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## Australian–Japanese relations: The first phase 1859–1891<sup>1</sup>

DCS Sissons

It was grog time when the visit was made, and the aldermanic party seized the opportunity for tasting ‘saki’, a spirit altogether foreign to their palates. The opinions regarding the beverage varied. One thought it too strong, while another of greater experience in liquor proclaimed it altogether too mild. A third would shake his head and declare that it was not fit for English throats.

Account of the visit of the Mayor and Aldermen of Sydney to HIJMS *Tsukuba*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 April 1886

### Australia in Japan

Not surprisingly, over the period of more than a century in which they have had dealings with each other, the response of Australians to the Japanese has been as varied as that of the aldermen to Japan’s national beverage.

So far, the earliest reference that I have found to contact between Australians and Japanese is in the *Sydney Gazette* of 25 February 1832. There a correspondent claims that the crew of a Sydney whaler, the *Lady Rowena*, had recently made a landing at latitude 43° on the Japanese east coast.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Unpublished paper.

2 R Hildreth, *Japan As It Was and Is* (London: Sampson Low, 1856) cited this report (p. 494) but wrongly dated it as February 1842. Unsuccessful attempts to find it in the *Sydney Gazette* were made by HE Wildes (*Aliens in the East: A New History of Foreign Intercourse*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1937, p. 215) and HS Williams (*Foreigners in Mikadoland*, Tokyo: Tuttle & Co., 1963, p. 114). Our thanks are due to Honore Forster (‘A Sydney whaler 1829–32: the reminiscences of James Heberley’, *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 10 [1975], p. 103) for providing the correct date for the *Sydney Gazette* item.

If this was in fact the first contact between our two peoples, then the relationship got off to a bad start for, according to the correspondent, the sailors destroyed a village and fired on its inhabitants.

There is no doubt that the *Lady Rowena* was in Japanese waters in the course of her 1830–32 whaling voyage.<sup>3</sup> The following passage in the *Sydney Herald* of 16 July 1832 tends to confirm the report of a predatory landing:

The *Lady Rowena* has also brought up several curious Japanese instruments and utensils rarely met with, on account of the extreme jealousy the natives of Japan evince towards strangers.

This was during the period of Japan's seclusion when any landing by foreigners would have been likely to be resisted. Hence there would have been little chance of acquiring 'instruments and utensils' other than by force.

It was in 1859 that Japan was finally forced to abandon her policy of seclusion and open designated 'treaty ports' to trade and to foreign residents. In that year a youth aged 21, Alexander Marks, a new Australian — born in the United States but raised for the most part in Australia — set up in business in Yokohama. In 1872, following the loss of two of his brothers on the *Julia* in a trading venture between Yokohama and the Marianas, he returned to Melbourne where he continued to be engaged in trade with Japan until his death in 1919. GE ('Chinese') Morrison, writing in 1900, described him as worth £80,000 in Melbourne and having much property in Yokohama. From 1879 to 1896, Marks was honorary consul for Japan for the Australian colonies generally. From the latter year (when a career consul was appointed in Townsville) until his retirement in 1902, he was honorary consul for Victoria.<sup>4</sup> That his consular responsibilities were no sinecure — particularly in the earlier period — is attested by the large volume of despatches to and from him that survives in the archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>5</sup> and by the fact that he had a Japanese clerk working under his direction on consular matters.

3 IW Nicholson, *Shipping Arrivals & Departures, Sydney*, vol. 2, 1826–40 (Canberra: Roebuck, 1977), establishes that the *Lady Rowena* entered Sydney on 27 July 1832 from the South Sea fishery including Japanese waters carrying 600 barrels of sperm oil. The voyage had commenced from Sydney on 2 November 1830.

4 The *Cyclopedia of Victoria* (Melbourne: Cyclopedia Co., 1903), vol. 1, pp. 289–90; *Far East* (Yokohama), vol. 2, no. 11, 1 November 1871, p. 129; *Jewish Herald* (Melbourne), Obituaries, 30 May 1919; *Argus* (Melbourne), 22 May 1919; GE Morrison, diary, 7 February 1900; ECFG Kunz, *Blood and Gold: Hungarians in Australia* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1969), pp. 25–28.

5 Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsō* (Select Documents on Japan's Diplomatic Relations) (hereafter referred to as NGB).

He travelled extensively in connection with his consular duties, including at least one tour of inspection to Thursday Island. He was fluent in the language,<sup>6</sup> and on occasion acted as interpreter in court proceedings.<sup>7</sup>

It is doubtful whether more than a portion of Marks's trading activities in Yokohama were with Australia: Australian imports to Japan were virtually non-existent until wool shipments commenced in the 1890s.<sup>8</sup> Earlier efforts by one or two wool brokers to develop a Japanese market were unsuccessful. In a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1895 PL Trebeck writes:

In 1874 I collected all the best lots of wool, bales and cases from our Agricultural Society's Exhibition of that year, and consigned them to Sir Harry Parkes, K.C.B., at Her Britannic Majesty's Legation at Yeddo, and to H.E., Okubo Toshimichi, Minister of the Interior Department, Yeddo. A beautiful lot of snow white sheep and lambs' wool of Mr Kermodé's was to be presented to the Mikado, and the other was for distribution among the manufacturers. In return, the Mikado sent us some good silk handkerchiefs and neckties, and also some of the cotton rugs and mats generally used in their dwellings.<sup>9</sup>

For two reasons, nothing came of this. First, as Trebeck notes, the price of wool rose by 20–30 per cent and the graziers lost interest in marketing. Second, there were not yet any woollen mills in Japan. The need, however, was there — chiefly for uniforms for government employees. As early as the 1860s, some units of the *Shōgun's* army and navy had adopted Western uniforms and, in 1871, the police force and the post office did likewise. But all the cloth was imported.<sup>10</sup> Trebeck appears to have become aware of the absence of a local industry for, in the same letter, he writes that, a few years later when prices had fallen, he tried to induce

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6 In 1940 at Kushimoto, a village at the tip of the Kii Peninsula, an old man, Tanaka Fujitarō, remembered Marks as 'a giant of a man whose Japanese was so accomplished and polite that we felt like country bumpkins'. He had met Marks in 1899 when, in the course of his attempt to emigrate to Thursday Island on the *Futami Maru*, the Queensland authorities had refused him and his three colleagues permission to land and they were carried on to Melbourne (these must have been the four men masquerading as 'merchants' referred to by the Queensland Chief Secretary in his telegram to the Japanese Consul of 13 July 1899, which is published in Queensland, *Parliamentary Paper* A56 of 1901). Marks met the ship at Melbourne and managed to secure them admission to Thursday Island. Tanaka recounted this at a meeting convened on 16 September 1940 by the headmaster at Kushimoto for the purpose of making a record of the recollections of older citizens of matters of importance in the history of the village (*Kushimoto Kōyūkai-shi*, 1940, p. 33).

7 *Argus*, 23 and 25 July 1878.

8 An exception may have been racehorses. HS Williams in his *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan* (Rutland: Tuttle, 1958) at Chapter 18 speaks of the contribution to Japanese horse racing made by the 'fast racehorses and crooked jockeys ... that were imported from Australia', but describes this as a fairly late phenomenon. Note, however, that JH Brooke, writing in 1867, reports having witnessed the victory of an Australian horse, 'Sydney', in a Japanese race (*Argus*, 29 August 1867).

9 As reported in *Japan Daily Mail*, 26 April 1895 (Mitchell Library — 'Contributions by John Plummer', p. 4).

10 For a most informative and readable account of the progressive adoption of Western clothing and the development of the woollen industry in Japan, see K Nakagawa & H Rosovsky, 'The case of the dying kimono', *Business History Review*, Spring/Summer 1963, pp. 59–80.

some squatters to subscribe sufficient funds to provide the Japanese with a few simple modern looms and to supply some wool or yarn. Once again, however, the price of wool rose and the squatters were not interested.

Trebeck was a few years premature. In 1873, the year before Trebeck had despatched the samples, Okubo had proposed the establishment of a woollen industry in Japan, largely to save the foreign exchange being spent on imported cloth. As the result of his representations, it was decided to establish a government woollen mill at Minami Senjū in Tokyo. In 1876 a mission was sent to Germany to purchase machinery and to engage technicians.<sup>11</sup> In 1878 some government officials, led by a Mr Yokoyama, visited Australia to study the use of wool for military uniforms. They took back samples of wool and also some sheep. Exporting the latter did not worry the Australians, who had already made their own enquiries and found out that the merino could not thrive in the Japanese climate.<sup>12</sup> The Minami Senjū mill began operations in September 1879. Some wool was imported from Australia soon afterwards through the Melbourne wool firm Arnold & Co.<sup>13</sup> It seems, however, that, until Kanematsu & Co. set up operations in Sydney in 1890, what Australian wool the Japanese used must for the most part have been bought in the United Kingdom.

The first recognisable category of migrant from Australia to Japan appears to be settlers from the United Kingdom for whom the Australia of the 1860s belied the glittering prospects of the 1850s.

HS Williams, the doyen of today's Australian community in Japan, in his *Tales of the Foreign Settlements of Japan* quotes the following passage from the *Japan Times Overland Mail* of 27 January 1869:

We must not omit to mention the advent of a fine steamer, the 'Albion', from Australia. She arrived in June and brought a number of passengers who had been induced to move hither by the publication in the Melbourne *Argus* of some excessively factual letters from a countryman here describing Japan as a new El Dorado. We did immediately what we should have done before, published a couple of articles advising intending immigrants what class of men we wanted and to what they were coming. These and the private letters of the unfortunate victims who have been seduced hither to suffer poverty seem to have checked the movement.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, however, this story cannot be accepted in its entirety. Undoubtedly the *Albion* did make a voyage to Japan with passengers at that time: the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 12 May 1868 announces her impending departure from

11 T Ichikawa, *Nichigō Kankeishi* (Nichigō Nyūjirando Kyōkai, 1953), part 2, pp. 181–88.

12 Monckton Synnot, letter, *Argus*, 3 August 1878.

13 *Dalgety's Annual Wool Review for Australia*, Season 1925–26, p. 88.

14 Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan*, 1958, p. 158.

Sydney that afternoon for Yokohama via Fiji. It gives the names of 37 passengers and the number of children accompanying them. It lists the cargo — 56 cases of champagne,<sup>15</sup> one boat and 40 other packages for Yokohama. How many of these passengers were emigrating to Japan we do not know for not even their destinations — let alone the purpose of their journeys — are stated. A series of letters from Japan by a former Victorian had indeed appeared in the *Argus*.<sup>16</sup> These, however, confined themselves to descriptions of the sights and the people through the eyes of a tourist, and contained no suggestion of employment opportunities for Europeans. Why did the *Mail* say otherwise? Possibly because the writer of the *Argus* letters, JH Brooke, may have been associated with the *Mail's* rival, the *Japan Herald*. To blame one's rival for as many of the ills of humanity as possible was a common device of 19th-century journalism. Brooke arrived in Japan on Easter Sunday (21 April) 1867<sup>17</sup> (with an amount of luggage that set Yokohama society talking for years).<sup>18</sup> In Victoria, fortune had initially smiled on him. In 1860, within eight years of his arrival from England, he had achieved Cabinet rank, at the early age of 34. In 1863, however, he was omitted from the Ministry and, in the following year, he was defeated at the polls.<sup>19</sup> He became proprietor of the *Herald* in 1871 and was proprietor and editor until his death in Yokohama in 1902.<sup>20</sup>

Strangely enough, Brooke's predecessor as editor of the *Herald* was another disappointed colonist, JR Black. In the words of the rather patronising obituary written by Brooke in 1880:

Mr Black was a native of Scotland; he emigrated to South Australia, and resided in that colony for some years. Business with him taking an unprosperous turn, he was induced to turn his fine vocal powers to account, and, after travelling through the Australian colonies, India, and China, he at length reached Japan, where, with the exception of a short stay in China, he has ever since resided. The deceased's career was a checkered one. Of a hopeful and cheerful disposition, his views were always sanguine. His industry was great, but his business enterprises were seldom crowned by success; year after year he struggled manfully with his difficulties, but the Fates were unpropitious. At one time he held the editorship and sustained the management of this journal. Next he projected and started with a few battered types and an old wooden press, the *Japan Gazette*, which, not proving a lucrative undertaking, he retired from. His next literary enterprise was a periodical called the *Far East*, illustrated with photographs, after which he started the first newspaper conducted by a European in the native language; this he disposed of, and he

15 From Brooke's account of life in the foreign settlement at Yokohama at this time, champagne was a much-used beverage. It was served as a stirrup-cup to the 14 natives who made up the armed party that escorted Brooke and his colleagues to Edo (*Argus*, 29 August 1867).

16 'Impressions of Japan – by an Australian colonist', *Argus*, 22, 24 and 29 August; 10 and 28 September; 28 October 1867.

17 *Argus*, 22 August 1867.

18 Williams, *Tales of the Foreign Settlements in Japan*, 1958, p. 162.

19 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 1851–1890, vol. 3, p. 244.

20 *Far East*, vol. 2, no. 10, 16 October 1871, p. 117. Brooke's obituary, *Japan Times*, 11 January 1902.

started another in lieu, but it was suppressed by the Japanese Government; nor did its projector and proprietor succeed in obtaining compensation for the loss the stoppage of the paper was to him. For a brief period he was in the Government service, after quitting which he continued the publication of his magazine in Shanghai, and whilst there was concerned in the starting and publication of the *Shanghai Mercury*. Whilst so engaged his health gave way, and he came back to Japan, looking the shadow of his former self — to recuperate. His final effort was the compilation of a work, — ‘Young Japan’; an epitome of the history of the foreign settlement since the conclusion of the existing treaties.<sup>21</sup>

Today Brooke is a forgotten figure. Black, however, is remembered both in the West, and in Japanese history. The first six volumes of his *The Far East: An Illustrated Fortnightly* were reprinted in a facsimile edition in 1965.<sup>22</sup> His *Young Japan: Yokohama and Yedo*, a perceptive and readable, though somewhat rambling, account of the last years of the Shogunate and the early years of the Meiji Government, was reprinted in 1968.<sup>23</sup> But it was in his Japanese vernacular newspaper, the *Nisshin Shinjishi*, that he made history. In 1926 when the *Osaka Mainichi* published *Jū Daisenkaku Kishaden* (Ten Great Pioneers in Japanese Journalism), it numbered Black among the 10. Black set up the *Nisshin Shinjishi* newspaper in March 1871. In November it was granted the exclusive privilege of publishing announcements of the *Sain*, the deliberative organ of the Japanese Government. How was it, asks the *Mainichi* writer, that Black’s paper achieved such eminence? His explanation is as follows:

It was solely due to the fact that he as editor was a realist and understood the useful function that a newspaper can discharge. It had a flavour quite different from the newspapers of the day. While the *Chūgai Shimbun*, the *Moshihogusa* and the *Kōko Shimbun* dealt principally in very unsophisticated political discussion and strange jottings reminiscent of the preceding era, Black told his readers of the vicissitudes of farming, of prices, of new inventions, of exports and imports, of transactions as far apart as the sale of upland pastures and the purchase of battleships. No doubt the readers could tell from this that it was a real newspaper and could see the scrupulous care with which he treated everything. His was the first newspaper to list exports and imports at Yokohama and the time-table and fares of the railway ... It is apparent that its strength was that it caused people to realise that newspapers are useful.<sup>24</sup>

21 *Japan Herald*, Obituary, 11 June 1880.

