ intensive agriculture, was filled by the Japanese, who had begun to arrive at Pacific Coast ports in large numbers or who had been released from railroad and mine labor. These Japanese soon adapted themselves to ~~fit into~~ the Chinese system of labor and living conditions, ^{and} In some localities, ~~however, the Japanese not only~~ augmented the labor force, but also displaced Chinese and Caucasian laborers.

The majority of the newcomers had had farming experience before emigration from Japan and were, therefore, suitable laborers for

Ageing,
death, and
entrance into
city trades
family
depleted
other
ranks.

intensive ~~cultivation~~ farming. They were bachelors, young, active, and neat. They were accommodating and willing to work the hard, long hours required during peak seasons. ~~The employers found them~~ *And, in the beginning, they accepted* ~~satisfactory, because they were willing to accept~~ lower wages, put up with the crudest form of shelter and ~~would~~ board themselves.

Recruitment was a simple process for the employer. "All the employer needing "help" had to do was simply to telephone or write to a club or a camp or tell his Jap boss how many men were necessary; he then settled wages to be paid to the men with the labor-supplying agent, to whom the money was paid, and he, in turn, paid the men after deducting a commission, except in the case of the Jap boss."

"boss" and "gang" system
The development of the ~~system~~ *is* the pattern that had been inherited from the Chinese--~~was~~ *is* described ~~thus~~ *as follows*:

The unorganized
(Japanese farm laborers ~~were unorganized in the beginning, but~~ soon formed "gangs," directed by bosses. Sometimes these gangs became the nuclei of district clubs, to which members paid annual dues for the privilege of cooking, lodging, and hibernating when unemployed. The secretaries of the clubs maintained relations with local

2. Ichihashi, Japanese in the United States, p. 175.

employers and kept themselves informed through Japanese bosses of work opportunities in neighboring districts so as to direct intelligently the migration of the club members. Another outgrowth of the Japanese gangs were the camps run by Japanese bosses as a kind of headquarters for farm labor, the camp bosses supplying the local farmers with workers and directing the men elsewhere during slack seasons. Some of the larger farmers kept a regular "Jap boss" in their employ in order to round up an adequate supply of laborers for peak seasons.¹

Although
exploitative
in the
long run, 1

The system was ~~also~~ ^{had certain advantages to} advantageous to the Japanese immigrants, ~~who~~ ^{who} willingly ~~paid fees and commissions to the boss~~ ^{so long as} for they were unfamiliar with ~~conditions and~~ ^{working} ~~customs of America~~ ^{American} and were unable to speak English. Moreover, through the boss they were able to obtain steadier employment without individual effort and enjoyed the benefits of better wage scales due to ~~the~~ ^{his} skillful use of collective bargaining.

These contractors or bosses ~~held a position of~~ ^{attained} considerable power and prestige. They were able to control the disposition of the working forces to Caucasian farm employers and became the major job dispensers to the Japanese. They could realize enviable profits

1. Ibid., p. 67.

Check
Note: Footnote is same as No. 3 on p. 8.

not only from dues and commissions, but also from related services,
such as mess operation and sales ^{the} of daily necessities to the
laborers.

A Nisei described the early experience of his father ^{as} ~~in the~~
~~following words:~~ *follows:*

Most of the jobs that my father got in California
^{were} ~~was~~ as a farm laborer. At that time he didn't know a
single word of English so that he moved around with other
Japanese workers and one of the members who knew English
did most of the business transactions for the whole gang.¹

And elaborated upon the
~~An Issei recalled his early experience as a seasonal laborer~~
~~thus:~~ *and this:*

When I graduated grammar school, I was 17. I intended
^{high} to go to school but I did not have enough money. I did not
know how I could go to high school so I went down to Japanese
hotels to look for a job. There was a Japanese labor con-
tractor signing up men to work on farms in California. I
decided it was one way to make money so I signed up. You know,
the labor contractor is the only one who makes money. He
charges money from each person and all arrangements must be
made through him. He does not work if he has a good gang and
they make money.

The pay was only \$1.00 a day for farm workers, they did
not make much. Other workers were all Japanese who came to

1. Case History, No. 54.

Before the close of the nineties, however, the wages paid Japanese had begun to rise and the increase in their wages continued even when the influx of the members of this race was greatest.¹

By 1909, according to the survey of the Immigration Commission, the wages of Japanese had increased more than 50 per cent over those of fifteen years before. The rise is attributed to "prosperous times and an adequate labor supply under prevailing conditions, with new opportunities opened for them, and especially with restrictions upon their further immigration." It is claimed that after the restrictive measure went into effect "they . . . ceased to greatly underbid other laborers."² It is also reported that in order to drive successful bargains "strikes and boycotts, particularly at harvest time" were used by Japanese bosses.³ By this time Japanese in California agriculture probably numbered more than 30,000. They were reported in the production of almost all crops of intensive farming in California.

What
restrictive
measure?

1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 63.

2. Ibid.

3. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report, p. 67.

In the beet industry they number 4,500 of between 6,000 and 7,000 handworkers employed during the thinning season. They predominate and control the handwork in the beet fields of all except three districts in the State -- two in southern California, where they are outnumbered by the Mexicans, and one northern district, where they do not care to work and Hindus were the most numerous race employed in 1909. In the grape picking of the various parts of California they are also the most numerous race, some 7,000 or 8,000 being employed during the busiest season of a few weeks in the fall. They do practically all of the work in the berry patches of the State. In the various districts specializing in certain vegetables and on truck farms near the cities they do much of the work. Much of the seasonal work in most of the deciduous-fruit districts is also controlled by Japanese laborers.

