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An immigrant family¹

Jō Takasuka was born on 13 February 1865 at Matsuyama, Japan, the only son of Kahei Takasuka who had been granted samurai status for his services as a chef at the castle of the local *daimyō* (feudal lord).² In 1884, when Jō was only 18 years old, Kahei transferred to him the headship of the house and the title to the family property — a not unusual procedure in the case of samurai families.³

After two years study at the Keiō Continuation School in Tokyo, Jō enrolled in the Economics Faculty of Keiō University in 1892,⁴ but shortly afterwards went to the United States where he studied at DePauw University (Indiana)⁵ and Westminster College (Pennsylvania) where he graduated BA in 1896.⁶

On his return to Japan, he successfully stood for election in March 1898 in the local constituency in the House of Representatives on behalf of the Rikken Seiyūkai Party. In July of the same year he married Ichi, daughter of Michimoto Maejima, a judge of the local District Court. She had received a secondary education at a famous Tokyo school for young ladies, the Watanabe Saihō Gakkō, the predecessor of today's Tokyo Kasei University. In 1900 a new electoral law greatly enlarged the franchise and changed Takasuka's seat into a much larger, single-member constituency. In these circumstances he did not contest the 1902 elections.

Accompanied by his wife and two infant children, Takasuka arrived in Melbourne on 14 March 1905 aboard the E&A Line's *Empire* on a 12 months' 'Certificate of Exemption from the Dictation Test' granted for the purpose of engaging in the

1 Unpublished paper.

2 Interview with Mr Yūichi Nakasuka (the son of Jō's cousin) at Matsuyama on 24 January 1974.

3 Copy of Jō's family register (*koseki*) provided by Matsuyama Town Hall, 24 October 1973.

4 Information provided by the Historical Section (Jukushi Shiryō-shitsu) of Keiō University in 1974.

5 Shūgiin, *Gikaiseido Nanajūgonen-shi: Shūgiin-giin-meikan* (Tokyo: Okura-shō, 1962), p. 287.

6 Registrar, Westminster College, to the author, 29 October 1973.

export and import trade.⁷ He set up in business under the name, Takasuka, Dight & Co., Japanese Importers, at 136 Queen Street in the city and at 20 Boyd Street, Richmond.⁸ As a part-time activity he also taught the Japanese language at Stott & Hoare's Business College.⁹

Takasuka was dilatory in applying for an extension of his 12 months' certificate of exemption. Accordingly, on 7 July 1906 he was instructed by the Commonwealth authorities to wind up his affairs and leave Australia within six months. On representations from the consul-general, however, he was granted an extension of 12 months from 1 March 1906 'on the distinct understanding that no further application is made'.¹⁰ Takasuka, however, had other plans. He had secured an interview with the Victorian premier and the minister for Crown lands and survey and had asked for the lease of an area of from 300 to 500 acres of land subject to flooding in the Mallee district. On this he proposed to experiment with rice growing. Rice culture, he told them:

is very difficult and requires special trained knowledge to be successfully done. In my native country the cultivation is in the hands of farmers who for generations have followed this culture for their living. It is a crop of extraordinary fickleness, and owing to the quantity of water used, subject to attacks of many diseases, as witness the frequent failures of the crops and ensuing famines in Japan. On the other hand rice culture affords a means of utilizing areas of marshy land not capable of cultivation for any other crops of commercial value at the present time.¹¹

Impressed, no doubt, by the latter consideration, the minister placed the matter before the Victorian Cabinet, which on 6 July resolved to make available for this purpose an area of 300 acres on the Murray River. Accordingly, there duly appeared in the Victorian *Government Gazette* over the minister's signature the following advertisement:

LAND AVAILABLE FOR RICE CULTURE ON THE MURRAY RIVER FRONTAGE, ABOUT FOURTEEN MILES BELOW SWAN HILL.

Three hundred acres, in the parish of Tyntynder West, county of Tatchera, situated between the 'Cadusch' Homestead Settlement and the Murray River.

The land is subject to annual inundation. A permit to occupy the land for five years will be given the successful applicant, at an annual fee of 6d. per acre.

7 AI, file 25/27797, National Archives of Australia (Canberra) (hereafter 25/27797).

8 Sands & McDougall, *Melbourne Suburban and Country Directory* 1906, 1907, 1908 (in 1908 the Richmond address is not listed).

9 Stott and Hoare's Business College, *21st Annual Report, 1906*, p. 13.

10 Secretary, External Affairs to Consul-General, 25 July 1906, 25/27797.

11 Takasuka to Premier, 22 June 1906, Department of Crown Lands and Survey, Victoria, file 05075/204 (hereafter 05075/204).

Conditions will be inserted in the permit making the cultivation of rice compulsory, and also providing for an annual expenditure of at least Ten shillings per acre during the term of five years.

If, at the end of such term, the conditions have been complied with to the satisfaction of the Minister for Lands, a perpetual lease will be granted, at an annual rent of 3d. per acre.

Such rent is subject to revision at the end of every period of ten years.

