

Floating Theme Parks: The Cultural Relations Role of Japanese Imperial Navy Training Ship Voyages in an Anglo-Saxon World

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Introduction

This article is a preliminary report of a study of how one Japanese institution represented Japanese culture outside Japan from the Meiji to the early Shōwa Period. That institution is the Imperial Japanese Navy, and the cultural representation is that carried out during the training voyages for cadets. These voyages became a truly international activity with the 1875 trip to San Francisco and Hawaii. The next voyage, in 1878 to Australia, was the first made by a Japanese ship south of the equator (see Noguchi and Davidson 1993 for an introduction to Australian reports of nineteenth and early twentieth century voyages; Senno 1973, pp. 473–494 gives a list of all voyage itineraries).

While the voyages had the primary purpose of providing long-spell sea experience to cadets, they were also part of the grand adventure Japan had embarked on to interact with and learn from the West. The visits to port cities were official, and well-advertised; relatively large numbers of men were involved; the officers were generally articulate and good speakers of English; and there was growing interest in (and eventually disquiet about) Japan. All of this meant that training ships visits were big events and attracted a lot of popular and media attention.

The period under study here covers Japan's trajectory from relatively early modernisation, through world emergence, and on to full-blown military nationalism. As Japan's ambitions grew, so too did anxiety about perceptions of Japan, and the navy men increasingly used the interest in training ship visits for cultural promotion. With the growth of Japanese ambitions in the Pacific, this was one extended contact zone where images of Japan were most likely to be muddled by geopolitical concerns, and it is probably no accident that the majority of the voyages traversed the Pacific (either north-south or west-east: of a total of 59 voyages, 25 were to Oceania and 15 to the US west coast or Hawaii).

This report uses data from the Oceania voyages and looks at representations of 'self' during the training ship visits. It attempts to relate these to the more general question of Japanese identity and representations of self, with particular reference to the question of complicity with 'audience' (Iwabuchi 1994, Yamada 2005). We are necessarily limited here, since most of the representation 'text' can be viewed only through the lens of audience reports (mostly from New Zealand in the present report). However, the recovery of text is aided by the fact that the novelty of the visits in Australasia means that relatively

detailed media reports of the visits remain.

Pre-‘World Emergence’ Visits: Representation through Behaviour

The earliest visits were in the 1870s and 1880s, when the ‘artistic, quaint Japan’ had entered the Western consciousness, but the ‘assertive, modernising Japan’ was yet one or two decades away. In Japan itself, questions about its place in the world, and consequent self-image, were only beginning to be seriously considered (see, e.g., Pyle 1969). This is reflected in the cultural representation aspects of the early navy visits, in the sense that there appear to have been few formal attempts at representation of nation as such.

The navy men did, however, present entertainment. There were very popular public fireworks displays (*NZH* 28 Feb. 1883, p. 5) and open-ship days. There were also the invitation-only At Homes, where the officers entertained hundreds of local prominent citizens on the ships. This all fitted in nicely to the spectrum of Western, particularly British, formal entertainment; and herein is one key to examining the reception of the navy men: their audience perceived their behaviour as representation of a culture with many features identifiable in terms of the ideals of the Anglo-Saxon world.

From the beginning encounters with Japanese officers were used to rank and place Japanese as a ‘race.’ One New Zealand report on the visit of an officer to a city council office compared them against the current mean-spirited stereotypical view of Chinese (*AS* 19 Aug. 1882, p. 5):

Lieut. Yendo speaks English with the utmost facility, his dress was like that of an English naval officer, and there was nothing in his manner or appearance to excite remark. If he is a fair specimen of his countrymen, the race must be far superior in physique, and visage, to their Chinese congeners.

Another aligned the officers to a popular received image (*NZH* 19 Aug. 1882, p. 5):

Distinguishing and commendable of these Japanese is their frank and easy politeness and courtesy. . . . The Japanese have been called the ‘French of the East’—from what we have seen, they deserve the title.

Consistent with the exhortation of the fifth article of the 1868 Charter Oath (‘knowledge shall be sought from throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule [translation from Tsunoda et al. 1958, p. 137]), the cadets sought to learn as much as possible from the countries they visited. In their audience’s perception, this too helped to locate their culture nearer to that of the ‘civilised’ European world. In fact, there were tentative positive comparisons with Anglo-Saxon culture (*NZH* 29 Mar. 1884, Supplement p. 1):

Nothing could be more admirable than their conduct—shrewd, intelligent and observant: they may be regarded as ‘the French of the East.’ The shops, the places of amusement, the Museum have been visited in turn, in order to make purchases or ascertain new scientific facts. Is there any reason to believe that ‘Christian’ English men-of-warsmen would have conducted themselves as soberly and orderly as these poor deluded followers of

Buddha have done? I trow not.

