

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Torahichi Tsukahara, 91, coffee and macadamia nut farmer, and former ranch hand and stone wall builder

"I was very happy and went to work for him when Asa-Boshi [Arthur Greenwell] asked me. The job at Greenwell was to weed, poisoning the guava, and also repairing the ranch pā [walls] where they were broken. And I worked there at Greenwell, no place else, ever after that."

Torahichi "Tiger" Tsukahara was born on March 20, 1890, in a farming village in Kumamoto-ken, Japan. As a youth, he completed five years of schooling and helped on the family farm.

Torahichi arrived in the islands in 1907. For three years, he did kachi kane, hō hana, and hāpai kō at Ka'u Sugar Plantation's Iseri Camp. In 1910, he came to Kona where he loaded sugarcane at Chong Camp, worked in the coffee lands, and contracted to build stone walls. This stay in Kona, lasting less than a year, was followed by a few years of work among Honolulu's stevedores and pineapple cannery workers.

Subsequently, Torahichi returned to Kona and made it his home. He began farming coffee on leased lands in Captain Cook and found employment, loading coffee and tending the stables, at the Captain Cook Coffee Company. The majority of his many years in Kona, however, were spent as a ranch hand employed by the Arthur Greenwell family.

Now retired, Torahichi regularly attends functions at the Kona Regional Senior Center and works his coffee and macadamia nut lands. He and his wife, Tsuyu, reside in Captain Cook.

Tape No. 9-16-1-80 TR
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
with
Torahichi Tsukahara (TT)
November 14, 1980
Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii
BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Mako Mantzel.]

MK: Interview with Mr. Torahichi Tsukahara at his home in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii on November 14, 1980. When were you born, Tsukahara-san?

TT: I was born on the twentieth of March, 1890.

MK: What is the name of the place where you were born?

TT: I was born at house number 1842 Aza-Nagatomi, Nishito-machi, Shimomatsushiki-gun, Kumamoto-ken.

MK: When you were growing up, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

TT: There were seven.

MK: Tsukahara-san, what number child, were you?

TT: Among the seven, I am the seventh; I was born in the year of tora [tiger] and since I was the seventh [hichi], my parents gave me the name of Torahichi.

MK: Oh, that's why you're named Torahichi?

TT: Yes.

MK: What was your parents' job then?

TT: My father died shortly after I was born. (pause) My father died on January 29, 1897, at the age of 54.

MK: So your father passed away when you were about seven years old?

TT: That seems right.

- MK: Before his death, what were their jobs?
- TT: They were farmers so they grew rice, wheat, dasheens, and sweet potatoes.
- MK: How many tsubo did they own then?
- TT: Although we were living in the country, they owned about six tan of rice paddies and four to five, or maybe three to four fields in addition to the rice paddies.
- MK: After your father died, your mother worked all by herself?
- TT: Yes. Mother, all alone. She took care of us until we left for Hawaii. And after I came to Hawaii, I wonder what year it was, next to Meiji era, March? September? It was on the eighth of September, in the third year of Shōwa [TT means Taishō] (1914), when my mother died at the age of 78.
- MK: Yes, it's written so. She died on the eighth of September in Taishō 3 (1914).
- TT: She was seventy-eight when she died. That was after I came to Hawaii.
- MK: Before she died, and when you were young, what was the village like?
- TT: Well, since it was a village of farmers, there were (pause) eight houses.
- MK: What kind of houses were those eight houses?
- TT: Ah, let's see, they were farmer's houses, so they were not fancy, but there were some good houses, even though they were in the country.
- MK: Since I haven't seen any houses like that, would you like to describe them for me?
- TT: Well, in Japan most houses are . . . there were three kawara-buki [tile-roofed] houses. And some had kawara [tiles] on noki [eaves], and the rest was covered with straw.
- MK: Were those houses near your house?
- TT: Yes. We lived close to each other. My uncle used to make butsudan, the house-like boxes for Buddha-figures. His younger brother was my father. The name of my uncle who made butsudan was Morihachi, and my father's name was Ryohei.
- MK: What sort of food did you use to eat then?

- TT: Well, in the old days rice and wheat for farmers, sometimes mixed with millet.
- MK: How would you compare your family with your neighbors on [matters like] jobs, food and housing?
- TT: I came to Hawaii when I was eighteen. And since I was young then, I don't know too well what the neighbors were eating.
- MK: How would you compare your family with your neighbors economically?
- TT: I don't know if we were better off or not, but I think we were quite wealthy for that time, considering it was in the country. But after my father died, my eldest brother spent lots of [the family's] money. So by the time I was coming to Hawaii, there was not as much money left as there had been in the old days.
- MK: Did you go to school when you were young?
- TT: My eldest brother was spending money fast and causing our inheritance to shrink. (And he'd sold our land, so) I had to listen to what all the kids would say to me, like this land used to belong to your family, and so forth. I didn't want to go to school because I was ashamed.
- MK: How many years did you go to school?
- TT: About five years.
- MK: Do you remember the name of the school?
- TT: Ah, (pause) I think it was called Tomachi school. We didn't call it a special name, the school in Nishito-machi, Shimomatsushiki-gun, Kumamoto-ken, we called it.
- MK: So you went to that school for five years. How were the teachers there?
- TT: There were teachers, whose names were Ito, Shingai, Tomoda, and (pause) there were others (pause), but I forgot the rest. (laughs)
- MK: There were a lot, weren't there?
- TT: There were (pause) about seven teachers in the school.
- MK: What was education like? In discipline, for instance?
- TT: I used to be scolded by the teachers since I sometimes didn't go to school. (laughs)
- MK: Hmm, hmm; what did you study in school?
- TT: Well, in school, nothing in particular, but for physical education, we used to do calisthenics, running and so on.

MK: Did you like physical education most?

TT: Yes, I liked it. I liked running and playing ball. I didn't do too well in writing, since I didn't go to school regularly and teachers used to scold me.

MK: What was the subject you disliked most in school?

TT: (pause) Let's see, what could that be. There were many I disliked. (laughter)

MK: What sort of things didn't you like?

TT: (pause) Anyway, my family's financial state was going downhill and the kids made fun of me. I went to school reluctantly.

MK: Reluctantly?

TT: And when I become more sure of myself, my mother bought me a cow, and I charged some money for the cow [for rent] and did some hauling on a wagon when I was sixteen or seventeen. Because things would not get better if I stayed in Japan, I asked my mother to send me to a foreign land, to Hawaii, where lots of people were going in those days. And she gave me permission without hesitation, saying, "Go, if you want to go." And she also said to go to Nagasaki, and if I passed the exam, she would give me the money for the boat fare. She asked me to send a telegram as soon as I knew that I had passed. Otherwise, she would worry that I had gone to a red-light district. Some people among those who didn't pass spent money on geisha. So when I passed, I sent a telegram immediately through my yadoya [inn]. Although my mother had sent the money, it couldn't reach my yadoya by the day the ship was leaving. I had to borrow the money from this yadoya, saying that the money had been sent, but had not yet arrived. And I got on the ship.

MK: How did you know about Hawaii?

TT: That was the end of the Meiji era, and I thought I wouldn't inherit much property even if I stayed in Japan. And the future didn't look too good. So I thought of coming to Hawaii, thinking I might be able to make my fortune.

MK: Did anybody tell you stories about it [Hawaii]?