22 *The Far East: An Illustrated Fortnightly*, vols 1–6, facsimile edition (Tokyo: Yūshōdō for Tokugawa Rinseishi Kenkyūjo, 1965).

23 JR Black, *Young Japan: Yokohama and Yedo* (London: Trubner 1881), vol. 2.

24 A Ōdawara, ‘Burakku’, in T Kubota, *Nijūichi Senkaku Kisha Den* (Osaka: Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1930), at p. 222.

He confirms Black's boast that it was he who introduced the 'Editorial' into Japanese vernacular journalism.<sup>25</sup> He also notes that Black encouraged the writing of letters to the editor and that rising young politicians expounded their views in his columns.

In 1874 Black achieved a scoop by publishing the manifesto in favour of the establishment of an elected legislature, which had been drawn up by disgruntled elements within the government. According to the *Mainichi* writer, Black's paper, while in its editorials it ridiculed the childish prattle of the other papers, alone published the good points of the protagonists of both sides. More recently, in 1967, Professor Okudaira has argued that it was this particular debate, sparked off by Black's publication of the manifesto, that transformed the Japanese press from 'quasi Government gazettes' into 'newspapers engaging in political discussion'.<sup>26</sup>

A Japanese scholar selected Black as the topic for his paper at the International Conference of Orientalists at Canberra in January 1971 and was surprised to find that he was quite unknown in Australia. Presumably he was the JR Black who, according to the *Adelaide Times* of 1 November 1854, disembarked from the *Irene* with his wife four days previously. Perhaps, as more work is done on business history and the history of the performing arts in this country, we may one day learn more about both his unsuccessful business activities and the 'fine vocal powers' that proved so useful when other employment failed.

If Marks, Brooke and Black were Australian only by adoption, Australia can claim Wilton Hack as truly her own. He was born in South Australia in 1843, the son of Stephen Hack, a venerated pioneer of Quaker stock. In 1873, the year of the removal of the public notices in which the Japanese Government prohibited its subjects from adhering to the Christian religion, he went to Nagasaki and established a mission there.<sup>27</sup> At that time there were only about 10 Japanese Protestant converts in the entire country.<sup>28</sup> He purchased a printing press, engaged a translator and distributed thousands of religious tracts among the inhabitants. He is said to have built up small followings in Nagasaki and Hiroshima among poor middle-class people. For 12 months in 1874–75 he was able to help finance his missionary activities by teaching English at a government school, the *Eigo Gakkō*, at Hiroshima.<sup>29</sup> This employment, however, was terminated and, in 1876, he returned to Adelaide to raise funds. During this visit he sought and received authorisation from the South Australian Government to 'lay before the

25 Black, *Young Japan*, 1881, vol. 2, p. 364.

26 Y Okudaira, 'Nihon Shuppan Keisatsu Hōsei no Rekishi-teki Kenkyū', *Hōritsu Jibō*, June 1967.

27 For details about Hack and his scheme see my article 'Japanese in the Northern Territory 1884–1902', in *South Australiana*, vol. 16, no. 1 (March 1977). Much of my information about Hack is derived from J Cross, 'Wilton Hack and Japanese immigration into north Australia', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S. Aust. Branch)*, vol. 61 (1960), pp. 55–59.

28 H Ritter, *A History of Protestant Missions in Japan* (Tokyo: Methodist Publishing House, 1898), p. 39.

29 T Shigemasa, *Oyatoi Gaikokujin*, vol. 5 ('Kyōiku, Shūkyō') (Tokyo: Kajima, 1968), p. 73.

[Japanese] authorities and the public there full particulars respecting the terms on which settlement may take place in the [Northern] Territory and the character of the country'.<sup>30</sup> In his subsequent correspondence with the Japanese Foreign Ministry, Hack exceeded his instructions and suggested that the South Australian Government might be willing to pay the fares of the migrants.<sup>31</sup> The Foreign Ministry, however, adhered to its standing policy and replied that it would resist such emigration.<sup>32</sup> It had had too much experience of having to repatriate Japanese subjects who, despite the disapproval of their government, had been beguiled overseas by unscrupulous foreigners under 'contracts' that they did not carry out. It was not until 1883 that the Japanese Government consented to the emigration of groups of its subjects under contracts of service. Hack closed down his mission and, early in 1877, returned to Australia where he 'turned to the more dubious, worldly life of a mining speculator'.<sup>33</sup>

J Hingston, the Melbourne journalist who visited Japan early in 1877 wrote: 'Scarcely an Australian but can remember some one from some part of Australia who has made Japan a home.'<sup>34</sup> He reports, however, only one encounter with an Australian during his visit: 'A Melbourne man, who had been a "super" at the Theatre Royal, was, I found, tutor at an up-country school at £200 a year. He intended to stay in the country.' Nothing more is known about this man. But some 11 years later, in 1888, a teacher arrived from Australia who in later years was to become famous as a Western scholar of Japanese history. He was James Murdoch.<sup>35</sup>

Born in Stonehaven, Scotland, in 1856, Murdoch became assistant to the professor of Greek at Aberdeen in 1880. In 1881 he migrated to Queensland to take up the position of headmaster of Maryborough Boys Grammar School. He was summarily dismissed from this position in 1885 in the course of a dispute with the trustees over their authority to require members of his staff to give lessons at the girls' grammar school as well as the boys'.<sup>36</sup> Letters in the 'Correspondence' column of a local newspaper suggest that additional reasons for Murdoch's departure may have been anxiety about his agnosticism and some kind of scandal

30 E W(ard), (Minister for Agriculture and Education), Minute, 5 September 1876, approved by cabinet the same day, 'Project for Introducing Japanese Settlers into the Northern Territory 1876-77', no. 358, State Archives, South Australia.

31 Hack to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 26 February 1877, 'Project for introducing Japanese settlers into the Northern Territory 1876-77', no. 358, State Archives, South Australia.

32 Ishibashi to Hack, 27 February 1877, 'Project for introducing Japanese settlers into the Northern Territory 1876-77', no. 358, State Archives, South Australia.

33 Cross, 'Wilton Hack and Japanese immigration into north Australia', 1961, p. 59.

34 J Hingston, *The Australian Abroad: Branches from the Main Routes Round the World* (London: Sampson Low, 1879), vol. 1, p. 1.

35 My information about Murdoch is derived principally from C Nomi & M Matsumoto, 'J Mādokku', *Kindai Bungaku Kenkyū Sōsho* (Tokyo: Shōwa Joshi Daigaku), vol. 30 (1963), pp. 83-108 and the obituaries in the *Aberdeen University Review*, vol. 9, pp. 109-14, 226-33 and the *Japan Weekly Chronicle*, 17 November 1921. The latter obituary was reprinted as the Foreword in Murdoch's *A History of Japan*, vol. 3, *The Tokugawa Epoch 1652-1868* (London: Kegan Paul, 1926).

36 *Maryborough Chronicle*, 3, 7 February, 7 March 1885.

involving his wife.<sup>37</sup> It may have been at Maryborough that his first marriage broke down. From 1885 to 1888 he was second master of Brisbane Grammar School.<sup>38</sup> There he was well regarded, the headmaster noting at the time of his departure that he had ‘served the school most ably and faithfully’.<sup>39</sup>

In 1888 he turned to journalism and was commissioned to journey to Hong Kong on a ship engaged in transporting Chinese coolies to Australia and to study the conditions under which they lived and travelled. He continued on to Japan. Soon after his arrival he contributed a series of articles to the *Japan Gazette* on the bad conditions at the Takashima coalmine in Kyushu.<sup>40</sup> The following year (1889), William Lane’s Brisbane weekly magazine, the *Boomerang*, published a series of articles by Murdoch describing Japan and his experiences teaching at a school of English operated by the former *daimyō* at Nakatsu in Kyūshū. On 13 April of that year, the *Boomerang* mentions a brief visit by Murdoch to Brisbane from Japan to open up trade with Queensland. On 5 May it advertises an auction of Japanese curios and silks brought by Murdoch from Japan. Apparently Murdoch was also pushing the sale of the *Boomerang* in that country for, on 25 May, it claims weekly sales of 50 copies in a single Japanese town. Later in the year he returned to Japan to take up a contract with the Japanese Ministry of Education as a professor at the celebrated Tokyo First High School (Japanese Government ‘high schools’ were modelled on the German *Gymnasium*. They were the link between secondary school and university. Students entered them at about the age of 18.) Two of his students there achieved international reputations — Natsume Sōseki, the novelist, and Shidehara Kijūro, the diplomat and prime minister. Both kept in touch with Murdoch in later life.<sup>41</sup> Concurrently with his teaching, Murdoch continued to be active as a writer. Among other things, he edited a weekly magazine, the *Japan Echo*. This, however, lasted for only six issues — apparently Murdoch’s short stories set in the provincial towns of Queensland were not to the taste of Tokyo’s international community. In 1893 he left to join his Brisbane friend, Lane, in his unsuccessful attempt to found a socialist colony in Paraguay. After a few weeks, however, Murdoch returned to Japan where he remained until 1917 writing his famous *History of Japan*.<sup>42</sup> In that year he was appointed lecturer (later professor) in Japanese at the University of Sydney.

37 *Wide Bay and Burnett News*, 12 and 17 March 1885.

38 S Stephenson, *Annals of the Brisbane Grammar School* (Government Printer, 1923), p. 15.

39 Headmaster to G Souter, 9 June 1966, ‘Souter Papers’, Fisher Library, University of Sydney.

40 Quotations from these articles survive in the attack on them in the *Japan Weekly Mail*, 13 October 1888.

41 For references to Murdoch in Natsume Sōseki’s works see S Matsui, ‘East and West in Natsume Sōseki: the formation of a modern Japanese novelist’, *Meanjin Quarterly*, no. 110 (1967), pp. 282–94. I am indebted to Dr Matsui for bringing this and other Japanese material about Murdoch to my attention.

42 Vol. 2 was first published in 1903, vol. 1 in 1910 and vol. 3 (posthumously) in 1926. Few books can have remained standard works for so long. Each volume was reprinted several times, the latest edition of each being 1952.

## Japan in Australia

Until 1866 it was a capital offence for any Japanese to leave the country. In that year, after two centuries and a half of seclusion, an edict was issued permitting citizens to apply for passports to go overseas for the purposes of study or trade.<sup>43</sup> Probably the first Japanese to be seen in Australia were on the stage. In December 1867, 12 Japanese acrobats and jugglers performed in Melbourne at the Princess Theatre where they were billed as 'Lenton and Smith's Great Novelty for the Colonies — The Great Dragon Troupe of Japanese — 12 Wonders from Yeddo'.<sup>44</sup> Their season there lasted five weeks. The *Argus* was sufficiently impressed to devote two full columns to a review. It did not content itself with describing the performance and the theatre in Tokyo where it originated; but also noted its significance.

That a theatrical company of one of the most stay-at-home, exclusive nations in the world — a country which until recently natives could not leave and strangers could not enter — should so far throw aside the suspicions and prejudices of education and habit as to consent to trust themselves to the chances of an excursion so wide and to them unknown a range, is a circumstance which could only have occurred within the last year or two, and affords proof of the widespread influence of the spirit of change in these latter days.<sup>45</sup>

It is interesting to note that, even at this early date, the *Argus* writer referred to the Japanese as 'Japs'. The term is commonly used throughout the period. Though possibly a little familiar or condescending, like the Australian's use of 'Brit' today, unlike the use of 'Pom' it had no inherently hostile connotation but was used frequently by Japanophiles like Hingston and Murdoch.

Japanese historians have noted that among the earliest Japanese to visit the United States was a group who, from their addresses, must have been acrobats but who in their applications for passports gave 'commerce' as the purpose of their journey. Passports, the historians argue, were to be issued for purposes of study or trade; but the acrobat's was a despised calling and it would have been considered harmful to the image that Japan was trying to create to let such people go overseas.<sup>46</sup> The *Argus* review gives some support to this theory.

Mr Lenton selected his present company, with whom he effected an engagement for two years. There was no reluctance on their part to undertake the voyage, satisfactory terms having been agreed upon. Some difficulty, however, was experienced in getting them away from the port, the Governor for some time objecting to any females leaving the country. Every facility, it appears, is afforded to Japanese going abroad, who are likely to bring back any useful art or industrial

43 A translation of the edict is given in JR Black, *Young Japan* (London: Trubner, 1880), vol. 1, pp. 416–17.

44 *Argus*, 20 January 1868.

45 *Argus*, 17 January 1868.

46 Wakayama-ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi* (Wakayama-shi: Wakayama-kenchō, 1957), p. 266.

process to their own country, but somehow in this case, the authorities did not like the idea of these people going away as performers. Strict enquiries also were made as to whether they were wanted for any military purpose. At length permission was obtained for their departure, on the representation that they were wanted as servants to the company with which Mr Lenton was then travelling.

And so, after performing in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Batavia, Singapore, Penang and Calcutta, they eventually reached Melbourne where their audience included Queen Victoria's son, the Duke of Edinburgh. Three years later they were still on tour. In a Scottish newspaper there is an account of their performance at Abroath on 20 August 1870.<sup>47</sup>

It was a similar team of Japanese acrobats, the Royal Tycoon Troupe, 13 in number, which appeared in the same theatre in February 1874, that gave Australia its first Japanese settler, Dicoski Sakuragawa.<sup>48</sup> He (and presumably the rest of the troupe) had arrived in Australia in 1871. By the end of the century, some hundreds of his countrymen had become permanent settlers but, only the merest handful had, like him, taken an Australian wife, become naturalised and purchased land. We can briefly trace his career by means of his contacts with officialdom. In the Victorian Registrar-General's office there is the certificate of his marriage at the Registry Office, Fitzroy, on 20 February 1875 at the age of 29 to 'Jane Kerr, Barmaid' of Bourke Street, Melbourne. His signature is in Japanese. His personal name is in ideographs and quite intelligible. For his family name he makes an unsuccessful attempt to use the phonetic alphabet used by Japanese primary school children before they learnt ideographs for he was illiterate and had left Japan before 1874 when commoners were first allowed to take family names. In the Queensland State Archives we have the evidence of his life as a travelling showman in the form of his annual applications for a theatrical performer's licence — from Dingo (1877), from St George (1880), and from Nebo (1881). Then, in 1882, comes his application for naturalisation, which was successful. From this we learn that the petitioner now had three children and had recently acquired 'a house and garden situated about 11 miles from Herberton on the Port Douglas road with the intention of abandoning his former occupation and becoming a farmer'.<sup>49</sup> For some reason, however, his life as a farmer was shortlived. In 1883 the applications for theatrical licences begin again — this time at Mackay, C/o 'Japanese Circus'. The next, in 1888 and 1889 (from Curramulla and Ingham), are for acrobatic performances. Then nothing until 1893 when it is 'Dicoski's Circus'. We hear of the circus again in 1917 when his son, Ewar, applied for registration under the War Precautions

47 *Abroath Guide*, '100 Years Ago', 20 August 1970. I am indebted to Mr HS Williams for this reference.

