THROUGH NON-MILITARY EYES:
DEVELOPING THE POSTWAR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Somewhere in the vast ruin of post-nuclear Hiroshima, two middle-aged Japanese men walk towards a stationary camera (see Figure 5.1). They look purposeful and strangely cheerful. As two Australian diggers slouch back into the colossal bombsite and towards the vanishing point beneath a cluster of stripped trees, the conspicuously civilian, Western-attired Japanese duo stride out of it, moving away from the militarism that led to such wholesale destruction and into a future that would be independently determined by men such as them. The photograph is carefully conceived, staged to capture a significant point of departure in postwar Japanese history—a people leaving war and military occupation behind and embarking on the task of rebuilding and remaking the nation.

Significantly, this richly allegorical image was not taken by one of the professional photographers affiliated to the military and official civilian agencies. Rather, it is the work of an amateur, Hungarian-born Stephen Kelen, who served with British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF) Intelligence before joining the military newspaper *British Commonwealth Occupation News* (BCON). Kelen was an enthusiastic and accomplished photographer. Several of the images that illustrate his memoir, *I Remember Hiroshima*, have become iconic pictures of the stricken city in the early stages of its reconstruction. His photographs of orphans and of an outdoor schoolroom that had sprung up in the rubble are among the best known pictures of atomic Hiroshima, featuring in
online educational material published by the municipal authorities such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, to teach the history of the bombing and to spread the anti-nuclear gospel.¹

Their documentary value aside, Kelen’s pictures suggest a shift in Australian apprehension of its recent enemy and the identification and recognition of the emerging new (or remodelled) Japan. The camera was a crucial instrument of rapprochement in the postwar period, as Australians began to look at Japan with what BCOF serviceman Halton Stewart called ‘non-military eyes’.² This is particularly true of the unofficial pictures taken independently by the legion of amateur photographers in the occupying force that compose an alternative visual narrative of postwar Japan. Freed of the obligation to produce a sanitised view of a Japan dependent on the beneficent presence of the Occupier, they were

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receptive to the signs of a people regrouping from mass devastation and mutating into a forward-looking nation while remaining true to their ancient traditions.

To the Australians, the Occupation was both conquest and cultural reconnaissance, the first time in history that large numbers of them were able to explore an Oriental culture and landscape; it was the precursor of the mass Asian travel of Australians today. As travellers and as photographers, the Australians of the Occupation pioneered an era of engagement with the region generally, signified in the years to come by reoriented travel itineraries and the belated Australian embrace of Eastern cultures. Camera enthusiasts in the touring BCOF community such as Kelen, Frederick Frueh and Neville Govett ignored the visual clichés of picturesque Japan that existed before the war and rejected the negative stereotypes generated by the war itself. The unofficial Occupation photography testifies to the unfashionably positive view of tourist image-making articulated by Jonas Larsen, who posited that tourist photographers are not passive reproducers of a received imagery of ‘the exotic’ but producers of new geographies with potentially creative, personal visions of the world.3

A somewhat more ambiguous picture of Japan emerged in the public photography produced in the post-Occupation period, during the fraught process of political reconciliation with the former enemy. From the 1950s until well into the 1970s, successive Australian governments remained sensitive to lingering memories of Japanese military turpitude, and the image of Japan remained largely filtered through the lens of war. At the same time, they encouraged cultural and economic links to flourish and ensured that they be conveyed attractively, through official channels, to the people. Photographers working for the Australian News and Information Bureau (ANIB) were particularly active in the period, taking promotional images of cultural as well as diplomatic and political engagement that collectively signposted the path to a strong bilateral relationship that remains in place today. The reviled Japanese adversary of wartime propaganda was humanised as a friend and ally, and Japan itself reframed into a dynamic, embryonically modern society whose bright future Australia could share.

That so many of these official pictures are so blatantly intended to transmit a message of bilateral amity betrays the artificial element to the developing Australia–Japan relationship. As Alan Rix implied by the pointed title of his study of the politics of postwar trade with Japan, *Coming to Terms* (1986), Australia’s compulsion to get on with its recent antagonist was essentially a mercenary enterprise, for commerce with economically regenerating Japan provided massive business opportunities.⁴ The trade and commerce agreement of 1957, deepened and extended by the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed in Tokyo in 1976, provided the diplomatic context for a set of photographic images designed to dignify and formalise a partnership that once seemed inconceivable.

Yet, ‘coming to terms’ was also about expressing genuine fellow feeling. As cultural contact between the two countries accelerated during this period, facilitated by fairs and exhibitions and by burgeoning trans-Pacific travel, photography became a powerful interpretive medium, a tool of cultural translation that created sympathetic responses to a country that both beguiled and bewildered.

### New Ways of Seeing Japan: The Amateur Photographers of BCOF

Australian servicemen in Occupied Japan sometimes used the language of visual perception and representation to explain the effect the personal encounter with the country had on them and how it had transformed their view of the country. Halton Stewart’s remark that he began to see the Japanese through ‘non-military eyes’ was echoed by BCOF medico Murray Elliott, who recalled being exposed to a ‘new and great culture’ that provided him with ‘a new perception of the world’. Japan, he declared, transformed his ‘way of seeing’.⁵ The principal focus for this perceptual change was the ordinary people of Japan encountered by the Australians, and their favoured means of registering it was the camera.

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⁵ Murray Elliott, *Occupational Hazards: A Doctor in Japan and Elsewhere* (Brisbane: Griffith University, 1995), 80, 91, 93.
Often fatherless or orphaned, the children of Japan attracted an especially sympathetic lens. The soldiers found them irresistible and they were instrumental in softening attitudes to the Japanese. The children could not be lumbered with the misdemeanours of their elders. In *Ashes of Hiroshima* (1950), Frank Clune blamed the destruction wrought by the atomic bomb on the Japanese themselves, for being ‘too stupid and ignorant to build solidly’. Yet, even Clune had his enmity qualified by the sight of Japanese children. ‘No man could see the ashes of Hiroshima and fail to feel qualms’, he wrote. Driving along the perilously narrow coastal road back to Kure, he saw Japanese kids playing in the water: ‘They at any rate had no war-guilt’, he remarked, ‘we couldn’t honestly say it served them right’.6

The disarming effect of Japanese children is best illustrated by Albert Tucker, better known as a modernist painter, who spent three months on secondment to BCOF in 1947. Tucker was essentially an amateur photographer, though he became more attracted to the medium later in his career. Apparently he did not even own a camera in Japan, using a borrowed Leica to take several hundred photographs, including a couple of covert shots at the war crimes trials in Tokyo. Years later, Tucker reflected that the immensity of Hiroshima’s destruction defeated him as an artist; just as many writers bemoaned the event’s unprecedented indescribability, he considered it unpaintable. Nonetheless, the secondment produced ‘Hiroshima 1947’, a scene of desolation solely populated by a homeless child standing near a blasted tree whose bare branches form the unmistakable shape of a swastika.7 Somewhere near bomb-ravaged Osaka, Tucker selected a more straightforward means of capturing the face of postwar Japan (see Figure 5.2). In her collection of his photographs, *The Eye of the Beholder*, Janine Burke remarked how the camera liberated the artist, ‘creating a fresh, intimate visual sense not found in his bleak, socially critical and sexually anxious paintings of the war years’. Burke noted that his close-ups are emotional and physical, evidence of photography’s way of ‘saying what is in the heart rather than the mind’.8 Tucker’s photograph of three boys seems to ask, ‘how could anyone maintain their hatred of the Japanese?’

