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## **Visible Participation: Japanese Migrants in North Queensland, 1880–1941**

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### Abstract:

Between 1880 and 1941, many Japanese migrants arrived in north Queensland and became active participants in their communities. Despite arriving during an era where a White Australia was broadly envisioned, these migrants formed lasting connections within the unique geographical and cultural climate of north Queensland. Government records and newspapers archives reveal these individuals' positive contributions to the region through business, civic engagement, and social events. This article focuses on Japanese migrant families' economic, civic, and social contributions to north Queensland communities to highlight the longevity and depth of their connections within the history of northern Australia.

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Migration, Japanese-Australian history, White Australia Policy, Immigration Restriction Act

## **Introduction**

In 1912, a stroll down Townsville's main retail precinct on Flinders Street meant passing by Japanese retail stores selling men's and women's fashions, children's toys, and home décor. Japanese businesses were not an unusual sight for residents of Townsville, or even north Queensland, and were not a source of alarm. The visible commercial presence of Japanese migrants in north Queensland during the early twentieth century contrasted with the White Australia era's ideological currency of racism and immigration restriction.<sup>1</sup> The most thoroughly researched and well-remembered aspects of Australia's relationship with Japan in the period before, during, and immediately after the Second World War (WWII) include Australia's offensive and discriminatory White Australia Policy, the Pacific War, and Australia's role in the subsequent occupation of Japan. Neville Meaney's assessment that historians have tended to focus on these dramatic, obvious, or grim aspects of the Australian–Japanese relationship rings true, but there is much scope for an exploration of more normal

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<sup>1</sup>The White Australia Policy broadly refers to a policy of non-European exclusion that was formally introduced at Federation, although most colonies already had some immigration restriction legislation prior to 1901. The *Immigration Restriction Act 1901* (hereafter *Restriction Act*) is the primary focus of this article when referring to the White Australia Policy and the associated racial ideas about excluding non-European migration.

and positive connections.<sup>2</sup> Historical sources demonstrate that while Japanese migrants were recognised as racially distinct in north Queensland communities, this did not undermine their contributions to north Queensland communities in the sixty years preceding WWII. Japanese migrants in north Queensland towns including Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay were both long-term residents and participants in their local communities.<sup>3</sup> Japanese people had a visible presence while pursuing their livelihoods in clothing and silk stores, laundries, and on farms; they also participated in local community organisations and social events. Despite the shadow of White Australia during the period between 1880 and 1941, Japanese migrants' entrepreneurial, social and civic engagement were visible aspects of north Queensland life.

Histories of Japanese migration to northern Australia mostly focus on either Australian-Japanese diplomacy or the itinerant Japanese labourers who worked in the pearl shell and sugar cane industries.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally Japanese women are discussed, but usually

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<sup>2</sup>Neville Meaney, *Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 Years* (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1999), 9.

<sup>3</sup>The phrase 'long-term resident' is not used in a strict legal sense, but instead refers to the lengthy time period (more than three decades) that many Japanese migrants resided in north Queensland.

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, David Sissons, *The Immigration Question in Australian Diplomatic Relations with Japan 1875–1919* (Brisbane: ANZAAS Congress, 1971); David Sissons, *Bridging Australia and Japan: The Writings of David Sissons, Historian and Political Scientist*, eds. Keiko Tamura and Arthur Stockwin (Canberra: ANU Press, 2016); Henry P. Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia: From the Sixteenth Century to World War II* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991); Paul Jones and Vera Mackie, eds., *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s to 1950s* (Melbourne: The University of Melbourne, 2001). See, in addition to David Sissons' collection of works in *Bridging Australia and Japan* also John Armstrong, 'Aspects of Japanese Immigration to Queensland before 1900', *Queensland Heritage* 2, no. 9 (1973): 3–9; Mary Albertus Bain, *Full Fathom Five* (Perth: Artlook Books, 1982); Regina Ganter, *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait: Resource Use, Development and Decline 1860s–1960s* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994); John Bailey, *The White Divers of Broome: The True Story of a Fatal Experiment* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan

only in connection to Japanese brothels.<sup>5</sup> In any case, Japanese migrants who came to Australia are generally framed as temporary residents who were disconnected from and ‘other’ to Australian communities during this period. The history of Japanese migration extends beyond such temporary migrants, however, as a couple of historians have recently noted. Pam Oliver has examined this issue of the othering of Japanese migrants in Australian history, and presented Japanese migrants as settlers and contributors to Australian communities in spite of government restrictions.<sup>6</sup> In Oliver’s framing, Japanese migrants had friendly and business-oriented relationships across Australia and within their local communities.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Julia Martínez has recognised the problem of treating Asian experiences as separate and distinct, identifying this othering as a product of the southern states’ preoccupation with White Australia. Martínez argues that this southern narrative fails

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Australia, 2001); Noreen Jones, *Number 2 Home: A Story of Japanese Pioneers in Australia* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002); Diane Menghetti, *Sound of our Summer Seas* (Melbourne: Macmillan Art, 2004); Pam Oliver, *Empty North: The Japanese Presence and Australian Reactions, 1860s to 1942* (Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 2006); Linda Miley, *Tomitaro Fujii: Pearl Diver of the Torres Strait* (Brisbane: Keeaira Press, 2013); John Lamb, *Silent Pearls: Old Japanese Graves in Darwin and the History of Pearling* (Canberra: Bytes 'n Colours, 2015).

<sup>5</sup>Another recurrent object of study in histories of Japanese migration to Australia is the Japanese brothel. Regina Ganter, ‘The Wakayama Triangle: Japanese Heritage of Northern Australia’, *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (1999): 57 identifies the trivialisation of Japanese brothels as interesting or ‘colourful’ elements of north Queensland histories. For in-depth analysis of Japanese prostitution in northern Australia, see: Sissons, ‘*Karayuki-san*: Japanese prostitutes in Australia, 1887–1916 (I&II) in *Bridging Australia and Japan*, 171–208; Susan Hunt, *Spinifex and Hessian: Women in North-West Australia 1860–1900* (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 1986) (chapter five is titled ‘Japanese Prostitution’).

<sup>6</sup>Oliver, *Empty North*, xvi.

<sup>7</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia: 1942 and Japan’s Plans for Australia* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 59.

to consider the experiences of Australia's Asian residents during this era in sufficient detail.<sup>8</sup> As Martínez elucidates, the othering of Japanese and other Asian migrants in Australian histories can be conflated with the southern-centric position of those histories. She explains: 'The realignment of Australian history towards an Asian perspective is best done by subverting the traditional southern-centred perspective of the Australian nation and looking northwards to Australia's tropical port towns.'<sup>9</sup> An examination of northern Australian experiences and contexts reveals the centrality and interconnectedness of Japanese migrants in north Queensland communities.

Martínez offers the framework of 'Plural Australia' as northern Australia's antithesis to the White Australia era's underlying assumption of 'coloured' exclusion. In the context of north Queensland, she explains that a Plural Australia was negotiated into existence 'by the evolving responses of White Australians to their experiences of living within a multi-ethnic community'.<sup>10</sup> Prior to the distorting effects of WWII, north Queensland's multi-ethnic community was racially conscious and differentiated between different groups of 'Asians'. The recognition of Japanese migrants as distinct from and superior to other Asian migrants afforded them a higher status and enabled their visible participation in communities. This article uses the framework of Plural Australia to analyse archival local newspapers alongside government records. Situating newspaper reports within the context of the multiracial north

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<sup>8</sup>Julia Martínez, 'Plural Australia: Aboriginal and Asian Labour in Tropical White Australia, Darwin, 1911–1940' (PhD thesis, University of Wollongong, 2000), 3.