Applications will be received by the Secretary for Lands, Melbourne, until Friday, the 31st August, 1906.¹²

Takasuka lodged an application for the whole 300 acres and promptly moved with his family to the district, where they boarded with a local farmer. On 18 October he gave evidence before the local land board in support of his application. He said that he had been associated with rice cultivation nearly all his life. In Japan his father had 10,000 acres and had 'people growing rice on parts of it'. In the United States over a period of four years he had made two attempts at rice growing in Texas where he had rented 170 acres and 300 acres respectively.¹³ These attempts had been unsuccessful because of the low price of rice there (£10 a ton). Thanks to a high duty, the price of rice in Australia was £22 a ton. At this price he considered the enterprise would be viable despite the expenditure that would be required to construct a levee bank five-feet high to keep out the floods. He had £500 capital and one ton of rice seed. He was trying to secure a local farmer as a partner; but, if he could not find one, he would proceed on his own (in the event, this is what he had to do). He admitted that he was not naturalised and said that this would take five years (in this respect he must have been misinformed. From the 1890s onwards the policy of Australian governments had been to make use of their executive discretion to refuse naturalisation to Asians).¹⁴

Takasuka was allotted 200 of the 300 acres. The remainder was divided equally between two Australian applicants.

On the basis of this changed set of circumstances, the consul-general prevailed on the Commonwealth immigration authorities to take a less rigid view regarding Takasuka's stay. On 3 October they informed the consul-general that, as the case was 'an isolated one, not likely to form a precedent', annual extensions of his certificate of exemption would be granted for the period of the lease.¹⁵

¹² Victoria, *Government Gazette*, 1 August 1906, p. 3348.

¹³ These claims must surely have been exaggerations. The May 1898 edition of *Shūgiin Giin Meibo* ('List of Members of the House of Representatives') gives Jō's annual land-tax assessment as ¥25.115. This meant an ownership of only about six acres! (I am indebted to my colleague Dr Andrew Fraser and to Dr Junji Banno of the Institute of Social Science at Tokyo University for this information.) Any real property owned by his father would have been transferred to Jō when the latter became head of the house in 1884.

¹⁴ Local Land Board, Swan Hill, Notes of Evidence, Case No. 13, 18 October 1906, 05075/204.

¹⁵ Secretary, External Affairs to Consul-General, 3 October 1906, 25/27797.

The survey of Takasuka's allotment was completed in August the following year (1907) and his five-year permit to occupy the land commenced on 1 January 1908. Takasuka, however, did not allow such formalities to delay his experiments. His seed would deteriorate if kept. For the 1906/07 season he sowed 35 acres on land rented from SP Watson at Nyah. In this way Takasuka, with insufficient capital, embarked upon a 20-year battle against the elements in what was in those years virtually the only sustained attempt to grow rice in Victoria.¹⁶ He was by disposition a theorist rather than a practical man. The story is still current in the Nyah district that on his arrival he was seen putting bait on his rabbit-traps!

The 1906 attempt was a failure. The seed was of an unsuitable variety. Furthermore, sheep got in and devoured what little of it that had come up. In 1907 he imported three other varieties from Japan and sowed 65 acres on land belonging to E O'Riley at Piangil (about 12 miles to the north-west). Because of lack of water this too was a failure. The yield was only a few bags; some of it was black, some of it was green, and it was no use for seed.¹⁷ In 1908 he brought out an 'expert' from Japan. This 'expert' (who appears to have been Takasuka's father, Kahei) brought with him 15 bags of seed of different kinds and advised him that the only way was to experiment with many varieties and to acclimatise the best. That was Takasuka's first year on his own allotment. With the aid of a contractor he began work on the levee bank and ploughed 10 acres. He was so busy with these operations, however, that he missed sowing time and no crop was planted that season. In February 1909 he tried without success through his local member of parliament to get £100 from the state government to buy bullocks for erecting the banks.¹⁸ Despite this rebuff, he continued work on banking and ploughed about 40 acres, only to have everything washed away in the big flood of that year which forced him to take refuge with his family at Nyah.¹⁹ At this stage, he sought the permission of the Commonwealth Government to bring in two Japanese with the necessary special skills as partners to remain in the Commonwealth until the expiry of his own period of admission.²⁰ This was refused. In 1910 he erected 1.25 miles of banking; but floods struck again and swept it away. He sowed about a quarter of an acre on the land of a neighbour, E Hungerford.

16 This account of Takasuka's rice-growing experiments is taken principally from Takasuka to Minister for Lands, 18 March 1920, 050575/204 and supplemented by the sources indicated hereunder.

17 Report of Mounted Constable CJ Levett, 18 May 1910, 25/27797. See also Takasuka to Agricultural Superintendent, 31 July 1914 in Victorian Department of Agriculture file 'Miscellaneous — Rice Culture' (hereafter 'Misc. — Rice Culture'). I am indebted to the director for kindly providing me with relevant material from this file.

