

4 Archival Country, Counterclaims

As an indication of improving trade between the colonies and the East, the inauguration of a new steamship service under the auspices of the Japanese Mail Steamship Company is an event to be welcomed, and in the *Yamashiro Maru*, the pioneer vessel, which arrived here yesterday, the proprietors of the service have presented a steamship which should at once commend itself to the travelling public.

Argus (Melbourne), 12 November 1896

And in that water lies our sacred Law.
Not just near the foreshore. We sing from the shore to where the clouds
rise on the horizon.

Lanani Marika, 'Declaration', 1999¹

A Map

In its heyday, the *Yamashiro-maru* was known not only for having transported thousands of Japanese labourers to Hawai'i but also for having opened the NYK's monthly service to Australia. Beginning in October 1896 and in rotation with two other company ships, it steamed from Yokohama to Melbourne via Hong Kong every three months until the end of 1898, when it was replaced on the route by a newer, bigger vessel.

In my initial online research for this period of the ship's life in 2012, I came across a man who took early advantage of the new Japan–Australia line, possibly after reading reports of its official opening in the Japanese newspapers.² Hasegawa Setsutarō was born in the Hokkaido port of Otaru in 1871 and trained as a schoolteacher. Having applied for a passport at the end of 1896, he arrived in Australia on the *Yamashiro-*

¹ Lanani Marika, 'Declaration', trans. Raymattja Marika, in Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre, *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country: Recognising Indigenous Sea Rights* (Neutral Bay, NSW: Jennifer Isaacs Publishing, 2003 [1999]), p. 19.

² A number of articles about the new NYK line to Australia appeared in the *Yomiuri shinbun* in October 1896, including a description of the tiffin and fireworks that accompanied the *Yamashiro-maru's* departure from Yokohama on 3 October: *YS*, 4 October 1896.

maru in February 1897, travelling in steerage with one other Japanese and nine Chinese passengers. According to oral history interviews given by his daughter-in-law in the mid 1980s, he came to Melbourne to learn English, lodging at the residence of a certain Colonel Tucket as a ‘house-boy’. But having allegedly been badly treated by his employer, Hasegawa ended up in Geelong, where he became one of four Japanese laundry owners. Marrying Australia-born Ada Cole in 1905, he and Ada brought up three sons before divorcing in 1914. After his attempt to open an import–export company failed during the First World War, Hasegawa returned to the laundry business, where he worked until his internment as an enemy alien in December 1941. During the war, two of his sons permanently adopted their mother’s maiden name in an attempt to avoid anti-Japanese discrimination.

Upon his death in 1952, Hasegawa left his family a collection of documents, objects and clothes, which they later donated to Museums Victoria.³ Among the surviving possessions which he brought from Japan in 1897 was a Ministry of Education-approved textbook of English lessons by Reverend D. A. Murray, then head of a commercial school in Kyoto. The book speaks to Hasegawa’s training as a teacher, to his hopes for a new life in Melbourne – and to a rote-based mode of teaching English still prevalent a century later in Japan. Structured according to the ‘Style of Sentence’, for example, Lesson 1 was entitled: ‘This is a book’. And Lesson 2: ‘This is a book *and* a pen’.⁴

³ Moya McFadzean (2009), ‘Setsutarō Hasegawa, Japanese Migrant, 1897–circa 1952’, in Museums Victoria Collections, <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/2935> (all links in this footnote were last accessed on 8 May 2021); McFadzean incorrectly notes Hasegawa’s date of birth as 1868. Since my initial internet searches in 2012, more information about Hasegawa has come online, including Andrew Hasegawa, ‘Story of Hasegawa Family’, *Nikkei Australia: Japanese Diaspora in Australia*, 6 October 2014, www.nikkeiaustralia.com/story-hasegawa-family/, ‘Interview with Ida Hasegawa’, 31 August 2020, www.nikkeiaustralia.com/interview-with-ida-hasegawa-on-hasegawa-family-history/, and various posts by Andrew Hasegawa (Setsutarō’s great-grandson) on *Untitled.Showa: With Love from Australia*, <https://untitled.showa.com.au>. The historian Yuriko Nagata conducted her own interview with Setsutarō’s daughter-in-law, Ida, in August 1987, which she references several times in her ‘Japanese Internment in Australia during World War II’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Adelaide, 1993). For details of Hasegawa’s arrival on the *Yamashiro-maru*, see the microfilms ‘Brisbane Inwards 1892–97 Rolls 5 and 6’, National Archives of Australia (Brisbane) J715.

⁴ Rev. D. A. Murray, *Inductive English Lessons; Japanese Text*, 3rd edn (Osaka: Osaka kokubunsha, 1892); <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1556835> (last accessed 8 May 2021) (emphasis in the original).

This is a story of how my privileging of the book and the pen led to my overlooking an archival bias inherent in any analysis of the Japan–Australia line’s history. As so often in the reconstruction of Australia’s colonial past, the written word led me to approach sources from a particular direction. What I mean by this will hopefully become clearer towards the end of the chapter. For now, it suffices to say that my archival work in 2013 began, as I assumed it logically should, with the records of the Sydney-based enterprise which served as the NYK’s managing agent for Australia after 1896. The papers of Burns, Philp & Co, incorporated in 1883, are today preserved in the Noel Butlin Archives Centre of the Australian National University in Canberra. And there, among ledgers and reports and correspondence, I came across a striking map, bigger when unfolded than an A2 sheet, with the title, ‘N. Y. K. Line: Map Showing the Routes and Ports of Call of N. Y. K. Steamers’ (see Map 1).

The map depicted the Japanese archipelago, coloured in deep red, almost at the centre point of the folds. Though undated, the fact that Taiwan, Korea, southern Sakhalin and much of Micronesia were also coloured in deep red, thus indicating their status as Japanese colonies, suggested a publication date sometime in the mid 1920s.⁵ From the imperial metropole, red lines fanned out across the maritime world. One thick line crossed the north Pacific to connect Yokohama with Seattle. Three more carved up the waters between Nagasaki and Shanghai before forking south-west to Hong Kong, where they divided: one continued through Southeast Asia and down to Australia, while the other threaded through the Indian Ocean, the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean and the Bay of Biscay, eventually to Antwerp, Middlesbrough and London.⁶ The British Empire at its zenith – the oversized home islands, great swathes of East Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Australia and Canada – was coloured in pink, with much of the rest of the world in pale yellow.

The map was beguiling in its schematic simplicity. As perhaps to be expected, at one level it simplified the geopolitical realities of the

⁵ Burns Philp Collection, N115/622 Printed – NYK Line 1896–1982 (Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Australian National University). On the map’s reverse is a section entitled ‘N. Y. K. Line Proposed Sailings (1923–1924–1925)’.

⁶ In this chapter I use the term ‘Southeast Asia’ despite the moniker being a post-war construct which falsely divides Asia into ‘South’ and ‘Southeast’ – and, as I shall argue in this chapter’s final section, ‘Southeast Asia’ from ‘Australia’. For one discussion, see Sunil S. Amrith, *Crossing the Bay of Bengal: The Furies of Nature and the Fortunes of Migrants* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp. 243–5.

contemporaneous mid 1920s.⁷ Positing Japan as central to the Pacific world, its emboldened shipping routes seemed wilfully to cut across transpacific tensions over race and migration in the 1900s and 1910s, tensions which had provoked scaremongering books such as *Must We Fight Japan?* (1921) or restrictive anti-Asian legislation in the United States such as the Johnson–Reed Immigration Act (1924). Thus, the map’s red lines defied the early twentieth-century ‘white walls’ which settler societies in North America and Australia were erecting against the perceived ‘yellow peril’ from Asia in general and from Japan in particular.⁸

At a second level, the map simplified the mid 1890s context in which the NYK’s new lines had originally been forged, including both Japan’s revised treaty of commerce with Britain (1894) and its victory in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–5). The positive reading of this context was applied by Alexander Marks (1838–1919), honorary consul of Japan to Australia and later Victoria, who wrote to his Tokyo paymasters in March 1895: ‘The great prospects for the Nippon Yusen Kwaisha at the termination of the present war with their large fleet of steamers must naturally be of much commercial interest to Japan, and [to] her trading community.’⁹ As the ‘N. Y. K. Line’ map confirmed, the company indeed opened three new prestigious routes in 1896 – to Seattle and to various European ports, as well as to Melbourne, thereby providing a stimulus to Japan’s international trading prospects.¹⁰ But there was also a negative side to this story: on the docks and in the port-towns of Australia in particular, politicians and the press expressed fears about the arrival of Japanese and Chinese immigrants (as embodied by Hasegawa and his steerage companions), or of undocumented women from Japan (see

⁷ My analysis in this chapter mainly looks back. But it could also be argued that the NYK map was a forerunner of Japanese geopolitical imaginations in the 1930s, when corporate maritime expansion and imperial designs on Southeast Asia would go hand-in-hand: see Kris Alexanderson, *Subversive Seas: Anticolonial Networks across the Twentieth-Century Dutch Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 209–45.

⁸ On the ‘white walls’, see Adam M. McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men’s Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). For Japan’s reaction to the 1924 Immigration Act, see Nancy Stalker, ‘Suicide, Boycotts and Embracing Tagore: The Japanese Popular Response to the 1924 US Immigration Exclusion Law’, *Japanese Studies* 26, 2 (2006): 153–70.

⁹ Letter from Alexander Marks to the Vice Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Tokyo, 30 March 1895: DA 6.1.5.9–7, vol. 1. Also available from JACAR (www.jacar.gov.jp) (reference code B16080178700, photos 0240–1) (last accessed 15 May 2021). Although Marks’s letter is dated 1896, it’s obvious from the context and content that this is a mistake, and the letter was instead written in March 1895.

¹⁰ Recall, in Chapter 1, Mori Arinori’s 1873 essay, claiming that enlightened countries ‘open seaways’.

Chapter 5). Thus, in exactly the years that the *Yamashiro-maru* steamed the Yokohama-Melbourne line, popular anxieties in Australia would culminate in the Federation of 1901 and the establishment of the new nation's foundational 'White Australia' policy.¹¹

In other words, under the guise of cartographic objectivity the NYK map projected a number of claims about Japan's position in the world, both in the mid 1920s but also stretching back to the mid 1890s. To critique each aspect of the map's apparently neutral lines, points, colours and directionality is thus to unpack the propositions and conceptual schemata contained therein.¹² This I attempt in the chapter's first two-thirds, where I use the *Yamashiro-maru*'s career in the period immediately prior to 1896 in order to demonstrate the very real military power which underpinned the map's rhetorical power; and I then challenge the map's representation of apparently frictionless hubs of Japanese-Australian connection by reconstructing the thick historical context in several ports at which the *Yamashiro-maru* called between 1896 and 1898.¹³ My empirical base for this analysis was suggested by the map itself: where the lines met the land, be that in Brisbane or Sydney or especially in northern sites such as Queensland's Port Douglas, I assumed that the tension between the NYK's 'great prospects' and fears on the ground must have left some kind of archival trace. So it transpired, and there my work might have ended.

That it did not was due to my encountering the 'Saltwater Visions' temporary display at Sydney's National Maritime Museum on the last day of my two-week research trip to Australia in November 2013.¹⁴ This

¹¹ On this process, see David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850–1939* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1999).

¹² On maps as propositions, see Denis Wood, with Jon Fels and John Krygier, *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), especially pp. 39–66. For an exploration of how maps try to hide their 'privileging of a particular conceptual scheme', see David Turnbull with Helen Watson, *Maps Are Territories: Science Is an Atlas: A Portfolio of Exhibits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), also online at <http://territories.indigenousknowledge.org/index.html>, here Exhibit 3 (last accessed 11 May 2021).

¹³ My methodology here is influenced by the idea that 'Thick mappings, like thick descriptions, emphasize context and meaning-making through a combination of micro and macro analyses that foster a multiplicity of interpretations rather than simply supporting facts or considering maps as somehow given, objective or complete': Todd Presner, David Shepard and Yoh Kawano, *HyperCities: Thick Mapping in the Digital Humanities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014) pp. 18–19. My thanks to David Ambaras for this reference.

¹⁴ 'Saltwater Visions' was displayed in the National Maritime Museum's Tasman Light Gallery from 23 May 2013 to 23 February 2014: *Australian National Maritime Museum Annual Report 2012–13*, p. 14, https://issuu.com/anmmuseum/docs/annual_report_2012_2013/14 (last accessed 10 May 2021).

mini-exhibition centred on ten bark paintings composed by Yolŋu artists and activists in the north-east of Arnhem Land, in today's Northern Territory. Five of the paintings, it was explained, had been used as evidence in a 2008 high court case which focused on the 'ownership' of coastal waters. In the years following that encounter, I began to realize that although the NYK map's claims per se were important, the institutional settings in which those claims were preserved and could be researched must also be acknowledged. Those settings had framed not merely my knowledge of what I understood to be the 'Japan–Australia line' but also the positionality from which I approached its history: they were the museums, the university libraries, the state and national archives where I felt most at home, and even the infrastructures of digitization which had led me to a man such as Hasegawa Setsutarō. I explore these ideas in the section entitled 'Archival Directionality'.

But an archive need not necessarily comprise books, words or maps, all to be measured for their empirical truths against other paper sources: for paper can simply be thrown away, as the Japanese historian Minoru Hokari learned from his mentor Jimmy Mangayarri of Daguragu.¹⁵ Instead, 'Saltwater Visions' alerted me to something that my historical training in the universities of Britain and Japan had rarely allowed (in all senses of the word): that the material basis for historical claims need not only be paper and a pen. The sand could be the book; the bush, the university.¹⁶ That is, the archive was as equally situated in Aboriginal country as in the modern state's institutions of knowledge.¹⁷ 'Country', as many scholars have pointed out, is a spatially fluid concept whose meanings may partly be read in contradistinction to the bordered sovereign entity of the colonial state (the etymological roots of 'country' lie in *contra*).¹⁸ Thus, if the earthy and watery materiality of the country could as equally be considered sites of archival knowledge as museums or

¹⁵ Minoru Hokari, *Gurindji Journey: A Japanese Historian in the Outback* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2011 [2004]), pp. 122, 134.

¹⁶ Samia Khatun, *Australianama: The South Asian Odyssey in Australia* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2018), especially ch. 6 ('The Book of Sand'). The phrase 'bush university' was used by Djambawa Marawili in 'Gapu-Monuk: Saltwater', a promotional video to accompany the Australian National Maritime Museum's much bigger exhibition of its Saltwater Collection, which ran from 9 November 2017 to 17 February 2019: www.sea.museum/saltwater (last accessed 10 May 2021). For more on Djambawa Marawili, see the 'Delineating' section later in this chapter.

¹⁷ My thinking on sites of knowledge is influenced by Christian Jacob, *Qu'est-ce qu'un lieu de savoir?* (Marseille: Open Edition Press, 2014), <http://books.openedition.org/oepp/423> (last accessed 11 May 2021); and David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003).

¹⁸ Timothy Neale and Stephen Turner, 'Other People's Country: Law, Water, Entitlement', *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, 4 (2015): 277–81, here p. 280.

university libraries, then the question arose: what counterclaims could be enunciated through this archive? I offer one answer to that question in the chapter's final section.