<sup>9</sup>Martínez, 'Plural Australia,' 34. The concept of 'looking north' is problematic, however, because it assumes the default of a southern location and ignores the significance of 'being north' as opposed to 'looking north'.

<sup>10</sup>Martínez, 'Plural Australia,' i.

creates a clearer picture of Japanese migrants and their visible participation in north Queensland communities and challenges conceptions of a uniformly racist White Australia.

Evidence about the lives of Japanese migrants in north Queensland can be gathered from official government records in the National Archives of Australia (NAA) and the Queensland State Archives (QSA), including Certificates of Exemption from the Dictation Test (CEDTs), alien registration forms, and records of internment during WWII. A rounded and rich picture of individual Japanese migrants emerges when such official government records are correlated with archival databases and the digital newspaper repository Trove. Newspaper sources including editorials, letters to the editor, social notes, and advertisements provide glimpses into the lives of Japanese migrants that are not available from studying official policy or government records. This article layers these archival sources to probe beyond a simplified narrative of White Australia and the supposedly itinerant Japanese migrants relegated to its periphery. It shows how, for example, Japanese migrants operated businesses with clientele across the community, while Japanese laundries and silk stores were not only remarkably long-lived, but also located in central thoroughfares of towns. The specialty wares sold by Japanese businesses made their way into the homes and wardrobes of people throughout north Queensland, not just those of other Japanese migrants or members of the local elite. Some Japanese migrants participated in civic and social events, such as community fundraisers, debutante balls and sporting and social events. Others gained local recognition for their sporting prowess and were socially well-connected among the elite. Throughout north Queensland, these Japanese migrants were long-term residents able to participate fully in the economic, social, and civic life of the region.

### *Problematizing White Australia in North Queensland*

The ideal of White Australia did not operate uniformly across the entire continent; for much of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries its realisation differed widely above and below the Tropic of Capricorn.<sup>11</sup> British and Australian politicians frequently recognised northern Australia as a distinct region during the nineteenth century, a situation that arguably continued into the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> Tim Rowse notes this distinction, writing ‘when Australia federated in 1901, there were two Australias: North and South’.<sup>13</sup> The division of north from south was a consequence of many factors, not least of which was geographical distance, a theme that has been reproduced by many histories of north Queensland.<sup>14</sup> Importantly, however, racial and cultural distinctions paralleled the geographical divide and helped fuel the divisions.

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<sup>11</sup>The *Restriction Act* was the same legislation whether one was in Townsville or Sydney. Despite this administrative cohesion, the White Australia ideal looked very different for the north and south of Australia. For a description of the separate ideological and administrative functions of the Restriction Act, see Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005), 235–36; A.C. Palfreeman, *The Administration of the White Australia Policy* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 3–4.

<sup>12</sup>Martínez, ‘Plural Australia,’ 45.

<sup>13</sup>Tim Rowse, ‘Indigenous Heterogeneity’, *Australian Historical Studies* 45, no. 3 (2014), 303; Henry Reynolds, *North of Capricorn: The Untold Story of Australia’s North* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), vii.

<sup>14</sup>See, for example, Geoffrey Bolton, *A Thousand Miles Away: A History of North Queensland to 1920* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972); and Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, vii. Lyndon Megarrity’s review of the lasting influence of Bolton’s work discusses how a number of histories of early north Queensland emphasise isolation and distance as an unavoidable theme. Lyndon Megarrity, ‘Geoffrey Bolton’s A Thousand Miles Away Origins, Influence and Impact’, *History Australia* 12, no. 3 (2015): 23–5.



At the heart of the division between northern Australia – specifically north Queensland in this case – and the south was the development of southerners’ hysteria about the north’s distance, deficiency, and disuse. Russell McGregor’s interpretation of this issue as hyperbole charged with anxieties is an apt description of the division. While concerns about failing to protect the purity of white men’s nations was in some ways a broad concern, north Queensland was framed as an ‘empty north’ that lay in the shadow of a ‘looming Asia’. As a result, the goal of preserving White Australia remained a preoccupation of southern politicians. This racial heterogeneity combined with challenging geography, the burden of ‘empty spaces’, and significant barriers to public and private investment to produce a northern Australian settlement vastly different from its southern counterpart.<sup>15</sup>

Guided by these overarching issues, the racial and cultural context of north Queensland, both prior to and following 1901, ensured that the White Australia policy did not strictly apply in the same way as it did in the southern states. Historians from Geoffrey Bolton – who wrote the earliest comprehensive history of the north Queensland region to 1920 – to Henry Reynolds have recognised that, whilst the ideals of the White Australia policy were intended to be applied uniformly across the continent, north Queensland’s racial diversity and the trade and labour it supported could hardly be frustrated by a government ‘a thousand miles away’.<sup>16</sup> Although the *Restriction Act* aimed to bar entry to Australia for non-European migrants and was in many ways successful, there was a pre-existing population of non-European peoples who already resided in north Queensland. While the labour movement

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<sup>15</sup>Rowse, ‘Indigenous Heterogeneity,’ 303; Russell McGregor, *Environment, Race, and Nationhood in Australia: Revisiting the Empty North* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 8–9. Fears about an ‘empty north’ related to the entirety of northern Australia but are focused on north Queensland in this article.

<sup>16</sup>Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, 102.

under White Australia sought to protect wages and working conditions from being undermined by cheap Asian labour, historians such as Martínez have identified that this was limited to positions that could be filled by white Australians.<sup>17</sup> Japanese migrants also often proved immune to union arguments about cheap Asian labour, usually costing more than other Asian, or even European migrants.<sup>18</sup> Further in the administration of the *Restriction Act*, more and more exemptions were widely applicable within the northern region and served to increase, rather than reduce, the racial diversity of the region. Strung along the north Queensland coast from Thursday Island, to Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay were key regional centres where many non-European residents including Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Malays were employed in primary industries dependent on their labour until at least 1920.<sup>19</sup>

In north Queensland, panic over the threat of Asian migrants to a White Australia was often a projection of southerners and those external to northern communities, rather than a sentiment emerging from within the north. Oliver notes that Australian fears of Japanese were nothing but a ‘ripping yarn’, pointing instead to the many stories of friendship.<sup>20</sup> Although Oliver’s work reveals large networks of *zaibatsu* that promoted Australian-Japanese

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<sup>17</sup>Julia Martínez, “The End of Indenture? Asian Workers in the Australian Pearling Industry, 1901-1972,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 67 (2005): 128, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0147547905000116>.

<sup>18</sup>Kay Saunders, “The Workers’ Paradox: Indentured Labour in the Queensland Sugar Industry to 1920,” in *Indentured Labour in the British Empire, 1834-1920*, ed. Kay Saunders (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 238; Menghetti, *Sound of Our Summer Seas*, 14.

<sup>19</sup>Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, i.

<sup>20</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 100; David Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 1999), 100. Oliver challenges Walker’s thesis that Australia was an ‘anxious nation’. Oliver asserts that while fictional stories represent unease in the Australian psyche, they categorically overlook archival material that suggest a different reality.

friendships, it is clear that social class was a mediating factor in these relationships. Specifically, acceptance was most extended to Japanese businessmen and their families at a time when business was perceived as a service to the community.<sup>21</sup> These individuals were ‘economic equals and respected for their achievements’.<sup>22</sup> In north Queensland, local community members were similarly accepting of Japanese migrants but inclusion was not dependent on social class. The participation of Japanese migrants encapsulated a more diverse experience, with inclusion of individuals ranging from labourers and cooks, through to farmers, business owners, and diplomatic representatives. It was usually southerners or those external to northern communities who expressed concern about the concentration of Asian migrants in the region.<sup>23</sup> In the eyes of north Queensland residents, ‘these opinions, like those of tens of thousands of Southerners, were formed in a chamber of ignorance’.<sup>24</sup> While southerners imagined North Queensland’s distinctly multiracial character as a cause for panic, north Queensland had already come to grips with a local Asian presence.<sup>25</sup>

Given its diversity, north Queensland society was surely race conscious but so long as the racial status quo was maintained in favour of white dominance, the community functioned in a usually interdependent manner and was only occasionally complicated by racial and class

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<sup>21</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 165–8

<sup>22</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 167.

