Adaptive Strategy of Japanese Immigrants and Occupational
Sequent Occupance in the Development of Fresh
Produce Marketing in Los Angeles

YAGASAKI Noritaka
Department of Geography, Tokyo Gakugei University, Koganei, Tokyo 184-8501, Japan

Abstract: Three research frontiers need to be explored by geographers in understanding
Japanese immigrants and their overseas communities: analyses of immigrant communities in
the context of local and national host societies, comparative studies of immigrant groups
settled in the same local host society, and economic segregation and occupational sequent
occupance. This paper explored the third theme by presenting a case study in southern
California prior to World War II. Japanese immigrants successfully attained vertical domi-
nance in production, wholesale, and retail of fruits and vegetables in Los Angeles and the
surroundings of southern California from the 1900s through the early 1940s. The process in
which Japanese came to occupy such economic niches was documented with special reference
to the adaptive strategy they applied in establishing their economic bases. Ethnic organiza-
tions and occupational preference played an important role, while growing economy and
population created a soaring demand for fresh produce, marketing system had not yet been
established, and the role of the Chinese was fading after the turn of the century. Considering
the fact that the economic niche that Japanese occupied in the supply of fresh produce was
taken over by other immigrant groups following World War II, the idea of “occupational
sequent occupance” was proposed. Documenting such sequence in the occupational structure
will contribute to the comprehensive understanding of immigrant groups as well as cultural-
historical geography of American cities.

Key words: Japanese immigrants, fresh produce, adaptive strategy, sequent occupance, eco-
nomic niche, Los Angeles

Introduction

Japanese immigrants were one of many
groups who constituted multi-ethnic California
prior to World War II. A cultural-historical
geographic approach is to contribute to a com-
prehensive understanding of Japanese overseas
communities including those in California. I
have suggested three research frontiers to ex-
plor geographically the further understanding
of Japanese immigrants and their communities: analyses of immigrant communities in the con-
text of local and national host societies, com-
parative studies of immigrant groups settled in
the same local host society, and economic segre-
gation and “occupational sequent occupance”
(Yagasaki 2003).

Facing pressure from the local host society,
Japanese immigrants applied adaptive strate-
gies to survive in a foreign environment often
hostile to the newcomers (Yagasaki 1987, 1995,
2002). Varied adaptive strategies were fash-
oned and employed by immigrant groups in
finding their space for living as well as estab-
lishing their economic base in the local host
society. Detailed analyses of adaptive strate-
gies are required in exploring the aforemen-
tioned three research areas.

Immigrants’ adaptive strategies may be clas-
sified into three categories: ethnic organiza-
tions, residential concentration, and occupa-
tional preference (Figure 1). Formal as well as
informal ethnic organizations were established
in social, cultural, and economic spheres of im-
migrants’ life. Immigrant groups preferred to
concentrate in certain quarters in order to mini-
imize conflicts with the members of the host
society and to facilitate their adjustment
processes to the new socioeconomic setting.
The existence of such immigrant quarters has been one of the major characteristics of American cities. In rural areas ethnic islands have been formed sustaining cultural traits of immigrant groups and their ties to the homelands.

Immigrant groups found economic opportunities in a certain type of occupation. There were some occupations in which the members of the host society were scarcely engaged in spite of the growing demand. By taking such occupations, newcomers were able to minimize competition and conflict with members of the local host society. Immigrant pioneers helped members of the same stock take such occupations, while the tradition they brought from their homeland often facilitated successful engagement in such economic activities. Members of the host society often formed a positive perception that some immigrant groups were well versed in certain fields. Thus, a specific immigrant group was predominantly engaged in a particular type of economic activities, which may be called ethnic business or ethnic industry (Yagasaki 1984). Finding an economic niche was an important adaptive strategy for immigrant groups as they intended to survive in the local host society. Such occupational dominance has not been well studied by geographers as compared to the residential concentration and segregation in American cities.

This article focuses on the economic segregation and occupational sequent occupancy among aforementioned three research frontiers for geographers. It examines an economic niche that Japanese immigrants came to occupy in southern California from the 1900s through the outbreak of the Japan-US war in 1941. As the Japanese community grew and the regional economy prospered in and around the City of Los Angeles, this immigrant group succeeded in attaining substantial vertical dominance in the fresh produce business by producing, wholesaling, and retailing diverse fruits and vegetables (Yagasaki 1993). This paper attempts to examine the adaptive strategy Japanese immigrant employed by documenting the process of Japanese engagement in fresh produce marketing and the extent of their dominance in southern California by replacing Chinese predecessors.

The final section of this paper suggests that the idea of occupational sequent occupancy
may be valid in examining immigrants' occupational structure in the course of time. The period of Japanese dominance in produce marketing came to an end as Japanese were removed from the west coast during World War II and the Japanese occupational structure became largely modified following the end of the war. The vacuum created in the fresh produce marketing was to be soon filled by other ethnic groups. A sequence of immigrant groups occupying a specific occupation, which may be termed occupational sequent occupancy, needs to be scrutinized in order to understand the ethnic geography of American cities.

**Early Sequence from Chinese to Japanese**

 Trucks farming in Los Angeles dates back to 1854 when an Alsatian immigrant began to grow vegetables on some leased land and peddled his products, and European vegetable growers gradually increased (Newmark and Newmark 1916). However, it was not until the arrival of Chinese immigrants that vegetable production rapidly expanded in Los Angeles.