TT: Yes. There were some people who were taking care of the paperwork for the people who wanted to come to Hawaii. They used to tell stories about Hawaii's being developed and there being some jobs that we might like.

So I came. And when I arrived at Honolulu, there were so many people, I went to a barber shop, and when the barber asked me, "Have you gone to school?" I said, "No, I just came here to work." Then he told me that the plantations had gotten stricter and the work was very hard. But since I had come to Hawaii already, I had

to go somewhere, even to an outer island. And somebody asked me if I wanted to go to Iseri Camp in Ka'u, Hawaii [the Big Island], since they were looking for people to work for them. I said that I would go, so I came to Ka'u.

MK: You were talking about [having] an inspection before you came to Hawaii, weren't you?

TT: Yes.

MK: Could you explain about the inspection before you go into [the] Ka'u [story]? What kind of inspection was it?

TT: When I went to the immigration office, Mr. Katsunuma checked my eyes, and then, I had to jump up onto this place. I passed the inspection by Mr. Katsunuma.

MK: That was the inspection at the immigration office in Honolulu?

TT: Yes. After I arrived at the immigration office.

MK: What about the inspection in Nagasaki?

TT: They also checked my eyes and checked me for typhoid.

MK: After passing the inspection in Nagasaki, you sent a telegram to your mother . . .

TT: And I asked for money.

MK: How much money was it?

TT: Well, around 70 yen, since the boat fare was about 70 yen then. But she sent a little bit more than that. I can't remember exactly, but the boat fare was around 70 yen, and the name of the boat was the Siberia.

MK: How was the trip on the Siberia from Japan?

TT: Nothing special.

MK: How long did it take?

TT: I got on at Nagasaki. It took two days to Kobe. And it took some time to Yokohama. It took about one week to get to Honolulu.

MK: What did you do on board during that one week?

TT: On board, for the first three days, we spent [the time] singing songs like "Rappa bushi," which was very popular at that time. But for the rest of the trip, after the sea got a little rough, we all got sick; we didn't find time to sing, since everybody was vomiting.

MK: Did anybody take care of those who were sick?

TT: Some among those who were on board, did. Luckily, I didn't get sick.

MK: Did you meet anybody on board during that week?

TT: Since those who got on board at Nagasaki were mostly from Kumamoto-ken -- although there were people from Kobe and Yokohama--I met people from Kumamoto, Mr. Tomita, Mr. Sakata, Mr. Hotta and Mr. Kandan, and we talked.

MK: What kind of talk?

TT: Well, (laughs) we were still kids then, I can only remember talking to them, but I don't remember what we talked about.

MK: Did you talk about Hawaii, what sort of place it would be and so on?

TT: Yes, we did. We were all afraid of the inspection at the immigration office in Hawaii since we would have been sent back to Japan if we didn't pass. That was in our minds, mostly.

MK: So you arrived at Honolulu, and passed the inspection at the immigration office, and you went to a barber and had a talk with him. And you decided to go to Ka'u. But why Ka'u?

TT: Because there were jobs in Ka'u, they needed somebody there. That's why.

MK: So what sort of paper work did you have to have to come to Ka'u?

TT: Paper work? The people from Ka'u who hired me did it all.

MK: What did they tell you?

TT: Mrs. Iseri asked me to work for her. And what's the name of the place in Ka'u? Anyway, I arrived there on a sugar boat which came to Honolulu. And I went to the plantation.

MK: Did you pay the fare?

TT: The fare? I think my boss paid it. I mean my employer.

MK: Did you go to Ka'u with your aikānes?

TT: Yes, I did.

MK: Do you remember the names?

TT: Tahei Morita, Kanda--this one I don't remember his first name--and Tomita, I don't remember his first name, either.

MK: What kind of work did you do at the Iseri Camp on Ka'u?

TT: I used to cut sugarcane and do hō hana. And since I was new at cutting cane, which was very thick, and not used to this cane knife, which was also big, I had to raise this knife high. And when it was windy, sometimes it used to bother the people working nearby, and they complained, calling me "new man." And this Mr. Iseri in Ka'u liked sumō very much. Although I was small, I used to practice, because I wanted to be strong and independent.

MK: You wanted to be strong so you practiced sumō.

TT: Yes. I wanted to be a better player.

MK: Did the practice help you work, cutting canes?

TT: Well, after I started playing sumō, well, how many could that be, it might have been 25 or 25, or even 30 sugarcanes that I could carry without any trouble, when I did hāpai kō.

MK: So when you were working on hāpai kō, did you take them to a truck?

TT: No, no, we didn't use trucks then. In Ka'u then, we called it flume cane. With water, you know? We used to carry sugarcane to the place where the flume was.

MK: Ah, that was your job.

TT: Yes.

MK: What time did you get up to start working, and what time did you finish working?

TT: Let's see, probably ten hours. I think it was from 8 [o'clock] to 4 [o'clock]. I don't remember, but it might have been eight hours, but not less. More than eight hours. People work eight hours nowadays. It must have been ten hours.

MK: How many days a month did you work?

TT: Well, when I worked hard, it was about 20 days. Sometimes 18 days. Since I was a bit molowā (laughs), it was pretty good when I worked 20 days.

MK: How was the pay then?

TT: At that time, the pay was \$22 if you worked for 26 days. So my pay depended on how many days I worked, according to the pay scale. But Iseri-san liked me, since he liked sumō, so he added a little money to my pay. He gave me more money.

MK: How did you spend your money, including this money you got from playing sumō?

TT: Well, then, I don't remember the figures very well. I paid the cook seven dollars, and [my] laundry was one dollar. I spent it all. I didn't save any.

MK: Talking about the cook, what sort of food did he prepare?

TT: The cook at that time prepared lots of different things to put in bentōs. Since we came from Japan, we were delighted when we saw something like salted salmon as our bentō okazu in our bentōs.

MK: Really. (pause) Tell me about your fellow workers.

TT: I don't think there were many young ones like me then. But I and two others used to go on donkey back to get some bananas at the Pākē's. So people used to call us "three musketeers on a donkey."

MK: From the Iseri camp in Ka'u to a Pākē's, where the banana store was . . .

TT: No, it wasn't a store, we went to a Pākē's where they grew bananas. We went all the way there on donkey back, but not to a store.

MK: Oh. I understand now. You mean you went to a Pākē's where they grew bananas.

TT: Nowadays you buy bananas at a store, but in those days we went to buy them where they were growing.

MK: How did you get what you wanted in Ka'u, where there weren't any stores?

TT: Stores, there was a Japanese store, Kawahara store it was, and a haole's store. They sent some people to take orders from us. We told the order-takers what we wanted.

MK: What kind of things did you buy from these stores?

TT: It's a long time ago. I can't remember what I bought then.

MK: Were there workers called luna then?

TT: Yes, there were.

MK: Were there any luna in the Iseri Camp in Ka'u?

TT: They were Japanese, their names were Honda and Maemoto.

MK: Were they good luna or not?

TT: Yes, they were.

MK: What did those luna do?