Of the 4,000 extra laborers brought in to work in the orchards of the Vaca Valley during the summer of 1908, one-half were Japanese. About 2,000 of the 2,500 or 3,000 persons employed in the Newcastle fruit district at the busiest season in 1909 were Japanese. About 1,000 members of this race remain in the Pajaro Valley all year, while for the intensive work during the summer and autumn some 700 or 800 Japanese and about the same number of Dalmatians come into the district from other places. In the citrus-fruit industry of Tulare County a little less than one-half of the pickers are Japanese, while some 5,000 pickers in

southern California constitute more than one-half of the total number of citrus-fruit pickers in that part of the State during the busy spring months. Some 200 Japanese are employed regularly in the handwork on celery ranches in Orange County, while at the height of the transplanting season the number is increased to 600.¹

The predominance of Japanese labor in the production of many crops is shown by the survey undertaken in 1910 by the California Commissioner of Labor. The following table is based on a sample of 2,369 farms operated by Caucasians in select regions of intensive farming:²

Table

Japanese Laborers as per cent of Total Laborers in
Select Regions of Intensive Farming in California

	per cent		per cent
Berries	87.2	Citrus fruit	38.1
Sugar beets	66.3	Deciduous fruit	36.5
Nursery Products	57.3	Hops	8.7
Grapes	51.7	Hay and grain	6.6
Vegetables	45.7	Miscellaneous	19.6

In the decade 1900-1910 the Japanese were probably most aggressive in entering ~~into~~ agricultural pursuits and ~~most~~ ^{more} mobile in improving their status than any other time before or since. Many Japanese had begun to climb ~~up~~ the "agricultural ladder" -- from

1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol 23, p. 64.
2. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report, p. 68.

common labor to contract tenancy⁺⁵, share crop^{pers} arrangement, cash
tenancy^t, and finally to land ^{owners} ownership²⁾. The more successful club
secretaries, camp bosses, and Jap bosses were the first to attain
an independent status. Others were also encouraged to get out of
the ranks of common laborers.

We worked very hard. Our boss ~~talked to his men~~ and
told ^{us} ~~them~~ ^{we} if they worked like this ^{we} they would be worn out
and no good. He told ^{us} ~~them~~ to save money and buy land and
go out on ^{our} ~~their~~ own farm. He encouraged ^{us} ~~them~~ to go out on
^{our} ~~their~~ own. He looked for places where land was cheap.
He told ^{us} ~~them~~ there was some good land near Fresno ^{we} ~~they~~
should buy. The men more intelligent than others decided
to start their own farms and this is the reason why the
gang broke up. Later picture brides came, settled and
raised families. Some of the men later went to Imperial
Valley and were all pretty successful.

There were other Japanese gangs which did not do so
good. They worked hard all right but ^{were} not wise in planning
for their future. Many took to gambling and there were
always Japanese around looking for easy money. Some
opened gambling houses. During the winter they gambled
away all the money they earned. Lots of times they were
in debt and worked the next season to pay their debts.²

Under the contract system, the lowest form of tenancy, the

laborer is paid for his work per unit of land or product. For example, in the Watsonville area, the handwork involved in growing potatoes paid so much per sack harvested. In the berry patches in the same area, the system operated as follows:

One or more Japanese, often in partnership, entered into an agreement with the owner of a ranch or ranches to set out plants, at so much per acre, and to water, weed, hoe, pick, pack, load, and to do all of the "hand-work," at so much per chest of crops, to be paid by the owner when crop is sold. Contract prices naturally varied with market and labor conditions as well as with the age of plants. For example, the prices paid in the Watsonville district for 1908-1909 were as follows:¹

First year, setting plants, per acre	\$20.00
Second year, watering, weeding, hoeing, picking, packing, and loading, per acre	50.00
Third year, the same work per chest	1.50
Fourth and fifth years, per chest	1.75

This form of tenancy was, however, more advantageous to the owner.

The rate of compensation was usually agreed upon on an annual basis, in advance of the season, depending upon estimates of output, market prices, and labor conditions. If such compensation were based on the unit of land, the owner tended to fix the rate

1. Ichihashi, op. cit., p. 179.

on the lowest possible estimates of yields and prices. If on a production basis, on the other hand, he calculated the rate on the basis of the minimum market price that the crop could command. The owner was on the whole in a better bargaining position for he could utilize the rationale that he must assume the risk of uncertainty of production and prices. The contractor therefore could not share the profits realized from yields or market prices higher than the estimates. "In the long run, the contractor's share has proved not materially different from the wages paid to ordinary 'hands' employed in the industry. Because of this fact, the contract system in most industries began to be abandoned by the Japanese."¹

When?

Share crop tenancy, the next higher system, was essentially similar to the contract arrangement, except the tenant's remuneration was determined by the profits netted from the marketing of products. The duration of such an agreement varied; in fruit growing it was usually for one year, and in strawberry growing, for four or five years. The share of the tenant also varied from

1. Ibid., pp. 179-180.

40 per cent to 60 per cent of the annual profits depending on the type of crop and the degree of participation by the landlord in the cost of production. Share cropping in various forms is described as follows:

The landowner provides all necessary equipment, except, perhaps, crates needed for shipping, does the work with teams or hires it done, possibly pays the wages of a part or all of the employees, manages the business in all of its details, sells the products and collects the selling price, and shares this with the tenant after all bills have been paid. Much of the leasing of orchards about Vacaville and elsewhere in California and a considerable part of the leasing of land for ^{the} growing of sugar beets and of vegetables on an extensive scale takes this form and differs little in most respects from a contract for the hand labor for the season. . . . In still other cases the landowner furnishes all permanent equipment but very little of the other capital required, and the tenant does all of the work or hires it done, many of the details of management, but few of the details of marketing the product passing into his hands, and the crop is shared between the contracting parties. Much of the leasing of orchards in the Newcastle district, of land for growing sugar beets in several localities, and of some strawberry patches about Watsonville takes this form. In still other cases the share tenant provides some,

possibly most, of the equipment.¹

It closely Cash tenancy *in its terms* varied; *one of the various forms* *very much* resembled the essentials of share cropping; another was independent of owner control. The difference of the former from share cropping was the cash payment of a specified amount for rentals and the assumption of all the risks involved in farming and marketing. This form was commonly practiced in the leasing of fruit orchards and was generally of one year's duration. Sometimes the rent was paid in advance, but oftener it was paid "out of the sale of the first crop." In many instances of this variety, ~~in addition~~ the owner stipulated in the contract that he be hired to do certain jobs on the farm and be paid regular wages for the work. Frequently the crops were marketed in the owner's name. The owner thus retained a great deal of control as overseer of his orchards. For strawberry patches and truck gardens, however, leases were free from such owner controls and *ran usually* for a longer term. *In the former*, for instance, the lease covered five or six years.