And according to a summary of the competitive sports activities during this visit, they had taken part in these with (*NZH* 17 Apr. 1884, p. 5):

just about as much pluck, determination and good humour as if the men had had the good fortune to be born in that tight little island of which we are all so proud. The men from the Empire of the Rising Sun showed themselves fit to compete with the men from the 'Empire on which the sun never sets.'

Other formal and semi-formal cultural representation tended to confirm all this. The presentations made to museums of examples of Japanese crafts, books, currency, and seeds to be tested for viability were a European-style civic behaviour (although from the Japanese side they were probably attempts to redress the lack of representation of Japan in these institutions). In published interviews Japanese officers represented Japan as a modernising nation eager to learn from the rest of the modern world and were critical of aspects of 'old Japan' (e.g., *NZH* 16 Apr. 1884, p. 6).

Similar representations were made by Shiga Shigetaka, later known as a geographer and writer on Japanese identity (see, e.g., Pyle [1969], Gavin [2001]). As a civilian observer on the *Tsukuba* as 1886, he was asked to give public speeches on Japan. In New Zealand, astutely playing on his hosts' styling of their country as the Britain of the South, he called Japan the Britain of the East and stated his belief that the Britain of the East would remain a staunch ally of the other two Britains (*EP* 20 May 1886, p. 2).

What of the representation of 'exotic Japan' by the navy visitors? This happened to some extent, in the setting of At Homes. A newspaper reporter at one of these found a mixture of the 'known' (in the sense of conforming to received images of Japan and Asia in general) and the 'new' (having no received image yet) (*NZT* 20 Feb. 1883, p. 3):

[T]he quarterdeck [was] . . . tastefully draped, and hung with paper lanterns, without which no Mongolian fete is complete . . . The exquisite taste of the Japanese in the art of the grouping of colors was remarkable in this decoration. . . . [T]here was an exhibition of Japanese fencing by two combatants thoroughly protected, after which a grotesque fancy dance, which thoroughly deserved its name, took place, the four characters performing it looking for all the world like the pictures represented on the well-known Japanese fans. . . . [A]mong the viands were many curiosities of Japanese confectionary, strange to the eye and sweet to the taste, and there was also Japanese wine, which, tasted for the first time, gave promise of greater appreciation with renewed acquaintance.

In this pre-emergence era, there was little formal diplomatic representation of nation as such. The reactions of their audience suggest that the most powerful representation was by the general behaviour of the men, both as guests in host ports and as hosts on their ships. The final word here can go to the 1883 reporter who, like many other Westerners who encountered 'live' Japanese culture, was left with the feeling that Western culture suddenly seemed somehow lacking (*NZH* 28 Feb. 1883, p. 5):

We cannot complain that they have not done all in their power to amuse us. . . I wonder if they look upon us as savages? For certainly their superiority in the way of manners and behaviour over ourselves would fully justify them.

Visits during the Era of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance: Representing Allies

Into the new twentieth century, the diplomatic imperatives of an Alliance coupled with the maturing of civic identity in Australasia meant that formal receptions for the visitors increasingly became part of the training ships visits. And, in parallel with this, cultural representation at At Homes tended to become more of a spectacle.

In terms of demeanour, the men exhibited the same 'superiority in the way of manners and behaviour,' and were as 'intelligent and observant' as ever. However the world-emergence of Japan militarily and politically had forced a new dimension into received images, and more meaning could now be read by the audience into this demeanour. And while the 'artistic Japan' image was essentially static, reading of this new part of the image was dynamic, still developing as Japan's international activities moved from the signing of Anglo-Japanese Alliance through the Russo-Japanese War, friction with the USA, emigration into the South Pacific and into World War I.

A visit soon after the signing of the Alliance brought welcoming media editorials in New Zealand that belatedly recognised the signing of the Alliance under headlines such as "Our Far Eastern Ally" and "Our Friends the Japanese." These praise an abstract image of a Japanese 'race,' an image based on media representation of Japan's foreign military activities and foreign relations endeavours, rounded out by the increasing number of Western works published about Japan. While nineteenth century journalists' alignment of Japanese characteristics with those of the West was tentative, some of their 1902 counterparts were direct (*NZH* 5 June 1902, p. 4):

[While] the Turanian Chinaman never strikes a sympathetic chord in our heart, the Turanian Japanese excites our admiration and compels our esteem. . . . [H]e is a 'gentleman' in the nobler sense of the word. . . . We are not mystified by the aspect he presents to the world, although we are astonished and amazed at the intensity of his feelings and aspirations. We can see in the Japanese more than any other alien race . . . the marvellous working of a common humanity.