- TT: Standing in the back, they used to say, "Move ahead, move ahead. Go ahead, go ahead." (laughs)
- MK: They said, "Go ahead, go ahead" even though they were Japanese?
- TT: Yes. They said, "Move ahead, move ahead. Go ahead, go ahead."
- MK: What did you think of working on the plantation?
- TT: I thought there was no future in staying there, growing sugarcane. So I decided to come here to Kona.
- MK: Before we get into Kona, may I ask you about the camp in Ka'u? What kind of camp was that Iseri Camp?
- TT: When I came, there were long houses made of unplanned boards. I don't remember how many there were, but that's where everybody was, I mean, the bachelors. Couples had different housing.
- MK: How many people were there in that house?
- TT: Well, there must have been at least 14 or 15. We kept our belongings, like our chests and bags which we had brought from Japan, and slept individually. We were all bachelors.
- MK: Who were the people living there in the Iseri Camp?
- TT: Well, the bachelors were Tanaka, Sugino, Tominaga, and Yamamoto, I think that was his name.
- MK: Were there any others, besides Japanese?
- TT: Yes, there were. There were Koreans, three or four. They lived in the same house where we were. They were among us, 14 to 15 people.
- MK: And anybody else?
- TT: No, there wasn't. But there was a Pākē camp below our camp, where the Pākēs were. But when we worked in the field cutting sugarcane, we worked together.
- MK: How was the relationship between you [Japanese] and the Koreans and Pākēs?
- TT: Not much. We only saw them at work and worked together.
- MK: What did you used to do when you were not working at the Iseri Camp?
- TT: Well, (pause)
- MK: How about sumō? And anything else?

- TT: At that time, there wasn't much to do. . . . We played.
- MK: What sort of play?
- TT: Just lying around. (laughter) Yeah, I just spent the days being lazy.
- MK: Were there any holidays to celebrate, like Tenchō-setsu or bon?
- TT: Yes, there were.
- MK: What did you do then?
- TT: On Tenchō-setsu, there was a sumō tournament.
- MK: Did you participate in it?
- TT: Yes. Since Mr. Iseri was fond of sumō, I did participate whenever there was a tournament.
- MK: Did you have a nickname as a sumō wrestler?
- TT: (laughs) The name. . .
- MK: Were you a good wrestler?
- TT: (laughs) Yes, I was good when I wrestled a weak player, but I was bad when I challenged a strong one. (laughter)
- MK: Did you usually wrestle with strong ones or weak ones?
- TT: There were eight or nine wrestlers in the Iseri Camp then. And the camp people made us keshō mawashi [decorative loin cloths]. And when they made those keshō mawashi, I was given the name "Nihon Sugi" [Japanese Cedar], though I don't remember very well.
- MK: Did you and the sumō wrestlers in Iseri Camp challenge wrestlers in other camps?
- TT: Yes. They came over [to our camp] when they heard about the tournaments. And we went over to their camps also.
- MK: Was there a bon odori [bon dance festival]?
- TT: No, I didn't know about that. But those who came from Japan and didn't play sumō or that sort of thing used to have plays.
- MK: What kind of plays were they?
- TT: I didn't know what the titles were, but they were giving plays.
- MK: What did you think of life at the camp?

TT: I liked it. Since I was young, I didn't learn much, though.

MK: You were in Ka'u from 1907 to 1909, for three years; then you moved to Kona. Why did you decide to come to Kona?

TT: I heard about sumō in Kona. I wanted to play sumō in Kona, since I was young; also, I thought picking coffee would be easier than cutting cane.

MK: How did you know about Kona?

TT: Everybody was talking about Kona then, so I went. I just thought coffee picking would be easier than cutting cane. That's why I came to Kona.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Before we started this interview today, you told me that a lot of people ran away from the plantations. Can you repeat that story again?

TT: All right. There were lots of people who'd run away from sugarcane plantations before their contracts had expired. They came to Kona because it was a big place. There were some people who changed their last names. I knew this because some of them told me that their real name was such-and-such. There were lots of them who ran away from the plantations, breaking their contracts. And most of them started in coffee farming.

MK: Did you run away from the plantation, or not?

TT: I could say that I did. I didn't want to stay at the plantation.

MK: What was your impression when you first came to Kona, after leaving the plantation?

TT: It wasn't like when I first came to Hawaii from Japan. I was expecting something similar [to the plantation]. I was not expecting much. I worked in the coffee land and on a plantation, no, not a plantation, it was a sugar (mill.) I worked there for a while, at the Chong Camp. It was when I got a wahine that I started to settle down. I bought coffee land and built a house.

MK: Did the Chong Camp you were working at have something to do with sugar?

TT: The name of the camp was the Chong Camp, but the boss was a Japanese. Imamura was his name. I worked for him for a while. They used to use a railroad to transport sugarcane.

MK: Where was this camp in Kona?

TT: This Chong camp--(phrase unclear). They used to come to get it [sugarcane] by train.

MK: What else did you do, besides working on transporting sugarcane?

TT: It depended on what the boss wanted me to do. Sometimes he asked me to go to the railroad station and help so I did. And other times, if he asked me to go to sugar loading to work, I did that. So my job was not regular, it was different every day.

MK: How many hours a day did you work?

TT: Well, I think it was ten hours. I don't remember exactly, but in those days, a ten-hour work day was common.

MK: How was the pay at the Chong Camp?

TT: Pay? I can't remember exactly, but I think it was better than the pay in Ka'u.

MK: How did you spend your salary?

TT: I paid for the cook, the laundry, the haircuts at a barber shop. I couldn't save any.

MK: Did you have free housing at the Chong Camp?

TT: Yes.

MK: What was it like?

TT: The name of the camp was Chong but the boss was a Japanese, and I didn't have to pay for the house I was in, which belonged to the boss.

MK: You mean Mr. Imamura's?

TT: Yes.

MK: How many people were there, at the camp?

TT: There was Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Ueda, Mr. Imamura, these three were bosses. I stayed with Mr. Imamura. I don't remember exactly how many people there were altogether. Since there were three bosses. What I mean was we all stayed with our own boss, who was a cook. There were three bosses, in other words, three cooks: one was Yamamoto, another one was Ueda, and the other, Imamura.

MK: Did Mr. Imamura supervise the workers, too?

TT: Yes, although he did the same work we did.

MK: Is Mr. Imamura the luna?

TT: No, the luna was somebody else. We called the cooks bosses. Lunas were lunas.

MK: How would you compare life in Kona with that in Ka'u?

TT: I liked Kona better because there were more things to do, since Kona was a bigger place than Ka'u. Kona had more things to offer. I liked Kona since I liked lively, busy places.

MK: Who owned the Chong Camp?

TT: The name of the company...the boss was a woman who lived there. She [identity not clear] owned the sugar plantation at first when we were there. and at the end, what was his name? A Japanese bought the plantation. After he died, so did the business. Mr. Konno was his name.

MK: Did Mr. Konno buy the plantation while you were still working there?

TT: No, after I left. Konno bought it after I left.

MK: Were there any sumō tournaments in Kona like there were in Ka'u?

TT: Yes. We got together and wrestled.

MK: Was there anything else to do?

TT: Let's see, sometimes I went to see the movies.

MK: Where did you go to see the movies?

TT: And at that time, it was Mr. Homura or Mr. Goto, anyway, he had [a theatre] below this [Kona] hospital. And there was the Kona Theatre. And Kainaliu theatre is still there.

MK: And what kind of films did you see in the theatres?

TT: I don't remember now what they were showing in those days. I knew it then, when I used to go to see them, but I can't remember now.

MK: Were those movies in English?

TT: No.

MK: Japanese movies?

TT: Yes. Japanese movies.

MK: What kind of stories were they?

TT: Since they were Japanese pictures, usually. . . . I can't remember. I used to go, though.