<sup>23</sup>Cathie May, *Topsawyers: The Chinese in Cairns, 1870–1920* (Townsville: James Cook University History Department, 1984), 150–1.

<sup>24</sup>‘Agriculture. In North Queensland. The Herbert River,’ *Queenslander*, 3 June 1905, 34.

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, ‘“White Australia” and the Tropics,’ *Daily Telegraph*, 22 February 1905, 9; ‘Queensland – A Dump Heap for Australia’s Asiatics,’ *Bundaberg Mail and Burnett Advertiser*, 9 September 1904, 2. The latter example shows how concern was not limited to southern states, but also included southern regions of Queensland.

divisions.<sup>26</sup> Although north Queensland residents sometimes recognised fundamental differences of habit, Japanese migrants were still regarded as hard working, enterprising, and law-abiding.<sup>27</sup> In north Queensland, racial consciousness did not necessarily equate to racial exclusion; while the ‘European colonial imagination’ constructed racial otherness, there was still relative tolerance and productive relationships formed within communities.<sup>28</sup> McGregor makes clear that north Queensland communities were racially harmonious insofar as practical and mutual interdependence required. In particular, Japanese migrants were often highly ranked in racial stratifications (although below Europeans) so long as they did not attempt to rise above their ‘rank’.<sup>29</sup> The relative tolerance extended towards Japanese migrants enabled their participation and positive contributions to north Queensland communities in ways that were not solely dependent upon their social class.

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<sup>26</sup>Matthew Richards, ‘Race Around Cairns: Representations, Perceptions and Realities of Race in the Trinity Bay District 1876–1908’ (PhD thesis, James Cook University, 2010), 247; McGregor, *Environment, Race, and Nationhood*, 16.

<sup>27</sup>Although the same was often said for many racial groups, the emphasis in this case is on Japanese migrants. For example, Japanese are referred to as law abiding and of good character by local police in Rockhampton: Aliens-General [Lists and Details of Aliens in Queensland], 17 June 1939, Correspondence Files Relating to National Security, BP242/1, Q30582 PART 1, National Archives of Australia (hereafter NAA), Brisbane. Although referring to Japanese migrants in the Northern Territory, they are similarly remarked as being hard working and law abiding: George H. Sunter, *Adventures of a Trepanng Fisher* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1937), 178–79.

<sup>28</sup>Richards, ‘Race Around Cairns,’ iv, 2.

<sup>29</sup>McGregor, ‘Drawing the Local Colour Line: White Australia and the Tropical North,’ *The Journal of Pacific History* 47, no. 3 (2012): 332; Richards, ‘Race Around Cairns,’ specifically looks at Cairns but provides a detailed study of the racial representations of different migrant groups. “Tommy Japan” How Nipponese Came to TI,’ *Pacific Islands Monthly*, April 1945, 35 even at the height of WWII comments on the enterprising nature and expresses concern insofar as they threatened the position of Europeans.

### *Japanese Participation in North Queensland Communities*

Japanese involvement in the pearl shell and sugar cane industries is a well-known part of the history of north Queensland and has been researched by historians including David Sissons, Regina Ganter, John Armstrong, Steve Mullins, and Mary Albertus Bain.<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on these Japanese labour migrants in the aforementioned histories gives the impression that Japanese migration to north Queensland during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was predominantly male oriented and temporary. It is true that most Japanese migrants were male labourers who came from poorer rural areas in Japan – including Wakayama, Nagasaki, and Hiroshima – and the pearl shell industry along the north Australian coastline was a significant destination for them. They also worked in the sugar cane industry throughout north-east Queensland. Almost without exception, these Japanese labour migrants were employed in Australia on short-term labour contracts, although this does not mean they stayed for only a short time. Many took on a succession of contracts as a means of long-term immigration to Australia.<sup>31</sup> The number of Japanese migrants coming to north Queensland began to increase from 1880 and migration continued until the outbreak of the Pacific War in 1941.<sup>32</sup> Although they were not the only group, nor the largest proportion,

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<sup>30</sup>Most notably these works include: Sissons' chapter 'The Japanese in the Australian Pearlring Industry' in *Bridging Australia and Japan*; Ganter, *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait*; Armstrong, 'Aspects of Japanese Immigration'; Steve Mullins, *Torres Strait: A History of Colonial Occupation and Culture Contact, 1864–1897* (Rockhampton: Central Queensland University Press, 1994); Bain, *Full Fathom Five*.

<sup>31</sup>Jones, *Number 2 Home*, 11.

<sup>32</sup>Sissons, 'Australian–Japanese Relations: The First Phase 1859–1891' in *Bridging Australia and Japan*, 54.

of labourers in these industries, male Japanese labour migrants are the most visible part of the history of Japanese migration to north Queensland.<sup>33</sup> Importantly, histories of Japanese pearl divers and sugar cane labourers obscure the presence and activities of other Japanese migrants in north Queensland.

While male Japanese migrants who worked in the pearl shell and sugar cane industries remain a significant group in north Queensland history, other Japanese men and women were also able to form lasting and positive connections within north Queensland communities. Many Japanese migrants undertook permanent continuous employment – as opposed to seasonal labour contracts – or founded their own businesses, started families, and actively engaged in north Queensland society in a social and civic capacity. Japanese community participation was a sign that some Japanese migrants were welcomed into north Queensland communities despite the White Australia era’s supposed antipathy towards ‘coloured migration’ and ‘racial mixing’. While racism was very likely experienced by Japanese migrants as a result of White Australia ideals, there are clear examples of the positive connections Japanese migrants were able to form within communities throughout north Queensland from the late nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century.

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<sup>33</sup>There were also a small number of Japanese labour migrants who worked in mines. For research about other migrants who worked in the pearl shell industry see Julia Martínez and Adrian Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier: Indonesian Labor and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015).

## *Japanese Entrepreneurship*

The Iwanagas<sup>34</sup> and Mitakaras<sup>35</sup> are two Japanese families who demonstrate long-term participation in north Queensland communities. These families' economic and civic contributions to their respective north Queensland communities exemplify Japanese migrants' positive connections that defied boundaries of race and class. Tokitaro<sup>36</sup> Iwanaga and Otosume<sup>37</sup> Iwanaga, as well as Sukezayemon<sup>38</sup> Mitakara and Momu<sup>39</sup> Mitakara arrived to Australia during the 1890s and made their start in the stereotypical roles of Japanese migrants: Tokitaro and Sukezayemon worked as labourers in the sugar cane industry,<sup>40</sup> whilst Otosume and Momu's occupations remain listed as 'domestic duties'.<sup>41</sup> Tokitaro Iwanaga

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<sup>34</sup>Also spelt as Iwanga. There are often spelling errors and translation errors when Japanese names are written in the Latin alphabet. Given names and surnames are also often confused. The errors can reflect variations in pronunciation and translation from Japanese to English. Identified variations in spelling will be noted in the footnotes, but the spelling most widely used in archival sources will be used throughout the body of this article. All possible care has been taken to ensure that variations in spelling within archival sources refer to the same individuals.

<sup>35</sup>Also spelt as Mitikara, Mitkara, Mataka and Mitakra.

