"… polished and cultured, speaking English fluently" The First Japanese Doctor of Broome

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The third Saturday in January 1910 was a warm, windy day.[1] At noon, Doctor Tadashi Suzuki stepped off the ship that brought him and his wife to the remote town on the north-western coast of Australia. Long-awaited by his compatriots, he took residence in the pearling town to provide medical services to its inhabitants. His coming marked the end of a lengthy discursive process and bore factual testimony to the participation of the Japanese population in Broome's social and political affairs. It was, however, a controversial event, which took place in a nation that had been constituted only ten years earlier based on its aspiration for racial homogeneity and its colonial unification to ward off perceived threats of invading Asian nations.

Drawing on historical newspapers and governmental records, this case study examines Japanese migration and agency in Broome through the

[1] "The Weather", *West Australian*, January 18, 1910, 6.

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example of Dr. Suzuki, who was granted an exemption from Australia's restrictive immigration policy at the request of the Japanese community. This sheds light on the discursive and practical enactment of racism as a social relation in Japanese migration history—i.e. its continual reproduction in social interactions—and thus allows for an assessment of the everyday performance of race relations in 'White Australia' during the first decade of Federation.

'A White Australia'

When Tadashi Suzuki arrived in Australia, he encountered a nation firmly set on reserving its vast, empty swathes for the 'whites'. The preceding year, the defence minister had described Australia as the "most vulnerable part of the British empire",[2] thus emphasizing an urgent need for protection against settlement claims by foreign powers. While at the beginning of the British occupation, this threat was seen in the form of European imperialism, at the end of the nineteenth century, China was perceived as the predominant threat—until, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the rise of Japan as a military power provoked a change of focus.[3]

Just four days before Suzuki's arrival, the *Kalgoorlie Western Argus* referred to this perceived danger, publishing a two-page article that expanded on the necessity to fend off 'unwarranted' land claims and linked cultural exclusionism with eugenic ideals: "no part of the earth seems to have an easier task than Australia in creating unity and purity of race […] and realise the ideal of having on this continent only one race, one people, one speech, and one flag".[4] This had been officially instated in 1901 by the Immigration Restriction Act, which primarily regulated the arrival of migrants from Asia. But, argued the article, could a human-made law really "change the laws of nature—the filling of an empty realm by a stream of immigrants from teeming lands" that desired to "turn a white Australia into a yellow"?

[2] Joseph Cook, quoted in Henry P. Frei, *Japan's Southward Advance and Australia: From the Sixteenth Century to World War II* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1991), 87.

[3] Naoko Shimazu, *Japan, Race, and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919* (London: New York: Routledge, 1998), 128.

[4] *Kalgoorlie Western Argus* (1910: 24).

This pressing question referred to the general primacy of racial homogeneity in Australia; it portrayed Japan and China as nations seeking a 'release' for their 'surplus population' and therewith alluded to a long-standing fundamental issue in the history of British settlement in Australia. The initial occupation of the continent in the late eighteenth century had been legitimized based on the (avant la letter) discourse of 'terra nullius', i.e. the assumption that—due to the alleged absence of agriculture—the land belonged to no one.[5] But if the dispossession of Indigenous Australians could be justified based on their purported inability to inhabit and cultivate the Australian soil, would not the still barren stretches of land that continued to defy European agriculture and settlement simply based on the overwhelming vastness of the continent likewise justify other nations' aspirations to occupy the southern landmass? Consequently, the racist ideology of 'White Australia' primarily pushed for policies that would populate this 'empty North' with 'white' settlers and thus consolidate it into a veritable bulwark against an Asian takeover—be it through forceful invasion or clandestine immigration.[6]

While the actual trespassing on the continent remained hypothetical until the Second World War, the fear of invasion was found in the daily press and political debates. Even more, it was popularized culturally through a genre called 'invasion novels' but also in poems, plays, and the (later) national anthem.[7]

[5] Andrew Fitzmaurice, "The Genealogy of Terra Nullius," *Australian Historical Studies* 38, no. 129 (April 2007): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1080/10314610708601228.

[6] David Robert Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia, 1850–1939*, UQP Australian Studies (St. Lucia, Qld.: University of Queensland Press, 1999); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152–53.

[7] Robert Dixon, *Writing the Colonial Adventure: Race, Gender and Nation in Anglo-Australian Popular Fiction, 1875–1914* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1995), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139085038; Neville K. Meaney, "The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture," in *The 1890s: Australian Literature and Literary Culture*, ed. Ken Stewart (St. Lucia, Qld.: Portland, Or.: University of Queensland Press, 1996), 228–63; Catriona Ross, "Paranoid Projections: Australian Novels of Asian Invasion," *Antipodes: A Global Journal of Australian / New Zealand Literature* 23, no. 1 (2009): 11–16; Christopher Kelen, "Hymns for and from White Australia," in *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, ed. Alfred J. Lopez (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 208; Stefanie Affeldt, "'White' Nation—'White' Angst: The Literary Invasion of Australia," in *Racism and Modernity. Festschrift*

Australia's self-image as an "isolated outpost of western civilisation"[8] problematized its ideological proximity to Europe and its geographical location in a region of the world that was considered culturally alien and racially harmful[9]—a conflict that found expression not least in the strained designation 'Australasia' for the Pacific region under British control. This led to a two-pronged approach in terms of immigration and population policy: externally, the nation had to be protected against undesirable immigrants (specifically from the Asian region); internally, a demographic change had to be initiated that targeted in particular the 'coloured' labour in the northern regions of the continent (an endeavour that was decisively pressed ahead by the newly founded Labor Party).

At the end of the nineteenth century—in the face of worldwide warnings about the decline of 'white supremacy'—Australian historian and politician Charles H. Pearson thought of 'white' Australians as "guarding the last part of the world, in which the higher races can live and increase freely, for the higher civilisation" for the benefit of "not the Englishman in Australia alone, but the whole civilised world".[10] His exact words would be quoted during the first session of the Australian federal parliament by the first prime minister in support of the legislation that later regulated immigration into the Commonwealth.