The foothold of the Japanese in California agriculture

1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 80.

expanded rapidly during 1900-1913. That Japanese seasonal workers dominated the farm labor supply has already been noted. Corresponding progress was made as regards Japanese farm holdings. The Census for 1900 reported only 39 Japanese-operated farms covering 4,698 acres.¹ They, however, made great strides in a short time in expanding their farm operations. A Japanese source reports the following ~~data on~~ ^{found in} the acreage of farm holdings under various forms of tenure:²

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1. The Immigration Commission reports that "the acreage of small subdivisions of farm under lease, and not included in these figures, was very small." (Reports, vol. 23, p. 79.)
 2. Japanese-American Yearbook, cited in Ichihashi, op. cit., pp. 184 and 193. It is to be noted that the total acreage in the table does not check with the sum of its parts. These figures must be used with great care when compared directly with Census data. Japanese sources tended to exaggerate their farm holdings. The Census, on the other hand, was more prone to undercount the holdings. The Census, for example, did not include certain classes of tenants "such as those doing a part of the farm work and sharing the products or receiving a price agreed upon." (Millis, op. cit., pp. 131-132.)

The data indicate that both the total farm acreage and the total acreage under lease by the Japanese multiplied more than four times during the eight-year period, 1905-1913, while the acreage of Japanese-owned farms increased almost eleven times. In total farm acreage the greatest increase occurred during 1905-1907 and during 1910-1913, while the same pattern of expansion applied to Japanese-owned acreage. The greatest increase of acreage under the share cropping arrangement took place during 1905-1907, but ^{between 1906 and 1907} that under cash lease during 1908-1910. ^{between 1908 and 1909} Although separate data under both these types of lease are not available for 1910-1913, it is estimated that the increase was proportionately as great as that of the total acreage under all forms of lease tenancy for the period. The acreage under contract agreement, on the other hand, increased almost seven times in the five year period 1905-1910 at an irregular rate, probably showing high sensitivity to changes in labor conditions and market prices. From documentary evidence, too, it is learned that these farmers had, on the whole, graduated from the rank of common laborers and had passed through

What
about that
1913 figure?
Is it
reasonable?
Where
did you
get it?

various stages of tenancy before becoming ultimate owners.

The vigorous activities of the Japanese to establish a more permanent position in agriculture, and, once becoming operators, to reach a more stable tenure status can be attributed to many factors. First, the desire to rise from the rank of common laborers was great. The Japanese immigrant, like other immigrants in general, were young and ambitious; they had come to America to "get rich quick" and return home. Most of them were either farmers or from farming families in Japan, and this experience was easily adapted to intensive farming in California. In agriculture there were great possibilities, for progress was easy and rapid; in addition, farm products were commanding profitable prices. Many stories of successful Japanese pioneers in farming were told, often with legendary exaggeration, and the more venturesome late arrival calculated that he too could attain success. As a common laborer his income was meager and limited, but becoming an entrepreneur would be the major step toward realizing his ambition. Independent status also meant prestige, for he would then be an employer of other Japanese. In contrast, mobility in industrial and trade jobs

was very much restricted because of racial discrimination. Only under Japanese employers could he advance above the unskilled labor class. To achieve entrepreneurial independence in city trades or occupations he faced severe language and training handicaps.

The acquisition of farm tenancy also meant for him a settled residence and steady employment throughout the year, in comparison to ~~constantly~~ ^{adequately} being on the move and ~~period of idleness incidental~~ ^{"hibernating" in} to seasonal labor. ~~The farmer~~ ^{operating tenant} could ~~now~~ lead a more normal life.

He could be reunited with his family, or, if a bachelor, he could get married and establish a home. Frequently, whenever agitation for exclusion of Japanese or for the restriction of farm lease and ownership to them became louder and more threatening, they accelerated their efforts to get in under the wire and obtain security in agricultural pursuits. The large increments of increase both in the lease acreage and in the ownership acreage during 1905-1907 are attributable not only to the prosperity of 1905 but to fear engendered by such adverse events and hostile public sentiment that culminated in the Gentlemen's Agreement. Fear of the possibility of alien land legislation spurred the purchase and lease

Financial returns and other advantages, too, were attractive to the landlords. The eagerness of the Japanese to secure farm leases tended to raise the cash rental rate and depress the tenant's take in share cropping. In some instances the Japanese were willing to reclaim marshy land or to make improvements on lands.

There were other aspects that were lucrative, especially to the aging pioneers of western agriculture who wished to retire partly or entirely from active farming. In many cases the Japanese leased "only the orchards, or the 'beet land,' or the 'berry land,' or the 'vegetable land' on a farm" and the owner cultivated the rest of the farm. In these and other cases the owner continued to occupy the farmhouse, while the tenant was housed in a cheap cottage or in the laborer's bunk house.

the produce
The growth of shipping industry also contributed to the expansion of the Japanese in agriculture. By leasing an enormous ~~and~~ acreage of farm land, which was then subdivided and subleased

to the Japanese, shipping corporations guaranteed themselves a sufficient volume of business.