Figure 5.2. Albert Tucker, *Three Boys Near Osaka*, 1947.
Source: Albert Tucker Collection, State Library of Victoria H2010.72/1.

Figure 5.3. Herbert Cole ('Nugget') Coombs, *Children in a Tokyo Street*, May 1946.
Source: National Archives of Australia (NAA) M2153 5/12.
On a visit to Japan in May 1946 accompanying Prime Minister Ben Chifley, leading bureaucrat H.C. ‘Nugget’ Coombs was also drawn to photograph the children. Away from the round of diplomatic business, he found many subjects that appealed to him, including the customary shots of Hiroshima’s destruction. His apparently spontaneous photograph of a group of spirited young school children in a Tokyo street indicates the postwar Australian take on Japan (see Figure 5.3). Responsible for overseeing the national transition to a peacetime economy as the director-general of Australia’s Department of Post-War Reconstruction, Coombs was alert to the potential of Japan’s raw human material and its capacity for renewal.

Of course, there were strategic and altruistic dimensions to the Australian participation in the Occupation project, and Japan’s children were useful in transmitting the message of Japanese acquiescence in the role being created for it as a reliable ally in the Asia-Pacific. Published in a photo spread in *Pix* in March 1946, Neil Town’s image of two Australian soldiers traipsing through Kure with a crowd of adoring Japanese schoolgirls is afforded a revealing caption. ‘That the Australians had ‘made friends’ with the children, the caption states, ‘might even be good for the future generation of Japan’.9 The short propaganda film *Watch Over Japan* (1947), directed by Geoffrey Collings for the Australian National Film Board, takes up this theme. The narrator intones that the men of BCOF saw the children as ‘the real rays of the Japanese rising sun’; guided by the Allies, they would shape a democratic Japan, ‘so that one day, perhaps, she will walk hand-in-hand with the peace-loving nations of the world’. The final scene shows a long line of diggers walking hand-in-hand with children through a sunlit village street.10 No longer symbols of ancient and innocent Japan—‘the child of the world’s old age’—children had become symbols of its future.

The common soldier-photographer was willing to make the children themselves the subject of the pictures, unadulterated by the forced presence of the Occupier. Taking to the streets of Hiroshima with his Kodak ‘Box Brownie’, Neville Govett, a sergeant in a transport company, made effective use of the winter sunshine in a photograph of a boy selling black market cigarettes (see Figure 5.4). The boy confidently poses for the camera, to the evident amusement of his friends. Hiroshima was full

of uprooted youngsters living rough, supporting themselves as best they could. Many had lost their fathers to the late war, or one or both parents in the atomic bombing. The survival instinct was strong, if not always especially edifying.

The vernacular photography produced by amateurs such as Govett was receptive to the new Japan emerging from the war and rather less reliant on anachronistic visual clichés than the work of the professionals. Govett was an active member of the BCOF Tourist Club (out of which emerged a Camera Club), enjoying group tours to various locations throughout the Japanese archipelago. Compiled by Govett himself, *The Story of the B.C.O.F. Tourist Club* (1950) records the full itinerary of some 200 outings, well over 20 of which were to Hiroshima and environs. The book is copiously illustrated with photographs of the club’s activities, but only one of Hiroshima—a run-of-the-mill shot of the A-Bomb Dome. The club may have thought it in questionable taste to highlight a voyeuristic interest in a site of mass death. Several of the photographs are the work of the MHS photographer Claude
Holzheimer—clichéd pictures of castles, mountain views, tea ceremonies and the like. This was a wasted opportunity to showcase amateur work, for Govett’s own pictures possess an immediacy lacking in much of the official photography and a willingness to take on unusual subject matter. Taken aboard a ferry plying the northern waters between Honshu and Hokkaido, his *Smokestack and Ventilator* (see Figure 5.5) is a heroically monumental industrial image that conveys a Japan freed from an inhibiting set of images originating from an earlier century. The oblique camera angle and dramatic contrasts of light and shade reveal a modernist photographer’s eye for form that shames much of the professional work in Japan.

Like Govett, Royal Australian Air Force pilot Frederick Frueh was an ambitious photographer, alert for signs of modernising Japan. Frueh took several stylish images in the vicinity of the air base at Iwakuni to the west of Hiroshima. Iwakuni is the home of the ‘brocade bridge’, *Kintaikyo*, a structure built originally in the late seventeenth century. An elegant emblem of the traditional Japanese aesthetic drawn by the legendary Edo-era artist Hiroshige and a common feature of tourist paraphernalia, the bridge was ritually photographed during the Occupation as a signifier of the ‘Real Japan’. Yet Frueh’s photographer’s eye lingered elsewhere. In *On the Road to the Railway Station*, a photograph taken in 1946, he composed a scene both highly romantic and suggestive of a Japan leaving its past behind (see Figure 5.6). The picture is a skilfully arranged blend of opposites—of horizontals and verticals, light and shade, human interaction and industrial impersonality, and of a rural Japan transforming itself into a modern powerhouse (suggested by the chimneys belching smoke emanating from underground factories). To Hal Porter, articulating the view of the elegiac school of writers and artists who bemoan the passing into history of picturesque Old Japan, postwar ‘progress’ was a ‘pestilence’, a desecration of the country’s voluptuous natural landscape and a corruption of its traditional culture.¹¹ Frueh saw the country differently, visualising the harmonious coexistence of male and female; past, present and future; agrarian and industrial; old and new.