In 1883—precisely ten years before Pearson penned his designation of the continent as the last 'white sanctuary'—Broome was founded,[11] setting in motion a process that was seen as contrary to his aspiration. Originally a base station for European–Australian pearlers on their nautical ventures in northern waters, the settlement on Roebuck Bay soon grew to become Australia's main pearl-shelling port. By the time Suzuki arrived, global demand for mother-of-pearl was reaching historic heights,

for Wulf D. Hund, ed. Sabine Ritter and Iris Wigger (Berlin et al.: Lit Verlag, 2011), 222–35.

[8] Andrew Markus, "Of Continuities and Discontinuities: Reflections on a Century of Australian Immigration Control," in *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, ed. Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker, and Jan Gothard (Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press, 2003), 178.

[9] Stefanie Affeldt and Wulf D. Hund, "'Racism' Down Under: The Prehistory of a Concept in Australia," *Australian Studies Journal|Zeitschrift für Australienstudien* 33/34 (2020, 2019): 11.

[10] Charles H. Pearson, *National Life and Character. A Forecast* (London, New York: Macmillan & Co. of Australia, 1893), 17.

[11] Shire of Broome (2014: 8).

and Broome had a reputation as the "pearling capital of the world".[12] While in the outgoing nineteenth century, the main workforce consisted of Malays—who had gradually replaced the Indigenous Australians who were employed as divers in the latter half of the century—with the expansion of the pearl-shelling industry in the early twentieth century and the technological advances in diving gear, Japanese workers came to the fore as pearl-shell divers.

By 1901, given the implementation of the 'White Australia' policy, the increasing non-European presence began to pose an urgent problem. In particular, the employment of Japanese divers in the northern pearl-shelling industry and South Sea Island cane cutters in the sugar industry of Queensland seemed the manifestation of a virtual bifurcation into a 'white south' and a 'multiracial north' that split the country into "two Australias",[13] creating an area of tension in which immigration restrictions came into conflict with economic deliberations.

Queensland's sugar industry was directly affected by the new regulations that shaped the Commonwealth of Australia in the spirit of 'whiteness' as defining a crucial characteristic of Australianness. The 'whitening' of the sugar industry was accomplished with the help of legislation and nationwide campaigns that urged the necessity to maintain the sugar industry to demographically shape the continent's north as part of the defence policy.[14] The South Sea Islanders, introduced as low-cost workers into the cane fields from 1863 to 1905, were deported to their ports of origin and replaced by 'white', preferably British, workers. This brought forth a rare kind of *alimentary racism* that secured the support

[12] Tanya Edwards, Sarah Yu, and P. L. Dodson, *Lustre: Pearling & Australia* (Welshpool: Western Australian Museum, 2018), 16.

[13] Henry Reynolds, North of Capricorn: *The Untold Story of Australia's North* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 2003), vii.

[14] Nota bene, the everyday implementation of 'whiteness' was far more intricate than its theory finds expression in these endeavours. The question of who was considered 'suitable to fend off the 'coloured tide' was a complicated matter. The discrimination against southern Europeans as 'not-white-enough' and Maltese as British but part of the 'black menace' show the malleability of 'whiteness' and the incongruence of 'white' and 'European'/'British' (for instance, Douglass 1995; York 1990)—in particular because against the background of the 'yellow peril', these southern Europeans were then integrated into the project of populating and defending the distant northern shores.

of Australian consumers who had to pay dearly for the now socially 'white' cane sugar.[15]

While sugar was a necessary part of everyday consumption, the prospects for the proponents of 'White Australia' were less promising in the case of the pearl as a luxury item and a product of *exploitatory racism*. Nevertheless, similar exclusionist endeavours were envisaged for the pearl-shelling industry and found practical expression in the 'white experiment' of 1912/13.[16] The introduction of twelve British naval divers was the focused attempt to prove European fitness for pearl diving and manning the luggers, thus aiming to initiate the replacement of Asian crews. Only eighteen months after their promising recruitment, the test case for the 'whitening' of the pearl-shelling industry had to be declared a fatal failure. The employers claimed that the European divers lacked the Japanese instinct for discovering pearl-shell on the ocean floor, while the divers criticized that they had not received the extensive training Japanese divers underwent during their seasoning.

In the end, only one of the participants was still employed as a shell-opener; three of the nine divers had died as a result of decompression disease and the rest had decided against further employment in Broome's industry. Three of the survivors put on record that while "they had been given every opportunity while engaged in the industry, and were quite satisfied with the pay […] the risks were far too great, space cramped and life monotonous".[17]

These sentiments—and the exploitatory racism of pearling—were mirrored in the report of the Royal Commission, which had investigated the pearling centres at Thursday Island, Darwin, and Broome from 1912 to 1916. While a preliminary report advocated the termination of 'coloured' labour, the final report—written under consideration of the 'white experiment'—determined that a replacement of the Japanese divers

[15] Stefanie Affeldt, Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the 'White Sugar' Campaign (Berlin et al.: Lit Verlag, 2014).

[16] Stefanie Affeldt, "'The White Experiment': Racism and the Broome Pearl-Shelling Industry," *Anglica* 28, no. 3 (January 15, 2019): 43–58, https://doi.org/10.7311/0860-5734.28.3.05; John Bailey, *The White Divers of Broome. The True Story of a Fatal Experiment*, 5th ed. (Sydney: Pan MacMillan, 2004).

[17] Department of External Affairs (1913: 6–7).

was not advisable considering that the life of a pearl-shell diver "is incompatible with that a European worker is entitled to live" and "[t]he work is arduous, the hours long and the remuneration quite inadequate".[18]

The attempt at demographic transformation misfired. Broome continued its unique course in contradistinction to the Australian primacy of 'whiteness' through the world wars, albeit with a steadily decreasing number of Asian workers—until the rise of plastic buttons and artificial pearls led to a virtual demise of the industry.