48 Throughout his life in Australia he used his personal name (of which the standard Hepburn transliteration would be Rikinosuke) as if it were his surname. His spelling of it in English varies from time to time: Deconoski, Decenoski, Dicoski. As he was illiterate, it is hard to establish what his family name was. Possibilities are Sakuragawa, Sakagawa, Sakanagawa or even Takaragawa. Note that throughout this paper names are given in the Japanese order; i.e. surname *preceding* personal name.

49 Queensland, Inwards Correspondence, 1882/5058.

(Alien Registration) Regulations. In his application, Ewar described himself as proprietor of a travelling circus, domiciled in Quilpie (Queensland). The parents must have left Queensland, for their names are not in that state's register of deaths.

Apart from these troupes of theatrical performers, the Japanese who arrived in Australia before 1883 appear to have been individual adventurers — principally seamen who had adopted the roving life by signing articles on foreign ships at one of the 'open ports' in Japan (as permitted by the treaties of 1859) and who, having come to Australia in the course of their employment, found the country to their liking and settled here. Scraps of information survive that tell us a little about some such early arrivals.

According to Japanese sources, Nonami Kojiro of Hirose in Shimane prefecture signed on a British merchantman at Yokohama in about 1874 at the age of 22 and, after some years on various European and American routes, signed off at Sydney. There he joined a pearling lugger as a pumper and arrived on Thursday Island in about 1878, the first Japanese to set foot there. He was eager to become a diver but his British employer resisted this on the ground that he was of the same race as the Chinese who had proved useless at that task. With the help of a Malay, however, Nonami got his way. Soon 'Japanese Nona' became the most famous diver on the island, with a monthly take almost double that of his closest competitor.<sup>50</sup> News of his success reached Japan and two or three Japanese arrived in 1881–82. They too did well. It was the success of Nona and his colleagues that caused the Australian pearler, Captain Miller, to go to Japan in 1883 to recruit Japanese labour for the industry.<sup>51</sup> The only reference to Nona in the Queensland State Archives is a letter from him to the shipping master at Thursday Island dated 9 April 1892. Apparently Nona's Australian employer was rather like Dearsley Sahib in Kipling's 'The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney'. In the letter, Nona complained that he had been forced to contribute £2 for a Sydney sweepstake for which he had received no receipt and £5 for a raffle of a billiard table that had not taken place.<sup>52</sup>

An even greater success story is Nakagawa Tamiji, 'Tommy Japan'. He first achieved fame as steward of the Sydney trading vessel the *Ripple* when she was attacked by natives near Cape de Gross on Bougainville in August 1880. According to a Japanese account (written 14 years after the event):

Seeing the Captain and the captain's wife murdered by the Natives, Nakagawa's anger knew no bounds. He himself was in great danger. Seizing the Captain's pistol he forced his way into the mob of brutal savages and, with the help of the

50 T Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshokumin* (Tokyo: Hakubunsha, 1894), p. 10.

51 K Watanabe, 'Sasudē-tō oyobi Toresu-Kaikyō Tanken Hōkoku', *Shokumin Kyōkai Hokoku*, no. 29 (c. 1894), p. 39.

52 Queensland State Archives TRE/30.

Engineer, a Britisher, drove off a dozen or more. Though he received a spear-wound in the neck he more than settled the score with them and then brought the ship back to Brisbane safe and sound.<sup>53</sup>

Although it appears that, in fact, it was the mate who brought the vessel back to port, contemporary accounts confirm that Nakagawa performed most creditably. According to the report of Rev. George Brown on Duke of York Island where the survivors and the bodies were landed:

The steward was down the after hold engaged in handing up some stores by the captain's orders. He heard the captain call out 'I'm killed' and immediately received himself a dreadful wound in the neck from a tomohawk. He fell back, but recovered, and, with his revolver shot the two men who were standing over the hatchway; one of whom, it is pretty certain, was the man who struck down the captain ... The steward (a Japanese) is praised by all for his bravery; though wounded in the most dreadful manner in several places, he fought until the ship was clear and the natives driven away, when he fainted from loss of blood; and now the poor fellow wins the respect and love of us all by his care of the poor men who are fellow-sufferers with him.<sup>54</sup>

The Japanese source continues that the Brisbane press was united in singing Nakagawa's praises and that ladies and gentlemen vied with each other in contributing to his medical expenses. This does the *Courier* more than credit: in its account of the incident, it makes no mention of Nakagawa's efforts and urges the owners adequately to reward the mate!<sup>55</sup> Nakagawa moved to Thursday Island the following year. There were then only four or five Japanese on the island. But, with the widespread employment of Japanese on the luggers after 1893, he prospered first as a boarding house keeper, then as the proprietor of a billiard saloon and store. Marks, on his visit to the island in 1895, speaks of him as a 'very good character' and notes that he speaks English 'very fairly' and is of 'some assistance to the other Japanese and acts as interpreter when required to do so'.<sup>56</sup> This is confirmed by the surviving portion of the Petty Sessions Deposition and Minute Book, in which his name from time to time appears as court interpreter.<sup>57</sup> From the same book it also appears that the fighting spirit of the hero of the *Ripple* sometimes reasserted itself. He must have celebrated Christmas 1888 too well for he spent Christmas night in the watchhouse and was fined 5 shillings the next morning for being drunk and disorderly.<sup>58</sup> Two years later he had ample cause for celebration: he was leader of a syndicate of 10 Japanese on the island that drew

53 Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshekumin*, 1894, p. 11.

54 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 September 1880.

55 *Brisbane Courier*, 20 September 1880.

56 Marks to Vice-Minister, Foreign Affairs (VFM), 24 February 1885, *NGB — 1885*, p. 525.

57 Clerk of Petty Sessions Thursday Island, Deposition and Minute Book 11/9/77 – 2/10/85, p. 398 (19 May 1885), p. 461, Queensland State Archives CPS 13D/P1.

58 Clerk of Petty Sessions Thursday Island, Deposition and Minute Book, 13/3/88 – 7/11/89, p. 193 (26 December 1888).

Carbine in the Tattersall's 1890 Melbourne Cup sweep.<sup>59</sup> He returned to Japan on the *Tsinan* with his colleagues a month later to spend their £22,000 — after they had made a donation to the Anglican cathedral building fund that exceeded those of the governor, the bishop and the government resident combined.<sup>60</sup> He died of consumption at his home at Okudairano-mura on the outskirts of Kobe on 12 December 1893.<sup>61</sup> His widow was murdered by a Japanese diver named Yosuke at Thursday Island on 26 October 1895.<sup>62</sup>

Nakagawa arrived on Thursday Island in 1881. Several more Japanese came there the following year. A book on the Japanese community on Thursday Island published in Tokyo in 1894 gives 1882 as the year of arrival for three of its leading residents: Tanaka Yasugorō (Tokyo), Nakamura Kiryū (Wakayama City) and Watanabe Toranosuke (Hiroshima prefecture). By 1894 Tanaka was the proprietor of a billiard saloon. Nakamura had become a diver and his success had influenced a number of men from Wakayama prefecture to come to the island. Watanabe had progressed from diver to master pearler.<sup>63</sup> He was the owner of three luggers and had been granted naturalisation<sup>64</sup> — one of the very few Asians ever to achieve this. Like Nonami, these three men probably left Japan as seamen on the articles of foreign vessels.

In 1883, the Japanese Government permitted 37 of its subjects to go to Thursday Island to work for an Australian pearler, Captain John Miller. This is the first contract approved by the Japanese Government for Japanese labour to work in a foreign country.<sup>65</sup> In negotiations that occupied some months, the Japanese provincial and central authorities looked very carefully at the contract.

The initial approach was made through the British consul to the prefectural authorities at Yokohama. The latter were somewhat concerned and wrote to the Foreign Ministry for guidance. They enquired of the latter whether 'the evil custom of slavery obtains in those parts or whether other unexpected evils might befall Japanese who went there'.<sup>66</sup> The Foreign Ministry after due consideration of the terms proposed gave its permission:

59 *Brisbane Courier*, 6 November 1890; *Bulletin*, 22 November and 6 December 1890.

60 *Queenslander*, 6 and 13 December 1890.

61 Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshokumin*, 1894, p. 10. This is confirmed by a copy of his family register (Nakagawa Tamiji domiciled at Hyogo-ken, Yatabe-gun, Minato-mura-no-uchi, Okudairano-mura Ban-gai 87-ban-yashiki) provided by the Kobe Municipal Office.

62 Queensland, Inquest No. 360 of 1895, Depositions, Queensland State Archives.

63 Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshokumin*, 1894, pp. 11–12.

64 Queensland State Archives SCT/CF38.

65 Wakayama-ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi*, 1957, pp. 269, 276.

66 Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture to Asada, 2 May 1883, *NGB — 1883*, p. 440.

This contract with foreigners to work overseas in pearling is essentially different from a contract in which labourers go abroad to do ordinary menial tasks for foreigners. Only a small number will be employed and they all are skilled divers. Furthermore, if specific agreements are made as indicated in the documents tendered, there need be no fear that the employees may become like slaves.<sup>67</sup>

The Foreign Ministry, however, insisted that since Torres Strait was far from the consulate (Melbourne), some resident in Japan must go surety in case the employer should fail to fulfil his obligations under the contract. This role of local guarantor was in fact undertaken by Lane, Crawford and Co., a firm that continues to serve the needs of Australians travelling in the Far East. The Foreign Ministry also required that signatures be witnessed by the British consul. The contract was duly signed on 10 October 1883. In it John Miller engaged for a term of two years: six divers at \$50 per month plus \$50 per ton of shell raised; six tenders at \$20 per month; one interpreter at \$15 per month; and 10 pumpers at \$10 per month. Rations, the nature and scale of which were carefully specified in the contract, were to be provided by the employer together with return transport. Wages were to commence with the signing of the contract. In the case of sickness the employer was to provide treatment and repatriation.<sup>68</sup>

Eight days later, the 37 Japanese duly embarked from Yokohama as deck passengers on the P&O steamer *Khiva* for Hong Kong where they transhipped to the Eastern and Australian Line's *Catterthun*. They had complained of inadequate food on the *Khiva*, but found the food on the *Catterthun* excellent.<sup>69</sup> They touched at Darwin on 10 November where they were amazed at the heat: 'It was unbearable even though we were wearing only a single layer of clothing, and that unlined.' Some of them may have had some grounds for being surprised at the heat: the interpreter who drew up the contracts in Japanese had used the ideographs for Austria instead of Australia!<sup>70</sup> They disembarked at Thursday Island on 14 November. Captain Miller lost no time in putting them to work and, on the 18th, despatched them, six to a lugger, with a fortnight's rations, to the pearling grounds about 50 miles to the west of Moa Island. The Japanese were not used to deep-sea fishing. One of them wrote soon after his arrival:

We carry only two weeks' food and stay at sea for that period. If these run out we send a boat to our employer at Thursday Island to replenish them ... The situation is therefore very different from the fishing we do in Japan. Being at sea day and night is something that surprised us all. If we run out of food and there is no wind,

67 Asada to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 6 August 1883, *NGB — 1883*, p. 444.

68 Asada to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 6 August 1883, pp. 448–49.

69 S Masuda to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 9 March 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 508.

70 The Japanese often confuse the two countries. One day in the late 1950s the occupant of the house opposite the Australian embassy in Tokyo was somewhat surprised when an excited stranger appeared at the front door and asked her to assist him to kill 'the Austrian ambassador who lives opposite'. The conversation that ensued confirmed that the supposed grievance was not against Sir Alan Watt but against the people of Austria!

we cannot go to our employer. If there is no wind and we run out of water we have to wait for rain and drink the rain-water. We have often had to do this. The boats anchor at sea night after night ... We remain at work until the waves are actually breaking into the boat.<sup>71</sup>

The Foreign Ministry was mistaken in its belief that all 37 were experienced seamen. For the writer continues that, although the divers found the going easy, the depth (5–10 fathoms) apparently being less than that to which they were accustomed, it was a very different story with the pumpers. The same writer continues:

In the early stages they were in dire straits. Among them were people who had never been in a boat in their lives. Seventy per cent were seasick. When aboard, their limbs ceased to answer. If there were any waves at all they collapsed in the morning and remained in this condition all day. It was exactly as if we were taking the sick to sea ...

They often complained. Some said that the work was different from that described in the contracts with our employer that they had signed at Yokohama and that this was not what they had come for. Others begged to be repatriated because they were unable to do this kind of seafaring work.

He notes, however, that within a few months, even these had, for the most part, settled down satisfactorily. They must have made a good impression for, in the following year, Burns, Philp & Co. recruited about 70 Japanese for various pearlers on the island. Apparently the Foreign Ministry was unwilling to approve further contracts until they had seen how Captain Miller's men fared. Burns, Philp worked through a British firm in Kobe, where the prefectural authorities issued passports endorsed 'For Hong Kong, to be employed by Fearon, Low & Co.'<sup>72</sup> without referring the matter to the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo. Marks lost no time in bringing this to the latter's attention:

I enclose two papers of two men engaged by Fearon, Low & Co. in Kobe to the order of Burns, Philp & Co. who speculate in men and make their profit by letting the men out to the pearl shell fisheries. It matters not how unsuitable the men are, as long as they are men and they can make their profit. The two men, Tokugiro and Takichi, are carpenters by trade and did not know the nature of the employment they were to be engaged in. There are about fifty engaged in the same way.<sup>73</sup>

These 50 were apparently not enough, for about another 20 appear to have been procured by Burns, Philp's agents in Hong Kong.