MK: Did they have sound?

TT: At first, they didn't have sound, only the pictures moved, and there was a narrator.

MK: Oh, who was the narrator?

TT: His name was Kiso. And there was another one, what was his name? Depending on the movies, they had different narrators. The one I knew was this Mr. Kiso. Someone came from Hilo with the movies and another came from Keauhou. There were several.

MK: How much was it to see a movie?

TT: You mean the fee? Well, I don't remember how much it was. I don't know how much it used to be.

MK: Was it cheap, you thought?

TT: Yes, it was cheap. Compared to the fee nowadays, it was almost free. (laughter)

MK: How long, how many years or how many months, did you work at the sugarcane fields in Kona?

TT: It was not very long. I moved to the coffee land.

MK: So you came to Kona, first worked in the sugarcane fields, then went into the coffee land?

TT: Yes.

MK: I am going to start asking about the coffee land.

TT: All right.

MK: (pause) Why did you start working in coffee land?

TT: I was a bachelor then, and there was Mr. Eto, no Mr. Ito. I came to work at his coffee plantation, growing coffee, doing hō hana and so on, but nothing special. And there was Mr. Ariyoshi, who I worked for at the end. I did just about the same work, picking coffee, trimming trees and so on. I worked on the plantations during harvest seasons, and when a season ended, I worked repairing pā [walls], stone pā, up ma uka. They asked me to build a wall from here to there, for instance, and when I finished that, I got paid.

MK: Who hired you to do the job?

TT: We had contracts. The boss, the contractor was Mr. Takagi, an old man, he got the contracts, and I worked under him.

MK: Did you have to go to various places, asking if they needed people to work for them?

TT: They came to us when they were short of workers.

MK: So, you worked at a sugarcane plantation, right after you came to Kona, and then you went to work for various people, picking coffee, doing hō hana, trimming trees and so on, right?

TT: Yes.

MK: How did you find the job at the coffee farm, picking coffee?

TT: In Kona, when the coffee was ripe, they asked anybody to pick the beans.

MK: But why did Mr. Ito hire you?

TT: He had been in the same camp when I was in Ka'u. He had gone to Kona and started running a coffee farm. That's why I came to him.

MK: Did anybody else besides Mr. Ito hire you? You talked about Mr. Ariyoshi, didn't you?

TT: Yes, I went to him after I left Mr. Ito.

MK: This job on the coffee farm, is it true there were jobs only during the harvest season?

TT: That's right.

MK: (pause) What kind of work was it, on a coffee farm?

TT: Picking coffee, hō hana; and after the coffee was picked, we cut the branches, something like that.

MK: How many months did you work at that?

TT: How many months? We used to do the trimming only when we were not busy. And for hō hana, when it was done by wahines, I did other work.

MK: Were there certain work hours at the farm?

TT: No, there were not. I got paid so much per bag. If I wanted to quit with one or two bags, I could, whether it was by contract or not.

- MK: Did you take any breaks to rest?
- TT: We took a break to eat. If you wanted to make money, you couldn't take too many breaks, right?
- MK: How long was your lunch break, usually?
- TT: Well, I took just enough time to eat, since I wanted to finish the work before the coffee started to fall.
- MK: How many days a week did you work?
- TT: A week? When the coffee was ripe, we often worked even on Sundays. We couldn't let the coffee fall [from the tree].
- MK: So you worked seven days a week?
- TT: Yes.
- MK: How many sacks could you pick a day?
- TT: Well, when coffee was was ripe, we, a wahine and I, picked four sacks or more, and when the season was ending, it depends. The beans decreased little by little, so maybe we picked two sacks, or one.
- MK: (pause) How much did the owner of the farm think you should pick?
- TT: As much as possible. Because if you don't pick fast enough, the coffee would fall. They thought we should pick as much as possible, although there was a contract. If I were the owner, I would like as many sacks as possible, to save the coffee from falling. It had to be done fast, since the coffee fell when it rained.
- MK: If you hadn't been very fast, what would have happened?
- TT: If I hadn't picked fast enough, the coffee would have fallen, wasting other people's efforts, hō hana, etc. So we all picked as fast as we could, trying not to waste coffee. In those days, schools in Kona went on vacation when the coffee harvest season started. So those students used to come to my place and pick coffee beans. Nowadays, schools have planned the schedule, from this month to that month, like that, but in the old days in Kona, school vacation was during the coffee harvest season, since we needed helping hands, even though they were kids. Vacation time could shift.
- MK: That was when you were in Kona, (but) not in the beginning.
- TT: Yes. It was later.
- MK: Kids used to kōkua.

TT: Yes.

MK: (pause) When you were working on the coffee farm, was the work divided? For instance, one person worked on one section and others worked on other sections, and so forth?

TT: Yes. Coffee was planted in rows. If I started on one row, the next row was taken by somebody else. We had our own rows and worked on them. We didn't work on somebody else's rows.

MK: You had your own rows to work on?

TT: Yes.

MK: How did you like coffee picking, compared to sugarcane work?

TT: I liked coffee picking better.

MK: Why?

TT: Coffee picking was more enjoyable, and I got paid according to how much I worked: the harder I worked, the more money I got, while it didn't make any difference when I was working with sugarcane.

MK: Was there anything that you didn't particularly care for in picking coffee?

TT: Well, sometimes. Since wahine and the kids from school used to pick the coffee, I picked, but I mainly worked on sewing up the bags, carrying the bags of coffee to the place where the trucks picked them up.

MK: That story comes a little later, doesn't it? What did you dislike about the job?

TT: (Laughs) I had to do whatever had to be done, whether I liked it or not.

MK: When you had just started working at the coffee farm, what did you use to do while picking?

TT: We didn't have time to do anything but pick the coffee as fast as we could. There was no time to chat.

MK: Did you race with others?

TT: We never did it, but I heard about it among school kids. A teacher sent a few kids to pick coffee and let them race to see who was the best picker. I've heard about stories like that, but we never did it among ourselves. When we were picking, we didn't even want to take time to go to the bathroom.

MK: Is that because you were being paid so much per bag?

TT: Yes.

MK: How much did you get per bag in the beginning?

TT: Usually, 75 cents. Nowadays, the price for coffee has gone up--but then it was not very high; it used to go up and down. I think it was about 75 cents.

MK: When the coffee was ripe, how many bags a day could you make? I mean when you were young.

TT: Sometimes, there were other people working . . .

MK: At Mr. Ito's plantation?

TT: Oh, there. Probably two bags at most.

MK: So you made \$1.50 a day at Mr. Ito's?

TT: Yes. That's about right.

MK: Was that better than the pay at the [sugarcane] plantation?

TT: When the coffee season was at the peak, I made more money there than I did at the [sugarcane] plantation.

MK: When did Mr. Ito pay you?

TT: I got paid when he got the money, after sending the harvested coffee out [to the miller] but not before he got the money.

MK: When was it that you usually got paid?

TT: When, you know, I worked under a cook, and whenever I needed money, I used to ask him for some money. We didn't get paid regularly, like we did at the [sugarcane] plantation.

MK: Were you given anything else by Mr. Ito besides the pay, a place to live, food, etc. for free?

TT: I lived at his, the employer's house, and that was free of charge.

MK: How about food?

TT: I had to pay some money out of my pay for the food.

MK: How about the furniture?

TT: It was all provided by him. I paid for my clothing.