<sup>36</sup>Also spelt as Takitaro.

<sup>37</sup>Also spelt as Otsume, Otsune, Otusne, Otosune, Etsume, and Tsune.

<sup>38</sup>Also spelt as Suke dae mon and Sukeyayemoui. The latter egregious misspelling, used in an article referring to Sukezayemon's tragic death, can be found in *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 6 December 1927, 6.

<sup>39</sup>Also spelt as Mon.

<sup>40</sup>Tokitaro Iwanaga – Alien Registration Certificate No. 73/16, 30 November 1916, Alien Registration Forms, BP4/3, JAPANESE IWANAGA T, (NAA), Brisbane; Sukezayemon Mitakara – Alien Registration Certificate No. 153, Alien Registration Forms, BP4/3, JAPANESE MITAKARA S, NAA, Brisbane.

<sup>41</sup>Etsume [Otsume] Iwanaga – Alien Registration Certificate No. 96/16, 1 December 1916, Alien Registration Forms, BP4/3, JAPANESE IWANAGA E, NAA, Brisbane; Momu Mitakara – Alien Registration Certificate No. 154, 19 January 1917, Alien Registration Forms, BP4/3, JAPANESE

and Sukezayemon Mitakara share the commonality that, despite entering Australia under temporary contracts, they resided in Australia long-term and undertook work beyond their original labour contracts. Both couples also had children who were Australian born, with Tokitaro and Otosume adopting Annie Margaret<sup>42</sup> Iwanaga in 1918 while Sukezayemon and Momu's biological daughter Miyoka was born in 1903.<sup>43</sup> These families' long-term interests coupled with their enterprising attitudes demonstrate a greater depth of economic participation in north Queensland communities than short-term labour contracts.

Although likely arriving for economic reasons and perhaps with the intention of remaining only a short while, the Iwanagas or Mitakaras ultimately resided in Australia for many decades. Fitzgerald, although focusing on Chinese migrants, emphasises that many individuals may migrate for a short period of time, but with the view to establishing more long-term connections. Despite his particular focus, Fitzgerald's analysis highlights how migrants' initial intentions at the point of departure often bear little relationship to their

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MITAKARA M, NAA, Brisbane. It is likely that other Japanese women like Otosume and Momu, who arrived in Australia in the pre-Federation era without an otherwise indicated source of work, may have been prostituted women. It is also possible, however, that they were employed as domestic servants or were undertaking 'domestic duties' in their home. While these are all possibilities, a clear determination cannot be made.

<sup>42</sup>Also spelt as Anne and Ann, sometimes with or without Margaret or Maggie attached. Annie had Chinese parents but her mother, Maggie Lee Yan, died at the time of her birth and her biological father, Charlie Lee Yan, arranged for her to be adopted by Tokitaro Iwanaga. Annie is considered Japanese in this article as she was raised by Japanese parents with the belief that she was also Japanese. This racial identity was also the view of the Commonwealth during her internment in WWII. Annie Margaret Iwanga - Objection against internment, 19 May 1942, General correspondence files, MP508/1, 255/741/416, NAA, Melbourne.

<sup>43</sup>Also spelt as Miyoko, Myoka, and Myoko.



eventual length of residency.<sup>44</sup> More important are the factors that enabled Japanese migrants to remain in Australia for a long period of time. It is clear that Japanese migrants were able to form deep connections within their communities whilst remaining racially distinct. For individuals who arrived in Australia prior to 1901, such as the Iwanagas, the Mitakaras, and the Furukawas, their largest hurdle to residing in Australia on a long-term basis was proving their vested interests in Australia.<sup>45</sup> This could usually be done through a combination of factors such as showing length of residency, having immediate family members in Australia, or the ownership of land or businesses. Tokitaro Iwanaga, in particular, arrived in Australia in 1897 at the young age of seventeen.<sup>46</sup> He appears to have moved around the north

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<sup>44</sup>Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie*, 48–51; May, *Topsawyers*, 51 however, interprets it as the intention of almost all Chinese migrants to return home to China but that not all managed to.

<sup>45</sup>Also spelt as Fulukawa, Furukaway, Ogawa and Furuchi. Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia: The Background to Exclusion, 1896–1923* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1984), 68–9. Provided they were able to enter Australia in the first instance, it was relatively simple for Japanese migrants to remain for an extended period of time. The ability to live in Australia long-term was only complicated by short return trips to Japan where re-entry to Australia could prove difficult. Individuals could obtain a Certificate of Domicile by proving fixed habitation and vested interests in Australia, thereby also granting them a CEDT that would enable re-entry into Australia. Evidently, the Iwanagas and Mitakaras were able to prove their holding of land and other material possessions in Australia. See, for example: Otosune Iwanaga and Infant CEDT, 16 February 1921, Certificates Exempting from the Dictation Test, J2483, 299/079, NAA, Brisbane.

<sup>46</sup>Tokitaro Iwanaga – Alien Registration Certificate lists his date as arrival as 1897. However, his date of arrival is listed as 1899 in: Tokitaro Iwanaga – Prisoner of War/Internee, 23 December 1941, Dossiers containing reports on Internees and Prisoners of War held in Australian camps, MP1103/2, QJ16042, NAA, Melbourne. It is most likely Tokitaro arrived in 1897 as his birth date is consistently listed as 1880 and there are multiple references to his arrival at the age of seventeen.

Queensland region frequently during his initial years, likely on a series of contracts, before settling in the Cairns region for more than three decades.<sup>47</sup>

For individuals after 1901, however, the single greatest barrier to permanent migration was gaining entry into Australia in the first place. Fortunately in the case of Japanese migrants arriving in north Queensland, they were afforded a strong diplomatic representation from the Japanese Consulate that was located in Townsville until 1908.<sup>48</sup> As Oliver notes, the Japanese Consul was able to vouch for Japanese migrants to extend their CEDTs, and by extensions, their residency in Australia.<sup>49</sup> Sissons argues that although the Japanese Government was not enthusiastic about the migration of its nationals, it was vitally interested in ensuring they were not discriminated against. They considered this a matter of national prestige.<sup>50</sup> While the *Restriction Act* was carefully designed so as not to offend any

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<sup>47</sup>It is likely Otosume and Tokitaro were already married prior to arriving in Australia as Otosume can only be located under the name Otosume Iwanaga and no record of their marriage can be located. They migrated to Australia in different years and Tokitaro's internment papers indicate a lot of movement throughout the north Queensland region, whilst Otosume's do not. Tokitaro originally arrived on Thursday Island and stayed there for six months, later moving between Mossman, Cairns, and Tolga in the Atherton region. Tokitaro Iwanaga – Prisoner of War/Internee Dossier.

<sup>48</sup>Dorothy M. Gibson-Wilde, 'The Japanese Consulate at Townsville in the 1890s', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 16, no. 1 (1996): 25–30; Menghetti, *Sound of Our Summer Seas*, 15–16. The Japanese Consulate was located in Townsville from 1896 to 1908 and was thereafter located in Sydney. The Japanese Consulate had a strong focus on Japanese migrants living in north Queensland and its proximity afforded these migrants the benefit of representation to a degree greater than Japanese migrants in other regions. Even after the Consulate relocated to Sydney there was a strong awareness of the Japanese presence in north Queensland.

<sup>49</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 64.