As I say, I did not begin to imagine the archives in this way until my last day in Australia. My 'stepping outside' to that point had been less intellectually demanding, limited as it was to a two-day road trip to Queensland's northernmost sugar-farming town of Mossman, where in 1898 a group of Japanese labourers arrived to work after their passage on the *Yamashiro-maru* to Port Douglas. Given these oversights, I planned in June 2020 to revisit the far north of Queensland – Mossman, Port Douglas and Thursday Island – in order to explore the basis by which historians might reconstruct alternative archival claims concerning the arrival of the ship and its passengers. The Covid-19 pandemic put paid to that trip, and in any case an additional two weeks would probably have been insufficient time to think through the lessons of Yolŋu saltwater visions for how the Kuku Yalanji peoples of Mossman might have understood the arrival of Japanese sugar labourers in their country in the late nineteenth century. Consequently, what follows in the chapter's final third is less a reconstruction of the specific moment of the *Yamashiro-maru's* arrival as seen from Kuku Yalanji perspectives than a broader challenge to the historical directionality both represented by the NYK map and embodied in the archival institutions of libraries, museums and universities. My argument here is for historians, as part of our archival practices, to acknowledge country-derived counterclaims to sources such as the NYK map as empirical interventions in our reconstructions of the past.

Claim 1: Lines Away from the Sinosphere

When a ship sailed, what did it carry? Goods and people, of course; but a ship also carried a set of associations which went beyond its cargo or physical appearance and crossed into the realm of the imagination. One entry point into this imaginative space was the ship's name. It mattered, for example, that some functionary in the British Admiralty chose to rename the *Earl of Pembroke*, the Whitby-built collier that Captain Cook would command while observing the transit of Venus from Tahiti in 1769, the *Endeavour*. The ship could have as conceivably been called the *Racehorse* or the *Carcass* – both names, Nicholas Thomas quips, 'which would rather have diminished the mythic potential of Cook's voyage, one feels'.¹⁹

¹⁹ Nicholas Thomas, *Discoveries: The Voyages of Captain Cook* (London: Penguin Books, 2018 edn), p. 19.

So it was with the *Yamashiro-maru*: no records survive to indicate whether a KUK employee or an Imperial Navy bureaucrat chose the name for the 2,500-ton vessel launched from Low Walker yard 467 on a cold morning in January 1884 – but in Newcastle upon Tyne as elsewhere in late nineteenth-century Europe, an appellative strategy was clearly at work.²⁰ Yamashiro was the most important province of ancient Japan. The imperial capital had been moved there from Nara in 784 (that is, exactly 1,100 years before the *Yamashiro-maru*'s launch), and then again in 794 to another of Yamashiro's settlements, Heian – later known as Kyoto, where the capital remained until the Meiji 'restoration' of 1868.²¹ Meanwhile, the *Yamashiro-maru*'s sister ship, the *Omi-maru*, was named after a neighbouring province and site of one of the ancient court's summer palaces (Ōmi 近江), while the fourteen other British-built steamships of the KUK fleet each carried province- or place-names that connoted Japan's seventh-century Ritsuryō state.

Such referencing of the distant past for the transformative present was standard fare in mid-late Meiji Japan, as demonstrated by the rhetoric of the 1868 revolution as a 'revival of ancient kingly rule' (*ōsei fukko* 王政復古). Modern innovations were regularly embellished in the language and iconography of the ancient, as in (to name but one of countless examples) the new paper notes of the new national currency, which were released in 1873 and whose ten-yen issue featured the legendary Empress Jingū (169–269 CE) on her conquest of the Korean peninsula.²² In many cases, moreover, such uses of the past also had spatial and not merely temporal dimensions. In 1869, Meiji officials renamed the large island to the north of Honshu from Ezo to Hokkaidō (北海道), literally 'northern sea circuit'. This looked back to a spatial ordering of the aforementioned Ritsuryō state known as the 'five provinces, seven circuits' (*goki-shichidō* 五畿七道) – except that Hokkaido now implied an eighth circuit, as if the island had been part of a Japanese territorial imagination from time immemorial.²³

²⁰ For naming strategies in the German and British imperial navies in the late nineteenth century, see Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 147–59, 165–82. The naming of the KUK fleet is unfortunately absent from Richard Ponsoyby-Fane, *The Nomenclature of the N. Y. K. Fleet* (Tokyo: Nippon yusen kaisha, 1931), which nevertheless explains the NYK naming rationale for later classes of steamships.

²¹ Ellen van Goethem, *Nagaoka: The Forgotten Capital* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

²² On these tensions, see Mark Ravina, 'Locally Ancient and Globally Modern', in Robert Hellyer and Harald Fuess, eds., *The Meiji Restoration: Japan as a Global Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), pp. 212–31. As Ravina points out, the ¥10 note was in fact modelled on the US\$10 National Bank note from the 1860s.

²³ Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World*, p. 174.

A ship named *Yamashiro*, after one of those five central provinces, therefore made explicit reference to the spatial logic of ancient Japan. Indeed, in cartographic terms it recalled a schematic type of provincial map, used even into the nineteenth century, in which Yamashiro was marked as the ‘centre of the imperium’ and distances were indicated in the time it took to travel ‘up’ to the imperial capital and back ‘down’ – that is, to and from Kyoto.²⁴ Such temporal schemata were a far cry from the mid-1920s ‘N. Y. K. Line’ map, which offered a representation of space apparently divorced from time, with Japan rather than Kyoto at its folded centre. But as the infrastructures were put in place from the mid 1880s onwards to realize this NYK vision of Japan’s place in the maritime world, the *Yamashiro-maru*’s early status as the fleet’s *primus inter pares* made the ship symbolically central to mid-Meiji Japan in a way presumably intended to reference the historical province’s analogous centrality to the ancient state. In this sense, to adapt Kären Wigen’s apt phrase, the ship constituted a ‘province of the mind’.²⁵

In fact, however, the NYK map *can* also be read through a temporal lens. As we have seen, the bold red lines emanating from Japan glossed over the geopolitical realities of the 1920s, namely that white walls had been or were being erected in the Pacific Anglosphere to keep Japanese immigrants out. Yet such contestations notwithstanding, the drawing of thick connections across the Pacific was itself indicative of a major historical transformation. Throughout the Tokugawa period, Japanese world maps had presented an ocean untraversed by shipping lines. Moreover, in Nagakubo Sekisui’s (1717–1801) famous ‘Complete Illustration of the Globe, All the Countries, and the Mountains and Oceans of the Earth’ (c. 1790), the great uncoloured space at the centre of the world was not even marked the ‘Pacific’ (see Map 2). It was instead labelled both the ‘small eastern sea’ and the ‘large eastern sea’, in which ‘small’ (it has been argued) suggested *nearby* or *familiar* and ‘large’ *faraway* or *fearful*, thereby reflecting a profound Japanese ambivalence towards the distant Pacific world before the mid nineteenth century.²⁶ By contrast, Nagakubo’s colour scheme, whereby all of South, Southeast and East Asia (including Japan) were marked in red, unambiguously

²⁴ Kären Wigen, *A Malleable Map: Geographies of Restoration in Central Japan, 1600–1912* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 33–7. See also Nobuko Toyosawa, *Imaginative Mapping: Landscape and Japanese Identity in the Tokugawa and Meiji Eras* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), especially pp. 88–144.

²⁵ Wigen, *Malleable Map*, p. 2, in turn adapting John R. Gillis, *Islands of the Mind: How the Human Imagination Created the Atlantic World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²⁶ Marcia Yonemoto, ‘Maps and Metaphors of Japan’s “Small Eastern Sea” in Tokugawa Japan, 1603–1868’, *Geographical Review* 89, 2 (1999): 169–87.



Map 2 Nagakubo Sekisui, 'Complete Illustration of the Globe, All the Countries, and the Mountains and Oceans of the Earth' (*Chikyū bankoku sankai yochi zenzusetsu* 地球萬國山海輿地全圖說), c. 1790. Call number G3201 .C1 1790z N2. Courtesy of University of British Columbia Library, Rare Books & Special Collections.

posited Japan as part of the continental Sinosphere – a positioning reinforced by the fact that the cartographic inspiration for Nagakubo's map had been published in Beijing in 1602 and entered Nagasaki, via Jesuit conduits, soon thereafter.²⁷

This contrast in representations of Asia and the Pacific reveals that the claim in the NYK map was not simply *for* Japan's post-1868 centrality to the Pacific world; it was therein also a claim *against* the hitherto defining role that the Sinosphere had played in Japanese cultural and intellectual life for many centuries.²⁸ In the map's colour scheme, imperial Japan's deep red now stood in marked contrast to China and Mongolia's yellow. Even the graticule delineation of longitude and latitude reinforced the map's message of new world centres away from China, with zero degrees longitude anchored at the Greenwich meridian.²⁹

Steaming towards Australia in October 1896 and thereby establishing one of the subsequent NYK map's linear claims, the *Yamashiro-maru* was emblematic of Japan's transformed temporal relationship to the Sinosphere. On the one hand, the ship's name referenced the Ritsuryō state, itself modelled closely on Tang China (618–907). On the other, after being requisitioned by the Japanese Imperial Navy in June 1894, the ship had been active in the conflict which brought China's long claim to wider cultural and intellectual influence in East Asia decisively to an end, namely the Sino-Japanese War (1894–5).³⁰ True, the *Yamashiro-maru* was never feted for its wartime service in the Japanese press like its NYK counterpart, the *Saikyo-maru*, which famously fought in the heat of the Battle of the Yalu River.³¹ Rather, from July 1894 to the end of the war in April 1895 and even

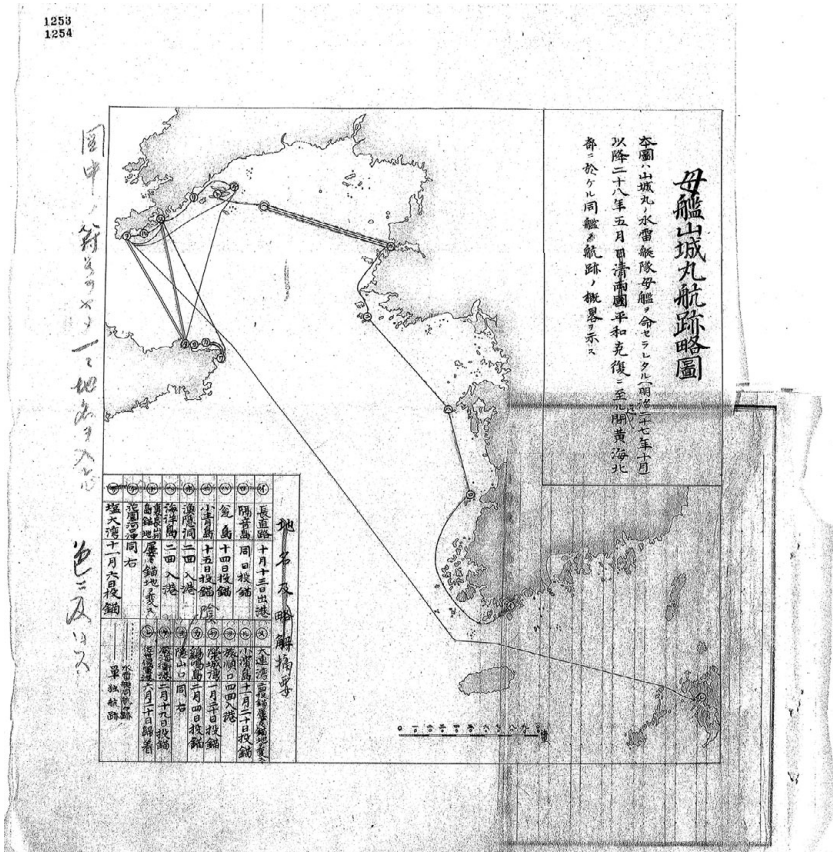
²⁷ On the Chinese-language 1602 map by the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), see Yasuo Endō, 'The Cultural Geography of the Opening of Japan: The Arrival of Perry's Squadron and the Transformation of Japanese Understanding of the Pacific Ocean during the Edo Period', *Acta Asiatica* 93 (2007): 21–40, here pp. 25–9.

²⁸ Joshua Fogel, *Articulating the Sinosphere: Sino-Japanese Relations in Space and Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

²⁹ On Greenwich-centred standardization, see Chapter 1.

³⁰ The *Yamashiro-maru* was one of ten NYK ships requisitioned for military or supply purposes (*goyōsen*) on 4 June 1894: Nihon Kei'eishi Kenkyūjo hen, *Nippon Yūsen Hyakumenshi shiryō*, p. 456. The ship's service during the war (including Map 3) is detailed in The National Institute for Defense Studies, Ministry of Defense, *Meiji 27/8-nen kaisenshi fuki: Tokubetsu kanteitai kiryaku (Dai issetsu: Yamashiro-maru)* 明治27・28年海戦史附記：特別艦艇隊記略（第1節：山城丸）[Supplement to the naval war history: Outline of the special ship squadron, 1894–5: *Yamashiro-maru*], available from JACAR (<http://www.jacar.go.jp/>) (reference code C08040561900) (last accessed 15 May 2021).

³¹ On the ways in which the requisitioned ships carried not just supplies but also crucial information on the progress of the war back for the Japanese press, see Catherine L. Phipps, *Empires on the Waterfront: Japan's Ports and Power, 1858–1899* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), pp. 189–216 (on the *Saikyo-maru*, p. 201).



Map 3 'Chart of the Mother-Ship *Yamashiro-maru*'s Routes' (Bokan *Yamashiro-maru* kōseki ryakuzu 母艦山城丸航跡略図), 1894–5. Courtesy of Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (Holding institution: National Institute for Defense Studies, Center for Military History), Ref. C08040561900.

into the first months of peace, the *Yamashiro-maru*'s role was to deliver torpedoes to the imperial navy's battleships, and to supply coal to those ships as they were engaged across the Yellow Sea (see Map 3). But such logistical support from the NYK commercial fleet was nevertheless vital in bringing to fruition Fukuzawa Yukichi's desire for Japan to 'cast off Asia'.³²

³² During the Sino-Japanese War, NYK ships carried 59 per cent of Japan's requisitioned tonnage, 83 per cent of its military personnel and 75 per cent of its horses: Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N. Y. K.*, p. 361; Kuwata Etsu 桑田悦, 'Nisshin sensō ni okeru yusō, hokyū' 日清戦争における輸送・補給 [Transportation and supply in the Sino-Japanese War], in *Kindai Nihon sensō* 近代日本戦争 [Japan's modern wars] (Tokyo: Dōdai keizai konwakai, 1995), pp. 251–68, here pp. 260–1. On Fukuzawa, see Chapter 2.

Thus, while the *Yamashiro-maru*'s name conjured up a seventh-century imagination of spatial order in Japan and in East Asia, its Australia-bound navigations looked to a post-Sinosphere future and to a new cartographic representation of Japan's place in the world. That the 'great prospects' for this new route had been enhanced by victory in the Sino-Japanese War – that the *Yamashiro-maru*'s service to the southern hemisphere was inseparable from its supply missions in the Yellow Sea – reminds historians of two oft-overlooked truisms: first, that conflict was a key form of connection in the modern world; and second, that the power of maps ultimately derives from the force – legal, bureaucratic and in this case military – which lies behind their representation.³³

These were just some of the ideas borne by the *Yamashiro-maru* in 1896. And while no Australian newspaper could have been expected to know the finer details of the ship's career or its historical references, NYK company officials and Meiji bureaucrats would nonetheless have purred at some of the press coverage triggered by the *Yamashiro-maru*'s arrival. The Melbourne *Argus* remarked upon the ship's 'exciting exploits' during 'the late war between China and Japan, in which she acquitted herself with credit'; the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* (Queensland) alleged that due to the ship's design, the 'peaceful trader' could in merely twenty minutes metamorphose into a 'virulent wasp of war'.³⁴ But of especial note were the *Morning Bulletin*'s opening sentences, which offered a volley of pleasing tropes – Japan's 'aptitude', its 'spirit of progress' and 'intellectual powers' – like a cruiser firing a salute:

Japan is the coming nation. Since it doubled up the Chinese forces and fleets in the late war it has been praised and admired by the western nations. Not so much a revival of something that had formerly been in active existence, but a great demonstration of the possession of intellectual powers and capabilities, and manifestation of a spirit of progress have raised it to a prominent place among

³³ Daniel A. Bell, 'This Is What Happens When Historians Overuse the Idea of the Network', *New Republic*, 26 October 2013; see also the concluding remarks in Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Arnold Toynbee and the Problems of Today', 2017 Toynbee Prize Lecture, *Bulletin of the GHI Washington* 60 (2017): pp. 69–87, especially p. 86. On representational force, see Wood, *Rethinking the Power of Maps*, pp. 2, 137.