 The Chinese population was originally concentrated in northern California in and around the mining districts and San Francisco following the Gold Rush. On the other hand, there were only two Chinese in the City of Los Angeles in 1850, and ten years later fourteen were counted (a total of fifteen in Los Angeles County). Chinese opened restaurant and herb stores around 1860/61 in Los Angeles, and Chinese migrated from northern California looking for job opportunities. In 1870 the Chinese population was 172 in the City of Los Angeles, half of which lived in and around Calle de los Negros, which was later renamed Los Angeles Street. This quarter was close to the Plaza, the original center of Los Angeles, and was soon recognized as Chinatown (McDannold 1973: 36–38; Mason 1967: 15–16). On October 24, 1871, the Chinese massacre took place here (Newmark 1944). The Chinese population increased rapidly during the 1870s and 1880s, counting 605 in 1880 and 1,871 in 1890.

 While the early center of Chinese truck farming was in the mining regions of northern California, Chinese truck farmers increased as Chinese became a major workforce for the construction of railroad. When Southern Pacific Railroad Company extended southern California routes, Chinese vegetable growers followed to supply Chinese railroad workers with fresh vegetables. Many of them remained in Los Angeles to continue truck farming even after the completion of the railroad (Wong 1980: 64). Chinese vegetable growers rented small parcels of land in downtown Los Angeles along West Washington Boulevard and utilized *zanja* irrigation canals running along Figueroa Street (Mason 1967: 16; Wong 1980: 63–64). There were also vegetable gardens in the present-day Watts, Lynwood, Compton, and Wilmington (McDannold 1973: 48).

 During the 1870s Chinese vegetable growers increased in and around Los Angeles, and peddled their produce around the city. In 1870 there were sixteen Chinese vegetable growers in the City of Los Angeles. Ten years later, among 122 vegetable growers 108 were Chinese, while 50 Chinese officially obtained licenses for selling from wagons on the street (Friedmann 1980: 441). Analyzing the 1880 manuscript census record of Los Angeles County, Chan showed that 208 (89 percent) among 234 vegetable growers were Chinese while Chinese shared only 3.5 percent of the total population of the county. Eighteen percent of the Chinese population engaged in vegetable production in the county (Chan 1986: 115, 167–157). These Chinese who carried vegetables on a pole with a flat straw hat, loose trousers, and a blue wamus were typically observed in early Los Angeles (Bingham 1942: 25). Thus, Chinese vegetable growers dominated the production and marketing of vegetables in Los Angeles during this period.

 Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century, Chinese truck farmers dominated vegetable marketing in Los Angeles. When Chinese vegetable growers and peddlers went on strike in 1879, the supply of vegetables to the Los Angeles' residents was completely cut. They were protesting against the new city ordinance proposed at the city assembly to raise a license fee to ten dollars for a peddler and twenty dollars for a wagon vendor. The Chinese strike eventually succeeded in lowering the fee to five
dollars (Friedmann 1980: 441; Mason 1967: 16; Bingham 1942: 26).

In the late nineteenth century when Los Angeles remained a small urban center, marketing of fresh produce was undertaken in a disorganized manner. Establishing a public market was first attempted in 1859 when the City of Los Angeles leased a private building for opening a public market. While stools were open for bidding, some meat dealers dominated the use of the market, and residents increasingly criticized the management of the public market. This public market was forced to close in February 1861 (Friedmann 1980: 443). For the next three decades, public markets for fruit-vegetable producers and consumers did not exist in Los Angeles. Instead, peddlers and roadside stands were major outlets where consumers could purchase fruits and vegetables.

Although at the turn of the century Chinese truck gardeners and dealers still dominated the market, their role had been gradually declining due to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and subsequent decline in the availability of Chinese laborers. The Population Census of 1880 and 1890 counted 1,169 and 4,424 Chinese in Los Angeles County respectively, which declined to 3,209 in 1900 and to 2,591 in 1920. The declining Chinese population, on the other hand, tended to concentrate in the City of Los Angeles, whose share increased from 42 percent in 1890 to 80 percent three decades later. The Chinese population of Los Angeles County increased by 175 percent from 1880 to 1900, while Chinese vegetable growers decreased from 208 to 95 during the twenty-year period. Some Chinese turned to fresh produce dealing. Rapidly expanding economy and population of Los Angeles and the vicinity in this period created a soaring demand for fresh produce, which was impossible to be met by Chinese truck farmers.

While truck farming in California originated around such large urban centers as San Francisco and Los Angeles, new developments took place not only in the arid but fertile inland valleys including Central Valley but also in narrow coastal lowlands. Improvements in transportation and refrigeration techniques and the development of irrigation works largely facilitated the development of such remote farming regions. Southern California's fruit and vegetable production in the 1870s and 1880s was predominantly oriented toward local market at Los Angeles and the truck farming regions were located within the city and its vicinity. By the turn of the century larger producers in inland farming regions started to supply fresh produce to the Los Angeles market as well as to the distant market on the eastern seaboard across the continent. Japanese immigrants were attracted to southern California in order to take advantage of such economic opportunities.

The Japanese population in southern California experienced a drastic increase after the turn of the century, particularly during the first decade of the twentieth century when the Chinese population was decreasing, demand for fresh produce was ever growing, and agricultural regions were developing throughout southern California. Although the Population Census counted only 36 and 204 Japanese in 1890 and 1900 respectively in Los Angeles County, some 8,500 were counted in 1910, a 41-fold expansion in a decade. It continued to increase, numbering some 20,000 in 1920 and 35,000 in 1930, and by 1940 Los Angeles County housed the largest cluster of this ethnic group in the country, accounting for 39 percent of the total Japanese population of California. A large proportion of the population actively engaged in truck farming in and around the City of Los Angeles where land was available for lease to grow vegetables and strawberries. Japanese farmers began to dominate truck farming in Los Angeles County, which had been practically monopolized by Chinese prior to the turn of the century.