A few days of actual encounters with the navy men brought a more concrete and less hyperbolic image (*NZH* 11 June 1902, p. 3):

Their behaviour is most exemplary. They want to know everything about everything, but they are so polite in their methods of seeking information, so quick and intelligent in learning, and so polite, that one feels it is a privilege and a pleasure to be able to assist them. . . . Of allies so bright, so neat, so orderly, and so intelligent, we certainly have no reason to be ashamed.

This relief that the Japanese are worthy allies is echoed in references that implicitly group them with the friendly and loyal indigenous people of the British Empire: rather

than being part of a “Yellow Peril,” they are “sturdy little men,” “little brown men” (*NZH* 5 June 1902, p. 4), and, combining the whole lot, “sturdy brown allies” (*NZWN* 12 June 1902, Supplement p. 8).

After the Russo-Japanese War, there was no more talk of being ashamed of these allies; there was a much more sober attitude now that they had demonstrated their modern military clout. The ships themselves represented this (*EP* 1 Apr. 1907, p. 5):

[T]he squadron came quietly into the bay. . . . They were grim looking craft, of dark leaden hue Obviously the boats were cut out for the fighting business as they squatted sullenly on the water. . . . Then came the city’s [gun] salute. . . . The flag of Nippon fluttered over the battery, and made a brave show amid the smoke.

The ships in this squadron had taken part in both the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars; other squadrons around this time included ex-Russian ships captured in the Russo-Japanese war. Now, there was much more media interest in the ships, the on-board life and marks of battle on the ships. And, as a sign of uncertainty over Japan’s intentions in the Pacific, individual officers were asked to represent these intentions (e.g., *AS* 2 Apr. 1907, p. 4).

When demeanour of the officers and men was mentioned, it was in (often implied) reference to the background of current received images of Japan. Thus, for example, in 1907, the sailors looked like boys, but they were really “pocket editions of giants, tabloid editions of strenuousness” (*EP* 4 Apr. 1907, p. 5). In 1912, when opinions of Japan had darkened as a result of friction with America over immigration and of large-scale use of Japanese labour in nearby New Caledonia, the occasion of an open-ship day helped blow away some of the clouds (*NZH* 8 Jan. 1912, p. 6):

Several thousand visited . . . yesterday. . . . Those who . . . came on board went away with flags, gallantly shown off by smiling round-faced sailors. . . . It was a beautiful day, and all its incidents tended to make the visitors think the better of the Japanese . . .

There was certainly had good reason to think well of the Japanese when the training ships made their last Australasian visit before the expiry of the Alliance. This visit occurred in World War I, when the Australasian dominions were feeling particularly isolated. The Japanese sailors now represented welcome allies who could provide defence that the British Navy could not. As such, they received a royal welcome. In New Zealand, for example, the number of people attempting to take advantage of open-ship days was so large that many hundreds could not even get past the wharf gates, let alone onto the ships (*NZH* 10 Jul. 1916, p. 7).

The Japanese too, made a special public relations effort for this voyage, almost certainly in order to represent Japan as a trustworthy ally. Much of this effort will be noted below in the discussion on civic representation and At Home representation. The public relations role of demeanour clearly continued, although media reports of this were subordinated to reports on the more formal occasions. One send-off article did allude to this. Clearly based on conversations with officers, this article notes the purpose of

the training voyages, the officers' learning of English, and then suddenly switches to a general conclusion, one based on observations during the visit, and one that echoes the abstraction of the welcoming praise in 1902 and the received images on which that was based (*D* 7 July 1916, p. 6):

if there is an Eastern nation that stands for the best in civilisation it is the Japanese. To the gentleman of Japan good manners come naturally; he is always thoughtful and considerate, fond of study, instinctively artistic.

As usual, there were references to demeanour based on more immediate perceptions: there was, for example, "outspoken admiration of the spick and span condition of the boats and the smart and workmanlike appearance of the small but wiry crews" (*AS* 10 July 1916, p. 2). This reference was part of a large article reporting the visit under the headline "Our Jap Allies." Other references without such obvious headlines nevertheless represent the men as allies: unforced fraternisation between the sailors and returned soldiers is noted approvingly (*NZH* 10 July 1916, p. 9), and in a show of inclusiveness, an article on the doings of sailors on shore leave refers to them as the 'boys' (*EP* 6 July 1916, p. 3).