³⁴ 'A New Steamship Service to the East', *Argus* (Melbourne), 12 November 1896; *Morning Bulletin* (Rockhampton), 11 November 1896: available through <https://trove.nla.gov.au> (last accessed 18 May 2021). Unless otherwise stated, all the Australian newspapers in this chapter were accessed through NLA Trove. When the *Yamashiro-maru* first arrived in Japan, the ship's potential for military adaptation was duly noted: 'In the event of her being required for transport duties two thousand troops could be easily carried for a short run, and she is fitted with two 17-centimetre breech-loading Krupp guns, for which ports are provided on the main deck amidships'. See 'New Japanese Steamers', *Japan Weekly Mail*, 12 July 1884.

the powers of the earth. Among other things it is displaying an aptitude and a desire for engaging in trade and commerce. Of this we have had practical evidence by the appearance on the Queensland coast of the pioneer steamer of the Nippon Yusen Company.

Claim 2: Points of Contact

If the first of the NYK map's claims lay in its delineation of 'routes', then its second lay in its representation of 'ports of call': that is, of precise points where the lines met the land. The ships docked, business was conducted and then the ships moved on – or so the map's reader is led to believe.

In my case, the simple clarity of this representation was bolstered by the archival port of call I had made in the early pre-fieldwork stages of my Australian research, namely to the National Library of Australia's database of historic newspapers. There, a basic search with the keyword 'Yamashiro' for the year 1896 had uncovered such gems as the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin's* characterization of Japan as 'the coming nation'. More broadly, it had revealed a genre of article which had been generated from a particular place: not the dock (which I'll return to shortly) but rather the ship's saloon. For when the *Yamashiro-maru* called at port, this 'handsome apartment' in the vessel's stern, most probably lit by small chandeliers and filled with a long dining table at its centre, itself became a port of call: for local businessmen, politicians and newspapermen, who gathered to laud and report on the ship's arrival.³⁵ We can join them in Brisbane on the summer evening of 3 November 1896, an auspicious day, when, 'it being the Japanese Emperor's birthday[,] the ship was going dressed with all her bunting, which attracted great attention' in the city.³⁶ Captain James Jones has invited more than twenty local dignitaries to dinner. Glasses tinkle, cutlery clinks, men's voices rise, the sun sets – and then a hush descends upon the 'commodious and airy' saloon.³⁷

The first to speak is the Honourable Thomas J. Byrnes (1860–98), attorney-general of Queensland. Dark hair brushed high on his forehead,

³⁵ Suppositions based on a photograph of the interior of the aforementioned *Saikyo-maru* (see fn 31), constructed in London in 1888, and briefly discussed in Nippon Yusen Kaisha, *Yōjō no interia II 洋上のインテリアII/ The Interiors of Passenger Ships II* (Yokohama: Nippon yūsen rekishi hakubutsukan, 2011), p. 3. 'The saloon is a handsome apartment': 'Nippon Yusen Kaisha: New Japanese Mail Line', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 21 November 1896.

³⁶ 'The New Mail Line from Japan', *SMH*, 7 November 1896.

³⁷ 'New Steamship Service to the East', *Argus*, 12 November 1896.

Byrnes is a precocious young man, his fulsome beard giving him an older appearance than his thirty-six years. His erudition in history and his skills as a barrister make public speaking second nature, and his three years to date as a legislative assemblyman for Cairns mark what will be his rapid ascent to the colony's premiership by 1898.³⁸ We do not know Byrnes's direct words, only – from the paraphrasing of the *Brisbane Courier's* correspondent – that he celebrates the *Yamashiro-maru's* arrival as the first time a steamer flying the Japanese mercantile flag has come up the Brisbane River. 'It [is] a fine thing for Queensland to have direct communication with rising Japan,' he says of the new NYK line, and indeed inevitable that 'the Eastern countries' would seek new markets for their commercial enterprise. On the occasion of the emperor's birthday, and 'looking at things from the broad standpoint of progressive humanity', Byrnes suggests that they (the Japanese? the assembled gentlemen?) 'ought to be proud of the strides made by the Japanese nation, and he trusted the Emperor would be spared to see his people make still further advancement.'³⁹

The speeches continue: Captain Jones on behalf of the Nippon Yusen Company; Mr Thynne, postmaster general, proposing a toast to the NYK's Queensland agents, Burns, Philp & Co. (in whose archives I found the map); Mr Robert Philp (1851–1922), responding on their behalf, but also present as Queensland minister for railways and mines; and various other toasts, including to 'The Health of the Queensland Ministry' and 'Long Life to the Mikado'.⁴⁰ Indeed, it was the same story as the *Yamashiro-maru* steamed southwards: celebratory luncheons in Sydney and Melbourne; newspapers commenting on how 'the inauguration of a new and well-subsidised mail service with a distant country is felt to be an event in a nation's history'; more onboard toasts as the ship returned northwards; and all this couched in the trope of the *Yamashiro-maru* as a 'pioneer' steamer – a word redolent with meaning in a white settler society.⁴¹

³⁸ On Byrnes's erudition, see 'Immigration of Coloured Aliens, 16 July 1896', *QPD*, vol. 75 (Legislative Assembly, 1896), pp. 304–17. These debates are now available online (www.parliament.qld.gov.au/work-of-assembly/hansard), but in 2013 I accessed them through paper copies in the State Library of Queensland, Brisbane.

³⁹ 'The Yamashiro Maru', *BC*, 4 November 1896. ⁴⁰ *BC*, 4 November 1896.

⁴¹ On the Melbourne celebrations, 'Australia and Japan', *Age* (Melbourne), 14 November 1896. On 'the inauguration', *SMH*, 7 November 1896. On the celebrations as the *Yamashiro-maru* returned north: *SMH*, 21 November 1896, and *BC*, 21 November 1896. On 'the pioneer steamer', *SMH*, 4 November 1896, and *SMH*, 7 November 1896; on 'the pioneer boat', *Mercury* (Hobart), 9 November 1896, and *Northern Territory Times and Gazette*, 13 November 1896; on 'the pioneer vessel', *Australian Town and Country Journal*, 14 November 1896.

What was the ‘commercial enterprise’ that Byrnes and others had in mind? On the *Yamashiro-maru*’s maiden voyage to Australia, the ship carried a cargo which included fish oil, bamboo blinds, camphor, curios, matting, silk, rice and fire crackers.⁴² The last item excepted, this was not a list of goods likely to ignite an immediate boom in bilateral trade. Instead, the Kobe-based Kanematsu Shōten (Kanematsu Trading Company), which from 1890 had been the leading Japanese company involved in the Australia trade, was merely exploring what shape the future Japanese export market might take.⁴³ For, as Captain Jones explained in a lengthy interview with the *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), ‘[The Japanese] say they have not found out yet exactly what the Australian people will purchase from them, but they are making inquiries on this subject, and hope in time to get in touch with the Australian markets.’⁴⁴

More likely, then, Byrnes and company were excited about the Japanese market for Australian goods. Already in December 1896, the *Yamashiro-maru* returned to Japan with a cargo including 500 bags of crushed cattle bone, plus more bones, sinews and hooves – in other words, the raw materials of fertilizer for the Japanese agricultural sector. By one of the *Yamashiro-maru*’s final return trips, leaving Australia in August 1898, the ship’s cargo included more than 500 tons of fertilizer, plus 1,031 bags of bones, hooves and other component parts of bone-meal. To be sure, 1898 was an exceptional year: processed fertilizer accounted for more than 40 per cent of the total value of Australian imports to Japan, whereas during the first fifteen years of bilateral trade, the most important cargo by value was generally sheep’s wool.⁴⁵

⁴² *BC*, 5 November 1896; *SMH*, 7 November 1896.

⁴³ On Kanematsu’s early trade with Australia, see Amano Masatoshi 天野雅敏, ‘Senzen ni okeru Nihon shōsha no Gōshū shinshutsu ni tsuite: Kanematsu Shōten to Mitsui Bussan no jirei o chūshin ni shite’ 戦前における日本商社の豪州進出について: 兼松商店と三井物産の事例を中心にして [Concerning the pre-war advance of Japanese trading firms into Australia: With a focus on the examples of Kanematsu Shōten and Mitsui Bussan], in Andō Sei’ichi 安藤精一, Takashima Masaaki 高嶋雅明 and Amano Masatoshi 天野雅敏, eds., *Kinsei kindai no rekishi to shakai* 近世近代の歴史と社会 [The history and society of the early modern and modern] (Tokyo: Seibundō shuppan, 2009), pp. 260–89.

⁴⁴ ‘A Chat about Japan’, *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 7 November 1896.

⁴⁵ I take the *Yamashiro-maru*’s cargoes in December 1896 and August 1898 from the surviving Kanematsu papers 兼松商店資料, preserved in Kobe University’s Research Institute for Economics and Business Administration 神戸大学経済経営研究所, especially Honten kanjō 本店勘定 (II), Gaikoku yunyū shōhin 外国輸入商品 (24), Gaikoku yunyū shōhin kanjōchō 外国輸入商品勘定帳 (1), vols. 1 (July 1894 – December 1897) and 2 (December 1897 – December 1900). For an overview of imports and their values, see Amano, ‘Senzen ni okeru Nihon shōsha no Gōshū shinshutsu,’ pp. 268–9. For general context, see David Sissons, ‘Japan and the Australian wool industry, 1868–1936’, in Arthur Stockwin and Keiko Tamura, eds.,

(As Captain Jones also explained to the *Telegraph*, ‘The Japanese, whose clothing has hitherto been cotton, imported from India, are taking to wearing wool.’)

Either way, the export of wool and fertilizer from Australia to Japan placed this new trading relationship at the heart of a wider ecological transformation of the Pacific world. In Japan, German-trained soil experts in the mid 1890s had calculated that the archipelago had a serious phosphate deficit: the search was on for new sources of agricultural fertilizer, including both guano deposits and domestic bonemeal. The import of Australian bonemeal was thus one element of a wider concern for Japanese phosphate production, a concern which led both to the entrepreneurial exploitation of islands in the western Pacific and to the large-scale import of soybean cake from Manchuria.⁴⁶ Moreover, as Gregory Cushman has argued, the fact that nineteenth-century colonialists had successfully turned much of Australia into – in terms of livestock production – a ‘mirror image’ of the British Isles was itself a development dependent on fertilizer, and thus on the destruction of several tropical islands in the Pacific in the name of guano imports.⁴⁷

The advent of the Japanese mercantile flag coming up the Brisbane River and trading in cow and sheep products was therefore a story of the Australian colonies’ own economic engagement with and exploitation of the Pacific Ocean. This may explain the expansionist vision expounded by saloon speakers at the *Yamashiro-maru*’s other ports of call. In Sydney, for example, Mr James Burns, managing director of Burns, Philp & Co, declared that his city ‘was destined to become the London of the southern seas’. There were good prospects for direct services from Sydney to Manila, Dutch Java, German New Guinea and beyond. ‘Altogether, everything pointed to expansion. Sydney, from its natural position, should command the whole of the trade of Greater Australia, embracing the rich and fertile groups of islands that stretched from our shores to China and Japan, and east to North and South America.’⁴⁸ By this logic, the NYK’s lines from Japan to Australia were just part of a story in which Sydney would be connected to other strategic points in the Pacific world.

Bridging Australia and Japan, Vol. 1: *The Writings of David Sissons, Historian and Political Scientist* (Acton, ACT: Australian National University Press, 2016 [1978]), pp. 311–18.

⁴⁶ Paul Kreitman, *Japan’s Ocean Borderlands: Nature and Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 130–1.

⁴⁷ Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 109–35, citation from p. 135. See also Ben Daley and Peter Griggs, ‘Mining the Reefs and Cays: Coral, Guano and Rock Phosphate Extraction in the Great Barrier Reef, Australia, 1844–1940’, *Environment and History* 12 (2006): 395–433.

⁴⁸ ‘Luncheon on the Japanese Mail Steamer’, *SMH*, 21 November 1896.

This was an outward-looking imagination of 'Greater Australia' (itself a term which perhaps drew on contemporaneous Anglophone discourses of Greater Britain or Greater America) – as if ports, being departure points for exports, were sites primed towards the sea and not the land. Perhaps Burns's views were momentarily shaped by their articulation in the extraterritorial space of the ship.

Even in the saloon, however, inward-looking anxieties wispied among the invitees. They were to be sensed in the denials. Queensland Attorney-General Byrnes: 'He did not view the new [Japanese trading] venture with apprehension at all, but a needless amount of alarm had been expressed about it. He believed the Anglo-Saxon race would hold its own.' Mr Philp: 'He was not afraid of the Japanese coming to Australia and flooding them out. [...] He did not think there was the slightest fear that the Japanese would come here in greater numbers than Queensland would care to receive.'⁴⁹ And in Sydney, the former premier of New South Wales, Sir George Dibbs (1834–1904): 'Australians were not afraid of the Japanese.'⁵⁰

And yet, as these keen politicians knew, many Australians felt differently. In Brisbane, the *Worker* newspaper had for the past three years warned of a 'Jap deluge', of 'A Plague of Japs', of 'JAPANESE DANGER' (this in a letter from an enraged 'Anglo-Saxon'), and of 'Japs Colonising Queensland'.⁵¹ The assembled gentlemen could hardly have been surprised, therefore, by the *Worker*'s visual representation of the *Yamashiro-maru*'s arrival, a few days after the celebratory onboard dinner (see Figure 4.1). Under the headline, 'AUSTRALIANS, HOLD YOUR OWN!' (itself a phrase used by Byrnes), a cartoon depicted a large steamship, its Rising Sun flag fluttering in the breeze as its cargo is manifested on the quayside. The ship is a hive of activity: an officer stands on a soapbox directing operations as two Asian-looking men manoeuvre a large crate marked MACHINERY; behind them appear other boxes and containers, all labelled with a popular nickname referring to Sir Thomas McIlwraith (1835–1900), the former premier of Queensland and leading figure in the colony's politics.⁵² Meanwhile, in the cartoon's foreground an East Asian sailor grapples with a swarthy Caucasian worker, wrapping his claw-like hands around the worker's

⁴⁹ 'New Line of Japanese Steamers', *Mercury* (Hobart), 9 November 1896. The two men's apprehensions were not reported in the *BC*, to my knowledge.

⁵⁰ *SMH*, 21 November 1896.

⁵¹ *Worker* (Brisbane), 4 March 1893, 8 July 1893, 27 October 1894, 11 May 1895.

⁵² 'Australians, Hold Your Own!' *Worker* (Brisbane), 7 November 1896. McIlwraith had defended 'alien labour' in Queensland in 1893: 'Motion for Adjournment, 28 June 1893: Japanese Immigration', *QPD*, vol. 70 (Legislative Assembly, 1893), pp. 136–44.