Japanese truck farming in the first two decades of the twentieth century was largely concentrated in Los Angeles County and to some extent in adjacent Orange County. According to a survey made in the mid-1910s, vegetable acreage farmed by Japanese amounted to nearly 10,000 acres in Los Angeles County, in addition to strawberries (2,500 acres) and sugar beet (3,800 acres), and Japanese in Orange County cultivated some 1,500 acres in vegetables and 6,000 acres in sugar beet. Although
Japanese farmers started to penetrate into such southern California counties as Santa Barbara, Ventura, and Imperial, vegetables had not yet become the major crops. In Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties they mainly grew sugar beet for refineries (some 12,000 acres) and beans (7,500 acres), while in the dry Imperial Valley Japanese were mainly engaged in cultivating cotton (18,000 acres) and cantaloupes (12,000 acres) (Nanka Nihonjin Nenkan No. 1, 1917–1918). In these distant farming regions in this period vegetable production was still largely limited.

Japanese truck farming expanded remarkably from the early center in the Los Angeles area over to the major agricultural regions in southern California during the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 2). Among over 2,500 growers' families raising vegetables, strawberries, and flowers in nine southern California counties in the mid-1930s, more than half were found in Los Angeles County, the rest being scattered over the rich farming districts. Nearly 600 Japanese families were found in Imperial Valley where they cultivated 15,000 acres in cantaloupes, 7,500 acres in lettuce, and 2,500 acres in other vegetables. In such coastal farming regions as San Luis Obispo, Guadalupe and Lompock, a wide variety of vegetables were produced by nearly 200 Japanese families, among which lettuce became an important crop occupying over 5,000 acres (Nodera 1936: 94).

The preceding suggests that the sequence from Chinese to Japanese proceeded successfully in the production of fresh produce in Los Angeles. Japanese farmers were to meet expanding demand caused by ever-increasing population while Chinese lost their dominance as the population decreased. Japanese also found their economic niche in the retail and wholesale of fresh produce. The following two sections will document Japanese engagement in such economic activities with special reference to their adaptive strategies.

**Economic Niche in Retailing Fruits and Vegetables**

Occupational characteristics of Japanese immigrants in the urban setting may consist of three types: ethnic group-oriented occupations to meet local Japanese demand, host society-oriented occupations catering for members of the host society, and general occupations catering for both Japanese and white Americans. As Nodera (1936: 27–31) pointed out, both host society-oriented occupations and ethnic group-oriented occupations existed from the beginning of the emergence of the Japanese community in Los Angeles, and ethnic group-oriented occupations were dominant at early stages of Japanese settlement in order to supply their demand. After the late 1910s, however, the center of Japanese businesses shifted from ethnic group-oriented occupation to host society-oriented occupation. It was mainly due to the growing economy and population of the City of Los Angeles and its vicinity, to the limitation of
both purchasing power and employment opportunities existing within the ethnic community, and to the increased adaptation. Kataoka pointed out that the Immigration Act of 1924 which prohibited the entry of Japanese temporarily hit the Japanese immigrants' economy which was largely based on the Japanese ethnic community and that their economic activities soon shifted and widened to cater for large host society (Kataoka 1929: 56).

As the Japanese economic activities grew, retailing fruits and vegetables was a typical occupation of the host society-oriented occupation from the beginning. They provided important employment opportunities for Japanese who had restricted access to a wide range of occupations, while contributing substantially to providing food for the increasing population of Los Angeles. Since this type of employment did not require specialized skill, experience, ability of English language, or a large capital to start with, Japanese were able to enter this small business easily.

Japanese occupational structure in southern California at the beginning of the twentieth century is well depicted in a report on the condition of Japanese immigrants in southern California presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Gaimusho Tsushokyoku 1908: 10–13). In this report, the number of Japanese businesses in Los Angeles and other cities was enumerated by business type. The City of Los Angeles had 163 Japanese businesses, among which fruit-vegetable stores were only two. The number of Japanese business increased to 588 by 1907, which was comparable to that of San Francisco (591), the major port of entry for Japanese on the west coast. Los Angeles' Japanese population amounted to 6,292 (5,382 males and 910 females) in 1907, which was approaching that of San Francisco.

Among 588 Japanese businesses in 1907, 37 were fruit-vegetable stores. They were next in importance to hotels (ryokan, 64), restaurants (ryoriten, 62), and public baths (yuya, 45). In addition, there were 21 grocery stores. Considering that San Francisco in the same year had only fifteen fruit-vegetable stores, this small business had particular importance in Los Angeles. It was mainly due to the fact that Japanese newcomers were able to occupy an opening in the local economy of rapidly growing Los Angeles. Japanese retailers were also able to take advantage of the ready supply of fruits and vegetables from Japanese farmers in and around Los Angeles.

