‘THE CHILD OF THE WORLD’S OLD AGE’: PHOTOGRAPHING JAPAN IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

In 1926, while visiting Japan as a delegate to the third Pan-Pacific Science Congress in Tokyo, the Australian geologist Professor Leo Cotton purchased a series of lantern slides as mementos of his trip. Based at the University of Sydney, Cotton was the father of the celebrated modernist photographer Olive Cotton, who was just 15 years old when he made the trip. Along with photographs reflecting his research interests, including the crater rim of volcanic Mt Aso, Cotton collected photographs of Japanese children. One lantern slide produced by Futaba and Co. of Kobe features a joyful young child wearing a beautifully crafted silk vest and ceremonial kimono (see Figure 1.1). The distinctive blurred edged geometric pattern of the kasuri textile has been brightly hand coloured to accentuate the child’s vitality and enhance the commercial appeal of the photograph. The child exuberantly waves the rising sun flag, which was adopted as the war flag of the Imperial Japanese Army in 1870 at the beginning of the Meiji era (1868–1912). Combining youth, innocence, artistic traditions and Japan’s imperial might in one very appealing image, the photograph distilled many of Australia’s impressions of Japan itself.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which Australian perceptions of Japan were visualised in photographs of children during a critical time in the two countries’ histories. For Australia, the period from the lead-up to Federation in 1901 to the interwar years was one in which national identity and Australia’s place in the Asia-Pacific were hotly debated. This period coincided with a time of radical change in Japan, during which
Figure 1.1. Futaba and Co., *Untitled [Japanese Child]*, c. 1926.
its social structures, economy, military, industries and international relations were reshaped. Described popularly as ‘the child of the world’s old age’, Japan was frequently personified in the Australian press and travel writing as essentially childlike, innocent or unruly. The symbolic dimensions of the child and the ‘real’ children who were photographed are inextricably linked in these photographs. Embodying views of Meiji Japan as a fledgling modern nation and an emergent partner in the Asia-Pacific region, photographs of children satisfied demand for images of Japanese culture as ancient yet forged through innocent artistic sensibilities.

Commercially produced photographs of children, like that purchased by Cotton, and postcards and tourist photographs affirmed these conceptions of Japan-as-child and allowed this imagery to find a place in Australian homes. Personal and public modes of cross-cultural encounter are intertwined in this process. The scale and light weight of photographs made them highly portable objects of material culture, and facilitated their movement across the seas with travellers or through the mail. Postcards, family photographs and photographs produced commercially were collected, assembled in albums and stored in the home where they also operated as a means of interpreting international relations and defining political and diplomatic networks. In these photographs, the domestic, diplomatic, industrial and imperial are enmeshed in fascinating ways.

Two Child Nations

It is not surprising that a commercially produced photograph of a Japanese child caught Cotton’s eye during his travels. Beginning decades before Cotton’s visit and extending many years beyond his return, the child was invoked symbolically and metaphorically in descriptions of Japan, Japanese culture and Japanese people in the Australian press. This language is evident in popular descriptions of the Japanese courts in Australian international exhibitions, which staged many Australians’ first encounters with Japan. Art critic James Smith’s description of the artisans at the Japanese court at the 1880 Melbourne exhibition reflects how the childlike innocence of the artist sat alongside conceptions of ancient Japan ‘awakening’ to the ‘West’:
In a word, the mind of the executant appears to be as young, as open to impressions from external phenomena, as receptive of lessons from every object he sees, and as capable of spontaneous, almost childlike, admirations, as if it belonged to the member of a race living in the infancy of civilisation; while the hand which fulfils the behests of that mind is the hand of an accomplished artificer, of a master craftsman, with all the dexterity and finesse capable of being acquired and exercised by one belonging to our ‘wondrous mother age’. He is old in the technique of his art, but youthful in thought and feeling.¹

Smith’s comments encapsulate how childlike innocence became code for authenticity, in which ‘authentic’ Japan was grounded in artistic naïveté and ancient traditions.

Popular notions of Japan-as-child must, therefore, be distinguished from what eighteenth-century European commentators and missionaries commonly referred to as ‘child races’. Underpinning this troubling concept is the belief that races are marked by a progression from infancy to maturity, as with individuals. ‘Primitive’ races were identified with the intelligence and innocence of children, deemed to lack rational thought and seen to become threatening if they reached adulthood too quickly. Recognition of Japan’s ancient civilisation and artistic traditions meant that it was not viewed as a child race in these terms. Yet, there is a comparable desire to position Japan as the subordinate to Britain and Europe, which were implicitly cast as more developed and advanced.

The description of Japan as ‘the child of the world’s old age’ provided a very popular means of reconciling this sense of ancient Japan with its Meiji-era modernity. This pervasive expression was popularised by Henry Norman’s book, The Real Japan (1891), and was repeatedly used in the Australian press to describe Japan as ‘young in years, but old in wisdom’ during the first decades of the twentieth century.² The expression

positioned Japan as a child of modernity, yet ‘brought up by parents who lived through centuries of development and civilisation’. Such newspaper and travel texts served as pre-reading for travellers to Japan, anticipating their search for ‘authentic’ Japan, shaping itineraries and informing their selection of photographic subjects. Photographs like Cotton’s souvenir lantern slide reproduced that sense of authenticity for travellers, validating their experiences and reiterating impressions of Japan-as-child among family and friends when they returned.

Like Japan—but more so—Australia was perceived to be a fledgling nation. The Japanese political geographer Shiga Shigetaka personified Australia as a child in his book, *Current Affair in the South Seas*, written after his visit to Australia in 1886. In a section addressing Australia’s potential for independence from Britain, Shiga likened the Australian colonies to a newly hatched egg evolving into an adult:

> The child is obviously now becoming an adolescent; as it begins to have a mind of its own, it is searching for its own national identity, distancings itself from its mother country Britain.