MK: Was your pay determined by the price of coffee?

TT: No, that's not true. I didn't know the price of coffee. But we got what they'd say they'd pay when we settled on the pay at first.

MK: You didn't have much experience in picking coffee then, did you?

TT: Experience? As long as you were moving your hand, like this, as fast as you could, working very hard, you could pick a lot. But if you were daydreaming or something like that, you couldn't do as well as the others. Fast people were the ones who worked as hard as they could. You got paid by the bags you picked so much per bag.

MK: That's the way you got paid?

TT: Yes.

MK: What sort of recreation did you have at Ito's when you were not working?

TT: When we weren't picking coffee, usually we went fishing in the sea. Something like that.

MK: Where did you go fishing?

TT: In Kona, we went just about everywhere. When we were on foot, we went to Kahaluu and to Milolii. When we had a car, we went other places. We went lots of places.

MK: Did you sometimes get together with Mr. Ito, since you were living with him?

TT: No, he did his own stuff. We, the young ones, got together and went to the sea and so on.

MK: What was your life like then, when you were only working at picking coffee?

TT: Since I couldn't make much money in picking coffee as I told you before, I went to work repairing pā [walls] or I worked at other jobs when I could find them.

MK: How much did you get paid for building stone walls?

TT: As I told you before. We got paid by the job, something like a contract. If there were lots of stones, the work was fast, but if there weren't, it was slow. I can't say exactly how much, since it depended on the contract.

MK: Which paid more, stone wall building or the coffee work?

TT: Well, it depends. If there were lots of stones and we could do the job fast, stone pā [stone wall building] was good. I can't say which was better. I worked when the work was available. When there was no coffee work, I worked at stone pā, since I thought it was better to work than to goof off.

- MK: Getting back to the coffee job, how did you get paid for hō hana or pruning trees?
- TT: It was work for my own place. But when I worked for somebody else, I got \$1.00 a day or \$1.50. I used to work for a Portuguese, too.
- MK: Which job did you prefer, the coffee job or stone pā?
- TT: Building stone walls was unlike pruning trees and so forth, which I did when I had some time to spare. I can't say which I liked better. Pruning trees was done when we had time to do so. Building stone walls was different from the kind of job that you did when you have spare time, like hō hana.
- MK: A few months after you came to Kona, you went to Honolulu. Why did you leave Kona and go to Honolulu?
- TT: I went to Honolulu to see a sumō match. That was why I wanted to go to Honolulu originally, but I worked at the pier, and, as I told you before, I also took pineapple jobs.
- MK: Where did you use to live in Honolulu?
- TT: I was in Palama, and in Liliha also. I was at an aikāne's for three months one time. I didn't have a house in Honolulu, so sometimes I stayed with my cousin in Honolulu.
- MK: You told me that you worked at the pier?
- TT: Yes, it was called jikan sanbashi [hourly wage work at the pier]. Mr. Mizusaki was the luna. After we had gotten a ticket for a pineapple cannery (job), we would sit at the pier and wait for this Mr. Mizusaki to call our names, since we preferred to work at the pier. If he didn't call my name that day, I would take a pineapple job, which I already had a [work] ticket for. So this job was not always available. The pineapple jobs were always available, but they didn't pay as well as this jikan sanbashi job. So I used to go to the pier early in the morning and sit and wait for Mr. Mizusaki to call my name. If he called my name, I worked at the pier; if not, I took a pineapple job.
- MK: What kind of work did you do at the pier?
- TT: It depended: sometimes loading sugar and so forth. There was no fixed time, either. We got paid by the hour. We loaded sugar, unloaded stuff which came in by boat. Loading was mostly sugar. I did something like that.
- MK: What about the pineapple job?
- TT: The pineapple job was--I was in a place high up, and there were four women underneath, and I tossed them empty cans for them to catch and put labels on. And probably because they thought I was strong, they called me one day, and I started carrying boxes of

pineapples which were to be sent to the train. So my work was not steady.

MK: Do you remember the name of the pineapple company?

TT: No, I don't. What could that be? No, I don't remember. (mumbles)
There were two companies.

MK: Dole or CPC [California Packing Corporation]?

TT: Yes. There were two. I was working for the one in the front.

MK: I'll check it later.

TT: I can't remember the names, but there were two. I don't know how many there are now.

MK: So you worked for a pineapple company and at the pier in Honolulu?

TT: Yes.

MK: Which did you like better, I mean, the jobs in Kona or in Honolulu?

TT: It was more relaxing, working in Kona. Working in Honolulu was okay when there was a job. When the pineapples were in season, they hired us, but at the end of the season we didn't have a job. Jikan sanbashi was the same. When there was work, there were jobs, but when there wasn't work, no jobs. So I came back to Kona because it was more secure.

MK: I would like to stop here today. I will continue on some other day. Okay?

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape No. 9-36-2-80 TR

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Torahichi Tsukahara (TT)

December 19, 1980

Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

[Note: Interview conducted in Japanese. Translation done by Paul Scott Lehman.]

MK: Interview with Mr. Torahichi Tsukahara at his home in Captain Cook, Kona, Hawaii on December 19, 1980. Tsukahara-san, today I would like to continue with the story about jikan sanbashi in Honolulu.

TT: All right.

MK: What kind of job was it?

TT: Sugar used to come in bags at that time. I think they were shipped to America. Our job was to carry those bags of sugar, which were lowered by a machine, to where the ship was and to stack them up neatly. Usually a group of four people carried a bag together. And when the goods arrived from America, or wherever they came from, we carried them to the stores [store warehouses] at the pier.

MK: How were you chosen to work at jikan sanbashi?

TT: Well, we workmen used to line up at the pier in the mornings. And, I think his name was Mizusaki, he would call some of the people's names. And whoever was called would work at jikan sanbashi that day. And if your name was not called, you would take a pineapple [cannery] job.

MT: What kind of pineapple job was it?

TT: Mainly, boxed pineapples were shipped by train, you know; we used to carry those boxes to the train. Or else, I used to work where there were lots of cans. I went up on a ladder and tossed the cans down to women. There were about four of them, and they would stick labels on the cans. A luna used to tell me where to work. So sometimes I worked at this job [tossing the cans down], other times, I'd carry boxes to the train. So it depended on what the luna wanted me to do.

- MK: What did you think of jobs in Honolulu, like jikan sanbashi or the pineapple jobs?
- TT: Well, I thought I wouldn't be able to make it in Honolulu. I was spending too much money and couldn't save. So I came back to Kona.
- MK: Why couldn't you save money in Honolulu?
- TT: You would be able to save when you had a steady job, but . . . (Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)
- MK: Okay. Go ahead.
- TT: I thought I wouldn't be able to save money, so I came back to Kona.
- MK: Because you didn't have a steady job, you couldn't save?
- TT: Yes, that's right. You tended to spend money in Honolulu. Far from saving, I didn't have enough to spend. (Chuckles) So I decided to come back to Kona and save.
- MK: What did you do, once you were back in Kona?
- TT: After I came back to Kona, I said to myself that since it was no good to be by myself it was time to get a wahine from Japan. And I did.
- MK: Where was she from?
- TT: She was from the same place, Kumamoto.
- MK: Had you known her?
- TT: No, I hadn't, although I knew a little bit about her. I left when I was 18, and I wasn't interested in women yet then.
- MK: What was her name?
- TT: Her name was Tsuyo Tabata.
- MK: How did you find her?
- TT: I wrote my parents in Japan that I wanted them to get me a wife. So they took care of it. I didn't do anything, my parents took care of it.
- MK: And what happened when your wife arrived in Kona?
- TT: After she got here, she really worked hard for me. And we thought we shouldn't be mahina man, [farmhand] so we bought some coffee land.