<sup>50</sup>Sissons, *The Immigration Question*, 17.

specific nation, Japan was recognised as extremely sensitive to any level of discrimination.<sup>51</sup> The Japanese Consuls and their representation on behalf of their nationals continued to be a thorn in the side of the Australian Government.<sup>52</sup> The Japanese Consuls' persistence in pursuing the interests of their nationals, at both local and federal levels, often involved detailed and terse letters expressing disdain for any semblance of discrimination towards Japanese people within Australia.<sup>53</sup> Most significant in these negotiation and discussions was the 1897 Anglo–Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation and its partial continuation in the form of the 1904 Passport Agreement.<sup>54</sup> The favourable treatment of Japanese nationals

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<sup>51</sup>The issue of racial discrimination of Japan is consistently expressed by Japanese officials. For example, Queensland Legislation Affecting Japanese and other Asiatics, 28 November 1911, Correspondence files, A1, 1911/20007, NAA, Canberra; Conversation at the Japanese Foreign Office, Letter from Mr. Hanihara to Edmund Piesse, 17 March 1920, Papers of E.L. Piesse, MS882, Box 3, National Library of Australia (NLA), Canberra. In these cases, Japan perceives its discrimination as an undue harshness and an 'unbearable humiliation'.

<sup>52</sup>Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, 85. Edmund Barton consistently avoided the 'embarrassment' of diplomatic representations from the Japanese Consuls by referring them through formal diplomatic British channels.

<sup>53</sup>Jane Doulman and David Lee, *Every Assistance & Protection: A History of the Australian Passport* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2008), 42–4.

<sup>54</sup>Japanese Merchants, Assistants, Wives and Students on Passports, General Policy File, 10 August 1904, Correspondence files, A1, 1937/1511, NAA, Canberra; Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, 84–9. In Yarwood's analysis, the 1897 Anglo–Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation came under scrutiny as to whether it was still binding due to Queensland's entry into the Commonwealth. Until at least 1904, Japan continued to grant concessions to Queensland under this agreement whilst the Commonwealth continued to exclude Japanese migration. In 1904, Deakin amended and inserted a new section to the *Restriction Act* that allowed for exemptions to Japanese migrants. These amendments amounted to the 1904 Passport Agreement.

in Australia's immigration policy was also a product of Japan's status in global relations.<sup>55</sup> From the perspective of the Australian Government, particularly under Alfred Deakin's Prime Ministership, Japan was a politically stable industrial and naval power with a strong alliance with Britain.<sup>56</sup> While Australia's relationship to Japan was often deferred as a colonial matter under Edmund Barton, Deakin's view of Japan's victory against Russia in 1905 saw to it that Australia tried to stay on the better side of Japan. Deakin, in coordination with representations from the Japanese Consuls, ensured this favourable treatment.

Indirectly, a product of Japan's diplomatic relations with Australia were exemptions to the *Restriction Act* that, although applying to various migrant groups in north Queensland, particularly benefited Japanese migrants. Most Japanese migrants' ongoing and visible connections were possible because of administrative detours around the *Restriction Act* and exemptions within the primary labour industries under which they entered Australia, such as the pearl shell and sugar cane industries. Labourers in the pearl shell industry – located primarily around the northern coasts of Australia, including the Torres Strait – were exempted entirely from the provisions of the *Restriction Act*, under the assumption that workers were only allowed into Australia under a contract of indenture, usually three years.<sup>57</sup> Similarly in the sugar industry along the north-east coast of Queensland, under the *Sugar Cultivation Act 1913*, labourers were still required to take the dictation test, although pass

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<sup>55</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 41. Australia was not the only nation to grant favorable treatment to Japan and its nationals. For example, the 1896 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation signed between Japan and the Netherlands in 1896 granted European status to Japanese nationals in Dutch territory, including the Netherlands East Indies in 1899. This classification as Europeans granted Japanese migrants the capacity to establish industrial and commercial activities in these territories.

<sup>56</sup>Yarwood, *Asian Migration to Australia*, 3.

<sup>57</sup>Ganter, *The Pearl-Shellers of Torres Strait*, 107.

rates were much higher than in the south.<sup>58</sup> Although Lorraine Phillips has noted that exemptions from the White Australia policy did not necessarily mark a departure from the goals of a White Australia, the exemptions certainly facilitated a multicultural community where individuals lived, for the most part, interdependently.<sup>59</sup>

Sukezayemon Mitakara was likely one of a handful of Japanese migrants to transition from employment as a labourer in the sugar cane industry to an operator of his own farm on leased land. Sukezayemon was able to lease a plot for sugar cane farming sometime after the Ripple Creek Estate was subdivided and sold by R.M. Boyd and the Wood Brothers in 1907. After this time, the farmers of Ripple Creek along with Sukezayemon supplied their cane to the Macknade Mill owned by the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR).<sup>60</sup> The Mitakaras were successful sugar cane farmers, with their family home on the same land they farmed and likely employing their own labourers. It is unclear exactly how profitable the Mitakaras cane farm was, although after Sukezayemon's unfortunate death in the 1927 Herbert River floods, Momu and Miyoka sold the farm for a hefty sum. Evidence of Miyoka's claim on over £3000 in 1955 indicates that the value of the farm and their other property was significant.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>There is a suggestion that the *Sugar Cultivation Act* was designed to maintain the employment of Japanese migrants in the sugar cane industry. Correspondence regarding employment of Japanese in sugar cane industry, 5-20 June 1919, Correspondence files, A1, 1919/13433, NAA, Canberra.

<sup>59</sup>Lorraine Phillips, 'Plenty More Little Brown Man! Pearlshelling and White Australia in Queensland 1901-18,' in *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, eds. E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (Sydney: Australia & New Zealand Book Company, 1980), 59.

<sup>60</sup>'Ripple Creek Sugar Plantation, Herbert River, Ingham,' *Queenslander*, 12 May 1906, 24; Bianka Vidonja Balanzategui, *The Herbert River Story* (Ingham: Hinchinbrook Shire Council, 2011), 43.

<sup>61</sup>Miyoko Mitakara, 12 September 1955, Correspondence files, Enemy Property Japan, A1379, EPJ803, NAA, Canberra.

Additionally, north Queensland's racially diverse labour force created a space for businesses that supported these workers and supplied them with goods and services otherwise lacking in north Queensland. Yuriko Nagata refers briefly to the presence of three soy sauce factories on Thursday Island alone. There are also references to Japanese-run boarding houses, laundries, billiard halls, and shops selling silk, draperies, and furniture throughout north Queensland communities.<sup>62</sup> Other historians, including Sissons, have acknowledged the presence of Japanese enterprises and services, although usually only in fleeting descriptions of them. As a result, this entrepreneurial aspect of Japanese migrants' community participation is often overlooked.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the brief descriptions imply that Japanese-run businesses operated outside the main thoroughfares of north Queensland communities, inside the 'Yokohamas' or 'Japtowns'.<sup>64</sup> Although there were certainly Japanese businesses that operated on these thoroughfares, there were also many on the main streets of north

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<sup>62</sup>Yuriko Nagata, 'The Japanese in Torres Strait,' in *Navigating Boundaries: The Asian Diaspora in Torres Strait*, eds. Anna Shnukal, Guy Malcolm Ramsay, and Yuriko Nagata (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004), 141, briefly refers to soy sauce factories and silk stores but does not elaborate.

<sup>63</sup>Sissons, '*Karayuki-san*,' 41 briefly mentions a Japanese store, boarding house, and laundry but provides no further information.

<sup>64</sup>Nagata, 'The Japanese in Torres Strait,' 141, describes Japanese migrants living in a Japanese quarter named Yokohama or 'Jap Town', analogous to regular appearances of 'Chinatown' in various settlements, which was also a Japanese commercial centre. Although it is important not to conflate community perceptions of Chinese and Japanese migrants, both 'Chinatowns' and 'Yokohamas' were often referred to interchangeably or contained together in one area. Raymond Evans, "'Soiled Doves': Prostitution in Colonial Queensland," in *So Much Hard Work: Women and Prostitution in Australian History*, ed. Kay Daniels (Sydney: Fontana Collins, 1984), 139; refers to Japanese brothels in Mackay's 'Chinatown' while Richards, 'Race Around Cairns,' 67 explains that Cairns' Yokohama' was situated within a small strip of Chinatown.