That little or no capital was required to begin tenant farming is self-evident from an examination of the various forms of contract or lease.

As already indicated, many, in fact most of them to begin with, have leased land for a share of the crop, the landlord supplying all or practically all of the equipment. This is especially true in all localities where much seasonal labor is required and the Japanese are the predominant element in the labor supply. In these localities not only have the farmers provided most of the necessary equipment, but have also frequently provided the money necessary to pay current expenses, so that the tenant required no capital at all. Moreover, in the production of sugar beets the beet-sugar companies have ordinarily advanced a part of the necessary capital. At Newcastle and Wacaville, and in other localities devoted to the growing of fruit and vegetables, the commission merchants usually make advances of supplies for shipping the product, and of cash, taking a lien upon the crop in order to secure the loan. In several instances the competition between the shippers for business has led to the making of advances long before the crop matures, and in large amounts. About Newcastle it was found that some of the shippers had leased land and then

fluctuations in farmers' annual incomes. In prosperous years it worked to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. In years when the crop was poor or prices were low, the income could not cover all the payments for rent, loans, wages, and store bills. The commission merchants and the landlord were always the first to deduct outstanding loans and rent before the Japanese farmer could receive payment for his produce. Wages for the laborers were paid in full, as a rule, because a good reputation could always assure him of a future labor supply. There were many cases, however, where wages remained unpaid for a long time, but resort to legal recourse was infrequent. Debts to ^{Japanese} ~~American~~ firms were usually taken care of, because their credit was more rigid and they were not hesitant about employing legal means for collection. Thus the payment of bills owed to Japanese merchants had the lowest priority. They were at best partially paid, if not at all, and the balances had to be carried along year after year and further credits granted until a better time. It meant that the retailer had to use up more working capital, if available, or had to ask for extension of time and more credit from the wholesaler. The Japanese merchants entered into partnership

operation of farms in effect, although at best sharing in profits no more than the amount of outstanding bills, and at worst, losing everything. This mode of loan and credit was still widely practiced in 1940 by Japanese farmers, and merchants who refused such credits were not patronized in favor of more lenient merchants.

"In Turlock there were about two Japanese stores.

There were always going broke. The owner of one of these stores used to go around and borrow money so that he could stay in business.¹

Not clear just what this means

The failure of many business firms in the depression years is largely traceable to this practice. Only in large cities could Japanese merchants escape from the risky credit system and operate on a cash-and-carry basis.

Despite the enactment of the alien land law,² the expansion of Japanese farm holdings gained impetus in the boom years of World War I, reaching a peak probably in 1920. Data obtained from Japanese sources, as given in the following table, indicate that the total acreage of Japanese-operated farms, including those under

1. Case History, No. 54.

2. The alien land laws will be discussed in detail in Chapter

productive importance of the Japanese as tenants and laborers in California agriculture, ownership was quite insignificant, amounting in acreage to one tenth of one per cent of the cultivated land of the state, five hundredths of one per cent of the assessed valuation, including improvements.¹ But, just as later, the rate of ^{natural} national increase in the 1920's was the basis of a prediction that the Japanese population would exceed that of the whites in California by 1949, so now the rate expansion of agricultural holdings in the early years of the century was thought to forecast that by 1922 "the Japanese will be in absolute possession of the agricultural resources of the State of California, and the white farmer will be in the same class as the woolly rhinoceros."²

+ 1. Millis, op. cit., pp. 215-216. Millis used state assessment rolls as the basis for these estimates. The Japanese American Year Book gives an acreage figure for ownership about twice as high as that cited by Millis. Even so, the proportion of Japanese-owned to total cultivated area would be only about two-tenths of one per cent, and all Japanese holdings (including the lowest forms of tenancy) were scarcely more than 2 per cent of the total.

+ 2. Bulletin Asiatic Exclusion League, November 1912, p. 267.
(Cited by Millis, p. 218.)

monopolies of the production of many commercial truck crops.

In 1941 they operated 205,989 acres for the growing of commercial truck crops, some 40 per cent of the aggregate state acreage devoted to the same purpose. The value of their crops was estimated to be between \$30,000,000 and \$35,000,000, i.e., about one-third of the value of all of California's commercial truck crops. In 1942 they accounted for almost all the snapbeans for marketing, the peppers and the strawberries, and most of the garlic, spinach, snapbeans for canning, cauliflower, celery, cucumbers, and tomatoes produced in the state.¹

1. Report of Lloyd H. Fisher. Printed in U.S. Congress, House. Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Part 31, p. 11815. It is stated therein that California produced more than 25 per cent of the Nation's total of truck crops.

contract agreement, increased from 300,474 acres in 1914 to 458,056 acres in 1920. The acreage under Japanese ownership for the same period showed an increase of almost 140 per cent from 31,828 acres in 1914 to 74,769 acres in 1920. The figures also indicate that a large portion of new acreage under ownership was acquired after 1918, an outgrowth of general optimism resulting from prevailing high prices, threats of more stringent anti-alien land legislation, and the investment of wartime profits in real property. Census figures confirm the trend revealed by the Japanese data. The former, however, reported a much greater change in the total acreage of Japanese farm holdings, an increase from 99,252 acres in 1910 to 361,276 acres in 1920. Similarly, the total number of Japanese-operated farms multiplied almost threefold, from 1,816 in 1910 to 5,152 in 1920.¹ An examination of the discrepancy in the rate of increase between the two sources gives some credence to the belief that many farmers who had formerly operated subdivisions had acquired entire farms and that

1. The estimate by the Immigration Commission, based on the data from the Japanese-American Yearbook, is 3,000-3,200 farms in 1909. (Reports, vol. 23, p. 76.) The Japanese Association of America reported 6,463 farms in 1918. (Statistics Relative to Japanese Immigration and the Japanese in California, p. 7). An explanation for such discrepancies has been given on p. above.