Australia often represented itself in comparable terms. People born in Australian colonies—framed as a population yet to mature or find its own voice—became known as ‘Young Australia’ in the 1880s. After the New South Wales Government sent Australian troops to fight under British command in Sudan in 1885, Young Australia took the form of ‘The Little Boy from Manly’. This character was named after a real boy who wrote to the government expressing his desire to join the troops. In political publications like the *Bulletin* and the *Melbourne Punch*, ‘The Little Boy from Manly’ was represented as a Fauntleroy-like boy clad in pantaloons, frilled shirt and flat peaked cap looking up to John Bull—the personification of British paternalism and authority. Although Japan and Australia were both identified with children, this sense of a young British colony and emergent Australian identity differs significantly from representations of Japan-as-child, which were repeatedly linked to assumptions about Japan as a land of ancient artistic traditions.

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3  ‘Japan’, 2.
A Paradise for Babies

P.L. Pham described how British and American commentators on Japan readily slipped between descriptions of Japanese children and ascribing childlike characteristics to the country itself. This slippage is particularly evident in references to Japan as a ‘paradise’ for children and babies, a notion attributed to the British consul general in Japan, Rutherford Alcock, and his book, *The Capital of the Tycoon*. Japan’s reputation as a ‘paradise of babies’ was popularised in Australian, British and US travel writing through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and pervaded the Australian press from the 1890s to the 1920s. These publications variously referred to the freedom enjoyed by Japanese children, their many opportunities for play and the love and patience that they were shown by their attentive mothers. An appreciation for artistic creativity and the natural world, as well as the love of play, were said to stay with Japanese children into adulthood as an essentially Japanese characteristic.

Although they proliferated in Australia during the early twentieth century, conceptions of childlike Japan have a much longer international history. Pierre Loti belittled the Japanese as a ‘frivolous and childish people’ throughout *Madame Chrysanthème*. Mortimer Menpes, an Australian-born British painter who visited Japan in 1887 and 1896, also wrote of the ‘almost childish simplicity of the Japanese woman’ in *Japan: A Record in Colour*. In a section on children, Menpes argued that the ‘national artistic and poetic nature of the Japanese people’

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THE CHILD OF THE WORLD’S OLD AGE is embodied in children. Looking forward to the ways in which photographs of Japanese children came to symbolise these qualities, some of Menpes’s painted illustrations of children were given allegorical titles such as Advance Japan (see Figure 1.2) and Young Japan. Geo H. Rittner described ‘artistic’ Japan as a nation of people who never lose their love of play and childlike fascination for nature. His Impressions of Japan asked readers to:

Imagine an aged gentleman with grey hair flying a kite for pure amusement, playing marbles, or spinning tops. We should term it second childhood, but in Japan that is unknown; they are born children, and die children.11

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This sense of Japan as a land of adults who never lose their childhood innocence recurs in the Australian press during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Douglas Sladen’s account of ‘child life in Japan’ proclaimed:

It has been the lifelong prayer and advice of every Japanese parent for endless generations that their children, when they have reached the estate of men and women, should retain their child’s hearts … Childhood certainly is the Golden Age in Japan, more than in any other country in the world.12

Other articles linked descriptions of the model behaviour of Japanese children to aspects of traditional culture such as festivals for children, lovingly made and gaily coloured children’s kimonos, and even Japanese architecture.13 Children accordingly became potent symbols of Japanese cultural traditions and the supposedly childlike qualities of the Japanese people more broadly. Photographs proved an ideal medium for reinforcing this image of Japan-as-child. As the photograph arrests time and fixes the child in an image forever, it dramatises the very idea of Japan as an eternal child.

Futaba and Co.’s commercially produced photograph of a child waving a flag in a glorious ceremonial kimono capitalises on this widespread international interest in children as symbols of Japan. Cotton’s own appreciation of this imagery is also reflected in another item in his small collection of Japanese glass lantern slides. Taken by Cotton at Lake Chūzenji near the celebrated shrine site Nikko, it features a group of plump children in kimonos, including two small children who each carry a baby on their backs (see Figure 1.3). Cotton has framed the children quite tightly so they dominate the photograph, and the elderly woman accompanying them is cropped almost entirely out of the image. By crouching down to their level and photographing the two children on the left in profile, Cotton captured the full length of their little bodies and the relative scale of the babies they carried. In this practice, known in Japanese as onbu, babies were secured to the backs of their carers with a pair of crossed sashes. The practice offered babies a form of close contact with a loved one, deemed important for the socialisation of children, but to tourists and travel writers it had long attracted attention as a sign of Japanese exoticism.

Western travellers viewed onbu with a mixture of admiration and scorn. To Menpes, the practice was evidence of the impressive deportment of Japanese children.\textsuperscript{14} For others, it was a marker of these children’s extraordinary sense of responsibility. In an article referring to Japan as a ‘paradise for little children’, a writer for the Brisbane Courier described how Japanese children between the ages of six and 10 learn to take responsibility in the household:

As soon as a baby is born it is handed over to a sister, who takes care of it, and it is a common sight in Japan to see little girls of 6 or 7 with sleeping babies strapped to their backs like a knapsack … Hence when quite babies themselves they are taught to look after others.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Menpes, Japan: A Record in Colour, 140.
\textsuperscript{15} ‘Japan. A Paradise for the Little Children’, 20. This article was published in several US newspapers in 1910, reflecting the international circulation of these ideas. See ‘The Flowery Land’, Cook County Herald, 18 March 1910, 14; ‘Nippon Babies’ Paradise’, Detroit Free Press, 17 April 1910, 40; ‘A Paradise of Babies’, Plymouth Tribune 9, no. 31 (1910): 3.
Others were far more critical, arguing that this responsibility was harsh on the young carrier, a sign of lazy ‘selfish, cruel’ mothers and the cause of physical damage to young bodies. It is interesting that Yanagawa Masakiyo, a shogunal envoy on the first Japanese mission to the US, found Western preferences for baby carriages just as shocking. He commented in a diary entry on 23 May 1860 that:

> In Washington and Philadelphia and all other American cities the mothers do not carry their babies on their backs or in their arms but put them in small baby carriages which are pushed by maidservants.