In the mid-1910s, the number of Japanese engaged in retailing fruits and vegetables increased gradually. Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho (1960: 664) counted 66 grocery-fruit stores and 19 grocery (shokuryohin-zakka) stores in a survey of 1914. Uono counted 54 food and fruit stands when he examined the Japanese Address Book of 1917 (Uono 1927: 54). According to Nodera (1936: 28–29) who studied Japanese occupational structure by examining the Japanese Telephone Directory of 1915, ethnic group-oriented occupations catering for Japanese amounted to 603 with 33 business types, which included 20 food stores carrying Japanese foods. On the other hand, host society-oriented occupations accounted for 276 in eleven business types, which included seventeen grocery stores and eight fruit stands. These numbers of grocery stores and fruit stands appear to be much smaller than the actual numbers, and it may be because of the low rates of telephone holders among Japanese and of the dominance of casual sales facilities. The figures on Japanese-operated grocery and fruit stores given by Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho and Uono appear to represent the actual condition of Japanese business.

Retail of fruits and vegetables became much important during the 1920s. A survey made in 1923 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan shows that 262 males engaged in the sales of fruits and vegetables in and around Los Angeles (Gaimusho Tsushokyoku 1923). This occupation was important following housekeepers and cooks (1,146), farmers (1,049), farm laborers (1,000), fishermen and fishing laborers (933), and clerical workers (429). On the other hand, the 1928 Japanese Address Book listed 292 grocery stores and 203 fruit-vegetable stands in Los Angeles according to Kataoka (1929: 54). These businesses were an important economic basis for Los Angeles' Japanese, together with cafe and restaurants (107) and barbers (107). According to a survey conducted by
the Japanese Consulate of Los Angeles in 1927, Japanese employed at fruit stands in Los Angeles amounted to 1,262, which were next in importance to clerical work and gardening (Kataoka 1929: 55). Comparing these figures with those in the mid-1910s, it is easily understood that the importance of retailing fresh produce gained substantial importance in the Japanese community of Los Angeles.

Japanese occupations in the City of Los Angeles were surveyed in 1934 by the Japanese Chamber of Commerce of Southern California (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho). Japanese population gainfully employed numbered 9,027, among which 48 percent were engaged in the retail of fruits-vegetables and other foods. Employment at fruit and vegetable stands was the leading category where forty percent of Japanese were engaged (Nodera 1937: 465). Comparing Japanese immigrant (Issei) and American-born second generation (Nisei), the total numbers were almost comparable, but business categories were substantially different. Among Issei who numbered 4,576, 33 percent were employed in gardening, 20 percent in fruit-vegetable stands, and 10 percent in grocery stores. Other Issei found themselves in other occupations catering for the same ethnic stock, or ethnic group-oriented occupations. On the other hand, fruit-vegetable stands shared the majority of Nisei (62 percent), and only one percent was employed at grocery stores. These clearly show the different occupational characteristics among two generations of Japanese.

While the Immigration Act of 1924 restricted Japanese entry into the United States, Issei began to settle down in this foreign land as Nisei population was growing. Since the ethnic group-oriented occupations were fully occupied by Issei, the host society-oriented occupations could absorb increasing Nisei population. Without experience and capital Nisei were able to start fruit-vegetable stands or to be employed at such stands. Los Angeles County had Nisei population of 15,296 in 1930, among which 60 percent were ten years of age or younger. On the other hand, 94 percent of the total Nisei population was 20 years of age or younger. The Nisei population of 16 to 25 years of age amounted to 2,371, while the same age group increased to 4,608 by 1935 (Svensrud 1931: 19a; Nodera 1936: 114). Although Nisei of working age thus increased during the 1930s, American job market discrimination and prejudice restricted opportunities for Japanese. Not only Issei who had difficulties in the English language but also Nisei, American-born citizens, were severely handicapped in finding jobs. Fruit-vegetable stands were able to absorb such Nisei.

The importance of fruit-vegetable retailing continued to exist in the Japanese community of Los Angeles and its vicinity until the Japan-US war broke out in December 1941. Rafu Nenkan (1939–1940) listed 499 Japanese operated grocery and fruit-vegetable stores in the City of Los Angeles, amounting to the total of 714 including those in the surrounding areas. They were not only concentrated in downtown Los Angeles, but also widely dispersed in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

These Japanese retailers of fruit and vegetables were mainly supplied from Japanese wholesalers at the wholesale markets of Los Angeles. Broom and Riemer (1949: 95) estimated that a typical Japanese wholesale dealer at the produce markets provided fresh produce to white-operated retail stores (20 percent), white-operated chain-markets (25 to 30 percent), and Japanese-operated retailers (50 percent). This suggests that Japanese immigrants also found their economic niche in the wholesale of fresh produce in Los Angeles prior to World War II. The following section attempts to document how Japanese came to engage in the wholesale business with special reference to their adaptive strategies.

**Economic Niche in Wholesaling Fresh Produce**

In order to examine Japanese engagement in wholesaling fresh produce, the development process of fresh produce marketing in Los Angeles needs to be examined. In the early 1890s a small open-air market was established in the Plaza on Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. Farmers in the vicinity of Los Angeles brought their fruits and vegetables to the market by carriage. As the number of vendors
grew, the market soon came to dominate the Plaza, causing inconvenience for other use of the public space. The open-air market was eventually closed in 1901. In the same year, the City of Los Angeles opened a new produce market in an open lot on Ninth and Los Angeles Streets. Two years later, this public market, seeking for wider space, moved to a lot on Third Street and Central Avenue adjacent to the Southern Pacific Railroad track. This site was within the Japanese quarter that became later known as Little Tokyo. Six years later, this public market moved again to the site on Sixth and Alameda Streets to expand space (Wong 1980: 64–65, 79).