Where
Did we
get it?

greater independence and stability in agriculture through ownership and cash lease were achieved in this period.

In the nineteen twenties, however, Japanese farm holdings decreased in all aspects. The total acreage in 1929, according to the Japanese source, dropped almost to the pre-war level of some 300,000 acres, while the acreage under ownership declined to 57,028 in 1929 from 74,769 acres in 1920, a drop of 39.5 per cent. Several factors contributed to this decline: (1) overexpansion and speculative operations during and immediately following the boom years and subsequent failures or retrenchment; (2) the decline of prices in the twenties,¹ and (3) the enactment and enforcement of more severe anti-alien land laws in 1920 and thereafter. The Census, in contrast, reported a much greater rate of decline both in the aggregate acreage and the number of farms in the period 1920-1930. The decrease of the acreage was from 361,276 acres in 1920 to 191,427 acres in 1930, or 88.7 per cent, while that of the number of farms was from 5,152 in 1920 to

1. For example, annual index numbers of California fruit prices dropped from a high of 221 (average price for July, 1910 to June, 1915 = 100) in 1920 to 111 in 1923, recovered somewhat to 141 in 1925 and 147 in 1927. The index numbers again dropped to 118 in 1928, 104 in 1930, and 62 in 1932. See H.J. Stover, Annual Index Numbers of Farm Prices, California, 1910-1933, Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 569, College of Agriculture, University of California, Berkeley, Calif., 1934, p. 26.

3,956 in 1930. The difference between these two sources is revealing in demonstrating the effect of the anti-Japanese legislation. It is believed that illegal tenure through circumvention and evasion was common in many localities, but such a fact was obviously concealed from the Census interviewer. In these cases, the Japanese farmer generally reported himself as foreman or hired laborer. The Japanese data were, on the other hand, compiled from reports of various local Japanese Associations and Japanese Agricultural Associations, which, were in closer touch with the situation, and in more cases could give the true status of the farmer. It is significant that with respect to the acreage under Japanese management, which was within the law, there is little discrepancy between the two sources, the Census reporting 90,587 acres for 1930 and the Japanese reporting 104,560 for 1929. However, because lease and ownership were denied to alien Japanese, a wide difference is noted between the Census report of 26,152 acres under ownership and 74,688 acres under lease for 1930 and the Japanese claim of 57,028 acres and 166,762 acres for 1929, respectively.

In the period 1930-1940 the Japanese, too, felt the effects of

the national financial crisis. The price of fruits and truck crops reached the lowest level since 1910¹ and had not recovered by 1940. Failures and subsequent foreclosures of farms were not uncommon. The Japanese Association, however, claimed that the Japanese farmers suffered less during the depression years than the Caucasian operators. It reported the decline of aggregate Japanese acreage during the ten-year period as approximately 96,000 acres and that of acreage under ownership as about 15,000.² If this statement is accepted, it would mean that the general retrenchment in the late twenties and, as will be seen, the coming of age of the Nisei contributed greatly to the stabilization of Japanese farming in the trying years.

Contrary to the Japanese data, the Census reported for the corresponding period a net gain of 34,667 acres in the total acreage, 40,891 acres in the ownership and part-ownership³ acreage, and 1,179 in the number of farms. Significantly, however, the two

1. See p. , footnote.

2. The Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, op. cit., p. 199.

3. A part of the land is owned and the rest is rented.

sources are approximately in agreement about the total acreage for 1940, the Japanese source estimating it to be some 230,000 acres and the Census reporting 226,094 acres. Contradictory, yet more revealing, are the Census data with respect to net changes during 1930-1940 in the number and the acreage of farms under various tenure. Farms operated by Japanese managers decreased from 1,816 to 249, or a loss of 1,567, and the acreage decreased from 90,587 to 18,798, or a loss of 71,789 acres. Farms leased by Japanese, however, increased in number from 1,580 to 3,596, or a gain of 2,016, ⁱⁿ and/acreage from 74,688 to 140,253, or a gain of 65,565 acres. Such incredible changes can only be explained in terms of the alien land restrictions. It has been noted that the laws were a major factor for the undercounting of Japanese farm holdings by the 1930 Census. In the thirties, however, more and more Nisei, who were citizens by birth, reached their majority and could operate farms unhampered by legal obstacles that their parents had faced. Thus by 1940 most forms of illegal tenancy by alien Japanese were transferred to their Nisei children and no longer

was the concealment of true status necessary.

The majority of Japanese farm operators in 1940 were still tenants. In California, of 5,135 Japanese-operated farms, 3,596-- or 70.0 per cent--were under cash and share leases, covering 140,253 acres, or 62.0 per cent of the total acreage under Japanese. This is in sharp contrast to the overall ratio; the percentage of the number of farms under similar leases to the number of all farms in California was only 19.1 per cent in 1940. That is, three out of four Japanese farms were leased, while only one out of five California farms was leased.

The extent of farm operation under Japanese ownership was still small. Some 997 farms on 36,770 acres were owned, and 293 farms on 30,273 acres were partly owned. Full ownership represented 19.4 per cent and 16.3 per cent, respectively, of the total number and the total acreage under Japanese in the State, while part-ownership represented 5.7 per cent and 13.4 per cent. Included among the latter were the more successful, large-scale operators.

The geographical distribution of these farms within the State again followed the population pattern. There were 1,523 Japanese-

operated farms in Los Angeles County, constituting 29.7 per cent of the total, indicating that almost one out of three farms in California was located in the County. Sacramento and Fresno Counties followed, the former with 416 farms, or 8.1 per cent, and the latter with 412, or 8.0 per cent. Santa Clara, Orange, and San Joaquin Counties were next in order. In the part of the State south of the Tehachapi Range, Japanese farms numbered 2,200, or 42.8 per cent of the total. It is important to remember that the distribution coincided with the areas where intensive farming prospered.