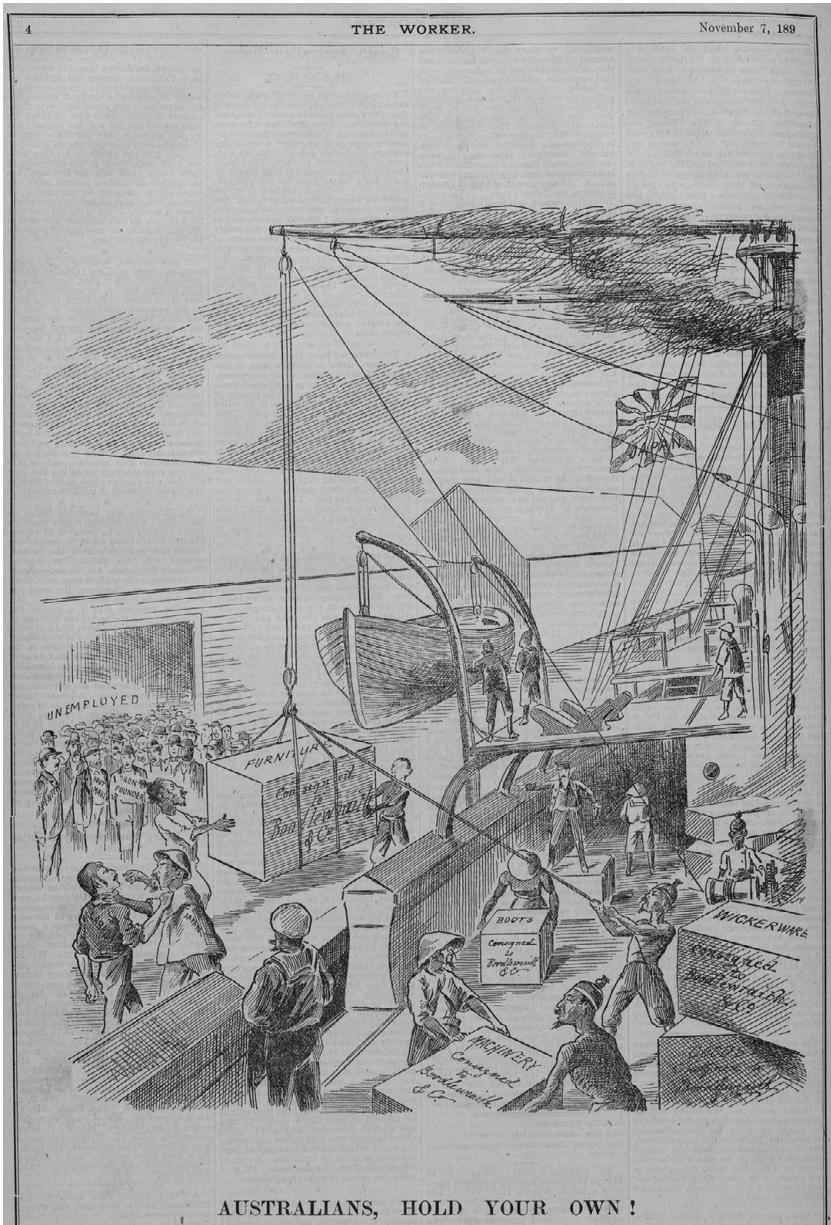


Figure 4.1 'AUSTRALIANS, HOLD YOUR OWN!' Worker: *Monthly Journal of the Associated Workers of Queensland* (Brisbane), 7 November 1896. Courtesy of the National Library of Australia.

throat. All this is observed by a multitude of unemployed men – IRON FOUNDER, BOOT MAKER, [C]ARPENTE[R] – whose numbers press back into one of two large warehouses on the dock.

As the *Worker's* title made clear, the newspaper's particular gripe was with the perceived threat of cheap Japanese labour, which would allegedly undercut the working man's wages and even render him unemployed. Here, the dock rather than the saloon was the key point of contact between the ship and the shore, and the antagonism expressed in the *Worker's* 1896 cartoon therefore belied the NYK map's later representation of lines cleanly intersecting with the land. Indeed, the New South Wales politician and secretary of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union in the late 1890s, William 'Billy' Hughes (1862–1952), made anti-Asian labour campaigns central to his emerging career. Two decades later, as Nationalist Party prime minister of Australia, Hughes and US president Woodrow Wilson (1856–1924) agreed to deny Japan's campaign for a 'racial equality' clause at the Paris Peace Conference – thereby undermining the NYK map's fiction of untrammelled transpacific connections.⁵³

Perhaps most striking of all, the anxieties present in the *Yamashiro-maru's* saloon were revealed by the disconnect between the private celebrations of politicians who supped at the NYK's expense, and their statements of a very different tenor for the official public record. In Queensland, for example, the Legislative Assembly had first debated the issue of Japanese immigration in June 1893, partly prompted by a brief report in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* to the effect that 500 Japanese labourers had recently arrived to work in the northern Queensland sugar plantations.⁵⁴ Thereafter, in increasingly heated annual debates on the issue, politicians of all persuasions – even those, such as Byrnes, who argued that the solution to immigration concerns was to increase the number of white immigrants to Queensland rather than worrying about the Japanese – used the language of 'invasion' to describe the alleged problem. This drew on a longer discourse both in the colonies and in the British metropole concerning the numerous perceived threats from Russia, China or latterly Japan – or a combination of all three. In Australia it found particular expression in the popular literature of the time, such as the 1895 novel by New South Wales-born Kenneth Mackay

⁵³ Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London: Routledge, 1998); Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, pp. 149–50, 293–7.

⁵⁴ *QPD*, vol. 70 (1893), pp. 136–44; 'Japanese Labor for Queensland', *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 23 June 1893.

(1859–1935), entitled, *The Yellow Wave: A Romance of the Asiatic Invasion of Australia*.⁵⁵

Indeed, as if prompted by the language of ‘waves’, many Queensland assemblymen also drew on metaphors of water. In the first debate on Japanese immigration, one spoke about ‘the new importation [of Japanese] with which we are about to be *deluged*’ (the *Worker* had used the same term three months earlier).⁵⁶ Albert James Callan (1839–1912), member for the constituency of Fitzroy and invitee to the *Yamashiro-maru* in November 1896, announced the danger that ‘this country, and especially the Northern portion of it, will be *inundated* with Japanese’. In 1897, he suggested that ‘one of the most grievous dangers Queensland has to face is the possibility of an *influx* of Japanese’ – a word used almost as frequently as ‘invasion’.⁵⁷ Such was the power of the water metaphor that Robert Philp, whose business interests were so entwined with the NYK, was forced to deny in his onboard speech the prospect of ‘the Japanese coming to Australia and *flooding them out*’.⁵⁸

Thus, at the very point where the line met the land, be that the saloon or the dock, anxieties about labour and race threatened to muddy the vision of an outward-facing Australia and an expansive Japan connected across the seas. The latter was an optimistic vision which would later justify the cartographic claims of the ‘N. Y. K. Line’ map in the mid 1920s. But, as suggested by the language of inundation, flooding and tides, it was also an inherently unstable imagination of the world.⁵⁹ Such instabilities were particularly pertinent for the cargo unmentioned in the

⁵⁵ D. Walker, *Anxious Nation*, pp. 98–112 (on Mackay, pp. 105–7). See also Cees Heere, *Empire Ascendant: The British World, Race, and the Rise of Japan, 1894–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 8–45.

⁵⁶ *QPD*, vol. 70 (1893), p. 138 (emphasis added): the speaker was John Hoolan (Labour) (1842–1911).

⁵⁷ ‘Asian and African Aliens, 30 August’, *QPD*, vol. 73 (Legislative Assembly, 1895), pp. 770–89, here p. 779; ‘Motion for Adjournment, 20 July 1897: Continued Immigration of Japanese’, *QPD*, vol. 77 (Legislative Assembly, 1897), pp. 343–60, here p. 357 (emphasis added). Callan, an independent whose constituency neighboured Rockhampton, had visited Japan between February and April 1893 (*QPD*, vol. 70, p. 138) but was unabashed in expressing his ‘dislike [for] the notion of Japanese being brought here [...] because they will take the work from men of our own race’: ‘Motion for Adjournment, 31 August 1894: Influx of Japanese’, *QPD*, vol. 71 (Legislative Assembly, 1894), pp. 400–6, here p. 402.

⁵⁸ *Mercury* (Hobart), 9 November 1896 (emphasis added). The government resident of Thursday Island, John Douglas (see also Chapter 5), acknowledged in an interview in 1897 the ‘fear that we were going to be inundated with Japanese’: ‘Hon. John Douglas’, *Telegraph* (Brisbane), 13 December 1897.

⁵⁹ Sir James Dickson (1832–1901), ministerialist and premier of Queensland between 1898 and 1899, told the Legislative Assembly during this period, ‘I am determined as far as possible to resist the tide of Japanese invasion’, as reported in ‘The Japanese Question’, *BC*, 13 May 1899.

‘Ex Yamashiro Maru’ lists of goods and wares, namely the Japanese men and small numbers of women who travelled on the NYK ships – migrants who were largely poorer and less educated than Hasegawa Setsutarō. As we shall see, for Japanese male labourers disembarking in the far north of Queensland as for white working-class readers of the *Worker* in Brisbane, blots rather than clean points would have been a more realistic graphic by which to represent Japanese–Australian entanglements.⁶⁰

Claim 3: Uniform Colours

Though Japan may well have been ‘the coming nation’ for the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* in November 1896, it was not the only one. In fact, the exact same phrase had been used in the Queensland Legislative Assembly’s first debate on Japanese immigration in June 1893 – but with reference to Australia. ‘In the name of the coming nation,’ exclaimed John Dunsford (1855–1905) at the end of his speech, ‘I call upon the Premier and this House to assist in making this a white man’s country, and [in] conserving the welfare of the coming Australian nation.’⁶¹

The NYK map’s colour scheme was problematic for the monochrome claims of uniformity it made about this alleged white man’s country.⁶² At a first level, these claims were a question of the implied umbilical cord between Britain and its Australian dominions (both coloured the same shade of pink). In fact, that cord had been under increased strain since July 1894, when Britain led the world in concluding a new Treaty of Commerce and Navigation with Japan, thereby replacing the 1858 ‘unequal’ treaty (see Chapter 6). The new agreement, to come into force in 1899, included the promise of ‘full liberty’ for both Japanese and British subjects ‘to enter, travel, or reside in any part of the dominions and possessions of the other Contracting Party’ (Article I). That is, Japanese people would be free to live and work in the dominions of Australia – if, within a two year period, the Australian colonies agreed to adhere to the treaty’s provisions. But if they did not agree, then the colonies would equally not enjoy ‘the reciprocal freedom of commerce and navigation’ between the contracting parties (Article III), including

⁶⁰ Billy Hughes himself described Japanese and Chinese immigration as a ‘blot’ on Australia’s national destiny in 1901: cited in Lake and Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, p. 149.

⁶¹ *QPD*, vol. 70 (1893), p. 143.

⁶² Cf. Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2 on the ‘monochrome shading of imperial maps’.

protection from unequal import tariffs (Articles V and VI) and the mutual right to transport goods to port without depending on each other's merchant navies (Articles VIII and IX). In these ways, the treaty was central to the vision of an expansive, Pacific-facing Australia articulated on the *Yamashiro-maru* by James Burns, with Sydney as the 'London of the southern seas'. And yet, as the Queensland premier confidentially telegraphed his Victoria counterpart in April 1895, 'it may be found necessary to legislate for restriction of [Japanese] immigration into Queensland in which case adhesion to Treaty would cause difficulty at the time such legislation was initiated'.⁶³

The dilemma that the British–Japanese treaty thus forced upon the Australian colonies, between the promise of free trade and the peril of free entry, was epitomized in Queensland by the contradictory voices emerging from Rockhampton. As we have seen, the town's newspaper lauded the opening of the new NYK line in November 1896, including Japan's 'desire for engaging in trade and commerce'. Twelve months earlier, however, the Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce had also passed a resolution arguing that 'it will be very injudicious for these Colonies to accept the Imperial Commercial Treaty with Japan of 1894 and thereby grant a free and unrestricted entry of the Japanese into this and the adjoining colonies'. In case the message was unclear, the Chamber's secretary explained to the Queensland premier that the treaty 'carries with it the very objectionable risk of *flooding* our country with an undesirable alien race'.⁶⁴

If anything, the arrival of the *Yamashiro-maru* in 1896, at a time when the colonies' adherence or otherwise to the treaty was still an open question, was therefore a reminder of Australia's relative impotence concerning its relations to Asia's coming nation. As the aforementioned honorary consul of Japan, Alexander Marks, provocatively noted in his saloon speech upon the ship's arrival in Melbourne, '[t]he Governments of Australia should understand that they were parts of the British Empire. Britain had made treaties with foreign nations, and those treaties must be

⁶³ Telegram from Sir Hugh Nelson to Sir George Turner, 2 April 1895: QSA, Item ID ITM861853 (top number 95/03738). On the QSA system of top-numbering, see Chapter 5.

⁶⁴ Letter from Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce to Sir Hugh Nelson, 18 November 1895, QSA, Item ID ITM861853 (top number 95/14011) (emphasis added). A public meeting in Mackay in September 1894 similarly passed a motion bemoaning the 'repeated influx of Japanese' as 'a menace to the white workers of this place and neighbourhood as they are undesirable colonists': Letter from the Mackay Town Hall (writer illegible) to James Chataway, 24 September 1894, QSA, Item ID ITM861850 (top number 94/10020).

observed. Of course Australia had no “sovereign rights”.⁶⁵ Others were less sanguine about this reality. A month earlier, an editorial in the *Maitland Weekly Mercury* (New South Wales) obliquely referenced Cinderella when it complained:

Our right of self-government is a mockery, unless it includes power to regulate the components of our population. [...] And, if we are threatened with a gradual, an insidious, but none the less certain and menacing irruption of [Chinese, Japanese] and other peoples whom we do not desire for the purposes of admixture with our own, the mother-country must help us. She must see that it is an essential part of Imperial policy that she should help us. She is no mother at all, but only a cruel stepdame, if she does not.⁶⁶

As for Queensland, by the time of the Legislative Assembly’s 1897 debate on the ‘Continued Immigration of Japanese’, the metaphors connoted less pantomime than power abuse, with one member objecting ‘to the British Government practically holding up a revolver to our heads’. Hence the proposal, in Queensland and elsewhere, that if ‘[w]e are all agreed that the Japanese should not be allowed to flow into this colony’, then ‘[t]he great remedy is for Australia to become united under one Federal Government.’ Or, as the Rockhampton representative phrased it, ‘I have no more desire to cut the bonds that bind us to the old country than the [previous speaker] has, but if the only way by which I could save Australia from an Asiatic invasion was by cutting those bonds I would do it to-morrow.’⁶⁷

In portraying the Australian continent as a single political entity in the mid 1920s, the NYK map sanitized a history of excision between the ‘old’ or ‘mother’ country and the colonies. In fact, the perception of a Japanese influx had been one stimulation for the federated Australia that the map now depicted, an act of fundamental disconnection from Britain. At this first level, therefore, the conformity of pink across the map’s British empire offered a rose-tinted interpretation of metropole–colony relations during the period of the new NYK line to Australia.

⁶⁵ ‘Australia and Japan’, *Age* (Melbourne), 14 November 1896. Marks’s critique was perhaps particularly directed at Victoria, whose protectionist policies stood in contrast to the more free-trade instincts of Sydney’s politicians: D. Walker, *Anxious Nation*, p. 73. But he had also been banging this drum elsewhere, as when he wrote to the Queensland government warning the Australian colonies that they should ‘not take upon themselves a sovereign right, so as to cause complications with the Mother Country, unless the peace and safety of their colony is threatened’: Letter from Alexander Marks to illegible addressee in Brisbane, 12 April 1894, QSA, Item ID ITM 861850 (top number 94/3720).

⁶⁶ ‘Exclusion of Coloured Races’, *Maitland Weekly Mercury* (NSW), 17 October 1896.