Repeated references to onbu made it a potent signifier of Japanese traditions and conceptions of Japan-as-child. Photographs of women and children carrying babies on their backs, produced for the substantial international tourist market in Japan by studio photographers Felice Beato and T. Enami, helped to reinforce this interest. An enterprising Melbourne photographer, George Rose, circumvented the need for Australian collectors of Japanese photographs to take the long journey to Japan. During his visit to Japan in 1904, Rose produced many photographs of the Japanese people and countryside. He also made an arrangement with Enami to publish his photographs in Australia and distribute them through the Rose studio. Alongside Rose’s many stereographs of pretty geishas and gardens filled with cherry blossoms are several photographs of children. *Cherry Blossoms, Ueno Park, Tokyo, Japan* (see Figure 1.4) features Japanese women carrying babies on their backs, while *The Perambulators of Japan* depicts Japanese babies being carried on the backs of their older sisters.

Stereography added to the experience of these images. Commercialised in the 1850s and 1860s, stereographs were immensely popular in the United Kingdom, the US, Europe and Australia from this period through to the early twentieth century. Stereography was thought to be particularly suited to the depiction of foreign sites because of the

19 US Marine Joe O’Donnell’s moving photograph of a young Japanese boy standing erect with a lifeless, slumped baby strapped to his back at a crematory in Nagasaki in 1945 decades later became a powerful image of lost innocence in the wake of the atomic bombing.
illusion of three dimensions it created. In the closed viewing field of the stereoscope, which was held right up to the face, stereographs offered a highly accessible form of simulated travel within the home, especially appealing to those without the means of travelling themselves. The Rose Stereograph Company’s employment of six staff is indicative of the high demand that these photographs generated in Australia. Photographs of foreign countries occupy a significant proportion of Rose’s catalogue, with Japan being the subject of over 200 stereographs.

In contrast to the private viewing space of the stereoscope and the intimate familial enjoyment of photo albums, lantern slides, like those purchased and produced by Cotton, afforded the display of the photograph on a larger scale for collective spectatorship. Slides were viewed with the use of a projector for public entertainment, educational lectures or in the home among family and friends. Public lantern slide lectures on Japan were also offered in Australia at this time, including one given by Professor Arthur Sadler who taught Oriental Studies at the University

of Sydney. Such lectures offered a kind of armchair travel that was entertaining, public and communal. Popular conceptions of Japan-as-child helped to incorporate the fragmentary impressions offered by the photographs into a unified experience for both the traveller and viewer.

Child Labour and Education

One of the consequences of the repeated recycling of these ideas was that modernity and Japan’s Meiji-era industrial growth were framed as both the source of Japan’s youth and the cause of its potential corruption. Geo Rittner accordingly lamented that ‘formerly every man, woman, and child in that country was a born artist, but through the change it has undergone, much of the artistic feeling has been destroyed’. This sense of the damaging power of modernisation and industrialisation is particularly evident in discussions of Japanese child labour. Japanese industrial expansion from the 1880s saw a growth in child labour outside of the home. Work in factories manufacturing cigarettes, textiles, shoes and matches proved a more cost-effective alternative for families to child labour within the home because it provided families with much needed cash. As child workers were paid around one-quarter of the rate of adults, it also provided Japanese manufacturers with a significant advantage over foreign competitors in international markets. In the early twentieth century, Australian newspapers commented critically on these child labour practices as a source of corruption for the ‘child’s paradise’. More sensational commentaries referred to ‘child slaves of Japan’, ‘Japan, the child devourer’ and ‘factory prisoners’. Criticism of child labour was concentrated particularly heavily in workers’ publications. One article quoted Walter Kingsley from *World’s Work*, who described the Japanese capitalist as ‘the most remorseless devourer of little ones the world has ever known’. Contrasting Meiji Japan with an imagined pre-modern ideal, the article noted that children:

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do not laugh as blithely as in the old days. Happiness was their heritage then, but now the nation demands that the little ones go to work at a time of life regarded in England as infancy. In the manufacturing cities like Osaka there are no longer seen thousands of boys and girls playing in dainty, many-colored costumes like gorgeous butterflies on the grass of temples. You will find them in coarse dull clothing, working like pathetic dolls in the factories. These babes toiling for a few pennies a day form a vast and sorrowful army.

International concerns over child labour during this period extended well beyond Japanese child factory workers and became an important feature of the early history of social documentary photography in the US. American photographer Lewis Hine hoped that his photographs of children working in mines, factories, textile mills and canneries would bring about an end to the exploitation of child labour in his home country, but it took many years before changes to child labour practices had an impact.