There had been a southward shift in the relative distribution of these farms since the early days. Before 1910 most of the Japanese agricultural activity was located in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys, and the acreage of the Japanese-operated farms in the southern part of the State could not have exceeded some 11 per cent of the total acreage.¹ Farming in the southern part expanded rapidly in subsequent years and gained greater importance. In 1918 the number of Japanese-operated farms in the section constituted some 37.7 per cent of the total number of Japanese farms in California, and those in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys decreased in number.² In the nineteen twenties the growing of vegetables in the south expanded further, and the development of farming in the Imperial and Coachella valleys was particularly noteworthy. In the northern part, however, decrease in the acreage of sugar beets and rice was conspicuous. It was estimated that during the period 1923-1929 the acreage in the southern part of the State increased by approximately 22,000 acres and decreased in the northern

1. Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin-Shi, op. cit., pp. 170-172. It presumably included Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties besides the six counties usually referred to as southern California.

2. Ibid.

part by approximately 20,000 acres.¹ The Census for 1940 reported that 44.5 per cent of Japanese farms ^{were} was located in southern California, including Ventura and Santa Barbara counties.

Farms operated by the Japanese were always much smaller than non-Japanese farms in California. In 1940 the average size of Japanese was 44 acres, while the average of all farms was 230 acres, i.e., the former averaged only one-fifth of the latter. It is, of course, to be understood that the size of farms used for intensive farming in which the Japanese were engaged is smaller than that of general farming and varied greatly according to the crops. The great majority of the tracts devoted to strawberry growing, for instance, was from five to twenty acres. The size of truck gardens in Los Angeles counties varied anywhere from ten acres to sixty or seventy acres. Potato, lettuce, bean and asparagus farms were usually larger, running from 50 to 150 acres. Fruit orchards also varied in size, some of them 100 acres of more. There were, in addition, regional variations. In the irrigated desert region, embracing the Imperial and Coachella valleys, the average was

1. Ibid., p. 196.

reported to be 50.0 acres, and in the southern coastal region from Santa Maria to San Diego it was 28.5 acres. In the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys Japanese farms averaged 40.0 acres.¹

Farms owned by the Japanese were likewise small. With a few exceptions, these purchases had been made "in comparatively small tracts by men" who had successfully climbed up the agricultural ladder from the ranks of common laborers and tenants. They "had come to this country with little or no capital." They had been "assisted in making their purchases by the extension of liberal credit."² A survey of 44 farms made by the Immigration Commission in or about 1909 revealed the following valuation. These farms embraced 1,849 acres.

Four were worth \$500 but less than \$1,000, four, \$1,000 but less than \$1,500, eight, \$1,500 but less than \$2,500, fourteen, \$2,500 but less than \$5,000, five, \$5,000 but less than \$10,000, seven, \$10,000 but less than \$25,000, and two more than \$25,000.³

Few data are available on the average size of the Japanese-owned farms, and the accuracy of those available are questionable. The

1. U.S. Army, Wartime Civil Control Administration, "Final Report of Farm Security Administration, for period, March 15, 1942 to May 31, 1942," (Mimeographed), Table 4.

2. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 85.

3. Ibid.

County Assessors' reports in 1912, for instance, reported data that would make the average size of those farms included as 38.5 acres.¹

9 The report by the Japanese Association of America for 1918 indicates that the average for the year was 57.5 acres.² A comparison of these two averages gives further evidence to the trend of agricultural expansion, already noted, during and after World War I. In 1940, however, the average size of Japanese-owned farms, according to the Census, was 36.9 acres, indicating the trend of retrenchment and the appearance of legal obstacles against the expansion of farm property that had taken place during the intervening years. The following table based on select samples from the WRA survey gives the distribution by size of Japanese-owned farms in California in 1942:

Some

1. Fourteenth Biennial Report of the California Labor Commissioner, p. 633. Cited in Millis, The Japanese Problem in the United States, op. cit., p. 132.

2. Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, op. cit., pp. 174-175.

It shows that about two out of three farms owned by the Japanese were 29 acres or less, and almost all farms were 100 acres or less in size. The acreage total was almost equally divided between those owning 49 acres or less and those owning 50 acres or more. An examination of these two percentage distributions together conveys a situation where most of the Japanese owned small tracts and a few of them owned very large tracts, probably running into hundreds of acres per property.

The importance of Japanese to California agriculture was founded on their specialization in certain intensive crops. The position of their farming in the total picture was insignificant. In 1940 the Japanese operated only 3.9 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively, of the number and the acreage of all farms in the State. Their status in the production of commercial truck crops, however, was significant and indispensable, in some instances virtual monopolies because of their specialization.

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The concentration of the Japanese in certain products had shifted over a period of years. The decrease of Japanese participation in the production of rice and sugar beets has already been mentioned. Acreage devoted to the growing of asparagus, onions, and grapes declined similarly since 1918 in relation to the State acreage of respective crops. The increase of Japanese acreage for the growing of beans and peas in proportion to the State acreage is noteworthy, while strawberries had always been a Japanese grown crop.

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The supply of farm labor had changed drastically in composition during these years. As more entered entrepreneurial positions in agriculture, the number of Japanese available for farm labor diminished. As early as 1929 the number of Japanese seasonal workers in California decreased to some 3,000, and that of regular farm employees to some 7,000.¹

1. Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, op.cit. p. 197.