18 Takasuka to Hon. John Gray, MLA, 12 February 1909, 05075/204.

19 Consul-General to Secretary, External Affairs, 20 April 1910, 25/27797.

20 Consul-General to Secretary, External Affairs, 13 November 1909, 25/27797.

In 1911 on his own allotment he sowed 25 varieties, each in a sample plot measuring 20 × 12 feet. Of these, three — Kahei (named after his father), Hiderishirazu and Shinriki²¹ — appear to have been successfully harvested. The chief field officer of the Department of Agriculture (Temple A Smith) visited the property and reported favourably:

Mr Takasuka claims that these will yield 20 cwt. per acre of clean rice, valued at £20 per ton. The rice straw is also of value for making mats, for thatching, and the straw is also greedily eaten by stock.

The cost of growing and irrigating, including ploughing, harvesting, etc., is approximately £7 per acre.

The soil on which the rice is being grown is a strong clay loam, liable to flood for several months of the year, owing to which fact Mr Takasuka cannot grow the crop on a commercial scale at present. The rice now in the plots shows better growth than any of the other crops adjoining, such as maize.

There are approximately 500 acres of this flat suitable for rice-growing, and this land is typical of many hundreds of acres of land along the Murray of little use for other purposes.²²

It was during this season that the two Australians who had been allotted land for rice-growing at the same time as Takasuka abandoned their efforts and their allotments reverted to the status of unoccupied Crown land.

It is ironical that just as there appeared some prospect of success for Takasuka's project, a threat to his tenure developed. In July 1911 Takasuka had pointed out to the Lands Department that in order to protect his allotment from flooding it was necessary to erect a bank three miles long — half of it on his allotment, half of it on Crown land. He proposed that they share expenses.²³ The government was indeed contemplating extensive works of this nature in its own interests; but in these plans Takasuka's presence was a hindrance. Around his 200-acre allotment there were another 405 acres of unoccupied Crown land. By means of levee banks this could all be brought into production as a closer settlement project and the value of the land raised to at least £6 per acre.²⁴ Although Takasuka had paid his rents, he was legally in a weak position as he had not the cash flow to enable him to effect the £100-per-annum improvements required under the conditions of his

21 In Japan, Hiderishirazu (旱不知) and Shinriki (神力) were regarded as upland (and not as wet-field) varieties.

22 Temple A Smith to Director, Department of Agriculture, 10 April 1912, 05075/204; Rept. by Mounted Constable GH Taylor, 6 May 1912, 25/27797. See also *Age* (Melbourne), 12 April 1912; *Argus* (Melbourne), 12 April 1912.

23 Takasuka to Minister, 12 July 1911, 05075/204.

24 Secretary State Rivers & Water Supply Commission to Lands Department, 15 March and 22 June 1912, 05075/204.

tenancy. In May 1912 he was informed that, until the government's plans for the wider reclamation project had been settled, the question of issuing the perpetual lease to him could not be considered.²⁵

Without the protection of the levee banks Takasuka was loth to expose to risk of floods the valuable seeds that he had at last produced. In 1912 he sowed at two different places in Nyah on ground rented from W Hobson and K Mole. In 1913 on R Berry's block at Tyntynder Central he sowed a total of five acres of Kahei (now acclimatised for three years and renamed Takasuka) and Ehime (the name of his native prefecture in Japan). He harvested about 12 bags (i.e. almost one ton) to the acre.²⁶ The five-year period of residence required under the terms of his tenancy having been completed, Takasuka moved with his family to Swan Hill in October of that year.

There were difficult problems of cultivation technique to be overcome. On 6 June 1914 he wrote to the Victorian Department of Agriculture asking for advice on how to achieve more regular ripening. In Japan the flowering stage lasted only two weeks; but at Nyah it lasted for six weeks and new ears kept shooting after the first ears had ripened. The department's reply ignored these questions. On 31 July he informed them that he was now about to experiment with the cultivation of a large area. Pointing out that his experiments to date had entailed testing 54 varieties, he appealed to them for some assistance:

During last 8 years I sacrificed much work and expenses for experimenting rice culture, so year by year I got poorer and poorer, I have not much capital for rice growing on a large scale this year, and I should be glad to get assistance from your Department.

To this letter he received a bare acknowledgment.²⁷ Undaunted, he went ahead and that season sowed two separate plots in the Swan Hill Irrigation Area (30 acres, Original Block 24, Mrs Carroll; 20 acres, Original Block 36, J Hannon). It turned out to be a drought year and the State Rivers and Water Commission could not supply him with sufficient water. In this situation he devoted his entire ration to 10 acres on the smaller block. This strategy was successful. On these 10 acres his yield was once again 12 bags to the acre. He was able to sell the seed produced to commercial seedsmen and to the New South Wales Department of Agriculture, which sowed it at its Yanco Experimental Farm in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area.

25 Secretary, Lands Department to Takasuka, 22 May 1912, 05075/204.

26 According to the Victorian *Journal of Agriculture* (10 August 1916, p. 493), one bag of this variety unhulled weighed about 176 pounds.

27 'Misc. — Rice Culture'.