- MK: Did you lease the coffee lands then?
- TT: I bought the lease for the land.
- MK: Who did you buy it from?
- TT: I bought the lease from a person named Sakamoto. It was about four acres. Although it hadn't been kept very well, it was in a very good location, conveniently close to school for the kids. There was no house [on the lot], and it cost me \$700 at that time. I borrowed some money from the boss at Captain Cook [Coffee Company] and built a house.
- MK: How did you get that \$700 at first?
- TT: It had been saved up. My wahine and I worked very hard and saved it up.
- MK: What did your wahine do?
- TT: She worked mostly at picking coffee. And she also sorted coffee beans down at [Captain Cook Coffee Company] mill down below. We both worked hard.
- MK: You told me that you were in coffee for three years when you first bought the coffee lands.
- TT: Yes.
- MK: How did you know how to grow coffee?
- TT: The coffee land hadn't been kept up. So we first weeded and fertilized it, and so forth, and then we could pick coffee.
- MK: Did you have equipment like drying platforms then, during those first three years?
- TT: No, we were with Captain Cook [Coffee Company], and we had to send the red ones [not yet processed cherry coffee] to Captain Cook.
- MK: Did your land belong to Captain Cook, actually?
- TT: No, it belonged to Greenwell. We leased the land from Captain Cook [Coffee Company], who had the contract [lease] from Greenwell. And when the contract [Captain Cook-Greenwell lease] terminated, and Captain Cook quit coffee, we made contracts [leases] with Greenwell. And when Greenwell announced that the land was for sale, we bought it for \$3,000 per acre. There were four acres, so it was \$12,000. And we had to buy the path from Greenwell, so that cost a little bit extra. So altogether there were four acres and a little bit more. I think we paid about \$13,000.
- MK: During the time Captain Cook had the mountain, which store did you go to when you needed machines and tools?

- TT: When I needed them, I mostly bought from a store at Captain Cook [Coffee Company]. And at that time there was no poison and we mainly did hō hana. And when poison became popular, we bought it from Captain Cook [Coffee Company] store. Or sometimes we bought from some other store.
- MK: Did you buy on credit instead of with money then?
- TT: Yes. At the time we were buying from Captain Cook, instead of cash, it was charged, and they would subtract the amount from our coffee harvest.
- MK: There were times when the coffee price went up and down, weren't there?
- TT: Yes, there sure were.
- MK: How could you manage in those times?
- TT: Well, I mostly worked at clearing land, but my wife worked on the coffee land mostly. And when I bought the land for \$12,000, I paid cash. I had been working for Greenwell and others. And at that time, there wasn't much money around. But I paid cash, almost \$13,000 to Greenwell. I asked Sherwood Greenwell, the boss, if I could delay my payment a little. He said that he would like to say I could, but that he would have to say the same to everybody once he allowed me to do so. He said he would really like to do so for me, but it wouldn't be possible, because other people wouldn't like it. So he said that I should pay, even though it might be hard. And since I had the money, including insurance money I had received, I paid cash.
- MK: Did you say that you had extra jobs outside coffee in order to save money, that \$12,000? Could you tell me about the job at the stable? You said that you worked at a stable at Captain Cook [Coffee Company]?
- TT: Well, you mean at the stable? When I was working at the stable in Captain Cook, there weren't many young workers. And the truck driver was a makule. And I was asked to help hāpai coffee in the mornings for a while. I got a dollar extra for that. I helped this old man, the truck driver, for a while, and then I went to my own job.
- MK: How much did you get paid in those days?
- TT: Then, the pay was--I was very lucky. Well--it must have been \$60 per month. I got paid \$60 per month. And I got a dollar for helping the truck driver, which was extra. The \$60 was paid regularly every month.
- MK: You worked at the mill also, didn't you?
- TT: Yes. The mill also was short of young workers for coffee hāpai and other types of work. There weren't many young workers, not like

nowadays. So I must have looked very energetic. My boss asked me if I wanted to work at the mill also. I said all right, and started to work at the mill in addition to the job at the stable, where I had to leave the young ones working on things like cutting the grass while I was working at the mill.

MK: What kind of work did you do at the mill?

TT: At the mill, mainly, I didn't work with coffee, but I also did something like working with cement, or I'd work on hāpai when the coffee arrived in trucks and wagons from ma uka.

MK: You must have been strong, since you were working on hāpai a lot.

TT: I was young then. And there really weren't very many young people then, not like now.

MK: Were there people other than Japanese who worked on this hāpai, the very heavy jobs?

TT: Well, then, not very many Hawaiians--worked on that job. They came sometimes. Two people or more carried bags of coffee together. I sometimes took some people to work at the mill from Captain Cook. And when the work at the mill was slow, I came back to the stable.

MK: What was the name of your boss then?

TT: It was MacFarlane.

MK: MacFarlane. How was he?

TT: He was good. And I think it was when MacFarlane was still there that I changed to Greenwell, since coffee hāpai became too strenuous.

MK: What kind of job was it at Greenwell?

TT: The job at Greenwell was to weed, poisoning the guava, and also repairing the ranch pā [walls] where they were broken. Something like that.

MK: How did you get that job at Greenwell?

TT: At Greenwell's, at first some Filipinos were going to clear some ranch lands. And when they said they were going to clear some ranch lands, I asked if I could join them. They said all right, so I joined them. And the boss at Greenwell must have heard about me. He asked me to work for him. I didn't have to ask for a job, he came to me. So I said all right and went.

MK: What was his name, the boss at Greenwell?

TT: Well,--his name was "Asa-Boshi [Arthur Boss]".

Yes. Asa-Boshi [Arthur Greenwell]. And at that time Sherwood was still small, even though Sherwood is a boss now. I was very happy and went to work for him when Asa-Boshi asked me. And I worked there, no place else, ever after that.

MK: When you were first hired, how much was your pay?

TT: A dollar and a quarter [\$1.25] then. I think it was a dollar and quarter [\$1.25].

MK: How many hours a day did you work?

TT: Ten hours, I think. I think it was ten hours.

MK: And were there enough jobs throughout the year?

TT: Yes, there were, throughout the year. But when the coffee got ripe, sometimes I asked my boss to give me a break so I could work at home. And when I finished with that, I would go back to Greenwell.

MK: You worked at the ranch at Greenwell, didn't you?

TT: Yes.

MK: I've heard from old people that you were a cowboy. Did you take cows to Kailua?

TT: Yes, I used to take them to Kailua on a truck. And, what was it called--we put the cows in a haole's place and watched them during the night. And the next morning we would ship them out.

MK: How did you put the cows on the ship?

TT: We pushed the cows off the pier, and they would swim. And people in boats, the cowboys, would lead those cows, with the ropes around their necks, to the ship

MK: Did you do that, using ropes?

TT: No, I couldn't do it. The cowboys managed to get the cows to swim [to the ship]. And the people who came from the ship would take the rope and tie the cows, four or five at a time, to a boat, a small one, and then they would load them up onto the ship, using ropes.

MK: So your job was to take care of the trees, such as guava, and to fix stone walls and so on at the ranch. Is that right?