¹¹ Porter, *The Actors: An Image of the New Japan* (Sydney: Angus Robertson), 45. Works such as Donald Richie’s *The Inland Sea* (1971) and Alex Kerr’s *Lost Japan* (1996) are among the best-known accounts of Japan’s self-inflicted damage since the war.
For many Australians, of course, the camera was simply a means of taking ‘holiday snaps’, pictures of the fleeting pleasures of people having the time of their lives. Like most tourist-photographers, they were drawn to the ‘unspoiled’ Japan that had either escaped the bombing or showed no evidence of postwar suffering. In *The Story of the B.C.O.F. Tourist Club*, Govett wrote that ‘cameras clicked merrily’ at the ‘glorious sight’ of cherry blossom at the famous viewing site at Mt Yoshino in Nara Prefecture.\(^\text{12}\) Further, some of the private images expose tourism’s propensity to encourage exhibitionism. In *Memories of Occupied Japan*, Royal Australian Air Force Flight Lieutenant Philip M. Green included a photograph of himself receiving a shoeshine in the city of Takarazuka from two small Japanese boys, for the price (we are told) of one cigarette per shoe. Such indulgences invoke Sontag’s diatribe against the photographer as a ‘supertourist’ who uses the camera as ‘a kind

of passport that annihilates moral boundaries and social inhibitions, freeing the photographer from any responsibility toward the people photographed’.13

Yet, if the amateur photography revealed a degree of heedless hedonism, much of it also sought to connect with Japan itself, and even perhaps define the country it was in the process of becoming. The extensive collection of photographs taken by Brian McMullan, the pre-teenage son of an Australian officer, and his mother Cecilia, is a case in point. Brian and Cecilia used a ‘Mycro I’, a huge commercial success in 1947 and 1948, on family vacations throughout the length and breadth of Japan.14 They captured a Japan in transition, one that was both vanishing and in the making. One of their most seemingly innocuous photographs, of a humdrum commercial area of Kure, is among the most eloquent (see Figure 5.7). A group of young Japanese, most likely senior high

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14 The latest model of a nimble little ‘subminiature’ 14 mm camera first developed in Tokyo in 1939, the Mycro I was the chosen medium of the first ever photographic contest in postwar Japan. See camerapedia.wikia.com/wiki/Mycro (accessed 14 June 2016). For the Australian War Memorial record of the McMullin camera, see AWM REL35672. The McMullins were also proud owners of a Japanese-made cigarette lighter in the shape of a miniature camera set on a tripod (AWM REL35673).
school students, chat unselfconsciously as an anonymous BCOF officer looks away and a traditionally dressed woman clops out of the picture in her wooden geta. The well-stocked shops in the background indicate activity. Old Japan, and the recent past of war and occupation, was disappearing from view. Japan was open for business.

Photography and Reconciliation: 1952–57

The Occupation of Japan officially ended in 1952, though the Australian military presence in Japan was temporarily reinvigorated by the fighting in nearby Korea. With the Korean ceasefire in 1953, it began a terminal decline. By November 1956, the last remnants of the force departed Japan. The number of Australians in the country dwindled to virtually nothing. In 1958, a mere 248 Australians were registered as residing in Japan, only 17 of whom lived in the Chugoku region in western Honshu that was once the centre of BCOF activity.15

Back in Australia, the Japanese had not been forgiven for the misdemeanours committed by their military, especially the heinous mistreatment of its prisoners in sites of suffering such as the Burma Railway, and resentment still burned. A Gallup Poll of responses to the Peace Treaty taken in August 1951—five years after the war’s end—showed a remarkable 62.5 per cent disapproval and 21.4 per cent in favour.16 As late as 1956, the year of the Melbourne Olympic Games, most Australians ‘still tasted bitterness’ when they thought of Japan, observed the popular travel writer Colin Simpson.17

Australian ambivalence towards fostering a political and economic relationship with Japan was expressed in the public photography of the period—Australians still found it hard to ‘see’ the Japanese outside the frame of war. One of the most memorable images of the Melbourne Olympics, splashed across the front pages of local newspapers the day after the event, was the press photographer Bruce Howard’s picture of the embrace of Australia’s ‘golden boy’, the swimmer Murray Rose, and his Japanese rival Tsuyoshi Yamanaka after the 400 m freestyle final (see Figure 5.8). Influenced by the coincidence that the event fell on

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the fifteenth anniversary of Pearl Harbour, *Pix* used the photograph to illustrate its story of the Rose/Yamanaka clash later in the games, the 1,500 m final won more narrowly by the Australian, reported to have heroically staved off a final thrust from ‘the do-or-die Japanese’.\(^{18}\) The Birmingham-born Rose had migrated with his British parents to Australia as a baby. Aged three or four, he had appeared in a wartime savings propaganda poster for the war effort, playing with a toy boat by the seaside and plaintively posing the question: ‘Will the Japs come here in their big ships, Daddy?’ A little over a decade later, there he was in the water pitted against a Japanese. Interviewed in 2011, Rose remembered the race as ‘symbolic of two kids that’d grown up on opposite sides of the war’, who had ‘come together in the friendship of the Olympic

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\(^{18}\) The photograph featured prominently on front pages the day after the event. See for example *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 December 1956, 1; ‘A Rose in Full Bloom’, *Pix*, 22 December 1956, 18. Other publications also referenced the war in their account of the 1,500 m final, see ‘Rose Beats Japanese in Fighting Final Lap’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 December 1956, 12.
Appearing in Australian newspapers and reproduced in souvenir publications as representative of the ‘Friendly Games’, the photograph radiates male bonding, if gratifyingly once again showing an Australian proving superior to his Japanese counterpart.

Similarly, the developing commercial competitiveness of the nations was considered war by another means, but this time with an industrially revivified Japan emerging the victor. Dependably populist and increasingly sensationalist, *Pix* fanned this anxiety in 1957 with ‘Japs Fight Again—For Trade’, a photo essay documenting the intimidating pace of Japan’s recovery. Disquiet about Australia being swamped with Japanese goods fed anxiety that Japan might rediscover its martial propensities. It also inflamed longstanding national fears about Asian invasion, both literally and via migration. Not only was Japan rebuilding, it was also repopulating. As early as June 1950, *Pix* had highlighted its postwar baby boom, with its population growing by an alarming 5,000 babies per day. Recalling older anxieties about Japan’s ready production of boy soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War, *Pix* posed the question, ‘is the swiftly expanding nation to be ally or dangerous problem child?’.

Yet, the photographic image could be turned to Japan’s advantage, helping soften attitudes and allay fears that the war had never really ended. The integration of several hundred Japanese war brides into Australian society in the early 1950s was a deeply symbolic event, the first significant breach in the fortress of ‘White Australia’. Photographs of the brides’ arrival and entry into Australian suburban communities appeared regularly in newspapers in the first years of the decade, notably featuring in the *Australian Women’s Weekly*. In July 1952, the *Weekly* marked the imminent arrival of the first Japanese wife to arrive, 22-year-old Cherry Parker, with a feature on the ‘warm welcome’ she could achieve.