71 S Masuda to M Masuda, 19 March 1884, *NGB — 1884*, p. 486.

72 Wakayama ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi*, 1957, p. 190.

73 Marks to VFM, 24 February 1885, *NGB — 1885*, p. 527.

[T]hey scrape up all the boarding houses in that place for Japanese discharged seamen. The men are robbed in Hong Kong by the boarding house keepers and shipped off to Torres Straits by Gibb, Livingstone & Co. The men have not the remotest idea where they are going or what they are expected to do.

Under some of these contracts, the employee was not entitled to receive any of his wages until the completion of the contract. Marks noted that even under Miller's contracts the payment of allotments to next-of-kin had sometimes been improperly delayed and that wages paid to the employees themselves had been paid not in cash but by an order on Brisbane or Sydney: 'The men, not understanding it, sell the order at from 5 to 50 percent discount.' A grievance that Marks appears to have ignored was that payment was made in truck. As Masuda, the leader of Miller's group, reported to the governor of Kanagawa prefecture on their return to Japan at the expiry of their two-year contracts: 'When we were supplied with goods that should have cost a dollar, \$1–1/2 was required. \$1–1/2's worth cost \$2 – \$2-1/2. When you convert wages in this fashion \$50 becomes only \$30, and \$30 becomes \$20. As a result, what we got came to nothing.'<sup>74</sup> This often caused despair. This lack of feeling on the part of employers cannot be done justice to on paper.<sup>75</sup> What worried Marks most was the absence of a single medical practitioner in a population of 1,500. To quote Masuda once again:

When a man became ill at sea and appeared unlikely to recover immediately, he would go ashore, explain the situation to the employer and ask for treatment. There are cases where the employer did not readily consent and provide treatment. If the case was the least difficult to diagnose, he would accuse him of malingering and force him back to work. Where this was not possible he would push him into a jerry-built shed used for storing shell, give him some medicine unrelated to the illness and take no further notice of him, almost as if he were an animal. All the sick man could do was just wait for death.<sup>76</sup>

Eventually, on 2 October 1885, Marks, impressed by the discontent among the Japanese and the high death rate among them, recommended to the Japanese Government that 'all the Japanese on the fishing grounds should be sent back to Japan'.<sup>77</sup> As a result, on 19 February 1886, he was instructed to return to Japan as soon as possible all except those whose contracts prevented this.<sup>78</sup> The following month the Foreign Ministry also instructed prefectural authorities to discourage

74 Some nevertheless succeeded in making money. The Japanese consul at Hong Kong in 1897 reported three Japanese divers returning to Japan after two to three years on Thursday Island with \$6,000 between them (Consul, Hong Kong to VFM 16/9/97, *NGB — 1886*, p. 512).

75 S Masuda to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 9 March 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 510.

76 S Masuda, to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 9 March 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 510. See also the evidence at the trial of Nishi (TI Deposition and Minute Book, p. 461, 29 August 1885) and at his inquest (no. 510 of 1885).

77 Marks to VFM, 2 October 1885, *NGB — 1885*, p. 543. Of Miller's 37 Japanese employees engaged in October 1883, five died and 10 were repatriated on grounds of sickness during the two-year period of the contract (S Masuda to Governor, Kanagawa Prefecture, 9 March 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 510).

78 VFM to Marks, 19 February 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 507.

all who wished to emigrate to Australia to engage in pearling and, where this proved ineffective, in each case to forward the proposed contract to the ministry to await its decision.<sup>79</sup> There is no evidence that widespread repatriation actually took place. In any event, this would in most cases have been impossible because of the terms of their contracts. Be that as it may, the number of Japanese in Torres Strait fell from about 200 in 1886<sup>80</sup> to about 170 or 180 at the end of 1890 and did not pick up again until 1892.<sup>81</sup>

Subsequent events did nothing to weaken the view of the Foreign Ministry that contracts for employment in Australia had to be looked at very carefully, and that, for Japanese workers, life there could be hazardous. Late in 1884 it had reminded the prefectural governments that the emigration of people from the lower walks of life for display in public performances could not be permitted. Despite this, early in 1886 an Englishman named Pemberton Willard managed to secure passports from the prefectural governments for some 40 Japanese whom he displayed throughout Australia as 'The Japanese Village'. The show consisted of craftsmen pursuing such traditional avocations as screen painting, wood carving and the manufacture of cloisonné ware; acrobats and jugglers; and waitresses who served Japanese tea to the audience. Willard appears to have hoodwinked the Japanese authorities by dividing the company into small occupational groups, drawing up separate contracts for each and distributing the applications for passports between two ports, Yokohama and Kobe, and over a period of two weeks.<sup>82</sup>

As a theatrical performance, 'The Japanese Village' appears to have been a considerable success. It remained in Australia for 15 months and performed in each capital except Perth. Its season in Melbourne extended for more than five months, during which time it was visited by the governor and (if one may believe the advertisements) by upwards of 317,000 people. Its arrival in Australia, however, had been followed by a series of despatches from Marks. He considered the wages far too low:

When Japanese are engaged at 15 or 20 yen per month ... [this] amount seems a fair rate of pay for the particular class of persons so engaged in Japan. But the moment they arrive in any European country they dress, eat and smoke European fashion and contract other expensive habits [and] therefore find the amount of pay they are receiving totally inadequate to meet their acquired European necessities. Not alone they cannot save a cent, but [they] are constantly in debt, which causes considerable trouble and discontent — more especially as they soon find out that their European fellow workmen are getting more in one week than they do in a month.

79 FM to Governors of Kanagawa and certain other prefectures, 20 March 1886, *NGB — 1886*, p. 511.

80 Marks to VFM, 7 February 1889, *NGB — 1888*, p. 569.

81 K Watanabe, 'Sasudē-tō oyobi Toresu-Kaikyō Tanken Hōkoku', c. 1894, p. 6.

82 Archives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (JFMA), 3.8.4.7 (Australian National Library microfilm G16163).

He recommended that in future the Foreign Ministry should ensure that the wages offered to Japanese in contracts should be based on the rates ruling in the country concerned. He urged that this also be the case with hours ‘as longer working hours would certainly engender an ill-feeling between the working classes and Japanese people in the country they are temporarily residing in’.<sup>83</sup> Marks also considered inadequate the standard of food and accommodation (both at sea and ashore) provided by Willard. In the Melbourne winter the Japanese threatened to desert unless they were provided with more blankets.<sup>84</sup> (Two of their number had died of consumption soon after their arrival in Sydney. Their graves are in Waverley Cemetery.)<sup>85</sup>

In Japan, Willard’s venture appears to have had two consequences. It increased the reserve with which the Foreign Ministry regarded Australia as a suitable place for employment and it gave rise to the legend of a monolith in Tasmania bearing the *hiragana* inscription: ‘kashiu zeniya gohei riyouchi’ (This is Zeniya Gohei’s domain). This first appeared in 1891 in Umehara Chuzō’s *Teikoku Jitsugyōsha Risshi-hen*, which attributes the information to a Japanese acrobat who had visited Tasmania six years previously. In about 1908 in Kobe one of the women members of the troupe confirmed the story. She claimed that when they went to Tasmania the men saw the inscription but the women did not, as they did not go out.<sup>86</sup> That the women members of the company were kept confined to their quarters during the tour of Australia is confirmed in one of Marks’s despatches:

Foreigners engaging a number of Japanese people who are mostly of the poorer classes should on their arrival at their place of destination in the first instance be bound to supply them with a suit of European clothing, whether male or females. The present lot of Japanese women who are engaged by Willard are not allowed out in the streets as their appearance in Japanese costume would cause excitement and curiosity and probably rudeness on the part of the lower classes of people.<sup>87</sup>

The ‘Japanese Village’ performed in Hobart from 15 January to 8 February 1887. According to the ‘Shipping Intelligence’ column in the *Argus*, some members of the company embarked from Melbourne for Launceston on 11 January (SS *Flinders*) and 14 January (SS *Pateena*). The most likely explanation is that some other members made the crossing via Devonport (e.g. SS *Mangana* departing Melbourne on 12 January) and were shown the petroglyphs on Mersey Bluff. There are of course problems in this explanation. The inscriptions there are on horizontal

83 JFMA, Marks to VFM, 27 August 1886.

84 JFMA, Marks to VFM, 13 August 1886.

85 JFMA, Marks to VFM, 14 May 1886. Murakami Toyokichi died on 16 April; Uesaka Fukumatsu, the following day.

86 S Kaburagi, *Zeniya Gobei no Kenkyū* (Zenigo Kenshōkai, 1954), pp. 169–70.

87 JFMA, 3.8.4.7, Marks to VFM, 27 August 1886.

faces of rock, not on monoliths.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, Tasmanian Aboriginal rock carving is based on circles and has little resemblance to *hiragana*. There is, however, a way out of the last difficulty. In 1887 many Japanese acrobats would have been illiterate. Let us assume the locals showed the Japanese the petroglyphs and referred to the mystery surrounding them (for until about the 1930s the popular belief was that the Tasmanians were so 'primitive' that they had no art). Then let us suppose that some time between his return to Japan and 1891 one of them recounted this mystery in the hearing of a Zeniya enthusiast. It should not have required too much effort of the latter to convince both of them that what the acrobat had seen was a message from Zeniya.

During the remainder of the period under review no indentured labourers left Japan for Australia with the consent of the central Japanese Government. In 1888 the Mourilyan Sugar Co. proposed a contract for the employment of 100 Japanese on the canefields. After long negotiations, the Japanese Government was prepared to approve it provided that the company, at the time of embarkation, were prepared to pay a specified amount of the prospective wages into a trust fund to provide lump sum payments to each employee on his repatriation. This, however, proved to be beyond the company's resources and the scheme fell through.<sup>89</sup> No Japanese contract immigrants arrived on the canefields until 1892.

Towards the end of our period, the pearlers of Western Australia appear to have succeeded in engaging Japanese labour, despite the policy of the central Japanese Government. The 1891 census shows that on 5 April of that year there were 198 Japanese males in the colony of whom all but one were north of Shark Bay.<sup>90</sup> Of these perhaps a handful were on the Kimberley and Pilbara goldfields. It can, however, be safely assumed that the large majority were engaged in pearling. Presumably the method of recruiting was similar to those of the Queensland pearlers that Marks described in 1885.

Another class of Japanese emigrant that succeeded in leaving the country in defiance of Foreign Ministry instructions was the prostitute. Japanese brothel keepers had established themselves in Australia by 1888. Murdoch on his visit to Darwin early in that year reported that there were in that town five Japanese brothels housing 25 Japanese prostitutes and that there were 'branch establishments down the Western Australian coast well nigh as far as Fremantle'.<sup>91</sup> This occupation, no doubt, accounted for the relatively high number of Japanese women in the 1891 WA census: 62.

88 AL Meston, 'Aboriginal rock-carvings on the NW coast of Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1931, pp. 12–17.

89 *NGB — 1888*, pp. 547–74; *Queenslander*, 30 March 1889, p. 589.

90 Western Australia, *Census of 1891*, pp. 116–19. Although the figures given are persons born in Japan, it appears from the information on p. 119 that none of these were Britishers born in Japan.

91 *Boomerang* (Brisbane), 12 May 1888.

This evil appears to have reached Thursday Island on 29 September 1891. On that date John Douglas, the government resident, cabled Brisbane for instructions regarding the arrival of two young women, Otashi and Otoyo, whom he described as ‘undoubtedly prostitutes but of a respectable and orderly type’. He kept them in quarantine pending instructions. Brisbane cabled Marks, the consul, who asked that they be deported. Instructions to this effect were cabled to Thursday Island on 2 October. There was, however, no north-bound ship until 23 November. In the meantime, the pillars of respectability among the local Japanese community apparently feared that Douglas’s resolution was weakening. Douglas writes that ‘Their arrival here caused some trouble among the Japanese inhabitants of this island, and I was waited upon by the whole of them with a request that I would remove the women’.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps Douglas should have said ‘nearly all’, for the *Mainichi Shimbun* of 9 March 1892 carried a graphic account of a meeting of the Japanese residents at which an address to Douglas praying that the two women be deported was adopted. According to this report, ‘when the resolution was put there was the sound of a shot, and Hirano Sennosuke was shot where he sat’. According to this report the shot was fired by a pistol-packing madam named Okiyo under whose auspices the girls were to have worked.<sup>93</sup> Fortunately Okiyo’s aim was not good and Hirano-san made a good recovery.<sup>94</sup> As an earnest of their sincerity, the Japanese residents presented Douglas with £8 towards the cost of the girls’ repatriation.

With the rapid increase in the size of the Japanese population on Thursday Island in 1892–93, the attitudes of both the residents and the Queensland authorities appear to have undergone a radical change. According to Hattori, writing in 1894, there were then 21 Japanese prostitutes on the island.<sup>95</sup> Japan’s prostitution frontier appears to have operated quite independently of her immigrant frontier. Almost all the prostitutes were from Nagasaki, a prefecture that provided very few immigrants in other occupations. Nor did it depend on a Japanese clientele. The traffic in prostitutes overseas from Nagasaki is considerably older than the reopening of Japan to the outside world in the 1850s. There is a special word in Japanese, *kara-yuki-san*, for a prostitute emigrating overseas from Nagasaki. Since the literal meaning of the word is ‘one who went to China’, the trade must have begun in that direction. Singapore is thought to have received its first Japanese prostitute in about 1870. Soon the Japanese brothels there had become the key to a vast system, despatching their inmates east or west in accordance with the needs of the market.<sup>96</sup>

92 Queensland, Col. Sec., Inwards Correspondence, 1891/14105, Queensland State Archives COL/A680.

93 As quoted in Wakayama-ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi*, 1957, p. 590.

94 Queensland, Col. Sec., Inwards Correspondence 1891/12674, Queensland State Archives COL/A677.

95 Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinsbokumin*, 1894, p. 20.

96 T Irie, *Hōjin Kaigai Hattenshi*, 1942, vol. 1, p. 231–34. According to T Fujita, *Kaigai Zaikin Yon-Han-Seiki no Kaiko* (Tokyo, 1931), there were about 900 Japanese prostitutes in Singapore when he served at the consulate there in 1896–97.