⁶⁷ *QPD*, vol. 77 (1897), respectively p. 348 (George Jackson, Labour), p. 354 (Robert Harrison Smith, Ministerialist), and pp. 357–8 (William Kidson, Labour).

The second way in which the map's colours corralled the colonies' recent past was in their conformity of pink across the huge area of Queensland – as if political control was evenly distributed from Brisbane, in the south, to Thursday Island, more than 2,000 kilometres to the north (comparable to the distance between London and Saint Petersburg). In the eyes of Australia's late nineteenth-century opinion makers, such control was more de jure than de facto. Editorializing on the new British-Japanese treaty, the *Sydney Morning Herald* argued that Australia's relations with Japan must be considered differently from those of England, America and the nations of Europe, for '[n]o other has vast unoccupied territories exposed to an influx of people'. Australia's choice, the paper claimed, 'will have to be taken between exclusion from a share in the coming trade of Japan and the possibility of our unoccupied territories being overrun by an alien "inferior race"'.⁶⁸ In other words, the colonies' legal claim to 'territory' was undermined in practice by the fact that so much of Australia was allegedly 'unoccupied'.

In the case of Queensland, this tension found expression in the trope of the 'empty North', and one site at which its contours were rendered visible was the small town of Mossman, some 1,500 kilometres north of Brisbane.⁶⁹ In the mid 1890s, Mossman was the northernmost outpost of the Australian sugar industry, as it remains today. But Mossman had never been unoccupied. The wide river valley was, and is, known as Wikal. Manjal Dimbi, at the valley's western rim, is the 'mountain holding back', representing in turn Kubirri, the 'good shepherd' who restrains the flesh eater, Wurrumbu, and thereby protects the people.⁷⁰ And the people, speaking Kuku Yalanji, had lived off this land for many thousands of years before European gold prospectors and loggers began to encroach in the early 1870s and impose their own placenames.

Among the arrivistes was a certain Daniel Hart, who described himself as a British subject and 'native of the West Indies'. This presumably made him familiar with the Caribbean sugarcane economy, and indeed in an 1884 petition to the governor of Queensland, Hart described an exploration he undertook in June 1874 from Cooktown to the area around the Mossman River, where he and his small party discovered an

⁶⁸ *SMH*, 6 December 1894.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of this trope in the 1900s and 1910s, see D. Walker, *Anxious Nation*, pp. 113–26.

⁷⁰ On the name Wikal: <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/144049/20170330-1816/queenslandhistory.blogspot.com.au/2011/03/far-north-queensland-place-names-mo-my.html> (last accessed 7 November 2017); 'Manjal Dimbi: Kuku Yalanji Origin Story, Mossman Gorge, Australia', www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUQzIQ7cQMM (last accessed 23 July 2021).

‘abundance of cedar and excellent sugar land’. Hart reiterated how his own subsequent clearances and the arrival of other loggers fully endorsed ‘his repeatedly expressed opinion as to [the land’s] value for sugar growing’. (In the petition, Kuku Yalanji people appear only offstage, when Hart mentions that two men from another party ‘were speared and conveyed to hospital by Your Petitioner’.)⁷¹

But the gap between Hart’s sugarcane vision and the reality on the ground was substantial. At the very least, the land must be cleared, a mill built, the cane cultivated, and the crop harvested at speed – that is, transported to the mill for juice extraction and purification in the forty-eight hour window before the cut cane would begin to rot. All this required capital and labour. Further south in Queensland, where the sugar industry had been developed since the mid 1860s, the labour had been provided partly by Chinese immigrants who had previously crossed to Australia in successive gold rushes, and partly by Pacific Islanders, whom the white settlers derogatorily referred to as ‘kanakas’ – that is, labourers often transported to Australia against their will and in horrific conditions.⁷² (A key motivation for one of the *Yamashiro-maru*’s first captains, John J. Mahlmann, to pen his later autobiography was to deny his involvement in this ‘blackbirding’ trade in the late 1860s: see Chapter 1.) But such was the weight of liberal opinion against the importation of Pacific Islanders that legislation banning the trade was passed in 1885 – just as Hart was imagining a sugar future in the Mossman River valley. Though not effective immediately, both the ban and simultaneous restrictions on Chinese immigration were two factors, along with a decline in sugar prices, which resulted in the contraction of the Queensland sugar industry in the late 1880s.⁷³

⁷¹ ‘The Petition of Daniel Hart’, 13 December 1884, QSA, Item ID ITM847142, but reprinted in *Queensland Heritage* 3, 2 (1975): 21–8, and accessed online through the University of Queensland, <https://espace.library.uq.edu.au>. The context for Hart’s petition was the rapid sale of agricultural land in the far north of Queensland in the early 1880s – land partly purchased by speculators from Victoria, who hoped to form sugar plantations: Peter D. Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation: The History of Cane Sugar Production in Australia, 1820–1995* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 49–50. The settlement was named after Hugo Mosman (1843–1909), whose Aboriginal servant, Jupiter Mosman (1861–1945) is credited with finding gold at Charters Towers in 1871.

⁷² It is estimated that 62,500 Pacific Islanders were shipped to Queensland after their introduction by businessman Robert Towns (founder of Townsville) in 1863: Emma Christopher, ‘An Illegitimate Offspring: South Sea Islanders, Queensland Sugar, and the Heirs of the British Atlantic Slave Complex’, *History Workshop Journal* 90 (2020): 233–52; Brown, “‘Most Irregular Traffic’”, pp. 184–203.

⁷³ Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, pp. 52–3, 86, 191. Writing under the name ‘North Queenslander, Mosman [sic] River’ and drawing on his experience in Jamaica, Hart proposed the importation of ‘coolie’ labour: ‘[I]f Queensland is to compete in the

That a newly constructed mill was nonetheless to be found in Mossman less than a decade later was due in no small part to the Queensland government's attempts simultaneously to stimulate the sugar industry, to encourage white settlement in the colony, and thereby to fill the 'empty North'. One legislative mechanism to do so was the Sugar Works Guarantee Act (1893), by which public loans were pledged to finance the construction of expensive sugar mills. This, it was hoped, would increase the financial viability of small, family-managed sugar farms – which would in turn attract white settlers as far north as places like Mossman.⁷⁴ (In this way, the Queensland sugar model was very different to that of Hawai'i, where mills were privately owned and required major investment, leading to the consolidation of the industry in the hands of major capitalists.) Under the Act, therefore, a group of settler-farmers formed the Mossman Central Mill Company in December 1894 and borrowed £66,300. The mill crushed its first cane in August 1897, and within a decade had almost quadrupled its tonnage. In a 1904 newspaper report, it was considered 'to be in a good position financially'.⁷⁵

So much for the problem of capital. But the problem of labour remained, despite the presence of several hundred Chinese and Pacific Island workers in the Mossman district.⁷⁶ And this labour shortage explains the arrival of 100 Japanese men at Port Douglas on the afternoon of 12 August 1898 – labourers who were contracted to work at the Mossman Central Mill Company.⁷⁷

world's market with these commodities she must have suitable labourers on something near the same terms as other sugar-producing countries, and then I feel sure that Queensland will become in a few years one of the principal, if not *the* principal, sugar producers of the world': 'The Tropical Labour Question', *Queenslander* (Brisbane), 10 March 1883.

⁷⁴ On this logic, see Jodi Frawley, 'Containing Queensland Prickly Pear: Buffer Zones, Closer Settlement, Whiteness', *Journal of Australian Studies* 38, 2 (2014): 139–56, here p. 140. On the legislation, see Griggs, *Global Industry, Local Innovation*, pp. 100–2. Mossman was one of ten government-funded sugar mills built between 1891 and 1901.

⁷⁵ 'The Mossman River and District', *Queenslander* (Brisbane), 24 December 1904; on the increase in output from 27,905 tons crushed in 1897 to 103,291 tons in 1906 (an unusually good year), see John Kerr, *Northern Outpost* (Mossman: Mossman Central Mill Co, 1979), p. 151.

⁷⁶ There were 'about five hundred Chinese and three hundred kanakas in the Mossman district' in August 1898: 'Queensland (By Telegraph)', *North Queensland Register* (Townsville), 17 August 1898. See also Christopher Anderson and Norman Mitchell, 'Kubara: A Kuku-Yalanji View of the Chinese in North Queensland', *Aboriginal History* 5, 1/2 (1981): 20–37, here pp. 27–8.

⁷⁷ The directors G. L. Rutherford, W. H. Buchanan and Thomson Low were delegated with 'obtaining a supply of Japanese' in 1898: Kerr, *Northern Outpost*, p. 45.

The men who stepped off the *Yamashiro-maru* that afternoon knew none of this context. Like their compatriots in Hawai‘i, they had left Japan in search of better wages and perhaps the possibility of a new life. Like Wakamiya Yaichi and Kodama Keijirō, they hailed from Hiroshima and Kumamoto prefectures respectively; indeed, sixteen of their number came from Hiroshima’s Saeki county alone (see Chapter 2).⁷⁸ There was, however, one structural difference with their migration from that of their earlier Hawaiian counterparts: the Mossman men travelled under the auspices not of the state but rather through the mediation of a private emigration enterprise, the Tōyō Imin Gōshi Gaisha (Oriental Emigration Company). Co-founded under a different name in 1891 by a Tokyo businessman and the vice-president of the NYK, the Oriental Emigration Company shipped more than 10,000 Japanese overseas in the period 1891–1917, including to New Caledonia, Fiji, Guadeloupe and Brazil. Along with dozens of other private migration companies which were founded in the years after the replacement of the Hawaiian government-sponsored programme in 1894 by a system of ‘free’ emigration, the Oriental Emigration Company thereby contributed significantly to an expansive vision of the Japanese empire articulated in the mid 1890s by a coalition of Tokyo-based politicians, journalists, intellectuals and businessmen.⁷⁹ The Mossman Japanese were the foot soldiers of this transpacific vision – though this, too, they were not to know.

Although this imagination of a ‘Greater Japan’ (*Dai-Nihon*) had many ideological reference points, one of its key tenets was a Malthus-inspired discourse of domestic demographic explosion – and, so the thinking went, a concomitant need to identify overseas destinations for Japan’s surplus population.⁸⁰ And although Queensland’s politicians were far from attuned to the nuances of the Japanese-language debates in Tokyo, population considerations were also central to their anti-treaty (and anti-Japanese) rhetoric. Thus, against the ‘scattered population of North Queensland’ was contrasted ‘*the teeming population of Asiatic countries*

⁷⁸ For a full list of these migrants and their addresses, see DA 3.8.2.83, vol. 2. The ship carried around fifty-nine other labourers who were contracted to work for three different companies in Mackay.

⁷⁹ Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier*, pp. 81–90 (Oriental Emigration Company figures on p. 84). The Oriental Emigration Company was called the Nihon Kissa Imin Gōshi Gaisha until 1897. This company shipped the first group of Japanese contract labourers to Queensland in 1892, and over the next four years organized five further crossings: Kodama Masaaki 児玉正昭, ‘Shoki imingaisha no imin boshū to sono jittai’ 初期移民会社の移民募集とその実態 [The conditions and recruitment strategies of the first emigration companies], *Hiroshima kenshi kenkyū* 3 (1978): 20–44, here pp. 20–7.

⁸⁰ Lu, *Making of Japanese Settler Colonialism*, passim.

that are close within reach of our ports'.⁸¹ The aforementioned Mr Callan was typical in his articulation of the problem, in August 1895:

You cannot bounce the Japanese. They have had their turn at war now, and have done remarkably well, and if they once turn their attention to Queensland, I do not know that there is anyone here capable of keeping them out unless measures for the purpose have been taken beforehand. It is ridiculous to talk about stopping the Japanese without England to back us. We [Queensland] have a population of about 400,000, or about the population of a third or fourth class European city, and Japan has a population of 40,000,000. What could we do unless we put the case before those who are able to protect us, and say we do not want the Japanese to come here?⁸²

Yet by the winter months of mid 1898, Queensland's range of possible 'measures' had narrowed considerably. Having joined the 1894 Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation on the expectation that a separate protocol on the immigration of labourers and artisans, agreed in March 1897 with Tokyo, would also be accepted by London, Brisbane's politicians were dismayed to be disabused of that notion by the mother country in August 1897.⁸³ (This was the context for the 'revolver' complaint.) A year later, as ships continued to discharge Japanese men and women at Thursday Island in their dozens, the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* furiously observed that 'this peaceful invasion will prove so disastrous to Queensland's interests ultimately that Thursday Island will be in fact an "appanage of the Mikado's kingdom"'.⁸⁴ And thus, in the absence of legislative options, the new premier of Queensland, Thomas J. Byrnes (who had led the celebratory speeches onboard the *Yamashiro-maru* in November 1896), decided to strengthen the administration of immigration control, by decreeing that any Japanese without valid passports for Queensland would not be permitted to land in the colony. In the meantime, however, the *Yamashiro-maru* had already left Japan for Australia, carrying among its passengers the 100 Mossman-bound labourers – and thus prompting a flurry of telegraphs between various agencies about the legal status of those on board.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Respectively: *QPD*, vol. 71 (1894), p. 401 and vol. 73 (1895), p. 780 (emphasis added). On Australia's own declining birth-rate: D. Walker, *Anxious Nation*, p. 101.

⁸² *QPD*, vol. 73 (1895), p. 779.

⁸³ The protocol was signed between Britain's minister in Tokyo, Ernst Satow (on behalf of Queensland), and the Japanese foreign minister, on 16 March 1897: QSA, Item ID ITM861853. Queensland ratified the 1894 treaty in June 1897: QSA, Item ID ITM 861851 (top number 97/10112).

⁸⁴ *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 20 July 1898. This is not available on NLA Trove; rather, the article had been clipped out by Japanese consulate officials in Townsville and forwarded to Tokyo: DA 3.8.2.33, vol. 2.

⁸⁵ *NGB Meiji* 31 (1898), vol. 2, 107, 114–15.

These were the circumstances in which the Mossman Japanese disembarked in Port Douglas in August 1898: a diplomatic wrangle over passports – a wrangle itself reflective of wider geopolitical tensions over the position of the Australian colonies in Britain’s new relationship with Japan – tensions themselves prompted by anxieties about the ‘scattered’ settler population in the otherwise ‘unoccupied’ North – anxieties themselves suggestive of the concomitant need to encourage further Anglo-Saxon colonization through state subsidies for the emerging sugar industry. If the labourers detected a chill in the air, it had nothing to do with the winters, which are mild this far north. Instead, it had to do with the ‘public feeling’ in Port Douglas that ‘runs very high against the importation of Japanese’.⁸⁶ And it had to do with the accusation that the contracting of Japanese to work at Mossman ran against the intent of the 1893 Sugar Works Guarantee Act – as articulated by the Rockhampton-based *Capricornian* newspaper:

When the central mills scheme was launched by the Government, and Parliament agreed to invest such a large sum in the venture, the great inducement held out was that by this means black labour would be shut out of the colony, and at the same time the sugar industry would be saved from destruction. But now the Government which put forward this argument is itself sanctioning the introduction of Japanese for one of these very central mills, built by Government money for the purpose of establishing the sugar industry on a white instead of a black man’s basis.⁸⁷

In this Manichean world view, the Queensland sugar industry was strategically important not just for its economic value but because, through the provision of central mills, ‘black labour would be shut out of the colony’. In this way, ‘white sugar’ was not just a descriptor of the end product but also an aspirational marker of the labour involved in its production. Conversely, any labourer who was not white – be they ‘black’ or Japanese – contaminated this vision of white product and white production.⁸⁸ To complain about the ‘introduction of Japanese’ in Mossman was another way of calling the Japanese racially impure: their presence in the mill would undermine the coming nation’s imagination of its own refined future.