'A Good Friendly Feeling'

As in other Western countries, the notion of a 'yellow peril' emanating from Asia prompted Australia to issue a constraint on Japanese migration, which took effect in 1898[19] and was eventually codified in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 as one of the first Commonwealth laws after Federation.

Between 1902 and 1958 (ending with the enactment of the Migration Act), migration to Australia was regulated by the administration of a dictation test. Initially, this was to be completed in any European language. In 1905, due to opposition from Japan—which had not least criticized the lumping together of Japanese immigrants with those from China, India, or the South Sea Islands[20]—it was changed to any language at the discretion of the border officer.[21]

Certificates of exemption from the test, and thus from immigration restriction, were permits, usually for economic, educational, or diplomatic reasons, that allowed selecting non-European persons to enter Australia or

[18] Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia (1914–1916: 6).

[19] James Stanlaw, "Japanese Emigration and Immigration. From Meiji to the Modern," in *Japanese Diasporas: Unsung Pasts, Conflicting Presents and Uncertain Futures*, ed. Nobuko Adachi (London et al.: Routledge, 2009), 47, https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203968840.

[20] Asahi Shinbun (1901), Yomiuri Shinbun (1903).

[21] Humphrey McQueen, *Social Sketches of Australia, 1888–2001* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 66–67.

non-European residents to travel overseas for a specific period.[22] In addition to the name and the duration of validity, most certificates recorded the person's description (nationality, birthplace, age, complexion, height, hair and eye colour, build, and particular marks), two photographs (full-face and profile), and, overleaf, the impression of the left hand.[23] Although ostensibly an instrument to access the level of education, the dictation test was a means of prohibiting immigration on grounds of class, 'race' but also health or occupation—mainly, however, it targeted Asian immigration and Chinese migrants in particular.

The northern pearling industry remained less affected by these restrictions. The reason that exemptions to the Act were more readily granted there than in other places in Australia seemed to have been primarily economic. By the time the restrictions were fully deployed, the Japanese presence in the pearling industry was as undeniable as it was inevitable. During the industry's heyday, before the First World War, Europeans in Broome were significantly outnumbered by indentured workers from Japan, China, Indonesia, Timor, and other Asian countries.

When, from the late 1870s onwards, Japanese migrants began arriving in the northern areas of Australia on temporary permits, employment in the expanding business of pearl-shell diving became a major pull factor. Most of the Japanese divers employed in Thursday Island, Darwin, and Broome (the three principal pearl-shelling ports in Queensland and Western Australia) originated from the Wakayama region.[24] Like other regions in Japan—a transitional society that experienced a decided

[22] From 1904, Japanese tourists, students and merchants received a one-year-permit of entry without the administration of the dictation test (Robin Gerster and Melissa Miles, *Pacific Exposures: Photography and the Australia–Japan Relationship* [Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2018], 47). When the certificate expired or was cancelled (which could happen at any time), the person was treated as a prohibited immigrant and would be deported from the country. The exemption system was replaced with permits contingent on specific purposes by the 1958 Migration Act (Tavan 2005: 11, 104).

[23] For an extensive collection of "Certificates Exempting from Dictation Test", see the project 'The real face of White Australia', https://www.realfaceofwhiteaustralia.net.

[24] David Carlisle Stanley Sissons, "Japanese," in *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation,Its People and Their Origins*, ed. James Jupp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 522.

"decline in rural employment"[25] at the end of the nineteenth century—Wakayama was among the "fishing and farming communities" that were distant and isolated from larger cities and left to fend for themselves.[26]

After Japanese migration to Broome increased in the late 1880s, the prolific and resilient Japanese replaced the Malayan and Indigenous divers and eventually proved indispensable for the pearl-shelling industry—their numbers steadily increasing.[27] At the time of Australia's federation, the number of Japanese residents in Broome amounted to 966.[28] They soon became the town's largest population group[29]; and by the early 1900s, the Japanese in Broome had "established themselves as the dominant colored race".[30] The year following Suzuki's arrival in Broome, nearly 3500 Japanese were registered in Australia. Of the 3281 Japanese males, the vast majority were employed in the pearl-shelling industry, where many of them stayed for up to two decades.[31] Their share of the population grew steadily before the First World War—until they outnumbered Europeans almost five to one.[32]

This disproportionate presence of Japanese—primarily in Broome but also in the other centres of pearl-shelling—was diametrically opposed to the continent-wide guiding principle of a 'White Australia', i.e. the striving for a racially homogeneous, predominantly British, society. Broome in particular had long been viewed as a peculiarity in an otherwise 'white' nation. This sentiment was reflected in an August 1899 article, when a journalist expressed absolute amazement at the motley social and 'racial' landscape he found himself in during a visit to Broome. Because

[25] Castles et al. (2014: 47).

[26] Regina Ganter, "The Wakayama Triangle: Japanese Heritage of North Australia," *Journal of Australian Studies* 23, no. 61 (1999): 56.

[27] Yūichi Murakami, "Australia's Immigration Legislation, 1893–1901: The Japanese Response," in *Relationships: Japan and Australia, 1870s–1950s*, ed. Vera C. Mackie and Paul Anthony Francis Jones (Melbourne: Melbourne University History Monographs, 2001), 47.

[28] Miles and Warren (2017: 6).

[29] David Carlisle Stanley Sissons, "The Japanese in the Australian Pearling Industry," *Queensland Heritage* 3, no. 10 (1979): 9.

[30] Kalgoorlie Miner (1903: 6).

[31] Sissons, "Japanese," 522.