Outside pearling and prostitution we can only speculate about the occupations of the few Japanese who were in Australia at this time. The 1891 census gives the following figures for the Japanese population: in Western Australia, as we have seen, there was only one Japanese south of Shark Bay; in Tasmania the only person born in Japan was a woman and she may well have been born of British parents; in continental Queensland, there were 14 males and three females; in Victoria, 26 males and four females; the figures for New South Wales were higher, 66 males and six females. Unfortunately, the SA census lumps Japanese with 'other Asians'.<sup>97</sup>

Some of these Japanese would have been household servants. Domestic service played an important role in the history of Japanese emigration. Typical among the early applicants for passports to the United States and Europe were students wishing to study overseas and servants engaged by foreign residents who wished to continue in the latter's service when they returned to their home countries. Many of the more enterprising among the young Japanese who went to the United States to gain overseas experience began as houseboys and worked in this occupation until they had acquired sufficient command of the language to enable them to move higher. A table published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1882 showing the destinations and the purposes for which passports had been issued during the years 1868–81 (inclusive) indicates that out of a total of 24 passports issued for travel to Australia, 10 were for servants (the remainder were distributed as follows: government officials, nine; commerce, four; study, one).<sup>98</sup>

So far, the earliest specific reference that I have come upon to the engagement of domestic servants in Japan to work in Australia relates to the late 1880s. According to a recently published history of the Broken Bay district north of Sydney, HR Cox, a wealthy landowner in the district, returned from a world tour in about 1886 with 'ten Japanese servants and workers' under three-year contracts. Japanese reappear in the history as butler and cook when the Coxes build a large residence, 'Ettalong Hall' (completed c. 1898).<sup>99</sup>

Marks took up the question of the appropriate wages for such servants in a despatch to the Minister for Foreign Affairs dated 12 November 1891.<sup>100</sup> He reported that two Victorians had recently brought in Japanese servants under contracts that provided wages that were too low by local standards. AT Tuckett, senior partner of the Melbourne real estate firm, Gemmell and Tuckett, and a member of the City Council, had recently gone to Japan and, using as an intermediary the interpreter at the Hyōgō hotel, had engaged a cook, a houseboy and a laundryman on three-year contracts. Marks compared the £10-per-year wage provided for the houseboy in

97 In the 1891 censuses, Tasmania is the only colony where it is not possible to separate those born in Japan of British parents from the total of those born in Japan.

98 *Nihon Teikoku Tōkei Nenkan*, no. 2, 1883, pp. 723–25.

99 C Swancott, *Good Old Woy Woy* (Sydney: privately published, 1970), pp. 18–19.

100 Marks to VFM, 12 November 1891, *NGB — 1891*, pp. 442–43.

this contract with the current wage of £1 per week that prevailed for such work in Melbourne. From the brief histories of their employment in Australia given to the police by Japanese in Melbourne in 1911, Tuckett's home must have been operated by a succession of Japanese brought in on similar contracts, the last of whom came in 1901. Evidently it was not unusual for them to abscond; for we are told that to prevent this Mrs Tuckett used to impound each Japanese's passport as soon as he arrived.<sup>101</sup> Asians without passports were, of course, likely to be suspected by the police as being illegal immigrants. Some of Mrs Tuckett's employees, however, preferred to take this risk. As late as 1942 one such suspect told the authorities that he had left his passport with Mrs Tuckett in 1901!

The other case that Marks mentioned concerned 'a Mr Wilson who lives about 50 miles from Melbourne'. He had engaged four houseboys on terms similar to the Tucketts; but some two or three months after arrival they had discovered how low their wages were and had sought to terminate the contracts.

This Mr Wilson must have been WR Wilson, the owner of St Alban's, the famous stud property on the Barwon, and the chairman of BHP. Three times the winner of the Derby, he was, according to his obituary in the *South Australian Register*, 'a bold speculator who thought no price too high for a really first-class horse'.<sup>102</sup> Until the Second World War broke out in 1941 there was an old Japanese fisherman called Kawajiri at Yanderup in Western Australia who was brought out in 1895 under engagement to work for Mr Wilson as cook at St Alban's. He was at the time cook at the Grand Hotel at Yokohama. As this was four years after Marks's letter we can assume that Wilson, like Tuckett, brought in a succession of servants from Japan. We know that he visited the East in 1888 to develop markets there for silver.<sup>103</sup> Possibly it was on that occasion that he brought in his first Japanese servants. His enthusiasm for the Orient was of an eclectic nature: he named his Melbourne residence 'Shanghai Villa'.

Marks viewed such employment with some concern: 'In my opinion, more important than the question of a houseboy's wages is that, if the Trades Hall Council discovers that people of this city are bringing in cheap labour under contract, a heavy poll-tax will be imposed completely excluding such immigrants.'

Naturally it was the aggrieved who contacted Marks. When HIJMS *Hiei* visited Brisbane in November 1891, it was welcomed by Uemura Sadakichi, a lad of 16. A Brisbane couple had engaged him in Yokohama and brought him home with them about six months previously. He told the crew that his master and mistress held him in great affection, treating him as they would their own son.<sup>104</sup>

101 CAO A1 30/9356.

102 *SA Register*, 28 August 1900.

103 R Bridges, *From Silver to Steel* (Melbourne: Robertson, 1920), p. 226. I am indebted to Professor Geoffrey Blainey for this reference.

104 T Hirose, *Kōnan Shiki* (Tokyo: Kyōzaisha, 1942), p. 93.

A few of the Japanese in the 1891 census would have been engaged in trade. So far as is known, the first Japanese to set up an importing business in Australia were Akiyama Teiji and Tokuta Toshihiko. Both men had been sent with Japanese exhibits to the International Exhibition of 1880–81: Akiyama by his firm, Tokuta by the Japanese Government. They remained after the exhibition and set up in business next door to Young & Jackson's as importers of Japanese goods under the trade name Akita (formed by combining one ideograph from each of the partners' names). Akiyama died of tuberculosis on 20 November 1884 at the age of 36, having just completed his fourth journey to Australia. His grave, with its fading bilingual inscription, may still be seen in Melbourne General Cemetery.<sup>105</sup> With his death the name of the firm ceased to appear in Sands and McDougall's directory. Another Japanese importer, J Numashima, was in business in Melbourne in Elizabeth Street from 1887 to 1889.<sup>106</sup> The first to establish a lasting enterprise, however, was Kanematsu Fusajirō of Kobe. He first went to Australia in November 1887. At that time rice was virtually Japan's only export to Australia. It is thought that it was in connection with this commodity that he made the visit. He returned to Japan the following year and, after raising ¥30,000 capital, established operations in Sydney in April 1890. The firm initially imported traditional Japanese manufactures, rice and coal. Later it developed the manufacture in Japan of Western goods specifically for the Australian market. It was this firm that in May 1890 shipped the first regular consignment of Australian wool to Japan, 187 bales of fine merino bearing the 'T over Diamond' brand of James Rutherford's 'Murrumbidgee' station.<sup>107</sup> To this day Kanematsu remains annually the largest consignor of Australian wool to Japan.

There were also a few artisans among the Japanese in Australia at this time; some are mentioned in the diary kept by Tomiyama Komakichi aboard *Hiei*.<sup>108</sup>

Ships of the Japanese Training Squadron, manned by new Navy cadet officers, at that time usually carried as passengers a few civilians whose task was to report on opportunities for Japanese enterprises in the places visited. Tomiyama was such a passenger: he reported on the possibilities of Japanese immigration to New Caledonia.<sup>109</sup> His record of her stay at Sydney (December 1891) gives us a useful, if incomplete, picture of the small Japanese community there.

The ship is visited by Kawagoe Yoshirō and Kuwahata Hideo. Kawagoe had left the Japanese warship *Kongō* at Samoa the previous year and made his own way to Sydney from there. Like Tomiyama he was a civilian and a member of the

105 Ichikawa, *Nichigō Kankeishi*, 1953, p. 67. The location of the grave is C of E, 'X', 642.

106 Sands & McDougall, *Melbourne Directory*, 1888–1890. See also his advertisement in the *Argus*, 17 June 1889.

107 Ichikawa, *Nichigō Kankeishi*, 1953, pp. 68–69, 184–85, 269–70.

108 K Tomiyama, 'Kōnan Nikki', *Shokumin Kyōkai Hokoku* [1892?].

109 Irie, *Hōjin Kaigai Hattenshi*, 1942, vol. 1, pp. 104–6.

Shokumin Kyōkai (Colonisation Society). Later in this paper we shall refer to a portion of a report by him on opportunities for Japanese enterprise in Australia that survives in the journal of that society.<sup>110</sup>

Tomiya tells us little about Kuwahata beyond that he had been in New South Wales for six years. Fortunately a much better source of information is available. For Kuwahata Hideo was one of the few Japanese who settled in Australia, married an English migrant, raised a family and prospered. His eldest son, the late Mr TEH Kuwahata of Epping, Sydney, kindly furnished me with the following details:

Hideo Kuwahata, son of a Samurai family, was born at Kaseda, Kagoshima, Japan, on 17th September, 1863. He was well educated and a great lover of nature and art.

He brought with him a small but valuable collection of old woodcuts and prints, by famous Japanese artists.

He arrived from Japan about 1888 and began business as a landscape gardener and importer of Japanese plants. Only a few Japanese ships were coming to Sydney at that time, so he helped to supply them with some of their stores.

In 1891 he married an English lady, Mary Elizabeth Wyre. In 1892 I was born, and in the same year Messrs. Burns Philp & Co. obtained the agency for the first regular shipping service between Australia and Japan, the Nippon Yusen Kaisha line.

My father saw the possibility, at this stage, of entering the providoring business, and his tenders for the supply of provisions, and in later years, blankets and other merchandise, were accepted by Messrs. Burns Philp & Co. During this period, and in later years, on their visits to Australia, the Japanese Navy and training ships were supplied with large quantities of stores.

In the early years of providoring, most of the vegetables required were grown at Blackwall by a number of gardeners employed by my father. These were shipped by the small steamers 's.s. Erina' and 's.s. Woy Woy' to Sydney and unloaded at the ships' side in the harbour.

In 1898 my brother Frederick was born.

In 1908 my father purchased a large home and twenty-two acres of land at Guildford. He laid out part of the property with fish ponds, flower beds and imported plants, which were to form what eventually became the well known 'Mikado' nursery.

110 Y Kawagoe, 'Gōshū-dan', *Shokumin Kyōkai Hōkoku* [1892?], pp. 88–93.

Later my father rented premises at 173 George Street North, and conducted business from there as H. Kuwahata & Sons. My brother and I joined him later. In 1929 my brother commenced a department for the bottling and sale of various medicinal and edible oils and I later set aside a section for the sale of Japanese plants, glazed pots etc. and the designing and landscaping of indoor and outdoor gardens.

The outbreak of war with Japan curtailed some of these activities and the oil business became a flourishing concern.

In 1954 I retired and my brother's son, John Kuwahata (grandson of the founder of the business) carried on in my place. He now is managing the providoring section of the business, with his father as Managing Director of what is now known as H. Kuwahata & Sons, Pty. Ltd., Shipping Providors, Importers and Exporters.

The late Hideo Kuwahata entertained very extensively his many friends and members of the Japanese Consular and Diplomatic Service. Whilst retaining his own nationality he was most loyal to the country in which he lived and made his livelihood and was highly respected by all who knew him. He died in 1930 whilst on a health trip to Japan and was buried at his birthplace.

But to return to 1891. Tomiyama was probably witnessing Kuwahata's first venture in the providoring business, for he records that Kuwahata arranged accommodation ashore for him and a fellow passenger, and that the Nihon Yusen Kaisha's (NYK) ship *Miike Maru* was also in port. This was the NYK's first trial voyage to test the potentialities of an Australian service.

So much for Kuwahata. What about the other Japanese that Tomiyama found in Sydney?

The rooms Kuwahata hired for Tomiyama and his colleagues are at 'Bengal House' in 'Jackson St' where a Matsuzaki is living. This Matsuzaki is a graduate of a commercial college and has been there for two years.

Tomiyama also meets Kitamura Toranosuke, the local manager of Kanematsu.

We learn that there is another outlet for Japanese goods in Sydney, for Tomiyama visits Okumura's 'Nihon Shōten' ('The Japan Store').

Tomiyama also receives and returns a call by Yokouchi who, with Kudō Yoshisuke, had arrived only a few days previously on the *Miike Maru*. These two men had taken up residence in 'Beach Road' with two other Japanese, Yamaguchi Kenroku and Suematsu Zenshichi, who had arrived earlier on a British ship. Yokouchi was a copper-plate engraver; the other three were tattooers. Sands's *Sydney Directory* lists 'R. Yokouchi, Artist' in its 1893 edition, and gives his address as Quong Tart Chambers in King St. (It also lists a 'T.O. Sata & Co Japanese Art Painters' in the same building.)

Soon after the *Hiei* left Sydney, the tattooers added a fourth to their number. One of Tomiyama's civilian colleagues, Matsuoka Yoshikazu, jumped ship. The following day a pickpocket relieved him of all but a half-crown of his £12 capital. 'A Japanese shopkeeper' (presumably Okumura) lent him £1, and one of the tattooers took him on as an apprentice. Matsuoka, however, did not last more than a few days in that occupation. The indifferent picture he emblazoned on a burly British seaman so infuriated the latter that Matsuoka was forced to down tools and run, in fear of his life. He left his master, who kept his scant belongings in lieu of a premium. After sleeping two or three nights in the Botanical Gardens he signed on with two other Japanese at 30 shillings a month on Captain Kelly's pearling lugger, *Josephine*, bound for Thursday Island.<sup>111</sup>

## The mutual image

### Australia as seen by Japanese

Then, as now, few Japanese knew or cared about Australia. Little record has survived of their thoughts. As we have noted earlier in this paper, in the early 1880s the Kanagawa prefectural authorities thought that it was probably a savage place where Japanese emigrants were likely to be exploited and deceived. We have also noted that by 1886 the experience of the early contract immigrants had inclined the Foreign Ministry also towards this view. Not only did it circulate its misgivings to the local authorities, it also communicated them directly to the public. When in 1887 four Japanese members of the crew of the pearling lugger *Gamecock* were chased overboard by a Malayan shipmate wielding an axe and were drowned, the Foreign Ministry issued a press statement to all the Tokyo newspapers. This drew attention to the fact that the contracts of these men were negotiated at No. 118 at the Foreign Settlement at Kobe (Fearon, Low's address), and concluded:

Among the four men some had wives and children. Besides the bitterness of untimely death at the hands of a savage and becoming a ghost in a foreign land, the grief of the parents, children and brothers that they leave behind in their birthplace is beyond imagination.

As a result of our entering into diplomatic relations with foreign countries and the improvement in transport facilities, the number of our nationals who go overseas to work is daily increasing. This is not something to be regretted. Among them, however, are people who know nothing about the country to which they are going and cannot speak its language. What is worse still, there are those who go without any contract. Needless to say such people are in a very disadvantageous position if

111 Hattori, *Nankyū no Shinshokumin*, 1894, pp. 55–59.

an untoward event like that described above should befall them. Accordingly it is our wish that, in future, prospective emigrants should be very careful to acquaint themselves with conditions in the country concerned and that they should consult the authorities and secure detailed contracts.<sup>112</sup>

It seems a little hard to suggest that Fearon, Low's contract was defective in failing to deflect blows from an axe.