County). The first lease of land is said to have been made in this area in 1892. Until the turn of the century only a handful of Japanese were found in agricultural pursuits. Soon the scarcity of attractive jobs and the hardships of strenuous physical work on railroads and in lumber mills forced the Japanese to seek agricultural jobs in ~~an~~ greater numbers. In 1909 some 3,000 were occupied in agriculture, concentrated in the two Counties. Some 200 Japanese were employed as seasonal workers in the sugar beet fields in the eastern part of the State and ^{others} in vegetable farms in Yakima Valley.¹

In Washington the Japanese found the expansion of their foothold in agriculture much more difficult. Unlike California where the Japanese filled the vacuum in the labor supply created by the expansion of intensive farming and the withdrawal of Chinese laborers, there were no ready-made labor demands of an appreciable degree. There had also been an insurmountable legal obstacle to possible progress inasmuch the State Constitution had always prohibited aliens from ^{owning} real property. The Census for 1910 reported 316 farms with a total acreage of 9,412 acres,² almost all under cash

1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol 23, pp. 69-70.

2. Census Bulletin 127, p. 44. Cited in Millis, op. cit., p. 89.

lease.¹ Their farm holdings expanded in the boom years during and immediately following World War I, and increased in 1920, according to the Census, to 699 farms and 25,340 acres. Again almost all these farms were under lease, and those under Japanese ownership numbered only 27. In the nineteen twenties, due greatly to the enforcement of the more stringent alien land law passed in 1921, their holdings decreased appreciably. In 1930 there were 523 farms totaling 12,632 acres.. Farm tenure was, however, more diversified than before; the portion of the farms under tenancy declined to 46.7 per cent, while those under Japanese managership vastly increased to constitute 34.4 per cent of the total number of Japanese-operated farms in the State. Those under ownership also increased to 16.6 per cent of the total. In the thirties, as in California, a reversal of this trend took place; an increase in leases and a decrease in managership. In 1940 the Japanese operated 706 farms and 20,326 acres. Of them only 10 farms with 363 acres, or 1.4 per cent and 1.8 per cent of their respective totals, were under managership, while 511 farms with 12,611, or 72.4 per cent and 62.0 per cent, were

1. Millis, op. cit., p. 89, footnote.

under tenancy.¹ Japanese-owned farms increased to 123 with a total acreage of 4,937 acres.

1. In comparison, the number of tenant-operated farms of both Japanese and non-Japanese of the total number of farms in Washington in 1940 was 17.7 per cent. (Adon Poli, op. cit., p. 13.)

Almost all of these farms were located in King, Pierce, Kitsap, and Yakima Counties, the overwhelming majority being in White River Valley (King and Pierce Counties). Their size was very small, averaging only 29 acres compared to an average of 186 acres for all farms in Washington. The average size of farms under ownership was 40.1 acres. According to the selected samples obtained by WRA (See Table.) almost 90 per cent of the Japanese-owned farms were 29 acres or less in size, representing, however, a little more than half of the total ownership acreage. This would indicate that a few Japanese possessed land of appreciable size.

As in California, the number and the acreage of Japanese-held farms were insignificant and meager as compared with those of all farms in Washington; it constituted less than one per cent of the number and a little more than one-tenth of one per cent in acreage. Due to their specialization in commercial truck crops, their contribution to Washington agriculture was considerable. It was estimated that they grew over \$4,000,000 worth of produce annually.¹ Their

1. The estimate by the Japanese-American Citizens' League, Seattle. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report, p. 131.

concentration in certain crops is described as follows:

According to the Agricultural Marketing Service, they operated 56 per cent of the acreage devoted to truck crops in King County and 39 per cent of the acreage in Pierce County. In King County they produced 90 per cent of the beets and carrots, 80 per cent of the asparagus, cauliflower, onions, and late peas, and over 50 per cent of the cabbage, celery, lettuce, spinach, strawberries, snap beans, and cucumbers. In Pierce County they produced 90 per cent of all of the early cabbage, carrots, celery, lettuce, green peas, and beans. . . . In the Yakima Valley the Japanese were reported by the Japanese-American Citizens' League to have produced, during 1941, 15,000 to 20,000 tons of tomatoes, 16,000 tons of onions, 90,000 crates of lettuce, 3,000 tons of carrots, 225,000 crates of cantaloups, 60,000 tons of watermelons, and considerable quantities of peas, beans, and rutabagas.¹

Japanese agriculture in Oregon was very much similar to that in Washington, although much smaller in scale. In the nineteen hundreds a movement from railroad labor to employment on farms was also conspicuous in Oregon. In 1909 the Japanese farm laborers were found on truck and berry farms near Portland (Multnomah County), on berry farms and fruit orchards near Hood River, and on truck gardens

1. Ibid., pp. 131-132.

and in hopyards near Salem. These workers numbered less than 1,000, and worked mostly for Japanese farmers.¹ The Japanese-held farms, according to the Census for 1910, numbered 83, embracing 4,608 acres. About three out of four of these farms were under lease, and about one out of five was owned by the Japanese. In the next ten years their foothold expanded rapidly, and the total acreage almost doubled. Japanese-owned farms also increased greatly to number 61. During the next few years before 1923, when the Oregon alien land law was passed, there was a great rush to acquire farms. "They were forced to pay the high prices of 1920 and early 1921"; and within several years after the purchase "many of them are reported to be in financial difficulty."² The Census data reveal very little change in the Japanese farm holdings during the period 1920-1930. In 1930 there were 264 farms with a total acreage of 8,001 acres. Of these 76, or 28.7 per cent, were owned by the Japanese. Those under lease numbered 163 farms, embracing 4,956 acres. In the nineteen thirties a general expansion of farm land is noted, although there was little increase in the number of farms operated

1. U.S. Immigration Commission, Reports, vol. 23, p. 68.

2. Mears, op. cit., p. 259.

by them. The total acreage in 1940 amounted to 11,645 for 277 farms, and 3,249 acres for 77 farms under ownership.¹ The acreage of the farms under lease also increased to 7,016, although the number increased by one to 77.