At the beginning of the twentieth century when Japanese started to engage in intensive farming in Los Angeles, a small public market was the only outlet of fresh produce in town. Therefore, Japanese growers either brought their produce to this market by wagon to sell by themselves or sold their produce to dealers and commission merchants on their visit to the farm. By 1908, 120 to 130 Japanese vegetable growers engaged in selling their produce in the market that was traditionally dominated by Chinese, whose total sales amounted to some one million to one and half million dollars annually (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1960: 66). As the amount of produce marketed in Los Angeles grew, the small public market was not able to respond to the ever-increasing transactions. Japanese growers were often restricted because of space limitation when the white users of the marketplace were against the increase of Japanese.

As the number of Japanese farmers increased and the market condition was unsatisfactory, the Japanese Farmers’ Association of Southern California (Nanka Nogyo Kumiai) was organized in November 1907. It was an ethnic organization, consisting only of Japanese immigrants, and came to play an important role in the development of Japanese farming and produce marketing in southern California. At an extraordinary general meeting held in October 1908, attended by some seventy Japanese members, the establishing of a new produce market was discussed. Responding to a white elder in the old market who planned to build a new market, Japanese participated in the joint venture of establishing a new produce market (Nanka Nogyo Kumiai 1932: 74–84).

The City Market of Los Angeles was established in June 1909 in downtown Los Angeles on a 4.5-acre parcel leased under a fifteen-year agreement on San Pedro Street and Ninth Street. Japanese often called it the Ninth Street Market. All of the members of the Japanese Farmers’ Association of Southern California were affiliated to this new market. So were Chinese growers who had played a central role in the old market.

The new produce market was characterized by ethnic diversity. It was started by Anglo-American president, Chinese and Italian vice-presidents, Japanese secretary, and Russian treasurer. Paid-up capital amounted to two hundred thousand dollars, whose shareholders included 94 Japanese, 373 Chinese, and 45 white Americans, who shared 18 percent, 41 percent, and 41 percent respectively (Nanka Nogyo Kumiai 1932: 86–88). In addition, this market was where a variety of people with different cultural backgrounds met and communicated with each other (Mason and McKinstry 1969: 31). The quarter adjacent to the new public market from Ninth Street to West Adams Boulevard had a concentration of Chinese population for a while until a new Chinatown was built on North Broadway. It was partly due to the employment created at the produce market and also due to the demolition of old Chinatown (McDannold 1973: 103–104).

It appears that those Japanese who were positively engaged in establishing the City Market shared strong feeling of solidarity, considering the market as theirs. When the market observed the first anniversary of the marketplace opening in 1910, it was undertaken under the initiative of Japanese members. The statement of account for this event reveals that Japanese contributed over sixty percent of the total amount of special donations (Nanka Nihonjin Nogyo Kumiai Isshunen Kin en Sokai Shukugakai Kessan Hokoku, 3 August 1910, JARP Collection, UCLA).

When the City Market opened, 180 growers sold their produce by using stools and tables. Among them, 120 were Japanese, 40 Chinese,
and 20 white Americans, indicating the influence of Japanese growers at the market. Japanese influence was less manifested in the number of dealers and commission merchants who kept stores, as Japanese stores were only four among 44 (Nanka Nogyo Kumiai 1932: 88). Three years later, there were 47 stores (25 Chinese, 17 white Americans, and 15 Japanese), and 620 grower-sellers (430 Japanese, 40 Chinese, and 150 White) (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1960: 67). Those grower-sellers either used tables within the market structure or sold their produce from their wagons in open-air. The open-air sales section had 350 lots, which were rented for 25 cents a day. Japanese occupied 170 open-air lots in 1917, while Chinese rented 100 lots and whites 50 lots. Within the market building, there were 305 compartments, among which Japanese shared some twenty percent.

The total sales of the City Market amounted to five million dollars for vegetables and three million dollars for fruits in 1917 (Nichibei Nenkan 12, 1912: Agriculture, p. 126). In the early 1930s, the City Market sold sixteen to twenty-five million dollars annually, and the Japanese Consulate in Los Angeles estimated that Japanese were responsible for half of the total sales (Nodera 1936: 103).

Opening of the new produce market brought about temporary disorder in the Japanese farm produce community. The public market on the Third Street and Central Avenue, which was often called the Third Street Market or old market, had to face severe competition from the opening of new market. The old market experienced reduced transactions, loss of tenants, and decline in stocks. Although Japanese affiliated in the old market moved to the new market when it opened, there were more than a dozen Japanese who returned from the new market to the old market. They organized the Nippon-California Farmers Association (Nikka Nogyo Kumiai) in October 1909 (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1956: 170-171). This was an ethnic organization consisting only of Japanese. Although the Japanese Farmers' Association of Southern California and the Nippon-California Farmers Association experienced conflicts during the early period, these ethnic organizations played a central role in uniting the Japanese communities and furthering the Japanese farming economy in southern California prior to World War II.

In the mean time, the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, a giant corporation of California, began to show interest in the produce business and in May 1918 established the Los Angeles Union Terminal Company, Inc., on Central Avenue between Seventh and Eighth Streets. This market was commonly called the Wholesale Terminal Market (abbreviated hereafter as the Union Terminal Market in this paper).