The 1916 formal receptions saw the same representation in a more formal register. In 1902 the captain of one of the ships had represented Japanese ambitions to the Auckland Club with his hope that Japan would become "mistress of the Eastern seas" (*NZH* 16 June 1902, p. 5). At the 1907 New Zealand Government reception, crammed with many hundreds of people, Japan's recent military achievements had set the theme. The hosts welcomed the representatives of "a great nation, a nation that had fully shown its valour in the late war." Always aware of strong Australasian identification with Britain, the Japanese side attributed the successes of Japan's navy largely to the "example of England" (*NZT* 6 Apr. 1907, p. 6). This reception was punctuated by cheers; those in 1916 were even more so. To nervous Australians and New Zealanders the ships were a symbol of concrete help, and not unexpectedly the speeches focussed on Japan as an ally in the task of preserving a free world.

One civic activity in 1912 befitting allies, and reported by one newspaper under the banner "Staunch Allies" was a visit to the Auckland Veterans' Home (*NZH* 8 Jan. 1912, p. 8). This kind of formal recognition of old soldiers of an ally was to become more established in visits after World War I.

All of the above was the 'modern' Japan; as a reporter noted in a description of a visit to one of the ships in the 1916 training squadron (*NZT* 6 July 1916, p. 3):

The first thing that might have impressed the visitor . . . was the business-like aspect of the ships themselves and their officers and men. About these there was nothing suggestive of the gorgeous and dreamy Orient. On the contrary, everything pointed to the New Japan ranking shoulder by shoulder with the most intelligent, enlightened and self-respecting and respected nations of the world.

But there were always people who hoped to find some representation of the "gorgeous and dreamy" Japan, the one whose image (patchy and confused as it was) was actually being cemented in place in reaction to the modernisation proceeding apace. Such

people included the women ship visitors who “hoped to see the Japanese in another garb than in which he paraded Queen Street; in flowing silk and umbrella, . . . taking tea from delicate porcelain.” (*NZH* 8 Jan. 1912, p. 8). Obviously a Gilbert and Sullivan pastiche like this was not going to happen, but in their At Home events, the Japanese did go quite some way in representing the ‘Japan of old’ that featured so strongly in Western imagery. Military expert Fred Jane noted the efforts that the Japanese sailors put into decorating ships that visited Britain and lamented that the local press did not pick this up (Jane 1984, p. 293). In Australasia however, what the Japanese hosts presented as a cultural relations exercise was also a large local social event. It is thanks to the resulting media attention that we have detailed records of these.

The scale of effort put into the At Homes varied according to time and size constraints, but generally the At Homes brought together two related characteristics popularly ascribed to the Japanese: their attention to detail and their ability to bring life and nature together through art. A former Japan resident and commentator had noted that “[N]ot content with viewing the beauties of nature, the Japanese have set themselves with rare success to represent them” (Dixon 1900), and the sailors seemed to do just this. For the 1902 At Home, for example, the ship had been decorated (*NZO* 21 June 1902, p. 8):

by infinite labour and patience, to represent an apple and cherry orchard in the spring time. . . . [S]maller shrubs and flowers filled the lower spaces with a wealth of bloom, which required the closest scrutiny to reveal their imitation of nature. . . . [T]he scene [was] one of amazing beauty and soft, artistic colouring, most harmonious to the eye.

In 1916, reports of the At Home decorations and displays filled whole columns in the local media. There had been the beginnings of tableau displays early in the history of the voyages (an imitation garden made of peas, rice and artificial flowers; (*NZH* 11 Apr. 1884, p. 5)), but guests to the 1916 At Home found themselves following a path through tableaux and dioramas that were at a whole new level, in quality and quantity. Their journey though this “Japan in little”, this “fairyland afloat” (*NZT* 6 July 1916, p. 3), climaxed with a view of the following tour-de-force (*AS* 15 July 1916, p. 5):

In the far distance rose Fuji, a perfect snow-capped cone. . . . Below rose a representation of a forest-clad hill, with a real waterfall tumbling and splashing down the rocks. Amidst the distant trees stood a shrine, while on a rocky eminence stood a silver gate dedicated to the spirits of the dead. Part of the river came down a boulder-strewn course . . . and flowed down into the lakes at the foot of the hills, where real fish disported themselves in and out, under a high-arched bridge and smaller bridges. Summer tea-houses stood perched about in the lake, and on a small island in the foreground a stork elevated its head and spouted a fountain from its beak, all the time keeping up a delicate whistling bird call, as if the birds concealed in the foliage were singing. . . . Water-lilies grew in the lakes and irises on the banks, while a stone lantern added to the picturesque little scene.