Thus, at the point of Port Douglas, where 100 Japanese disembarked from the new NYK line, the colonial polity imagined by Brisbane

⁸⁶ ‘Queensland (By Telegraph)’, *North Queensland Register* (Townsville), 17 August 1898.

⁸⁷ ‘Stray Notes’, *Capricornian* (Rockhampton), 20 August 1898.

⁸⁸ On this point, see Stefanie Affeldt, ‘A Paroxysm of Whiteness: “White” Labour, “White” Nation and “White” Sugar in Australia’, in Wulf D. Hund, Jeremy Krikler and David Roediger, eds., *Wages of Whiteness and Racist Symbolic Capital* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2011), pp. 99–130.

politicians could never merely be a colour on the map: it was also a question of the colour of skin and the colour of the product, and thus a question of who would be free to enter and who would be shut out.⁸⁹

Archival Directionality

One of the most detailed surveys of the northern Queensland sugar industry at the turn of the twentieth century survives not in Brisbane, Sydney or Canberra but in Tokyo. Written by Townsville consul Iijima Kametarō on the basis of a three-week tour he took in July and August 1900, the ninety-one-page handwritten report describes the location, labour force, acreage, working conditions and production output of the planting districts at – travelling north from Townsville – Macknade, Ripple Creek, Victoria, Goondi, Mourilyan, Hambledon and Mossman; and, just to the south of Townsville, Kalamia and Pioneer (see Figure 4.2). This itinerary was determined by the distribution of Japanese sugar labourers throughout the northern part of the colony, ranging from the 57 employed at Ripple Creek to the 137 working at Victoria, and numbering 839 in all. At Mossman, Iijima wrote of only 70 Japanese labourers – not two years after 100 had arrived on three-and-a-half year contracts. The reason for this was that in March 1900 (he explained), the Japanese there had gone on strike. Broken only after the intervention of the Townsville consulate, one result of the unfortunate incident was that the main instigators were repatriated to Japan.⁹⁰ Iijima was suitably vague on this point, but contemporary newspaper reports suggested that 140 ‘rebellious Japs’ downed tools in Mossman, implying both that more labourers had arrived subsequent to those in August 1898, and that approximately half the Japanese workforce had proved ‘troublesome’ enough to be ‘sent back to their own land’.⁹¹ Similar to the Japanese consular staff dealing with complaints from the Spreckelsville

⁸⁹ For comparison, see Jonathan Hyslop, ‘The Politics of Disembarkation: Empire, Shipping and Labor in the Port of Durban, 1897–1947’, *International Labor and Working Class History* 93 (2018): 176–200. On the ways in which the site of immigrant disembarkation framed subsequent archival imaginations of race and class in Canada, see Lisa Chilton and Yukari Takai, ‘East Coast, West Coast: Using Government Files to Study Immigration History’, *Histoire sociale / Social History* 48, 96 (May 2015): 7–23.

⁹⁰ Iijima Kametarō 飯島亀太郎, ‘Kita Kuinsurando chihō junkai hōkokusho’ 北クインスランド地方巡回報告書 [Report of a tour around the Northern Queensland area], 25 September 1900: DA 6.1.6.29. A few years after I first accessed this report, it was digitized and is now available from JACAR (www.jacar.go.jp) (reference code B16080742300) (last accessed 15 May 2021).

⁹¹ *North Queensland Register*, 26 February 1900: the strike occurred in February, not March. For further (unfootnoted) details, see Kerr, *Northern Outpost*, pp. 45–6.



Figure 4.2 'Japanese and trucks loaded with cane', Hambleton Mill, near Cairns, c. 1890.⁹² Image Number APU-025-0001-0010. Courtesy of John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland.

labourers in 1885 Hawai'i, Iijima's unsympathetic opinion of the Mossman agitators is suggested both by his report failing to discuss the strike's origins – allegedly a labourer being struck by one of the cane-transporting rail trucks – and by his condescending descriptions of the labourers in Queensland as 'Japanese boys'.⁹³

The generation and preservation of reports such as Iijima's in Tokyo was indicative of the professionalization of the Japanese overseas diplomatic service in the late nineteenth century, with the Foreign Ministry sending trained officials to Townsville in 1896 to take over consular

⁹² Although the date is given as c. 1890, a photo from the same series on display in the Australian Sugar Heritage Centre, in Mourilyan, offers a date of c. 1898 – which seems more likely to me.

⁹³ E.g. the private letter from K. Iijima to Henry Dutton, Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Office, 20 August 1900, QSA, Item ID ITM861853 (no top number).

duties which had previously been carried out from afar – and in English – by Melbourne-based Alexander Marks. Iijima’s report thus typifies the multilingual and transnational archival traces by which historians might reconstruct the complex history of the Queensland sugar industry in the late 1890s. Moreover, it hints at new ways through which to globalize that history. A few weeks before he embarked on his tour, for example, Iijima had contacted one of the most senior officials in the new colonial government of Taiwan, Gotō Shinpei (1857–1929), to suggest that the experience Japanese sugar labourers had acquired in Queensland might be of use to the recently established Taiwan Sugar Company. Perhaps one motivation for Iijima’s subsequent tour of northern Queensland was therefore the labour-relations and land-ownership lessons to be learnt for the future development of colonial Taiwan. If so, his report speaks to the more general history of transplanted sugar knowledge, personnel and capital which was occurring across and between Japanese diasporic communities in the Pacific Ocean at the turn of the twentieth century.⁹⁴

Yet for all the ways in which the Tokyo archives complexify the history of Queensland’s sugar-producing areas, the paperwork therein shared in two important ways a basic worldview with that of the Queensland politicians and newspapermen I have cited to this point. For a start, the Aboriginal peoples of northern Queensland were as absent in Iijima’s report as they were in colonial imaginations of an ‘unoccupied territory’. Of Chinese, ‘Kanakas’, ‘Malays’ and Europeans, and of their relations to Japanese labourers, Iijima had plenty of observations; of, say, the Kuku Yalanji people of Mossman, he wrote not a word. (And even if he had discussed them, he would certainly have used the generic word *dojin* 土人 in the Japanese parlance of the time, literally meaning ‘earth people’, rather than naming individual Aboriginal countries.)⁹⁵ Second, like the politicians with whom he was in regular contact (including Robert Philp, since December 1899 the premier of Queensland), Iijima interpreted the

⁹⁴ See Martin Dusinberre and Mariko Iijima, ‘Transplantation: Sugar and Imperial Practice in Japan’s Pacific’, *Historische Anthropologie* 27, 3 (2019): 325–35. On Iijima’s letter, see Miki Tsubota-Nakanishi, ‘The Absence of Plantations in the Taiwanese Sugar Industry’, *Historische Anthropologie* 27, 3 (2019): 385–409, here pp. 385–6. The letter itself is in DA 3.5.2 and is also available from JACAR (www.jacar.go.jp) (reference code B11091025600) (last accessed 15 May 2021).

⁹⁵ It was not until the onset of Japan’s hostilities with Great Britain (1941) that Aboriginal groups in northern Australia were considered potential collaborators for the expanding empire – leading to the terminology changing from *dojin* 土人 to *genjūmin* (原住民, literally ‘original inhabitants’): Shuji Iijima, ‘Australian Aboriginal Studies in Japan, 1892–2006’, *Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology* 7 (2006): 51–70, here pp. 53–4. My reading of silence in Iijima’s report is influenced by Samia Khatun’s discussion of Muhammad Bux’s memoirs in Khatun, *Australianama*, pp. 79–80.

undeniable tensions in the north in terms of ‘the mutual relations of both countries’. In other words, in the nation-state imagination of the world for which he had been trained, northern Queensland constituted a borderland between the expansive interests of Japan and the exclusionary anxieties of Australia.⁹⁶

This co-production of northern Queensland as a remote border region was, like the NYK map, a beguilingly simplistic way of seeing the world – and one which I myself bought into during my archival research in Australia. For, after a few days in the Burns Philp Collection and also at Canberra’s National Library of Australia, I returned to Sydney by bus and flew north to Iijima’s old stomping ground of Townsville. Of a mild Saturday evening, I strolled around the historical downtown, whose colonial-era buildings have themselves been colonized by nightclubs and cocktail bars. (The historical plaque on the former Burns, Philp & Co Building, erected in 1895, noted that in the late nineteenth century the company ‘was the largest exporter of Queensland cedar – “red gold”’. A sign hanging near the building’s main entrance, displaying the graphic of a white pole dancer against a black background, promised a different currency: ‘Gold Santa Fe: Showgirls of Style, Dancers of Pleasure’.) The following morning, I hired a car and began the drive some 420 kilometres up to Mossman. Although I had not read Iijima’s report at that point, I was inadvertently tracing his route north: within an hour or two I was passing through the cane country of Ingham (site of the Macknade, Ripple Creek and Victoria mills); then Mourilyan, home of the Australian Sugar Heritage Centre museum; Innisfail (Goondi) and Edmonton (Hambledon) before, after an overnight stay in Cairns, I took the Captain Cook Highway first to Port Douglas and then on to Mossman.⁹⁷

There, at the small town library on Mill Street, a stone’s throw from the working mill, I asked about any possible Japanese graves in the area. Staff showed me a book of oral histories which included the testimony of

⁹⁶ Private letter from K. Iijima to R. Philp, Premier of Queensland, 20 August 1900, QSA, Item ID ITM861853 (no top number). Iijima’s nation-state imagination of the world may be judged from one sentence in the letter: ‘Each nation has its own “amour-propre” as well as its national prejudices, the latter being, no doubt, the direct cause of the agitation against the Japanese labourers in this Colony.’ On the applicability of the borderland framework to northern Queensland, see Maria Elena Indelicato, ‘Beyond Whiteness: Violence and Belonging in the Borderlands of North Queensland’, *Postcolonial Studies* 23, 1 (2020): 99–115.

⁹⁷ My reconstruction of what Paul Carter calls the ‘*running hither and thither*’ is to demonstrate, as he suggests, the materiality and the physical ‘moving across ground’ which lies behind knowledge construction: Carter, *Dark Writing*, pp. 20–1 (emphasis in the original).

the late Walter Mullavey, born in 1914 and interviewed in 2006. His stories meandered through the byways of his memory: they featured Jack, his gold-pro prospector-turned-cattle-farmer grandfather from Ireland; another Jack – ‘Jack the Kanaka’ – who’d come from the Solomon Islands and had flog marks like ‘grooves in his back’; the Chinese prostitutes who’d come up from Sydney during harvest season; and, out of the blue:

When the Japanese died up at the mill, they were the workers and the whites told them what to do, I forget what year it was, my father took them all out with a dray. You couldn’t get to Port or anywhere in the wet and he said you only dug a grave that deep and it was full of water. They were buried opposite the Rex’s cemetery, towards the mountain. They died of Mossman Fever. Dad said four or five every night. Where Rupert Howe lived, there was the Jap hospital in the mill yards. But I’ve an idea it’s gone. It was a good old building too.⁹⁸

On the basis of this lead, one of the librarians, Judy Coulthard, generously drove me a short way north to Rex’s cemetery – in reality the extended family plot of Richard Owen Jones (1852–1914), a Welsh immigrant and one of the area’s first settlers (his home was called The Cedars). From there we headed west through verdant cane fields to a site where, as the result of some phone calls, Judy had a hunch the Japanese graves might have been moved.

In the end we found nothing. And in any case, the idea of four or five Japanese successively dying each night of Mossman Fever – the local name for typhus – seemed unlikely, at least without corresponding records in Tokyo.⁹⁹ As did the story of Chinese sex labourers making a trek more than 2,500 kilometres north for work. (Did they come from Cairns instead?) As did a boast that Mullavey made about avenging ‘the blacks’, who allegedly murdered a Mossman River selector in March 1885. In the wake of the murder, he recalled, the settlers and the police, aided by ‘a lot of black trackers’, chased the Aboriginal people ‘right up onto Rifle Creek. And they said they shot 112, the whole tribe.’ There was undoubtedly some basis for Mullavey’s claims, but unlike the widespread newspaper coverage concerning the white victim, there was very little public information on the massacre – which would have counted as one of the biggest in Queensland’s blood-soaked history.¹⁰⁰ As I headed

⁹⁸ Pam Willis Burden, *Raindrops and Sugar Crops: Tales from South of the Daintree* (Port Douglas, QLD: Douglas Shire Historical Society, 2010), pp. 59–63, citation from p. 60.

⁹⁹ On ‘Mossman Fever’, see John Pearn, *Outback Medicine: Some Vignettes of Pioneering Medicine* (Brisbane: Amphion Press, 1994), p. 101.

¹⁰⁰ On the original murder, ‘Port Douglas, March 14’, *Queenslander* (Brisbane), 21 March 1885, which noted, ‘The impression is that Barnard was murdered and carried away. It is reported that the native troopers are to leave the Johnstone River today. The blacks

down south, to spend several days in the more familiar territory of Brisbane's Queensland State Archives, I was left with the impression that empirical truths might be unknowable in the borderlands: that here even more than elsewhere, historical facts must compete with boasts and blindspots, hunch and hearsay.

Which, I would later realize, was an entirely unoriginal observation and one reinforced by what we might call the archives' directionality – that is, their position in the south, looking towards the north. In his magnum opus on the Mediterranean, Fernand Braudel described a similar directionality in terms of the upland mountains and the lowland plains:

The history of the mountains is chequered and difficult to trace. Not because of lack of documents; if anything there are too many. Coming down from the mountain regions, where history is lost in the mist, man enters in the plains and towns the domain of classified archives. Whether a new arrival or a seasoned visitor, the mountain dweller inevitably meets someone down below who will leave a description of him, a more or less mocking sketch.¹⁰¹

In other words, the archival descriptions of mountain dwellers were generated by those 'down below'. In late nineteenth-century Queensland, too, descriptions of the north were plentiful – exacerbated, if anything, by the alleged absence of inhabitants. But such sketches were imbued with the physical and imaginative distance that separated the speaker's (or writer's) audience from the realities on the ground. In the resultant empirical mist, authority had to be claimed on the basis of experience. 'Any man who travels about the colony – and especially in the North – must see the large numbers of Japanese who are now engaged in every line of business,' argued W. H. 'Billy' Browne (1846–1904), in opening the Legislative Assembly's 1895 debate on 'Asiatic and African Aliens'. Browne himself had worked extensively in the north, and he represented the northern constituency of Croydon; and thus his long speech was peppered with claims – *I have seen, I have worked,*

are bad all through the district.' The incident is not discussed in Timothy Bottoms, *Conspiracy of Silence: Queensland's Frontier Killing Times* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013), nor is it recorded in the 'Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788–1930' database, <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/> (last accessed 10 June 2021) – which doesn't mean that it did not occur. The most detailed online reference I could find was in the Queensland government's 'Communities' section, www.qld.gov.au/atasi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/community-histories/community-histories-mossman-gorge (last accessed 10 June 2021), itself citing the *Queensland Figaro*, 4 April 1885 (not available online).

¹⁰¹ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, trans. Sian Reynolds (London: Harper & Row, 1972 [1966]), p. 44.