[32] Neville K. Meaney, *Towards a New Vision. Australia and Japan across Time*, 2nd ed. (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2007), 90.

of the prevailing ethnic conditions and the progressive miscegenation, he claimed, it "would utterly puzzle the cleverest ethnologist" to "describe some of the children to be seen in the Broome district".[33]

The town's cultural diversity continued to be both a curiosity and a dystopia during the days of 'White Australia'. Cultural and linguistic diversity was certainly respected in Broome; this was evidenced by cultural artefacts, such as postcards with bilingual captions,[34] which testify to the significance attributed to the Japanese in Broome, but also street signs in English, Malay, Chinese, Japanese, and Arabic. Today, this multilingualism and the wide range of migratory origins are echoed in the emphatic notion of Broome as a "uniquely multicultural Australian town".[35] This shows that the town continues to be considered an ideological location where racial discrimination took a backseat to a relatively harmonious coexistence of Indigenous Australians, Asians, and Europeans.

In the mid-twentieth century, still in the days of 'White Australia', Broome was described as an "exciting pocket of humanity in the drab texture of white Australia",[36] constituting an "exemption" that brought the national ideal of 'White Australia' "in danger of being discredited".[37] In the current secondary literature, this configuration is discussed as a "significant exception to the White Australia policy"[38] and even as the "antithesis to White Australia".[39] The town's "rigid social structure" was "based on class, race and gender" that was nevertheless compatible

[33] Age (1899: 7).

[34] Joanna Sassoon, "E. L. Mitchell and the Imaginary Broome," History of Photography 23, no. 2 (1999): 50.

[35] Broome Historical Society & Museum.

[36] Norman Bartlett, *The Pearl Seekers* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1954), 25.

[37] John P. S. Bach, *The Pearling Industry of Australia. Social and Economic Development, from Its Inception to 1955* (Newcastle: University of New South Wales, 1955), 272.

[38] Martínez and Vickers (2015: 4).

[39] Regina Ganter, *Mixed Relations. Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2006), 70.

with a "fluidity of relationships across [...] social and economic boundaries",[40] and its social climate was determined by "the casual acceptance of multi-racial living".[41]

In contrast to such assessments, it is claimed that the "common-held view of a cosmopolitan Broome, where the 'natives' were friendly and all races lived happily" fails to capture the full complexity of social and racial relations and its broader relationship with 'White Australia'.[42] Rather than being contradictory, these statements outline a situation of discursive tension that necessitates an in-depth examination of racism as a social relation.[43] Furthermore, while this indicates the complexity of intercultural interaction in the town, it is quite telling that—despite being the town with the highest ratio of Japanese inhabitants—Broome's Japanese consulate (as the first in Western Australia) was not opened until the year of Suzuki's arrival.[44]

Against the background of Australian fears of 'foreign invasion', the rise of Japan as a military and political power posed a crucial problem. When the Japanese doctor emigrated from Japan, his homeland was a self-confident nation that had already exhibited imperial ambitions. The modernisation of the country through the late Edo and early Meiji period and its participation in world fairs reinforced Japan's self-stylization as a—for European intellects—culturally and industrially valuable society, thus proving that it was "decidedly in advance of other Eastern people".[45] This was in line with the assessment generally prevailing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that 'promoted' Japan to the rank of the "Britain of the East".[46] This appraisal did not diminish even during the Russo-Japanese War, when its inhabitants were referred to as the "British of

[40] Sassoon (1999: 149).

[41] Reynolds, *North of Capricorn*, 128.

[42] Christine Choo, "Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Broome, Western Australia: The Riots of 1907, 1914 and 1920 between Japanese and Other Asians," *Continuum* 25, no. 4 (2011): 466.

[43] Affeldt and Hund, "'Racism' Down Under".

[44] Frei (1984: 79).

[45] Scientific American (1873: 279).

[46] Walker (2012: 75).

the East".[47] With the victory over Russia at Tsushima, they eventually replaced China as the militarily adept spearhead of the 'yellow peril'.

For W. E. B. Du Bois, this epochal conquest marked the moment when the "magic of the word 'white' is already broken".[48] Like the rest of the European nations, Australia may have found in these words both a disenchanting veracity and a fulfilment of gloomy predictions. In terms of territorial claims, Japan had already demonstrated its intentions of being a colonial power with territorial appropriations in China, Taiwan, and Korea. Moreover, it challenged the imperial policies of European powers with its geo-political and bio-political plans extending far into the Pacific regions. Moreover, the long-running claim to racial equality with Europeans and superiority to the "lower races"[49] was reactivated in light of the restriction of Japanese migration to Australia and was continued in the context of the Versailles Peace Treaty.[50]

In Broome, the increase in the sheer number of Japanese residents and their indispensability as divers caused a correlative increase in social power and agency.[51] This was further underlined by the hierarchical structure of the industry (and thus social status in town), which was unambiguously arranged based on the skills attributed by the Europeans to the respective 'races' and had the Japanese divers at the top of the pearl lugger crew.[52] This positioning contributed to the gradual elevation of the social status of Japanese residents above most members of Broome's other non-European groups.

While the majority of Europeans were directly involved in the pearl-shelling industry, Japanese businesswomen and businessmen covered a wide range of daily necessities and wants. Their stores in Broome carried "in stock things as soft goods, 'novelties', fancy goods".[53] Over time, long-standing renowned businessmen became leaders of the Japanese

[47] Morning Post (1904: 3).

[48] W. E. B. Du Bois, The Color Line Belts the World. *Collier's Weekly* (October 20), 30.

[49] Gerster and Miles, *Pacific Exposures*.

[50] David Lee, "The Australian Delegation to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference: A Biography," *Australian Journal of Biography and History* 4, no. 2 (December 3, 2020): 131–48, https://doi.org/10.22459/AJBH.04.2020.07.

[51] Martínez and Vickers (2015: 106–107).

[52] Sickert (2003: 67).