The opening of this market exerted a great impact on Los Angeles as a whole as well as the Japanese community. Rafu Shimpo, a major Japanese newspaper of Los Angeles, reported this market as big news. This new market, built on a five-acre lot, was the largest wholesale terminal market west of Chicago, and was equipped with modern market facilities and the siding of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The open-air sales section in the center of the market had 600 open stalls, while the market buildings on both sides of the open market housed 300 compartments for produce dealers and commission merchants. One of the building wings had 100 office spaces, three restaurants, and a Japanese-operated hotel on the second floor. The other wing housed agriculture-related companies, banks, US post office, gas station, and garage. The USDA Bureau of Marketing also kept an office in the market in order to provide news of marketing conditions. Japanese at the old market on Third Street, with the Nippon-California Farmers Association, moved to this modern terminal market (Rafu Shimpo, 3 and 11 May 1918).

The opening ceremony of the Union Terminal Market was celebrated with much enthusiasm. Two Japanese delivered a congratulatory address, and kendo (Japanese fencing) and kenbu (sword dance) were performed at the entertainment following the ceremony (Rafu Shimpo, 12 May 1918). The total transactions of the market amounted to approximately 70 million dollars in 1934, among which Japanese were responsible for one seventh (Nodera 1936: 106). Although Japanese did not participate in the management of the company unlike the
City Market, they exerted a substantial influence upon the actual transactions in the marketplace.

Burnight presented the ethnic characteristics of those who sold fresh produce at the City Market and the Union Terminal Market by surveying these markets five times in March and April 1920 (Burnight 1920: 18–19). The total number of people who sold produce from trucks or wagons numbered 253 on the average. Japanese amounted to 150 (56 percent) and whites 91 (36 percent), while Chinese influence had been almost lost by this time. Japanese and whites dealt with different types of produce, Japanese being specialized in vegetables and strawberries and the whites in fruits. When Burnight surveyed the two markets, lettuce, cabbage, potatoes, celery, radish, and turnip, orange and apple, and berries constituted the produce mainly handled. He pointed out that the number of whites may fluctuate seasonally but Japanese were rather stabilized throughout the year, for the harvest of citrus fruits decreased but the receipt of vegetables were rather stable all the year round (Burnight 1920: 19).

Two Japanese agricultural associations based on the produce markets gradually shifted their original functions as Japanese became increasingly engaged in wholesaling fruits and vegetables. In the early stages, those Japanese who sold fresh produce at the wholesale markets were predominantly vegetable growers themselves, who transported their products to the market by themselves and sold them. For the first ten years following the establishment of the Japanese Farmers’ Association of Southern California and the Nippon-California Farmers Association the membership increased as the number of Japanese growers increased and they sought places for marketing. Both associations had a membership of approximately 300 by 1917 (Nanka Nihonjin Nenkan 1917–1918: 67). Several years later the Nippon-California Farmers Association boasted its peak membership of approximately 400 (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1960: 68).

Following the peak period in the 1920s, the membership of two Japanese associations at the markets decreased, especially during the 1930s. There were several reasons for this decline. One was the growing importance of Japanese-organized agricultural cooperatives in the farming regions of southern California (Yagasaki 1995). More importantly, as Japanese farming activities expanded into peripheral farming regions in Imperial and Santa Barbara counties, it became difficult for farmers to transport their produce and sell by themselves, and they consequently depended more on dealers and commission merchants. Under these circumstances, two Japanese agricultural associations started as growers’ cooperatives shifted to those of specialized wholesalers. Although Nodera observed that both associations had over 400 members when he surveyed both markets in 1935 (Nodera 1936: 104, 108), it appears that the wholesalers, market-related personnel, and nominally affiliated growers who had stopped transporting their produce by themselves were included.

As the number of Japanese growers increased in the peripheral farming regions, the number of Japanese who engaged in wholesaling increased, including commission merchants, dealers, brokers, and cash buyers. In 1915, the number of commission merchants counted fifteen at the City Market and five at the Third Street market. These Japanese merchants organized a friendship club (Shinwa Kurabu) following the settlement of the early dispute between the two agricultural associations (Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1960: 69). In May 1930, eleven Japanese commission merchants at the two wholesale markets organized the Produce Dealers Exchange, which offered the basis of the Cooperative Farm Industry of Southern California (Yagasaki 1995). The Shinwa Kurabu developed into the Rafu Nihonjin Nosansho Kumiai, which had amembership of 22 in 1939 (Nanka Merchants’ Bulletin 14, 20 September 1939). These commission merchants kept a store within the market structure. In addition to them, Nodera counted the following Japanese: five wholesale-growers and 20 yard dealers at the City Market, and eight wholesale-growers and 45 yard-dealers at the Union Terminal Market (Nodera 1936: 110). These Japanese commission merchants and dealers played an important role in the market-
ing of fresh produce in Los Angeles, keeping close contact with Japanese farmers and Japanese retailers and mediating between the two sectors in the ethnic community.

During the 1930s, organized marketing systems were developed from the peripheral farming regions in southern California. The most successful effort was the cooperative marketing project started in 1931 by the Cooperative Farm Industry of Southern California. Four central coast agricultural cooperatives in San Luis Obispo, Guadalupe, and Lompoc, and the Pismo-Oceano Vegetable Exchange organized the Central Coast Farm Federation (Chubu Engan Rengo Nokai) and took part in the marketing program by supplying lettuce and other vegetables. Japanese commission merchants and dealers organized under the Cooperative Farm Industry of Southern California took part in receiving and selling of the produce. The office within the City Market reported daily market conditions to the four agricultural cooperatives affiliated in the Federation, while each agricultural cooperative reported the estimate shipment to the Los Angeles office. The supply and demand of vegetables became well adjusted, which contributed to stabilizing the market price in Los Angeles. The centripetal role that the wholesale terminal market played in the marketing of fresh produce in Los Angeles and vicinity was maintained throughout the pre-World War II period, despite the fact that Japanese farming regions moved to the periphery and the distance of shipment expanded.