The very fact that the Foreign Ministry felt obliged to issue such a press statement indicates that there was current an enticing image of working overseas. The number of Japanese immigrants is itself sufficient proof of this. There is other evidence to confirm that Australia was regarded as a place in which fortunes were to be made. When after the Second World War the Wakayama prefectural government was collecting material for a history of emigration from the prefecture, old people in the village of Tanami told them that the first person from the village to go to Australia was Ebina Torakichi who went in 1884 and that when he returned more than four years later he contributed half the cost of rebuilding the belfry in the local temple. 'As a result,' they said, 'there was for a time much enthusiasm in the village for emigration.'<sup>113</sup> In 1954, in Melbourne, I interviewed an old Japanese, Suzuki Sakuhei, who remembered, when a small boy, the return of two of the Carbine syndicate, Hiramatsu Jimbei and Shiosaki Gorobei, to his village, Shionomisaki, in 1891. Another of the syndicate came from a neighbouring village where he was said to have squandered his winnings in such extravagances as bathing in saké. It was rumoured that Australia was so rich in gold that after rain nuggets lay uncovered in the streams. Suzuki himself emigrated to Australia eight years later at the age of 16.<sup>114</sup> There is also other evidence that some of the early emigrants knew very little about the task awaiting them on Thursday Island. Seven of the men recruited by Fearon, Low in 1884 were from Shionomisaki. When material for the prefectural history was being collected after the war, villagers recalled the story that these men had not known what a pearl oyster was. They were used to diving for abalone (which of course was skin diving, not suit diving) and took with them tools used for abalone fishing.<sup>115</sup>

Two Japanese who visited Australia at this time have left us their impressions.

Mishima Kazuo, an employee of the Mainichi newspaper, aged 23, travelled as a civilian on the Pacific cruise of *Hiei* in 1889. That year Australia was not included on the itinerary. He accordingly transhipped at Samoa and arrived at Sydney on the SS *Lubeck* on 18 December 1889, accompanied by Kawagoe (who as we have noted earlier in this paper was still there two years later). After a short stay in

112 *NGB — 1887*, p. 482–83.

113 Wakayama-ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi*, 1957, p. 189.

114 Notes taken at interview with Suzuki Sakuhei, caretaker at Jackett's Flour Mill, Burnley, 27 June and 7 November 1954.

115 Wakayama-ken, *Wakayama-ken Imin-shi*, 1957, p. 181.

Sydney he took the train to Melbourne on 27 January and remained there until he left for home via India on 22 September. He published a book on his travels the following year, which was republished in 1943 under the auspices of the Japanese navy, no doubt to stimulate popular enthusiasm for the South Pacific.<sup>116</sup>

For the first few months he lived near Caulfield Racecourse. It was, he said, impossible to express in words the passion that Australians had for horse racing. They had become the biggest gamblers in the world. There were newspapers specially devoted to horse racing. In 1889, 48 persons had died from falling off horses, and one in every three suicides was attributable to horse racing. He was amazed to see that Australia had bred a race of pygmies to serve as jockeys. From this he reached the encouraging conclusion that the Japanese could increase their stature by changing their style of life.<sup>117</sup> He had somewhat of a chip on his shoulder regarding the European assumption of racial supremacy; but he gives no example where he received discourtesy or discriminatory treatment. He was delighted to see among his landlord's prized possessions Japanese articles that to a Japanese were of no great quality.

Although these Britishers are able to look down on us Japanese, when it comes to the silks that they want, they must bow their heads to us. The Americans do not fear Japan; but for the teacups that they use, they must surrender to us. Although I cannot make Englishmen, Americans and Australians read these sentences, we can cause all men in all lands to use Japanese handkerchiefs. It is a true fact that in trade there is no discrimination among states. In the world of market demand there is no racial discrimination.<sup>118</sup>

He saw the prosperity of the white races as founded on the exploitation of the subject races that they had dispossessed.<sup>119</sup> This is probably one of the reasons why his book was reprinted during the Second World War.

During his stay in Australia, his chief interest seems to have been to discover possibilities for increased trade between the two countries. Japan's overseas trade was then in its infancy: her trade with all countries was only one quarter of Australia's.

At the time, Japan's principal export to Australia was rice (4,938 tons in 1887). Although he noted with some apprehension the beginning of rice cultivation in South Australia, he saw a good future for the Japanese product. His argument is somewhat surprising: 'For geographic reasons, labourers constitute a high proportion of the Australian population. They would like to eat Japanese rice

116 I Suehiro, *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi* (Tokyo: Nihon Kōen Kyōkai, 1943).

117 *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi*, 1943, pp. 99–103.

118 *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi*, 1943, p. 107.

119 *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi*, 1943, pp. 155–60.

instead of bread.<sup>120</sup> He provides today's reader with two other surprising pieces of information. First, the Japanese mandarin orange had become so popular among Australian housewives that they had to come to call it by its Japanese name, *mikan*. Second, Japanese matches were doing very badly on the Victorian market, because in this field Japanese industrial legislation was the more advanced. Victorians were still prepared to expose operatives to the dangers of necrosis of the jaw in order to have the convenience of 'strike-anywhere' matches. Japan, however, 16 years before the Berne Convention, had prohibited the manufacture of the yellow-phosphorus match. It therefore exported only the safety match, which, according to Mishima, Victorians despised. He took this rather badly and urged that the offending legislation be repealed.<sup>121</sup>

He considered that the market for Japanese objets d'art was limited and that, although the reputation of Japanese sundries was high, more care should be paid to the special requirements of the Australian market. For in Elizabeth Street he found not a few articles in which the ingenious locals had used Japanese motifs to produce products more in accord with local taste and requirements than those Japan exported.

On a locally made fruit stand there was a snow and bamboo design. Traditionally, Occidentals have no appreciation of the aesthetic refinement of bamboo amid snow. In their art and literature snow always means a couple of sledges and some dogs. If this is present, they are satisfied. They appreciated its exquisite beauty for the first time when they had become accustomed to the spirit of Japanese art. They then immediately applied it to the fruit stand ... From this the clear fact emerges that the people here, once they appreciate the elegance of Japanese objects of art, assimilate it and apply it as their own. We must pay great attention to this in the future.<sup>122</sup>

He found that our shopkeepers, too, were enterprising.

I must reiterate that Australians are very quick off the mark when it comes to advertising.

Shops like florists, butchers and ice-cream sellers make use of the water-supply to attract customers. They all have water flowing from the ceiling down the shop windows and write their advertisements in front of the tumbling water.

There is a photographer's shop that, when it becomes night, projects pictures from the tower on the top of a building more than twelve storeys high so that they can be seen from every direction. The pictures change every two minutes and are very interesting.

120 *Gōshū Oyobi Ino Tankenshi*, 1943, p. 123.

121 *Gōshū Oyobi Ino Tankenshi*, 1943, p. 123–24.

122 *Gōshū Oyobi Ino Tankenshi*, 1943, p. 125–26.

Bookshops and tobacconists use clock-work dolls for their advertisements.

In front of the office of a tannery stands a seven-foot kangaroo and emu. When you go inside there are stuffed animals everywhere. It is just as if you are in a zoo. There is a seemingly endless variety of such things as monkeys carrying satchels and possums with purses in their mouths.

When you come to the companies that trade with New Guinea you would think that you were at a New Guinea exhibition. In the windows are stuffed birds-of-paradise and emus with feathers even more beautiful than those of the American ostriches. Women's hats made of these feathers are also on display. In addition there is white coral and the actual jewels that the natives wear stuck through their noses.<sup>123</sup>

If he found Melbourne shops exciting in the way that many Australians find those of Tokyo today, his description of Australians and the Australian way of life has much in common with the 'eager beaver' stereotype of the Japanese that is current in Australia at present.

They venerate speed even in eating and at the lavatory. If the latter takes time they feel aggrieved. Milkmen, bakers, and butchers do their rounds at a dizzy speed. People don't get a minute's rest in the day, but work with the sweat pouring down their faces. Even so they are upbraided by their overseers. Compared with them our way of doing things in Tokyo seems on a par with the Samoan or Hawaiian natives who take all day to move four or five bananas and take turn-about in carrying them.

According to him the Australian civilisation was built on long hours, the day commonly worked being 16 hours for men and 14 for women. Admittedly this was the year of the Maritime Strike and Henry George's visit (both of which he records in some detail).<sup>124</sup> Nevertheless he must, surely, be exaggerating.

As the price of speed, the community, he considered, put up with very shoddy workmanship. He also found us basically untidy behind a pretentious veneer.

If you look at the houses, the front door is ornately decorated in such a manner as to cause wonder. Inside however, are broken bottles and scattered slices of meat left over from a meal.<sup>125</sup>

The other Japanese visitor whose detailed impressions of Australia at this time have survived is Hirose Takeo.

123 *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi*, 1943, p. 135–36.

124 The American political economist Henry George was known for his advocacy of a single tax on land value (eds).

125 *Gōshū Oyobi Indo Tankenshi*, 1943, pp. 138–39.

In my youth there were two pictures that every Australian schoolboy knew. One was *Simpson and His Donkey*. The other was Frank Salisbury's representation of Jack Cornwall VC, aged 16, on HMS *Chester* at the Battle of Jutland, tending his gun while the rest of its crew lay dead around him. In Japan it was Cdr Hirose that every schoolboy was exhorted to emulate. During the Russo-Japanese war, after sealing off Port Arthur with block-ships, he had died in an attempt to extricate the demolition parties. As a national hero his collected works, including the diary that he kept as a 23-year-old sub-lieutenant on *Hiei* during her 1891 cruise,<sup>126</sup> were avidly read until they were banned by Gen. MacArthur in 1945.

When Hirose checked in at Lennon's Hotel, Brisbane, on 23 November 1891 it was his first encounter with a European environment. He was surprised to find that, unlike Japanese inns, here there were separate rooms for each officer and that, in addition, one also bathed alone. His particular room was on the third storey. With some displeasure he records in his diary that there was no lift. Instead of the food being brought to one's room he notes that 'at 1 p.m., a bell rang and everyone rushed to a dining-room and took possession of the tables'. Luncheon and dinner were sumptuous meals with a great variety of courses. He looked forward to an equally hearty breakfast. To his dismay he found only eggs, toast and tea.

On board, good will was poured on them by thousands of enthusiastic sightseers. Hirose, however, found their compliments somewhat irritating.

They are endless in their civilities, and using such expressions as 'How splendid!', 'How clean!', and 'How ship-shape!', go through the whole gamut of commendatory phrases. They cannot believe that the entire ship's company is Japanese. Every one of them you meet says 'The Captain is a European?', 'Haven't you Europeans among the officers?' or 'Isn't the Chief-Engineer a European?'. They are almost dumbfounded when we reply 'No. We are all Japanese'. This can only mean that they are unaware how civilised our country is and how our navy has progressed. That we are still not credited with such achievements is something greatly to be deprecated. It is humiliating that they regard civilization as the preserve of Europeans and Americans ...

They appear surprised that the officers and midshipmen understand English (The newspapers expressed amazement at this. They made the comment that, although when asked if we spoke English we replied 'Only just' or 'Only a little', nevertheless in conversation we proved very good). How sad the lot of us Japanese: we are thought to know no English; and we acquire merit through speaking it. Will there not come a day when we shall make these Europeans feel ashamed if they can not speak Japanese.

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126 Hirose, *Kōnan Shiki*, 1942, pp. 82–154 covers the visit to Australia.

(Unfortunately events were soon to demonstrate that their navigation was not yet up to European standards. On their journey from Brisbane to Sydney it was not until they identified the entrance to Jervis Bay that they realised that they had overshot Port Jackson by 70 miles!)

At Sydney, he was greatly impressed by the harbour. From the standpoint of defence he considered that its natural advantages were such that if its existing fortifications (which he enumerated in detail) were improved, it could easily be made impregnable to a hostile fleet. The city itself also impressed him: ‘Most of the buildings are at least three or four storeys high; some are seven or eight.’ Like Mishima, it was the bustling activity that he noticed. In his diary he wrote that a walk down Pitt, King and George streets immediately brought to his mind the description given of the capital of the Chinese province of Sei by Soshin more than 2,000 years before: ‘Sleeve touched sleeve in an endless curtain and perspiration poured like rain.’

The evidence tendered to the second *Voyager* inquiry indicates that of recent years one of Tokyo’s attractions for Australian bluejackets is its Turkish baths. In 1891 such aspects of civilisation had not yet reached there. Hirose’s first introduction to one was at Sydney — close by the Hotel Metropole. He was so impressed that he described the architecture and procedure in minute detail. From this it appears that in those pre-White Australia days the attendants in the steam room were coloured — probably Lascars or West Indians.

But, if Hirose was not averse to many of the amenities and efficiencies of modernisation, there were aspects of Western society that displeased him. At Brisbane the level of class antagonisms apparent in the newspapers and in the novels at the bookstalls caused him concern. Then, at Sydney, the ship was decorated with lights and flowers and the city fathers and their ladies were invited to a dance on the poop deck (the officers had enjoyed honorary membership of the Australian Club during their visit). Hirose did not participate in the dancing. The thought of men and women keeping time to music in each others’ arms was distasteful to him. It was an activity unbecoming warriors of the land of the gods, and officers whose minds even in time of peace should be devoted to war. He was delighted when it rained solidly from 9.30 pm.

While in Sydney a chance meeting with one of its citizens made Hirose more tolerant of foreigners and their ways. On 15 December he wrote in his diary that he had never met one and that he had a reputation for disliking them. Five days later he visited the home of Mr R Brown, a builder, at Strathfield. After getting into conversation with two midshipmen, Brown had called at the ship and offered hospitality for the following Sunday.

Hirose and three midshipmen duly made their way to Strathfield station where Brown and two friends were waiting for them. From the moment they shook hands things appear to have gone well. First Brown (whom Hirose describes as ‘a man of cheerful countenance’) took them to a local vineyard to sample its product. Hirose notes that the service was excellent. After a while Brown picked some flowers and put them in everyone’s lapels. Then he summoned cabs and took them to his house — where they had another drink. Hirose found him ‘by nature frank and open, large minded and fond of drinking — a man who did not raise barriers against us’. Brown pressed gifts on them — for Hirose a framed picture; for the midshipmen some cushions that he had bought in Yokohama. Embarrassed, they demurred. Hirose then presented Brown with the fan that he was carrying and a photograph of himself. Brown was delighted and poured more drinks. He then summoned cabs and showed them the river while one of his colleagues made arrangements for lunch at a nearby hotel. En route Brown took them to the house of a German friend, where more drinks were served. At the hotel, the food was excellent. Brown, however, had by now become somewhat rowdy. When some of the hotel guests tried to start a conversation Brown brushed them aside telling them that they were socially the inferiors of these Japanese gentlemen. In due course they returned to Brown’s house and made their farewells.