Queensland towns that were patronised by a diverse clientele.<sup>65</sup> The visibility of Japanese migrants who were successful merchants has been explored by some historians. Oliver documents the community connections that were formed by Japanese migrants who were able to use their elevated status as merchants to connect to the broader white Australian community. Although Oliver paints a broad picture of the Japanese *zaibatsu* networks throughout Australia, she argues that Japanese migrants were generally accepted within Australian communities because of their ability to perform and accumulate middle-class civic values including, but not limited to, individual initiative, trustworthiness, hard work, and cooperation.<sup>66</sup> Families such as the Iwanagas displayed their initiative and cooperation through business and community dealings, while the Mitakaras' trustworthiness and hard work saw them success as sugar cane farmers and community members. Clearly there is scope for a focused analysis of the diverse community connections Japanese entrepreneurs developed within north Queensland.

Japanese-operated businesses were a common feature of towns throughout the north Queensland region, many of them emporiums of Japanese goods. These Japanese emporiums sold everything from silks and fabrics, women's clothing and parasols, through to children's toys, men's slippers, and tea sets. Tokitaro Iwanaga was the proprietor of one such store in Cairns, named Iwanaga & Co. The store was originally located on Lake Street in Cairns, and

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<sup>65</sup>The earlier period of Japanese migration saw a concentration of Japanese people around these 'Japtowns' and 'Chinatowns'. See, for example, Nagata, 'Japanese in Torres Strait,' 141; and Richards, 'Race Around Cairns,' 65. May, *Topsawyers*, 107, however, notes that by the 1920s Chinese who wished to gain acceptance in the wider Cairns community were deterred from living in Chinatown due to its bad reputation. Similarly, Japanese businesses began to operate outside of these areas.

<sup>66</sup>Oliver, *Raids on Australia*, 165-70; Oliver, 'Japanese Relationships in White Australia: The Sydney Experience to 1941,' *History Australia* 4, no. 1 (2007): 16.

later relocated to Shields Street across from the Crown Hotel. Both store locations are barely two blocks from the Cairns esplanade and are a sign of the business' appeal to the wider community.<sup>67</sup> There is also strong evidence that Tokitaro's partner in the business was his wife Otosume, where she spent time running the store while Tokitaro would work at a farm in Tolga.<sup>68</sup> Townsville had a similar store that was named Fujiya's or the Silk Store and was located on Flinders Street, a main street of Townsville that was a popular location for many other retail and commercial business.<sup>69</sup> Although Iwanaga & Co. operated for at least seven years from 1922,<sup>70</sup> the Townsville Silk Store had remarkable longevity, operating for at least fifty years, surviving at least one destructive fire, and undergoing a change in ownership twice.<sup>71</sup> An advertisement for Fujiya's in 1930 celebrated the store's 50 years of operation.<sup>72</sup> In both Townsville and Cairns, these Japanese specialty stores were located in central and prominent positions, suggesting they were not marginal or unpopular and that they did not cater only to Japanese or non-European people. May estimates that in Cairns, Sachs Street was originally the main thoroughfare of 'Chinatown', although most Japanese businesses purposely disassociated from the street because of its poor reputation and undesirable

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<sup>67</sup>'To the Public of Cairns and Districts,' [advertisement] *Cairns Post* [hereafter *CP*], 29 May 1926, 2.

<sup>68</sup>Annie Margaret Iwanga - Objection against internment.

<sup>69</sup>'Fujiya's The Silk Store 50th Anniversary Sale,' [advertisement] *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 October 1930, 11.

<sup>70</sup>Various newspaper advertisements can be found advertising Iwanaga & Co. between 1922 and 1929. For example: 'Changing Hands,' *CP*, 17 August 1922, 4; 'Men's Japanese Slippers Just Arrived' [advertisement] *CP*, 25 January 1924, 3; 'Millinery and Dressmaking,' [advertisement] *CP*, 17 October 1928, 1; 'A special line of novelties...' [advertisement] *CP*, 18 December 1929, 1.

<sup>71</sup>'Fire at Townsville Silk Store Destroyed Early Tuesday Morning,' *Telegraph*, 12 March 1924, 2.

<sup>72</sup>'Fujiya's The Silk Store 50th Anniversary Sale,' [advertisement] *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 29 October 1930, 11.



clientele.<sup>73</sup> The Japanese stores and their location on the main street were popular amongst the broader community. The Townsville Silk Store proprietors described themselves as selling ‘charming silks ... required by Australian women’ and posted advertisements regularly in the local newspapers.<sup>74</sup>

Laundries were another common business owned and operated by Japanese migrants in north Queensland, often advertised specifically as a ‘Japanese’ laundry but catering to the broad public. Advertisements for these Japanese laundries were perhaps a recognition of the meticulous and ‘first-class’ work that would be done to clean and iron the clothes. Two such examples of Japanese laundries in north Queensland include the Fuja Laundry in Mackay<sup>75</sup> and the Iwanagas’ Victory Star Laundry in Cairns.<sup>76</sup> These Japanese laundries would offer services from cleaning and laundering, through to mending clothes and fitting suits to the wider community. In the coastal town of Mackay, the Fuja Laundry on Wood Street owned by the Furukawa family was in competition with Ashimura’s Laundry on Victoria Street.<sup>77</sup> Shigi Furukawa<sup>78</sup> appears to have become the proprietress of the Fuja Laundry sometime after her husband passed in 1933, although it is likely she was involved in the business many years earlier. The Furukawa’s Fuja Laundry was located, like the Japanese silk stores, in a

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<sup>73</sup>May, *Topsawyers*, 107.

<sup>74</sup>‘Today – Great Display of Summer Fashions,’ [advertisement] *Townsville Daily Bulletin*, 6 February 1922, 6.

<sup>75</sup>‘Clothes Washed and Ironed,’ [advertisement], *Daily Mercury*, 12 May 1916, 1.

<sup>76</sup>The Iwanagas relinquished Iwanaga & Co. sometime in 1929. See ‘Auction Sale,’ *CP*, 20 December 1929, 1. From around 1937, the Iwanagas owned and operated the Victory Star Laundry, also known as the Railway Laundry, on 48 McLeod Street, Cairns. See Annie Margaret Iwanga - Objection against internment.

<sup>77</sup>See both advertisements: ‘Clothes Washed and Ironed’ from C. Furukawa Laundry and ‘Japanese Laundry. – Ashimura,’ [advertisement], *Daily Mercury*, 12 May 1916, 1.

<sup>78</sup>Also spelt as Shige and Ashigi.

prominent position across from the popular M'Guire's Hotel in Mackay.<sup>79</sup> In Cairns, there were also a number of laundries run by Japanese migrants. After relinquishing Iwanaga & Co., the family came to operate the Victory Star Laundry. Although it was likely Tokitaro and Otosume who originally paid for the laundry sometime in 1937, they soon handed its operation over to their daughter Annie. After Tokitaro's and Otosume's internment in 1941, Annie operated the laundry with the assistance of only a single sixteen-year-old employee. This operation continued until Annie's brief internment in 1942 during which time the laundry was burnt down.<sup>80</sup> The remarkable longevity of the Japanese laundries in combination with the diversity of their business ventures indicates a recognition and acceptance of Japanese migrants within north Queensland communities.