[53] Commonwealth of Australia (1909–1910: 2).

community and founding members of the Japanese Club. That tensions existed within a socially diverse community is evidenced by the fact that after said Club was accused of elitism for its exclusion of lower-class workers,[54] the local newspaper announced the launch of a second Japanese Club: the "Dobo Hakuaikai (brethren club)" that had already four hundred members under the motto "union is strength".[55] However, the clubs were observed with suspicion by some of the European master pearlers, who were alarmed by the cohesiveness of the communities that seemed to ostracise residents of other nationalities and thus made them untrustworthy. Nevertheless, "local opinion" did not see "any political motive in the doings and conspiring of the Japanese Club" other than the unionizing of Japanese divers in support of their wage negotiations and the facilitating of "illicit pearl buying".[56]

The confident self-image inherent in such a rather unique unification of a foreign community was also expressed in intercultural conflicts. At times the tension between the different ethnic groups was ventilated in the form of the so-called 'race riots', which were not least a manifestation of the Japanese sense of superiority over other non-European groups.[57] However, the indispensability of the Japanese as divers, their social and political presence in Broome, fortified by the mitigation of social separateness and the support by a strong nation-state, and their industrious activity as businesspeople indeed seem to have facilitated a social atmosphere in the remote north-western town that differed from the predominantly exclusionist mood of the rest of the continent and stood in stark contrast to the usual European racist discourse expressed as the subjugation of a socially undifferentiated group under a thus unified 'white' group.

Shortly before the series of incidents that set in motion the process of bringing a Japanese doctor to Broome, the establishment of a Japanese memorial for those who died while diving for pearl-shell and pearls was taken as a reason to reflect positively on the relations between Europeans

[54] Melissa Miles and Kate Warren, "The Japanese Photographers of Broome: Photography and Cross-Cultural Encounter," *History of Photography* 41, no. 1 (2017): 17.

[55] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1911b: 2).

[56] Ibid.

[57] Choo, "Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Broome, Western Australia".

and Japanese in Broome. "I am very pleased to be asked to come here as representing the white population of Broome", proclaimed the mayor, "as it shows a good friendly feeling between the Japanese and the English".[58]

'A Burning Question'

Following Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital,[59] migration network theory explains that migration is decisively shaped by "location-specific social capital".[60] In relation to the first Japanese doctor in Broome, this capital manifested itself in two ways: firstly, in the Japanese network, consisting mostly of businessmen and divers, who brought him into the country; secondly, in his collaboration with the local European doctor and the religious sisters from the nearby monastery. While the funds raised by the Japanese community provided the basis for the physician's stay, his high-level education enabled him to integrate swiftly into Broome's society. "[M]igrants' agency can create social structures, such as social networks" and impact local politics and social relations.[61] This theoretical deliberation was confirmed in practice, namely in the form of the influence that the Japanese community was able to exert through its social influence and numerical strength.

In October 1908, the Japanese Club of Broome had successfully raised funds for the recruitment and voyage of a Japanese surgeon, its members then approached the consul general for Japan, Kisaburo Ueno, to forward the request to the Australian government.[62] Ueno, in turn, enquired with the Commonwealth Department of External Affairs and the premier of Western Australia, Newton Moore, to ascertain the permission for the introduction and registration of a Japanese medical doctor.

Taking into consideration the Australian general anti-Japanese spirit, this was more than a mere formality. The secretary of the Department of External Affairs had declared as recent as the previous year that the

[58] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1909a: 3).

[59] Pierre Bourdieu, The Forms of Capital. In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, eds. John G. Richardson, 241–258 (New York [et al.]: Greenwood Press).

[60] Castles et al. (2014: 40).

[61] Castles et al. (2014: 37).

[62] Home and Territories Department (1925: 201).

restriction of Asian immigration—pertaining, in this context, specifically the 'influx' of Japanese men and the prevention of subsequent family reunification for reasons of 'racial hygiene'—was "a necessity for our very existence".[63] However, arguably benefitting from the unofficial handling of case-by-case decisions,[64] six months later, in response to a renewed request, the secretary finally gave the consul general verbal assurance that an exemption could be granted.[65]

In light of the worldwide "crises of whiteness"[66] and Australia's legally codified seclusionism facilitating racial homogeneity, the so-called "Broome incident" was of immediate relevance to questions of 'racial integrity'.[67] Alluding to Australia's invasion anxiety, a Western Australian newspaper claimed that, given the "proximity of our north-western shores to […] the Far East", permitting a Japanese doctor to practice in Australia was "not a State matter but one of national importance".[68]

Against the backdrop of Australia's notion of Japan's imperial interests and potency, it was no surprise that the ensuing debates were conducted in an area of political tension between local economic considerations and national politics. The arrival of the Japanese physician was seen as a 'test case' because, in the eyes of those who disapproved of his admission, this "grave" or even "dangerous precedent" would incite other cultural groups to make similar appeals or encourage the Japanese community to press for the appointment of one of their countrymen to other crucial positions.[69]

It was not long before the local opposition took up the case. The Broome Pearlers' Association claimed that the doctor's presence would negatively affect the relationship between pearl fishers and their crews.

[63] qtd. in Bennett (1992: 35), Oliver (2007: 05.4).

[64] Rohan Howitt, "The Japanese Antarctic Expedition and the Idea of White Australia," *Australian Historical Studies* 49, no. 4 (2018): 523.

[65] Commonwealth (1909: 2684); John Edgar deBurgh Norman and G. Verity Norman, *A Pearling Master's Journey: In the Wake of the Schooner Mist* (Strathfield: John E. deB Norman, 2007), 145.

[66] Alastair Bonnett, "From the Crises of Whiteness to Western Supremacism," *Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association Journal* 1 (2005): 8–20.

[67] Daily News (1909: 12).

[68] Coolgardie Miner (1909: 2).

[69] Home and Territories (1925: 229), Western Mail (1909: 50).