A close tie between farming regions of southern California and Los Angeles' produce markets was well exemplified by "dealer credit," an informal financing which wholesale produce dealers offered to Japanese growers. While dealer credit was commonly offered in a variety of farming regions of the United States on the security of farm products, Japanese immigrant farmers, without proper capital accumulation, especially took advantage of this informal credit system. Japanese farmers in southern California received dealer credit from Japanese wholesalers as well as from American wholesalers (Broom and Riemer 1949). Although the actual amount of credit that Japanese wholesalers offered to Japanese farmers in southern California is yet to be investigated, it appears certain that dealer credit certainly contributed to stabilizing the flow of fresh produce.

**Adaptive Strategies and the Formation of Vertical Dominance**

Preceding sections documented that Japanese immigrants successfully moved into the economic niches in producing, wholesaling, and retailing fruits and vegetables in southern California prior to the beginning of World War II. Ethnic system of dominance in production and marketing was attained in three phases as is summarized in Figure 3.

The first phase was prior to the establishment of the City Market of Los Angeles in 1909. In this incipient period, a small open-air public market spontaneously started in downtown Plaza was moved and expanded as the Third Street Market, where Japanese producers of fruit and vegetables sold their own produce. Although this farmers' market functioned as the center of produce distribution in town, many growers peddled their produce in the city and others sold their produce to dealers. Truck farming areas were located within the City of Los Angeles and its vicinity. Chinese dominated the production and distribution of fruits and vegetables in this period. The number of Japanese growers was still limited while Japanese-operated small business, including hotels, restaurants, public bath, and food-grocery stores, began to increase as Japanese population grew.

The following factors helped Japanese move into an economic niche in the incipient phase: growing local demand for fresh produce, the declining role of Chinese growers, underdevelopment of marketing systems, and Japanese ability in intensive farming. The population of the City of Los Angeles grew from 11,000 in 1880, to 33,000 in 1885, 65,000 in 1887, 102,000 in 1900, and 260,000 in 1907. The rate of population increase brought about a soaring demand for fruits and vegetables. Although Chinese had mainly supplied the Los Angeles market with fresh produce, Chinese vegetable growers decreased from 208 in 1880 to 95 in
Figure 3. Japanese system of production and marketing of fresh produce in southern California prior to World War II.

1900 in Los Angeles County while the Chinese population increased by 175 percent (Chan 1986: 157). In addition, while efforts at establishing the system of fresh produce marketing had only begun, newly starting Japanese were able to find options for selling their produce.

Japanese started to engage in agriculture as migrant farm laborers in southern California as in other parts of the state (Iwata 1992). White farmers highly appraised Japanese farm workers as they were well adapted to working in a squatting posture, were skilled and experienced in farm work, and tended to be less mobile compared to other immigrant groups (Gaimusho Tsushokyoku 1908: 20). They soon climbed the agricultural ladder to become farm operators by leasing farmland. Although Japanese were able to purchase land prior to the enactment of the Alien Land Law of California enacted in 1913, they preferred to lease small parcels for growing annual crops such as strawberries and vegetable in and around Los Angeles. Although mechanization has characterized American agriculture, growing strawberries and vegetables heavily depended on manual labor, in which Japanese growers were
highly competitive.

The establishment phase was from 1909 through the mid-1920s, when Japanese increased their importance in produce marketing. The City Market of Los Angeles was established in 1909 by collaborative efforts and investment of white Americans, Chinese, and Japanese. The opening of the modern Union Terminal Market in 1918 further strengthened the distribution system through wholesale terminal markets. As the Los Angeles’ economy prospered and the population grew, increased demand for fresh produce brought prosperity to growers, wholesalers, and retailers. While Chinese importance was fading away, more and more Japanese became attracted to these economic activities to develop into ethnic business.

Japanese organized two ethnic agricultural associations, the Japanese Agricultural Association of Southern California and the Nippon-California Agricultural Association. They not only united Japanese affiliated in two wholesale produce markets, but also played functions to moderate Japanese farming communities in southern California. Although Japanese farming areas were gradually moving toward peripheral farming regions, two wholesale markets prospered as the place where growers regularly met to sell their produce. Two Japanese agricultural associations attained the maximum number of membership in this phase. Retailing fruits and vegetables at grocery stores as well as fruit-vegetable stands was an important occupational opportunity for Issei.

In addition to the two market-based ethnic organizations, Japanese farmers established agricultural cooperatives in every farming region in southern California (Yagasaki 1995). While playing a socio-cultural role in rural Japanese communities, they were also important in conducting cooperative marketing in the wholesale markets in Los Angeles. Thus, Japanese adaptive strategies based on ethnic organizations were successful in attaining the vertical dominance in production, wholesaling, and retailing of fruits and vegetables.