The Great War had broken out some months previously. Takasuka donated the proceeds of the first 100 lbs of the seed to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne's Belgian Relief Fund. This unusual gift gave rise to a paragraph in the Melbourne *Age*²⁸ describing Takasuka's experiments. This prompted the Lands Department to instruct its local representative to report on the state of affairs on Takasuka's own allotment. That officer reported that the rice that Takasuka had produced at Swan Hill appeared suitable for the local conditions and that the yield had been very successful considering the scarcity of water that season. On the other hand, he estimated that on Takasuka's own allotment the construction of the levee bank alone would cost Takasuka £700–800. He doubted whether, even if he received a title to the land, Takasuka would be able to raise this sum together with the additional capital required for pumping equipment, channelling, fencing and ploughing. He thought that Takasuka would be much better off to remain at Swan Hill. He urged him at least to remain there growing rice until he had amassed sufficient capital to make a return to his own allotment worthwhile. Takasuka, however, was not to be dissuaded.

The officer considered the improvements effected on Takasuka's allotment 'hardly worthy of valuation': 1.125 miles of fencing in a bad state of disrepair — £9; 2.3 miles of banking much destroyed by floods — £100; the house itself — £10. The latter appears to have been a very primitive dwelling measuring only 15 x 18 feet, with walls made from palings and pine slabs.²⁹

Soon after this interview, Takasuka returned to his own allotment and erected a four-roomed house measuring 32 x 28 feet built of Murray pine and valued at £150. He also spent another £80 on the embankments, hiring two teams of horses for this purpose. Although the sum total of his improvements still fell short of the required £500, this created a more favourable impression with the Lands Department. On 7 September 1915, its local representative reported:

I have tried to get Mr Takasuka to select a piece of ground not so costly to reclaim but he seems to be keen upon going on where he is and in view of him going to the present expenditure I think that the Department should assist him by granting a Title to the property. He says that he can manage if the title is granted to him and is in my opinion a little overconfident, however that is his own business. *All I can say is that he has produced a suitable variety of rice and if the mere fact of granting him a title will enable him to carry on his scheme successfully then the title should be granted.* Mr Takasuka should receive whatever assistance can be given as he has endeavoured to make the proposition a success in spite of immense difficulties.³⁰ [emphasis in original]

28 *Age*, 8 March 1915.

29 RA Black to E Selk, 5 April 1915, 05075/204.

30 RA Black to E Selk, 7 September 1915, 05075/204.

On 5 November the perpetual lease was issued. Takasuka's troubles, however, were by no means over. The floods had again broken in before the embankment was completed. Moreover, in 1916 and 1917 the creek did not dry out in the summer as in previous years. This prevented him from continuing work on the embankment. In 1918 the creek dried and he resumed the work. In 1919 he planted rice for the first time since 1915. But he only had enough seed for five acres because, the seed being old, he had to sow at five or six times the normal density. He hoped from this to get sufficient new seed to plant a large area the following year. In this he was disappointed: with the old seed the germination was too poor and the crop failed.³¹ Nor was he able to get the hoped for loan for completing the earthworks. His bank refused to lend money on the security of the perpetual lease and insisted that he get freehold. This could be done only if the Lands Department permitted Takasuka to convert his perpetual lease into a selection purchase lease. But the officials of the Lands Department had by now lost interest in Takasuka and his experiments. They wanted his land for their closer settlement scheme. In the words of the undersecretary (AA Peverill) in his advice to the minister: 'As Government works in the form of levees are contemplated which will materially enhance the value of this area and the Crown lands adjacent it is undesirable that any alienating title should be issued.'³² Taking advantage of the fact that Takasuka had not planted rice every year, the department in October 1919 informed him that his request was refused on the ground that he had failed to comply with 'the cultivation condition of his perpetual lease'.³³ Earlier that year they had, in reply to the annual enquiry about his activities by the Commonwealth immigration authorities, reported that Takasuka's work was not sufficiently important to justify further residence in Australia.³⁴ In contrast to the attitude of the Victorian officials, the attitude of the Commonwealth authorities was in this case refreshingly humane. They made their own enquiries through the local police who reported favourably: 'This is a industrious, hard working respectable man.'³⁵ They appear to have been impressed by this; for they did not set in motion the machinery to deport him.

Takasuka had not been a member of parliament for nothing. He did not accept departmental decisions lying down. On 18 March 1920 he wrote to the minister for lands through his solicitor, outlining the history of his experiments since 1906. The minister referred this to the department. The local Crown lands bailiff at Swan Hill was favourable:

31 Takasuka to Secretary for Lands, 18 August 1920, 05075/204.

32 Acting Secretary to Minister, 28 May 1921, 05075/204.

33 Lands Department to Takasuka, 28 October 1919, 05075/204.

34 Director of Agriculture (Vic.) to Secretary, Home & Territories, 11 July 1919, 25/27797.

35 Report of Mounted Constable A Llynn, 15 March 1920, 25/27797.

I think he is a hard worker but he seems to lack method. He will never be able to grow rice or anything else on the block unless a high check levee bank is erected. If he would do that, I know of no objection to his being granted the lease as requested.³⁶

The undersecretary, however, stood firm and on 17 May reaffirmed the previous decision, noting that ‘most of the experiments have been carried out on other people’s lands’.³⁷