Both the Association and the Broome municipal council drafted petitions opposing the admission of the Japanese doctor.[70] Echoing this opposition, the Australian Natives' Association in Perth declared that "every effort should be used to prevent the introduction" of the medical practitioner.[71]

The European doctor, who was also the parliamentary representative, sent a strong-worded letter to the mayor of Broome, demanding it remained a one-doctor town. The "clientele is composed of whites, Japanese and Malays", he explained. After the employment of a "Japanese medical man", the "White Doctor" would be in a "serious position", certainly ruined because half of the annual admissions were Japanese patients and the Government Hospital would soon lack the necessary revenue.[72] Likewise, the West Australian Pearlers' Association admonished against dire consequences that would result from allowing the temporary entry and practice of a Japanese doctor. His "presence […] can only result in much friction arising between the crews of pearling vessels and their Masters"; it would foster "disorganization" in the industry and invite further demands.[73]

Across the continent, the matter of the "grave mistake"[74] made in the causa "Japanese doctor […] wanted for Broome"[75] was discussed in the print media. With the commitment already confirmed by the secretary of the Department of External Affairs and the successful securing of financial resources by the Japanese community of Broome, the question became a pressing issue for the opposition. "The question of admitting a Japanese doctor was a burning question", reported a Labour politician, and only "a requisition to the Mayor" could initiate the passing of a resolution that supported the petitions previously received from Broome's European associations, who had already taken a stand against the doctor's admission.[76]

[70] Commonwealth, 2685, Stride and Louws, 157.

[71] "Meetings," *West Australian*, August 27, 1909, 7.

[72] Home and Territories Department (1925: 194).

[73] Home and Territories Department (1925: 192).

[74] Kalgoorlie Western Argus (1909: 30).

[75] The Argus (1909: 8).

[76] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1909c: 2).

In response to the furore over the introduction of a Japanese doctor, the consul general for Japan attempted to appease the tempers by declaring that Broome's Japanese residents had "no complaint against the local hospital or medical men, but they said they were unable to explain themselves properly" and that he had "no reason to expect that a properly qualified Japanese doctor would be excluded from an Australian hospital where there was special need for his services".[77]

Newspaper articles sympathetic to the Japanese request testified to the complex controversy surrounding the issue. Nonetheless, they did always argue *within* the framework of 'White Australia' rather than criticize it. One, for instance, stated that "no risk of endangering the integrity of this policy" was taken by the "permission" and that it was "absurd to urge that this small concession to Japanese sentiment [...] should endanger in any way [...] our White Australia"—if anything, the admission would set a "precedent of the reasonable and intelligent and humane and sympathetic application of the policy of Asian exclusion".[78]

These articles are furthermore representative of numerous newspapers from Brisbane to Hobart that—often by quoting the major newspaper of their region—reported factually on the debates unfolding in the north-western town and shaped the public opinion from below in all spheres of Australian society.

This influenced not least parliamentary discourse, which had to toe the line between the local economic interests and national population policies, Australia's overall paean of racial homogeneity, and the diplomatic entanglements in the triangle between the Japanese Empire, the British Empire, and Australia as the cultural outpost of the latter in the immediate vicinity of the former. It also led to disputes in the Western Australian Legislative Assembly. Politicians from a labour background accused those from capitalist backgrounds of accepting the relatively arbitrary introduction of Japanese workers to Broome as long as they were seen as necessary for the operations of the pearling industry but in turn disparaging the

[77] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1909b: 3). Though there might have been some reason, or at least motivation, to complain. Allegations of the "insanitary state of the hospital" surfaced from time to time in the local newspaper but were—except for the "want of paint throughout the building"—"found [...] without foundation" (Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser 1910a: 2) and the European doctor was also not free from suspicions of inadequate work moral (Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser 1911a: 2).

[78] Barrier Miner (1909: 2).

motion to allow the fixed-term admission of "a Japanese medical man" as a "Japanese invasion".[79]

Ultimately, the "Federal Ministers […] decline[d] to express an opinion" whether permitting the doctor's temporary immigration was "right or wrong" and ended the lengthy debates under the pretext that "the permission was granted before they took office".[80] In the same vein, the premier of Western Australia decided that the "exemption of three years officially promised to the Japanese Consul General […] could not be withheld".[81] The officials concerned referred to the need to maintain diplomatic relations, bypassing an explicit statement on the discrepancy between the admission of the Japanese doctor and the pervasive principle of the 'White Australia' policy.

'A Newcomer Galen'

Tadashi Suzuki and his wife—who, to this day, remains nameless in contemporary and secondary sources—embarked on their journey in Kobe, Japan, on Tuesday, 19 October 1909. As passengers of the second saloon, they took the Yawata Maru, then the smallest ship of the NYK (the imperial mail line Nippon Yusen Kaisha). Advertisements published on behalf of Queensland-based agents Burns, Philp & Co.[82] extolled the exquisite service: an electric fan in each cabin and cleaning services were provided for the passengers and a "qualified surgeon" attended to their medical needs.[83] On its voyage across the China Sea to Hong Kong and Manila, the ship experienced strong monsoons and was almost caught in a typhoon. After having passed through "very high squalls, and a high beam sea" (i.e. storm and waves coming at a right angle to the course

[79] Western Australia (1909a: 97).

[80] Herald (1909: 3).

[81] Western Australia (1909b: 117).

[82] Fittingly, these businessmen were not only involved in the Thursday Island pearling industry but also in the Queensland sugar industry and its 'whitening' through the deportation of the South Sea Islanders. John Bailey, *The White Divers of Broome. The True Story of a Fatal Experiment*, 5th ed. (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2004), 196; Affeldt, *Consuming Whiteness. Australian Racism and the 'White Sugar' Campaign*, 185–89.