### *Civic & Social Participation*

Community participation – such as organising or attending fundraisers, making donations, participating in community organisation – was also frequently and visibly performed by Japanese migrants in north Queensland. Although the White Australia era would seem to lend itself more to exclusion than inclusion, Japanese migrants' experiences of north Queensland life were characterised by social and civic connectedness. Henry Reynolds' portrait of harmonious race relations in north Queensland might paint an overly rosy picture, but Matthew Richards suggests that early north Queensland communities such as Cairns were

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<sup>79</sup>For some of the numerous examples of politicians, committee members, and company directors staying at M'Guire's Hotel on Wood Street in Mackay see: 'Apathetic Reception: Inquiry Committee in Mackay,' *Daily Mercury*, 22 August 1945, 2; 'British M.P. in Mackay Impressed with Visit,' *Daily Mercury*, 25 April 1940, 5.

<sup>80</sup>Annie Margaret Iwanga - Objection against internment; Anne Iwanaga – Prisoner of War/Internee, 7 May 1942, Dossiers containing reports on Internees and Prisoners of War held in Australian camps, MP1103/2, QJF16608, NAA, Melbourne.

conscious of racial diversity, although usually cooperative among races insofar as white dominance was maintained.<sup>81</sup> In relation to Japanese migrants specifically, Oliver recognises a degree of close engagement with Japanese migrants despite a national policy that excluded ‘people of colour’ and spoke of racial contamination.<sup>82</sup> The significant visibility and acceptance of Japanese migrants still belied a highly race conscious region. McGregor picks up the idea that interracial harmony in north Queensland communities was fairly fragile, explaining that ‘[u]nder normal circumstances, interracial tensions were held in check, allowing the various groups to interact relatively peaceably and productively, but this depended on the other factor minimised in Reynolds’ account: the structuring principle of racial hierarchy.’<sup>83</sup> Japanese migrants were afforded a slightly better position in north Queensland communities compared with other non-Europeans, although were still recognised as distinctly Japanese. Families such as the Iwanagas and the Mitakaras conformed to key values of Australian society through their business dealings and perceived respectability, which provided a gateway into further civic and social participation.<sup>84</sup>

Japanese migrants commonly donated funds for a variety of local community causes, either through their own businesses or other community organisations. Importantly, the contribution of funds from Japanese businesses seemed to be part and parcel of operating a business, with Iwanaga & Co. making various donations to community fundraisers

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<sup>81</sup>Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, ix-xiv; Richards, ‘Race around Cairns,’ 4.

<sup>82</sup>Oliver, ‘Japanese Relationships,’ 2.

<sup>83</sup>McGregor, *Environment, Race, and Nationhood*, 16.

<sup>84</sup>Japanese migrants, such as Tokitaro Iwanaga and K. Ishikawa, were both businessmen and committee members of the Japanese Association who leveraged their positions to participate within their local communities. See ‘Japanese in the Sugar Industry,’ *Brisbane Courier*, 13 May 1922, 9; ‘Generous Japanese Response’, *CP*, 12 April 1918, 4.

throughout the years, as well as the Townsville Silk Store and the Fuja Laundry in Mackay.<sup>85</sup> Japanese contributions were recognised in the newspapers as coming from the ‘Japanese residents’ or from a specific Japanese business. The Cairns Japanese Society not only engaged in community issues but would operate as a representative organisation of the local Japanese community members. Tokitaro Iwanaga was a long-time member of the Society and its secretary during 1929-30, using his platform to speak out against perceived injustices under the *Restriction Act* for other migrants.<sup>86</sup> Other causes supported through the Japanese Society also included the Mt Mulligan Disaster of 1921 and oftentimes the local ambulance fund where the ‘generous Japanese response’ was recognised in the *Cairns Post*.<sup>87</sup> The Japanese Societies throughout north Queensland were seen as legitimate and trustworthy community organisations, fielding requests to consult on issues surrounding the establishment of an Ambulance Centre and invitations to the coronation celebrations of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1937.<sup>88</sup>

In the Iwanaga family, Otosume, was involved in community organisations throughout Cairns and similarly influenced her daughter Annie. Interestingly, Otosume’s role in her family and community appears to deviate from the standard narrative of Japanese

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<sup>85</sup>For example, the Fuji (likely Fuja) Laundry as well as another ‘Jap. Laundry’ donated to the women’s hospital in Mackay. See ‘Mackay Hospital Women’s Auxiliary. Christmas Cheer’, *Daily Mercury*, 30 October 1940, 4.

<sup>86</sup>Tokitaro signs his name as Secretary of the Japanese Association in a letter to the editor regarding the dictation test. ‘Correspondence: Deportation Law,’ *CP*, 28 May 1930, 4.

<sup>87</sup>‘Mt Mulligan Disaster Administration of Relief Funds’, *CP*, 15 October 1921, 5; ‘Generous Japanese Response’, *CP*, 12 April 1918, 4; ‘Ambulance Centre A Year’s Work’, *CP*, 2 August 1929, 16.

<sup>88</sup>‘Aiding Ambulance’, *CP*, 21 March 1931, 7; ‘The Coronation Innisfail Celebrations’, *CP*, 15 May 1937, 11.

women.<sup>89</sup> Little is known about Otsune's background before adopting Annie, although her internment papers state that she entered Australia in 1895 at the age of seventeen.<sup>90</sup> The papers also identify her as a housewife and a member of the Church of England.<sup>91</sup> It is unlikely these were empty symbolic statements about Otsune, and much more likely they reflect a key part of her everyday life as participation in charities and fundraisers appears to have been commonplace for her. Her daughter Annie is also frequently recognised as a member of the local church and the St Mary's Church of England Girls' Guild and later the Ladies' Guild. Although it is not clear whether Otsune was a member of the Ladies' Guild, it is likely that Annie's heavy involvement in church and community activities emerged from her mother's influence. This organisation was responsible for not only fundraising throughout the community but also for arranging members' social calendars.

Contributing to 'The Children's Page' in the *Queenslander* and other newspapers with children's columns appears to have been a pastime of Annie Iwanaga's, and her contributions are not unusual for a girl her age. Miyoka Mitakara was also a regular contributor to these types of columns in newspapers. Both girls' letters provide not only an interesting insight into their lives in north Queensland but also their community connections. Annie, nicknamed 'sport lover', wrote to 'The Children's Page' page in hopes of maintaining correspondence,

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<sup>89</sup>Similar to the tokenistic treatment of Japanese brothels in north Queensland, most Japanese women who migrated to north Queensland were labelled as prostitutes. Although some Japanese women likely worked as prostitutes, either for a short or long period of time, this is a broadly problematic generalisation.

<sup>90</sup>Otsune Iwanaga – Prisoner of War/Internee, 19 December 1941, Dossiers containing reports on Internees and Prisoners of War held in Australian camps, MP1103/2, QJF16043, NAA, Melbourne.

<sup>91</sup>Otsune Iwanaga – Prisoner of War/Internee Service and Casualty Form, 23 December 1941, Registers containing 'Service and Casualty' forms (Form A112) of enemy prisoners of war and internees held in camps in Australia, MP1103/1, QJF16043, NAA, Melbourne.

writing about taking her bicycle to the Cairns Girls' and Infants State School each day and meeting her friends. While her supposed hobbies at the age of thirteen include swimming, rowing, diving, dancing, and playing tennis and hockey, Annie also reveals that her family had been living on a farm for sixteen years or so. She writes about her five pets, including a pony named Creamy, a fox terrier, two Pomeranians, and a galah.<sup>92</sup> Miyoka Mitakara, a resident of Bemerside in the Herberton region, also frequently features the *Queenslander* magazine, having written to the 'Young Queenslander' section.<sup>93</sup> Possibly less sporting than Annie, Miyoka appears a voracious reader and a keen lover nature lover, and describes herself as 'residing quite close to the Seymour River ... [with] a very comfortable home, surrounded by all sorts of merry birds'.<sup>94</sup> She lists books she has read, describes her family's farm in the Herbert River District, and at one point is reported as having 132 pen-mates!<sup>95</sup> Annie and Miyoka are examples of Japanese children who are aware of and keen to engage in their broader communities – both locally and nationally – in a positive and visible manner.