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expect to receive. The story was illustrated by a picture of the photogenic
family—Cherry, her husband Gordon and two small daughters with the
reassuringly familiar names of Margaret and Kathleen.22

The inconsistent imagery of Japan-as-threat and Japan-as-partner that
circulated during the Cold War period reflected the unease that many
people felt, as a recently hated nation moved into Australia’s defence orbit
as a client state of the US in the global fight against communism. Other
forms of visual culture continued to reflect and exacerbate conflicting
Australian attitudes towards Japan. In 1958, the national tour of the
‘Hiroshima Panels’, a collection of large canvases depicting the diabolical
concoction of blast, fire and radiation inflicted on the Japanese city,
deeply impressed Australian crowds and increased sympathy for the
suffering of scores of thousands.23 This was a time of heightened nuclear
alarm. Nevil Shute’s novel of nuclear apocalypse, On the Beach, set in
and around Melbourne, was published in 1957. At the same time, the
popular Hollywood epic The Bridge on the River Kwai (1957) reminded
a mass audience of the horrors perpetrated by the Japanese on the
Burma Railway. In July 1958, Pix mocked a group of newly released
convicted war criminals photographed holding a reunion in Tokyo’s
Sugamo Prison. The written text reminded readers that this was the
very place in which Prime Minister Kishi, with whom the Australian
Government had just negotiated the Australia–Japanese Commerce
Agreement, had been imprisoned as a member of Tojo’s War Cabinet
after Japan’s surrender.24

22 See Mary Coles, ‘Warm Welcome Arranged for Japanese Wife’, Australian Women’s Weekly,
9 July 1953, 23. The uplifting story of Gordon Parker and his fight to bring his family home
contrasted with one of the Occupation’s most undiluting legacies, the hundreds of mixed-race
children abandoned by their Australian fathers and scorned by Japan. Long ignored, their plight
came to light around the time of the signing of the trade agreement. This was ‘a story of shame’,
announced by Pix in an August 1957 article illustrated with several photographs of children
with unmistakably Western features. One is said to look ‘almost like any Australian schoolboy with
23 See ‘The Hiroshima Panels: Showings Draw Hushed Crowds’, Australian Woman’s Weekly,
9 July 1958, 7.
Both the intimate and public role of photography in the negotiation of the Commerce Agreement attests to the definitive part played by the camera in defining Australia–Japan bilateralism. The most overt agent of reconciliation was the prime minister of Australia in the 1950s, Robert Menzies. For several years, Menzies had sought to persuade Australians to quell their anger and to adopt a ‘grown-up’ attitude to Japan. ‘The war is over’, he remarked in a broadcast in March 1954. The communists posed a greater threat to peace and prosperity than the prospect of a rejuvenated Japan.25

Menzies was a camera enthusiast who would habitually take his equipment with him on his overseas tours. Phillip Hobson photographed him indulging his passion for 16 mm home movie making on an official visit to Kure, Hiroshima and surrounds in August 1950. Over the prime minister’s shoulder, a leather camera case is adorned with the initials ‘R.G.M.’. It is a graphic illustration of political possession—the Australian leader taking private images of a beaten and humbled nation.26 He had his Kodak with him when he revisited Japan in April 1957, unashamedly and possibly indecorously filming his hosts during the rituals of diplomacy. When he was not taking his own pictures, Menzies was the epitome of diplomatic courtesy, photographed trying his hand at chopsticks and stoically sampling sushi. In pictures widely circulated in newspapers, he even had his photograph taken with the formerly despised Hirohito, who the Australians had a decade earlier wanted to be held to account as a war criminal.27 Three months after Menzies’s trip, the Australia–Japan Commerce Agreement was signed, guaranteeing most favoured nation treatment on tariffs and non-discrimination in trade. The agreement was to become a key factor in Australia’s economic growth in the 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Sixty years later, it was still being lauded for its historic importance by Australian and Japanese prime ministers.28

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26 For Phillip Hobson’s photograph of Menzies in Kure, see AWM HOBJ1190.
28 Signing a new trade partnership in Canberra in July 2014, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Australian counterpart Tony Abbott lauded the signal economic significance of the 1957 commerce agreement and the more general relationship it seemed to indicate. The previous year, Abbott declared Japan Australia’s ‘closest friend in Asia’. See ‘Putting Meat on the Bones of a 1957 Agreement’, *Australian*, 21 July 2014, 10; ‘Tony Abbott Says Japan is Australia’s “Closest Friend in Asia”’, *Australian*, 9 October 2013, 1.
Undertaken with tight security in response to negative publicity, the reciprocal visit to Australia in December 1957 of Japan’s Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi was intensively photographed. At a wreath-laying ceremony at the Australian War Memorial, a local businessman (and ex-serviceman) audibly shouted to the attendant group of press photographers to ‘shut those cameras up’, calling it ‘an infamous day for Australia’.29 That May, *Pix* headlined an article about the forthcoming trip ‘Should Jap P.M. Visit Australia?’, illustrating it with the barbed use of well-known photographs from the recent military past, including George Silk’s famous photograph of a blinded digger in New Guinea being led by a loyal Papuan helper, as a vivid reminder of Australia’s wartime travails.30

Kishi’s brief sojourn in Australia, however, was a diplomatic triumph. At a luncheon held in his honour at Parliament House in Canberra, Japan’s prime minister offered a formal apology of ‘heartfelt sorrow’ for what had occurred during the war. Menzies responded with portentous remarks about Australia and Japan’s mutual ‘destiny in the Pacific’.31 Yet the trip’s significance was more sharply articulated by a photograph than by fine words. On his initial arrival in Australia, at Melbourne’s Essendon Airport, Kishi was greeted by Japanese women and children in traditional dress, and by Prime Minister Menzies, his hand extended in friendship with a swarm of photographers at the ready (see Figure 5.9). Menzies’s injunction, ‘We Must Be Friends’, had featured on the front page of the Melbourne *Sun* on the morning of Kishi’s arrival and, by the afternoon, a photograph of the historic handshake dominated the evening newspaper the *Herald*.32 The leaders of the two countries were photographed enacting a definitive political version of burying the hatchet.