The immense popularity of photographs and texts that locate Japanese children in an idyllic, pre-industrial context is indicative of international resistance to the roles children played in Japan's industrialisation. This criticism of Japan's supposed transformation from a child's paradise to Dickensian nightmare can be seen in part as a reaction to Japan's sizable exports of cheap textiles, produced for costs with which Australia and Britain could not compete. It was also informed by Australian shifts in ideologies of childhood from Victorian notions of its essential innocence to ideals of childhood health supported by the rise of the infant welfare movement and the professionalisation of childcare. Australian women in the early twentieth century were increasingly ‘instructed in the science of motherhood’ as a mode of progressive thought justified in terms of humanitarianism and the growth of the modern nation. The criticism of Japanese child labour helped Australians to define their own modernity in terms of the vigour, strength and promise of youth.

In Meiji Japan, approaches to childhood were also being redefined in relation to the needs and ambitions of the modern nation. Industrialisation, the movement towards universal education and greater investment in childhood development led to new ideologies of the

26 ‘Japan the Child Devourer’, 18.
child in the twentieth century. Compulsory elementary education was introduced in 1872 ‘with the goal of preparing Japan’s future generations for “civilization and enlightenment” (bunmei kaika)’. The dilemma for the Meiji government was that while it valued education, it also sought to protect its industries and resist ‘taking actions that would raise the cost of production, such as restricting the availability of low-wage child workers’.28

Lizbeth Halliday Piel has pointed out that the higher ratio of girls to boys in factories correlated with the lower ratio of girls to boys in schools.29 Yet, the education of girls was deemed especially important. The Japanese ideal of ryōsai kenbo or ‘good wives and wise mothers’ gained momentum in the late nineteenth century and played an important role in the redesign of Meiji-era education for girls. The ideal combined Japanese traditions of feminine restraint with British conceptions of the Victorian woman. This Victorian ideal of motherly virtue was also evident in other nations undergoing processes of modernisation. As ‘good wives and wise mothers’, Japanese women helped to advance the nation by building a workforce capable of competing with the West, acting as helpmates to their husbands and teachers to their sons. Piel argued that:

With the exception of a handful of protesters such as Ueki Emori and Yokoyama Gennosuke, concern over child labor [in Japan] was not driven by sentimentality or sympathy for children. It was driven by the Meiji Government’s agenda for mass indoctrination through schools, as well as by the army’s need for fit soldiers.30

Infant Prodigy and Enfant Terrible

Meiji Japan’s military and diplomatic advances were another important context in which notions of Japan-as-child were contested and re-evaluated. Japanese writers took exception to Western representations of childlike Japan. In ‘Misunderstood Japan’, published in The North American Review in 1900, Ozaki argued that such ‘misconceptions were corrected’ by Japan’s victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95). He lamented that, in early 1894, ‘Japan was regarded as a spoiled child,

29  Ibid., 100. In 1877, an estimated 55.97 per cent of boys were enrolled in school compared to 22.48 per cent of girls. Some 20 years later (in 1895), the number of girls enrolled in school had doubled to 43.87 per cent, but still lagged behind the number of boys at 61.24 per cent.
30  Ibid., 107.
wantonly bent on amusing herself with her newly devised toy army and navy’. Yet, by mid-1895, in foreign eyes Japan had become ‘a formidable military power … a deadly menace to the peace of the Far East’. Some of Ozaki’s sentiment is echoed in Kakuzo Okakura’s book, *The Awakening of Japan*, published in English in 1905. Like Ozaki, this Japanese scholar remarked that ‘until recently the West has never taken Japan seriously … We are both the cherished child of modern progress and a dread resurrection of heathendom—the Yellow Peril itself! At least one Australian commentator agreed that the dramatic growth of Japan’s military power meant that it had left its childhood behind:

> Japan has been described by somebody as the ‘child of the world’s old age’, and if that were ever true of Japan in the past it only requires a brief practical experience of the present condition of the ‘Land of the Rising Sun’ to convince the most sceptical that it is now developing rapidly into a vigorous manhood.

These comments highlight the gendered quality of these discourses of Japan-as-child. Whereas Meiji-era Japan’s growing military and industrial strength were typically identified with boys, conceptions of Japan as artistic, traditional and eternally childlike were commonly feminised. Despite such commentaries about Meiji Japan’s impending maturity, the view of Japan as ‘the cherished child of modern progress’ was ultimately not displaced by Japan’s growing military strength. Instead, the Japan-as-child motif became a means of symbolically containing its ‘vigorous manhood’ as diplomatic relations were tested in the early twentieth century.

A series of commemorative postcards titled *Young Japan and Friends* is indicative of how images of children were used to symbolically manage diplomatic and military relationships between Japan, Britain and Australia. Produced by the London-based company Raphael Tuck and Sons, these postcards centre on hand-coloured photographs by the British photographer, actor and art director Cavendish Morton. The series features an English and Japanese boy in various poses in front of British and Japanese flags. These postcards, and other products by Raphael Tuck and Sons, were advertised extensively in the Australian press and found an eager market in Australia. *Young Japan and Friends* was likely

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34 Ibid.
35 This particular series of was advertised in ‘Raphael Tuck and Sons’, *Daily News*, 16 October 1905, 8.
produced to commemorate the first Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which was negotiated in response to the threat of Russian expansion in Asia. The Alliance was signed in London on 30 January 1902 by Lord Lansdowne (the British foreign secretary) and Hayashi Tadasu (the Japanese minister in London), and was renewed and expanded in 1905 and 1911. At first glance, Morton’s photographs appear to capture the spirit of friendship between the two nations. In one image, the boys adopt a common diplomatic pose, facing partly towards the camera and partly to each other as they shake hands to seal their partnership (see Figure 1.5). Captioned L’Entente Cordiale, this postcard also alludes to a series of agreements signed on 8 April 1904 between the United Kingdom and France that saw a significant improvement in Anglo–French relations.