Next, the local member of the state parliament at Takasuka’s request wrote unsuccessfully to the department asking that the matter be reconsidered. That year Takasuka sowed 70 acres of oats. The floods entered once again and he lost the lot.³⁸

In March 1921 Takasuka wrote to the assistant minister for water supply, H Angus. Angus passed on the letter to the Lands Department, where the undersecretary once again stood firm. Angus, however, must have been impressed by Takasuka’s case, for he did not let the matter end there, but in June presented Takasuka personally to the minister for lands. Takasuka on 23 June followed up the interview with a letter to the minister. This letter contains one of the most poignant sentences in Takasuka’s Lands Department file:

Nearly every year I have to take all my animals out, my house getting quite surrounded by water and for two or three months during the flood I have had to row (I do so yet) over half a mile daily to let my children out and in from school.³⁹

The minister was more sympathetic than his undersecretary and took the matter to Cabinet, which resolved to seek an opinion from the Crown solicitor ‘whether in the circumstances of the case, the Minister of Lands would be violating the provisions of the Land Act ... if he allowed an application to select to proceed’.⁴⁰

In June Takasuka had also visited the Commonwealth immigration authorities in Melbourne and, in support of his annual application for an extension of his stay in Australia, had given them the full details of his problems with the lease. Early in July they sent one of their investigating officers to the Lands Department to find out what chances Takasuka had of converting his lease. There the investigating officer met a somewhat piqued undersecretary:

Mr Peverill stated that Takasuka was a very persistent individual and in a sense a bit of a nuisance to the Department. He made several personal applications for concessions all of which were turned down but notwithstanding the rebuffs he would go to one politician after another and enlist their sympathy and assistance

36 Report by VN Turner, 12 May 1920, 05075/204.

37 Minute by AA P[everill], 05075/204.

38 ‘Misc. — Rice Culture’, Takasuka to Acting Collector of Customs, 12 March 1921.

39 Takasuka to Minister for Lands, 23 June 1921, 05075/204.

40 Minute by Undersecretary for Lands, 8 July 1921, 05075/204.

with the result that they would nearly always get the question opened up again ... Mr Peverill stated that Takasuka's application was before the State Cabinet but owing to the approaching Elections nothing would be done with it for a considerable time.⁴¹

The Victorian Crown solicitor on 13 July advised that, insofar as Section 204 of the *Land Act* empowered the governor if he thought fit to accept the surrender of a perpetual lease and issue a selection purchase lease, the matter was one of administrative discretion and there was no legal obstacle to Takasuka's application being granted. Whether or not to grant the lease was merely a question of policy. Any failure by Takasuka to have complied with the requirement of his perpetual lease with regard to improvements did not in law disqualify him. The authorities could, however, take any such failure into consideration in exercising their discretion.⁴²

The state elections took place on 30 August. Early in September Peverill informed the Commonwealth authorities that the matter had been decided in Takasuka's favour and that the selection purchase lease would be issued to him.⁴³ Having received this information, the federal officials then prepared their advice for their minister regarding Takasuka's annual application for one year's further residence in Australia. On 7 October, the secretary of the federal Department of Home and Territories was advised by his chief clerk as follows:

As Takasuka is sticking to the job of proving this proposition, (all others have given it up) the Min[ister] may be prepared to extend exemption 1 year. It w[ou]ld be very hard to order him away now.

The minister, Sir George Pearce, was so disposed. Furthermore, three years later, in 1924, on departmental advice, while reserving his right to revert to the practice at any time, he ruled that Takasuka be freed from the requirement to make annual requests for an extension of his stay.⁴⁴

It appears that the rice Takasuka sowed in 1921 was harvested successfully. After sowing the following year, he procured the freehold of the allotment on 4 October 1922 on payment of £200.⁴⁵ This crop, too, appears to have been harvested successfully. By 1927, however, his temporary good fortune had deserted him. In that year he was forced by financial need to abandon his experiments in favour of vine growing at Nyah. Then in 1934 he moved to Huntly near Bendigo where he started to grow tomatoes. Aged 69 he was now in virtual retirement and left the conduct of the business to his two sons. In 1938 the latter moved to a farm of their own at Fosterville.

41 Det. Inspr J Gleeson to Collector of Customs, 30 September 1921, 25/27797.

42 Opinion of the Crown Solicitor, 13 July 1921, 05075/204.

43 Det. Inspr J Gleeson to Collector of Customs, 30 September 1921, 25/27797.

44 Minute, 30 August 1924, 25/27797.

45 Title to Tyntynder West, Allotment 47, Vol. 4866, Fol. 973182, Victorian Titles Office.

Late in July 1939 Takasuka embarked for Japan on the *Atsuta Maru*.⁴⁶ His father had died in 1911 leaving two dependents — Takasuka's sister and stepmother. The former had died in 1933. The latter (born in 1865 — the same year as Takasuka) died in May 1939.⁴⁷ Her death was the occasion for Takasuka's return. He had to see to his possessions in Japan. He had also conceived the idea of returning to the import–export business. He would set up a company in Kobe with himself as president moving to and fro between Japan and Australia. He would make his brother-in-law vice-president to look after matters in Japan during his absences.⁴⁸