One cannot underestimate the image’s significance. Fifty years on, in the context of the signing of the Japan–Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2007, it was recycled in a photomontage to signify the political partnership of Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—Kishi’s grandson—with his Australian counterpart John Howard.33

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29 ‘Ex-Serviceman Protests at War Memorial’, *Canberra Times*, 5 December 1957, 1.
30 ‘Should Jap P.M. Visit Australia?’, *Pix*, 4 May 1957, 4.
32 ‘Menzies: We Must be Friends’, *Sun*, 29 November 1957, 1; ‘Handshake at Airport’, *Herald*, 29 November 1957, 1.
Kishi’s trip heralded a succession of official visits by Japanese prime ministers into the 1960s and 1970s. Kishi had flown into Australia with Japan Air; his smiling successors were usually pictured emerging down the stairs of a Qantas jet. Diplomacy evidently extended to the choice of airline carrier.34

Back in Tokyo, a few months before the public demonstration of bilateralism at the airport in Melbourne, an illustrated story in *Pix* revealed the link between photography and rapprochement in defining the postwar Australia–Japan relationship. It featured E.R. Walker, Australia’s first postwar ambassador to Japan and an avid photographer. Entitled ‘Ambassador’s Album’, the story described Walker’s passion for the medium and his desire to use it positively to take his impressions of Japan.35 A selection of his images reveals some attractive pictures of a small girl dressed in her best kimono on her way to a festival, and a pleasing photograph of the embassy garden under snow. Only

34 For examples see visit to Australia by Prime Minister Ikeda, 1963, NAA A1673 11836719; visit to Australia by Prime Minister Sato, 1967, NAA, A1200 11837972.
a photograph of a girl burning incense at the tomb of the 47 Ronin, the legendary samurai who committed harikari to avenge their lord and master, was a reminder of the uncompromising martial nation that had so recently threatened to bring Australia to its knees—a newly pacific nation now Australia's best friend and partner in the Asia-Pacific.

Photography and Reconciliation: 1957–76

Photography continued to act as a mediator of the formalised relationship with ‘new’ Japan in the late 1950s into the 1960s, though in varied and occasionally contradictory ways. Japan had emerged as a modern industrial juggernaut, but it was packaged for potential Australian consumption in decidedly traditional terms. ‘Australia’s Overseas Airline’, Qantas, began advertising its services to Tokyo in the mid-1950s. A Qantas shop window display in central Melbourne around 1955 that aroused the interest of the British Australian photographer Sarah Chinnery contained an image of a kimonoed woman and cherry blossom, used as a predictable lure. In 1957, an illustrated advertisement in the *Australian Women's Weekly*—later used to inaugurate the popular ‘Cherry Blossom’ cruises to Japan—revealed a Qantas jet flying perilously close to Mt Fuji.³⁶

A photographic competition sponsored by the Japanese camera manufacturer Yashica and run by *Pix* throughout 1961 offered a ‘millionaire’s holiday’ for two to the country, flying Qantas.³⁷ Yet, while the growth of commercial air travel promised to bring the two countries into closer contact, the vast majority of air travel to Japan during this period was for business and trade purposes, rather than leisure. Moreover, the numbers remained relatively small. In 1957, the year of the Commerce Agreement, the total number of Australian ‘short-term’ travellers to Japan was a meagre 1,153. This increased to some 6,371 in 1964.³⁸ Air travel

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³⁷ See *Pix*, 21 October 1961, 32.
was still a privilege available to the few, rather than the many; the age of mass recreational tourism to Asia was some years off. Armchair travellers were catered to by best-sellers such as Colin Simpson’s *The Country Upstairs* (1956), which went through numerous reprintings and editions, from the time of its original publication in 1956 right through to the 1960s. *The Country Upstairs* was prodigiously illustrated by photographs, mostly stereotypical images of traditional Japan supplied by the Japan National Tourist Organisation.

The domestic appetite for Japan was largely expressed through the desirability of imported Japanese products, as a rapidly suburbanising Australia enjoyed a period of sustained prosperity. Belying the imagery of picturesque timelessness promoted by tourism, the ubiquitous ‘Made in Japan’ label, applied to everything from cameras to cars, signified modernity not tradition, the future not the past. A Japanese Trade Fair held in Sydney in January 1959 was heralded by fireworks over Sydney Harbour, reportedly attracting the biggest night-time crowd seen in the city since the 1954 royal tour. Advertising for the event had spruik the ‘industrial renaissance’ of a ‘time-locked feudal’ Japan, along with its new status as ‘a dynamic democratic ally’, as being ‘a miracle of our time’. 39 Not that the focus was entirely consumerist; along with the displays of Japan’s technical acumen, the fair also featured film and fashion. The new trade agreement was synonymous with ‘closer understanding and goodwill between the two countries’, according to the representative of the Japan Export Trade Promotion Agency at an International Trade Fair held in Melbourne in 1959. 40 Among the Japanese exhibitors was the ‘Tokyo Toys and Wholesalers Association’. The prospect of mass importation of toys from the Japanese ‘invaders’ had created controversy in the early 1950s—a news item in the Sydney *Sunday Herald* stated that it created ‘almost as big a stir in toyland as the Japanese submarines caused in Sydney harbour’. 41 However, by the end of the decade, the transnational brand ‘Japan’ had become part of the Australian landscape.

By 1961, *Pix*, once prone to highlighting the pitfalls of closer national ties with the old enemy, had started producing positive photo essays about Japan. A story on successful Australian–Japanese marriages included glowing male tributes to ‘wonderful’ Japanese wives. A follow-up story claimed that Japanese men in their turn make ‘wonderful husbands’, from a Melbourne woman who met her spouse in Tokyo while working for Radio Australia.42 This was a story unimaginable a few short years before. The small but growing community of Australians living and working in Japan also attracted attention. Published in *Pix* in 1960, ‘An Aussie Tot in Tokyo’ described the challenges Australian business families faced in raising children in Japan. The article concluded that, surprisingly, the teeming metropolis is ‘a good place for rearing children’; a photograph of an Australian three year old playing happily in a multiracial Tokyo kindergarten illustrates the article.43

 Nonetheless, while Japanese cultural phenomena such as its interior design (though not yet its cuisine) were gaining greater cultural currency in the Australia of the 1960s, the country itself remained *terra incognita*. Most Australian artists and writers still headed straight for London and the cultural capitals of Europe. Tourist photography taken during this period by the small cadre of Australian travellers that ventured to Japan reveals a nation on the move but perplexingly stuck in its ways. An album of photographs taken by Ellen Brophy, the wife of a BCOF serviceman who returned to Japan with him as a tourist in the late 1950s, contains a portrait of a disparate group of women in an unnamed location. The image, which reveals a tension between the tenaciously traditional and the utterly modern, is as confounding as it is fascinating (see Figure 5.10). The handwritten caption alongside the photograph reads: ‘Have you ever seen anything like it?’ Presumably, the photographer is alluding to the exposed breast of the older woman to the right of the picture. Equally, the caption may refer to all three. Were Japanese females not supposed to be decorous, passive and almost obsessive in their efforts to conform to good taste? This collective of postwar Japanese women look defiant and dismissive; certainly they do not feel the obligation to fake a compliant smile for the foreigner’s camera.