The writer of the *NZ Times* article noted how (*NZT* 6 July 1916, p. 3):

On the Iwate herself it was shown that there are still two Japans—the new and the old—the new represented by the efficient, alert and ultra-modern navy; the old by the affection for and homage paid to the art of Old Japan, which in so many ways is expressive of a polished people.

The “polished people” are the stereotyped Japanese of the ‘quaint Japan,’ and in describing of the At Home the writer runs through a virtual checklist of contemporary stereotypes of an essentialised Japan, both in terms of the men’s behaviour:

... accustomed as the officers ... are to such events, they appeared to be just as happy as if the “At Home” were the first of its kind. The innate courtesy of their nation carried them through. ...

and the visual displays:

Miniature gardens, so dear to the Japanese people, were laid out with wonderful ingenuity. ... tiny house, and its garden in which every boulder is carefully chosen and its place assigned with the utmost care ... While the natural beauties of [the] two graceful peaks [Mt Fuji and New Zealand’s Mt Egmont] are similar, there is all the difference in the world between the utilitarian character of the buildings surrounding Egmont and the essentially artistic character of those which Fuji San looks down upon, even if it be but the little hut of a poor peasant.

The reports of representations in this 1916 “Floating Japan” (*D* 6 July 1916, p. 6) strongly echo those for the Japan-British Exhibition six years earlier, which “transformed Shepherds Bush into a treasure trove for a brief week” (*The Times*, 19 May 2001, p. 23). The effort put into creating the “enchanted gardens, bonsai and bamboo, ... delicately crafted models of Japanese towns” (*ibid.*) of the Exhibition, and that put into creating the 1916 “fairyland afloat” (*NZT* 6 July 1916, p. 3) were for pretty much the same reason: to improve Japan’s public image in the respective countries (see Hotta-Lister 1999 for more on the 1910 exhibition).

This incorporation of the ‘Japan of old’ into official and semi-official representations of Japan can be viewed as a kind of ‘complicit exoticism’ (Iwabuchi 1994), in which Japan used Western images to define its self-representation in a kind of cultural equivalent of the ‘third way.’ Similarly it can also be viewed in terms of the distorting mirror of Yamada (2005), through which Western views of Japanese culture that are distorted, but pleasingly so, may be ‘reverse imported’ to be used as representation (back to the West in this case, rather than within Japan, as in Yamada’s Zen examples).

Whatever theoretical framework we may wish to fit this kind of self-representation into now, it did its job well as part of the cultural promotion package. The 1916 training ships sailed back to Japan having replaced doubts about Japan with a sense of new respect for a skilled and capable nation.

After the Alliance: The Difficulties of Representation

The ‘spectacle’ aspect of training ships visits continued post-World War I: the arrival of a squadron had people “agog with excitement” (*D* 5 Feb. 1924, p. 5); on open

days the ships were “thronged with visitors” (*NZH* 24 May 1935, p. 9); and sailors on shore leave “attracted great interest” (*NZH*, 23 May 1935, p. 10). Civic entertainment events contributed more to the package: host cities organised a full programme of entertainment for the navy men, but the visitors amply returned the favour. Their onshore entertainment included ship’s band concerts, martial arts displays and film showings (mostly news documentaries on Japan, but in cities with Japanese residents feature films were also shown), all attracting large audiences (the outdoor band concert in Wellington in 1928 is reported to have had an audience of 7,000). All proceeds went to local charities. New Zealand beneficiaries included the Wellington Hospital Radium Fund, the Auckland Museum Building Fund, the Red Cross, and, in the Great Depression years, unemployment relief funds. Formal receptions were as equally popular: parliamentary receptions brought out more parliamentarians than would normally attend such events, and according to reports, 2,000 people attended the 1928 Auckland civic reception.