Back at the ship Hirose and the midshipmen pondered over the events of the day. There had been embarrassment; but there had been enjoyment also. They were staggered by the extent of Brown’s good will and hospitality. They all agreed that he was ‘quite unlike a European’ — indeed that he was like ‘an eccentric Oriental of old’.

But more was to come. At noon the following day a delivery boy arrived at the ship with a parcel for Hirose. It was a picture from Brown.

Japanese are punctilious about repaying gifts with something of equal value. Hirose enquired how much the picture had cost. When the boy answered ‘21 guineas’, his heart sank. He had only one possession of similar value — the Japanese sword forged by an Hakata craftsman, given to him by his father. He duly despatched it to Brown with an appropriate covering note.

The entry in his diary for that day ends with the following words:

Because my reputation was that of a dyed-in-the-wool conservative hostile to foreigners, the fact that I had received this gift was the talk of the ship. They said that if they told my friends in Japan about it they would think that I had joined the enlightenment and had cast my lot with the extroverts.

More than one Japanese who has travelled in Europe has remarked to me that in contrast with the formality there, in Australia their personal relationships have a warmth that reminds them of friendships at home. Like all compliments, this must of course be taken with a grain of salt; but the fact that they chose this

particular compliment is interesting. One of the reasons why I have dealt in some detail with Hirose's encounter with Brown, and with his reflections upon it, is that I suspect that, during the 80-odd years that have elapsed since then, a number of Japanese have felt a similar feeling of affinity on becoming acquainted for the first time with an Australian in an Australian environment — perhaps on a pearling lugger at the turn of the century, learning animal husbandry at Gatton in the 1930s, working in a British Commonwealth Occupation Force cook-house in 1946, or living in an Australian undergraduate hall of residence in the 1970s.

## Japan as seen by Australians

The writer has come upon four detailed accounts of impressions of Japan written by Australians during the period under review — by JH Brooke (1867), J Hingston (1876) and JS James ('The Vagabond', 1881) in the Melbourne *Argus*; and by James Murdoch in the *Boomerang* (1888). Of the four, Brooke is the most balanced and perceptive.

The Japan of 1867 that he described in his six letters to the *Argus*<sup>127</sup> is very different from that seen by the other writers. He wrote a few months before the Meiji Restoration. The *shōgun* still ruled Japan and the *daimyō* still ruled their fiefs. The samurai still carried their arms. Brooke reported how 'feeble old men will stagger about with a couple of cumbersome gold-bedizened weapons (which literally burden their existence) rather than have their quality momentarily mistaken'. Similarly 'Japanese boys of noble birth, some carrying a baby brother or sister, blunder about in their daily walks embarrassed with two little swords, which sadly interfere with spinning a top or jumping over a street post'.<sup>128</sup> There were, however, many samurai who were by no means feeble and who loathed foreigners. Their swords were a real threat to the foreigners. Within the confines of the Foreign Settlement in Yokohama, the 250 foreign residents were safe under the protection of a British battalion. But outside the settlement they carried personal firearms, moved under the protection of escorts, and exercised constant vigilance. It was less than three years since Major Baldwin and Lieutenant Bird of the British Regiment had been hacked to pieces by two anti-foreign *rōnin* at Kamakura. Their fate was much in the mind of Brooke and his fellows.<sup>129</sup> Tokyo was still called Edo and could be visited by a foreigner only at the invitation of one of the legations. At the French legation where Brooke stayed he was given the password before retiring, in

127 'Impressions of Japan – by an Australian colonist', *Argus*, 22, 24 and 29 August; 10 and 28 September; 28 October 1867.

128 'Impressions of Japan', 10 September 1867.

129 'Impressions of Japan', 24 August 1867.

case they had to stand to arms during the night.<sup>130</sup> When his party visited Asakusa a truculent samurai put his hand to his sword, whereupon the escort interposed itself between him and the party.<sup>131</sup>

Despite this aspect of the environment, Brooke was on the whole favourable. He noted the dirty clothes of the lower classes and the night soil buckets, but also remarked on the frequency with which everyone bathed, the cleanliness of the houses and streets and the absence of offensive smells (apparently it is only since Melbourne was sewered that its citizens have found Tokyo malodorous). He was surprised to see women bathing naked in public but on reflection felt that the 'too conscious prudery of civilised mankind' might not stand up to careful examination. Though he found the food insipid, the samisen tedious, the women plain and the wrestlers, by British standards, clumsy, he was most impressed by the courtesy and good spirits of the people: 'a gayer, light-hearted, people than the Japanese I cannot imagine under the sun; and they have also an amount of natural and easy politeness that I believe nowhere to be excelled'.<sup>132</sup> He was also impressed by the high degree of religious toleration enjoyed: 'The utmost freedom of conscience is permitted here.'<sup>133</sup> He noted important barriers to progress. There was the pride of the high officials and their remoteness. The latter led to the presence of concentric rings of courtiers who had to be bribed before business could be expedited. There was the disproportion of unproductive classes.

[N]othing more impresses a stranger than the vast number of that baneful class, the retainers of the Diamios. They may be counted in the empire by hundreds of thousands ... It is this locust tribe of hungry troublesome soldiery that keeps the peasantry in poverty. There is no respectable middle class in Japan, beyond a comparatively few artizans and shopkeepers. No professional men worthy of the name can be found. No manufacturers — except those who provide in a small way for simple local requirements.<sup>134</sup>

But he also noted Japan's latent assets. Very soon after his arrival he noticed that 'a knowledge of reading, writing, and arithmetic seems universally diffused'.<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, 'there is a curiously extensive knowledge of fine mechanism and scientific appliances existing here and there throughout Japan'.<sup>136</sup> He was surprised to see a Japanese arsenal producing modern ordnance and ammunition without the assistance of a single European.<sup>137</sup> His prognosis was favourable, if somewhat patronising: 'it will not be many years before this naturally quick and intelligent people will come to understand the advantages of constitutional government

130 'Impressions of Japan', 29 August 1867.

131 'Impressions of Japan', 10 September 1867.

132 'Impressions of Japan', 28 September 1867.

133 'Impressions of Japan', 28 October 1867.

134 'Impressions of Japan', 10 September 1867.

135 'Impressions of Japan', 22 August 1867.

136 'Impressions of Japan', 28 October 1867.

137 'Impressions of Japan', 10 September 1867.

and the rights of citizenship together with the blessings of civilization, social refinement and four pronged forks'.<sup>138</sup> He hoped, however, that they would soon come to realise that commercial prosperity is the real foundation of national power and cease to squander incredible sums on a weak fancy for acquiring a knowledge of scientific warfare.<sup>139</sup>

Hingston, a regular contributor to the *Argus*, visited Japan at the end of 1876. Much had happened to Japan since the time of Brooke's letters. The fiefs had been abolished and their samurai disarmed and pensioned. A strong central government had been established. Compulsory education and conscription had been introduced. The railways were being built.

Hingston's picture of the Japanese<sup>140</sup> is uncritical and idealised, but coincides with Brooke's in most respects. To him the Japanese were 'the cleanest of mankind'.<sup>141</sup> He found the rivers and canals unpolluted by sewage: 'not a stench from sewage matter can be found in Japan save at sewage depots'.<sup>142</sup> He too stresses the good spirits and geniality of the Japanese: 'they are the most polite, cheerful and pleasant of people'. The Japanese 'always smiles and looks pleasant. Nothing can make him grumble, and he has not learnt to swear. He is satisfied to be paid his due, and never asks for more.'<sup>143</sup> He makes a great point of their contentment and tranquility.

Generally ... all the many wondrous revolutions made and making in Japan are quietly effected. Folks are all pleasant and complaisant there — born philosophers, who seem to think that all institutions must change, or end, some time or other, and that there is nothing in this world much worth fretting or fighting about.<sup>144</sup>

The picture of Japanese as people who considered that there was nothing worth fighting about is one quite different to that painted by each of the other three Australians whose writings we are considering. It would have surprised anyone after the Japanese victories in the Russo–Japanese War (1904–05). The image, however, was shared by at least one other besides Hingston even after the Sino–Japanese War of 1894–95. In the latter year shortly after Japan's final victory, Kenneth Mackay, a keen militia officer and backbencher in the NSW parliament, published a novel, *The Yellow Wave — A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia*, in which Australia is captured by the Russians and Chinese. In it he depicts Japanese immigrants as loyal to Australia because of their implacable hatred of the Chinese, but militarily useless because of their peaceful disposition.<sup>145</sup>

138 'Impressions of Japan', 28 October 1867.

139 'Impressions of Japan', 10 September 1867.

140 J Hingston ('HH' of the *Argus*), *The Australian Abroad: Branches from the Main Routes Round the World* (London: Sampson Low 1879), vol. 1, pp. 1–88. This is a collection of articles that originally appeared in the *Argus*.

141 *The Australian Abroad*, 1879, p. 7.

142 *The Australian Abroad*, 1879, p. 67.

143 *The Australian Abroad*, 1879, p. 4.

144 *The Australian Abroad*, 1879, p. 10.

145 K Mackay, *The Yellow Wave — A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia* (London: Bentley 1895), p. 289.

The famous ‘Vagabond’ (JS James) of the *Argus* visited Japan late in 1881.<sup>146</sup> Like his predecessors he found the Japanese well washed — ‘in the attention they devote to personal ablutions they are surpassed by no people in the world’ — and merry:

I have seen beautiful nights in lovely localities all over the world ... but nights spent in the country districts in Japan, with the harvest moon’s mellowing lights contrasting with broad shadows of hill and pine forest, are as beautiful as anything I remember ... generally, the people appear to rejoice in the fullness of their own life, and the beauties of nature, and their light hearts take advantage of the occasion to be en fete and merry and glad whilst they may.

This is about the only good thing he has to say about Japan and the Japanese. Hingston’s picture of the Japanese as a people who ‘think ... that there is nothing in the world much worth ... fighting about’ is a very different from his. The passage from the Vagabond that we have just quoted continues:

In the joyous, happy, peaceful life all around one, you find it hard to believe that these apparently innocent people could have beneath the lacquer of good nature the fierce cruel passions which the records of the *Samurai* and *Ronins*, their popular literature, show were commonly possessed by their immediate ancestors, and which cannot yet be extinct within themselves ... In Japan the people are, as they always were, semi-savages lacquered.<sup>147</sup>

In his famous articles about the underprivileged and oppressed in Melbourne, James wrote as if there was a distinction between externals and moral worth. In Japan, however, he made less attempt to differentiate between the two. The piece just quoted was written near the end of his visit. His concept of the Japanese as ‘semi-savages lacquered’, however, seems to have taken firm root with his first sight of Japanese in their homeland — the boatmen who rowed him ashore at Nagasaki. These were dressed rather sensibly for the task. They wore only *fundoshi*, the diminutive Japanese loincloth. This appears to have upset him greatly:

What a distance between these naked savages and the smart young gentlemen who, in lacquered boots and store clothes, every detail of their apparel European, made such a display of themselves and their amiability at late international exhibitions [presumably the exhibitions in Sydney 1879–80 and Melbourne 1880–81, DCSS]. The suspicion crosses one that there is a good deal of lacquer (sic) about this people. Two such extremes as Mr —, my Sydney acquaintance, who made such good speeches on public occasions, and these tattooed boatmen, both belonging to the same city, Nagasaki, imply a good deal of show for the outer world and little decency in home life.<sup>148</sup>

146 His articles, ‘Notes from Japan’, appeared in the *Argus* on 7, 14, 21, 28 January; 4, 11, 18 and 25 February 1882.

147 ‘Notes from Japan’, 18 February 1882.

148 ‘Notes from Japan’, 7 January 1882.

Brooke had noticed that not all shopkeepers would bargain with him. He attributed this to apathy or language difficulties.<sup>149</sup> The Vagabond, however, has a less favourable explanation:

A Chinaman will never refuse an offer if he can make a cent by the transaction. Here I wish to buy a gourd from an itinerant vendor who is lying down gambling. He asks a *yen*, an extortionate price. I offer 10 *sen* [i.e. 1/10 of a *yen*, DCSS], he refuses, and five minutes afterwards sells one to a countryman for five *sen*. I am told this is often the case. The natives won't deal with foreigners unless they can cheat them.<sup>150</sup>

He dislikes the Japanese; but he does not admit to fearing them:

Far different to what I find it in China, the Jap in no case has worked out the European. The Caucasian is *not* played out here, as in so many instances in Shanghai ... [T]he white man's brain is still supreme here, and ... when he has a chance he is still the 'boss'. Indeed, except in their official positions, I find that the Jap hasn't much of the boss in his nature. In uniform he can stalk about and endeavour to look majestic, but in work or trade he seems nowhere. He is too lazy ever to come to the front as a worker, and in trade he proves such a liar that he can get neither credit nor trust — the foundation of commerce — from foreigners.<sup>151</sup>

This 'laziness' (which Mishima might have admitted but which none of the other Australians observed) worried the Vagabond a great deal: 'A Jap will live on very little sooner than work.'<sup>152</sup> He notes that even the horses are slackers: 'The man who leads them might almost carry the light loads; but this loafing along, making a pretence of doing something, suits the Japanese wonderfully.'<sup>153</sup> All calculations are done on the abacus, because 'mental calculation is too much for the Japs'.<sup>154</sup> English engine-drivers were employed on the night trains 'it being considered that natives would very possibly go to sleep at such a time'.<sup>155</sup>

So far as the period under review is concerned, it appears that it was the Brooke rather than the 'Vagabond' attitude that prevailed. Sometime in 1889 Murdoch, probably at the request of the Japanese Government, wrote them a short report on conditions in Australia. In this he said that 'Australian popular opinion is wonderfully favourably inclined towards Japan and the Japanese'.<sup>156</sup> Murdoch himself was a Japanophile; but there are no indications that the enthusiastic articles on Japan that he had just written for William Lane's Brisbane weekly,

149 'Notes from Japan', 22 August 1867.

150 'Notes from Japan', 21 January 1882.

151 'Notes from Japan', 14 January 1882.

152 'Notes from Japan', 28 January 1882.

153 'Notes from Japan', 21 January 1882.

154 'Notes from Japan', 28 January 1882.

155 'Notes from Japan', 18 February 1882.