On his arrival in Japan he appears to have sold up various *objets d'art* in the family home at Matsuyama such as armour and screens, and invested the proceeds (¥2,800)⁴⁹ in Japanese war bonds. His Japanese-language new year's greetings card distributed in January (1940), in addition to expressing his felicitations 'on the dawn of Asian advancement' and his 'thanks to our officers and men for their labours at the front' (hostilities against China had been resumed in 1937) announces that he is in business as the Australian Barter Trade & Co., with a room on the fourth floor of the Edo Building in Kobe where concurrently he proposes to run a correspondence school to provide instruction in an improved system of transliterating the Japanese language in the Roman alphabet. A copy of the prospectus for the correspondence school has survived. As a business proposition it sounds a good deal less practical than any of his previous ventures. For the payment of five yen, those enrolled would learn an improved system of Romanisation that 'would be comprehensible throughout the English-speaking world'. This would become the standard system of rendering Japanese overseas, instead of the conflicting methods currently in use. As a result, the Japanese language would be used more widely.

The Japanese Ministry of Education was at the time attempting to supplant the well-tryed Hepburn system of Romanisation by the homegrown *kunrei-shiki* system (which was incomprehensible not only to the English-speaking peoples but to the entire non-Japanese world). Under the latter system, the Emperor's younger brother, the Oxford-educated Prince Chichibu, ran the risk of being addressed by foreigners as Prince Titibu. It was widely rumoured that the mere thought of seeing the latter word towering above the wharf sheds at Southampton had been sufficient for him to decree that no ship should be named after him. If Takasuka's aim was to drive a nail into the coffin of the *kunrei-shiki* system, this certainly was a worthy objective. But from the little he tells us in the prospectus (and if he had there revealed too many of his secrets there would have been no need for people

46 Diary of Mrs Ichi Takasuka, entries for 11–21 July 1939, Pioneer Settlement Museum, Swan Hill. J Takasuka to Y Nakasuka, 3 July 1939 (I am grateful to Mrs T Sugai of Tokyo for making available to me this and the other family letters that follow).

47 Family register (*koseki*) of Jō Takasuka, Registration Section, Matsuyama Town Hall.

48 Mrs Ichi Takasuka to S Sugai, 24 February 1940.

49 At that time the exchange rate was approx. £Sgl = 17 yen.

to venture their five yen), it seems that what he was gunning for was not the *kunrei-shiki* system but the use of the macron in the Hepburn system. Whatever his beliefs on this matter, it seems fairly obvious that very few of Kobe's Japanese citizens (and it was to the Japanese that the prospectus was directed) would be willing to part with ¥5 and three month's leisure to acquire expertise in such an esoteric subject. In the event, they were not to have the chance. Throughout his life Takasuka had never had cause to visit a doctor. On the night of 15 February 1940, at his house in Matsuyama, a fatal heart attack took him in his sleep.

The inventory of Takasuka's Japanese assets compiled by his executor has survived. It shows that during his absence in Australia he had continued as owner of the family real estate, which consisted of two properties in the vicinity of Matsuyama: (i) at Suehirochō 841.5 sq. metres on which was built his own residence and eight small cabins; (ii) at Izumi-chō 224 sq. metres of agricultural land (not irrigated and not suitable for rice) and 264 sq. metres of residential land on which was built seven small cabins. The rent from the cabins on both properties and from the agricultural land amounted to ¥949.60 per annum — at that time about equal to the salary of a headmaster of a primary school. Apparently he had not sold or mortgaged any of his Japanese assets to support his experiments in Australia. This is not to say, however, that the family's assets did not decline during his lifetime. When I visited Matsuyama in 1974, a local official then in his 50s who had never seen a member of the Takasuka family remembered how, when he was a boy, his mother had warned him never to go into politics or it would ruin him 'as it had the Takasukas'. This is not surprising: Takasuka had had to mount two election campaigns within five months of each other — in March and August 1898.

Like most Japanese, Takasuka left no will. Therefore under Japanese law his elder son Shō, at Fosterville, became heir to the whole of the estate. Shō promptly made over to Mario, his younger brother and partner, all rights to the portion of the property located in Izumi-chō. It was, however, many years before the estate was wound up. And then, because of Japan's rigid exchange control regulations, the proceeds could not be sent out of the country. By the time, after Shō's death, Mario in his retirement visited Japan (1975), war damage, inflation, litigation, municipal rates, etc. had reduced the value of the estate to less than the cost of his air fare.

In his years on the Murray, Takasuka developed methods of cultivation appropriate to Australian conditions. For example, instead of transplanting the seedlings by hand (as is done in Japan), he sowed the seed in its permanent position by drill, in the manner of Australian wheat farmers. With such techniques he showed that, using from two to four acre-feet of water, yields of more than one ton per acre could be obtained.⁵⁰ But it was a blind alley. Seed of the Takasuka variety supplied by him was tested for four seasons at the Yanco Experimental Farm on the Murrumbidgee

⁵⁰ *Age*, 5 February 1924.