TT: Yes.

- MK: Sherwood [Greenwell] has known you for a long time, how was your relationship with the Greenwell family?
- TT: It was good. They were always nice to me.
- MK: When I asked you before, you told me that they often gave meat to workers when they slaughtered cattle. Can you tell me more about it?
- TT: Mr. Asa-Boshi at Greenwell used to make sure to kill cows which were even a little bit sick or weak. He used to say that when a mother cow is sick, the baby, the calf, would become that way too. It might not apply to humans, but it would to cows. So he killed those cows and gave the meat to us.
- MK: According to your wife, they used to give presents on Christmas or Thanksgiving Day. What did they used to do on those occasions?
- TT: They gave us bonuses, money. And even now they give us meat. But at Christmas they used to give us some presents.
- MK: What happened to Greenwell when somebody was sick or got hurt?
- TT: Greenwell used to take care of it. When my wife's relatives, no matter who it was, when they got sick and went to a hospital, Greenwell used to pay for it all. When my wife had gallbladder surgery, they paid all the expenses.
- MK: Was there anything else Greenwell paid?
- TT: I don't know exactly how much it cost, but anyway Greenwell paid it all for us.
- MK: Did they do that for the members of the workers' families?
- TT: I think they did the same for family members too, but I'm not sure.
- MK: So you were working for Greenwell. And you were paid, and they often gave you meat. And they paid the hospital bills. How do you compare your family with others who were working in coffee?
- TT: Well, I think we were better off, since we didn't have to buy meat and so on. And we didn't have a freezer or icebox then, I used to distribute it to neighbors.
- MK: You used to live in your coffee land then. And your neighbors were working in coffee. How were they getting along with them?
- TT: Well, pretty good, I think, since we didn't have any troubles. Most of them were Japanese. We had good relationships.
- MK: So they were all in coffee farming. And did they all help when the coffee was in season, when the coffee was ripe?

- TT: Well, in those days, the school vacation started in September, not like nowadays in June. The school vacation started later than other schools so the kids could help pick coffee. They worked very hard picking coffee when school was out.
- MK: You mean you let the kids help pick coffee?
- TT: Yes. After I came home from work, I would send out the coffee which were picked by the kids. That was the way I ran my coffee lands. The kids were glad to come and help since it was vacation time.
- MK: When your children grew bigger, did they go to work for someone [else], or did they stay with you and help your coffee business?
- TT: My children used to help with picking coffee when school was out.
- MK: Did you pay them too?
- TT: At first I didn't, but when they grew bigger--I can't remember what grade they were in--I began paying some money. I gave them some money in exchange for their work, picking coffee.
- MK: This is what I heard from old people, but you hired Filipinos and Hawaiians as well as children . . .
- TT: Yes. When my kids were younger and were in school, I hired them, since they were available.
- MK: Did you have a Filipino living with you, at your house?
- TT: Yes. I had an extra house built. That's where he stayed. And he worked for me. And this Filipino was quite a good worker. He used to plant coffee trees wherever he found some space on my land. (phrase unclear) He worked as if he were working for his own family.
- MK: Did he stay with you for a long time?
- TT: Yes, he worked for me for about five years, I think. And he went down [he left]. He's dead now. He sure was a good Filipino.
- MK: Did you hire any other Filipinos or Hawaiians?
- TT: Yes. When the coffee was ripe and about to fall, I asked them to help. They worked for me about a week, just enough to make one [picking] round of the coffee.
- MK: How much did you pay them for their work, per bag?
- TT: I don't remember very well, but I think it was either 60 cents or 70 cents per bag. And in the year when the price of coffee went down drastically, I felt like picking coffee myself and getting paid for it.

MK: Really? Was there a year like that?

TT: Yes, there was.

MK: How could you manage to pay those people you hired?

TT: I managed it with the money I got from Captain Cook [Coffee Company]. And there was enough profit to pay for those people. And when I was paid for the coffee, I paid with the profit.

MK: When the price of coffee went down very low, did you have to live on the pay that you got from Greenwell?

TT: Well, I had been trying to manage our family on the money from Greenwell anyway. My kids used to run around barefooted. They didn't wear shoes like nowadays. And when I gave them ten cents, that was a treat. They used to go to school happily with ten cents.

MK: You told me that your wife was managing the coffee. How many hours, from when to when, did she use to work?

TT: That was up to her. It was her own choice, since she was working for herself, not like working for someone else. I don't know exactly when and how she worked.

MK: How about when the season was at the peak?

TT: Usually, she left home at about 6 [o'clock a.m.], and kept working until about 5 [o'clock p.m.] on the coffee land, I think. It could have been more. People in Kona worked very hard, leaving home as soon as the sun came up and working steadily until the sun set. Once a friend of mine from Maui came to help with the coffee picking, and he said that people in Kona were work horses. I asked why, and he said some people in Maui would not work on rainy days, but people in Kona would wear raincoats--(chuckles)--and keep picking even when they were drenched with water through the sleeves.

MK: They really worked hard, didn't they?

TT: Not only me, but almost all the people in Kona in the old days worked really hard. It has gotten easy nowadays, I think.

MK: So you and the people in Kona were hard workers, but why were you working so hard?

TT: Well, for my children. Since I didn't have much education, I wanted them to have good schooling. When my eldest daughter, Matsuko, when she was in the 9th grade and said she was going to quit school and help the family, my wife and I got mad and told her that the more days she attended school, the better off she was. And we insisted that she should continue her schooling. And when my wife got sick and was in a hospital, my girl must have asked a nurse for a job. Was it in America? It must have been. Anyway,

the nurse said she would give her a job if she had a high school diploma. So I sent it right away. She was very glad and said to us that she realized then why we had insisted on her continuing her education.

END OF SIDE ONE.

SIDE TWO

MK: So you worked hard in order for your children to go to school. How many children do you have?

TT: There were five. The eldest daughter went to Ka'u to work after she finished high school here, and she got killed in Ka'u by Filipinos.

MK: What happened?

TT: And we fought in court for the second time, and we won. They said that Shintaku-san [storekeeper] had told his people not to give any credit to Filipinos. But my daughter was not in charge of the store, it was someone else. And this person was fighting with a Filipino so much that my daughter went to stop the fighting. But both of them were stabbed, my daughter was hit in a vital place, I guess, and she died.

MK: You have four children now in your family.

TT: Yes. I have four now.

MK: So your wife brought up five children, although the eldest one died?

TT: Yes.

MK: How did she manage the coffee business, raising children at the same time?

TT: The children were all in school. And I used to help her on Saturdays, Sundays and pau hana. We worked very hard, and people used to praise our coffee land, that there was no grass, not even seeds.

MK: Did all your children finish school?

TT: Yes. They all did. I don't mean to brag about it, but I don't think there was any family but ours in this neighborhood in Kealakekua which had five high school graduates then. They usually let them quit after completing the ninth grade and sent them to work, but we didn't. We sent them to high school. We told them that we felt ashamed since we didn't have an education, and didn't want them to go through a hard life like this so we said they must finish high school, at least. And I let them complete high school.

MK: How did you feel about your children while you were sending them to school? Did you have some ideas, such as that they should take over your coffee land once they were grown?