Although Britain and Japan are both represented by children in this series to symbolise the young Alliance, the boys are posed in a manner that suggests an unequal relationship. The English boy, dressed in a sailor suit, is notably taller than his Japanese counterpart. It also is pertinent that the Japanese child is shown wearing a kimono, rather than European dress. The Japanese emperor and empress actively promoted European clothing at this time, reflecting their desire to embrace modern European technologies, infrastructure and partnerships. The couple were often photographed for official portraits wearing European dress, including Uchida Kuichi’s official portrait of the Meiji emperor of 1873. In contrast, the Japanese child’s traditional dress in this postcard recalls contemporary conceptions of Meiji Japan as the modern offspring of essentially ancient parents. It is telling that Australian newspapers repeatedly referred to Japan as the ‘child of the world’s old age’ in accounts of its naval victories, alongside Japan’s ‘courage’, ‘fighting spirit’, ‘readiness for war’ and the ‘pluck of the Japanese soldier’.36 However, at times that child took on menacing qualities. One account in the Daily Mail, quoted in several Australian outlets in 1904, used the phrase ‘the child of the world’s old age’ to describe the Japanese soldier ‘and the spirit which animates him’. The author referred to Japan as an ‘infant prodigy’ as ‘poor old China … learnt to her exceeding cost’, and an ‘enfant terrible’

Figure 1.5. Cavendish Morton, *L'Entente Cordiale* from the series ‘Young Japan and Friends’, c. 1905.

Figure 1.6. Cavendish Morton, *Pals* from the series ‘Young Japan and Friends’, c. 1905.
as experienced by Russia.\textsuperscript{37} Accordingly, the notion of the troublesome child helped to represent conceptions of Japan as ‘a misfit in the assumed patterns of East-West power relations’.\textsuperscript{38}

That misfit is brought under the control of a protective big British brother in Morton’s postcards. The postcard titled \textit{Pals} shows the English boy with a protective arm around the smaller Japanese boy’s shoulder while his other hand is placed authoritatively on his hip (see Figure 1.6). They both smile for the camera as though perfectly happy with this arrangement. The construction of an unequal power relationship becomes more pronounced in \textit{Two Handy Men} (see Figure 1.7). Here, the English boy looks to the camera with a very stern expression while standing over the seated Japanese boy who holds a toy cannon on the table in front of him. The Japanese boy hunches forward, seemingly overwhelmed by the towering English sailor.


As evinced by the 1904 headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* declaring the Japanese Navy “The Child of Great Britain”, Japan was represented as a diligent student but, nonetheless, junior to Britain. Readers of this article were told that the Japanese naval fleet was not only modelled on its British counterpart but also benefited from the strategic advice of British officers. *Two Handy Men* gives form to this relationship by positioning the English child as the teacher and supervisor of the Japanese boy. Nonetheless, Morton’s postcards do not represent this relationship as entirely dominated by Britain. *That’s How it’s Done* shows the English boy seated with his hands passively in his lap as he looks at the toy cannon being held firmly in the hands of the standing Japanese boy (see Figure 1.8). The Japanese child is here in the position of authority as he teaches the British boy the art of warfare.

Postcards were an especially effective means of promoting ideas about these diplomatic relationships. Raphael Tuck and Sons’ distribution of these postcards in Australia coincided with a period of postcard mania. The craze for collecting postcards gained momentum after 1905 when the Australian Postal Service permitted postcards to be divided on the back, allowing the address and message to be put on one side and the pictorial image to take up the whole of the other side. The Raphael Tuck and Sons range was highly collectable and incredibly varied, and included many postcards of war scenes, British and foreign military men, and idyllic Japanese village scenes and landscapes. Such postcards, like photographs acquired and produced through travel, helped Australians to reimagine their own place in relation to Britain and Japan. Postcards trigger a form of imaginative travel and help to maintain connections with loved ones overseas. However, postcards like these had another important function. As they were collected, handled, posted or arranged in scrapbooks, they allowed these international political relationships to become part of the social space in the home. These objects helped

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collectors to feel connected to a world beyond Australian shores, to locate their own identities within that world and to affirm their individual positions in relation to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

Although Australia was imagined and imaged as a child in its colonial relationship to the British motherland, it was noticeably absent from Morton’s Young Japan and Friends. Here, Australia was implicitly cast as a passive onlooker to and consumer of the Alliance forged by the ‘big boys’ on the other side of the world. This perception of Australia’s position (or lack thereof) in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was a source of frustration. A contributor to the Freeman’s Journal complained in 1902 that the treaty was ‘made without any reference to, or consultation with, the Commonwealth Government. Australia was ignored—though Australian interests are gravely touched by the terms of the treaty’. At the heart of the issue were two main concerns: that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance undermined Australia’s exclusionary immigration laws and that it posed a threat to Australian security. The Immigration Restriction Act 1901, commonly known as the ‘White Australia’ policy, was one of the first pieces of legislation to pass the newly formed federal government. Although it was written in response to a desire to protect the nation’s labour market, the Act was informed by racial ideologies. It placed restrictions on the immigration of ‘coloured races’ to Australia by requiring non–Anglo Europeans to sit a convoluted dictation test in any European language. Restrictions on Japanese immigration were eased in 1904 when laws were changed to allow tourists, students and merchants from Japan to enter for one year on passports without being subject to the dictation test.