The continuing novelty of the visits was a large part of the attraction for this audience, but the step-up in friction between Japan and the white Pacific from the Versailles Conference onwards was also keeping Japan in the news. This latter, along with the end of the Alliance, brought even more self-conscious Japanese awareness of the need to harness the ‘spectacle’ to serve their public relations ends. Vice-Admiral Kobayashi was quite open in 1928 when he told his audience at an Auckland Rotary dinner that an important aim of the training cruises was “to meet influential people, speak with them, eliminate misunderstandings, if there are any, and to cement the good relation between our two countries” (*NZH* 3 Aug. 1928, p. 5).

With no more Alliance, the rhetoric of diplomacy in official and semi-official representation focussed on mutual links present or past and their basis for hope for the strengthening of, or at least continuity of, mutual relations. For the Australasian side, the one mutual link was Japan’s role in World War One as an ally of Britain, and in particular as a protector of sea routes in the Pacific. In New Zealand’s case, every reported speaker, from the prime minister at a state luncheon to a headmaster on the occasion of a visit of officers to his school, praised Japan’s war service as a key part of his speech.

That the recent war had had deeply marked the Australasian psyche was not lost on the navy visitors. They were modest in response to praise of their contribution to the war effort—Kobayashi speaking at a State luncheon was typical: “Japan had done her duty; no praise was due to her” (*D* 28 July 1928, p. 5). The visitors also carried out from 1926, at the request of their government, a formal act that helped convey a sense of genuineness about Japan—the laying of wreaths in unostentatious ceremonies at memorial cenotaphs or soldiers’ cemeteries. Photographs of these ceremonies appeared in the media without fail.

The Japanese too referred to the historical link between Japan and Britain, and hoped that the friendship would continue. Speaking in reply to the mayor at a Civic luncheon, Vice-Admiral Saitō in 1924 used the mayor’s praise of Japan’s progress to underline Japan’s links with Britain by noting that much of the progress occurred under English guidance (*EP* 6 Feb 1924, p. 11). Kobayashi was even able to use a visit to Rotorua, home to one of the largest Maori tribes, to please his white hosts (*AS* 4 Aug.

1928, p. 9):

Maori seem so happy and contented, and have no complaints. This speaks well for the New Zealand Government, and only goes to prove once again what a fine place any Dominion in the British Empire is to live in. . . .

The linking of British Empire and Japan was gradually replaced by a more explicit linking of Australasia and Japan, marking a stronger Pacific consciousness. At first, this was through the hope of increasing trade: the 1928 visit coincided with the signing of the New Zealand Japan Trade Treaty. As the world situation became increasingly uncertain in the 1930s, this was expanded to include the hope that Australia, New Zealand and Japan as Pacific countries would work together for world peace and prosperity.

In the 1920s, navy speakers at formal occasions were able to represent the Taishō democracy Japan. Saitō spoke of the improving status of women in Japan at the 1924 Wellington civic reception, meeting with media approval (*EP* 6 Feb 1924, p. 11). Kobayashi, giving an impromptu press conference at Auckland's 1928 civic reception spoke on the increasing social role of Japanese women. He adeptly covered New Zealand's interests by linking to this the increasing popularity of Western sports, then to the increasing use of western-style clothing and resulting increased market for New Zealand wool, and finally to the spread of a western-style diet and the resulting possibility of a market for New Zealand butter (*NZH* 2 Aug. 1928, p. 6).

Out in the public gaze, the "smiling, interested and courteous" men (*EP* 5 Feb. 1924, p. 6) went about their business on the streets and on the ships, upholding the stereotype and helping cement the public relations success of the visits. They were of "neat build and natty appearance" (*AS* 13 Feb. 1924, p. 4); showed their "traditional smiling courtesy"; and they kept the ships "spick and span. . . inside and out" (*EP* 30 May 1932, p. 5). "Honourable battle scars" also drew mention as reminders of the training ships' earlier lives. The sailors did fail to conform to some persistent Asian stereotypes: their "extreme robustness" was contrary to expectations, and their "natural cheeriness" gave the lie to the myth of the "immobility of the Japanese face" (*AS* 25 Feb. 1926, p. 6).

Other behaviour which met with approval and which corresponded to an earlier received image was the 'keen interest in children,' noted by the media earlier (*NZH* 15 July 1916, Supplement p. 1). Even though one cadet, when asked, said "all his countrymen loved little children," no ascription was made to an earlier popular general stereotyping of Japan as paradise for children, born from the writings of Rudyard Kipling, Lafcadio Hearn's and others. Reports on this behaviour remained approving, but confirmed the loss of the stereotype (e.g., *NZH* 3 Aug. 1928, p. 14):

A pretty incident was observed yesterday in Princes Street. Two Japanese sailors noticed a couple of diminutive Aucklanders looking at them with wondering eyes. Smiles were exchanged and one of the sailors produced a small Japanese umbrella, made of wood and paper, which sent a small maiden delightedly on her way.

