From the Plantations They Grew

Wonderful Hawai‘i, or so I heard  
One look and it seems like Hell.  
The manager's the Devil and  
His lunas are demons.

This hole hole bushi, or protest song, was sung among the women workers in the plantations as a sign of grievance and discontent with the plantation labor.

After the downfall of the indigenous Hawaiian society and government and the establishment of missionaries and Haoles taking power, the first sugar mill and plantation was established in Kaua‘i. However, the labor market was inexistent especially since the Europeans had brought to Hawai‘i diseases that wiped out a significant amount of the indigenous Hawaiian population. In response, the government passed an anti-vagrancy law and the Masters and Servants Act. The Masters and Servants Act enabled sugar planters to import labor workers from abroad.

With the Masters and Servants Act, Chinese and Portuguese laborers came to Hawai‘i. However, many Chinese, who made up 49% of the sugar plantation workforce deserted the plantations and started business and farms of their own. Additionally, although the Portuguese workers were welcomed, importing them was too expensive, thus concluding the end of Portuguese workers coming to Hawai‘i.

In Japan, however, farmers were facing high taxes with hardly any harvests making life difficult to cope with. Thus, when word spread that the Hawaiians were looking for workers to travel to Hawai‘i and work in the developing sugar cane industry, many Japanese fled to the islands, in hopes for a better life.

“The arrival of the first instalment [sic] of Japanese immigrants is the most important event that has happened in Hawaii for many years,” stated an article in the Advertiser.

An article in the Advertiser expressed the significance of the first group of Japanese people to enter the Hawaiian islands calling it the “most important event” that has occurred in a long time. For the plantation owners, the Japanese were a “godsend.”


“To illustrate the images of themselves, the Japanese American elderly discuss various themes that they believe are unique to their plantation experience. Talking about their childhood at home, Japanese neighborhoods, Issei disciplinary training, Japanese local institutions, the wartime, and interethnic and intraethnic differences, they characterize aspects of Japanese plantation life with the phrase, “Us, Japanese.” This expression is the key phrase that represents the ethnic identity of the Japanese American elderly and serves as a communicative marker to signify specific ethnic aspects according to the context of the story. For example, “Us, Japanese” may be characterized by Japanese things and thoughts taught by the Issei at home, closeness and liveliness in Japanese neighborhoods,
strictness, in Japanese disciplinary training, Issei leadership in institutional activities, and bitterness and pride in wartime memories. Analyzing their stories according to the seven themes noted at the beginning of this paragraph, I explore the meanings of “Us, Japanese” rooted in the ethnic identity of the Japanese American elderly.”


Meta-Commentary

Obviously, this draft is an extreme scatter draft. Although I have no solid introduction, these are the things that I want to mention in my first paragraph. I'm thinking about starting off with the present-day Japanese community in Hawai‘i and how they view themselves as a good starting point for the introduction and then lead into details about life on the plantation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrowing down a topic</td>
<td>1 hour 30 mins</td>
<td>It took quite a while to decide what I should focus my paper on. After reading a few books, I realized that it was best to focus on plantation life for the Japanese in Hawai‘i and make some correlation to present-day Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composing a scatter draft</td>
<td>30 mins</td>
<td>I decided to just throw a couple paragraphs from my readings that stood out and thought would be helpful to my paper.</td>
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