By this time, substantial communities of Japanese workers had already developed around the pearl shell industries in Queensland and Western Australia. The abovementioned contributor to the Freeman’s Journal found cause for concern in the presence of Japanese labourers in Queensland. After commenting on the exceptional ‘precocity’ of Japan as the ‘child of the world’s old age’, the author complained that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance resulted in a ‘clash’ of competing interests. The ‘phases of the Japanese civilization which charmed the world’ were contrasted with the presence of labourers and prostitutes in Queensland, which

43 Ibid.
Figure 1.9. Anon., *The Motherland’s Misalliance*.
were seen as ‘inimical to European labour, and inimical to Australian morality’. It was feared that Australia may ‘pay the price of the treaty in the admission of the Japanese hordes, and the establishment and maintenance of Japanese morals on Australian shores’. Reflecting this anxiety, a cartoon published the following week in the political magazine the *Bulletin* personified Australia as a frightened young boy, clearly nervous about the ‘marriage’ between Britannia and her new Japanese groom (see Figure 1.9). Defined here by its relationship to Australia, Britain is no longer personified as a child but as a very large, imposing, matronly mother. Titled *The Motherland’s Misalliance*, the cartoon shows Britannia knocking on the door of ‘White Australia’ announcing: ‘Now my good little son. I’ve married again. This is your new father. You must be very fond of him’. The stooped, ancient Japanese groom is dwarfed by his bride and presented in ill-fitting European clothing including a top hat, monocle and oversized tail coat. This representation of the Japanese groom ultimately places him in a subservient position to the enormous Britannia and young Australia—his imperialist ambitions have been symbolically cut short. Despite the Motherland’s instructions to young Australia, who is himself too immature to marry, the boy is still able to stand guard at his very high, exclusionary fence and gate.

Unsurprisingly, Australia’s immigration policy caused diplomatic offence in Japan and was a source of ongoing dispute between the two countries. Alison Broinowski noted that ‘eminent Japanese described Australian migration policy as “selfish and impolitic”, “an offence against humanity”, and “an insulting piece of legislation”’. The Japanese Government was affronted by Japan’s categorisation as a ‘coloured race’, rather than the racial ideology underpinning the legislation itself. Hisakichi Eitaki, the Japanese consul in Sydney, explained his country’s position in a letter to Edmund Barton, Australia’s first prime minister, in 1901:

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44 Ibid.
The Japanese belong to an Empire whose standard of civilization is so much higher than that of kanakas, negroes, Pacific Islanders, Indians, or other Eastern peoples, that to refer to them in the same terms cannot but be regarded in the light of a reproach, which is hardly warranted by the fact of the shade of the national complexion.46

Japan did not disagree with the broader racial hierarchy that it identified with the policy, but challenged where Japan should sit within it.

Japanese officials also remarked that Australia had caught kyōnichibyō (fear of Japan illness) in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War.47 The Japanese Navy’s defeat of the Russians at Tsushima received extensive attention in the Australian press in 1905.48 A Sydney paperboy in his youth, Frank Clune, recalled earning four times his usual profit from sales of the *Evening News* and the *Star* on the day of Japan’s victory at Tsushima.49 Three weeks after the Battle of Tsushima, soon-to-be Prime Minister Alfred Deakin expressed his concern that Australia was within ‘striking distance of no less than sixteen foreign naval stations’, noting that the strongest was Yokohama.50 Deputy Prime Minister in the Reid Government, Allan McLean, similarly warned:

> It must be apparent to every thinking man, that sense of security we have always considered we derived from our great distance from the bases of all the great military or naval powers of the world has now been removed. We now find one of the great naval and military powers of the earth within a very short distance of our shores … It is fortunate for us that the great Power that has recently arisen in the East is an ally of the Empire. Of course, that condition of things might not always continue, and we must be prepared for what might happen.51

In this context, representations of Japan-as-child took on new connotations. Imagery invoking Japan as a precocious military force and bottomless source of aspiring young soldiers began to emerge.

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Boy Soldiers

Rose’s catalogue of Japanese stereographs acknowledged the market for this military-inspired child imagery. One stereograph shows a large group of Japanese school children waiting on a train platform to farewell soldiers leaving for the Russo-Japanese War (see Figure 1.10). Many of the children are looking at the camera and the child wearing a hat in the centre front is standing sharply to attention as though expressing his own military aspirations. Although there are also girls on the crowded platform, it is telling that the caption refers only to boys: ‘Japanese schoolboys waiting to see soldiers bound for war. When the train arrives they all sing a war song and shout “Bonzai” (good luck)’. This marginalisation of the girls reflects the gendered character of representations of Japanese children—diplomatic and military relations were the domain of boys.

Rose’s visit to Japan coincided with the Russo-Japanese War, but his photograph responded to an older Australian interest in the young age at which military training began for Japanese boys. Australian newspapers linked Japan’s success in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–95) in part
to the military training of Meiji-era children. Comparable reports proliferated during the Russo-Japanese War. An article in the *Geelong Advertiser* in 1905 attributed the stamina, strength and courage shown by the Japanese in the ‘recent war’ to the discipline that boys acquire in school: ‘A portion of the school gymnastics consists of military drill. The school boys desirous of showing they can be more than toy soldiers, practice long marches. The Government encourages them by providing them with real rifles and bayonets’. Another article on Japan’s military strength, with strong xenophobic overtones, emphasised the nation’s boundless young human resources:

Japan is in no danger of race suicide. The mothers are not shirking maternity as in other lands, and the result is that we can spare half a million men a year for an indefinite number of years and not miss them … When the time comes Japan will guide the yellow whirlwind and direct the yellow storm, and I am prone to think that certain nations will find it a veritable sirocco … The spirit which won the world’s great battles is the spirit with which modern Japan, the Child of the World’s Old Age, will go into action on sea and on land.