[83] Daily Telegraph (1909: 1). Anglophone Australian newspapers oftentimes gave the name as "Yawatu Maru".

of the ship), it escaped the adverse weather conditions with only "some slight damage to deck fittings".[84]

Under the directions of Captain T. Sekine, the (almost exclusively) Japanese crew and the American, British, Japanese, and Russian passengers reached Thursday Island on 9 November 1909. Here they were issued their certificates of exemption from the Immigration Restriction Act. Most of the Japanese who travelled to Broome to become part of the pearling crews as divers or other workers took the northern route via Koepang or arrived via Singapore.[85] Here, the social distinction between them and the 'common' Japanese labourer was already apparent: the academically educated Suzuki and his wife took the scenic route and circumnavigated the continent on prestigious vessels. From Thursday Island they continued aboard the Yawata Maru down the east coast of Queensland via Townsville and Brisbane.[86]

From Wednesday, 17 November 1909, the Suzukis spent about a month in Sydney. Here, Mrs. Suzuki engaged in a bit of consumerism. As she sauntered along "Pitt-street clothed in the garb of Japan", she "created such a sensation owing to her attire—novel to the inhabitants of the New South Wales capital—and her personal beauty that she hurriedly withdrew to assume the orthodox dress of feminine Australia". This exoticizing description proves to be an exaggeration that raises reasonable doubt. Not even a year before this sensationalist report, the very same newspaper had promoted "Japanese Kimonos" as "useful for this hot weather".[87] Elsewhere, it was stated that "[n]o woman's wardrobe is complete unless she has a kimono".[88] Moreover, even at times of high international tension—during the Russo-Japanese War—a renowned department store listed in their selection "Japanese Kimonos" for the "ladies" of New South Wales.[89]

[84] Daily Telegraph (1909: 3).

[85] Julia Martínez and Adrian Vickers, *The Pearl Frontier: Indonesian Labor and Indigenous Encounters in Australia's Northern Trading Network* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2015), 84.

[86] Daily Telegraph (1909: 3).

[87] Sydney Morning Herald (1909: 12).

[88] Leader (1909: 45).

[89] Sydney Morning Herald (1905: 1).

At noon on Boxing Day, the Suzukis boarded the Royal Mail ship Otway and—with stopovers in Melbourne and Adelaide—journeyed to Western Australia.[90] They welcomed the New Year somewhere while crossing the Great Australian Bight, reaching Fremantle in the afternoon of Monday, 3 January 1910. After a two-day stopover, Suzuki and his wife ferried up the west coast on the steamship Koombana. The president of the Japanese Club joined them at Port Hedland for the last leg of the sea voyage, and together they arrived in Broome on Saturday, 15 January 1910, presumably at midday.[91]

Given the keen interest that Australia showed in the prologue to Suzuki's arrival, his settling-in phase was closely observed. The Kalgoorlie *Sun* published an in-situ account of the current situation in Broome, in which it also reported on the Japanese doctor. The "newcomer Galen" and his wife had acclimatized in exemplary fashion since their arrival a good six months prior.[92] The European population's initial reservations towards the Japanese medic seemed to have given way to respect (perhaps even epistemic admiration) as the article emphasizes Suzuki's "great professional ability", his "up-to-date tools", and his "extensive degrees and diplomas". The fact that he showed the journalist not only his awards but also a gallery of "Japanese eminent in medical and surgical science" attests to his self-confidence regarding his as well as his country's prestige regarding education and science. The latter is further emphasized by Suzuki pointing out the portrait of "the greatest surgeon in the world", which, according to the journalist, displayed "a sombre face of vast intellectual power". This mutual academic deference is immediately mitigated, however, by the journalist's apposition—strongly implying stereotypical Japanese subservience—that Suzuki, "apparently not wishing to hurt anybody's feelings", "hurriedly" narrowed this accolade to the Japanese context. The section concluded with the assertion that "[i]n appearance the doctor is the average Jap., but polished and cultured, speaking English fluently", thus again emphasizing classist distinction.

[90] Daily Commercial News and Shipping List (1909: 4).

[91] Noreen Jones, *Number 2 Home: A Story of Japanese Pioneers in Australia* (Fremantle, W. A: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2002), 17.

[92] The Sun (1910: 7).

In a similar manner, a report on the Japanese inhabitants of Broome noted that the "Japanese Doctor [...] has impressed the local population very favourably" and "speaks English well, but with a bad accent". Like the *Sun* article, however, the report emphasized his distinction from the 'common' Japanese of Broome: Suzuki "holds himself aloof from the ordinary Jap. population".[93]

This not only shows that education played an important role in the social localization of Broome's Japanese. Moreover, it also substantiates the refutation of the notion that the 'non-Europeans' were an indiscriminate mass of 'Others' and underpins that a hierarchization merely based on 'race' would be a myopic conclusion. As with Broome's European population, the social standing of the Japanese was based on class; transgression of social boundaries was possible in both directions.[94]

This appreciation of education is certainly also reflected in Suzuki being referred to as 'Galen' several times during his time in Broome. He is thus positively associated with Claudius Galenus of Pergamum—the Greek physician, surgeon and philosopher—who was renowned in the Roman Empire for his erudition and expertise in the medicinal sciences, whose teachings were still propagated in the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century, and whose name continues to be a sign of profound medical knowledge to this day. Despite this firm acknowledgement of professionalism, however, the respect paid to him is foiled by the fact that neither the *Sun* article in its 'thick description' of the encounter with the doctor nor the government's 'Report on Japanese at Broome' mentioned Suzuki by name.

Suzuki soon took up his service and planned the erection of a hospital. In early October 1910, he received the permit "for a building for the treatment of patients" with the "understanding that "the building was not to be used as a hospital".[95] Nevertheless, already by the beginning of

[93] Commonwealth of Australia (1909–1910: 4).

[94] Stefanie Affeldt and Wulf D. Hund, "Conflicts in Racism: Broome and White Australia," *Race & Class* 61, no. 2 (October 2019): 47, https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396819871412.

[95] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1910b: 2).

the next year, the building was referred to as the "Japanese hospital"[96] —in distinction to the other institution, the "Broome hospital".[97]

Suzuki's professional proficiency was widely recognized; however, the pending extension of his exemption from the Immigration Restriction Act in 1912 rekindled the flames of resistance among some of the European residents. Most vociferous were the eminent master pearlers, who were supported in their opposition by Broome's mayor and the European medic. The latter penned an emphatic protest in the racist tones of the time in a letter to the local parliament in May of that year.