I have been, and therefore *I know* – which implied his colleagues had *not* seen, worked or been in the north, and therefore did *not* know about ‘the large numbers of Japanese’. If only Browne’s colleagues would travel north from the urban settlements of the south, they would know.¹⁰²

Time and again, Queensland’s politicians used a language which spoke to a popular imagination of the distant north – even if they themselves represented northern areas. Mr Hamilton, member for the vast northern constituency of Cook, asked Mr Browne if ‘the hon. Member require[d] to go *as far as* Thursday Island’ to find evidence of Japanese ‘Yokohama’ red-light districts (see Chapter 5). Mr Ogden, representing Townsville, reminded the assembly ‘that this matter affects North Queensland more than the South, and that the North is practically made an experimenting ground for these cheap classes of labour, and in the North we have to suffer the whole of this’. Browne talked of ‘a lot of communications [which] *came down* from the north-west about the Chinese coming across from the northern territory’, while Mr Archer (Rockhampton) simply spoke of the ‘danger of an influx of Japanese [...] *up North*’.¹⁰³ This rhetorical distance of the North from the seat of government served also to reinforce claims about northern Queensland’s proximity – ‘within a few days’ sail’ – to Asia, and its concomitant ‘position of danger’.¹⁰⁴

Thus, the *distant North* was foundational to the claim of the *empty North*. Distance pervaded the archival reports coming from the far northern offices of Burns, Philp & Co to its Sydney headquarters; it was there in every bulletin transmitted ‘by telegraph’ to Townsville-, Rockhampton- or Brisbane-based newspapers; it was present in Iijima’s preface, noting that one of the three weeks he had been away from Townsville was simply for travel; and it remains in the title of the company-sponsored history of Mossman, *Northern Outpost*. In a similar way to Iijima, my memories of driving *all the way up* to this outpost formed a lens through which I approached the Queensland State Archives upon arrival in Brisbane. The action was up there; I was reading it from down here.

¹⁰² *QPD*, vol. 73 (1895), pp. 771–6 (quotation about the Japanese on p. 772). Browne represented Labour.

¹⁰³ *QPD*, vol. 73 (1895), quotations respectively on pp. 784, 787, 773, 779 (emphases added). Hamilton (1841–1916) was a member of the governing Ministerialist party; Ogden (1866–1943) a member of Labour; and Archer (1820–1902) was an independent.

¹⁰⁴ *QPD*, vol. 73 (1895), p. 780. The speaker was James Drake (1850–1941), an opposition politician.

This was history from the south writ large: an Anglo-Celtic imagination of Australia, according to Regina Ganter, in which the national narrative started in 1788 with the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove and worked its way upwards.¹⁰⁵ And without realizing it, mine was also an imagination which took for granted the finished map of post-1901 Australia as the natural territorial conclusion of that settler history. My archival research had started in Canberra, a capital city which would not have existed other than for the fact of federation. Like the NYK map I found there, I imagined a country with its land borders at the northern Queensland coast – thereby overlooking the fact that the Australia of the 1920s was not the inevitable outcome of historical contingencies in the 1890s. Moreover, as if following the *Yamashiro-maru*'s route down from those distant borderlands to the civilized urban centres of the south, my return archival itinerary took me from Port Douglas to Brisbane and finally to Sydney – the 'London of the southern seas'. There, in the Darling Harbour constituency once represented by Billy Hughes, I visited the National Maritime Museum of Australia. Like other tourists on the day and no doubt over the years, I stooped my way through the unfathomably cramped quarters of the replica *Endeavour*. The ship in many ways frames the museum, as if the national maritime story can only begin with Captain Cook and sail its way north.

But what, Ganter asks, 'if we start to write Australian history from north to south, instead of the other way round, and chronologically forward instead of teleologically backward'? Straightaway, she argues, historians must 'give up the idea of Anglo-Celts at the centre of the Australian universe'. This is a suggestion whose archival implications are left unmentioned.¹⁰⁶ But to the question of where, archivally, we might begin such a reverse-directional history, one credible answer was hanging in the museum's Tasman Light Gallery. It challenged the notion of a maritime narrative which must by default be national. It also drew attention to two common critiques of the 'borderlands' framework which in my mind I had posited to this point: namely, that 'a nation-state focus in borderlands history risks obscuring the histories of Indigenous peoples whose lands had been colonized or were at risk of colonization'; and that it focuses too much on *land*.¹⁰⁷

My archival departure point was a bark painting by Djambawa Marawili (born 1953), entitled 'Baraltja'.

¹⁰⁵ Regina Ganter, 'Turning the Map Upside Down', *History Compass* 4, 1 (2006): 26–35.

¹⁰⁶ Ganter, 'Turning the Map', p. 33.

¹⁰⁷ Chang, 'Borderlands in a World at Sea', pp. 384, 393.

Delineating

'Baraltja' demonstrates that the most fundamental claim of the 'N. Y. K. Line' map concerned neither the shipping routes nor the land colours, but rather the idea that the land and the sea are separate entities which can be representationally divided by a line. In arguing against such an apparently 'natural' boundary, Djambawa Marawili's work, and that of his fellow Yolŋu artists, makes an important contribution to the historian's conception of the archive. I'll return to this shortly – but first it's worth reflecting on the epistemological roots of the linear division of land from sea.

Some scholars have argued that such lines are based on a 'European cultural disposition to draw boundaries where land meets sea'.¹⁰⁸ Whether it is in fact appropriate to apply a single cultural explanation to a spatial entity as historically and linguistically diverse as 'Europe', even as scholars call for greater sensitivity to the historically and linguistically diverse histories of 'Australia', is a separate debate.¹⁰⁹ But it is true that from the seventeenth century onwards, a body of theory was produced in Europe concerning the alleged distinction between the land and the sea, which in turn offered the justification for a set of legal frameworks defining the 'ownership' of the former and the fundamental 'freedom' of the latter (themselves both terms loaded with European theory).¹¹⁰ In their representations of these frameworks through devices such as lines, European imperial maps appeared to offer non-indexical interpretations of the world: that is, they claimed a set of truths which were allegedly independent of local context and were thus universal. But despite presenting the 'truth' of such boundaries as transcending indexicality and being globally applicable, European imperial maps were not in fact autonomous of the local theoretical context in which they were produced. They instead reflected and 'can only be read through the myths that Europeans tell about their relationship to the land'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Monica E. Mulrennan and Colin H. Scott, 'Mare Nullius: Indigenous Rights in Saltwater Environments', *Development and Change* 31 (2000): 681–708, here p. 681. S. E. Jackson similarly writes of 'the European cultural distinction between land and sea': 'The Water Is Not Empty: Cross-Cultural Issues in Conceptualising Sea Space', *Australian Geographer* 26, 1 (1995): 87–96, here p. 87.

¹⁰⁹ Such a debate has taken many forms: see, for example, Frederick Cooper's critique of Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe* for not provincializing Europe enough: Cooper, *Colonialism in Question*, pp. 113–49.

¹¹⁰ On the complex processes by which imperial legal regimes were established at sea, see Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, pp. 104–61.

¹¹¹ Turnbull, *Maps Are Territories*, Exhibits 4, 7, and quotation from Exhibit 9.

Thus, in drawing on this imperial European cartographic tradition, the ‘N. Y. K. Line’ map must be read as advancing both a set of specific claims about Japan and Australia in the late nineteenth century *and* a more fundamental imperial ontology – namely, the boundary between land and sea.

Djambawa Marawili’s ‘Baraltja’ exposes this myth as indexical and therefore inapplicable to the saltwater country in which he grew up. A brief historical overview of that country helps contextualize how he does so – and underlines Ganter’s call to turn the Australian map upside down. Marawili is a senior leader of the Maḍarrpa clan in the Yirritja moiety, which, along with the Dhuwa moiety, constitutes half the world of the Yolŋu people, in what settler maps call north-eastern Arnhem Land (Northern Territory). Taking its name from a Dutch city via a Dutch East India Company ship which navigated the so-called Gulf of Carpentaria in 1623, ‘Arnhem Land’ nods to a history of European maritime contact with northern Australia that predates the British by more than 150 years. Indeed, the word for ‘White person’ or ‘European’ in many Yolŋu languages is *balanda* – a clear reference to Hollanders.¹¹²

But linguists have actually shown that *balanda* derives from the Makassarese and Buginese word *Balanda* (Holland). Along with Yolŋu verbs such as *djāma* (to work, make, do; Makassarese/Buginese, *jaāma*, to build, do, work; touch, handle) or *djāka* (to care for, look after; *jaāga*, to watch, look out), or indeed the noun *lipalipa* (canoe-dugout; *lepa*), these words point to a long history of interactions between Yolŋu people and trepang (bêche-de-mer) fishers from Makassar and its South Sulawesi environs – people who themselves called the northern coast of Australia *Marege*.¹¹³ Analysis of trepang exports from Makassar to the Dutch administrative centre of Batavia and then on to the Chinese market suggests there was a sudden increase in exports in the late eighteenth century. Read against a famous encounter in 1803 between the British navigator Matthew Flinders (1774–1814), on his

¹¹² A number of language groups comprise ‘Yolŋu Matha’ (literally the ‘words/speech’ [matha] of ‘man’). These include Dhuwala, spoken by Djambawa Marawili’s Maḍarrpa clan (see his ‘Declaration’, fn 125). For an overview, see ‘N230: Yolngu Matha’, in the online ‘Auslang’ database of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, <https://collection.aiatsis.gov.au/austlang/about> (last accessed 23 June 2022).

¹¹³ C. C. Macknight, *The Voyage to Marege’: Macassan Trepangers in Northern Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2017 edn [1976]), pp. 89–90; John Greatorex, *Yolngu Matha Dictionary* (2014): <https://yolngudictionary.edu.edu.au> (last accessed 2 June 2021). See also Alan Walker and R. David Zorc, ‘Austronesian Loanwords in Yolngu-Matha of Northeast Arnhem Land’, *Aboriginal History* 5 (1981): 109–34.

circumnavigation of Australia, and Pobassoo, a Bugis ‘old Commander’ of the trepanging fleet, some scholars have dated the first sustained engagements between Makassarese fishermen and Yolŋu peoples to around 1780.¹¹⁴ Until trepanging from Makassar to the Northern Territory was effectively prohibited in 1906, thereby ‘islanding’ northern Australia from Southeast Asia, the impact of these engagements was profound: it can be traced not only linguistically but also archaeologically, and in Yolŋu ritual practices and rock art.¹¹⁵

This Yolŋu–Makassar history is important because it refutes the stereotype of an isolated, static, ‘traditional’ Aboriginal past set against the dynamism of the post-European encounter – as if Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal history only began with Captain Cook. Yolŋu peoples were actively engaged with the world of today’s Southeast Asia from before the arrival of the First Fleet, and probably from before the arrival of the Dutch in the early seventeenth century, in a historical relationship which also changed across time. The line which divides the nation-state of ‘Australia’ from Southeast Asia is thus a historical anachronism – even if it continues to determine the infrastructures of travel in the region. Moreover, as the anthropologist Ian McIntosh argued with reference to the early 2000s, contemporary memories of Yolŋu encounters with Makassar across this anachronistic border affirmed the identity and authority of Yolŋu people as landowners and as claimants in a battle for sea rights.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Campbell Macknight, ‘The View from Marege’: Australian Knowledge of Makassar and the Impact of the Trepang Industry across Two Centuries’, *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011): 121–43, here pp. 133–4. This is a revision of Macknight’s earlier suggestion (see fn 113) that the trade began in the late seventeenth century. By contrast, fishers from Makassar may have reached the Kimberley coast a few decades earlier. On the act of interpretation between Flinders and the trepangers, see Paul Thomas, ‘Interpreting the Macassans: Language Exchange in Historical Encounters’, in Marshall Clark and Sally K. May, eds., *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounters and Influences* (Canberra: Australian National University E-Press, 2013), pp. 69–93.

¹¹⁵ On islanding, see Sujit Sivasundaram, *Islanded: Britain, Sri Lanka, and the Bounds of an Indian Ocean Colony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013). For an overview of the literature on Yolŋu–Makassar mutual influences (and its points of disagreements), see Stephanie Mawson, ‘The Deep Past of Pre-Colonial Australia’, *Historical Journal* 64, 5 (2021): 1477–99, here pp. 1493–8.

¹¹⁶ Ian S. McIntosh, ‘Unbirri’s pre-Macassan legacy, or how the Yolngu became black’, in Marshall Clark and Sally K. May, eds., *Macassan History and Heritage: Journeys, Encounter and Influences* (Canberra: Australian National University E-Press, 2013), pp. 95–105, here pp. 95, 103–4. On the revival of Yolŋu–Makassar engagements since the 1980s, see Regina Ganter, ‘Remembering Muslim Histories of Australia’, *La Trobe Journal* 89 (2012): 48–62, here pp. 59–62.

Which brings us to Djambawa Marawili's evocation of 'Baraltja' (see Figure 4.3).¹¹⁷ In settler geographical terms, Baraltja refers to the northern anabranch of the Koolatong River as it discharges into Jalma Bay, which itself forms part of the big, shallow Blue Mud Bay in eastern Arnhem Land. Nine Yolŋu clans claim estates in Blue Mud Bay – four from the Dhuwa moiety and five from the Yirritja, including Marawili's own Maḍarra clan. But whereas the word 'estates' may conjure up an image of land units, Yolŋu estates traverse the boundary of land and sea, as Marawili's bark painting demonstrates. In its simplest form, 'Baraltja' depicts fresh water (the vertical lines at the bottom of the painting) from the inland part of the Maḍarra estate flowing into the estuary at Baraltja.¹¹⁸ There, before the fresh water meets the clan's body of saltwater (known as Muḵurru, which further from the shore is shared with two other Yirritja moiety clans), it mixes with another body of Maḍarra clan water, the Wiḍiyarr – a brackish mixture of salt and fresh water (represented by the horizontal lines). The brackish waters in Baraltja are the ancestral home of the lightning serpent Burut'ji, who is central to Maḍarra creation stories.¹¹⁹ Here taking the form of a sandbar perpendicular to the horizontal brackish lines, Burut'ji is so excited by the flushing freshwater that he stands and, like other snakes associated with the brackish waters, spits lightning towards the painting's upper reaches. There we see the Waḵupini ancestral storm cloud, two terns flying in her winds, while other, smaller thunderclouds appear as triangles at the very top of the painting. Meanwhile, the brackish water flows from shallow

¹¹⁷ For a general introduction to Marawili's work, see Kimberly Moulton, 'Djambawa Marawili AM: Change Agent', to accompany Marawili's collaboration, *where the water moves, where it rests*, with the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, University of Virginia, 1 August 2015 – 24 January 2016, downloadable from <https://kluge-ruhe.org/collaboration/djambawa-marawili/> (last accessed 31 May 2021). One of the Marawili paintings commissioned by the Kluge-Ruhe, 'Journey to America', later won the NATSIAA award for 2019: www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2019/aug/09/natsiaa-2019-djambawa-marawili-wins-for-bark-painting-written-in-my-soul-and-in-my-blood (last accessed 31 May 2021).

¹¹⁸ The following description is based on *Saltwater*, pp. 34–5; Howard Morphy and Frances Morphy, 'Tasting the Waters: Discriminating Identities in the Waters of Blue Mud Bay', *Journal of Material Culture* 11, 1–2 (2006): 67–85, here pp. 70–3; Frances Morphy and Howard Morphy, 'The Blue Mud Bay Case: Refractions through Saltwater Country', *Dialogue* 28 (2009): 15–25, here pp. 20–1; Marcus Barber, 'Where the Clouds Stand: Australian Aboriginal Relationships to Water, Place, and the Marine Environment in Blue Mud Bay, Northern Territory', unpublished PhD dissertation, Australian National University (2005), pp. 169–74. The fresh water is known as Gularri.

¹¹⁹ Muḵurru is the Yirritja moiety name for deep saltwater; the Dhuwa moiety clans call it Balamumu. The Wiḍiyarr is owned by both the Maḍarra and the Dhalwaḵu clans. The lightning serpent is also known as Mundukul'.