The reference to ‘race suicide’ alludes to contemporary concerns about Australia’s own declining birth rate, which was the subject of a New South Wales royal commission in 1903–04. Fears of military defeat to growing Asian armies merged with anxieties about race suicide in the mind of the bishop of the Riverina, who described the declining birth rate in Australia as a ‘wilful shirking of responsibilities’. To the bishop, the increasing birth rates in China and Japan meant that the ‘East’ was growing ‘stronger and stronger, and is becoming conscious of her strength. Are the Christian nations refusing their inheritance, and by a wanton race suicide surrendering the sceptre to the East?’

Rose’s stereograph gave such anxieties visual form. Through the stereoscope, Australian viewers could study the faces of the school children gathered to support the Japanese army. The children wait

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under the watchful eye of a stationmaster and a male teacher dressed impeccably in a three-piece suit, hat and bow tie. Unlike the child in Cotton’s lantern slide, whose expression of glee undermines the potential threat posed by the war flag that he waves, none of the children in Rose’s photograph are smiling. Many of the boys frown at the camera, while others look at it sideways, as though out of suspicion. Although they all wear kimonos, many also wear the military-style school caps adopted in the Meiji era that reinforce the sense that these children were being prepared to take over from the previous generation of soldiers.

Importantly, the circulation of this type of commercial imagery in Australian homes not only shaped perceptions of Japan in Australia but also informed the perceptions and photographic practices of Australians who had the means to travel through Japan. The travel photographs of Mark Foy and his family are indicative of this process. Foy was an owner of the family-run Foy’s department store in Sydney, which traded between 1885 and 1980. The Foys were regular visitors to Japan and frequently commented on Japanese issues in the Australian press. On their trips, the family collected commercially produced photographs of scenery and tourist sites and produced their own photographs capturing their encounters with Japanese people. Individually sold, mass-produced photographs were commonly placed alongside family photographs in personal travel albums, which became sites in which commercial visions of Japan were merged with personal imagery and memories. Photographs from a Foy family trip in 1902 feature several photographs of local children that reflect prevailing Australian impressions of Japan, including a photograph of three children pumping water from a well with babies strapped to their backs.

A particularly striking group of photographs focus on militarised schoolboys. One of these photographs centres on a group of boys emerging from long grass on a hillside (see Figure 1.11). Their military-inspired attire reflects the interrelationships between citizen making, education and military training in the Meiji era. Originally designed as a junior version of the late nineteenth-century Japanese army uniform—

57 See for example Margaret Preston’s photograph album held in the Powerhouse Museum, registration number 2009/104/5.
modelled on French and Prussian military dress—these school uniforms were widely adopted from 1879. The overexposure at the top right of Foy’s photograph creates the impression that these schoolboys are moving en masse towards the camera from outside its frame. Some boys in the distance can be seen walking towards the camera, while others in the mid ground stand still with startled or quizzical expressions on their faces. The photograph is composed to focus attention on a particular boy seen slightly left of the centre grimacing fiercely at the camera. His feet are spread in a firm stance as he pretends to point a gun at

Figure 1.11. Photographs of Mark Foy and family, including a trip to Japan in 1902.

the photographer, while a younger boy crouches at his feet as though enjoying his protection. Although the absence of a weapon makes it clear that the child is just miming an attack, to Australian viewers familiar with newspaper reports about Japan’s training of young soldiers the photographs may have assumed more menacing qualities. Such military associations may have been implicit when the Foys viewed their travel photographs at home or showed them to family and friends, but no doubt merged with commentaries describing their personal recollections of this encounter with the children.

This crossover between the world of international relations and personal or familial recollections is also strongly suggested in another Foy photograph that shows militarised Japanese children standing with a young blonde Australian boy (see Figure 1.12). The blonde boy is most likely Mark Francis Foy, who accompanied his parents to Japan along with his baby sister Elizabeth. In this photograph, the three Japanese boys wear Japanese dress with military-style school caps. They stand to attention in a neat row, holding rods over their shoulders like rifles, while adult members of the Foy party and a Japanese man in a European suit

Figure 1.12. Photographs of Mark Foy and family, including a trip to Japan in 1902.
look on. Two of the boys have very serious expressions and the other looks at the camera with curiosity and a slightly cocked head. The three boys mark a sharp contrast to the much younger Australian boy who stands in front of them attempting to mimic their stance with what appears to be an umbrella over his shoulder. While the Japanese boys represent the epitome of Meiji military boyhood—disciplined, orderly and strong—the soft blonde curls of the Foy child, his bonnet, pleated tunic and large lace collar reflect remnants of the Victorian ideals of the ‘innocent saintly child’ embodied popularly by Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). Ideologies of the ‘saintly child’ drew on Christian iconography and Enlightenment and Romantic philosophies to perpetuate belief in the supposedly ‘natural’ goodness of children in nineteenth-century England. Although the image was also popular in Australia during the late nineteenth century and informed representations of ‘The Boy from Manly’, by the early twentieth century, ‘Fauntleroy-like “cissies”’ were being overpowered in popular culture with representations of the ‘hardy little mischief maker’, later embodied in the comic book character Ginger Meggs. The Foy photograph seemingly stages a meeting of Young Australia and the ‘child of the world’s old age’ in a humorous photograph for the family travel album.