Otosume and Tokitaro's daughter Annie was recognised in the Cairns social and sporting scene. She was arguably a minor local celebrity who was recognised in the community for her sporting prowess. Annie appears in various newspapers for her participation and awards in sport – she was a skilled sportswoman, playing vigoro, hockey, basketball, and cricket – and also her involvement in social events through St. Mary's Church of England Girls' Guild.<sup>96</sup> Annie's participation in local sporting teams appears fairly

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<sup>92</sup>'Letters from Little Readers,' *Queenslander*, 12 May 1932, 41. Possibly this is a slightly embroidered description by a thirteen-year-old, but there is no reason to discount it.

<sup>93</sup>'The Young Queenslander,' *Queenslander*, 19 April 1919, 45.

<sup>94</sup>'The Bunyip Song,' *Mirror*, 31 January 1919, 15.

<sup>95</sup>'The Young Folk: Answers and Letters,' *Australasian*, 12 July 1919, 48.

<sup>96</sup>'St. Mary's (E. of E.) Girls' Guild,' *CP*, 16 November 1937, 3.

significant; listed often as an ‘outstanding player’ and as the organiser for teams each season.<sup>97</sup> Evidently hockey was her preferred sport, as she was a member of the Hockey Ladies’ Association and eventually an inter-state hockey player as well as captain of the Queensland ladies’ hockey team. Annie’s participation in the Church of England also regularly filled her social calendar, particularly throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Church hosted social events for a variety of causes, with everything from an Aquatic Ball where Annie came dressed as a ‘Hawaiian Twin’ with Dorothy Gong, through to a Gypsy Tea Room Cabaret to raise funds for the War Emergency Fund in 1939.<sup>98</sup> Annie also debuted at the Masonic Ball in Cairns in 1938, and was reported in the pages of the local newspaper as wearing a ‘silver spot satin for her lovely frock ... with a peaked gored skirt ... finished with a silver spray at the neckline ... and she wore silver roses in her hair’.<sup>99</sup> Here in the local newspaper, Annie appears alongside many other girls her age, few of whom are likely to have been Japanese. Annie’s experience revealed through archival material attests that, despite the exclusionist and racist influence of the White Australia era, she was able to live a seemingly ‘average’ life as a young girl from a Japanese family in north Queensland.

Overall, the Iwanagas in Cairns appear to be a very social, well-connected Japanese family. Annie’s 18th birthday party was reported in the local *Cairns Post* as ‘a merry gathering of about 50 friends and well-wishers ... [who] did not disperse until the small hours

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<sup>97</sup>‘Women’s Hockey. Proposed Revival,’ *CP*, 11 March 1942, 6; ‘Cricket: Women’s Competition Ends. Highly Successful Season,’ *CP*, 8 April 1942, 6. In later years, Annie was also an inter-state hockey player and captain of the Queensland hockey team. See ‘Hockey Star Wins Claim,’ *Brisbane Telegraph*, 22 December 1954, 2.

<sup>98</sup>‘Aquatic Ball,’ *CP*, 25 July 1927, 4.; ‘Gypsy Tea Room Cabaret,’ *CP*, 21 September 1939, 3.; ‘Our Women at Work: Voluntary Register Emergency Committee,’ *CP*, 24 October 1939, 9.

<sup>99</sup>‘Masonic Ball. Brilliant Success. Twenty-Seven Debutantes,’ *CP*, 28 May 1938, 8.

of Sunday morning'.<sup>100</sup> It is hard to determine the national or racial background of the party's guests, who were perhaps a mix, but the mere mention of such an occasion in the local newspaper suggests it was a social event worth reporting. The social standing of her family seems to have travelled with Annie to Brisbane, where despite the absence of her parents, the newspaper reported that a morning tea was held in honour of Annie's engagement.<sup>101</sup> The family overall appears to be of quite high social stature in the community and were very attached to their local community. Despite being involuntarily repatriated to Japan after their internment during WWII, Tokitaro and Otosume returned to Australia in 1952, with their return reported in various newspapers around Australia.<sup>102</sup> Arriving in Port Adelaide before departing for Brisbane to live with Annie, Mr Iwanaga explained, 'All my friends are in Australia – so I come back ... I spent more of my life here than in Japan – so I am really an Australian'.<sup>103</sup> Tokitaro's and Otosume's warm reception demonstrate that wartime antagonisms could not trump the close connections and relationships they had formed in pre-WWII north Queensland.

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<sup>100</sup>'Edmonton News: House Party and Birthday Celebrating,' *CP*, 10 October 1936, 9.

<sup>101</sup>'Pre-Wedding Tea,' *Sunday Mail*, 19 March 1944, 8. Annie was interned for one year from 11 May 1942 to 6 May 1943. Although she was suspected of Japanese sympathies because of her evident Japanese associations, Annie successfully objected against her internment with letters of support submitted by members of the Cairns community. See Annie Margaret Iwanga - Objection against internment.

<sup>102</sup>See, for example, 'Japanese Migrant at 73,' *Advertiser*, 18 December 1952, 1; 'Jap Back,' *Worker*, 29 December 1952. The *Worker* notes that it was reported in *Sunday Morning Herald* on 21 December 1952 although the article cannot be located.

<sup>103</sup>'Japanese Migrant at 73'.



## Conclusion

The White Australia Policy was an important driver that shaped the life of all Asian migrants living in Australia. It did not, however, affect all migrant groups uniformly and was particularly dependent upon migrants' nationality and their residence in either the southern or northern regions of Australia. Specifically, in the case of Japanese migrants who arrived and took up residence in north Queensland, they were able to live more or less in the manner of other local residents and participate in their local communities.

As part of the White Australia Policy, the *Restriction Act* did not entirely debar the migration of Asian migrants and specific concessions were granted to Japanese migrants. Although there were administrative barriers to the migration of Japanese people, many of those who managed to arrive in Australia were able to remain for many decades. Japanese migrants were not always temporary residents nor were they peripheral members of north Queensland communities. Instead they became long-term residents who made their homes in their region, contributing economically, socially, and civically to their local communities.

Although the White Australia Policy had ideological currency throughout Australia, the recognition of a Plural Australia brings into relief the distinctive multiracial and cultural character of north Queensland. While the southern states' projections of a 'yellow peril' were framed in the context of invasion narratives, north Queensland was already accustomed to a local Asian presence. Although it is important not to understate the racial consciousness of the north Queensland region between 1880 and 1941—in that Japanese migrants were recognised as racially distinct amongst other migrant groups—Japanese people were able to form connections throughout their wider communities and appear to have been at least accepted by their fellow white Australians. While racial hierarchy dictated the more privileged position of Japanese migrants, recognition must also be given to Japanese

diplomatic representation and community participation that contributed to their elevated status. Japanese migrants, including families, were able to participate in local community organisations, churches and sports teams whilst also operating businesses that served the wider community.

Despite the broad ideological influence of the White Australia era and the intense race consciousness of north Queensland communities, Japanese migrants were central and positive contributors to their communities who called Australia their home. Although particular case studies of Japanese migrants and their experiences of life in north Queensland reveal community connections, there is still scope for future investigation of the experiences of other non-European, particularly Asian, migrant groups living in north Queensland during the era of the White Australia Policy.