> I feel it a great grievance that I, a white man [...] should have an alien thrust into the place who not only takes all this work and pay from me [...] but attends to "white" men [...] and mind you these people who are unworthy of the designation of "white", have fallen so low as to allow their women kind to be attended by this Japanese doctor. This [...] has a most disastrous effect on the minds of the colored people here, it lowers the prestige of the white race altogether.[98]

In doing so, the 'white doctor' not only challenged the racial allegiance of his fellow Europeans but also seized on the suspicion that the employment of a Japanese physician would create a precedent case that could be cited by other nationalities but would also devalue the standing of the Europeans. The "altogether", subsequently inserted by the 'white' doctor, could be read as a toxin in the temper of the time—an admonition against the general 'degeneration of the white race' and the demise of its 'supremacy'.

Despite this fierce but short-lived opposition, the renewal of the exemption was not a matter of further debate. The overwhelming majority of the town's councillors "expressed themselves as strongly in favour of his retention" due to his personal and professional abilities and his commitment to the local medical care. Furthermore, a petition calling

[96] Jones, *Number 2 Home*, 79.

[97] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1911b: 2). Upon the latter purchase of the hospital by the Beagle Bay Mission, the hospital was deemed "one of the finest buildings" found in town (West Australian 1935: 17).

[98] Home and Territories Department (1925: 105–106).

for an extension of Suzuki's sojourn was signed by one hundred European residents of Broome, among them notable pearlers, captains, and businessmen.[99]

During his subsequent time in Broome, Suzuki successfully established a cooperative relationship with the local Sisters of St. John's of God, who assisted the doctor as nurses.[100] Later, he was fondly remembered by them as "the kindest friend".[101] He contributed to Broome's medical enterprise by collaborating with the acting European surgeons in treating divers who were suffering from decompression disease or nutritional deficiencies, doctoring Broome residents from all cultural backgrounds, and fighting leprosy.[102]

Though he received antipathy from master pearlers and eminent locals, he nevertheless gained access to Broome's elite circles, attending official celebrations and social gatherings organized by master pearl and local politicians. This is further evidence of the specific situation of the town, where, under certain circumstances, 'race' did indeed take a back seat to class.

Another intriguing twist—this time in terms of traditional anthropological power relations—is the fact that he (not the European physician) was the one who performed a highly charged and widely discussed autopsy: that of pearl diver William Webber, a participant of the 'white experiment' and the first of the 'white divers' to succumb to complications of decompression disease.[103]

In May 1914, after four years of service Tadashi Suzuki and his wife returned to Japan—having "built up a remunerative business, not only among his compatriots but also among the whites".[104] Not much is known about his subsequent professional career. He seems to have specialized in child health care and afterwards provided medical services in a

[99] Home and Territories Department (1925: 18, 113–114).

[100] Broome Chronicle and Nor'West Advertiser (1911c: 2); Peter Stride and A. Louws, "The Japanese Hospital in Broome, 1910–1926. A Harmony of Contrasts.," *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh* 45, no. 2 (2015): 161.

[101] Quoted in Norman and Norman, *A Pearling Master's Journey: In the Wake of the Schooner Mist*, 149.

[102] Sunday Times (1912: 9).

[103] Affeldt, "The White Experiment," 51; Bailey, *The White Divers of Broome. The True Story of a Fatal Experiment*, 162.

[104] Nor'West Echo (1914: 3).

hospital in Japan-ruled Dairen.[105] In November 1925, Suzuki became a professor of paediatrics at the University of Kyoto. His career was cut short by illness, which forced him to leave this position in 1931.[106] Only two years later, shortly before his 50th birthday, Tadashi Suzuki passed away.[107]

Conclusion

The arrival of Dr. Tadashi Suzuki marked the beginning of a series of Japanese physicians who settled temporarily in Broome to provide medical services to their compatriots as well as to the European–Australian and other residents. After him, four more Japanese doctors successively attended to the medical needs at the Japanese hospital.

Recreating the regional and domestic debates surrounding the exemption of the first Japanese doctor allows for the examination of local and national tensions created by Broome somewhat being an exception to 'White Australia' on the one side and the complications to conciliate racist deliberations, economic interests, and provincial activities on the other. Even a town that generally respected its Japanese community was not immune to the discourses of the time. When the European doctor argued that the presence of the Japanese physician would imply an equalization of 'races' and that neither is 'black' equal to 'white' nor should any incitement be given into this direction, he drew up a telling dichotomizing short-circuit that reflected the global crisis in which 'white supremacy' found itself at the end of the nineteenth century.

The controversy that accompanied Suzuki's arrival was an expression of the predominant discourse that oscillated between the nationwide primacy of whiteness and the local emphasis on the indispensability of Japanese workers. While the latter was framed by traditional racist stereotypes and arguments, the specific incident of Suzuki's stay in Broome

[105] Norman and Norman, *A Pearling Master's Journey: In the Wake of the Schooner Mist*, 154.

[106] Kyoto University (1997: 853).

[107] Rei Miyata, [宮田, 怜], Collection of examples for research inquiries. Case No. 108 [<レ ファレンス事例集>事例]. In *Library of the Faculty of Medicine* [日本医学図書館協会] (4) 64: 245–246, 2017.

demonstrates the intricate relationship between the ideology that discriminated against people who are deemed inferior and the everyday life in which these complex racial and social relations had to be negotiated.

Hence, the circumstances of Japanese migration to and their long-term sojourn in Broome shed light on the intricacy of race relations in Australia. Despite the restrictions of 'White Australia' and local opposition, the Japanese community—far from being passive subordinates—succeeded in asserting their ambitions to have a medical practitioner of their cultural background, thus providing an insight into the practical implementation of 'location-specific social capital'. Their social prestige resulted not least from the indispensability of Japanese divers in the pearl-shelling industry as well as from their self-identification as members of an imperial nation that allowed them to face and confront the racist discourse of the time with poise and confidence. Furthermore, the assertiveness of the local Japanese community gives testimony to the effective agency by those who were otherwise framed by overtly racist discrimination and to the fact that the colour line, which was considered the distinct demarcation of modern racism, was not as definite as posited.

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