The intelligent activity of the sailors was still noted, but again with a stereotype-free

freshness reminiscent of nineteenth century reports (*AS* 4 Aug. 1928, p. 20):

One cannot help noticing the bent of the Japanese sailors, which is altogether different to that of the sailors . . . of the Caucasian race that visit Auckland. [T]hey are to be seen out in the suburbs, making their observant ways . . . visiting our factories and public schools in the pursuit of knowledge or information. One of the midshipmen made his way into the Trades Hall . . . after he had visited the local Labour Department office, and the shrewd questions he put . . . were interesting indeed.

Another aspect of behaviour that was to become part of a later twentieth-century stereotype tended to be reported the same way—in terms of favourable comparison with ‘Caucasian’ behaviour (*AS* 2 Aug. 1928, p. 6):

An Aucklander lent his darkroom yesterday so that some of the Japanese visitors could develop photographs. They worked all day, all night and are still there today. How many amateur photographers of British birth would show similar industry?

The public entertainment drew large audiences, and the hospitality shown to visitors on open-ship days meant that these always drew special comment. But it was still the At Homes that had citizens of the host ports clamouring for invitations to experience the now stereotyped “lavish hospitality” of the “masters of the art of entertaining” (*EP* 23 Feb. 1926, p. 9). In 1924, for example, 275 invitations were issued for an At Home; 300 people turned up (*Renshu Kantai Shireibu (RKS)* 1924, p. 563).

The staples of an At Home had been set by the first decade of the century: each guest was personally welcomed aboard the flagship to find the quarter-deck festooned with lanterns and paper flowers made by the sailors; entertainment included displays of *jūdō*, *kendō* and *sumō* (the ‘grotesque fancy dance’ of the early voyages had given way to the far more popular martial arts display); there was the serving of refreshments, including Japanese liquor and snacks; and the end of the event invariably saw guests reluctantly leaving, clutching souvenirs of Japan.

As in 1916, in some years the sailors went to extra lengths to entertain their guests (and themselves!). The 1926 At Home stood out for the pure vaudevillian nature of the entertainment, a procession of sailors in fancy dress depicting characters from folklore and elsewhere, who brought shrieks of laughter and surprise. Leading the procession was a miming jazz band carrying the most inappropriate implements pressed into service as instruments. Behind them came a huge samurai warrior; Yoshitsune’s retainer Benkei; a caricature of a doctor; pilgrims to the famous Zenkōji temple; Urashimatarō riding his turtle to the dragons’ lair; Momotarō and his animal retainers on their way to Ogre Island; a huge badger; and finally, flower ‘girls’ who later performed a folk dance (*AS* 3 Mar. 1926, p. 3).

A more usual visual entertainment was the decoration of the ship with a variety of tableaux, models and dioramas made by the ship’s men. Although apparently not reaching the peak of 1916 in scale, these displays continued earlier themes, depicting in miniature detail famous Japanese scenes, such as a Mount Fuji sunrise and the shrine at Miyajima,

or archetypal Japanese settings such as a tea house and a traditional Japanese garden.

Semi-official reports of the voyages, begun in the 1920s, acknowledge the contribution of these activities to the overall public relations success of the visits. And report writers confirmed Australasian praise of the discipline of the Japanese sailors, their dignified demeanour and their kindness (*Yakumo Shinbun* 1928, p. 103; RKS 1935, p. 1015). Their 1928 informant compared them favourably to 'slovenly' American sailors (the American fleet had visited Australasia in 1925), and to their 1935 informant, the British and Japanese Navies were the only navies in the world worthy of respect.

The 1935 writer was quite aware of being part of a 'spectacle', and felt quite uncomfortable being under constant scrutiny as an upholder of the image of Japan. And both he and the 1928 writer questioned the reliance on the complicit exoticism representations. While acknowledging their impact, both reports call for more promotion of modern Japan. The 1935 report was particularly scathing about the woefully low level of knowledge in spite of what the ships clearly represented (RKS 1935, p. 1014):

'Do you have electric lights in Japan?'; 'Do you have trams in Japan?'; 'What do you think of those [neon advertising signs, pointed out by the speaker]? You won't have those in your country yet, will you?' they brazenly call from the throng [of visitors to the ships]. . . . Provincial ignoramuses!