Figure 4.3 Djambawa Marawili, 'Baraltja' (1998). Courtesy of Djambawa Marawili of Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre. Australian National Maritime Museum Collection purchased with the assistance of Stephen Grant of the GrantPirrie Gallery.

into deeper waters, where Nyoka the mud crab and Makani the queenfish swim.

Even in this much-simplified description, two interrelated aspects of a Yolŋu worldview are striking.¹²⁰ First, this is a cyclical vision: in the monsoon season that Marawili depicts, the clouds – themselves a place of distant, ancestral kin – shed water over the land. Fresh waters from the inland Maḍarrpa estate rush into Baraltja, mixing with brackish waters and eventually flushing into the deep saltwater, where, at the edge of the known Yolŋu world, they will be drawn up once again into the clouds. In the dry season, by contrast, Mujuṛru penetrates the inland creeks and billabongs, offering a salty taste to the drinking water. Moreover, there are cycles within cycles: the daily tides, the lunar cycle of neap and spring tides – and of course the annual cycle of the trepang fishers from Makassar, whose stays coincided with the wet season.¹²¹

Second, this is a unified vision, where sea and land are conceptually inseparable. Here as also in other parts of Indigenous Australia, ‘country’ extends across sea and land – a far cry from Consul Iijima’s nation-state framed articulation of ‘the mutual relations of both countries’.¹²² Indeed, as a number of anthropologists have noted, ‘there is no Yolŋu word that translates as ocean or sea, no binary opposition [of] “sea” versus “land”’; but there are at least thirty-eight different names that Maḍarrpa clan members give to saltwater alone, referring both to clan ownership and to the water’s character.¹²³

Given this unified worldview, the most discombobulating element of Marawili’s ‘Baraltja’ painting is therefore the horizontal line he draws across its centre, exactly where Burut’tji stands up from the brackish waters. This he was instructed to do by his artist father Wakuthi (c. 1921–2005), who also helped design Djambawa’s ‘Baraltja’, in order to indicate the ‘illegal border’ of the low-water mark.¹²⁴ Under international law, the low-water mark delineates the boundary between the ‘land’ and the ‘sea’. Although, under the Aboriginal Land Rights

¹²⁰ My description does not do justice to other aspects of the painting: for example, Burrut’tji’s lightning and the travels of the Makani queenfish connect the Maḍarrpa clan with other Yirritja clans to the south, north and south-east of Blue Mud Bay: *Saltwater*, p. 45; Barber, ‘Where the Clouds Stand’, p. 172.

¹²¹ Morphy and Morphy, ‘Tasting the Waters’, p. 76.

¹²² On this point, see Peter Burdon, Georgina Drew, Matthew Stubbs, Adam Webster and Marcus Barber, ‘Decolonising Indigenous Water “Rights” in Australia: Flow, Difference, and the Limits of Law’, *Settler Colonial Studies* 5, 4 (2015): 334–49, here p. 336.

¹²³ Morphy and Morphy, ‘Blue Mud Bay Case’, p. 18; Barber, ‘Where the Clouds Stand’, p. 147.

¹²⁴ *Saltwater*, p. 34.

(Northern Territory) Act (1976), Yolŋu *land* rights were deemed to extend down to this low-water line, the law said nothing about *sea* rights in the intertidal zone – that is, the water in the area above and between the low- and high-water marks. As a consequence, the waters so central to Yolŋu ‘country’ were regularly encroached by commercial fishers. After a particularly distressing desecration of Maḍarra clan land in 1996, forty-seven of the community’s artists and leaders created a series of eighty bark paintings (*dhulanj*) with the aim, in Djambawa’s words, of ‘explain[ing] the country, how they became one, not only the sea but the land too’. He continued: ‘That’s why this paper is being written in public. It will be publicly seen by non-Aboriginal people, government and foreigners.’¹²⁵

‘This paper’ was a ‘Declaration’, one of five taped by Yolŋu artists and transcribed at the beginning of *Saltwater: Yirrkala Bark Paintings of Sea Country*, a book published in 1999 by the Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka art centre and including reproductions of all eighty paintings. But the key media of knowledge transmission were the paintings themselves, coloured with pigments from the land and drawn onto barks from the common stringy-bark tree. The patterns (*miny’tji*) and paints ‘come from the land’, Marawili emphasized. The patterns were also ‘etched by the smell of the sea around Walirra’, noted Dula Ŋurruwuthun (1936–2001), referring to a body of water in Blue Mud Bay. The paintings were ‘sacred art that has been etched by the sea’:

This is our sacred design. Our art is for us. You are paper. We are sacred design. You make paper. Your wisdom is paper. Our intellect is sacred design, homeland and ancestral hearth of ancient origin.¹²⁶

If this sounds like a polarizing view of the world, its intention was not. Such statements were rather born from a profound frustration that ‘we show these barks and yet they still belittle our Law. They send their fishing boats to these waters without permission.’¹²⁷ Ultimately, therefore, the key audience that the bark paintings had to convince were the settler custodians of paper, namely the Australian law courts. And in a case which culminated in a high court judgement in July 2008, Yolŋu leaders used the bark paintings as evidence to support their contention

¹²⁵ Djambawa Marawili, ‘Declaration’, trans. Raymattja Marika, in *Saltwater*, pp. 14–15, here p. 15. Djambawa himself contributed seven of the eighty paintings.

¹²⁶ Dula Ŋurruwuthun (Munyuku clan, Yirritja moiety), ‘Declaration’, trans. Raymattja Marika, in *Saltwater*, pp. 9–12, here pp. 9–10. The sacred designs (*miny’tji*) are particular to each clan.

¹²⁷ Mowarra Ganambarr (c. 1917–2005, Dätiwuy clan, Dhuwa moiety), ‘Declaration’, trans. Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr, in *Saltwater*, pp. 16–18, here p. 18.

that their ‘land’ rights should extend also to the water above the intertidal zone – a contention which was supported in a landmark [sic] ruling.¹²⁸

In this sense, bark paintings such as ‘Baraltja’ were more than ‘Aboriginal art’: they were also legal documents, thus continuing a history – dating at least as far back as the famous Yirrkala Bark Petitions (1963) – in which the medium was entwined with the political claim.¹²⁹ And, to use a term which has been debated by scholars for its applicability to Aboriginal representations, ‘Baraltja’ may also be considered a *map*, for it offered Balanda like the high court judges a representational structure to explain ‘how we choose our names’, how ‘the water flows into clan groups’, and thus the law of Yolŋu country.¹³⁰ Such propositions are analogous to those offered by the NYK map, with its country names, its lines across water and its explanatory basis in the alleged universalism of international law.

As Helen Watson (Verran) has argued, however, ‘[bark paintings] are maps only insofar as the landscape is itself a “text”’. In other words, the lands and waters of Blue Mud Bay are the founts of Yolŋu knowledge: how they are ‘read’ determines the construction of ‘Baraltja’ and its companion pieces. This is exactly the argument of the five declarations which preface the printed edition of the 1998 paintings: in Djambawa Marawili’s words, non-Aboriginal people ‘will see our intellectual

¹²⁸ Morphy and Morphy, ‘Blue Mud Bay Case’.

¹²⁹ See www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/yirrkala-bark-petitions (last accessed 3 June 2021). It’s worth pointing out that ‘[t]he very terms “map” and “chart” also derive from their materiality: the Latin word *carta* denotes a formal document on paper or parchment, while the term *mappa* indicates cloth’: Presner, Shepard and Kawano, *HyperCities*, pp. 15–16. The practice of Yolŋu bark painting predates the colonial period. After the arrival of the Methodist mission in Yirrkala in the 1930s, clan members explained their world through the medium: *Saltwater*, p. 22. See also the collections of bark paintings from the 1940s discussed in Rebecca Conway, ed., *Djalkiri: Yolŋu Art, Collaborations and Collections* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2021).

¹³⁰ Djambawa Marawili, ‘Declaration’, pp. 14, 15; see also Dula Nŋurruwuthun’s claim, ‘This is our law and our art’ (‘Declaration’, p. 10). On the bark paintings as maps, see Helen Watson with the Yolŋu community at Yirrkala, ‘Aboriginal-Australian maps’, in Turnbull, *Maps Are Territories* (exhibition 5). Peter Sutton labels Watson’s framework ‘highly problematic’ for blurring what he considers to be two separate heuristic categories, namely icons and maps (and he also points out that there is no word for ‘map’ in Aboriginal languages): Sutton, ‘Icons of Country: Topographic Representations in Classical Aboriginal Traditions’, in David Woodward and G. Malcolm Lewis, eds., *The History of Cartography*, Vol. 2, Bk. 3: *Cartography in the Traditional African, American, Arctic, Australian, and Pacific Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 353–86, here p. 364. It may also be possible to read ‘Baraltja’ and accompanying bark paintings as almanacs – at least in the South Asian reading suggested by Debjani Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 11–19.

knowledge exists in the fresh water and becomes one in the saltwater'. Such a statement would not be out of place in Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge*: Yolŋu country is the archive which determines what can be said or what can be painted.¹³¹ The country speaks a set of claims which counter those of the NYK map and its archival bases – especially in revealing the ontological absurdity of the low-water line.

But while I understand the explanatory value of suggesting that Yolŋu people read the landscape as text, I think it is an unhelpful metaphor.¹³² It returns us to the book and the pen as the ultimate arbiters of knowledge; it thereby reinforces – if only inadvertently, given Verran's sensitivity to Indigenous epistemologies¹³³ – a long-held assumption that while the archive is a repository of knowledge, associated in the European scholarly tradition with the *arkheion* (the residence of a polity's magistrates or governors), the knowledge itself is to be found in the pages therein.¹³⁴ By contrast, Djambawa Marawili is adamant that 'this paper' is *not* equivalent to the knowledge which exists in the water. Rather, 'things like this book' are simply a means for 'you' – that is, Balanda, me – to learn:

About the homelands, the paintings, the floodwaters, the hunting grounds, the everlasting old dwelling places, the sovereignty, the places, the shades, the shelters. You will learn of these. Both sides, Yolŋu and Balanda knowledge. This will be done through the publishing of books, not just through bark paintings but also through print literacy.¹³⁵

Reading these words in Switzerland, thousands of kilometres from the Maḡarrpa clan estates, I am under no illusions: I have held the Yolŋu artists' printed paper in my hands, I have seen Marawili's 'Baraltja' with my own eyes, but I have not in any way read his country archive. Nor could I make that claim, even if I had been able to fly to northern Australia as planned in 2020. For, to modify Foucault, one consequence of accepting the notion of Aboriginal country as archive is not merely that the archive determines *what can be said* but also *who can say it*. As has been noted of Torres Straits Islanders, land and sea rights are also related

¹³¹ 'The archive is first the law of what can be said': Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (London: Routledge Classics, 1989 [1969]), p. 145.

¹³² For a wider critique, see Teresia K. Teaiwa, 'On Analogies: Rethinking the Pacific in a Global Context', *Contemporary Pacific* 18, 1 (2006): 71–87.

¹³³ Helen Verran (Watson), 'A Story about Doing "The Dreaming"', *Postcolonial Studies* 7, 2 (2004): 149–64.

¹³⁴ Alexandra Walsham, 'The Social History of the Archive: Record-Keeping in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, Supplement 11 (2016): 9–48, here p. 14.

¹³⁵ Djambawa Marawili, 'Declaration', p. 15.

to the rights – and responsibilities – to name places and tell stories.¹³⁶ By this logic, my argument that historians must broaden our definition of ‘the archive’ also entails an acknowledgement of narrowed accessibility: global history cannot be synonymous with my unfettered right to access or tell everyone else’s stories. If it were, then archival accessibility – or *open access*, *open science* or similar such buzzwords which flood Euro-American academia in the early 2020s – would be no more than discursive decoys for a neocolonial appropriation of Indigenous knowledge in line with a long tradition of such Euro-American colonialism.

And yet Djambawa Marawili also concludes, ‘This talk is for wherever you are or whatever clan you are.’ Unlike some stories in situ, the knowledge presented in the *Saltwater* collection is not to be hidden from outsiders. Indeed, Djambawa sees his Declaration, and his art, as ‘living in the way of reconciliation’. In this spirit, I have tried in this chapter to take as my departure point certain Aboriginal epistemological strategies in my reading of colonial archival sources. For example, Minoru Hokari has written of the relationship that the Gurindji people of the Northern Territory posit between direction and morality in history, in which the ‘right law/earth law’ tracks from west to east, and ‘the English’ (represented by Captain Cook) ‘came from the wrong direction and moved in the wrong direction’ – thereby betraying their immorality.¹³⁷ While such an analytical framing of the past may seem alien to scholars trained in the discipline of ‘history’ which emerged from nineteenth-century Europe, I have argued that a basic acknowledgement of directionality *is* in fact useful for analysing the Australian colonial archive, and for understanding the historical lie of the ‘empty North’.¹³⁸ Second, in pairing two graphic sources, namely the NYK map and ‘Baraltja’, I have tried to undermine any assumption that the former represents universal ‘truths’ and the latter mere local ‘claims’. *Both* sources make claims about the past based on their understandings of ‘country’ law, and both need to be interrogated for the applicability of such claims beyond their local contexts. I do not have the skills to do so for the Yolŋu country archive (and herein lies one impetus for collaborative research projects). But within the limitations of the book-and-pen training I received in Europe and Japan, I see one of global history’s contributions to be the un-settling of

¹³⁶ Mulrennan and Scott, ‘*Mare Nullius*’, p. 688.

¹³⁷ Hokari, *Gurindji Journey*, pp. 113–35, especially pp. 125–9.

¹³⁸ My emphasis here is similar to Tony Ballantyne’s call for ‘perspectival histories’ of colonialism: see, for example, Ballantyne, ‘Mobility, Empire, Colonisation’, *History Australia* 11, 2 (2014): 7–37, here p. 18.

colonial narratives – including the mutual reinforcement of Australian and Japanese narratives of ‘emptiness’ – as they have emerged from archival epistemologies to date.¹³⁹

Finally, the world of metaphors is so littered with traps that I have no inherent wish to participate in what my Heidelberg colleagues jokingly called ‘comparative metaphorology’ – whereby my metaphor is better than yours.¹⁴⁰ But I do think that brackishness potentially offers a more convincing metaphor for analysing the claims and contradictions embodied in the NYK map than a language – which I have also used – of ‘connections’ or ‘entanglements’. The *brackish world* better captures the ambiguous discourses of mapping, flooding, blotting, taste, purity, ecology, history and moving sites of contact which bubble through this chapter than any other metaphor I have used – and it speaks to the archival and methodological challenges raised by Djambawa Marawili’s appeal for historians no less than judges to delineate the colonial boundaries between water and land.¹⁴¹ Moreover, in modulating between histories of humans and the natural environment, the ship and the shore, the past and the present, *brackishness* may also offer scholars a framework for thinking about what I previously termed ‘in-between’ migration histories in the Pacific world. For ultimately, the careers of Hasegawa Setsutarō, or, before him, Wakamiya Yaichi, Kodama Keijirō or Fuyuki Sakazō, cannot be reduced to lessons in a book. Their lives take meaning in the brackish spaces around penned sentences – as the case of a female labourer, Hashimoto Usa, will now show.

¹³⁹ On ‘unsettling’, see Morphy and Morphy, ‘Blue Mud Bay Case’, p. 15; Neale and Turner, ‘Other People’s Country’, p. 279.

¹⁴⁰ My thanks to Joachim Kurtz and Monica Juneja for allowing me to participate in such discussions.

¹⁴¹ These challenges are not unique to Australia, of course: scholars of South Asia have used the metaphor of ‘soaking’ to describe the geographical fluidity between land and sea, and the colonial imposition of notions of ‘property’ thereon: Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology*, herself drawing on Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha, *Soak: Mumbai in an Estuary* (New Delhi: Rupa Publishing, 2009).