One trailblazing traveller photographer was the sculptor and printmaker Bill Clements, who lived in Kyoto for nearly three years from 1964 at around the same time as the noted Australian poet Harold Stewart. Japan was changing, and so was the venerable city of Kyoto itself. The repository of many of the nation’s most prized structures and precious gardens, Kyoto had narrowly been spared the ravages of the wartime bombing, but it was ‘a city in transition’, Clements observed in a photo essay published in the *Kyoto Journal* in 2011.44 Old Kyoto was embracing the modern world. As elsewhere in urban Japan, there was an explosion of interest in photography; camera stores, Clements noted, seemed to be on almost every corner.45 Bill and his wife Barbara took to the streets with a Minolta SR7, taking hundreds of photographs that they hoped would one day become a book ‘that might help open eyes, shape reconciliation’. The book, sadly, has not as yet materialised.46

The year of the Clements’ arrival in Kyoto—1964—was big one for Japan. That October, the Tokyo Olympic Games demonstrated to the world its evolution into a confident contemporary nation. The choice of

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45 Ibid., 12; Bill Clements interview with Melissa Miles, San Isidore, NSW, 30 June 2016.
a student born in Hiroshima on the very day of its nuclear destruction to light the Olympic flame highlighted Japan’s civic reconstruction from the smouldering wreck of August 1945. The spectacle of the Olympics illustrated not merely Japan’s ability to stage a huge international event but also revealed its cutting-edge modernity.\(^\text{47}\) Tokyo was transformed by new expressways, hotels and sports facilities built for the games. The bullet train to Osaka was completed just days before the games opened. The fastest train in the word, the *shinkansen* changed travel within Japan and became a symbol of Japan’s breathtaking renovation. ‘A Pictorial Introduction’ to the enlarged and revised edition of Simpson’s *The Country Upstairs*, published in 1965, contains a two-page photograph of a bullet train hurtling past Mt Fuji—in what has since become an instantly recognisable image of Japan’s mesmerising blend of serene timelessness and helter-skelter activity. In Australia, the Tokyo Olympics was marred by the arrest of its star swimmer, Dawn Fraser, for attempting to purloin an Olympic flag from the moated area outside the imperial palace. The competition was over, it was 2.30 am and Fraser, along with other Australians, had been partying at the Imperial Hotel across from the palace. Yet, even in this awkward moment, magnanimous new Japan was triumphantly revealed. When the Japanese police realised they had taken an Olympic champion into custody, Fraser was promptly released, and the next morning they made a *presento* to her of the flag along with a box of flowers.\(^\text{48}\)

Six years after the Olympics, another state-sponsored event, Expo ’70 in Osaka, provided further compelling evidence that Japan had left militarism behind for a more constructive future, while the mass nationalism it produced offered a disquieting reminder of the war years.\(^\text{49}\) Sandra Wilson described the exposition site as a ‘very effective advertising medium for the achievements of Japanese industry’, a fantasia of pavilions containing futuristic homes and robots, moving walkways, electric cars and a state-of-the-art computer system—and, troublingly, the enthusiastic embrace of nuclearism.\(^\text{50}\) Up to half of the Japanese population saw the expo;

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\(^\text{48}\) The Australian sporting authorities took a less charitable view of Fraser’s nocturnal escapade, banning her from competition for 10 years.

\(^\text{49}\) See Wilson, ‘Exhibiting a New Japan’, 163.

\(^\text{50}\) In the context of a growing dependence on nuclear energy, the Japan Pavilion displayed two ‘Atomic Towers’, along with the legend, ‘Atomic power, if rightly used, will give us splendid power. It can enrich our lives and give us high hopes’ (Wilson, ‘Exhibiting a New Japan’, 165).
visitors totalled a staggering 64 million. A monorail was constructed to transport thousands of people by the hour to the site. The Berlin-born, Melbourne-based modernist photographer Mark Strizic, known for his pictures of architectural and industrial subjects, was in Osaka to photograph the event. Strizic captured both Japanese technological elan and the Australian attempt, in the dramatic design of its own pavilion, to illustrate to the Japanese audience that it too was no industrial backwater. He photographed the monorail from inside the pavilion as it snaked its way around the vast exposition complex (see Figure 5.11). In another photograph (see Figure 5.12), Strizic presents an exterior view of a tree sculpture of skeletal ghost gums—archetypally outback Australia—positioned in stark juxtaposition to a detail of the bold futuristic sweep of the Australian pavilion, fashioned from Australian steel.

Figure 5.11. Mark Strizic, Monorail Viewed from Inside the Australian Pavilion, Expo ’70, Osaka, 1970.

51 Ibid., 174.
Figure 5.12. Mark Strizic, *Exterior of the Australian Pavilion, Expo ’70, Osaka*, 1970.

Japan had already become Australia’s main trading partner well before the end of the decade, and an important linchpin in its growing national engagement with the Asian region more generally. Thus, as Carolyn Barnes and Simon Jackson observed, Expo ’70 was seen by the Australian Government as ‘an important exercise in cultural diplomacy’. The ‘ambitious engineering’ of the pavilion itself and its exhibits (in spaces curated by Robin Boyd) were calculated to impress.\(^{52}\) Designed by James Maccormick, the pavilion featured a monstrous arched cantilever holding in its jaws cables that supported a huge, lotus-like shallow-domed roof above the main exhibition hall. Maccormick claimed that the cantilever was inspired by the *Great Wave Off Kanagawa*, the famous print by the legendary nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e* artist Hokusai. More sceptical observers might have opined that it resembled a mock dinosaur in some suburban children’s theme park.

Despite the growing familiarity of Japan, the number of short-term Australian travellers to Japan remained relatively low. The year after the Osaka Expo, 1971, just under 10,000 made the journey. Through its Community Relations Section, Qantas Airways did its best to inspire interest in the country by producing a series of teaching kits for distribution in both state and independent schools. Its *Family Japan* (1971) series of publications focused on purportedly representative families in Tokyo and the provinces, heavily illustrated by photographs mainly sourced from Japanese agencies, including the Japan National Tourist Organisation. *The Two Families from Tokyo* issue strongly emphasised the attractive modernity of suburban life in the capital. *Two Rural Families* suggested the passing of traditional ways of life, as land prices rise and urbanisation continued its sweep across the landscape.\(^{53}\)

Conversely, Japanese travel to Australia was on the rise, increasing exponentially throughout the 1970s and 1980s. By 1988, Japanese tourism to Australia outstripped Australian travel to Japan twelvefold.\(^{54}\) Japanese

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53 Ted Myers, Qantas culture series no 5, *Family Japan: Two Families from Tokyo* (Sydney: Qantas Airways and the Asian Studies Coordinating Committee, 1974); *Family Japan: Two Rural Families* (Sydney: Qantas Airways and the Asian Studies Coordinating Committee, 1974).