The showing of films was one attempt to improve the situation. These included documentaries on cherry blossom viewing, which probably did not help redress the unbalanced interest in 'quaint Japan,' but they did have some effect: one report on a film showing expressed surprise at the 'occidental customs of upper class Japanese' (*NZH* Feb 15 1924, p. 10). And at the 1935 At Home, included amongst models and dioramas depicting a more 'traditional' Japan was a large-scale model of the living-room of a modern Japanese house.

But it was beginning to be too late in 1935 to worry about cultural promotion. Those of the audience with non-neutral opinions on Japan were in two opposed camps, represented by two letters published during this visit. The first, from 'Veteran' predicted the seizing of Australasia by Japan once the inevitable European war began (*NZH* 21 May 1935, p. 15). The second, in response to this, was from a nurse who had travelled during World War I on a ship protected by Japanese warships, and represented supporters of Japan grateful for its war service (*NZH* 24 May 1935, p. 14).

The image presented in the first letter was exactly what most Japanese wanted to change, even most navy officers (although we have anecdotal evidence of cadets' belief that the Indian Ocean and Australia existed for Japan as part of its *Nan'yo* (South Seas) destiny (Fukunaga 1934)). Indicating the general desire to improve Japan's geopolitical image, there were a number of 'goodwill' visitors to Australasia around the time of the 1935 navy visit: a group of businessmen sponsored by the *Mainichi* newspaper, the Christian social worker Toyohiko Kagawa and former ambassador to the US, Katsuji Debuchi.

However, as Dower (1987, p. 20) has noted, much of the official promotion in the West was promotion of 'traditional' culture; entertaining, but no match for images of a belligerent Japan. 1935 was the year that the Japanese Navy's advocacy of *Nanshin*

(Southern Advance) was made public, and this training voyage was the last by the Imperial Navy to Australasia, and the second-to-last to ports outside Southeast Asia and Micronesia.

Conclusion

Cultural representation was an increasingly important part of Japanese navy training voyages, and its history is part of the history of the representing of Japan by official institutions. As such, it tracks in the small the modern history of Japanese identity and representation.

The cultural promotion in the earliest voyages in some sense reflects the early Meiji 'lack' of a well-defined official self-identity apart from that created by the determination that any image should be regarded as 'civilised' by the West. From the 'complicit exoticism' point of view, it can be argued that this 'lack' is at least partly because the Western image was still scrappy, being based on the Japanese curios available in the West and on reports of the 'artistic' Japanese. Many of these curios were 'complicit exoticism,' being created to match Western reactions, and there was some of this in the entertainment in early voyages. What *de facto* formed a large part of the representation, however, was the men's behaviour patterns. To their audience these matched to a surprising degree (or even exceeded) British patterns and left a strong impression. On the occasions officers were pressed to represent their country in interviews, they stressed modernisation; 'old ways' tended to be referred to dismissively.

By the early twentieth century the need to promote understanding of Japan as a result of its world emergence met head-on with the 'quaint Japan' image, with this latter ironically growing stronger, if anything, as a result of this emergence. At the same time, in Japan definition of 'Japanese' moral and behavioural characteristics in opposition to those of West (as well as those of the 'uncivilised' world) was proceeding apace. As audience response to the sailors' behaviour shows, however, in actual encounters these characteristics tended to be regarded not so much as being in opposition to, but rather, as being aligned with Anglo-Saxon ideals. The 'quaint' Japan image was commandeered by the navy men, as by the planners of the 1910 Exhibition, and as by earlier craft workers who produced curios for Western buyers, in a complicit exoticism that essentialised the 'traditional' Japan so admired by a Western audience, the Japan of exquisite aesthetic sense and skill levels that allowed the manifestation of those aesthetics.

The 1920s and 1930s brought increasing friction between Japan and the Anglo-Saxon Pacific, and a corresponding increasing awareness of the importance of the publicity role of the navy training voyages. The behaviour of the sailors retained its positive impact on the audience, as did the representations of the 'quaint Japan.' It was the success of the later, combined with the apparent lack of development in knowledge of 'modern Japan' that became a point of some frustration, and caused reflection on one of the problems of the self-conscious representing of self to other: the tension between entertaining and educating. In the case of the navy men, however, the events of history overtook such considerations.

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AS: *Auckland Star*

D: *Dominion*

EP: *Evening Post*

NZH: *New Zealand Herald*

NZO: *New Zealand Observer*

NZT: *New Zealand Times*

NZWN: *New Zealand Weekly News*

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