TT: Yes, I thought about it, but I wanted them to have their own lives, doing what they liked. I was not going to force them to stay and manage my coffee. I can't remember exactly when it was, but it must have been when I was either 74 or 75, I thought that I shouldn't limit my business strictly to coffee. And I planted about 120 [macadamia] nut trees, on about four acres of land around the house, since I thought they would make nice shade at the same time. They cost \$1.75 a tree at that time. I'm sure my children appreciate them now.

MK: They are in the [macadamia] nut business.

TT: Although my children don't know that I planted those nut trees for them and their future, it seems it was a great idea, and it's paying off now. They are very grateful. When they built a new house, they had a party for us the other day. I think they did that to show how much they appreciate our efforts in bringing them up.

MK: Why did you plant nut trees rather than coffee?

TT: I didn't think I could make much money on coffee by itself. I thought the nuts had a better future. It's not that I planned very carefully, but I thought it wouldn't hurt. So I planted about 120 trees. But it turned out to be a great idea. And I'm sure my children were very grateful, so they had a party for us the other day, inviting my old friends.

MK: Had you planted anything else before?

TT: Well, I'd planted some orange trees and that sort of thing, but not seriously. I used to give the fruit to friends when they came to see me. (Repetition of why he planted the nut trees, etc.)

MK: You've been here in Kona for quite a long time, haven't you?

TT: Yes.

MK: There have been a lot of changes, haven't there?

TT: Yes, there have.

MK: You stayed in Kona during the war, isn't that right?

TT: Yes.

MK: You told me that you got very busy at Greenwell during World War II.

- TT: Yes. That was partly because there weren't enough young people. The young people all went to the war. So I went to work at Greenwell.
- MK: And you also said that you'd worked for Greenwell for 21 or 22 years, and they called you whenever they were busy.
- TT: Yes. Well, I was retired, but I still went to work for them whenever they needed me, although I thought I was too old to work. I think it was when I was 72 or so when I finally quit.
- MK: Is that right?
- TT: Yes, until then I went to work whenever they called for me.
- MK: When you go up on Napoopoo Road, there is a monument . . . When was it made?
- TT: That was while I was working for Greenwell. I wanted to build a monument to the old man Mr. Greenwell since he's been so good to us. At that time Greenwell owned most of the land around here. I went to see Haruto-san of Manago [Hotel], and Mr. Mori, who owned a drugstore, who I thought were influential people. I told them I wanted to have a monument built for old man Greenwell and asked them what they thought of the plan. They said that would be a great idea. And since they were busy people, they asked me to take care of the business. I said I would. And when I went around to other people, asking for donations, they all agreed that it would be a great idea. So it was built there by the people who donated the money.
- MK: Why did you want the monument? Is it because the Greenwells had been very good to you?
- TT: Yes, they were very kind. And also they owned the land around here. So everybody was glad to build a monument for Greenwell.
- MK: I've said this before, but things have changed in your lifetime, most of which was spent here. Isn't that right? Where do you find the most change?
- TT: Well, (pauses) the biggest change I see is in the increase in the price of goods. Although I can see why the prices have been increasing, since the wages have been going up also, but what I don't understand is the hippies who come here from America and just hang around. Although it's none of my business, I think they're quite strange.
- MK: How do you feel about various newcomers?
- TT: They are okay as long as they work and earn their living. But when I see those who don't work at all and just hang around, I must say they are spoiled.

- MK: You were talking about the prices of goods, weren't you?
- TT: Yes.
- MK: I've heard that there were lots of shops around here a long time ago. Do you remember those old shops? What sort of shops were they?
- TT: Those shops had everything we needed. And in those days--I didn't, but most people paid only once a year, when they got money after the coffee harvest. I had money, since I was working mahina man. I imagine some people couldn't pay their debts for the year when the coffee price went down. I was lucky that I had a job at Greenwell.
- MK: According to the stories I've heard about those days, there were people who bootlegged coffee.
- TT: Yes. Yes. I'm sure there were some people like that. Captain Cook [Coffee Company] used to give them credits: three dollars a month per acre, for food. And I can't remember exactly how much they paid per bag, 60 to 70 cents, I think. Anyway, since that was not enough to live on, I imagine there were some people who secretly passed the coffee they harvested elsewhere. And with the money they got for it, they paid their debts and so forth. I think there were times like that, although I don't know very much about it.
- MK: How did you feel when you heard about stories like that? What did you think of it?
- TT: I understand why they had to do it, and I don't think they did anything wrong, since it was their own coffee. If they could borrow enough money to pay their expenses, they didn't have to sell coffee secretly. But when you had children, they cost money. So I don't think it was wrong to sell to others.
- MK: So along with new shops and hippies coming in, there has been a lot of new development: roads, hospitals, etc.
- TT: Yes.
- MK: Can you tell me about the old roads?
- TT: Let's see. (Misunderstands the question.) If I were to get sick and were to be hospitalized, I understand it would cost me more than \$100 a day, although I don't know, since I haven't been to a hospital lately. And I myself can't do anything about the cost, since it involves the government. Anyway, the life is going to be harder, especially for those who are not healthy, because you won't be able to save just by being thrifty.
- MK: Have you heard of Dr. [Chitoshi] Hayashi?

TT: Yes.

MK: Was he your doctor?

TT: Yes. I went to see him once.

MK: And Dr. Hayashi's father used to publish a newspaper called Kona Echo.

TT: Yes.

MK: Did you use to read it?

TT: No. I only heard of it.

MK: You didn't read it then?

TT: No, I didn't.

MK: There are other things, like movie theaters, which you didn't have before in Kona.

TT: Yes.

MK: What did you use to do in those days when you were off work?

TT: Well, I often went fishing, and sometimes I went to see movies. What else? You know we had a lot of children, and they cost money. So we couldn't spend much foolishly.

MK: When you look back on your past, having been here in Kona for a long time, working for Greenwell while running your coffee land, and so on, how do you feel about your life?

TT: Let's see, I think we, my wife and I, are having the most relaxed and enjoyable time, since we don't have to work anymore.

MK: When you look at Kona's history and your own, what do you think the most important thing is?

TT: Let's see--well, I really don't have much to say, I just enjoy watching my children doing well.

MK: What do you want your children to remember? About Kona.

TT: I just want my children to keep managing this coffee land. I want them to stay here and visit our graves once we die. That's just about all, nothing elaborate.

MK: How do you feel about Kona, since you've lived here a long time? Do you like it here or not?

TT: Yes. For us, Kona was just like Japan. But now there are "too much" haoles coming in, but before--I think it's a nice place since everybody has his own house.

MK: In what respect did you think Kona to be similar to Japanese villages?

TT: Well, in those days, not now, but people used to visit each other, it's called nenshi, at New Year's. It was just like Japan, where people exchanged visits at New Year's. But things have changed here now, I don't think people do that as often as before.

MK: What do you think of the change?

TT: Although I myself prefer the way it was before, I also understand why people nowadays do things the way they do.

MK: How?

TT: Because people nowadays can't live like we old people did, taking life more casually.

MK: What do you think of Hawaii?

TT: I think that I am lucky that I came to Hawaii.

MK: Why?

TT: If I had stayed in Japan, as I didn't have much education--and I wouldn't have owned as much land as I have now. Although people talk about Japan being industrialized and rich, as far as I am concerned, I like Hawaii better.

MK: I see. Well, I think we are done for today. Thank you very much.

TT: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

**A SOCIAL HISTORY
OF KONA**

Volume I

ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Ethnic Studies Program
University of Hawaii, Manoa**

JUNE 1981