54 See Ian Castles, *Year Book Australia*, no. 73 1990 (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1990), 381. In 1988, the number of Australian tourists to Japan was 31,000; that same year, Australia attracted 352,300 Japanese.
tourists came armed with their cameras, creating a national stereotype that has continued to the present day. By 2015, Tourism Australia had come upon the idea of creating a smartphone app, aimed specifically at young Japanese, which allows tourists to take ‘selfie’ photographs with iconic backdrops to inspire actual travel to the country.55

The camera was used more conventionally by some Japanese when they started gravitating to Australia in the early 1960s. A singular moment in the history of postwar Australia–Japan reconciliation—comprehensively if prosaically covered by the camera—came with the arrival of the Fujita Salvage Company in Darwin in 1959. This was to prove a story of ‘salvage’ in more ways than one. The city’s harbour was still choked by the wrecks of ships destroyed by the Japanese aerial bombings in 1942 and needed to be cleared. After a worldwide search, the contract was awarded to a Japanese company, an irony not lost on the local people. Sensitive to a possible public backlash, the Australian Government stipulated that no former Japanese soldiers could be involved in what was a massive project. Yet, the company team of 120 Japanese workers, brave men diving in deep and dangerous waters, earned the respect of the Darwin community during their two-year stay. Housed aboard the first of the salvaged ships, the British Motorist, they interacted with the locals in various forms of social exchange, caught by the (anonymous) company photographer. In one photograph (see Figure 5.13), taken in 1961, Australian visitors to the Japanese quarters (for what appears to be a Japanese meal) make a toast for the camera in a convivial domestic scene unimaginable a decade earlier.56

Further Japanese arrivals to Australian shores during the 1960s provided more profound opportunities to produce definitive images of postwar reconciliation, especially for the cluster of official photographers attached to the ANIB. In 1964, the formal establishment of the Cowra War Cemetery, containing the remains of Japanese prisoners of war killed in the wartime ‘breakout’, occasioned the visit of still-grieving relatives, whose arrival in Australia was photographed by Bill Brindle for the

55 Damien Larkins, ‘Selfies “on Steroids” Set to Lure Japanese Tourist to Australia’, ABC Gold Coast News, 3 September 2015.

56 The spirit of amity was further fostered by the company owner, Ryogo Fujita, a pacifist, who crafted 77 bronze crosses from the metal of one of the sunken vessels and donated them to Darwin’s Uniting Church, destroyed during the air raids, now being rebuilt with the aid of its sister church in Kyoto. The extensive photographic collection of the salvage operation went on public display as ‘Mr Fujita’s Photo Album’ at Darwin’s Northern Territory Library from November 2016 to February 2017.
ANIB. However, by far the most moving Japanese familial pilgrimage, widely covered by the press and television as well as the ANIB, was that, in 1968, of Matsue Matsuo, the aged mother of the submariner Lieutenant Keiu Matsuo, who was killed in the midget submarine raid in Sydney Harbour in 1942. In Canberra, Mrs Matsuo met with the Australian Prime Minister John Gorton and made an emotional visit to the Australian War Memorial to formally receive her son’s bloodstained body belt, until then kept on public display. Paid for by funds raised by public subscription in Japan, Mrs Matsuo’s sentimental journey created immense public interest in Australia and in her home country.

The most affecting moment of the trip came when, accompanied by her daughter, Mrs Matsuo was taken by launch to Taylor’s Bay in Sydney Harbour, where her son’s vessel had been destroyed. Supported by two Australian sailors, the frail, traditionally attired mother stood shakily on the launch’s rear deck and read a poem expressing her yearning for her dead son, before casting flowers and pouring sake from his home town.

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57 See NAA A1501 A5755/1; A5755/2.
58 See photograph, AWM 135591.
into the sea. The *Sydney Morning Herald*’s George Lipman was there to capture an extraordinary moment in modern Australian and Japanese history, one that illustrates the camera’s ability to distil the abstract forces of history into snapshots of shared human emotion (see Figure 5.14). The visit and the emotive visual imagery with which it was rendered made undeniably good public relations material at the time, and has continued to provide a useful historical touchtone for political rhetoric celebrating bilateralism—in a speech to the Australian parliament in July 2014 celebrating the two countries’ ‘special relationship’, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe confessed that the episode ‘pulls at my heartstrings even now’.59 For her part, the frail 83 year old was put to work on her visit,

59 Abe speech, 8 July 2014, japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/statement/201407/0708article1.html.
laying a wreath for the Australian war dead at the cenotaph in Sydney’s Martin Place and calling on Healesville Sanctuary outside Melbourne for the obligatory close encounter with Australian fauna.  

Staged encounters of visiting Japanese with iconic Australiana were the stock-in-trade for the ANIB photographic cohort. An incarnation of the wartime Department of Information, the ANIB was set up in 1947 to promote Australia abroad, with one eye on encouraging migration. Stimulating Japanese investment (and not migration) was the name of the game in the 1960s. Nevertheless, photographers working for the ANIB doggedly documented the developing cultural links between the two nations, usually by placing the Japanese in ‘typical’ Australian environments. In 1965, the onetime Sydney *Daily Telegraph* photographer Keith Byron—fresh from a stint in the US photographing presidents and Hollywood celebrities for United Press International and other agencies—captured members of a Japanese Youth Goodwill Mission observing a sheep-shearing demonstration at Werribee near Melbourne. Visits by Japanese business delegations, local government figures forging ‘sister city’ links and members of the royal family were also comprehensively photographed by the ANIB. Some of its images reveal the tourists themselves photographing fellow Japanese, often in the act of tentatively attempting to cuddle a koala or a kangaroo.

Photographing the mundane niceties of cultural exchange between Australia and Japan evidently presented a representational challenge to the ANIB cohort, some of whom, such as the noted war photographer Cliff Bottomley, had experienced rather more bracing professional conditions. Badly wounded in New Guinea in 1942–43, Bottomley took some dramatic pictures of the Papuan campaign after having been present at Singapore in the lead-up to its fall in February 1942; his photograph of local women wailing beside the corpse of a child killed in a Japanese air raid is one of the most upsetting images of the Pacific

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60 Mrs Matsuo seems to have enjoyed the visit to Healesville. See ‘It Is Paradise, Says Mother’, *Canberra Times*, 6 May 1968, 14.

61 In 1973, the bureau was renamed the Australian Information Service. One of its later titles (from 1986) was *Promotion Australia*.