The phase of prosperity was from the mid-1920s to the outbreak of the Japan-US war in 1941. The produce distribution system based on the two wholesale terminal markets was further strengthened, while farming regions moved farther to the peripheral areas of southern California and the terminal market shifted from a growers’ market to that of specialist wholesalers. Two Japanese agricultural associations established at the produce markets gradually lost membership, and wholesalers rather than growers constituted the majority of members. At the same time, Japanese farmers organized agricultural cooperatives in each locality, which conducted cooperative shipment to Los Angeles’ wholesale markets. Development of organized shipments contributed to stabilizing market prices in Los Angeles. Dealer credit to Japanese farmers by Los Angeles’ wholesalers strengthened the flow of produce to Los Angeles markets. Many of the Nisei who reached working age took jobs at retailing fruits and vegetables, especially at fruits and vegetable stands scattered over the metropolitan area. Retail of fresh produce became the leading occupation for the Japanese community of Los Angeles.

Toward an Understanding of Occupational Sequential Occupance

Vertical dominance that Japanese immigrants established in production, wholesaling, and retailing of fresh produce suddenly collapsed with the outbreak of Japan-US war and the consequent relocation of Japanese from the Pacific Coast to inland concentration camps. The pre-war system of Japanese dominance was never restored after the end of World War II. This reflected both internal and external factors.

The distribution system of fresh produce was largely modified, where the traditional role of wholesale terminal markets became reduced substantially due to the increased importance of chain-markets (Jumper 1974). Farming activities in the Los Angeles metropolitan area had to decline due to rapid process of urbanization. The fact that the majority of Japanese farmers did not have title to land weakened their position in continuing farming activities. The Issei who were the main force of production and marketing in the prewar period had reached retirement age by the time they came
back from the concentration camps, while Nisei came to have easier access to widened job opportunities in the postwar period. Japanese immigration was still restricted under the Immigration Act of 1924, thus without newcomers to succeed in the ethnic business. Consequently the number of retail groceries decreased after the war, as the Japanese directories (Zenbei Nikkeijinn Fushoroku) counted 78 grocery stores in the 1949 edition, 98 in the 1952 edition, and 8 in the 1955 edition. Thus the Japanese role in the supply of fresh produce in Los Angeles became a theme in historical geography.

The aforementioned does not suggest that retailing fresh produce totally disappeared in Los Angeles. Although the role of wholesale terminal markets declined in wholesaling fresh produce, and fruit-vegetable stands almost disappeared as chain markets grew in retailing, grocery stores continued to exist as urban small businesses to meet local demand. Who came next, then, to occupy the economic niche of retailing fresh produce after Japanese influence faded away? It appears that operating grocery stores as ethnic business continued to exist as new immigrant groups found economic niches by replacing Japanese. Although details of the ethnic groups who succeeded Japanese are yet to be scrutinized, we know that Korean immigrants had found their economic niche in the small business by the early 1990s when the Los Angeles riot of 1992 severely hit their ethnic economy. This Asian immigrant group began to increase in Los Angeles during the 1970s following the enactment of the new Immigration Act in the 1960s that lifted restrictions on Asian immigrants.

The process of certain immigrant groups occupying a particular urban business in turn at different times in history may be documented and analyzed by applying the idea of "occupational sequent occupance." "Sequent occupance," proposed by Whittlesey in 1929, was a popular method of regional description in American historical geography from the 1920s through the late 1950s (Whittlesey 1929; Mickell 1975). Although the traditional concept of sequent occupance implied singular evolution and static intervals, occupational sequent occupance may be able to describe the dynamic interaction of immigrant groups and host society and to explain the process of change with internal and external factors.

As I demonstrated in this paper, the first sequence proceeded from Chinese to Japanese between 1900 and 1910 in the supply of fruits and vegetables in Los Angeles. Following the period of Japanese dominance, the second sequence took place after the end of World War II. Documenting such sequence in the occupational structure is a challenging research frontier, which will contribute to the comprehensive understanding of immigrant groups as well as the cultural-historical geography of American cities.

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Notes

1. When the Japanese Farmers’ Association of Southern California announced the application of sanctions against those Japanese who returned to the old market, the two cooperatives were confronted each other, and this developed into one of the greatest disputes among Japanese communities in southern California by dividing it into two groups. Two Japanese language newspapers in Los Angeles, Rafu Shimpo and Rafu Mainichi, supported the old market and the City Market respectively. When Rafu Mainichi shifted to take a neutral attitude, the Japanese Farmers’ Association of Southern California first published Shin Ichiba Joho (New Market News) and Rafu Asahi Shim bun in order to express their opinion. The dispute, which peaked toward the end of January 1910, gradually came under control (Zaibei Nihonjin Kai 1940: 838–839; Nanka Nikkeijin Shogyo Kaigisho 1956: 180–181; Shin Ichiba Joho Nos. 1–3). By the end of the 1910s, these Japanese associations worked together to cope with a variety of problems regarding farming. For example, they adopted a resolution indicating cooperative effort in the face of a new state law restricting tomato packing (Rafu Shimpo, 8 May 1918).
2. Wholesale markets located in urban consumer markets are generally called terminal markets. While cities on the eastern seaboard have a long history of such development to provide urban consumers with fresh produce, terminal markets began to increase rapidly in the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States as a whole. Twenty terminal markets were established between 1900 and 1920, and forty-nine new markets opened between 1920 and 1940 (Jumper 1974: 392). Development of wholesale produce marketing in Los Angeles well represented the general trend in the United States. Rapid urbanization process of Los Angeles from the late nineteenth century and the development of intensive farming in and around Los Angeles combined to contribute to the prosperity of wholesale terminal markets.

References


Yagasaki N. 2003. Adaptive strategies and ethnic


(J): written in Japanese

(JE): written in Japanese with English abstract