1. The total acreage of Japanese-owned farms in Oregon for 1930 is not available. However, the combined acreage for both wholly owned and partly owned farms was 2,257 acres.

The great majority of the Japanese farms were located in Multnomah County or its adjoining counties, the city of Portland at their hub. Their size averaged 42 acres as compared with an average of 291 acres for all farms in the state. The Japanese-owned farms also averaged 42 acres.

Japanese farming was a negligible factor in the agriculture of Oregon: it represented less than a half of one per cent of the total number and less than one-tenth of one per cent in the total acreage of all farms. As in other Pacific Coast states, their farming was concentrated on certain crops. It was reported that in 1941 more than a majority of the vegetables for fresh market, such as brussel sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, green peas, spinach, and celery were grown by the Japanese. It was also estimated that they raised in 1941 "approximately \$2,711,836 worth of produce of which about 85 per cent was shipped out of the State, the remainder sold for local consumption."¹

It is extremely difficult to determine the net earnings of Japanese farmers in recent years. Often many estimates were made

1. U.S. Congress, House, Select Committee Investigating National Defense Migration, Fourth Interim Report, pp. 135-138.

based on data on the value of crops grown by the Japanese.

Ichihashi, however, questions the reliability of such estimates.

Much has been written on this subject, accompanied by striking graphs which tend to exaggerate the financial success of Japanese farmers A statement such as "the Japanese produced \$58,213,000 in 1931, and \$45,000,000 in 1925," has been accepted by readers to mean that the Japanese producers have enjoyed the full benefit of these startlingly large sums of money, with consequent alarm, envy, jealousy, and what not. . . . By [such] a careless expression, i.e., without proper and necessary qualifications of his figures, [the person making the statement] author supports the current popular misconception of Japanese farming. It [is not] suggested that an accurate measure of the shares in these values going to the landlords and the Japanese tenants is possible; in fact, such measurements are exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to obtain, and it is for this reason that the present writer refrains from making any attempt to do so. But if one undertakes to write about these values, it is incumbent on him to make their meaning clear, especially in view of prevailing misconceptions; ^[however] one may point out facts relating to the nature of Japanese farming. . . . The Japanese cultivated 304,966 acres in 1925, and the value of the crops raised on the land thus controlled was \$45,000,000, or ~~\$1247~~ \$147.55 per acre on the average. But of the total acreage 189,671 or 62.7 per cent was cultivated under contract

and share tenancy; this part of cultivation will absorb something like \$28,215,000 of the \$45,000,000; and if tenancy is calculated on the basis of 50-50, then one-half of the value will accrue to the landlord or something like \$14,107,500. Thus even if we assume cash tenancy and ownership to mean what the terms strictly connote, this sum of \$14,107,500 must be deducted at once from the total sum of \$45,000,000, leaving a balance of \$30,892,500 to the Japanese farmers. On such calculations, the exaggeration suggested by \$45,000,000 is by something like 31.3 per cent. The writer feels confident that if more accurate statistics were available, the situation would be much less favorable to the Japanese.¹

Ichihashi points out that frequently the expenditures of these farmers had been much greater than ordinarily expected. That the Japanese usually paid higher rents to landlords has already been noted. Commission merchants or shipping corporations

who advanced money to the Japanese were without question the better bargainers of the two, simply because of their superior business knowledge, and the Japanese paid to them high interest charges both directly and indirectly, often failing to get the current market prices for their crops when such crops were mortgaged. The merchants, be they Japanese or American, who advanced them provisions, did so at prices

1. Ichihashi, op. cit., pp. 200-201.

from 10 to 20 per cent higher than the current market prices. Finally, the tenants had to pay their hired help higher wages because they were not to be paid until the entire work was completed. All these extra charges tended to push down the tenants' profit.¹

An early survey of the earnings of the Japanese farmers was made by the Immigration Commission. Of 647 samples,

432 reported that they had made a surplus over living expenses during the preceding year. Of the other 215, 114 were involved in a deficit while 101 reported that they had neither surplus nor deficit. The average amount of surplus realized was \$579.88; of deficit, \$561.02. Some of the gains were very large. Those of 31 of the 432 were less than \$100; of 92, \$100 but less than \$250; of 146, \$1,000 but less than \$2,500; of 14, \$2,500 or over. Some of the deficits also were large. Those of 5 of the 114 were less than \$100; of 27, \$100 but less than \$250; of 37, \$250 but less than \$500; of 23, \$500 but less than \$1,000; of 20, \$1,000 but less than \$2,500; of 2, \$2,500 or over. These figures must not be taken too literally, however, for the amount of surplus and deficit, especially in farming, is difficult to estimate. Moreover, and more important, no allowance is made for investmentsⁱⁿ/developing strawberry patches and asparagus and other crops which require two seasons before the plants begin to yield a remunerative harvest. The failure of the figures to

1. Ibid., p. 182.

make allowance for such cases greatly exaggerates the number who sustained deficits and increases the amount of deficits reported.¹

A recent publication in Japanese reported an estimate of the earnings and expenditures of Japanese farmers in California for 1917, one of the boom years. The following table was compiled from this information:²

		per cent
Products by Japanese farmers for 1917	\$55,000,000	100.0
Number of Japanese farmers	8,000	
Rentals	13,750,000	25.00
Planting and Cultivation	22,000,000	40.00
Harvesting and Packing	11,000,000	20.00
Subsistence	4,125,000	7.5
Net Profit	4,125,000	7.5
Average net profit	\$ 516	

There were a few Japanese who realized large profits and accumulated wealth. The story of the rise of George Shima, perhaps the most successful of all Japanese farmers, is now well known. The "potato king" arrived in San Francisco in 1889 and began his

1. Reports, vol. 23, p. 88.

2. Japanese Association of America, Zaibei Nippon-jin Shi, op. cit., p. 173.