156 The report, which is undated, is published, in English, in *NGB — 1889* at pp. 551–53.

the *Boomerang*,<sup>157</sup> were unacceptable even to the many radicals among that very nationalistic journal's wide readership. As time goes by, more students will no doubt work on the newspapers and magazines and private diaries and letters of the period and may turn up more evidence on what Australians at this time thought of the Japanese. In the meantime, we must make what use we can of the snippets of information that come our way. All we can say is that there was a steady trickle of Australian tourists who had heard enough that was favourable about the country to decide to visit it. These included among their number not only journalists and teachers, but cabinet ministers and wild colonial boys. The *Vagabond*, in 1881, noted:

The names of many Australians are registered on the hotel books here. The 'Duke of Melbourne' was here recently. That's the title he chose to assume when demanding an audience with the Mikado. But the *bon farceur* did not obtain his wish.<sup>158</sup>

The Olympic swimmer Dawn Fraser was not the first Australian to jump into the moat near the Emperor's palace: Douglas Sladen recalls how on his visit to Tokyo in 1889 his secretary fell into the moat with a 'drunken Australian squatter' whom she was trying to help across the bridge into their hotel.<sup>159</sup>

Some years ago, my old friend, Leslie Oates, a mine of information both on the Japanese language and on comparative religion, drew my attention to a passage in the diary of the American theosophist, HS Olcott, that revealed that in 1887 one of Brisbane's leading citizens was so impressed by things Japanese that, on his return from a vacation there, he built himself a Japanese house.<sup>160</sup> I wrote to the Oxley Library to see whether they could provide confirmation of this. Their answer was so unexpected that I must embark on a digression and outline the remarkable history of this remarkable house.

They referred me to an item in the *Brisbane Courier* of 21 December 1887, of which the following is an extract:

Some months ago his Honour Judge Paul took advantage of a well-earned vacation to pay a visit to 'beautiful Japan'. His sojourn there was from beginning to end a pleasing surprise to him. The people, their habits and customs, and their mode of daily life were an interesting study which he would willingly have prolonged and he was especially struck with the construction of their dwelling-houses, which, as all who have seen them aver, appear to be in every way suited for the comfort of their inhabitants, whether they are situated in temperate or sub-tropical latitudes.

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157 'Where McIlwraith is going', *Boomerang*, 1, 8, 15 and 22 December 1888; 5, 12 and 19 January; 2 February 1889; 'In a Japanese jail', *Boomerang*, 8 May 1889.

158 *Argus*, 25 February 1882.

159 D Sladen, *My Long Life: Anecdotes and Adventures* (London: Hutchinson, 1939), p. 118.

160 HS Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society*, 4th series, 1887-92 (London: Theosophical Society Publishing House, 1910), p. 282.

Judge Paul before leaving Japan determined to prove to himself whether a house constructed on Japanese principles was or was not suitable in a South Queensland climate. Accordingly, he appointed as his agent an English merchant, who agreed with a Japanese contractor to construct, ship, and erect in Brisbane a house in every respect but one [i.e. the height of the ceilings and doorways, DCSS] the double of the building in which Judge Paul resided at Kobe ... The contractor ... guaranteed that it should last 100 years ... In due course the house arrived in Brisbane, and with it came three Japanese carpenters and two plasterers, who were a part of the contract, for the only obligation resting upon the Judge in regard to them was to provide them with food. The site was chosen for the house was at New Farm, at the corner of Langshaw-street and Bowen-terrace.<sup>161</sup>

The library provided the additional information that there was every prospect that the contractor's 100-year guarantee would be made good. When the site was sold for redevelopment in 1962, a couple from Ingham, 1,600 kilometres to the north, bought the house itself (about 30 squares in area) at the demolition sale.<sup>162</sup> They engaged a member of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Queensland and four of his students to supervise the demolition and mark each piece for re-erection. The pieces were then transported by rail to Ingham where, with great care, a local builder rebuilt the house virtually in its original form. During the demolition, some patches of dry rot were detected under some exterior paintwork. Elsewhere, where the timber, following Japanese custom, was unpainted, it was sound.<sup>163</sup> When I visited the house in 1973 the only sign of deterioration was where some planks of new local timber used for repairs during the re-erection in 1963 had begun to decay.

Although the move to Brisbane was entirely fortuitous, it was from the historical standpoint very appropriate. What could be more fitting than that this living representation of the continuity and durability of Australian–Japanese relations should be at Ingham where, in November 1892, the first of some 2,300 Japanese contract labourers who worked in the Queensland sugar industry<sup>164</sup> were landed — 50 men to work at Macknade and Ripple Creek plantations.<sup>165</sup> Three of them died there during the following year — Nishimura Tomokichi of nephritis, Fujiwara Tomejin of dysentery and Oshima Kankichi of sunstroke.<sup>166</sup> Their graves have long been lost beneath the tropical vegetation; a much happier reminder of their contribution and those of the many who followed them is Judge Paul's house.

161 See also *Boomerang*, 24 December 1887.

162 *Courier Mail*, 21 July 1962; *Sunday Mail*, 20 October 1963.

163 WH Carr, 'The Japanese House, New Farm, Brisbane', *Architecture in Australia*, December 1964, pp. 98–100.

164 'Return of Japanese agricultural labourers engaged for service in Queensland ... as at December 1898', compiled by Bowden Bros & Co., Queensland State Archives PRE/102.

165 Irie, *Hōjin Kaigai Hattenshi*, 1942, vol. 1, p. 394. *Brisbane Courier*, 1 December 1892.

166 I am indebted to the Queensland Registrar-General, Mr HW Tesch, for his kindness in making this information available.

But let us return to the subject in hand. Murdoch's articles in the *Boomerang* were written during 1888. The country and the people had not changed greatly in the six years since the Vagabond's visit. In one respect, however, the latter might have felt that progress had been made. One of Murdoch's articles could have been subtitled 'Lament on a G String'. On a summer tour of rural Kyūshū, he was surprised when, on approaching a village large enough to sport a police station, his rickshawmen put down the shafts:

Here we make a discovery. It is that the Mikado's Government have determined to fine its subjects into decency. The poor rickshaw men, who by this time are steaming like so many cauldrons, have to stop and don each a pair of scanty breeches. Failing their putting on the unmentionables they are liable to a fine of 50 sen.

This is too much for Murdoch the republican, free-thinking, classical scholar:

This regulation appears to be the outcome of a yielding to Western ideas, in a case where the ideas are only prejudices ... The men that made Thermopylae a name in world history didn't run about in Lacedaemon with abbreviated unbuttonable unmentionables. Let Japan adopt the salutary parts of our civilization, but in the name of goodness let her not pander to our prejudices or pay court to Mrs Grundy.<sup>167</sup>

The picture Murdoch painted of the Japanese was decidedly favourable:

A Japanese who has not been spoiled by a residence in an open port is just about as pleasant and nice and jolly a fellow as you could wish for as a chum or a companion ... I'd rather tramp and trudge and eat my food with chopsticks and scribble with him for a mate and a bed-fellow than with the great majority of my 'even Christians'. And as for fidelity and standing by you in a scrape, you can't find his equal out of the Scotch Highlands or Switzerland. He is polite, thoughtful for you in every way, always laughing and good for a joke and thoroughly imbued with that sturdy independent honest pride that has its basis in self-respect ... if 'gentleman' means a man whose leading characteristics are the outcome of 'gentleness' and manliness the Japanese are just right in it up to the armpits and a good deal further. In the point of pluck they are about as dare-devil a lot as are to be found in any corner of the globe whatsoever; in regard for the feelings of others they are simply unique ...

The sum and substance of the whole matter is that by instinct and training the Nippon-jin is a real good radical. He is not at all self-contained or selfish in his joys and his enjoyment of life. He insists on sending his good things round.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *Boomerang*, 19 January 1898.

<sup>168</sup> *Boomerang*, 15 December 1888.

It may be that Murdoch's decision in 1888 to extend to Japan his voyage to China was the result of a suggestion by another writer for the *Boomerang*, his friend and fellow radical, Francis Adams, who had visited Japan the previous year. To Adams, as to Murdoch, 'gentleness' was an essential Japanese quality. There was another observation common to both men. Murdoch saw individual Japanese whose native virtues were spoiled by contact with Westerners in the treaty ports; Adams saw the whole nation and an ideal way of life doomed to contamination by British influence:

TO JAPAN

Simple You were, and good. No kindlier heart  
 Beat than the heart within your gentle breast.  
 Labour You had, and happiness, and rest.  
 And were the maid of nations. Now You start  
 To feverish life, feeling the poisonous smart  
 Upon your lips of harlot lips close-pressed,  
 The lips of Her who stands among the rest  
 With greasy righteous soul and rotten heart.  
 O sunrise land, O land of gentleness,  
 What madness drives you to lust's hateful bed?  
 O thrice-accursed England, wretchedness  
 For ever be on you, of whom 'tis said,  
 Prostitute plague-struck, that you catch and kiss  
 Innocent lives to make them foully dead!<sup>169</sup>

Such enthusiasm for Orientals is at first sight surprising in men among the inner circle of writers for a journal that, under Lane's leadership, was at the forefront of the White Australia movement. 'What', asked Lane, 'could we dream of getting from the hordes of Easterners but the East without its virtue, the East in all its loathsome nakedness and shame?' As his biographer justly observes: 'In his discussion of the coloured question, Lane lost all sense of equality, internationalism, decency, and respect for science.'<sup>170</sup> That the Japanese at this time were exempt from the opprobrium that the *Boomerang* attached to colour suggests that among Lane and his supporters this sprang directly from the presence of coloured labour in their midst. That labour was Chinese and Kanaka. As we have seen, there had never been more than a handful of Japanese on the Australian continent. The popularity of the Japanese may have been linked not only with their remoteness from the Australian scene but also with the fact that they too were hostile to the Chinese. This is not far below the surface in the article by Murdoch that we have already quoted:

169 FWL Adams, *Songs of the Army of the Night* (Sydney, 1888), p. 83.

170 L Ross, *William Lane and the Australian Labor Movement* (Sydney: Lloyd Ross, undated), p. 69.

You may live a year with a Chinaman, you may eat the proverbial peck of salt with him and yet know no more about the construction of his mental clockworks than when you first lifted chopsticks in his company; in short you can never get him out of his winding. With the Japanese it is entirely otherwise ...

They [the Japanese] will calmly tell you that one Japanese is good for five Chinamen. Now a Chinaman physically speaking is about twice as heavy as the ordinary Nippon-jin. But, as old Napier has it, the moral is to the physical as three to one in warfare, and that is where the Japanese does the boom over the Flowery-lander. I really and honestly believe that the peppery daredevil Jap would actually make his vaunting boast good if it came to actual blows.

This aspect comes out much more clearly in another article eulogising the Japanese published by the *Boomerang* at this time. In it Thomas Finney, a large city storekeeper who contributed to many of Lane's causes, wrote as follows:

He [the Japanese] doesn't impress you as yellow but as having more of a brown tinge to his skin. The Chinese, just across the Yellow Sea, are a sulky, churlish, cruel-looking lot of people, whose every way and mode of life repel 'barbarians', as they call us; but here, in Japan, the people seem what I can only explain as a 'loveable race'. They are as kind as it's possible for people to be. They go out of their way to oblige strangers and appear to oblige one another in just the same way. And they have as well, such a jolly cheerful, laughing look, that it does your heart good to sit and watch them ... I never in all my life saw people who seemed to take such pleasure in living as the Japs.

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[T]here can be not doubt that he [the Japanese] is destined to attain the highest civilization known and that already he has won the right to be considered not as Asiatic but as Western. His sympathies and proclivities are all with us against not only his old feudal civilization but as against the Mongols, and his value as a bulwark against the latter can hardly be overestimated.<sup>171</sup>

We have already observed how to Kenneth Mackay the Japanese were pro-Australian because they were anti-Chinese.

Besides Chinese labour the *Boomerang's* other *bête noire* was monarchy. The purpose of Australian defence was to ensure that 'none of the crowned robbers of the Old World will care to poke his fingers into this hornet's nest of the Far South Seas'.<sup>172</sup> In this context Japan posed no threat. Indeed, the *Boomerang* hoped, if need arose, to see 'Australia, Japan and America stand shoulder to shoulder against European aggression in the Pacific'.<sup>173</sup> In his report to the Japanese Government, Murdoch urged:

171 'The Japs and the future', *Boomerang*, 3 November 1888.

172 *Boomerang*, 20 April 1889.

173 *Boomerang*, 30 March 1889.

It would be highly impolitic to allow anything to happen likely to cause any check to the current of Australian good-will that has set in so strongly towards Japan. The introduction of ‘cheap’ Japanese labour would certainly have a cooling effect upon the enthusiastic admiration Australians at the present moment entertain for Dai Nippon.<sup>174</sup>

When in November 1889 a rumour circulated that Japanese contract labourers had been landed at Mourilyan Harbour for work on the canefields, the *Boomerang* was in the vanguard of the attack:

We shall be told that the Japs are neither Chinese nor Kanakas nor Cingalese, but a patient, kindly and harmonious race. That may well be, but they are not being brought here for what to us are virtues, but for what by every white worker must be and is regarded as the vilest vice. They can underwork us. They have not the white ambitions nor the white discontents ...

[I]t is nothing to us if the Japs are nice people or not; their very nicety makes them more dangerous; the more industrious they are at 30s. a month the more we have to fear from them and the more determinedly we should resist their introduction.<sup>175</sup>

The 1889 landing was a *canard* put into circulation by a provincial newspaper. Soon afterwards Marks (who advocated limited Japanese immigration at Australian rates of pay) warned Kawagoe in terms similar to the *Boomerang* that any arrival of Japanese labourers in large numbers would undoubtedly lead to the imposition of some such indignity as the poll tax that was applied to Chinese immigrants.

Kawagoe’s response was truculent, but not unperceptive:

If any country disparages our rights, then we Japanese are resolved to put an end to such insults. There is no reason why we should abandon our interests and place ourselves at their discretion in a cowardly fashion. If we at the outset are to retire in the face of such pressure, how shall we, when putting our best efforts into trade and agriculture overseas, compete successfully and implacably. If what Marks says should unfortunately come to pass, then we resolute Japanese would have to get such illegalities corrected. If, however, we got involved in disputes before our enterprises were established and before we acquired property rights, then there would be no alternative to our overthrowing such laws. Accordingly we should, at the outset while our enterprises are being set up, work under cover and use only a few men.<sup>176</sup>

The advice of Murdoch, the *Boomerang*, Marks and Kawagoe was disregarded. When the 50 Japanese contract labourers were landed at Ingham in November 1892, they caused little comment. But when 520 were landed the following June

174 *NGB* — 1889, p. 553.

175 *Boomerang*, 30 November 1889.

176 Kawagoe, ‘Gōshū-Dan’, [1892?], p. 92.

the response was very much as Murdoch predicted. The result was the resolution at a conference of premiers in March 1896 to extend the Chinese exclusion legislation to coloured races generally. The resolution was effectively accomplished by the federal *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1902. This was regarded as an insult by many Japanese less chauvinist than Mishima and Kawagoe. Furthermore, as the latter predicted, it prevented not only Japanese immigration but also the establishment of Japanese businesses in Australia.

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