63 See, for example, the image of members of a 1963 Goodwill mission with kangaroo, NAA A1501 A4719/1; 1963 image of the mayor of ‘Takada, in Australia to sign a ‘sister city’ agreement with Lismore NSW, NAA A1501 A4568/1; members of Japan’s ‘Floating University’ taking photographs of a woman holding a koala (1965), NAA A1510 A5894/8; the 1965 visit to Canberra of Princess Misako, NAA A1501 A6063/8.
War. Later, in 1944, he captured General MacArthur triumphantly returning to the Philippines, striding ashore what had been Japanese-held territory, like some latter-day Poseidon. Back home in Australia, Bottomley did occasional work for the ANIB. In 1963, he went to the outer suburbs of Melbourne to picture a party of Japanese school children attending a barbecue hosted by a local family. The students had won a trip to Australia in a competition co-sponsored by the Mainichi Broadcasting Company, the Australian Broadcasting Commission and Qantas Airways. Their task had been to either paint or write an essay on what they thought Australia was like. The competition was reciprocal; Australian students were asked to do the same of Japan, with a visit also the prize for them. Bottomley’s image of the barbecue conveys the stilted nature of these official or quasi-official gestures and merely serves to accentuate the essential differences in the two cultures (see Figure 5.15). The two Australian children are dressed disarmingly casually, compared with the more formal and conventional attire of the Japanese. Even the family dog seems constrained by the formality of the occasion, though perhaps it was transfixed by the sight and smell of the meat on the grill.

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64 See Shaune Lakin, *Contact: Photographs from the Australian War Memorial Collection* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 2006), 133, 141, 163.
The Whitlams Go to Tokyo

Like the humble domestic encounters dutifully photographed by the ANIB, the imagery of Australia–Japan political diplomacy during this period inadvertently captured a continuing unease in the bilateral relationship, one which perhaps went beyond the intrinsically artificial nature of such high-end tête-à-têtes. In October 1973, two years after his historic trip to Peking as opposition leader to meet with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, Australian Prime Minister Gough Whitlam visited Japan. He was en route to China to confer again with Chou en-lai, call on Chairman Mao and give (as he put it) further expression to Australia’s ‘new international outlook’. Post-Vietnam, Australia was re-engaging with Asia. The Japan visit was no mere sideshow to China. Accompanied by the largest ministerial delegation ever to leave Australian shores, and his wife Margaret, Whitlam had important business to conduct. It was, observed the commentator Max Suich at the time, the ‘most crucial encounter between Japanese and Australians in the last 20 years’.

Australian and Japanese officials had long been negotiating to diversify and extend the trade and economic partnership formalised by the 1957 Commerce Agreement. On the Japanese side, there was the desire for a broader, deeper relationship. Australia, for its part, had traditionally resisted treaties with other nations. Upon the successful conclusion of the discussions in Tokyo, Whitlam and the Japanese Foreign Minister Ohira appeared together at a press conference at which the former talked of the ‘reluctance’ and the ‘negative attitude’ of Australian administrations towards the longstanding Japanese proposal for a broad-ranging treaty between the two countries. His government was determined to redress this negativity with what was to be known as the Nippon–Australian Relations Agreement (NARA). At the press conference, Whitlam casually mentioned that Japan’s Prime Minister Tanaka had suggested the treaty might be named the Treaty of Nara, after the ancient capital and cultural centre, which Whitlam had toured a couple of days earlier. In fact, the suggestion had come from Whitlam himself, possibly via his

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Through Non-Military Eyes

press secretary Graham Freudenberg. No doubt Whitlam was attracted to the historical resonance of the nomenclature, but the suggestion was greeted coolly by the Japanese, in part because the title contained what was diplomatically called ‘an unfortunate pun’—for ‘onara’ is the Japanese word for ‘fart’.68

In Tokyo, Whitlam had hoped that the NARA treaty might be signed in Australia the following year, on the occasion of Prime Minister Tanaka’s reciprocal visit. However, the negotiations became protracted and Whitlam, dismissed from office on 11 November 1975, never saw the process through to fruition. Renamed as the less offensive ‘Basic Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation’—the first (and still the only) official treaty of friendship and amity between Australia and any other country—it was signed by Whitlam’s successor, Malcolm Fraser, in Tokyo in June 1976. It was an occasion, Fraser noted, ‘born of goodwill and mutual interests’.69

As is de rigueur with state visits, the Whitlams’ trip to Japan was assiduously captured by a bevy of official and press photographers, from the welcoming handshake from Prime Minister Tanaka at the airport to scenes of both Whitlam and his wife interacting with the local people. At Nara, the immensely tall Australian was pictured standing like a skyscraper over a cluster of Japanese children.70 ‘The formal portrait of the Whitlams’ audience with Empress Hirohito and Empress Nagako at the Imperial Palace, broadly circulated in the Australian press, suggests the inevitable awkwardness of such formal occasions (see Figure 5.16). Gloved and frocked to the hilt, Margaret Whitlam looks glumly away from the camera while the emperor looks in the opposite direction. Meanwhile, the tiny empress appears to be faintly amused, and Whitlam, fists clenched, looks tense and uncharacteristically uncertain. Seemingly without irony, the picture was captioned in the Melbourne Sun as a ‘Happy Visit to Japan’.71

69 Malcolm Fraser quoted in Dee, Friendship and Co-operation, 40.
The Whitlams must have understood that physical stature did not equate with strength, and that the Japanese remained masters of their own territory. One cannot help comparing the scene with the photograph of MacArthur towering above Hirohito at the American Embassy in 1945, in which there is no doubt about who is most at home and self-confidently in charge. Of course, the contexts are starkly different; MacArthur was the triumphant conqueror and Gough Whitlam merely a slightly awestruck visitor. Yet this awkwardly staged display of bilateral camaraderie with the once-despised emperor illustrates the sensitivities still surrounding the Australia–Japan relationship in the early 1970s.72

Certainly, as the Melbourne Herald editorialised, the Tokyo agreement of October 1973 clinched ‘a welcome Pacific partnership’ that had opened ‘an historic new chapter’ in bilateral relations.73 Nonetheless, some Australians still harboured conflicted feelings about the Japanese, and perhaps a niggling sense of inferiority.

72 First performed at Melbourne’s Pram Factory theatre a few months after Whitlam’s visit, in early 1974, John Romeril’s The Floating World placed these sensitivities on full dramatic display. The play enacted the crack-up of an Australian war veteran on a Women’s Weekly ‘Cherry Blossom’ cruise to Japan, tapping into contemporary disquiet about Japan’s new economic dominance while satirising the war-derived hatred that lingered in sections of Australian society.

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