Irrigation Area in New South Wales. The results were not encouraging: the 1916/17 crop was spoiled by hot winds at the time of flowering; the 1917/18 by locusts; the 1918/19 by poor germination; and the 1920/21 by frosts.⁵¹ The origin of today's successful rice industry in that district is the experiments conducted at Yanco in 1922/23 with three varieties from California — Caloro, Wataribune and Colusa. Successful commercial production began with each of these varieties in 1924/25 and in the years that followed Caloro gradually ousted the other two.⁵² Takasuka's experiments are today commemorated only by a few samples of his seeds in the Melbourne Museum and by a couple of lines in the standard English-language work on rice cultivation.⁵³ His lasting contribution to Australia was a family that possessed to a high degree two traditional Japanese traits — industriousness and the ideal of service to the community that reared them.

At the time of his father's death in 1940, Shō Takasuka had just turned 40. He had arrived in Australia just after his fifth birthday and had not been to Japan since. Although his applications for naturalisation had been rejected (until 1956 Australian governments refused to naturalise Asians), he felt completely Australian. There were no Japanese in the district: apart from his parents and his brother and sister he had not seen a Japanese for 35 years. Although he could remember a few words of Japanese, he could not read it at all. English was the only language he knew. Life in the Mallee had provided a bare living. He had had to leave school when he was 13 and take a job on a neighbour's farm. But out of his wages he had helped to put his sister through junior high school while he learnt what he could through correspondence courses at night. But he was happy. He loved the outdoor life and its recreations. He had started senior football when he got his guernsey with the Nyah club at the age of 14. His best win had been the Swan Hill District Singles Tennis Championship. He was also a strong swimmer. This had stood him in good stead. In 1939 on a fishing trip on the Murray River he had saved a youth, Harry Nation, from drowning. It had been a close go for both of them. At some time or other he had been made an office-bearer of just about every sports club and community activity in the district. In his early 20s, he had been secretary and treasurer for the local branch of the temperance friendly society, the Independent Order of Rechabites. In 1934, in recognition of his fundraising activities for the Swan Hill Hospital, he had been elected a governor of that institution.⁵⁴

A lot of his time had been taken up by his father's impractical ventures — rice, cotton, vines and even, at Huntly, bamboo shoots — but he and his brother, Mario, had finally been able in 1938 to start out on their own. They had rented 10 acres of irrigated land on the rich alluvial flats of the Campaspe River at Fosterville.

51 *Agricultural Gazette of NSW*, 3 April 1920 and 1 December 1921.

52 *Rice Growing on the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Areas* (Griffith: MIA Irrigation Research and Extension Committee, 1957), pp. 23, 60–61.

53 DH Grist, *Rice* (London: Longmans, 1965), p. 8.

54 Swan Hill District Hospital, Minutes of Committee of Management, 9 November 1934.

They were growing tomatoes and were cropping over 1,000 cases to the acre. He was busier than ever now. The younger men were away at the war. Despite his age he had wanted to go too, but his nationality prevented it; so he had joined the Volunteer Defence Corps.

In December 1941 Japan entered the war. Shō was immediately interned at Tatura Camp pursuant to the Cabinet decision that all Japanese over the age of 16 years should be taken into custody.⁵⁵ But so numerous and unconditional were the representations by his neighbours insisting on his complete loyalty that he was released within six months. The following extracts from the evidence given on his behalf before the Aliens Tribunal are typical. One local grazier described him as ‘as loyal a citizen as any living in our district ... He is always on his job, and if there is anything to be done, if there is a working bee for anybody who is ill or anything like that, he is always willing to help.’ Another spoke of him as ‘a really good citizen’: ‘He will help a battler along, too. Whenever his car is going to Bendigo, he will look out for somebody to take.’ It is also obvious from the evidence that Shō, like so many of the second-generation Japanese in California, was very much a practical farmer: ‘He is in the first grade as a tomato grower. He understands tomato culture from the time the plants are put into the seedling beds till the tomatoes are brought to the factory.’

These feelings of respect, acceptance and goodwill appear to have extended to the whole family — to both generations. When the tribunal asked a retired selector from Nyah what reputation the Takasuka family had in the district, he replied ‘Absolutely one of the best. When they left the district it was the biggest send-off held in the Nyah district. Everybody was there.’⁵⁶ In its careful scrutiny of aliens conducted during 1940, the Military Intelligence Section at Southern Command had come to a similar conclusion. In December 1941 it advised the minister for the army to exempt Jō’s widow from the operation of the Cabinet minute. In reply, the minister (FM Forde) stated that it was beyond the power of a single minister to overrule the collective decision of his colleagues but drew attention to the fact that the minute specified no date before which implementation must be completed.⁵⁷ Southern Command took the hint and never got round to interning her. She died at Goornong, Victoria, in August 1956. Her kimono and parts of her Japanese-language day-to-day domestic diary and recipe book for the period 1933–45 are preserved in the museum at the Pioneer Settlement, Swan Hill.

55 Cabinet Meeting, minute 1029, paragraph 5, p. 3, 9 May 1941, volume 7, A2673, National Archives of Australia.

56 Shō Noburu Takasuka – Transcript, Aliens Tribunal No. 4, 10 February 1942, MP 529/3, National Archives of Australia (Melbourne Office).