Such patterns of recycling, layering and building representations of Japan resonate with Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, Michael Haldrup, Jonas Larsen and John Urry’s discussion of the ‘imaginative mobilities’ of tourism. Although their focus is on contemporary tourism, the authors’ analysis may be extended to the Foy photograph. Imaginative mobilities acknowledge that tourism does not occur in a vacuum but, instead, involves the anticipation, performance and remembrance of travel at home and abroad. As the children in the Foy photograph pose for the camera, they enact a performance that has already been refined and scripted in commercial photographs, cartoons, news articles, international diplomacy and meanings of childhood. This performance of Australian–Japanese relations may have continued when the Foys returned home, as they used their photographs to repeat narratives of their Japanese encounters among family and friends. The Foy’s famous department store became yet another forum for staging encounters

59 Ibid., 92; Inglis, ‘Young Australia 1870–1900’, 1–24.
Figure 1.13. Ruth Hollick, *Untitled [Child in Kimono]*, c. 1910–30.
between Australia and Japan, this time for Sydney’s public. The store not only stocked Japanese goods such as silks and flower pots, its official publication, the *Magnet*, included a full page dedicated to photographs of a Japanese teahouse in its June 1910 issue. Through the purchase of Japanese goods, Australian consumers could also participate in these patterns of anticipating and performing encounters with Japan without leaving home.

From Japan-as-Child to Australian-Child-as-Japan

Japanese goods were used in other photographic representations of Australian–Japanese encounters during the early twentieth century. Here, notions of Japan-as-child were transformed into the Australian-Child-as-Japan. Across the country, in school performances, backyard plays, photographers’ studios and fancy dress parties, Anglo-Australian children adopted Japanese costumes and posed for the camera. Reflecting the popularity of this practice, Australian state library collections feature many photographs of Anglo-Australian children in Japanese costume and newspaper social pages regularly published photographs of children posing in Japanese costume for fancy dress parties. Other photographs, like Ruth Hollick’s portrait of an unnamed curly haired child (see Figure 1.13), were produced professionally in the studio. This Melbourne-based photographer is best known for her portraits of women and children, many of which were made at her home studio in Moonee Ponds and, later, in her Collins Street studio. Hollick’s high society portraits featured in newspapers and *The Home* magazine in the early 1920s, making her a highly sought after portraitist. We can only speculate why the parents of this child dressed her in a kimono for her portrait session. The girl also wears a tiny bead necklace with a manji pendant—a symbol associated with Japanese Buddhism—and a silver bracelet. Although kimonos were readily available in Australia, it is likely that the pendant was bought in Japan, perhaps by the girl’s parents. The girl’s bare feet also allude to conceptions of the feminine Japanese child as innocent and close to nature.

61 ‘Children’s Fancy Dress Ball at the Sydney Town Hall’, *Sydney Mail*, 7 October 1899, 864; ‘At the Children’s Hospital Ball’, *Queenslander*, 15 August 1903, 23.
An admiration for Japanese children, along with the concurrent fashion for Japanese goods, no doubt helped to foster the trend for photographing Anglo-Australian children in Japanese-inspired dress. Throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, Australian newspapers regularly published articles about idealised Japanese children. Japanese children, it was argued, were experts of self-control, rarely crying or throwing temper tantrums, and were always quiet, gentle, polite and obedient. Such reports about the behaviour of children must be distinguished from symbolic references to an unmanageable enfant terrible to describe the imperialist nation. One reporter noted:

Travellers in Japan are unanimous in their praise of the gentleness, courtesy, and charm of the Japanese child, whose quaint, old-fashioned manners, curious garb, and still more curious play, is an unfailing source of interest to all lovers of children who visit the Land of the Chrysanthemum and the Cherry Blossom.

Another article praising the extraordinarily good behaviour of Japanese children was republished across the country repeatedly between 1905 and 1919. It seemed as though Australians did not tire of hearing about well-behaved Japanese children. Piel has suggested that Western perceptions of Japanese children as universally polite and well behaved may be as much to do with the fact that Westerners encountered children typically as outsiders to the family, or as guests, strangers or customers in Japanese businesses. The Japanese custom of keeping up appearances in front of strangers and reserving their true feelings for members of their inner circle may have given many Westerners a distorted view of Japanese family life.

Likewise, women’s magazines published photographs and articles about selfless Japanese mothers and their angelic children. An issue of New Idea accompanied an article by Pierre Loti with a full-page montage of five photographs taken by Miss Nell Brownlow Cole from Brisbane of a little Anglo-Australian girl dressed in a kimono. The girl was photographed variously posing cross-legged, holding a fan and making tea in front of a Japanese screen. She is seemingly composed, innocent and disciplined,

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suggesting that Australian mothers could similarly align these qualities with their own children by staging such photographs. Several scholars have addressed the adoption of Japanese dress by adults in the US, Britain and Europe during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. This body of work has tended to frame cross-cultural dressing as a symptom of Western Orientalism, fantasies of power and a combination of fear and desire for the ‘other’. However, rather than simply reflecting fantasies of the distant and exotic East, photographs of Anglo-Australian children in Japanese costume may be better understood as practices that responded to complex and contradictory conceptions of childhood and both countries’ places as emerging nations in the Asia-Pacific. Underpinning these photographs are decades of discussion about Japanese children and Japan-as-child, informed by concerns about international diplomacy, immigration, industry and perceptions of Japan’s imperialist ambitions.

These and the other photographs examined in this chapter represent the accumulation of many years of anticipation, performance and remembrance of Australian encounters with Japan through newspapers, commercial photographs and tourist photographs. The apparent innocence of these images of children and their circulation in homes belies the important political role that conceptions of Japan-as-child played. Australian experiences of modernity and impressions of Japanese children were shaped by a variety of debates about industrialisation, modernisation, immigration and security. By staging, seeking out or purchasing these visions of Japanese childhood, Australians consumed and reproduced a series of conflicting views of Japan as a naïve artistic child and enfant terrible. As the twentieth century wore on, photography was to become an increasingly significant medium for reproducing and reconciling antithetical perceptions of both Japan and the Japanese.