57 MP 729, 65/401/147, National Archives of Australia (Melbourne office).

On his release from internment Shō returned to his tomato growing. He served on the council of Huntly Shire from 1964 to 1970 and for one year of this period was shire president. He was also active in the affairs of the local Anglican church, where he was rector's warden and parish representative in the diocesan synod.

Shō died in retirement in Melbourne on 7 October 1972.⁵⁸ His executors have placed in public custody two very fitting remembrances of his life's work. The first is his collection of some 3,000 colour slides of local flora and wildlife. These are now held by the Bendigo Field Naturalists' Club, of which he was for many years a member. The second is a 30-minute colour-film documentary made by Hiroshima Television Broadcasting Co. when he was shire president. This received wide acclaim in Japan, winning the Japan Script Writers Guild's annual award for the best documentary film produced in Southern Honshū. A copy is preserved in the National Library of Australia and is available on loan for screening.

On 30 November 1980, on the occasion of the centenary of St George's Church, Goornong, a stained-glass window was dedicated to his memory.⁵⁹ Embodied in the design are the Japanese ideographs *kyōdai* (brethren) and *danketsu* (solidarity) expressing the message of Psalm 133: 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.'⁶⁰

Takasuka's younger son, Mario, was born in Australia in 1910. In May 1940, a few months after the outbreak of war in Europe, he volunteered for the Australian Imperial Force (AIF). His first two applications were rejected under Australian Military Regulations & Orders No. 177, which applied the White Australian policy to the armed forces and excluded recruits who were not substantially of European origin. For his third attempt in June 1940 he went to Melbourne, where he was not known and where the recruiting officer was unfamiliar with the regulations. He had let his hair grow longer than usual to increase his height by half an inch to the five feet six inches minimum required in the AIF.

By the end of the year he was in the Middle East with 7 Battery in the 2/3 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. On the day of the German airborne invasion of Crete, 20 May 1941, his battery was part of the force defending the vital aerodrome at Heraklion. The gun of which he was layer brought down one German plane and scored hits on two others. They fought their gun until its ammunition was exhausted. When their position was cut off by German troops, they took to a rowing boat and pulled out to sea where five hours later they climbed aboard the British destroyer, *Kingston*. Before she arrived at Alexandria leaking from a near miss, they had been set afire by enemy strafing and had helped pick up survivors from the *Greyhound* and *Fiji*.

58 *Advertiser*, 13 October 1972.

59 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 1 December 1980,

60 *Bendigo Advertiser*, 29 November 1980, contains a photograph of the window.

The following year he received a written commendation⁶¹ from his general for his part in rescue operations after a head-on collision between a troop train and a local train at Gaza in Palestine on the night of 20/21 February 1942. Despite the danger to themselves from falling coal, he and two comrades had worked for an hour freeing the fatally injured native fireman who lay crushed under the contents of the up-ended tender.

When Japan entered the war, army headquarters made strong attempts to keep him in a rear area. These were vigorously and successfully resisted not only by Mario but also by his commanding officer who reported as follows: 'His record as a soldier both in and out of action has been exemplary and in consideration of his outstanding service on Crete I selected him for promotion as a bombardier.' The rest of the unit shared this view and when it embarked again for overseas service (this time for Oro Bay in New Guinea) Mario, now promoted to a gun sergeant, was with them.

Takasuka's daughter, Aiko, died at Swan Hill in 1970. Born in Japan in 1903, she was 19 months old when she arrived in Australia. After becoming dux of Swan Hill Higher Elementary School (1920), she joined the education department as a primary school teacher. This was possible because of Victoria's enlightened *Public Service Act*, which did not discriminate against aliens.⁶² She taught full-time in a succession of schools in the Swan Hill district⁶³ until 1933, when she left the service to marry a local Cornish migrant. True to the family tradition, she managed to combine a full home life with community service. She was secretary to the Methodist Ladies Guild and, while her children were at school, was an active member of the mothers' clubs and the Girl Guides Local Association. When the family grew up, she returned to teaching on a part-time basis and also conducted a regular program on the local radio station for the Swan Hill Housewives Association. It is through her four children and seven grandchildren that the Takasuka blood will continue in later generations of Australians.

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61 HQ AIF 3763 270/1/330 reproduced in 7 Aust Lt AA Bty Routine Orders Part I, No. 62, 28 Oct 1942.

62 54 Vic 1133, Sec 109 and 110.

63 The History Section of the Victorian Education Department has kindly provided the following details of her fulltime service: Tyntynder (Junior Teacher 1921–23), Swan Hill (Junior Teacher 1923–25), Nyrraby (Temporary Head Teacher 1925–26), Meering West (Temporary Head Teacher 1926), Nyah (Assistant 1926–33). Teaching seems to be in the blood. Her eldest son is a secondary school teacher and, at the time of writing (1978), one of her granddaughters is a second-year student teacher.

64 A Japanese translation of the article revised to April 1977 was published under the title, 'Aru Imin no Ichizoku' in the journal *Ijū Kenkyū*, no. 16, March 1979, pp. 65–78.

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